



**27th Annual
Down Home
Family Reunion**

A Celebration of African American Folklife

**August 19, 2017
Richmond, Virginia**

Elegba Folklore Society, Inc.

Richmond's Cultural Ambassador

101 E. Broad St, Richmond, Virginia 23219

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OFFICIAL PRESS KIT

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Fact Sheet

- WHEN** Saturday, August 19 • 4 - 11 pm, Free.
- WHERE** **Abner Clay Park**, Belvidere & West Leigh Streets (at I-95 & Exit 76B Interchange) in Historic Jackson Ward, Richmond, Virginia.
- WHO** A Family Festival Open to the Public.
Presented by Elegba Folklore Society, Inc.
Richmond's Cultural Ambassador
Sponsored by: City of Richmond, Dominion, Wells Fargo, Upscale Magazine, Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities
Additional Support: CultureWorks' Arts & Cultural Funding Consortium - Richmond, Henrico, Hanover
- WHAT** A Celebration of African American Folklife. **Returning for its Twenty-Seventh Year**, this Weekend Event **shares global African cultural influences** with An All-Star Line-Up of World Music and Dance, Entertainment and Material Culture Traditions.
- FEATURES** **Onstage: EU**, One of the Original Washington, DC Go-Go Bands, The **Cheick Hamala Diabate Band**, **Full Power Blues**, Reggae Band, **Strange Rootz**, Local favorites, **Carlton Blount & Them Church Boys** and African Dance, Music & the Oral Tradition with **Elegba Folklore Society**. Cameo appearances by comedian, **Micah "BammBamm" White** and **The Writer's Den Poetry Slam**.
Emceed by J. Ron Fleming, A Master of the Spoken Word.
In the Park: Interactive Folkloric Demonstrations, The Juanita Ragland Heritage Market, Delicious Down Home Food, Annie Tyler New School Pavilion featuring youthful performers and cultural engagement plus the Waverly Crawley Community Row.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ELEGBA FOLKLORE SOCIETY PRESENTS
**27th ANNUAL DOWN HOME FAMILY REUNION,
A CELEBRATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLK LIFE****

RICHMOND, VA • The *27th Annual Down Home Family Reunion* explores a full spectrum of music, dance, stories, food, shopping and enrichment in this weekend **Celebration of African American Folklife**. Elegba Folklore Society, Richmond's Cultural Ambassador, presents this cultural arts festival that takes attendees on a journey of heritage and folklore from West Africa into the Americas.

On **Saturday, August 19**, the *27th Annual Down Home Family Reunion's Family Festival* will happen, **4:00 - 11:00 p.m.**, at **Abner Clay Park, Belvidere and West Leigh Streets**, downtown in Historic Jackson Ward. Elegba Folklore Society invites Virginians and visitors to this event designed to link West African and African American cultural traditions and to demonstrate ways these practices have influenced the American South.

The *27th Annual Down Home Family Reunion* is presented by the Elegba Folklore Society, Inc., Richmond's Cultural Ambassador and sponsored by the City of Richmond, Dominion, Wells Fargo, Upscale Magazine and Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities with partial support from CultureWorks' Arts & Cultural Funding Consortium – Richmond, Henrico, Hanover.

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The **VIP Gold Circle** returns this year. Festival attendees may obtain special seating at the stage throughout the day, complimentary food and beverages and a private meet and greet with main stage performers throughout the event. Tickets are \$30.00 and available at <http://efsinc.org> or by calling or visiting Elegba Folklore Society's Cultural Center, 101 E. Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia, 804.644.3900.

The festival's curated performances on the main stage set a tone for the day.

EU (Experience Unlimited) is one of the original Washington DC Go-Go bands and is fronted by founding member Gregory "Sugar Bear" Elliott. The band chose the name "Experience" as an expression of their respect for the Jimi Hendrix Experience and "Unlimited" to expand the possibilities of the range of their music. Although they are best known for their Grammy nominated Da Butt from Spike Lee's School Daze soundtrack, EU also scored hits with Salt & Papa (Shake Your Thang), rap innovator Kurtis Blow (Party Time) as well as their own Buck Wild and Taste of Your Love. Musical veterans, EU's Da Butt won Soul Train's best R&B/Soul Single - Group in 1989. EU has performed with Teena Marie, Morris Day and The Time, Mint Condition and Cameo, among others, on tour then and now in Europe, Japan and across the US. When at home, EU is in the studio working, now, on a new recording.

