



# Wherever I Go

## Vanishing Paintings

"Mama says we'll have our stories, though. Wherever we go."

—WHEREVER I GO

*Listen as WHEREVER I GO illustrator Munir D. Mohammed talks about his childhood and how it influenced his creation of the images of Abia.*

"The history of me becoming an artist at an early age is interesting. Growing up in a Muslim-dominated region, town, and family was the hardest thing for a child who wants to draw. Islam is against any art form that depicts any living thing figuratively, especially people. So there was no encouragement whatsoever, that means no paper and pencil, and no child is given any of those tools to practice. Paper was used by our elders only.

However, I was able to use my finger in the sand to draw, and the only encouragement I got was my cousins who would gather around me admiring what they see. My uncles never bothered me because to them I was just playing in the sand with my finger.

When I was painting the pages for WHEREVER I GO the landscape was so familiar: I know it, I have lived it, played in a similar environment. Yes, my cousins, friends and I were all over exploring every detail of the land, and the semi-savannah vegetation landscape was at our disposal to play games. Abia and her friends marching? That was us with our feet covered with dust as we sang." —Munir D. Mohammed

*To learn more about how Munir's art moved from sand to chalkboard to canvas, watch the interview at: <https://bit.ly/MunirMInterview>*



### **Munir D. Mohammed**

is a native of Ghana, West Africa, who lives in Rhode Island. He maintains an active studio practice and does community-based work as a muralist. He is the cofounder of the International Gallery for Heritage and Culture, which provided art and cultural education programming in schools and in the community. Munir received a Master of Arts degree from the Rhode Island School of Design, where he is a Teaching Artist for Project Open Door, RISD's college access program for artistically talented teens attending local urban public high schools.

# Wherever I Go

## Vanishing Paintings

### Paint a Vanishing Portrait

*Young Munir drew images of people and animals in the sand. Do you think those drawings lasted? Did Munir's memories of his sand drawings last?*

*We invite you to create a vanishing self-portrait. Like Munir's drawings in the sand, this portrait may disappear, but the memory of it will be left on the paper.*

*1. Look for a paper bag or cereal box. Cut it open so it lies flat like a canvas or stretch of sand.*

*2. Get a glass of water and something to be your paint brush. That could be an actual paint brush, a finger, a feather, a sponge, a rag, a stone, or other object. Experiment with more than one brush.*

*3. Dip your brush in the water and paint something that expresses who you are or what you are feeling.*

*Don't worry about what it looks like. In minutes the water will evaporate and the image will fade.*

*The water, though, has changed the paper. You might say the paper holds a memory of the water and of your painting.*

*As a young artist, Munir was eventually given other tools or media to create images with. If you wish, find other art supplies (even a pencil) and start to make a less "ephemeral" art piece.*

### Ephemeral Art

"Ephemeral art is art that only lasts for a short amount of time. There are many forms of ephemeral art, from sculpture to performance, but the term is usually used to describe a work of art that only occurs once, like a happening, and cannot be embodied in any lasting object to be shown in a museum or gallery." —Tate Gallery



### Kelly McConnell

creates paintings that are about time and representations of her life through colors. You can view her paintings in galleries or at [KellyMcConnellStudio.com](http://KellyMcConnellStudio.com).

Kelly is the annual curator of "Art in Exodus," a mentoring and exhibition project through which immigrant artists and Mainers from under-represented populations share their art and culture.

Kelly is also an art educator who conducts art professional development for teachers of all backgrounds. For Kelly, teaching art is teaching a form of communication. "Art is a language that goes beyond words and the borders of speaking, reading, and writing. When taught effectively, the skills and habits of mind fostered in the art studio are lifelong tools."

*Thank you to Kelly for this ephemeral art idea based on Munir's childhood sand drawings.*



# Wherever I Go

## Cooking

"Every day, Mama and I take turns pounding cassava root to make fufu for our next meal. That's made me the strongest of all queens. I'm sure of that." —WHEREVER I GO

*Abia and her mother pound cassava root to make fufu. Do you think fufu is made differently here in America than it is in Shimelba Camp? We asked Lindsay Sterling, the founder of Immigrant Kitchens and educator Marienne Yaya about making fufu in America and in Africa.*

*This is what cooking friends from Ghana, DRC, Burundi, Somalia, Zambia, and Liberia taught Lindsay Sterling at Immigrant Kitchens about fufu. Try the recipe at home with your family!*

"Fufu or fufou is known by many different names throughout Africa. In Burundian, it is *bugali*, in Zambian, it is *nshima*, and in Congolese, it is *ugali*.

