

FEATURES

'Tis The Season To Celebrate...

Kwanzaa: African and American Customs



BY STEPHANY COUSINS AND MONICA ALEXANDER
Staff Writers

From December 26 to January 1, the time that some African cultures consider, "The time when the edges of the year meet," some African-Americans gather to celebrate the festival of Kwanzaa.

Kwanzaa is an African-American holiday that combines the tradition of Africa and the customs of America. It was first celebrated in the United States on December 26, 1966, in Los Angeles, Calif., by Dr. Maulana Karenga.

It is also the celebration of the African family, community and culture.

The symbolism behind the holiday derives from various African traditions. Kwanzaa is centered around seven principles, *Nguzo Saba*, which is expressed in the language of Swahili.

Each night during Kwanzaa, one candle is lit and arranged in the *Kinara* (a candle holder). The candles, one black, three red and three green, symbolize seven principles known as the *Nguzo Saba*.

The first day of Kwanzaa is *Umoja* (Unity). *Umoja* represents the

maintaining of the unity in the community, family, nation, and race. The second day is *Kujichagulia* (Self Determination), this is emphasizing knowing who we are, where we come from, and our role in the community. *Ujima* (Collective work and responsibility) is the third day. This day recognizes that through unity the community must come together and build up the community and solve the problems that may exist. *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics) is the fourth day in which emphasizes the building up and maintenance of the business world to help the needs of the community. *Nia*, having pride in ourselves and our history, so that we will be able to look into ourselves to plan and build a total community. This is celebrated on the fifth day of the Kwanzaa celebration. The sixth day is *Kuumba* (Creativity). This is the use of individual talents to keep homes and communities clean and creativity to build and maintain the community.

The final day of Kwanzaa is *Imani* (Faith). Believing in ourselves, parents, teachers, and leaders by honoring and remembering our history, the best of

ourselves and the best of our aspirations, are emphasized on this day.

Zawadi (gifts) are given on the last day, *Imani*. These gifts are of meaning to encourage growth, self-determination, achievement, and success. Gifts such as books or heritage symbols relating to African-American history, culture or community are exchanged. These gifts are primarily given to children, but other family members may exchange gifts as well.

Kwanzaa is also represented by seven symbols: crops, a mat, a candle holder, seven candles, ears of corn, gifts and a unity cup. The cup is used to pour libations for the ancestors and participants drink from it to reinforce unity in the family and community.

According to Tim Jackson, branch manager at the East Winston Library, "a Kwanzaa celebration started at East Winston Branch Library. It was held for one night. It grew to the point that large crowds were drawn to the library and the entire community wanted to be involved. Other organizations in the community then started having celebrations that divided the community. As a result

community organizations decided to work together and have a Kwanzaa celebration for seven days, Dec. 26- Jan. 1."

On December 20, in the area outside of Sears' lower level mall entrance, several community organizations will sponsor a "kick-off" Kwanzaa event for the community. The organizations that will participate include: the Winston-Salem Urban League, Jack and Jill, Inc., Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., East Winston Community Development Corp., East Winston Library and Friends of East Winston Library, the Arts Council, Winston Lake Family YMCA, Emmanuel Baptist Church, St. Benedict Church, and St. Paul's Church.

Cheryl Harry from the Art council says, "The Art Council is delighted to be one of the co-sponsors of *Kuumba*, the sixth principle of Kwanzaa. It is the principle of the Arts Council to work together to build the art in the community so that we can preserve and learn about the diverse cultural heritage by which adds depth, joy and meaning to our lives and the lives of our children." Happy Kwanzaa, Rams!

Christmas

BY STEPHANY COUSINS
Staff Writer

The Christmas holiday which most westerners celebrate as a religious celebration, is in reality a smorgasbord of pagan and Christian practices.

Despite the belief in the birth story, found in the Bible's Matthew Chapters 1 and 2 and Luke Chapters 1 and 2, Christians did not observe a festival for the celebration of Christmas until the 4th century.

Originally, it was decided that the holiday would be celebrated on January 6. Later, the date was changed to Dec. 25. It is not certain as to why the date was changed. However, the time period between December 25 - Jan 6, became known as the "Twelve Days of Christmas."

Some people believe that these dates

were chosen to observe Christ's birth to correspond with the winter solstice, the time period when the days begin to lengthen, commemorating the "rebirth of the sun."

In fact, some of the customs observed in the holiday are derived from pagan practices. Pagan Europeans worshiped the fir tree. They decorated it and regarded it as a symbol of life. This custom survived even after their conversion to Christianity.

Gift-giving was borrowed from the Romans. On Jan 1 of their New Year, Gifts were given to children and to the poor, houses were decorated with greenery and lights. These things, both pagan and Christian, were adopted and incorporated into the observance of Christmas as we know it now.

Hanukkah: A Jewish Holiday

BY AMY PHIPPS
Editor

Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday which is held in remembrance of Maccabean victories over King Antiochus IV Epiphanes as well as the rededication of the Jewish Temple in 164 B.C.E. The Maccabees were the first recorded Jews who fought to defend not their lives, but their religion.

According to the Talmud, a collection of Jewish literature, during the original rededication of the Temple there was only enough lamp oil to last for one day. By some miracle the oil lasted for an amazing eight days.

To celebrate this miracle Hanukkah celebrants light one candle of an eight-candle menorah on the first evening of Hanukkah, and light an additional candle each of the following seven days. On the eighth day of Hanukkah all the candles are lit. This year Hanukkah will be celebrated December 6 - 13.

The Jewish also celebrate with holiday meals, songs, parties and gift-giving to the children of the faith.

Have A Safe and Wonderful Winter Break!!