

*Kan xoxo ɔ nu wε e
nɔ gbε kan yɔyɔ ɔ do.*

**C'est au bout de la
corde ancienne qu'on
tresse la corde neuve.**

**It is on the end of the
old rope that we braid
the new.**

—Fongbe proverb



Photographs: © Susan Middleton
Artwork: Collection of the National Museum of African Art, Gift of Walt Disney World Co.

PHILANTHROPY AND SUPPORT

The Smithsonian Institution—the world's largest museum, education, and research complex—shares a strong commitment to inclusivity and catalyzing conversations by reaching audiences across the nation and the globe. Our programs are innovative and help people better understand their place in the world, using technologies to engage learners from all walks of life. We are changing the way that people experience programs and museums.

Founded in 1967, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival is dedicated to promoting the understanding and sustainability of living cultures. At the Festival, musicians, dancers, instrument makers, artisans, and other cultural practitioners engage visitors through daily workshops, master classes, discussion sessions, and performances. The public—both on site and across digital platforms—is encouraged to participate in activities and share stories about the ways in which local living culture connects them to each other and to the larger world.

OUR CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

The Folklife Festival receives approximately 30% of its infrastructure costs from the federal government. Every year the remaining 70%—as well as all of its program-related expenses—must be raised from outside sources. Your generous support enables us to continue promoting culture of, by, and for the people!

SMITHSONIAN
**FOLKLIFE
FESTIVAL**

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JUNE 25–28 and JULY 1–5, 2020
(June 24–Community Preview)

SMITHSONIAN
**FOLKLIFE
FESTIVAL**

BENIN

LIFE, CREATIVITY, AND THE SENSES



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Benin: Life, Creativity, and the Senses shines light on traditional knowledge from the West African nation of Benin. From cuisine to the arts, Benin's cultural expressions are always in lively conversation: songs recall history, stories encode information about herbal medicine, and rituals link tradition with experimentation.

At the 2020 Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the National Mall, we'll invite visitors to engage with Benin's traditions using all the senses, to learn and experience new ways of knowing the world. With memorable, thought-provoking exchanges, this program will open new paths for understanding our relationship to the environment.

Attracting a broad audience on site and online, *Benin: Life, Creativity, and the Senses* will increase public understanding of the vibrant cultures of Africa and the African Diaspora and reinforce the value of traditional knowledge today.

Vodun, a Well of Culture

One of Benin's great global legacies, Vodun is a spiritual system associated with coastal West Africa and many communities in the African Diaspora. Vodun traditions connect people with family, ancestors, communities, spirits, and parts of the natural environment. The program explores how vibrant traditional knowledge positions Benin's people to be innovative caretakers of natural and human resources.

Call and Response

The contemporary cultures of Benin continue a long dialogue with African American and African Diaspora forms of spirituality, music, food, and artistry. The Festival celebrates this enduring link, in all its complexity. Alongside programs from Brazil, Cuba, Louisiana, and Washington, D.C., the Benin program presents the opportunity to tell a rich story of cultural resilience across the Atlantic that will resonate with diverse audiences.

FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES

- ☀ 45+ participants from Benin in 10 days of public programming
- ☀ Construction of traditional dwellings on the National Mall using sustainable natural materials
- ☀ Live performances, interactive workshops, and master classes with drummers and dancers, showing the wide range of performance traditions, from spectacular masquerades to work songs
- ☀ Artisan demonstrations and hands-on workshops, allowing visitors to contribute to collaborative works
- ☀ Concerts and film screenings
- ☀ Shared activities with Brazilian, Louisianan, and Caribbean participants, including cooking, jamming and performing, and related Vodun and Orisha spiritual traditions
- ☀ Special sessions for families, teachers, and stakeholder communities

PROGRAM IMPACT

- ☀ 700,000 local, national, and international visitors to the Festival, a landmark event on the capital's culture calendar
- ☀ Millions of additional engagements with our digital storytelling and online content, including articles, interviews, videos, and more
- ☀ Public programs on the National Mall and with partner institutions drawing a range of audiences
- ☀ Comprehensive marketing campaigns, local and national news coverage, and extensive social media content that reach new audiences each year

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