As you may know, flour is a powder made by grinding raw grains, roots, beans, nuts, or seeds. Fufou flour can be made out of corn/maize, rice, semolina, plantain, or cassava/yuca. In the US, fufou mixes/flours are sold online or at tropical markets. The easiest and tastiest version of fufou to make is one made with pre-cooked corn flour. Some Congolese friends told me this is what fufou beginners should use.

It's served in the form of a smooth mound or a slice of a molded loaf alongside soup or saucy dishes. In the US, we use bread similarly as we dip our bread into soup or soak up sauce with it. All my fufou teachers ate fufou with their hands. They broke off small bites of fufou, dipped them in soup or sauce, and then ate them." —Lindsay Sterling



**Immigrant Kitchens** is an online cookbook and cooking class series run by chef-author Lindsay Sterling. She asks immigrants for cooking lessons and reports on what happens, which is usually delicious. Explore more stories and recipes at [immigrantkitchens.com](http://immigrantkitchens.com).

# Wherever I Go

## Cooking

### Recipe for Fufou

*Children will want to cook this with an adult.*

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups fufou mix or fine flour of corn, plantain, rice, or semolina
- 4 cups water

#### Equipment

- Small pot or microwave safe bowl
- Fufou stick, wooden dowel, or wooden spoon
- Soup bowls or medium mixing bowl

#### Instructions

1. Fill medium pot on medium high heat with 4 cups water. Mix in the fufou flour in so that the water turns opaque but is still completely watery in texture. Stir constantly with the fufou stirring stick.

2. When the mixture heats up, it'll turn thick like cream. Boil vigorously, stirring constantly. The mixture will continue to thicken. Now, keep stirring around and around the edges and bottom, about 15-20 minutes. This is hard and you will want to quit, but this is how you do it. The goal is to end up with a contained ball of thick dough: jiggly, sticky, and malleable. Keep stirring so the fufou is smooth and thick, like a wet ball of really sticky playdough.

3. When you have a smooth thick mass, wet the inner surface of your guest's soup bowl (this will make the fufou not stick to the bowl). Scoop a serving (about 2/3 cup) of the fufou dough into the bowl. Move the bowl back and forth and around to get the mass of fufou to bounce around inside the bowl and take on the bowl-shape. It may help to turn the fufou over to get a really smooth, mounded top surface. Repeat for other guests. You can spoon soup or sauce around the fufou in the same bowl or serve the fufou and soup/sauce in separate bowls.



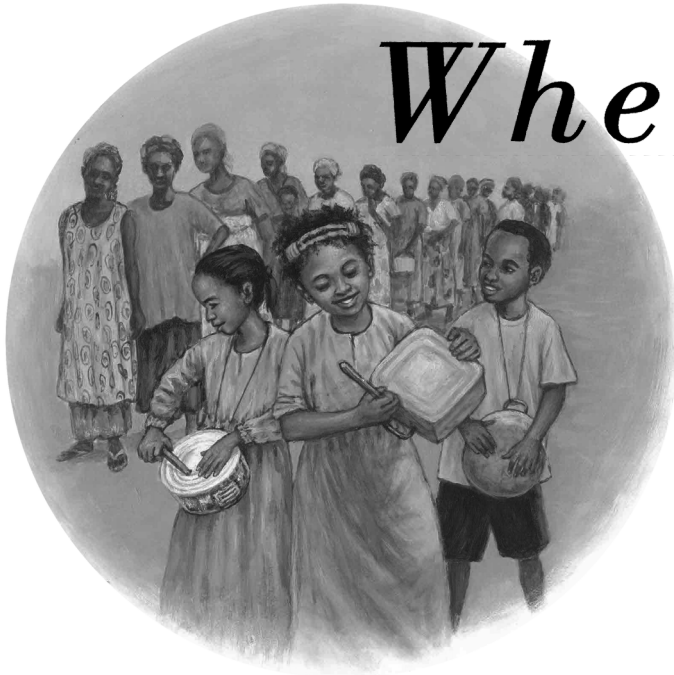
### Marianne Yaya,

born near Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, calls herself and her mother, "specialists in cassava fufu."

