

# Kwanzaa...African Tradition Celebrates Black Family Life

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The word KWANZAA is new or unfamiliar to the ears of many Black people.

Kwanzaa is a ceremony carried out by Black men, women and children for a period of seven days starting December 26 and lasting until January 1. On January 2, gifts are shared, and family and friends enjoy each other. The purpose of Kwanzaa is to inject a new meaning and unity into the Black Family.

During these seven days, there are seven social and spiritual principals of the NGUZO SABA (the Black Value System) that are honored. There are also five periods of our history that are told—from the beginning of our history to a hopeful and promising future. It is a time to give thanks and enjoy the blessings of living. It is an African holiday, rooted in several African festivals.

KWANZAA is a Black Thing. It is observed by families getting together to bond themselves in helping each other overcome their problems and difficulties. For the past two years, I have participated in the Kwanzaa ceremonies. It is a joyous time and a time to reflect on our plight as Black people from the

past that we have survived to the future that looks bleak and dark but with a deep-gutted feeling of knowing the future belongs to us as the past belonged to us.

On the evening of Kwanzaa, everyone brings a dish of food. Among these foods are the five particular foods that represent the five periods of our history. Somewhere in the room, you will see the five colors that also represent those historic periods.

The first period is the **BLACK AFRICAN FAMILY IN THE MOTHER COUNTRY**. The food that is served to represent this period is black-eyed peas, and the color is Black, which represents all Black sons and daughters of Africa who ever lived. The first principle observed is UMOJA, which means Unity. Also during this period, the principle of KUJICHAGULIA is observed, which means SELF-DETERMINATION.

The second period of history is **SLAVERY HORROR**. Rice is the food to represent this period and the color is white. The rice symbolizes the bland and tasteless condition under which Black Folk lived during the slavery period under the British, French and Yankee slavers.

Under this horrible period, we lost our names, cultures, religion, heritage, and history. We are still fighting off the myths and lies of the chattel slave owners. The principles observed during this period of Ujimma, which means COLLECTIVE WORK and RESPONSIBILITY; and Ujamaa, which means COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS.

Moving to the third time, we go to the **EMANCIPATION FIGHT**. The food that represents this period is wine, and the color is red. The color red represents the blood shed by our brothers and sisters who continue to fight for freedom after the end of slavery which also marked the beginning of a new economic and social bondage. It is bondage of our minds, captivated through alcohol, drugs, welfare, housing projects, detention centers, and a perverted and colonialistic religion. The principal for this period is the NIA, which means PURPOSE. We make a collective vow to build and develop our community to restore our people to their original greatness.

The fourth period is the **LIBERATION STRUGGLE**. The food served to represent this period

is greens or any green vegetable. The color is green, which symbolizes a new growth, awareness, fertility, consciousness, and change. It suggests a rebirth of learning and national purpose after years of suppression, repression, and oppression. The sixth principle is KUUMBA, which means CREATIVITY.

The last period is the observance of **THE BLACK FAMILY LOOKS AT THE FUTURE**. The food eaten is bread, which reminds us that the future of our people is predicated on two things: the rebuilding of our families and the resurrection of the Black Nation as a whole. We must know that nation-building requires new thoughts, ideas, ways of thinking, new values, respect, humanness, cooperation, integrity, spirituality, and simplicity. These we are obligated to embrace with our hearts and minds and live to our fullest capacity and never let go. The color, orange or gold, represents the sun. The warmth of the sun brings regeneration, healing, and a completeness in its roundness. The seventh and last principle is IMANI, which means faith—to believe with all our hearts in our

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