

# FORBIDDEN COLOURS

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## INTRODUCTION

Africa is a very big continent,  
over 1,000 million people live there.

It has 54 countries.

All of them stand out for the beauty of their natural landscapes,  
the variety of their traditions and their cultural richness.

Music and dance are always present  
in African countries.

In the majority of their celebrations,  
men and women are dressed in colourful costumes  
and wear accessories made by themselves.

They dance and play instruments from their territory.  
It is the most joyful aspect about the continent.

But there is another reality in Africa.

The majority of their habitants are poor.

They don't have the tools or the industry<sup>1</sup> necessary  
to earn money from the food they cultivate  
and from the animals they hunt and fish.

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1. Activity that transforms materials into products to be used by people.

There is also a lack of hygiene and medicines.  
Because of that, people die of illnesses  
that, in other parts of the world, can be cured.

In many villages in this continent,  
houses don't have electricity nor water to drink.  
And children leave school early  
to help their families earn some money.

Its habitants believe in witchcraft and superstition<sup>2</sup>.  
The people that have any disability  
or that are different to the others,  
are often considered cursed.

Because of all this,  
many Africans leave their country  
and try to get to Europe.  
They believe that they will find a better life in Europe  
and a job that will allow them to send money to their family.

But the governments of European countries  
don't let in all immigrants  
that come from other continents.

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2. A belief in something that cannot be explained through reason or science.  
It is related to magic.

They think that there is not enough space or jobs to offer them.  
This causes many people to try to get to Europe  
in any way, even illegally.  
They risk their life jumping over a gate guarded by the police.  
Or spend days on the sea, traveling in a boat  
that is not prepared to transport passengers.

Many die in the attempt.  
Others achieve to arrive,  
but many are soon arrested by the police  
and, often, they return them back to their country.  
Some manage to stay.  
But then, they discover that things in Europe  
are not as easy as they thought.

It's very difficult to communicate in another language.  
And it's even more complicated to find a job  
that would allow them to live and send money home.

To all of them, those who manage to arrive  
and those who don't,  
I want to make a small tribute  
with this story.

María Peralta

## 1. AMINA

My name is Amina.

I am the youngest of five siblings and the only girl.

I was born in Senegal, in the spring of 1990.

My family was very happy when I was born.

They were beginning to think that a spell<sup>3</sup> didn't allow my mother to give birth to girls.

In many countries of Africa,  
it is believed that everything happens because of witchcraft  
or because of gods' punishment.

Amina is an Arabian name. It means loyal and honest woman.  
It was my father who chose it, because those are the two qualities  
that he values most in a person.

He always taught us to be loyal to family  
and honest with the norms that our culture sets us.

To celebrate my birth, my family organised a great party  
and invited all the neighbours in our village.

My mother told me that that day  
women wore bright-coloured tunics and dresses.

They all danced at the rhythm of the music  
that men played with the sabar,  
a very popular drum in Senegal.

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3. The use of magic to negatively influence a person.

Our village is in a rural area,  
200 kilometres away from Dakar, Senegal's capital.  
Dakar has a lot of traffic from cars and public transport.  
There are also shops and a boulevard along the sea port  
where people can buy the products they need.  
And young people go to university.

The government has its central offices in the city.  
They even built luxury hotels  
for European tourists.

Life in my village is very different.  
There are not big shops nor high buildings.  
We live in old houses that we repair every day  
so that the rain and the wind don't get in.  
Our bathroom is a latrine<sup>4</sup> outside the house.

Women work very hard to maintain their home clean  
and in the best conditions.  
It might seem a very hard life. But I was a happy child.

My father worked many hours fishing in the river.  
He sold the fish to buy other foods  
to feed us.

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4. A hole that is dug in the ground and serves as a toilet.

My mother also worked fishing in the river  
and collecting rice and walnuts,  
the main foods that are cultivated in Senegal.

I had to walk for more than an hour to get to school,  
but I liked going to school.  
There there was always food and clean water to drink.  
Moreover, while we learnt to read and write  
we didn't have to help working the land.

All my brothers went to school.  
Two of them, Abdou and Moustapha,  
left to Dakar to study in the university.  
My father was against that:

'My sons have to work with me fishing  
and harvesting the products of the land,' he used to say.  
'Spending too much time in the city  
can only bring disgrace to the family.'

My brothers excused themselves saying  
that, in the villages, there were not jobs for young people.

'Dad, with the arrival of European ships  
that fish in Senegal's waters,  
there is fewer and fewer fish on the coast and in the rivers,'  
said my older brother, Moustapha.

They wanted to study and get a better job  
to help at home.

They had good intentions.

But this time my father was right,  
and the city brought bad news to my family.

The last time that my parents saw my brother Abdou  
was the day he left to study in the capital.

Two months later, he was put in prison.