Marianne and her mother can still hear the sound of the pounding mortar. Both of them remember pounding cassava as children alongside their mothers and grandmothers. The root was pounded and then the powdered cassava was sifted into flour. They then heated the water. When it was at its hottest, they would add the flour to the pot. Their strength then turned to stirring and kneading until the fufu was ready to serve.

As new arrivals in America, they cannot find cassava flour and are forced to use semolina or maize flour. "It does not taste natural to us," she said, "We really miss the Congolese fufu. It is the taste of home."

# Wherever I Go



## Drumming

"And every week, when Mama and I stand in the long line for rice and oil, I take out my drum. I pound that, too. Sometimes my friends play along. Mama says I can be a noisy queen." —WHEREVER I GO

*Abia and her friends play drums on cans and pans. Is this just something that happens in the Shimelba Camp in Ethiopia? We asked two American drummers who grew up in different parts of Africa that question. Here is what they said!*

"I started playing as a kid. I used saucepans, cans, jerrycans, pan covers, and other things we found. When I was a child, we didn't have real musical equipment, and so we had to make our own. In my country we had a lot of eucalyptus trees. Because their branches dry and fall to the ground throughout the year, we could use them as drum sticks.

Coming up with beats was easy, because when I was a kid, there was a lot of singing and dancing in our society. As a child and being exposed to music at such an early age, the beats and rhythm came naturally. In many African cultures, they have their own ways of coming up with the beats. Some cultures clap, others step on the ground hard in a uniform manner, others jump in a uniform manner, etc. For me, clapping to a song was also how I came up with beats as a kid

[Later as a refugee] music always felt peaceful and joyous. No matter the crisis, music reminded us of unity and togetherness. Drumming with a group or even singing in a group...to me it feels like family. And home." —Barakk Charles



## Barakk Charles,

born near Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is now a caseworker at Catholic Charities of Maine and is studying to become a nurse. Charles plays drums for a band that performs for churches and other audiences across New England.

# Wherever I Go Drumming

"In Guinea, drumming is always a part of your life. Drumming and music starts with your parents. It starts with the way they talk, the way they sing. All music. All life. There is no surprise when soon you are banging on a can. Your first audience is your parents. Your second audience? Your own joy. Young girls will clap or clap and stamp their feet together, but the boys drum.

The children of immigrants do not grow up with that sound. Drumming is something they hear at events, but not in the family and not every day. Drumming makes immigrant kids shy. Being here in America changes the nature of ourselves.

Many immigrants leave culture behind in America to become businessmen or their vision of American success, but not me. Music is my business. Culture is my business. I am an ambassador for my country.

Music helps us know each other. It helps us forget *me, me, me* and *go, go, go*." —Namory Keita

WATCH Namory Keita Performs in his Village of Sangbarala, Guinea: [https://youtu.be/UuT\\_rX7EptA](https://youtu.be/UuT_rX7EptA)

WATCH Namory Keita Demonstrates Drumming: <https://youtu.be/vKCXLZvC1MM>

## Listen to These Master Drummers

*Search YouTube for the following African drummers:*

Mamady Keita (Guinea)

Famoudou Konate (Guinea)

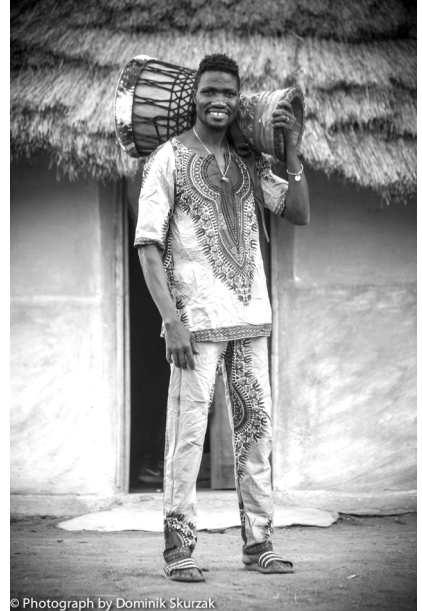
Okyerema Asante (Ghana)

Adama Drame (Burkina Faso)

Michael Babatunde Olatunji (Nigeria)

Abdoulaye Diakite (Senegal)

*Do you ever use the percussion of your hands, feet, or drums of any kind to make music?  
Do you need a drum set to start drumming?*



© Photograph by Dominik Skurzak

## Namory Keita,

born in Sangbarala, Guinea, began drumming at age 7. Now a Master Drummer, Namory is a sought after teacher and performer with a unique style and a wealth of traditional knowledge very rare to find outside the villages of Guinea.



