

## Abdou Gaye: A Promising Leader for an Emerging Continent

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BARRYTOWN - It's not often that our dreams and desires melt seamlessly into the ever-changing patterns of the universe in which we live. When it does happen, we realize it's not our actions alone that have brought about this most-favored result, but forces beyond our grasp - or control - that have conspired to bring about the end result.

Such is the case with Dr. Abdou Gaye, a 1997 graduate of the [Unification Theological Seminary](#) (UTS) with a [Masters of Religious Education](#) (MRE) degree, and a 2016 graduate of the [Doctor of Ministry](#) (DMin) program. He has been teaching both French and African literature since 2001 (adjunct professor in SUNY New Paltz, Marist College, Culinary Institute of America (CIA) and SUNY Ulster where he will teach an online course this summer (while in Dakar).

Taking what he learned from these experiences and his life in America, Dr. Gaye returned first to [Mauritania](#), his father's homeland and the country of his birth, and then to [Senegal](#), his mother's homeland, where he is presently working to bring a new vision and a new hope to that country, and to the African continent.

With a strong background and education in both the Muslim Koran and the Christian Bible, Gaye intends to pursue ways of bridging the gap between Islam and Christianity. He plans to take his experience growing up in Mauritania and Senegal - two countries largely influenced by [Sufism](#) (Sufi-Islam) and complement that with what he has learned from his time and study in the United States - a country largely influenced by Christianity.

"Senegal is home to me," said Dr. Gaye, "my mother is from Senegal and I obtained my postgraduate degree in African literature from Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar. I speak French and I speak Wolof, which is my "mother tongue," that is the national language. I speak it, as does 95% of the country.

"I'm also a 'son' of this nation, of America. I may be of African descent, but I am reaching beyond borders by being American. It's not about being Christian or Muslim anymore. We need to see ourselves (Senegal) as a 'border nation.' When we fly from New York it's seven hours straight to Dakar across the ocean. We have to see the "umbilical cord" between [Dakar](#) and New York City.

"As the newly-appointed national leader in Senegal representing the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification International](#) (FFWPUI), he has been tasked with the responsibility of promoting a new vision of peace in the predominately Muslim nation, and, at the same time, to bring a new sense of hope and prosperity to the largely agricultural country.

In January, 2018 at the time of the [Universal Peace Federation Africa Summit](#) there was a private meeting between Senegal's president, [Macky Sall](#), and [Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon](#), the co-founder of the FFWPUI.

Although Dr. Moon spoke to President Sall from her background and beliefs as a Christian, they were able to find common ground in their desire to create peace in the world - going beyond the borders of Christianity and Islam or skin color that often separate us.



*Dr. Abdou Gaye and his sons, Felix on the left and Alioune on the right*

Dr. Gaye's vision is to take the foundation of unity that was created through the support given for the Africa Summit by President Sall and the president of Senegal's National Assembly, [Moustapha Niasse](#), and to shape educational and entrepreneurial opportunities for the people of Senegal. He is looking to combine those two initiatives to develop a springboard for transformation in Senegal and provide a model of success for the African continent in the 21st century.

"What we need," said Dr. Gaye, "is leadership education. We need to go from preacher to entrepreneur; preaching alone is not good enough. In order to do this, we have to roll up our sleeves. I think UTS can make a significant contribution. UTS has a tremendous legacy in promoting and building interfaith dialogue. Though this is a predominately Muslim nation and that voice needs to be heard and appreciated, there are other religions present and there is freedom of worship.

"The other aspect is transformation of the nation, which is an agricultural country. Among several opportunities, there is a lot of interest in growing coffee here and helping Senegal become a coffee-producing country. Coffee business is like the oil business of tomorrow. Dr. Moon is promoting Kona Coffee in Africa."

Being a man of God, Dr. Gaye knows just having a dream, idea, or vision - no matter how "new" - is never enough. He's looking to his adopted country of America and his alma mater, UTS, to help guide him and support him in this journey, but he knows a reliance on the power and love of God is of utmost importance.

Dr. Gaye continues, "Most importantly, however, is that we have to have God's wisdom, God's power, and God's authority to make this providence achievable - not by the hands of man, but with the hands of God.

"Part of this new chance is we have to live it, not just say it," said Gaye. "It's not enough just to say to judge people by their character, not by the color of their skin, not by the language they speak, not by their religion. We are living in a new age - beyond borders, beyond race, beyond religion.

"You need to come with the mindset that 'I am a Muslim, just like you'. Theologically, people can believe you - you are open, loving - and people will say, 'I want to be like you.' Words aren't enough anymore, now we have to show the way, we have to live it."