

# Cultural Daily

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## A Visa-Vise: The Suspense of *Les Ballets Africains*' 12-City U.S. Tour

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, February 18th, 2026

In a dubious start to Black History Month, the highly anticipated 12-city, ten state tour by **Les Ballets Africains** has been put into limbo by the ongoing refusal of the U.S. consulate to approve visas for the celebrated West African dance and drumming ensemble. The February tour was announced long before a January 2026 executive order that largely banned visas for designated countries, including Guinea where **Les Ballets Africains** is the national dance company. Press accounts indicate that even after Guinea provided the ensemble with official government passports, the U.S. embassy in Guinea still has not issued visas. The visas have not been denied, but are in “administrative hold,” placing the visa applications, and the tour, in suspense.



Les Ballets Africains. Photo courtesy of the artists

As a result, the initial performances at two theaters in Florida were cancelled. With hope the visas would be issued and the tour would go forward, the two California theaters in Santa Barbara and Malibu held out until two days before the scheduled shows before announcing their cancellation. New Mexico was the next to cancel. As the calendar approaches the remaining venues, the company has no word on the visas' status and remains in a state of limbo. The remaining performances in Colorado, Missouri, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, and Connecticut have not

yet cancelled the shows, but the venues caution ticket purchasers about the uncertainty, not likely to boost sales.

Originally formed in 1952 by Guinean choreographer Keita Fodeba, **Les Ballets Africains** toured internationally from a base in Paris until Guinean independence in 1958 when Les Ballets Africains became the country's national dance company. From its home country, the ensemble continued as ambassadors of African dance, music, and culture, touring the world and the U.S., including performances on Broadway. The company's history and international recognition may explain the reluctance to simply cancel the tour as well as the efforts to expedite approval of the visas.



Les Ballets Africains. Photo courtesy of the artists

Beyond efforts through official channels, a grass roots campaign has sprouted on social media. Southern California, in particular, has a raft of West African dance and drumming groups, and many credit **Les Ballets Africains** for both building an audience and igniting performers to form local West African dance and drumming ensembles. Many of those local artists are urging e-mails to the U.S. Embassy in Guinea where the visas are in administrative limbo, urging the Consul General to approve the visas so the rest of the tour might be salvaged.

**Les Ballets Africains** is only one of the situations of international artists encountering similar visa obstructions. Still, the timing of the visa denial of internationally acclaimed African artists during the U.S.-designated Black History Month is particularly bad optics and can only add to worries for visitors to the U.S. for the upcoming World Cup matches and Olympic events.

**For more information: [Les Ballets Africains](#)**

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