# Wherever I Go

## Weaving

"I think it is the perfect amount of time to become a queen. Papa must agree because he wove me a crown from the acacia tree." —WHEREVER I GO

*Abia and her parents live in a refugee camp in Ethiopia. On the opening pages, Abia's Papa weaves her a crown. As Abia moves throughout her chores and play in the camp, she sees herself as a queen. Why do you think it is important to Papa that Abia feels like a queen? How has someone in your life "crowned" you or made you feel special?*

*Artist Aminata Conteh loves working with textiles. When she read WHEREVER I GO, she wanted to find a way for you to weave a crown for yourself or someone you think is beautiful and strong.*

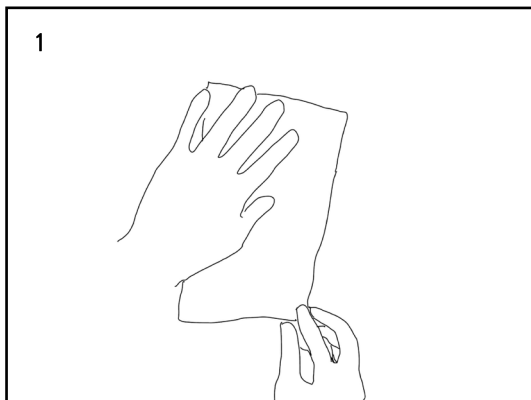
*Want to create one?* Find some paper. It could be a paper bag, printer paper, newspaper, food wrappers, or any other paper you have on hand. You can follow the step-by-step instructions on the next few pages or watch Aminata make a crown online at: <https://bit.ly/WhereverIGoCrown>.



### Aminata Conteh

is a metalsmith and multi-disciplinary artist. Born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, Aminata draws inspiration from her Sierra Leonian heritage, the collapsing histories that exist between her lived experience and her lineage. Aminata is currently a senior at Maine College of Art is an intern at Indigo Arts Alliance, a nonprofit arts center whose mission is to build global connections by bringing together Black and Brown artists from diverse backgrounds to engage in creative processes as Artists in Residence.

## Weaving a Crown

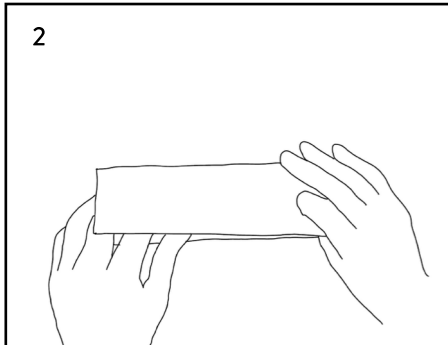


Find or cut a piece of paper that is about 8.5 inches wide and 11 inches long.

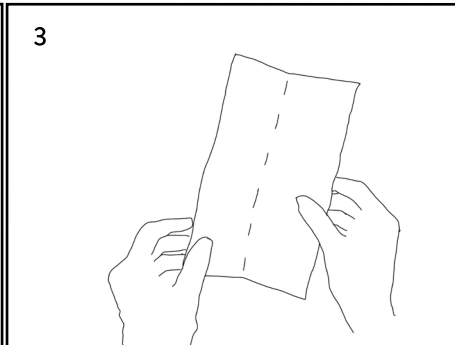
# Wherever I Go

## Weaving

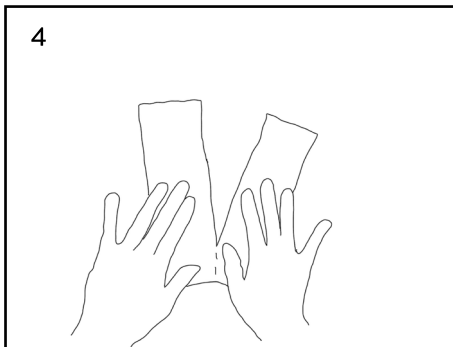
### Weaving a Crown (page 2)



