

Walk On My Own, a BYkids film, directed by Ndèye Fatou Fall

Rationale: *It's tradition!* How many cultural practices continue in communities due to this simple concept? In *Walk On My Own*, Ndèye Fatou gratefully acknowledges that just because of the year she was born, she did not have to endure a traumatic 'initiation ceremony' of FGC, nor has she had to marry by the age of thirteen. In Ndèye Fatou's village, the people are waking up: they are opening their eyes and recognizing the significant harm of these long-standing traditions.

These sexist practices are deeply troubling, and yet Ndèye Fatou Fall and the many individuals she features in her film reiterate again and again how important spreading *awareness* is. In this beautiful, inspiring film, observe the glowing smiles coming from young women and girls as they dream of a better future for themselves and for their daughters and granddaughters. Don't look away: it is time to *wake up*.

[Walk On My Own](#)

In her film, 13-year-old Ndèye Fatou Fall tells how her life has been affected by profound changes that occurred in her village a few years before she was born. In 1998, Keur Simbara, Senegal was among the first communities to publicly abandon the traditions of Female Genital Cutting (FGC) and child marriage, traditions which had been practiced for centuries.

More than 700 million women living today were married as children and FGC has impacted an estimated 200 million girls and women in 30 countries worldwide.

Mentored by Emmy-winning filmmaker, Elizabeth Hummer, Ndèye Fatou takes us on the journey of a cultural shift which fundamentally changed the course of her life and those of her peers. We learn how the women of Keur Simbara and the surrounding villages were inspired by the teachings of Tostan, a human rights non-profit based in Senegal, and how they, with the help of their Imam, were able to change deeply entrenched social norms.

She records the story of a woman who lost two daughters from complications of FGC and learns from another what it was like to be forced to marry a friend of her stepfather at the age of 12. Through these interviews we see how the hardships these women endured helped create an inner strength that inspired them to become advocates for the empowerment of women.

The wave of change in villages like Keur Simbara has ushered West Africa into a new era. Ndèye Fatou's film richly illuminates that she is part of a new generation of African women who are, for the first time, able to complete their education, marry whom they want and make their own decisions.

Featured Individuals

- **Ndèye Fatou Fall:** director
- **Maymouna Ba:** Ndèye Fatou's grandmother
- **Mame Marietta Diara:** a woman who lost two daughters through the 'initiation ceremonies'
- **Aunt Mamie:** an advocate for women and girls' rights
- **Father Demba Diawara:** the imam and head of the village of Keur Simbara
- **Ami Collé:** a student in a tailoring workshop
- **Ousmane Diop:** head of a tailoring workshop
- **Mame Doussou Konaté:** head of a solar workshop

Key Terms and Concepts

- **Female Genital Cutting (FGC) or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** refers to all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is most often carried out on young girls between infancy and age 15. In every form in which it is practiced, FGM is a violation of girls' and women's fundamental human rights, including their rights to health, security and dignity.
- **Child marriage** refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child.
- An **imam** is a person who leads prayers in a mosque.

Discussion Questions

1. Early on in the film, Ndeye Fatou observes some girls jumping rope. What is their rhyme about as they jump? Why is this significant?
2. Ndeye's grandmother says, "We do everything together. We are one being. There is no discrimination." What might she mean by this?
3. In studying the Koran, Father Demba Diawara learned that FGC and child marriage were "practices [that] came from [their] traditions, not from [their Islamic] religion." This distinction empowered him to speak to "347 communities" and pronounce "six public declarations to abandon the traditional practices, including female genital cutting." How might Diawara's distinction in recognizing these as *cultural* practices rather than *religious* ones aid him in persuading communities to change?
4. A Health Hut Owner explains that it is more effective to spread *awareness* about the dangers of child marriage and FGC than it is to make it *illegal*. Why might that be?
5. How has educating people about the harms of child marriage and FGC impacted Senegalese women's lives in a **positive way**? How do women from the village of Keur Simbara talk about their futures?

Education & Educators	How does this individual, group, or institution foster positive change for Senegalese women and girls?
French School, “formal schooling”	
Koranic School	
Community Theater Group	
Aunt Mamie	
Father Demba Diawara, the imam and head of the village of Keur Simbara	
Health Hut Owner	
Ousmane Diop, head of tailoring workshop	
Mame Doussou Konaté, head of solar workshop	

Additional Sources

- [World Health Organization: Female Genital Mutilation](#)
- [United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls](#)→ Target 5.3
- [Unicef: What is Female Genital Mutilation?](#)
 - [Unicef: Prevalence and Trends in FGM](#)