



InterPlay
unlock the wisdom of your body

InterPlay in Morocco

Reflections by Sara Jane Saliba

Diane Saliba Ault is a longtime community organizer, activist and artist. She has a passion for community-building across lines of race, class and culture. She loves the simplicity and elegance of the InterPlay forms and shares them with other adventurous souls in Nashville and other parts of TN. She has organized over 350 InterPlay gatherings in the last 6 years and is building a strong mutual support network of community artists. She has recently become the grandmother of twin boys and then another baby girl and enjoys the multicultural nature of her family. Her Moroccan son-in-law and daughter Sara live next door and between them they speak 5 languages. Diane's roles are many but her vision is one: wholeness for all.



Masankho Banda is a Multi-Disciplinary International Performing Artist, InterPlay Leader, Educator, Spiritual Healer and PeaceBuilder. He is a recipient of the "Heroes of Compassion" Award by His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his peace & justice work around the world. In August 2007, Masankho lead 40 InterPlayers to his childhood home in Malawi on a mission of cultural exchange.

Diane and Masankho will be leading a group of 20 InterPlayers (American and Australian) to Morocco June 3-15, 2008 on a mission of cultural exchange. They will be attending the Festival of World Sacred Music in Fes and meeting and playing with extended family and friends of Diane's son-in-law, Zouhair, in Rabat and Marakesh. InterPlay will provide the foundation for travelers to process their experiences as well as provide the bridge across differences in language and faith between the InterPlay

travelers and Moroccan locals. This trip is organized by Diane Ault's daughter, Sara Jane Saliba. Below are Sara's reflections on Why Morocco and Why Now?

Why Morocco? Why Now?

Morocco is a country at a crossroads. Geographically situated between Africa, Europe and the Middle East, it has for centuries been a meeting ground of Eastern and Western peoples, cultures and ideas. In modern times its status as one of the world's last true monarchies only seems to amplify the political and ideological predicaments it shares with other countries in the Islamic world — the legacies of an autocratic past confronting the challenges of a democratic and pluralistic future, with puritanical and progressive readings of Islam competing fiercely for Muslim hearts and minds. All of these elements converge to make travel in Morocco, in the words of one observer, “a schizophrenic experience.” Still, crossroads are places rich with possibilities, and Morocco offers them in abundance — possibilities for seeing through stereotypes, finding communion with people of a different faith, and making peace with a part of the world that most Americans view through a lens of fear and mistrust.

We have timed this trip to coincide with the renowned Festival of World Sacred Music in Fes. This year's theme “Weavers of Peace” could hardly be more timely, as the war in Iraq heads into its sixth year and the so-called war on terror holds no promise other than to further polarize Western and Islamic societies. The Festival is the proverbial oasis in the desert of fear and intolerance. In striving to awaken hearts through spiritually grounded music and dance, it embodies the divine imperative to find beauty in one another despite our differences. Simply put, the Festival represents Morocco at its best. The spirit of the Festival will contextualize the rest of our travels in the country — in the Atlas Mountains, home to indigenous Berbers whose communities thrive in spite of systematic efforts to dilute their cultures and languages; in Marrakesh, gateway to the deep South and the vast Sahara, a collage of Arab, Berber and African influences; and in the coastal cities of Casablanca and Rabat, the political and economic hubs of a country grappling with the mixed blessings of globalization.

We are committed to making space throughout the trip for real connections with our hosts, including homestays and meals together, music and movement, and sharing of InterPlay forms and principles. This is a unique opportunity for community-building and peace-making with the people of Morocco.

Years ago I imagined Morocco and the rest of the Islamic world as a darkly mysterious, perhaps even dangerous place. At 19, the enigma was irresistible. I went. Alone and with no Arabic to speak of, because it appealed to my sense of adventure, and because I was eager to test my resourcefulness. Three years later I had mastered what one might consider the basics of life in Morocco. I learned Arabic, made friends, and held a job. I learned the grid of streets around my neighborhood, the buses that took me to and from town, the price of tomatoes, and even how to cook a handful of local specialties. Eventually, it felt like home. And somewhere along the way, the thirst for adventure gave

way to a desire for real understanding of the place and its people, not just in passing, but in an intimate and profound way. Today, after six years of marriage and three kids with my Moroccan husband, I find the real adventures in unexpected places — fitting three car seats into the back seat of an impossibly small Renault, visiting six dozen relatives in fourteen days, negotiating differences on every subject from making tea to raising children, and most of all, imparting to my little ones a sense of belonging to the country of their father's heart.

Though my travels in Morocco are no longer thrill-seeking jaunts into the unknown (believe me, with 3-year-old twin boys, the thrills follow me everywhere), the country still holds an almost magnetic appeal for me. I have thoroughly enjoyed sharing its treasures with friends and family on several trips over the past few years. On these trips I am the “bridge” in a mundane sense — interpreting between languages, showing people the sights, making sleeping and eating arrangements, etc — but also metaphorically, guiding others down a path that mirrors the evolution of my own experience of the place, from the elusive and foreign to the intensely familiar. Today it strikes me that my journey to mutual acceptance within my Moroccan family is not so different from the journey we all undertake in growing into awareness of ourselves as part of the whole human family, its relationships brimming with complexity and ...possibility.

Your fellow traveler and seeker of peace,
Sara Jane Saliba