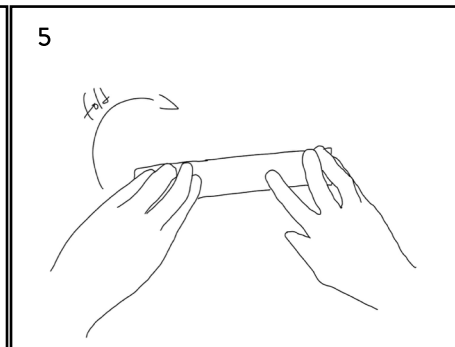
2  
Fold that piece of paper in half, lengthwise, running your fingernail along the folded edge.



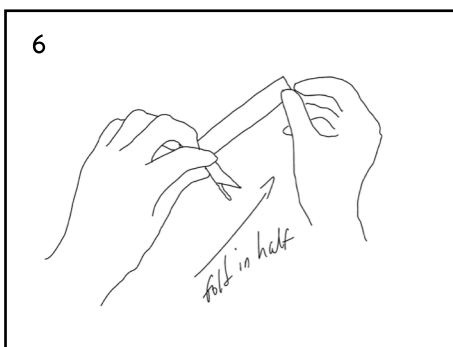
3  
Open the paper back up.



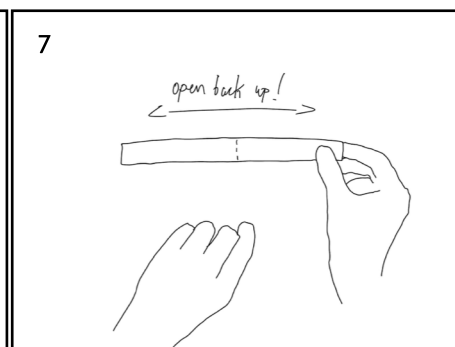
4  
Tear the paper in half at the crease line. Now you have two pieces of paper.



5  
Take one of the pieces of paper & fold it length-wise. Fold it length-wise again.



6  
Fold your long, skinny paper in half to create a center crease. Run your fingernail along the folded edge.



7  
Open the paper back up with the indent of the crease facing up. The folded paper should make a slight V shape and not a slight A shape.

### Crowns in America

In the end of the book *WHEREVER I GO*, Abia's family is resettled in America. The last image of Abia is of her wearing a toy tiara and saying, "I will still be a queen."

Africans that have come to America since the horror of the Middle Passage have found a way to "crown" themselves and their children. What does that mean? They have found a way to say, "we are strong, beautiful, resilient, and worthy of being leaders in anything we do."

In the Black community, you will hear "crown" used to praise a good haircut or a fine hat. The Black artist Jean-Michel Basquiat often painted crowns over the Black people he celebrated. Look for the picture book *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* (Abrams) to see Basquiat's crowns. To see the power of a haircut, read the picture book *Crown* (Agate Bolden). To celebrate hats, read *Tiara's Hat Parade* (Albert Whitman).

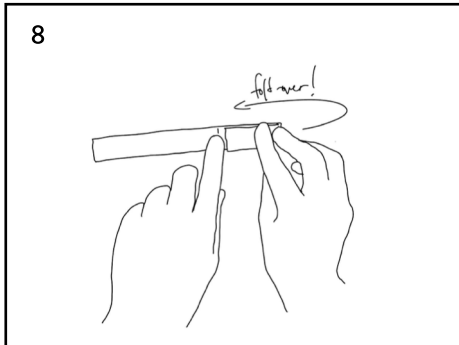
Look for more African American books like these at [DiverseBookfinder.com](http://DiverseBookfinder.com). Find more New Arrival/New American stories like Abia's at [ImYourNeighborBooks.com](http://ImYourNeighborBooks.com).



