



2023 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival

FACT SHEET

- What** **2023 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival**
Attended by families from Baltimore, MD to Durham, NC (& Beyond)
- When** **Saturday, December 30, 2023, 1p - 7p**
- Where** **Greater Richmond Convention Center • Exhibit Hall B**
5th & Marshall Streets • Richmond, VA 23219
- Who** **Presented by Elegba Folklore Society, Inc.**
Richmond, Virginia's Cultural Ambassador
A Richmond-based not-for-profit cultural arts and education organization.
- With City of Richmond, Dominion Energy, Wells Fargo and CBS 6
along with The Love Movement and the Arts and Cultural Funding Consortium:
Richmond, Henrico and Hanover powered by CultureWorks
- Features** The Candle Lighting, Performances, Keynote Speaker, The African Market,
The Nia Sessions, Watoto Kwanzaa (for children), Kuzinduka Healing Collective.
- Cost** \$6 Advance General Admission. \$7, Door.
\$5 Students (12-18) & Seniors (65+), Advance. \$6, Door.
\$5 Group Rates, 10 or More, Advance, Only.
Free for Children Under 12.
- Tickets** Elegba Folklore Society's Cultural Center
101 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219, 804/644-3900
<http://efsinc.org>
- Covid Protocols**
Detailed Below
- Media Contact**
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Please [click](#) for festival images.

Capital City Kwanzaa Festival

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Janine Bell
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Date: December 8, 2023

2023 CAPITAL CITY KWANZAA FESTIVAL • DECEMBER 30 GREATER RICHMOND CONVENTION CENTER

Richmond, VA • Elegba Folklore Society, *Richmond's Cultural Ambassador*, will present the **2023 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival** on **Saturday, December 30, 1:00pm - 7:00pm**. at the **Greater Richmond Convention Center, Exhibit Hall B** 5th & Marshall Streets, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

The **2023 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival** presents a carefully planned series of events to please the palate of attendees and capture the spirit and the significance of the Kwanzaa holiday, created by Dr. Maulana Karenga, now in its 57th year.

The festival's **main stage** is alive with music, dance and message presented to strengthen families and galvanize the community. **The African Market** will be open with food and shopping. Children are invited to **Watoto Kwanzaa**, and the **Nia Sessions** engage holiday reflections in this nationally recognized observance of the Kwanzaa (quahn-zah) holiday. **The Capital City Kwanzaa Festival is one of the largest Kwanzaa celebrations on the east coast.** Because of it, Dr. Karenga has said, "Richmond is a major center for the celebration of Kwanzaa; it is an important site of African American history and culture, and it has been a very welcoming and enjoyable experience for my wife, Tiamoyo, and me."

Kwanzaa is a Pan-African holiday of unity, strength, clarity and solidarity based on reconnection with essential African values. The **festival's theme is "Legacy As Balance."** Knowledge of African origin stories can create a strengthening cultural affinity by offering a rear view for reference for thinking and wellbeing now.

The festival occurs on the fifth day of Kwanzaa, *Nia*, or Purpose. It allows contextual considerations of traditional global African greatness and the restoration of these ideals. The **Ancestral Libation and Candle Lighting Ceremony** set the tone for the day. Attendees are invited to come and experience the Kwanzaa holiday right from the start.

The Nia Sessions are ongoing workshops that will offer perspectives toward personal and community triumph.

The African Market of cultural merchandise and African-inspired cuisine is open all day, and **Watoto Kwanzaa** will invite children to make art and participate in conversations that teach them about the holiday and about balance. This year's keynoter is **Kaba Kamene**, author, educator, national education consultant and sought after documentary resource consultant.

The festival's **performers** are songstress, **Ms. Jaylin Brown**, **Rhythim**, Nigerian Afrobeats artist and, of course, **Elegba Folklore Society** featuring **Cheick Hamala Diabate**.

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Festival events will occur as follows:

1:00pm The African Market Opens. This immersive collector's experience is filled with delicious foods that define the African Diaspora plus books, unique handcrafted and imported items, art, home décor, natural body care, clothing, jewelry and more. Remains open throughout the event.

2:00pm The Pouring of Ancestral Libation and Kwanzaa Candle Lighting Ceremony. Affirmation of the Nguzo Saba, the Seven Principles and the ancestors upon whose shoulders we stand. The lighting of candles and the ceremony will feature a call-and-response affirmation. The **Elegba Folklore Society's artistic director, Janine Yvette Bell**, will lead the ceremony.