With the intention of celebrating blues music, the **Full Power Blues** ensemble includes guitar, saxophone, bass, drums, harmonica and vocals right out front. Singer, Mama Moon, pulls while bassist, Denzil Hathway pushes; the harmonica dances on top and the rock-steady rhythm affirms that this music is the real deal. Evolving from rich Malian roots to express the true feelings of Africans in America, the blues has relationships with American genres like gospel, spirituals, rock and country. Audience members can shake their heads knowingly to standards or elevate on their dancing feet.

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Here is what it is as **Cheick Hamala Diabate** explains at the outset, “The music we griots play is not just about making nice sounds for dancing, it’s about giving a lesson to people about their lives. You tell them about what their grandfathers did, and what they should do now.” The griot, or more traditionally, the djeli in Diabate’s native Mali, West Africa is one in a long, multi-generational line of musician-counselors. The nice sounds flow from his n’goni, an ancient gourd-based lute that is the predecessor of string instruments that evolved in the West from Mother Africa’s influences. In this evolution various fiddles (violins and such) become apparent along with banjos and guitars. The **Cheick Hamala Diabate Band** will share Malian music as is and as the root of blues, American string music and funkier styles. As Diabate reminds, “The griot gives you the way you have to go.”

Carlton Blount. The Temptations and The Manhattans sought after him to sing lead. Lead. He did so with The Main ingredient for eight years. He won Showtime at the Apollo and performed for Queen Elizabeth. Then there are the commercials, voice-overs and “stage plays” on tour. Plus, his songs are featured in big screen films. He will appear live as **Carlton Blount & Them Church Boys** at the **27th Annual Down Home Family Reunion** along with celebrated bassist Carl Lester-EI, Chris Beasley on guitar, Rudy Faulkner on vocals and congas, drummer, Alvin Spratley and keyboardist, JL Harris. Amen.

Influenced by pioneers of roots reggae such as, Dennis Brown, Bob Marley, Burning Spear, Culture, Gregory Isaac, Peter Tosh and Morgan Heritage to name a few, the members of **Strange Rootz** come together to create conscious music and positive vibrations of love, unity, truth and rights. With the release of a self-titled EP in 2016, this five-man ensemble is based in Hampton Roads and appears along the East Coast.

Elegba Folklore Society's exciting and culturally enriching performance company will appear with a colorful and interactive program of African dance, music and the oral tradition that celebrates the oneness of the African Diaspora. The company has

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performed domestically and internationally. They will engage the festival's audience with relatable stories and traditions no matter their age or background. "In a way that perhaps you will expect or in a way that is totally spontaneous, your energy will blend beautifully with ours, closing the gap between performer and audience. Participants find themselves swept up in the oneness of movement and rhythm that links them with the global significance of this timeless art form," says the group's artistic director, Janine Yvette Bell. The Chakaba masquerade (stilt walker) is featured. Cheick Hamala Diabate will guest. **Elegba Folklore Society's performance company** is an annual festival favorite.

In addition to the **27th Annual Down Home Family Reunion's** main stage's offerings of the best in music and dance in this Celebration of African American Folklife, the festival will feature two special cameo appearances. Fresh from their juried appearance in the National Poetry Slam in Denver, **The Writer's Den Poetry Slam Team** will present their winning spoken-word compilations.

Using comedy to find a common ground, **Micah "Bam-Bamm" White** has performed over 20 years as a stand-up comedian, host and philanthropist. He has performed in four countries and in over 80 U.S. cities in 30 states. He has appeared in Denzel Washington's *Unstoppable* and the Lifetime network's *Army Wives*.

White is also the Founder of RVA Has Talent, which creates collaborations between local artists and non-profits in the Greater Richmond community. From that, he's developed an initiative that allows inmates at the Richmond City Jail to hone creative abilities and equips them with tools for gainful employment after incarceration.

J. Ron Fleming, Richmond's own noted storyteller and actor, emcees.

People **in the park** will revisit and participate in a variety of cultural traditions. As a highlight of the **27th Annual Down Home Family Reunion** attendees will have the chance to participate in two **Interactive Folkloric Demonstrations**. Attendees will

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have the opportunity to understand more about **Urban Gardening** and how to get started, and, also, they can find balance with **Kuzinduka**, A Collective for Holistic Healing.

Events for children and teens are focused in the **Annie Tyler New School Pavilion** and include a showcase of youthful performers, craft making where youth can create symbols to grow by, African inspired face painting, double-dutch jump roping, the moon bounce and more.