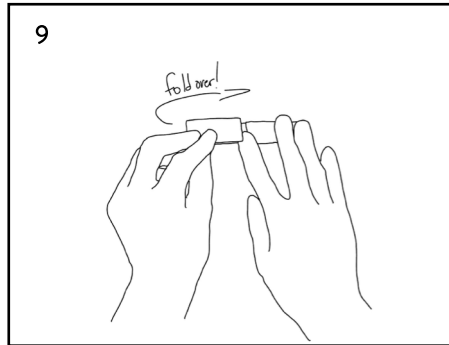
# Wherever I Go

## Weaving

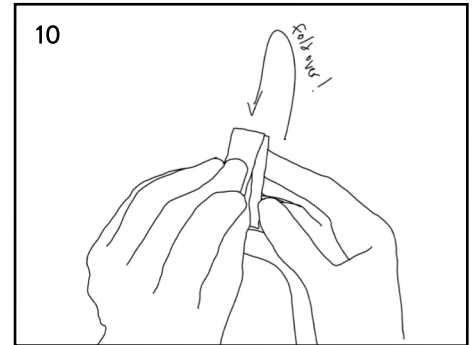
### Weaving a Crown (page 3)



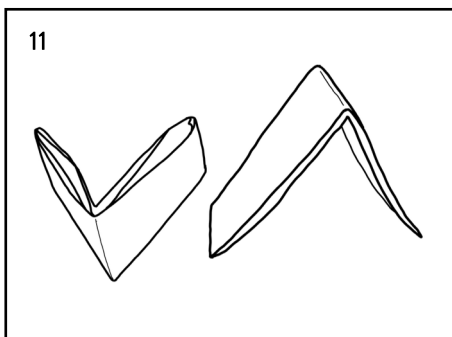
Take the right side and fold it into the center crease.



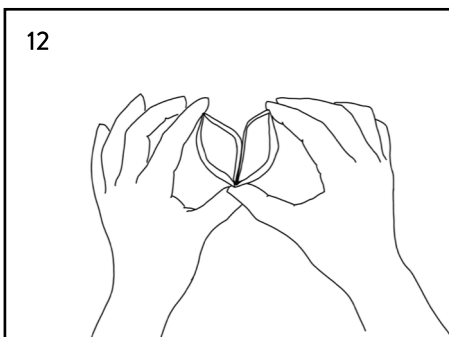
Take the left side and fold it into the center crease.



Fold the piece of paper in half with all the folds tucked inside. You have your first piece! Repeat steps 1-10 to make multiple pieces. You will need 15+ pieces to make a crown.

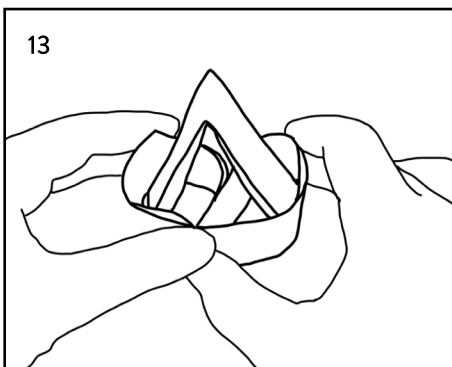


It is time to weave the pieces together. For the very first weave, lay one down so it makes a V on the table. Stand one up so it looks like an A standing on the table.

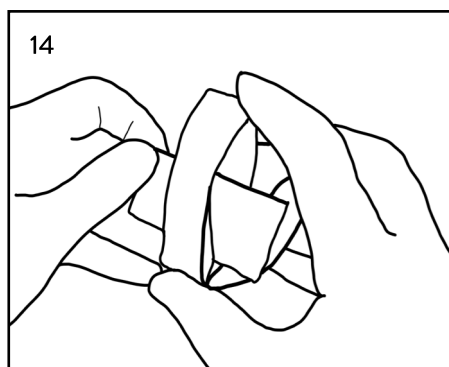


With your thumbs on the point of the V and your pointer fingers on the top of the V, give a gentle squeeze. See how it opens? It looks almost like two leaves side by side.