3:00pm Elegba Folklore Society. The **Society's dancers, percussive and melodic musicians, singers and masquerade** will offer ***African Dance, Music and the Oral Tradition*** and share the performance traditions of the Manding cosmology of West Africa to spur an evolving understanding of the cultural and historical underpinnings of the dance and its music while showing its relationship to the United States. **Elegba Folklore Society's performers** appear

The Nia Sessions and Watoto Kwanzaa Begin. **Nia Session** topics include **Black Land Matters, Policy for the People** and **Healing as Balance**.

Watoto Kwanzaa activities for children include art making and cultural lessons. **The Nia Sessions** will be ongoing from 3:00pm until 6:00pm.

4:00pm Kaba Kamene Speaks. Kaba Hiawatha Kamene has been a Pan-African, African-centered educator, consultant, administrator, staff developer and curriculum writer for over 40 years. *He is firmly dedicated to the belief that culture plays a vitally important role in education.*

He taught every grade level (Pre-K-12) in New York City Department of Education for over 31 years and has been a professor in the Black Studies Department at the State University of New York at New Paltz. Over Professor Kamene's long career in education, he has consulted with many boards of education, schools, communities, parents and students groups implementing successful strategies in the teaching/learning process around the world.

Professor Kamene is the creator, principal facilitator and CEO of the African-centered Science Academy, *Per Ankh* (Temple/House of Life), a feature in Kemetic Wisdom Schools. *Kemetic (ancient Egyptian) wisdom and origin stories are the subject of his talk within the festival's theme, "Legacy As Balance."*

Kaba Hiawatha Kamene has starred in several critically acclaimed, documentaries such as Tariq Nasheed's, *Hidden Colors 1, 2, 3,4, 5* and *1804: The Hidden History of The Haitian Revolution*. Additionally, he is the featured narrator in the documentary, *Out of Darkness* and *Heavy is the Crown* by Amadeuz Christ, among others.

Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in a post-talk Question and Answer session.

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5:00pm Ms. Jaylin Brown. Jaylin Brown is an independent singer-songwriter from Richmond, Virginia. As an artist, her soulful acoustic style carries influences from across the musical spectrum, including opera, jazz, soul, blues, Americana, and more. Her influences lie in artists like Lianne La Havas, Jill Scott, India.Arie, Brittany Howard from Alabama Shakes, Ray Lamontagne and James Morrison. This past year, Jaylin was voted as one of *Style Weekly's Top 40 Under 40*. She was also nominated along with her 2022 EP, *Take it Easy*, for the Richmond-based Newlin Music Prize. In addition to performing in both public and private settings since 2016, she obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in Opera Performance from VCU in 2020, and is currently continuing her music studies in Valencia, Spain at the Berklee College of Music for Contemporary Performance and Production.

6:00pm Rhythim. Nigerian Afrobeats artist, Rhythim, fuses his vocals and melodies with contemporary Afrobeats rhythms creating soulful, conscious music. Born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria, he grew up to the music of legends like Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Victor Uwaifo, Hugh Masekela and Chief Osita Osadebe. A prodigy, he began performing at the young age 14. Sublime lyricism meets superb storytelling combined with magical vocals and a live show for inspiration and dancing. **Rhythim** will perform songs from his latest EP, *Afrobeats and Jollof*, and his December 22, 2023 new release, *Gimme Ginger*.

In acknowledging the natural tendencies of African people and all that the festival imparts, the **2023 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival** shines a light on “**Legacy As Balance**,” in celebration of ourselves. The Kwanzaa holiday, itself, is a celebration of family, community and culture.

7:00pm Festival Closes.

Elegba Folklore Society is adopting measures aimed at keeping attendees safe and thwart any **Covid-19** infection. The festival asks that if those who wish to attend are experiencing any of the following symptoms, please take a Covid test in advance. If the test is positive, please stay at home and get well. The symptoms include:

- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Headache
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches and pains
- Altered sense of taste or smell
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

The festival asks attendees to mindfully socially distance and wash their hands frequently. Hand sanitizers will be readily available and stationed throughout the event. Masks will also be available, and high touch surfaces will be wiped frequently. The venue's ventilation system affords a constant circulation of fresh air.

