

# SAFARI YANGU

## MAGAZINE

Safari Yangu

STORIES INSIDE

Sheikh Musa Drammeh  
Who Are We



OUR FIRST ISSUE

# Who is Safari Yangu?

It is with great pleasure to present to you the first edition of the Safari Yangu magazine. To our readers who may not be aware, Safari Yangu is Swahili for “my journey”. Safari Yangu Magazine is another platform added to our organization, to share immigrant stories and advocate for their rights. Other platforms includes: SafariYangu Immigrant Stories YouTube channel, and Immigrants Storytelling Forums. Safari Yangu is currently based at Columbia University, thanks to the philanthropy of Columbia Alumni Center in Manhattan, New York. Due to the organization's close association with Columbia University, Safari Yangu was an idea born and nurtured at the

Columbia University School of social work. Without outside funding, we utilized what was available – passion, writing skills and bits of time. What started as a small group, who worked during their break time on campus, is now fully run by Columbia



**Nick Ogutu, President of Safari Yangu**

University students, alumni and other volunteers from different parts of the United States. Safari Yangu now has some of the most talented volunteers you can get. Our Vice President, Nancy Famby, is an award winning behavioral health expert and social justice advocate. Aisha Powell, the executive Editor of Safari Yangu Magazine, has a Master's of Journalism from Columbia and is a member of AmeriCorps. Niteesa Brooks, a New Jersey native and Columbia University alumni in charge of our social media. Our team also consists of experienced journalist Grace Omwa, an asylee from Kenya; Professor Julie Jesmer; published author Grace Cecile Obame; volunteers Esther Yerelin Lee, Marcia Calle, Edsaon Chipalo and many others. We promise to offer compelling and real stories, highlight immigrant serving institutions and shed light on all issues that matter to our immigrant diaspora.



**Nancy Famby, Vice President of Safari Yangu.**

*A Message from President Nick Ogutu*

To contact, volunteer or ask question visit [SafariYangu.org](http://SafariYangu.org)

# How 9/11 Changed an Immigrants Dream from Riches

By: Omwa Ombara

his chance to go to the omnipresent, rich, America and change his future. His goal was simple - in two years, he wanted to make \$30,000.

He quickly felt guilt as he began to assimilate. He casted off his Muslim garbs in the airport and wore his first pair of pants. He had worn the garb all his life because Muslims in Gambia don't wear pants. He felt naked, inappropriate, almost abnormal. But, he still had his goal in mind, make money and be rich.

In Sep. 2011, life changed for Drammeh. The glitz and glamour he was chasing ceased after the terrorist attack. What he saw was not a reflection of the religion he knew. His memories of home were rooted in togetherness, collectivity and community although he grew up riddled in poverty. Islamic practices of care, love and family infiltrated every aspect of the life. It instructed everyone on how to calmly dress, communicate effortlessly, celebrate success or move as a group.

Whatever the village had was shared, he said. The village raised the children, which was essential to his being - no one felt alone.



"As poor as he (Djibril) was, whenever humanity called upon him, a family or individual with a problem, he would go out convene a night meeting and resolve an issue," Drammeh said about his memories of his father. He remembers his father as the most educated religious leader in his village. The person he draws from when he thinks about wisdom and resilience.

"At one time my mum was the only provider," Drammeh recalls. "She did all the work, cooking, cleaning, clearing. It was a lot of work."

He wanted to muse his parents and show that his religion was not defined by the attack.

Drammeh infused everything in his life into his very own school: the Islamic Leadership School in the Bronx.

As peace activist, he uses the media and unites local governments and diverse people with different viewpoints to fight radical extremism, embrace peace and empower his community.

He also has a New York-based newspaper, the Parkchester Times, and an organization called Peace December. The organization works to rehabilitate gang members, and get them off the streets.

As 9/11 passed in 2018, Sheikh Musa Drammeh felt a pain in his heart that he can't explain. It was the same pain that drove him to activism, nearly a decade earlier, when he built the first Muslim-Jewish School in New York.

In 2011, Drammeh lived a "regular life." He just got married, had three children and sold merchandise for a living. Then the terrorist attacks on 9/11 happened. Two planes hit the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center, which was organized by the Islamic terrorist group, Al Qaeda. Drammeh, who is Muslim, had his world turned upside down.

"This bombing, this sudden, heinous crime by people of the same religion made me embarrassed, betrayed and disappointed," Drammeh said to Safari Yangu. "After that, I changed my priorities in life. I decided I must dedicate my life to fighting religious extremism."

Drammeh grew up in Senegal and Gambia, before making the daring venture to travel abroad. As a young boy growing up in West Africa, he created a business selling items, like old newspapers and magazines, on the streets of Dakar. Later, when he moved his business to Gambia, he heard world-traveling merchants share stories about the accessibility of making money in America. The merchants would share wonderful pictures, and tales about commerce industry in New York, where they said it was easy to make money. Drammeh wanted that reality.

At the age of 24, he finally had a chance of that coming true.

In August of 1986, Drammeh saved every penny he made to go to New York on a business visa. Drammeh grew up poor and was a former orphan, his mother Mjajo Drammeh died when he was five and father Djibril Drammeh died four years later. This was