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The Pan-African Fabric Celebrates African Unity and Diversity at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art

Nine countries. One shared textile. A celebration of African identity, creativity and cultural connection.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — October 7, 2026 — The inaugural Pan-African Fabric & Fashion Showcase brought nine African countries together at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art on September 26, transforming one shared textile into a vivid expression of cultural identity, creative imagination and Pan-African unity.

Presented as part of the museum's Community Day, the showcase drew a full audience despite heavy rain, with every available seat filled and many additional guests standing. It featured interpretations representing Cameroon, Egypt, the Central African Republic, Morocco, South Africa, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana—nine countries spanning all five regions of the African continent.

Founded and created by Cameroonian-born artist and architect Shiri Achu, The Pan-African Fabric incorporates authentic cultural symbols from these nine countries into one original textile. Each participating creative was invited to interpret the fabric through an individual cultural and artistic lens. The resulting garments were distinct in silhouette, craftsmanship and cultural reference, yet connected by a shared visual language.

"This showcase brought to life the heart of The Pan-African Fabric—celebrating Africa's unity and diversity," said Achu. "One textile became the foundation for nine distinct cultural and creative interpretations. Each country remained proudly individual, yet together they created something powerful, connected and unmistakably Pan-African."

Achu led the audience through a country-by-country journey, introducing the participating designers, their concepts and the cultural influences and stories behind each interpretation. National flags and country-linked music framed each arrival. The finale brought the models together in a mixed formation without flags, drawing the nine national presentations into one collective expression of African unity. The showcase concluded with enthusiastic applause, with members of the audience rising in appreciation.

"You showed how fashion can bring the world together with style, joy, and imagination. May your vision inspire celebrations across the globe."
— Jan Du Plain

Nine Countries, Nine Creative Interpretations

The showcase featured **Muks' Couture** for Cameroon; **MOJA Design Studio** for Egypt; **Diana-Melissa Ngoumape** (Miss Africa USA 2025) of **La Maison NDORA** for the Central African Republic; **Naima El Messaoudi** of Caftan Joujou for Morocco; **Dr. Fatima Mncube-Barnes** of Classy Funky for South Africa; **YYASMINA STAR** of Next Fashion Design College for Ethiopia; **Goody's Stitches** for Nigeria; **Amos Onyango** of LAWY Afrik for Kenya; and **Afua Sam** of STUDIO D'MAXSI/The A Concept for Ghana.

El Messaoudi, Mncube-Barnes and Sam attended the presentation, connecting audiences with the creatives behind their country interpretations. El Messaoudi travelled from Morocco, arriving in Washington the day before the showcase. Embassies, cultural representatives, models, collaborators and members of the public joined in the celebration.

Cultural Reception at the Embassy of Cameroon

The celebration continued that evening at the Embassy of Cameroon in Washington, D.C., with The Pan-African Fabric Cultural Reception, held in recognition of World Tourism Day. An exhibition introduced the nine participating designers and the cultural symbols within Edition One, extending the journey from national heritage to cultural symbol, from symbol to fabric, and from fabric to form.

The reception included remarks delivered on behalf of His Excellency the Ambassador of Cameroon, reflections from Achu and recognition of participating designers. Cameroonian food, drinks and vibrant floral arrangements provided a welcoming setting for cultural exchange, conversation and connection.

“The response to this inaugural presentation affirmed that The Pan-African Fabric is more than a textile,” Achu said. “It is a platform through which art, fashion, heritage and storytelling can create meaningful connections between African countries, institutions, designers and communities around the world.”

The initiative’s next steps include documenting the participating collections, sharing the creatives’ stories and developing opportunities for future exhibitions, educational programming, collaborations and an expanded Edition Two.

About The Pan-African Fabric Initiative

Launched in 2025, The Pan-African Fabric Initiative is an international cultural initiative founded and created by Shiri Achu. Edition One unites authentic cultural symbols from nine countries across North, East, South, West and Central Africa within one shared textile. Through art, fashion, heritage, education, storytelling and cultural diplomacy, it celebrates African unity and diversity while honoring distinct identities and creative traditions. Its message: One Fabric. Many African Stories.

About Shiri Achu

Shiri Achu is a multiple award-winning Cameroonian-born visual artist and architect based in Washington, D.C. Through her artistic practice and The Pan-African Fabric Initiative, she develops projects connecting creative expression, cultural identity, community participation and international exchange.

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