

Writer A.C. Frieden Returns to West Africa to Research Upcoming Novel

DAKAR, Senegal (April 12, 1999) – Writer-lawyer A.C. Frieden arrived in the West African city of Dakar, the capital of Senegal, for a 10-day visit to research his upcoming novel, *Canvas Sunsets Never Fade*, and, most importantly, to reconnect with the past. Key parts of Frieden’s story take place in several neighborhoods of Dakar. “For me, this city is not just another setting for my mystery novel,” said Frieden. “It’s also my birthplace—a fundamental part of who I am, even though I lived here only a short time.” Frieden was born in 1966 at Dakar’s Clinique Huber, one of West Africa’s top medical facilities in its heyday. Accompanying Frieden on this trip was his father, André Robert Frieden, a former Swissair executive who had lived in Senegal for several years with Frieden’s mother.



Above: Frieden in Dakar.

Senegal (officially, *République du Sénégal*) is a small country of approximately 12 million inhabitants on the Atlantic coast of Africa, bordered by Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia. The capital city of Dakar is located on the Cape Verde Peninsula and offers stunning, rocky coastline views. Senegal has a wide variety of ethnic groups and several local languages, including French, Wolof and Serer. Islam is the predominant religion, practiced by over 95 percent of the population, while the rest are mainly Christian.

The main character in Frieden’s novel is a journalist named Richard Nash, who is sent by the FBI to several places, including Senegal, to pursue a suspect in the Washington D.C. murder of the Saudi Ambassador’s wife. Scenes from Dakar that Frieden intends to write include among other locations the downtown area near the harbor, the Place de l’Indépendance, the Café de Paris, and the Meridien Hotel, all of which Frieden investigated during his stay.

Another scene in Frieden’s story involves a clandestine meeting near the St. Charles Church on the colorful Gorée Island between the CIA chief of station and the story’s hero, Nash. Gorée Island (in French, *Île de Gorée*) is a 45 acre island located a little more than a mile from Dakar’s harbor. It has about 1000 inhabitants, with quaint streets, charming colonial architecture, a few mules and no cars. Gorée is best known as one of the sites where the slave trade began, serving as a

processing and transportation hub for slaves heading to the Americas. "I had written this scene months before my visit to the island," Frieden said, "but, like in so many locations, once I set foot there in person there was much more detail to appreciate and this led to significant changes to the earlier writings."



Above: A mosque on the city's northern coast.



Above: View of Dakar's city center and harbor from the rooftop of the Independence Hotel.



Above: The Meridien President Hotel, where Frieden stayed, is also featured in his novel.



Above: Frieden's father next to old cannons facing the Fort d'Estrées, on Gorée Island.

Frieden also traveled 200 miles north of Dakar, to the town of Saint-Louis. Saint-Louis (or *Ndar*, in Wolof), is the capital of Senegal's Saint-Louis Region and the former capital of the federation of French West African colonies in 1895, but relinquished this role to Dakar in 1902. From 1920 to 1957 it also served as capital of the neighboring colony of Mauritania. Located in the northwest of Senegal, near the mouth of the Senegal River, it has a population of nearly 200,000. The French colonial architecture is still an important characteristic of the town and a number of industries, including fishing, have sustained the region. However, the town has recently gone through some tough economic times.



Above: The Faidherbe Bridge in Saint-Louis has 8 spans with a total length of 1600 feet (500 m).

Below: Frieden on the road between Saint-Louis and Dakar.



About the author: A.C. Frieden is a Swiss-Brazilian writer and lawyer living in Chicago. He is currently working on his debut mystery novel, *Canvas Sunsets Never Fade*, to be published by Avendia Publishing. For details, visit his website at www.acfrieden.com and his literary travel blog.

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