A captivating **Juanita Ragland Heritage Market** will offer an assortment of art, collectibles made by hand and imports for browsing and purchase. Community service providers will inform from the **Waverly Crawley Community Row**.

Food is a familiar way to continue the celebration of shared traditions, and it continues to be a centerpiece for the **Down Home Family Reunion**. This year's selections will include Southern style chicken, corn-fried fish, an assortment of down home vegetables, frozen fruits and mouth-watering desserts that are African-inspired and Southern favorites.

Down Home Family Reunion is grateful to offer **parking** for the festival in the lots at Belvidere and Leigh Streets and in the lots on Duval Street across from Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church. Signage will help direct patrons to these locations.

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27TH ANNUAL DOWN HOME FAMILY REUNION EVENT SCHEDULE

Saturday, August 19 • 4:00 - 11:00p.m.

- 4:00 Strange Rootz**
Reggae
- 5:15 Carlton Blount & Them Church Boys**
R&B and Jazz
- 6:00 The Writer's Den Poetry Slam**
National Poetry Slam Competition Team
Cameo Appearance
- 6:15 The Cheick Hamala Diabate Band**
Music of Mali West Africa
- 7:20 Micah "Bamm Bamm" White**
Comedy
Cameo Appearance
- 7:30 Full Power Blues**
- 8:45 African Dance & Music with Elegba Folklore Society**
Come into the Village!
- 9:45 EU**
Go-Go
- 11:00 Event Closes**

J. Ron Fleming emcees throughout the day. Programming in the Annie Tyler New School Pavilion happens from 4:00 - 8:00 p.m. The Juanita Ragland Heritage Market, Waverly Crawley Community Row and interactive activities in the park are ongoing from 4:00 - 11:00 p.m.

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Directions to Abner Clay Park West Leigh Street @ Belvidere Street 23220

From I-95 South & I-64 East: I-64 merges with I-95. Take Belvidere Street, Exit 76B. Follow ramp to Leigh Street, turn left. Cross Belvidere at light. See Belvidere Medical Center on right, fire station and Ebenezer Church on left. Clay Park on right.

From I-95 North: Take Exit 76A, Chamberlayne Avenue. Turn left at light onto Chamberlayne Parkway. Proceed to next light at Bill "Bojangles" Robinson statue (Adams Street) and Leigh Street. Turn right. After about 1/2 block you will see Clay Park on left.

From I-64 West: Take 5th Street exit. Follow 5th Street to Leigh Street. Turn right. Follow Leigh Street several blocks. Watch for Bill Robinson statue on right at Adams Street. After passing the statue, in about 1/2 block you will see Clay Park on left.

Parking

Complimentary parking is available on the streets surrounding the park. Signage will direct attendees to lots at Belvidere and West Leigh Streets and to the lots across the street from Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church on Duval Street.

Accommodations

The festival's host hotel is the Clarion Hotel, 3207 N. Boulevard 23230. Overnight guests can contact Elegba Folklore Society for details or the hotel at 804.359.9441.

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The Elegba Folklore Society is a widely recognized, not-for-profit organization that offers services in cultural arts programming and education. In addition to planning special events, services include organizing exhibitions of art and artifacts, presenting performance and teaching programs in dance theatre and music, and guiding cultural history tours. This group created the **Down Home Family Reunion**, and it has produced it annually since its inception.

*In its twenty-seventh consecutive year, the **Elegba Folklore Society** is partnering with several companies and cultural institutions to present the **Down Home Family Reunion**, a celebration of African American folklife. The **Down Home Family Reunion** interactively explores the folkloric connections between West Africa and the United States -- the cultural influences that are naturally a part of African American traditions and those that have become a part of Southern life.*

Elegba -- eh LEHG bah -- is the name given to the Orisa --ohr• REE• shah-- (an intercessor or aspect of nature) who, in the Yoruba --YOUR• ruh• bah tradition of West Africa, is the gatekeeper. He opens the roads to bring clarity out of confusion. Through its various services, the Elegba Folklore Society hopes to provide road-opening experiences for its audiences. Janine Yvette Bell is the society's founder and artistic director.

The Elegba Folklore Society is Richmond's Cultural Ambassador.

Embrace the spirit!

For more information, call the Elegba Folklore Society at 804/644-3900, email story1@efsinc.org or log on to www.efsinc.org. Find us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter.

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