

# BOWERYARTS+SCIENCE

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## **THE FIRST TV SERIES TO FOCUS ON ENDANGERED LANGUAGES**

**New York City:** “Of the 6500 languages spoken in the world today, only half will make it to the next century,” says poet Bob Holman, one of the founders of the Endangered Language Alliance and host of a new travel series spotlighting the cultures of endangered languages, premiering **February 1, 2012**, on LINK TV. “While endangered plants and animals are protected by law, who is looking out for the cultures and ways of life held in these words? That is the heart and mission of this series.” Encounter the distinct cultures and peoples of West Africa, Asia and the Middle East in the three-part documentary ***On the Road with Bob Holman*** and discover ancient languages on the brink of extinction. Each of the half-hour shows, produced by Rattapallax in association with Bowery Arts and Science, will air on Link TV, which is available on local cable channels, DVD, online, and on DirectTV channel 375 and Dish Network channel 9410.

“The way Anthony Bourdain goes after the edible delights of far-flung cultures,” comments Bob Holman, “that is the way I reveal the extraordinary richness of languages that encircles the globe—the personalities who embody ways of life so different from, yet achingly familiar to, our own.” Holman, who won three Emmys producing poetry shorts for WNYC-TV and founded the Bowery Poetry Club in New York City, discovers that the roots of spoken word go back thousands of years and span the globe. He goes *On the Road* to track them down! He throws himself into the life—sharing meals and participating in ceremonies, dances, and parties, as he trades stories, fun, recipes, insights, jokes, songs, and poems. Along the way, he gets passionately immersed in the Endangered Language crisis and guides us to the

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bottom-line question of survival of these systems of consciousness with respect, joy, and dedication to diversity. In 2010, with linguists Daniel Kaufman and Juliette Blevins, he founded the Endangered Language Alliance in New York.

In the first two episodes, Holman visits West Africa to focus on the griots, keepers of the West African oral tradition and tribal genealogy through poetic songs. He travels up the Niger River and continues on to Timbuktu, where Beat poet Ted Joans lived in the 1960s. He discovers the roots of hip-hop, rap, and blues that originated in Africa and witnesses a kora-guitar jam session between griot Karamo Susso and Ali Farka Toure's son, Vieux. Holman then visits the Timbuktu Library, which houses volumes from the 16th century when the city was the center of African learning. We learn how to ride a camel before venturing into the Sahara, where we spend an afternoon listening to the hypnotic music of the Tuaregs, the nomadic "blue people," so named because their indigo-dyed clothing rubs off on their skin. Then it's on to Dogon country, where we witness a breathtaking mask ceremony. These two episodes air February 1 and February 8, 2012. The third episode focuses on the resurrection of Hebrew in Israel and the decline of Yiddish, Ladino, and other tongues. When poet Ronny Someck, a "true Israeli poet from Iraq," gives Bob a tour of Jaffa and suggests he visit the West Bank to hear Arabic, Holman takes the grueling journey through the endless checkpoints and the Separation Wall to reach Ramallah. Once across the Wall, he meets with some young Palestinian hip-hop poets who explain the complexities of living near the Separation Wall that dominates the landscape. The experience leaves Holman pondering how a national language creates barriers between the many different voices and languages of the region and affects political thinking. This episode airs February 15, 2012.

Travel the road not taken, with Bob Holman, in *On the Road with Bob Holman*, beginning February 1, 2012, on LINK TV. **More info. at [www.rattapallax.com](http://www.rattapallax.com)**

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