

## 1000 Voices African Singing Fiesta

*\$750 Grant from the Alex “Tink” Wilson Legacy Fund - April 2018*

Thanks to the support of the Alex Wilson Legacy Fund, participants and our volunteers, the kick-off event for the 1000 Voices Project Fall 2018 Series of African Singing Fiestas was a wonderful community event!

On Sunday, September 23, 2018, from 3pm - 5pm, approximately 75 participants from the Boulder and surrounding areas, along with three talented West

African drummers (Master Drummer Nii Okai Aryeetey, Selasee Atiase, and Fodey Coly), eight volunteers, and the talented Nii Armah Sowah (a Boulder-based African Arts Educator and Director of 1000 Voices), gathered for a participatory sharing of soulful call and response songs, chants, and dance. The event took place in the Parish Hall of St John’s Episcopal church and the venue was brought to life as guests entered not only by the sounds and polyrhythms of the drums, but also with the decor of African textiles from Nii Armah’s personal collection from across the continent and colorful African attire worn by Nii Armah and the drummers.

True to African culture, the event started at 3pm with mixing and mingling—a chance to greet each other and get a sense of community. Community is a central value of African cultures across the continent so this is a fitting and appropriate start to any African event!



Nii Armah welcomed us, explained the intent of the event and led us into some warmup songs as we all gathered around him and the drummers in a large, messy circle. The event was participatory and intentionally not a performance. The 1000 Voices Project was founded on the conviction that whenever we raise our voices collectively, change is inevitable. This African Singing Fiesta was one event offering people the opportunity to work together to stimulate self-awareness while cultivating basic human qualities such as compassion, understanding and respect.



A safe and welcoming atmosphere was created, welcoming folks who don't necessarily see themselves as "singers" or "dancers" to join in the fun. African songs, rhythm games, dance, and storytelling were all used throughout the afternoon to facilitate personal growth, community building and cross-cultural understanding.

At the end of the event we interlaced arms, making one large circle. Nii Armah led us in African chants sending us with a blessing. Then participants were invited to share with the group how they were feeling, what they learned and what they got out of the experience. Folks voiced sentiments like the following: joy, perspective, fun, wisdom, happiness, community, etc.



The African Singing Fiestas are a great event that we hope will add to the Boulder community offering people a chance to immerse themselves in African cultures, explore personal growth and build community. Thank you to the Alex Wilson Legacy Fund for supporting our kick-off event for this Fall 2018 season.

You can view and download all photos from the event here:  
[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fwnTOPV8h\\_wl7pILF9rhdXfE1bzkVDH4?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fwnTOPV8h_wl7pILF9rhdXfE1bzkVDH4?usp=sharing)

A colorful event poster for the 1000 Voices Project African Singing Fall Fiestas 2018. On the left is a photo of Nii Armah Sowah, a smiling man in a patterned traditional African garment. The text on the poster includes:

- 1000 Voices Project 2018
- African Singing FALL FIESTAS
- Sunday, September 23
- Sunday, October 14
- Sunday, December 9
- 3pm - 5pm
- Location: St. John's 1419 Pine St Boulder
- \$10 - \$20 sliding scale
- No experience required! An all-ages, community event. Soulful songs, chants and dance.
- with Nii Armah Sowah
- 1000-voices.com | 303.219.3005
- Thank you to the Alex Wilson Legacy Fund for supporting this event!