



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the World Day for African
and Afro-descendant Culture**

24 January 2021

With this year's World Day for African and Afro-descendant Culture, UNESCO wishes to honour and highlight such cultures in their diversity and actuality.

From the Stone Town of Zanzibar to candombe drums – to mention only what is on the tangible and intangible heritage lists – the cultures of Africa and its diaspora have developed unique ways of thinking and feeling, experiencing and telling, across continents and centuries.

Endlessly revisited, reinvented and reinterpreted, this heritage fosters a particularly lively type of cultural creativity typified, for example, by the burgeoning music industry of Haiti and the flourishing cinema industry of Nigeria.

Across the world there are concerts, performances and screenings allowing you to discover and explore these cultures and their countless riches – which will both amaze and inspire – but also paying tribute to the work of all the creative artists and workers who maintain and rejuvenate these cultures.

At a time when they are experiencing huge problems owing to the pandemic and the resultant far-reaching crisis in the cultural sector, it is more vital than ever to have their voices heard.

This is not just an economic concern, since some very promising areas of development depend on these artists, but also an anthropological issue, as it would be terrible if the social and economic crisis were to reduce them to silence.

This would cut off a whole area of human culture and deny us the means of weathering the crisis. For, if we are to build back better and differently, we will need the inspirational power of culture. This is the challenge of the global Resiliart debates launched by UNESCO, which have been a great success in Africa, the Caribbean and Central/South America, where Afro-descendant cultures are particularly significant.

Promotion of African and Afro-descendant cultures is all the more important as the global crisis has exacerbated all the tensions in our societies. The fact is that these cultures offer pride, answers and something to heal even the deepest wounds. This is the focus of the San José office, which is working closely with schools and museums to show the importance of Afro-descendant cultures in the region's history and identity. It is also the concern of our Slave Route programmes, which provide an understanding of the causes and consequences of slavery and shed light on the mechanisms of racism and stigmatization.

As we begin 2021, which African Heads of State have declared the Year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage, this World Day is therefore an opportunity to promote these African and Afro-descendant cultures in order to enable them to play their full part in development and peace.