This year the Festival of American Folk-life presents a pilot program, "The African Diaspora," which pays tribute to the widely varied cultural contributions of the Black American community while depicting the historical and cultural continuum that links Black Americans to their African roots via the Caribbean Islands and Latin America. The term "African Diaspora" characterizes the dispersion of African peoples and cultures to many areas of the world. "African Diaspora 1974" is a survey statement which emphasizes the strength and vitality of one of America's strongest ethnic groups and marks the beginning of a new Festival thrust toward a comprehensive presentation of Black cultural materials.

In some geographical areas the contact of African culture with other world cultures has produced a synthesis of forms. In other areas, holistic forms and functions of African culture have remained intact. Musicians, dancers, cooks, woodcarvers, hairdressers, basket weavers, and fishnet makers from the three continents exhibit the unity within diversity which characterizes African culture wherever it exists.

Performances covering urban and rural Black experiences, secular and sacred life, home and community activities, validate the story of evolution of a people whose art forms change constantly to reflect their everyday life. Black Americans can trace back to Africa this characteristic of art changing to reflect culture. Black cultural development in the U.S. continues to manifest the new forms and functions in music; dance and material culture.

Visitors to this year's Festival will witness rural lifestyles as reflected in basket making from South Carolina, Mississippi, and Trinidad and Tobago. In the culinary arts area one will find the use of such foods as okra, in collard greens and okra from the pot of Charles Freeny of Chicago, callalou stew from the pot of Mr. Bishop of "Diana's," a Washington-based West Indian restaurant, and a third pot holding a Ghanaian dish of a similar blend of greens and okra. Demonstrations of the cooking of beans and/or peas and rice combinations and fish and gumbo or stews will also be featured.

Children's games and story-telling from Trinidad and Tobago, Washington, D.C. and Ghana will be represented.

In the music area, sacred and secular forms are brought together from West Africa, the Caribbean and the U.S. In Trinidad and Tobago the continuum is manifested in the Shango cult, the creation of steel bands, and calypso song. Black music of the U.S. illustrates the movement from country blues and spirituals to gospel, urban blues and jazz.

U.S. Black dance, one of the most rapidly changing cultural forms (when seen against the African and West Indian backdrop), reflects the evolution of the Black experience in America while showing the consistency in the line of the body and the importance of emphasizing certain body positions, and, in many instances, the same body steps. Examples of the continuation of traditional African use of the body in their high festival days and religious ceremonies are found in the jerk, cha cha, mambo, black bottom, the lindy, and the jitterbug. Similar utilizations of the body can be seen in the songs and ceremonies of the traditional Black church: rural Baptist, urban holiness and congregational.

Each of the performance and craft forms are demonstrated or exhibited through the use of three structures: the church, the market place, and a traditional African house.

Dancers from Nigeria are featured in the African Diaspora area of the festival. Seen here are Yoruba dancers as filmed for the African Art and Motion Exhibit of the National Gallery of Art now through September 22.
Participants

Music
Brothers Chorus
Deryck Bunch
Sam Chatman
Contact Africa
D. C. Black Repertory
Leonard Goines Quintet
Green School Dancerettes
Jackson Singers
Key West Junknoos
Charles Allen
William Butler
Kenneth Rahming
Alvin L. Scott
Lee Whynis
Eddie Knight
Jesse Mays
Flora Molton
Michele Murray
Rev. Leon Pinson
Lonnie Lee Pitchford
Mr. Rhythm
Rising Star Fife & Drum
Napoleon Strickland
Bernice Turner
Otha Turner
G.D. Young
Shock Treatment
Silvertones
Tommy Dozier
Mrs. Tommy Dozier
Steel Unlimited
Sweet Honey in the Rock
Everett Townsend
Trinidad Steel Band
Trinidad Children Games
Washington, D. C. gospel ensembles
Wulomei (Performing troupe from Ghana)
Nigerian performing troupes
Trinidad and Tobago

Crafts
Juliet Amoah
Errol Bishop
Althea Coakley
Beatrice Coakley
Paul "Sonny" Diggs
Terry Evelyn
George Ferrell
Charles Freeny
Anna Fuller
Dancella Hillman
Ju Ju
Walter M. Kelley
Arvell Lee
Wilson Lee, Jr.
Elliot Manette
Lee Nabors
Rufus Pintney
Joseph Ernest Smith
Nigerian artisans
Ghanaian artisans
Trinidad and Tobago artisans

*Individual names of participants were not available at the time of publication.

The Young Brothers Fife and Drum Band. The melodies and rhythms created by these street bands found in rural areas of Mississippi are rooted in West African musical tradition.