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Elegba Folklore Society thanks its program partners including the City of Richmond, Dominion Energy, Wells Fargo, CBS 6 and The Love Movement. The Arts and Cultural Funding Consortium: Richmond, Henrico and Hanover, powered by CultureWorks, grants partial support to Elegba Folklore Society.

A HISTORY OF THE FESTIVAL

Janine Yvette Bell, the founder and artistic director of the Elegba Folklore Society, Inc. and the festival's coordinator, has produced annual Kwanzaa programs in Richmond since 1986. **The Capital City Kwanzaa Festival was first presented in 1990. Because of this programming, observance of the Kwanzaa holiday has consistently increased in Richmond and surrounding areas.** The festival provides a particular contemporary significance against the backdrop of Richmond's history. Richmond, a center of the trade of enslaved Africans, was the Capital of the Confederacy *and* the Birthplace of Black Entrepreneurship.

The recognition of Kwanzaa as a cultural mediator of this history and the embracing of its concepts is evident not only in the festival's attendance, but also in the volume of requests for information and assistance from schools, churches and community groups.

The event has **featured such notables** as Kwanzaa's national creator, professor, author and lecturer, Dr. Maulana Karenga, activist Dick Gregory, TV journalist/entrepreneur, Tony Brown, Melba Moore, television star, the late Helen Martin, The Last Poets, Dr. Leonard Jeffries, Professor James Small, Bilal, Ms. Iyanla Vanzant, Mr. Anthony T. Browder, Professor Griff, Runoko Rashidi, Phil Valentine, the late Ruby Dee and former Governor L. Douglas Wilder, among others. **Nationally**, the Capital City Kwanzaa **Festival has received attention** on the Food Network, in Chicago's Black Gold magazine, Bandele's Guide to African American Festivals and Events (Washington), American Visions, the magazine of Afro-American Culture (Washington), Upscale, The Magazine for the Success-Oriented (Atlanta), Black Enterprise (New York), which recommended this event with Kwanzaa festivities in Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia and Essence magazine.

The Capital City Kwanzaa Festival helps to make Richmond and Virginia tourist destinations. It is the largest event of its kind in Virginia and one of the largest on the East Coast.

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ABOUT ELEGBA FOLKLORE SOCIETY

Elegba Folklore Society, *Richmond's Cultural Ambassador*, presents the **Capital City Kwanzaa Festival**. Operating in its 33rd year, the Society is a not-for-profit tax-exempt organization that offers services in cultural arts programming and communications. These include planning and managing special events and programs, organizing exhibitions of art, artifacts and material culture, presenting programs in dance theatre and music and guiding cultural history tours. Elegba is an *Orisa* (ohr-REE-shah) or energy from the Yoruba tradition of West Africa that opens the roads to bring clarity out of confusion. The Elegba Folklore Society hopes this event and each of its programs are road-opening experiences for its audiences.

ABOUT KWANZAA

The **Capital City Kwanzaa Festival** embodies the principles of the Kwanzaa holiday. Kwanzaa, a seven-day holiday, is a family and community strengthening observance based on traditional African harvest festivals. The word Kwanzaa comes from the Swahili phrase “matunda ya kwanzaa” (mah-TOON-dah ya KWAHN-zah) which means “first fruits of the harvest.” Celebrated by an estimated 28 million people December 26 - January 1, Kwanzaa is a time of thanksgiving for the accomplishments (or the fruits of our labor) of the year ending while projecting new growth into the year ahead. For African Americans, it is a time for reaffirming the holistic value system of African heritage, for paying homage to ancestors and elders. It is also a time for enjoying the blessings of the children while preparing them for the future.

The Nguzo Saba (n-GOO-soh SAH-bah), or seven principles, derived from Dr. Karenga's Kawaida philosophy, provides the foundation for the Kwanzaa holiday. They are: 12/26 - Umoja (Unity); 12/27 - Kujichagulia (Self-Determination); 12/28 - Ujima (Collective Work & Responsibility); 12/29 - Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics); 12/30 - Nia (Purpose); 12/31 - Kuumba (Creativity); 1/1 - Imani (Faith).

According to Dr. Maulana Karenga (mah - OO - lah - nah kah-RING - gah), the creator of Kwanzaa, Kawaida philosophy is built around:

- 1) An ingathering of the people,
- 2) A reverence for the creator and creation as it applies to nature and humanity,
- 3) A commemoration of the past — history, heroes and heritage,
- 4) A commitment to our highest ideals, and
- 5) A celebration of the good.