

# African Diaspora

This year the Festival of American Folklife 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	<i>Gospel chorus</i>
Deryck Bunch	<i>Bones &amp; quill player</i>
Sam Chatman	<i>Blues guitarist</i>
Contact Africa	<i>Children games</i>
D. C. Black Repertory	<i>Dance</i>
Leonard Goines Quintet	<i>Jazz quintet</i>
Green School Dancerettes	<i>Games</i>
Jackson Singers	<i>Gospel singers</i>
Key West Junknoos	<i>Junknoos Band</i>
Charles Allen	
William Butler	
Kenneth Rahming	
Alvin L. Scott	
Lee Whynis	
Eddie Knight	<i>Sticks &amp; bones player</i>
Jesse Mays	<i>Guitarist</i>
Flora Molton	<i>Street singer</i>
Michele Murray	<i>Dance workshop</i>
Rev. Leon Pinson	<i>Gospel singer</i>
Lonnie Lee Pitchford	<i>Guitarist</i>
Mr. Rhythm	<i>Tap dancer</i>
Rising Star Fife & Drum	<i>Fife &amp; drum corp</i>
Napoleon Strickland	
Bernice Turner	
Otha Turner	
G.D. Young	
Shock Treatment	<i>Urban blues band</i>
Silvertones	<i>Gospel group</i>
Tommy Dozier	
Mrs. Tommy Dozier	
Steel Unlimited	<i>Steel band</i>
Sweet Honey in the Rock	<i>Quartet</i>
Everett Townsend	<i>Spiritual singer</i>
Trinidad Steel Band	<i>Steel band</i>
Trinidad Children Games	<i>games</i>
Washington, D. C. gospel ensembles*	
Wulomei (Performing troupe from Ghana)*	
Nigerian performing troupes*	
Petit Valley Village Troupe,	
Trinidad and Tobago*	

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



### Crafts

Juliet Amoah	<i>Ghanaian food</i>
Errol Bishop	<i>Trinidad and Tobago food</i>
Althea Coakley	<i>Basket weaver</i>
Beatrice Coakley	<i>Basket weaver</i>
Paul "Sonny" Diggs	<i>Arabber</i>
Terry Evelyn	<i>Mask maker</i>
George Ferrell	<i>Woodcarver</i>
Charles Freeny	<i>U. S. Black food</i>
Anna Fuller	<i>Cosmetologist</i>
Dancella Hillman	<i>Cosmetologist</i>
Ju Ju	<i>Woodcarver/metalworker</i>
Walter M. Kelley	<i>Arabber</i>
Ardell Lee	<i>Fishnet maker</i>
Wilson Lee, Jr.	<i>Woodcarver</i>
Elliot Manette	<i>Steel drum maker</i>
Lee Nabors	<i>Chair maker</i>
Rufus Pinctney	<i>Basket weaver</i>
Joseph Ernest Smith	<i>Woodcarver</i>
Nigerian artisans*	
Ghanaian artisans*	
Trinidad and Tobago artisans*	

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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.