

NADINE AMINA KIM: **A MORO**



CCAD HOLIDAY

By Mikell Worley

Nadine “Amina” Kim radiates a quiet, peaceful presence, so it comes as no surprise when she wishes that everyone would have peace for the holidays. A native of Marrakesh, Morocco, Amina says that holidays there are special moments when families and the community reaffirm their appreciation for relatives, neighbors, and friends.

Marrakesh means “to go with speed,” but in reality the atmosphere there is much more relaxed than in the United States. “Spending time with family was a priority,” notes Amina. “The schools were close to our homes, so families had breakfast, lunch, and dinner together.” Education is considered very important to the family and the community in Morocco. Amina’s two brothers worked as educators before they retired, and her older sister earned a doctorate degree in biochemistry at Paris University, where she now works as a professor and a research scientist. Amina was a certified teacher of English as a foreign language after she graduated from Le Centre Pédagogique Régional in Rabat, Morocco. Later she also earned a degree from the Urban Land Institute Real Estate Development Program located in Washington, DC.

In Morocco, time and money are valued and never wasted. As children, Amina and her siblings helped around the house, studied, or conversed with their parents. Little time was given to

entertainment, such as television or games. During summer months they studied the curriculum for the next school year using each other’s books and notebooks and making weekly trips to the public library. The girls also sewed and knitted school clothes, usually in company with their cousins and girlfriends.

However, that has changed over the years, and young people now frequent cinemas, cafés, or stroll along beautifully landscaped boulevards. Parents provide their children with technological tools that include computers and the Internet. “I visit Morocco once a year and I am pleased by the country’s rapid economic growth and the availability and use of modern technology,” notes Amina.

Ms. Kim currently serves as the director of development at Harrisburg Development Corporation (HDC), where she participates in the planning, funding, and development of downtown Harrisburg revitalization projects. These include

the recent revival of the SOMA (South of Market) area of the city. Other HDC ventures in this area include the International House, a 47 student housing facility; Bricco, a restaurant and culinary school built in partnership with Harrisburg Area Community College; Ciao! a bakery; Olewine Meat and Cheese Shop; and Messiah College Harrisburg Institute at 28 Dewberry Street.



THE FOCUS IS ON APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE.

Opened in 2002, the International House's purpose mirrors that of the original 14 International Houses worldwide. It provides a warm environment where students, scholars, and interns from around the world can learn from one another and share their experiences and global viewpoints. At the International House Amina wants to enhance students' experiences and showcase the rich cultural diversity that exists in our community. In 2002, she initiated a series of cultural programs there that included presentations about world cultures, international films, occasional language forums, and international celebrations such as International Women's Month, International Education Week, Hispanic Heritage Month, and African American History Month.

Amina understands the challenge of starting over in a new country. She met her husband in 1975 while they were both students in Morocco. Cambodian born, he received a full scholarship from the World Bank to attend Ecole Mohamadia D' Ingenieurs where he earned a degree in civil engineering. The couple married soon after they graduated from college and now have three grown children.

After the Khmer Rouge took control of Cambodia in 1972, Amina's husband could not return to his homeland. He and the couple's three children became refugees in Morocco, because according to the law there, children took on the nationality of their father. Therefore the family moved to the United States in 1988. The law has since changed in Morocco to allow women married to foreign men to transfer the wife's nationality to her children. "This is one of the great examples of how Morocco quickly adapts to globalization and modernization."

However, Moroccan holiday traditions remain happily unchanged. Preparation takes a few days and begins with cleaning the whole house, baking cookies, and shopping for copious meals. It's also a custom to buy new clothes for the children, so they can dress in their best outfits. Families wake up very early to ensure their house is tidy and a traditional breakfast is prepared for relatives who visit with holiday wishes. Breakfast consists of various Moroccan crepes and barley soup. "My mother and father were the elders of their siblings, so all our relatives visited us during the holidays."

The day is dedicated to enjoying the company of everyone who stops by and lots of eating and drinking. Mint tea with crepes and cookies are the fare in the morning hours, while coffee with milk and

cookies are served in the afternoon. Anyone who arrives close to lunch or dinnertime is expected and invited to stay and share the meal. It's very impolite to decline. Though lunch is normally the main meal, dinner is more elaborate during holidays, and both meals consist of multiple salads, a lamb, chicken or beef dish, vegetables (tagine), and fruit for desert. Mint tea follows the meal. Pastries and cakes are not served for dessert—they are enjoyed during the midafternoon coffee time.

Ramadan is a favorite holiday in Amina's household. According to the Islamic calendar, Ramadan is the ninth month of the year and the time during which Muslims fast between sunrise and sunset. Fasting is a way of experiencing hunger and developing sympathy for the less fortunate. From it, participants gain a sense of thankfulness and an appreciation for what they have. Ramadan is also a time of worship, charity, purifying one's behavior, and doing good deeds. Gifts are not exchanged during Moroccan holidays. Instead people give clothing, money, and food to families in need.

Thanksgiving is Amina's favorite American holiday. "I like it because people celebrate regardless of their religion," she observes. "The focus is on appreciation and gratitude. Families spend time together and the mood seems more peaceful around Thanksgiving. In our household we combine the traditional turkey and side dishes with Moroccan and Cambodian food." It is a celebration that blends cultures, a perfect way to commemorate that first shared meal so long ago. ❀



Mikell Worley is the founder and president of Mikell's Treasures. She has spent more than 20 years designing and delivering self-improvement trainings, has had several cover stories in various magazines and recently illustrated her first children's book. She is an advocate for women and children.