

Dear Friend,

This is Maimouna Bio Gado.

Maimouna is in her mid-20s and just completed her first semester at the University of New Mexico and is now officially a junior in college. She received A's in all of her classes and made the Dean's List.

She is from Niger. And she is my friend.

It has been my pleasure in the past few years to watch Maimouna as she has grown into an intelligent, passionate, and inspiring young woman. But she doesn't need me to speak on her behalf. This is Maimouna:



"My dearest dream is to become a pioneer in fostering positive change in favor of women's and children's rights, in the world in general and in Africa particularly. My wish is to become a diplomat and my goal is to advocate for the development of women and children worldwide. I specifically want to fight for children's education, equal rights among men and women, and the betterment of women's living conditions. Clearly said, my goal is to fight to give other people better chances at improving their lives. More importantly though, I would like to be a role model for youngsters, especially young girls, by showing them the importance of education through my personal achievements. I deeply believe that education is the only valuable heritage we should leave for the next generations, because it can't be lost or taken away."

As a young woman from one of the world's poorest countries, Maimouna faces great challenges. But she persevered and completed her Associate of Arts degree at a community college. Today, she is an Amigo Scholarship winner at UNM working toward her Bachelor's degree in political science.

When I served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Niger in the late 1970s, I saw the daily — often life-or-death — struggle that girls and women face there. **It was as a result of my time in the Peace Corps that Maimouna came into my life. While in Niger, her parents became close friends with whom I have stayed in touch all these years later. In 2015, Maimouna lived with my husband and I for a year in the DC area after she finished her Associates of Arts degree.**

In the years since my time in Niger, I have continued to look for ways to support develop work in the country. And, I can think of no better way to support develop than by supporting Maimouna, a smart, dedicated Nigerien woman, as she pursues her education. I know that by supporting Maimouna's education, I am not only helping her today, but I am helping her create a future that can directly impact women and children in need in Niger and throughout Africa.

But, I can't do this alone. And, that's why I'm asking you to partner with me.

While scholarships and grants have covered much of Maimouna's tuition this year, they do not cover everything. I am writing to you today as a friend to help me raise the the remaining portion

of Maimouna's college expenses that her scholarships don't cover – about \$2,000 for each of her remaining four semesters (a total of \$8,000).

A college education can be a life-changing experience for Maimouna. But, the knowledge and life experience she gains will also benefit her community in Niger and beyond. Maimouna has an inspiring passion, heart, and spirit. All she needs is the opportunity. Let's give that to her.

Your gift – of any size – will make a difference.

Please join me in supporting Maimouna Bio Gado by making a donation to help fund her spring semester.

Your tax-deductible gift can be made securely online, via Africa's Tomorrow, at:

https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=s-xclick&hosted_button_id=RU25U3F8T585W

There's an old story that I think of from time to time and you probably know it too. It's the story of the woman who walks along a beach covered at low tide by thousands of star fish. She bends down and picks up a star fish and puts it back into the ocean. Over and over, she does this. "I know that I can't help everyone," she says to a passerby. "But, I can help this one."

I know that by helping Maimouna achieve her dream of a better education we are also helping many, many more in Niger who will benefit from her passion and dedication in the years to come. If you have any questions, please drop me an email. I'd be delighted to tell you more about Maimouna and how our work together can make a difference. On behalf of Maimouna and me, thank you so much.



Meredith McGehee

P.S. Please share this letter with those you feel might be interested in helping!