

BUILD

Happy Kwanzaa!



**A FOCUS ON
UNITY**

WHAT IS KWANZAA?

Kwanzaa was established in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, an Author, Professor, and Chairman of the Black Studies Program at California State University. It is an annual celebration observed by African Americans and the wider Pan-African community. The observance takes place from December 26 to January 1 each year. The name "Kwanzaa" originates from the Swahili phrase "matunda ya kwanza," which translates to "first fruits." This reflects the festival's focus on celebrating the first fruits of the harvest.

This observance brings individuals together, through families and communities, to honor the seven core principles of Kwanzaa, known as the Nguzo Saba. "Nguzo Saba" translates to "Seven Principles" in Swahili, and these principles encapsulate crucial cultural values that hold significance for Pan-Africanists worldwide.

Kwanzaa is characterized by seven fundamental symbols, each representing values and concepts reflective of African culture. It's essential to recognize that both the principles and symbols of Kwanzaa are deeply rooted in historical context, having been integral to African culture for thousands of years.

WHAT ARE THE SYMBOLS OF KWANZAA?



Mkeka

- A straw mat made from straw or cloth, that represents history, culture, and traditions.



Vibunzie

- A stalk of corn that represents fertility, the reproduction of children, and the hope of the future.



Mazao

- Fruits, nuts, and vegetables that represent the historical foundation of Kwanzaa (unity).



Mishumaa Saba

- Ceremonious candles, that represent the recreation of the sun's power and to provide light.



Kinara

- The candleholder, which represents the ancestors, and the understanding of life and means protection from danger.



Kikombe Cha Umoja

-The cup is used to perform the libation (tambiko) during the Karamu fest on the sixth day of Kwanzaa.



Zawadi

-On the seventh day of Kwanzaa, it's a celebration that involves gifts, which encourages growth, self-determination, and success.

THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF KWANZAA

Dec 26 **Umoja (Unity)**

To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

Dec 27 **Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)**

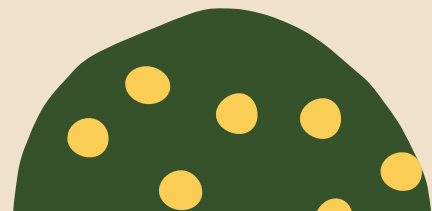
To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.

Dec 28 **Ujima (Collective Work & Responsibility)**

To maintain our community, making our community's problems our problems in order to solve them together.

Dec 29 **Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)**

To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together.



THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF KWANZAA



Dec 30 **Nia (Purpose)**

To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Dec 31 **Kuumba (Creativity)**

To always do as much we can to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.



Jan 1 **Imani (Faith)**

To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle. On the last day of Kwanzaa, we look within and above to strive for a higher level of spirituality and a better life for ourselves and those around us.



KWANZAA CELEBRATIONS

EACH COMMUNITY CELEBRATES KWANZAA AROUND THE NGUZO SABA (THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES) WITH SONGS, DANCES, DRUMS, STORYTELLING, POETRY, ART, READINGS, AND A TRADITIONAL MEAL.

Honoring the Ancestors

A crucial aspect of Kwanzaa is honoring the Ancestors, the community, and those yet to be born. This remembrance and honoring involves prayer and pouring Libations using the Kikombe Cha Umoja (Unity Cup).

The Children

Children have an important role in the Kwanzaa celebration. During each of the seven nights, they take on the responsibility of lighting one of the Mishumaa Saba (the seven candles) on the Kinara (The Candleholder). This meaningful act honors the ancestors and individuals while simultaneously recognizing each of the principles of Kwanzaa.

Decorations and Gifts

Homes and community spaces are festively decorated, and people wear traditional African clothing for the celebration.

The exchange of Zawadi, which translates to “gifts,” is a cherished tradition. These gifts are preferred to be handmade, which embodies values like self-determination, purpose, and creativity.

The Feast and The Crops

The Karamu, a Swahili word meaning “The Feast,” takes place on December 31. This special event deeply reveres the yield of Mazao, meaning “The Crops,” which symbolizes the fruits of the community's collective efforts and the personal sacrifices of individuals across time - past, present, and future. Moreover, the Karamu embraces and celebrates the entirety of the Nguzo Saba, paying homage to the guiding African principles of Kwanzaa.

Sources:

Book: Karaenga, Maulana: “The African American holiday of Kwanzaa: a celebration of family, community & culture”

Website: [Kwanzaa - National Museum of African American History and Culture](#)

Website: [Official Kwanzaa Website](#)

