



African Diaspora Dance & Drum Festival: Dancing With the Diaspora in Little Haiti

By Cultist

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The third annual [African Diaspora Dance and Drum Festival](#) of Florida, presented by Delou Africa Inc., comes to town this weekend, with 24 dance and drum workshops taught by world renowned artists who hail from Haiti, Cuba, Ivory Coast, Senegal, and The Republic of Guinea. On Saturday night they, along with the Delous Africa Dance Ensemble, will put on a performance called "Bridging Cultural Gaps," ending with a Dundunba celebration.

We sat down with Njeri Plato, the founding director of Delou Africa Dance Ensemble, outside the company's rehearsal at the [Little Haiti Cultural Center](#), where they are artists in residence, and asked about the concert that anchors the festival.



Full Life Photography

***New Times:* How did you come up with the theme for the concert "Bridging Cultural Gaps"?**

Plato: We created the 2012 theme based on the different ethnic groups and countries that will be represented at our festival this year. During our concert we will make a multi-ethnic bridge using music, dance and song to connect the U.S., Cuba, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Senegal and the Republic of Guinea.

What are some of the cultural gaps that you see are most prevalent in our community?

Language barriers are one of the gaps we are bridging. People often feel if they speak a different language, they may not be understood or fit in. After our multi-lingual community dance and drum class participants, workshop participants and clients participate in a Delou Africa Inc. program -- they quickly learn that dance, drum and music is a universal language and has no barriers.

How do you find inspiration for your choreographies?

When I create pieces I am inspired by knowing the culture is being kept alive and is represented in a traditional manner.

What inspires you?

Research, history, life stories, visions of ancestral legacies and the dedicated members of Delou Africa

Dance Ensemble.

What will the audience see the night of the performance, in terms of dance vocabulary, costuming, musical style?

The audience will witness cultural, global and artistic expression from Guinea, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Haiti the United States and Cuba and see how all are connected through the diaspora. The choreography, dance and music will represent life stories. The audience will observe vibrant traditional garments that will drape the bodies of our artists and they will hear traditional instruments that are over 900 years old, which will fill the theater with soothing melodies.

How does this concert speak to your mission and artistic vision?

The festival is promoting Delou's mission by preserving African culture through arts and education, and also providing an ongoing platform for participants to witness and experience the rich traditions of Africa.

What do you want the audience to take away from the concert?

An appreciation for culture as demonstrated through the arts.

The festival takes place this Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the Little Haiti Cultural Center, 212-260 NE 59th Terrace, Miami; tickets for the various workshops range from free to \$20; tickets for the Saturday concert cost \$15; 305-978-3866 or go to addff.delouafric.org for more information on times and events.

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