



2025 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival

FACT SHEET

What	2025 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival <u>Attended by families from Baltimore, MD to Durham, NC (& Beyond)</u>
When	Saturday, December 27, 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 <i>A Richmond-based not-for-profit cultural arts and education organization.</i> With City of Richmond, Dominion Energy, BLK RVA and CBS 6 along with the Arts and Cultural Funding Consortium: Richmond, Henrico and Hanover powered by CultureWorks
Features	The Mishumaa (Candle) Lighting, The Kuumba Stage with Performances & Keynote Speaker, The Ujamaa Market, The Karamu Kitchen, Nia Sessions (workshops), Watoto Kwanzaa (for children).
Cost	\$7 Advance, General Admission. \$9, Door. \$6 Advance, Students (12-18) & Seniors (65+). \$8, 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
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Please [click](#) for festival images.

Capital City Kwanzaa Festival

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For Immediate Release

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2025 CAPITAL CITY KWANZAA FESTIVAL • DECEMBER 27 GREATER RICHMOND CONVENTION CENTER

Richmond, VA • Elegba Folklore Society, Richmond's Cultural Ambassador, will present the **2025 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival** on **Saturday, December 27, 1:00pm - 7:00pm**, at the **Greater Richmond Convention Center, Exhibit Hall B** 5th & Marshall Streets, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

The **2025 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 59th year.

The festival's **Kuumba Stage** is alive with music, dance and message presented to strengthen families and galvanize the community. **The Ujamaa Market** will be open for shopping, and **The Karamu Kitchen** will serve African and Pan-African foods. Children are invited to **Watoto Kwanzaa**, and the **Nia Sessions** engage community building 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 second day of Kwanzaa, *Kujuchagulia* or Self Determination, and this designation aligns with the theme. The **Ancestral Libation and Mishumaa (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 Ujamaa Market of cultural merchandise and **The Karamu Kitchen** of African and Pan-African cuisine are open all day, and **Watoto Kwanzaa** will invite children to make art and participate in conversations that teach them about the holiday. This year's keynoter is educator and author, **Bayyinah Bello**.

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The festival's **performers** are the Togolese sensation, **Dogo du Togo**, conscious Go-Go group, **Crank Lukongo**, and, of course, **Elegba Folklore Society** featuring daly and kora master, **Amadou Kouyate**.

Festival events will occur as follows:

1:00pm The Ujamaa Market & The Karamu Kitchen Open. 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 Mishumaa (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. No matter your age or background, the spirit and the openness of the **Elegba Folklore Society** have been called "enchanted." In a way that may be expected, or in a way that is totally spontaneous, energies blend to close the gap between performer and audience. Winners of the *Virginia Dance Award for Best African Choreography*, the company's African dancers, musicians, storytellers and masquerades, seek to convey a universal cultural energy that links all with the global significance of this timeless art form.

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 Bayyina Bello Speaks. Vodouvi Bayyinah Bello is a true keeper of culture. An educator and author, she is a native Haitian, born in Port-au-Prince. She is a transformative figure who dedicates her life to correcting the "ourstorical" records, aiming to empower people through knowledge. She works with elder councils and centennials and young leaders to facilitate perspective building and intergenerational strength. **Vodouvi Bello will speak to the theme of the 2025 Capital City Kwanzaa Festival, *Knowledge of Self*.** She will share that knowing one's truth is a key liberation. It is essential for identity, self-esteem and future victories. Her studies across multiple continents — Africa, the Caribbean, Asia, Australia, Asia, Europe and America have provided layers of understanding in a global construct that will shape her talk. Ms. Bello will engage questions from the audience.

4:45pm Crank LuKongo. The Washington, DC-based **Crank LuKongo** will appear and bring their self-termed genre, *Afro-GoGo Roots* layered with lyrics, classified as protest and socially conscious, that reflect the true history and current status of our environment. **Crank LuKongo** was conceived, produced, and directed in Washington, DC by percussionist, drummer, vocalist, songwriter, and actor, Matt "Swamp Guinee" Miller. Miller has performed with artists from the Legendary Wailers to Bebe Winans to Sheryl Lee Ralph and Malik Yoba, among

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others. In 2019, **Crank LuKongo**, was nominated for a WAMMIE Award in 2 categories for Best Go-Go Album, and Best Go-Go Artist/Group. With a strong foundation rooted in DC Go-Go music, the mission and purpose of **Crank LuKongo** is to assert cultural awareness and social activism for the love of humanity, sharing the historical anthropology of the Nation's Capital and its surrounding region to the global community and throughout the diaspora.

6:00pm Emerging from Lomé, Togo, Dogo du Togo & The Alagaa Beat Band is a collective of top Togolese musicians led by Massama Dogo, aka Dogo du Togo, who blend afrobeat and a psychedelic rock into a genre-defying sound Dogo calls the "Alagaa Beat." (Alagaa means trance in the Ewe language.) Combining Togolese festive and ritual rhythms, hypnotic Vodún melodies and lyrics that speak to a new generation of young Africans, **Dogo du Togo's** music inspires a message that resonates globally, embodying the heart and soul of modern Togo in its music. **Dogo du Togo's** melodies are anchored in Togo's rich cultural history, derived from the music of the Vodún spiritual path and traditions that permeate everyday life in Togo. Togo is a country on the West African coast located between Bénin and Ghana.

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. 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.

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Elegba Folklore Society thanks its partners including the City of Richmond, Dominion Energy, BLK RVA 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.

ABOUT ELEGBA FOLKLORE SOCIETY

Elegba Folklore Society, *Richmond's Cultural Ambassador*, presents the **Capital City Kwanzaa Festival**. Operating in its 35th 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.

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