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Director: Oscar Mokeme

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Dear Museum Educator or Faculty Member,

We are very pleased to offer a unique traveling program entitled “African Art and Objects as Communication Tools,” exploring the meaning and function that African masks and ceremonial art objects carry for the communities they serve. This program will introduce art collectors, scholars and students to African art as a form that communicates complex cultural understanding based on the conventions of the group that created them.

The program offers three components:

- 1) A display of African masks and objects.
- 2) Discussion of selected objects:
 - a) their significance in ritual, entertainment, political voice, and gender management;
 - b) as composite art that communicates ideas through interpersonal verbal symbols, and as intrinsic symbols and ritualized actions based on the conventions of the Igbo people.
- 3) Drumming with ancient chants, and/or a masquerade bringing a spirit mask to life, offering an on-the spot experience of a mask figure in motion, observing its performance, power, and communication.

This experience will enable you and other participants to go beyond the classroom or museum discussion, to a practical arena where you will feel the complex and dynamic role of art in African cultures. It will deepen your understanding of the fundamentals of masking traditions, specifically as shown among the Igbo people. The objective is to develop new critical thinking about African art, not as decorative form alone but as a significant conduit for community life and communication in the various cultures of Africa.

This program features Chief Oscar Mokeme, founder and director of the Museum of African Culture. Born and raised in southeastern Nigeria, he inherited from many generations the knowledge and responsibilities of priest and healer in the Igbo culture. He blends traditional Igbo wisdom and training with his Western education and experience living and raising children in the United States. He is gifted in translating into Western terms the Igbo concepts embodied in the objects and masks. He also offers a truly authentic experience of a spirit mask, performing not to entertain but to demonstrate the depth of what masks offer as a cultural and spiritual phenomenon.

If you and your organization are interested in exploring this program, please give the Museum a call.

Honored to represent the Museum of African Culture,

Rev. Brenda Chandler, Vice President
MofAC Board of Trustees