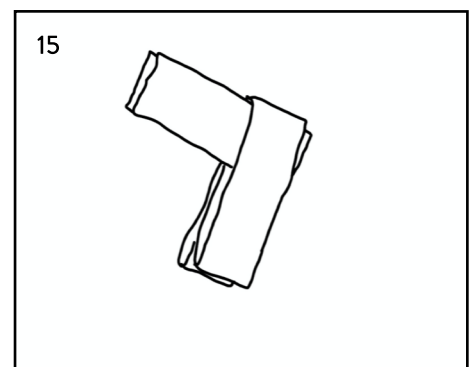
Stumped? Watch Aminata make the crown online at: <https://bit.ly/WhereverIGoCrown>



Stand the "feet" of your A shape into those leaf openings on the V.



Pull the V on its side and pull the "feet" of the A through.

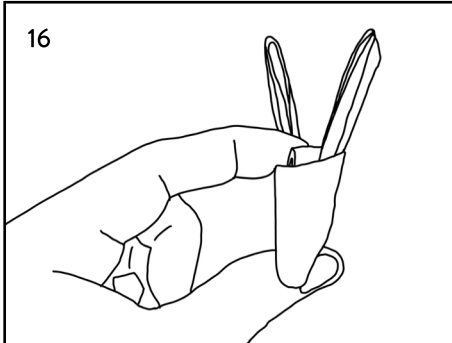


Boom! You created the first weave in your crown.

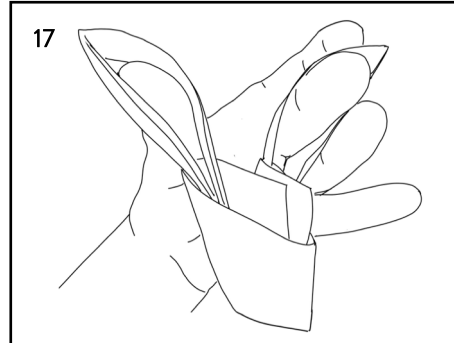
# Wherever I Go

## Weaving

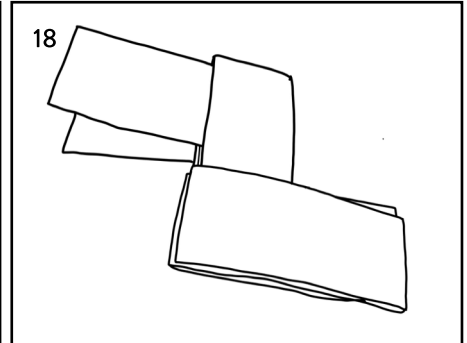
### Weaving a Crown (page 4)



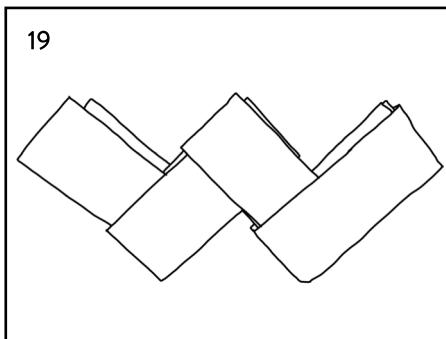
16  
To make the next weave, hold your creation so it looks like a rabbit (nose pointing towards you and ears pointing up.)



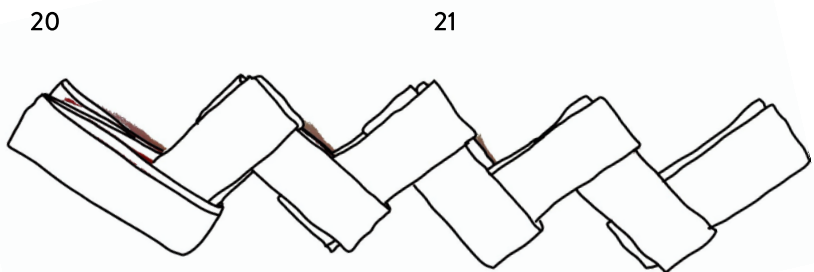
17  
Stick your fingers through the back of those ears to open them up. This is where you are going to weave in your next piece.



18  
Stick the "feet" of the next A into the front of the rabbit ears and pull them all the way through. You now have a duck shape.



19  
Place the feet of the next A through the bottom of the duck's beak. Pull it through and it should make a W shape!



20  
Keep feeding the feet of the A's through those bunny ears (or duck bills) until you have woven enough to go around your head.

21  
You are such a good paper weaver that I think you will now know how to make the final link.

Crown yourself resilient and strong like Queen Abia!