



Annual Founder's Kwanzaa Message
"CELEBRATING AND LIVING KWANZAA:
SOWING AND HARVESTING SEEDS OF GOOD"

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

Each season and celebration of Kwanzaa reaffirms our commitment as African people to create, celebrate and sustain good in the world. For rightly conceived, the celebration of Kwanzaa is about embracing ethical views and values and practicing principles which are directed toward remaking the world so that the goodness of the world can be shared and enjoyed by us and everyone. Kwanzaa begins with a celebration of ourselves as African people, our families, communities and culture. But in its ancient African origins as a first-fruit harvest celebration, it is also a celebration of life and all the good in the world—fruit and flower, beast and bird, field and forest, star and stone, water, mountains and the mysteries and magnificence of the earth and the heavens. Kwanzaa also was conceived and constructed in the midst of the Black Freedom Movement and thus reflects the Movement's emphasis on cultural grounding, self-determination, social justice, liberation and struggle.

The celebration of Kwanzaa, then, gives us an opportunity, not only to celebrate the good in and of the world, but also to meditate on the meaning and responsibility of being African in the world—in each of our lands and in the world as a whole. Indeed, Kwanzaa is also a time to pause, ponder and ask how do we as African persons and peoples address the critical issues of our time, speak our own special cultural truth to the world and engage in personal and social practice which upholds our highest values and contributes meaningfully to creating the good world we all want and deserve to live in.

Our Kwanzaa theme for this year 2013 is "Celebrating and Living Kwanzaa: Sowing and Harvesting Seeds of Good". It is a reminder and reinforcement of our ever-renewed commitment to the ancient African moral imperative to constantly strive and struggle to bring good in the world. And it is to build on the model and metaphor of the

harvest which is about the cooperative sowing of seeds of good, cultivating them in their growth, harvesting their fruit and sharing the good produced in just and joyous ways.

Now, the sowing of seeds of good, of necessity, turn here to principled practice, i.e., the practice of the Seven Principles, the *Nguzo Saba*, which are the cultural hub and hinge on which the holiday turns. Indeed, it is these principles practiced throughout the year that insure that Kwanzaa is not only a season of celebration, but also a living and lived tradition. For these principles, embraced and practiced, serve as a firm foundation and overarching framework for how we understand and assert ourselves in African ways in the world—how we ground ourselves, build relationships, live our daily lives, wage our struggles, and direct our lives toward good and expansive ends.

Indeed, to practice the Seven Principles is to sow and harvest seeds of good. For each good deed done is a seed of good sown. And in its time, as the ancestors taught us, it will grow and bear fruit. Thus, each seed of good sown, promises and produces a good we each and all can together harvest and share. Again, as our ancestors taught, every good deed done also aids in building the good family, community and world we all want and deserve to live in. This is the meaning of the teaching of the *Husia* that says, "Do good. Doing good is not difficult. Just speaking good is a monument for those who do it. And those who do good for others are also doing it for themselves." For they are building and shaping the good and beautiful world we all want and deserve.

The *Nguzo Saba* stand out as a clear way to walk, work and struggle in the world as African people; a way of life that begins with respect for the relational character of human life. It is a cultural way we call communitarian, i.e., community-grounded, which understands that we come into being, develop

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and flourish in relationships. And it is a way that teaches that the hub and hinge on which the whole of human life turns is the quality of relationships.

To practice the Seven Principles is also to engage in personal and social practices and struggles to transform ourselves and the world which are informed and inspired by these principles. The principle of *Umoja* (Unity) teaches us the oneness of life, the kinship and common interests of our people, the interrelatedness and interdependence of humanity and our active solidarity with the suffering, oppressed and struggling peoples of the world. The principle of *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination) teaches us to uphold our right and responsibility to be ourselves, to live free lives, to enjoy a full measure of justice, and to bear constant witness to the equal validity and value of African ways of being human in the world without denying other people similar rightful claims.

The principle of *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility) teaches us a shared responsibility in building the good families, societies and world we want and deserve to live in, to be actively concerned and engaged with the well-being of the world, to relentlessly resist evil and injustice, and to constantly seek common ground and common good. The principle of *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics) teaches us to practice the ethics of shared work and shared wealth; to uphold the right of the peoples of the world to a just and equitable share of the goods of the world; and to struggle to establish policies and practices which aid and empower the poor and vulnerable, protect and preserve the environment and create conditions conducive to a life of dignity and decency for everyone.

The principle of *Nia* (Purpose) teaches us to remember the sacred collective vocation

given to us in the *Odu Ifa* which says "humans are divinely chosen to bring good in the world" and that this is the fundamental mission and meaning of human life. And it teaches us to be constantly aware that this requires service, work, sacrifice and struggle, both in the interest of our people and for the good of the world. The principle of *Kuumba* (Creativity) teaches us the ancient African ethical imperative of *serudj ta*—the moral obligation to constantly heal, repair and remake the world, making it more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. It is again the instruction to raise up what is ruined; repair what is damaged; rejoin what is severed; replenish what is depleted; strengthen what is weakened; set right what is wrong; and make flourish that which is insecure and undeveloped.

Finally, the principle of *Imani* (Faith) teaches us to believe in the good, to raise it up, praise it and pursue it everywhere. It teaches us to believe in our capacity, commitment and struggle, as a people, to be good, do good and sustain good in the world. And it teaches us a faith founded in the history, hope and hard struggles of our people; a faith that dares to believe that through hard work, long struggle and whole a lot of love and understanding, we can actually be ourselves and free ourselves and with other progressive and struggling peoples bring into being a new hope, history and world for humankind.

Let us go forth, then, reaffirmed in the urgency and accuracy of our ancestors' description of our duty this season and at all times and in all places. And it is this: To know our past and honor it; to engage our present and improve it; and to imagine a whole new future and forge it in the most ethical, effective and expansive ways. Heri za Kwanzaa! Happy Kwanzaa!

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