

African Immigrant Folklife

many think they can teach their own children better at home. But many are waking up to the reality that kids learn American TV culture fast when parents are away at work and kids are home alone. The economics of survival prevents many parents from passing on any significant amount of culture. Hence, the future of language schools looks promising.

Some proprietors of language schools have an ultimate goal of providing a cultural immersion program during summer vacations, in which American-born children would go to their home country in Africa to gain authentic experience as they interact daily with custodians of their culture.

The success of many existing cultural schools cannot be measured yet, because they are still very young. Many of them have “teething” problems, with finances sometimes insufficient to hire qualified and interested teachers for the children. However, some experience success, even if not by standard measures. Camp-Africa reports that positive, significant, and lasting marks have been left with many of the children who have passed through the camp. Parents and children interviewed reported that children feel good about themselves and about their African heritage, while many still sing the traditional songs they learned in camp. The future of language and culture schools looks bright in the light of the present situation of the African immigrant community in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

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Diana Sherblom is an educator trained in anthropology who has interned with the African Immigrant Folklife Project since last year. She interviewed the directors of several language and culture schools for this article.

Make Someone Heavy!

Makele Faber

In Senegal you greet people heavily, that is, *tedinne*, which literally means “make heavy.” When Senegalese people greet you heavily, you know they think you are important. And the more time they spend greeting you, the more consideration they show for you, the “heavier” you become.

Throughout Africa, greetings begin every interaction and create the basis for all social relationships. Greetings become even more important in African immigrant communities, who maintain traditions of greeting among themselves and pass them on to their American-born children, not only to create the social ties that bind them but also to remind them of the many social customs of home.

Here is a short list of greetings. Join the tradition and use them to say hello to participants in the African Immigrant Program!

Arabic - *Ahlan wa sahlán* — Hello.

Amharic - *Enkwandehna metah chu* —
Hello and welcome.

Oromo - *Ashamaa* — Hello.

Susu - *Ima ma* — Hi.

T'na moufe — How are you?

Did anything bad stay with
you overnight? — (a morning
greeting).

Akan - *Ete sen* — How is it?

Eye — Fine.

Luo - *Oimore* — Hello.

Sesotho - *Dumela* —

Hello (and response
to hello).

Uphela joang —

How are you?

Ijo - *To baroa* — Hello.

Nda'ni la'oku — How are you?

Igbo - *Daa lu or nde wo* — Hello.

Ke du — How is it?

Yoruba - *Ekaro* — Good morning.

Ekasan — Good day.

Ekalé — Good evening.

Wolof - *Nan'gu deff* — How are you?

Mangui fi rekk — I am fine.

Diola - *Kasumai* — How are you?

Kasumi kepp — (response).

Mandinka - *Hera bay* — Do you
have peace?

Hera dorong —

Peace only.

Somali - *Iska waran* — Hello.

Nabad — (response).

Zulu - *San bonani* — Hello.

Swahili - *Hujambo* —

Hello (to one person).

Sijambo — (response).

Hamjambo — Hello (to
more than one person).

Habari — What's the news?

Makele Faber is a second-generation Guinean American. She worked at the Center for Folklife Programs & Cultural Studies as an intern for seven months last year on the Working at the Smithsonian program and is currently conducting field research on area African immigrant students for this year's African Immigrant Program. She works full time in the political department of NARAL (National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League).