

As-salaam alaikum – My name is Fatou-Seydi Sarr but call me Seydi, and I am mother, aunt, a daughter and a proud Detroiter. My upbringing, between my mom and my dad grounded me in a way that I didn't know before. It's a very funny thing... so I came to Detroit and I started doing African dance in Detroit, and it's opened up a side of me that was almost like my parents inputted in all these things. This is who you are - this is where you come from - this is your language - this is how you supposed to grow - you're supposed to be. I didn't see the value in it, until it ended up in a space where my identity is questioned all the time. Then I become very comfortable, more comfortable in my skin when I started taking African dance, because I was like, oh, my God, this is who I am - and then all the stories start making sense. And I always tell people that, culture is not a complete if you don't have all the components in it. You have to have the dance, the music, the language and, you know, the taste and the feel. Languages do convey things that I cannot translate... if I translate it. It's never going to be right. And with African dance, like something with a missing part... it just snapped. It grounds me in the idea of community growing up with 12 brothers and sisters. Nothing is 'I'... so when I see people talking about, I need my personal space. What's personal space? And I always challenge my people who come to my dance class like, you know, if you want to build a nation, you want to build support. If I need an arms length of personal space and I have a heavy load. How are you going to help me? I tell the girls that all the time. Dance close to each other, because that's how we as women, you know, keep the connections. Because if I turn around, I know there is a shoulder right next to me. If I allow myself personal space when I fall, I don't have no support. So it's always goes back and forth with that... check on your people. For me, it's like I'm building, I'm rebuilding a part of myself because if they are not whole, I am not whole.