



2024 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival

FACT SHEET

- What** **2024 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival**
Attended by families from Baltimore, MD to Durham, NC (& Beyond)
- When** **Saturday, December 28, 2024, 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 Arts and Cultural Funding Consortium: Richmond, Henrico and Hanover
powered by CultureWorks
- Features** The Candle Lighting, Performances, Keynote Speaker, The African Market,
Nia Sessions (workshops), Watoto Kwanzaa (for children).
- Cost** \$6 Advance, General Admission. \$7, Door.
\$5 Advance, Students (12-18) & Seniors (65+). \$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 7, 2024

2024 CAPITAL CITY KWANZAA FESTIVAL • DECEMBER 28 GREATER RICHMOND CONVENTION CENTER

Richmond, VA • Elegba Folklore Society, Richmond's Cultural Ambassador, will present the **2024 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival** on **Saturday, December 28, 1:00pm - 7:00pm**. at the **Greater Richmond Convention Center, Exhibit Hall B** 5th & Marshall Streets, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

The **2024 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival** offers 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 58th 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 Knowledge of Self.** "Knowledge of the African origin stories of African Americans, and the world, and knowledge of the legacies that support the power of identity can create a strengthening cultural affinity by offering a foundational reference for thinking and wellbeing," says Elegba Folklore Society's artistic director, Janine Yvette Bell

The festival occurs on the third day of Kwanzaa, *Ujima* or Collective Work & Responsibility. It allows contextual considerations for community building. 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 **Dr. Gina Paige**, Co-Founder of African Ancestry, where black people can discover their African roots through DNA testing.

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The festival's **performers** are songstress, **Kia Bennett**, **Burning Fire Reggae Band**, and, of course, **Elegba Folklore Society** featuring ngoni, guitar and banjo master, **Cheick Hamala Diabate**.

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. **Elegba Folklore Society's artistic director, Janine Yvette Bell**, will lead the ceremony.

2:30pm 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 domestically in the US and internationally. The group has garnered recognition for Best African Choreography from the Virginia Dance Awards.

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

3:30pm Dr. Gina Paige and Janine Bell chat onstage. Since 2003, Dr. Gina Paige, a co-founder of African Ancestry, Inc. (AfricanAncestry.com), has promoted the unique opportunity for people of African descent looking to more accurately and reliably trace their roots. With co-founder and scientific director, Rick Kittles, they have pioneered a new way of tracing African lineages using genetics. Paige travels the world demystifying the search for African roots to inform on the importance and empowerment of Black identity through the lens of Africa and the African ancestors of African Diasporic people.

Gina Paige has worked with and revealed the roots of thousands, iconically including Oprah Winfrey, John Legend, Chadwick Boseman, Spike Lee, Condoleezza Rice, iHeartMedia's Breakfast Club host, Charlamagne Tha God, and The King Family. Featured in hundreds of media outlets, like PBS' *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.* and the New York Times, Paige is often a go-to resource for African Diaspora communities including Embassies and government entities.

She holds a degree in Economics from Stanford University, an MBA from the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business and an Honorary Doctor of Philosophy from Global Oved Dei Seminary and University.

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After the reveal of actor, Isaiah Washington's, African Ancestry, he said, "I now have a sense of closure and a new meaning for the term African American."

Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in a post-chat Question and Answer session. **Attendees who purchase tickets online will be automatically entered into a drawing to win a free DNA test kit to discover their African roots. Says African Ancestry, "Knowing where you are from is key to knowing who you are."**

4:45pm Kia Bennett. A Richmond native, Kia Bennett, strives to create an atmosphere of love and beauty with her vocal musical stylings. Her smooth and powerful vocals are perfect for any occasion from engaging at a festival to, well, cleaning the house. Howard University trained, Kia Bennett has honed her skills working with international recording artists like D'Angelo, Ledisi, Roy Ayers and more. She has graced stages across in Virginia including The Richmond Jazz Festival, The Tin Pan, The Birchmere and Virginia Museum of Fine Arts among others.

6:00pm Burning Fire Reggae Band. Burning Fire was formed in 2018 by band leader, Amani Williams, and a group of gifted musicians. The band crafts a vibrant sound and a resurgence in roots reggae music that connects the soul, culture and its mighty revolutionary voice with the masses.

Tapping into ancestral roots to bring word, sound and power for healing, Amani Williams is a gifted drummer, songwriter, producer and composer. Sought after as both a session and touring drummer, Williams' musical influences include reggae, gospel, jazz, funk and afro beat. His genuine love of music shows in his artistry and innovation in pushing boundaries and touching hearts.

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

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

Festival attendees may park in the deck at 5th & Marshall Streets for \$5. Parking is also available in the Greater Richmond Convention Center's deck at 3rd & Marshall for \$8. Another deck is located at 7th & Marshall Streets, and some on-street parking is available.

Elegba Folklore Society thanks its partners including the City of Richmond, Dominion Energy, Wells Fargo and CBS 6 along with the Arts and Cultural Funding Consortium: Richmond, Henrico and Hanover, powered by CultureWorks.

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 for many years, and 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, companies and community groups.

The event has **featured such notables** as Kwanzaa's national creator, professor, author and lecturer, Dr. Maulana Karenga, activist, the late 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, Baltimore Magazine and Essence magazine.

The Capital City Kwanzaa Festival helps to make Richmond and Virginia a destination for travelers. 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 34th year, the Society is a not-for-profit tax-exempt organization that offers services in cultural arts and cultural education. These include planning and managing festivals and special events, 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 traditions 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 and Africans throughout the Diaspora, 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.