



ANNUAL FOUNDER'S KWANZAA MESSAGE
“REIMAGINING AND REMAKING THE WORLD:
A KWANZAA COMMITMENT TO AN INCLUSIVE GOOD”

Los Angeles Sentinel, 12-20-18, p. A1

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

| KWANZAA IS A FESTIVAL OF HARVEST AND celebration of the Good, the shared good, the shared good of field and forest, of fruit tree and flower, the shared good of wind and waters, rainfall and riverflow, of life and all living things, in a word, the shared good of the world in all its wonderful abundance. At the very heart and center of the celebration of Kwanzaa is the ethical imperative and social obligation of the cooperative creation and sharing of an inclusive Good. This principle and related practice are rooted in its ancient origins in the African harvest and the communitarian worldview and way of life that undergirded and informed it. The ancient roots of Kwanzaa in the shared African harvest and the celebration of it, immediately bring to mind the sacred teachings given to us by our honored ancestors in the *Odu Ifa* which tells and teaches us we are to constantly strive and struggle to bring good into the world, share it and not let any good be lost.

And this bringing increasing and sustaining good in the world must be directed toward an inclusive good, a good that benefits all, a good that is planned, produced, harvested and shared by all. Moreover, this conception of an inclusive good is a world-encompassing, all-embracing good, not only for us as a people, but also a good for humanity and the well-being of the world. And as we strive and struggle to achieve and secure an inclusive good for all, we are taught, we must also constantly reimagine, renew and remake the world. For as our honored ancestors teach us, we are not only human beings, but also world beings, *walimwengu* (in Swahili), and

must therefore always expand the arc of our moral care and concern.

And thus, this Kwanzaa, as millions of us gather together all over the world throughout the world African community, in celebration of family, community and culture, we are charged to ask again what does it mean to be African in the world in times like these of increased turmoil and testing, aggression, oppression and massive destruction of lives and lands in the world? And how do we, as a people, honor our role as moral and social vanguard? In a word, what are our moral obligations to ourselves and others, to the poor and less powerful, the vulnerable, the oppressed, suffering and struggling peoples of the world and to the well-being of the world itself?

Thus, in this, another season of the celebration of the Good, we are required to remember, reflect and recommit ourselves to our highest values and to the striving and struggle that secures and sustains them as an uplifted, lived and living reality. *We remember* and pay rightful and righteous homage to our ancestors, the way-openers, the lifters-of-the-light that lasts, the awesome models and clear mirrors by which we mold and measure our lives and strive for the good and beautiful in all we do. *We reflect* on the work we do, the struggles we wage and the lives we live in order to bring, sustain and increase good in the world. And we *recommit* ourselves to our highest values and to the ancient African ethical imperative of *serudj ta*, to constantly repair, renew and remake the world, making it more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

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If the ancient African harvest provides us the important moral message and model of the cooperative planning, cultivation, creation and sharing of good, the modern Black Freedom Movement provides us with a similarly essential message and model of the striving and struggles needed to actually achieve and secure a shared and inclusive good. Conceived and created in the midst of the Black Freedom Movement, Kwanzaa is deeply involved and invested in the concept and practice of freedom as an indispensable way to achieve and secure the shared and inclusive good it envisions and urges.

Indeed, Kwanzaa itself, is an historical and ongoing act of freedom, an instrument of freedom and a celebration of freedom. It is an historical and ongoing *act of freedom* in that it is an act of *resistance* and *reaffirmation*. It is and was conceived and created in resistance to Eurocentric cultural domination and determination of ways for us to understand, assert and celebrate ourselves and engage the world. And it was conceived and created in reaffirmation of our Africanness as persons and a people and our right and responsibility to be ourselves, free ourselves and celebrate ourselves.

Also, Kwanzaa from its inception was an instrument of freedom and thus of our freedom struggle. It provides cultural context and content for us to be our African selves, to raise and cultivate cultural and political consciousness about critical issues facing our people, society and the world. It teaches views, values and practices to enable us to return to our own history and culture in all their richness and relevance and empowering ways to increasingly understand and appreciate ourselves, anchor and orient ourselves and self-consciously direct our lives toward good and expansive ends. And in all of this,

Kwanzaa challenges our people to involve themselves in the overarching liberating struggle to build the good community, society and world we all want, work and struggle for and deserve.

And Kwanzaa is a celebration of freedom, of the free space we have created to honor ourselves, to remember, reflect and recommit ourselves. It is a celebration of hearts and minds free from self-doubt, self-denial, self-condemnation and self-mutilation, and open to experiencing and embracing a liberated and uplifted spirit of specialness, rooted in and raised up by the shared and sacred good of being African in and for the world. In the liberation struggle of the 60s, we dared to imagine with Frantz Fanon the face of the future, the possibilities and promise of a new history of humankind, a new world and new men and women to conceive and construct that world. And these new women and men who would reimagine and remake the world, we maintained, would be rooted in values that represent the best of what it means to be both African and human in the fullest sense.

And we chose the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles) to serve as an overarching framework for the way we lived our lives, did our work and waged the struggle for liberation and other good in the world. These principles focus first on family, community and culture, but they also have an expanded meaning and message for the work we do and the struggle we wage in society and the world. Thus, we must constantly think deeply about them, discuss them, share them and make them a vital and greatly valued part of our daily lives. The principle of *Umoja* (Unity) calls for a cultivated sense of relatedness and mutual respect, of togetherness in the work and struggle for a shared and inclu-

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sive good in our families, communities, society and the world, and for a sense of oneness and responsibility for each other's good and the well-being of the world.

The principle of *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination) reaffirms the right and responsibility of our people and all others to determine their own destiny and daily lives, to live their lives in freedom and as a unique and equally valid and valuable way of being human in the world and to choose the good and pursue it. The principle of *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility) speaks to our shared responsibility to build the good families, communities, society and world we want and deserve to live and flourish in – places of freedom, justice, caring, sharing, security, well-being and peace. *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics) is the principle of shared work and wealth, distributive equity and justice, the right to a life of dignity and well-being, and the responsibility to care for the earth.

The principle and practice of *Nia* (Purpose) calls for a commitment from us to strive, work and struggle to restore African

peoples to their good and rightful place in the world and to the ancient ethical mandate to bring and sustain good in the world as the fundamental mission and meaning of human life. *Kuumba* (Creativity) is a practice and principle that calls us to commit ourselves to work, strive and struggle to leave our community and the world more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. And thus again, it urges us to honor the ancestral ethical imperative, *serudj ta*, to reimagine, repair, renew and remake the world.

AND FINALLY, THE PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE of *Imani* (Faith) calls on us to believe in ourselves, in our people in the righteousness and victory of our struggle, in the inclusive good we seek and our capacity to achieve it, share it and leave a rightful and righteous portion of it for those who come after. For as always, this is our duty: to know our past and honor it; to engage our present and improve it; and to imagine a whole new future and to forge it in the most ethical, effective and expansive ways.

Heri za Kwanzaa

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