

THE FEAST OF:

KWANZA!

During the 1977 Kwanza celebrations, it was discovered that the celebration was one created by Ron Karenga. It was immediately dubbed "a hoax."

Many people became disenchanted after discovering that Kwanza was not an African festival, although it was based on an African concept.

But, the black communities soon realized that in creating Kwanza, Karenga was making an effort to bring blacks closer together.

So, now again, Kwanza activities will take place throughout the black communities of this country.

Charles A. Dugger

Because of the increased social and economic pressures, there are more suicides, homicides, and robberies in the United States occurring during the Christmas season than at any other time of the year.

About ten years ago, some black people in the United States decided that there needed to be a holiday and time of celebration that was relevant to black people. These black Americans were disenchanted with the over-commercialization of Christmas also.

They were dismayed by the fact that too many black people were getting in debt at Christmas and trying the rest of the year to get out of debt.

These black Americans created the holiday of Kwanza.

Kwanza was based on the rich African heritage of black people. Kwanza is the feast of the first fruits of the harvest.

Although Kwanza originated in the United States only ten years ago, it is firmly rooted in African culture and tradition. Kwanza focuses upon the coming together of the family and community to celebrate and share the arrival of the first crops of the year.

The time of Kwanza is from December 26 through January 1. Although in the United States it is too cold to harvest most crops in winter, the dates were chosen to correspond with the Western holiday of Christmas.



The drum is a part of the celebration of Kwanza, and Modiron Molemohi and child, Akenyele Molembohi participate in the festivities. The festival gets under way this month, and predictions are that it will be bigger than ever.

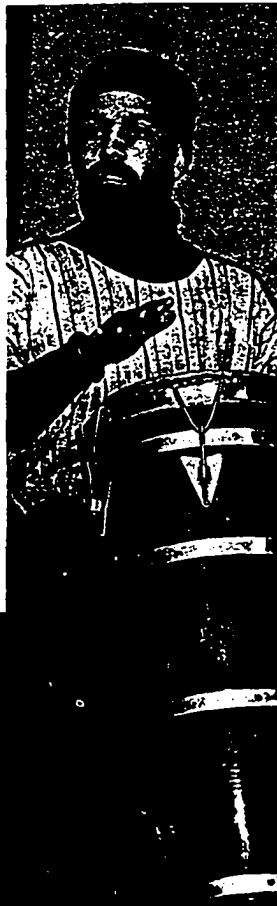
This time was chosen to provide black Americans and black people throughout the world with an alternative to Christmas.

Kwanza advocates no particular religion; consequently, black people of all religious convictions and affiliations can celebrate it.

As a result of the intense association and assimilation of black Americans, it is imperative that black Americans have positive alternatives to achieve a renaissance of their true culture and heritage.

The seven days of Kwanza are symbolized by a candle holder of seven candles.

The candle holder is placed on a straw mat. The straw mat symbolizes the earth. Also on the straw mat is an ear of corn which symbolizes all life.



The candle holder, candles, and the entire house, if possible, are decorated in the colors of black liberation — red, black, and green.

Red represents the blood of black people that has been shed and is still being shed in the constant fights for liberation.

Black stands for our skin color. Green symbolizes land, hope, and the youth of our race. The Akhn, the African symbol of life, is also used to decorate the house.

One of the seven candles in the candle holder is lit each evening during Kwanza.

The seven candles for the seven days of Kwanza represent the seven principles of black unity. The seven principles of black unity are expressed in the East African

language of Kiswahili. The seven principles are known as the Nguzo Saba. The seven principles are umoja, kujichagulia, ujima, ujamaa, nia, kuumba, and imani.

On the first day of Kwanza, Dec. 26, the candle of Umoja is unkindled. Umoja means unity. Unity is the most important component of the black family, community, nation, and race.

The second day of Kwanza witnesses Kujichagulia as the candle which illuminates the evening. Kujichagulia means self-determination. Black people must think, define, and do for themselves rather than be the pawns of others. We must determine what is necessary and what is not.

Ujima is represented by the third candle of Kwanza. Working together and being responsible is the definition of Ujima.

On Dec. 29, we light the fourth candle of Kwanza which symbolizes Ujamaa. Ujamaa means sharing with each other.

The Western philosophy of rugged individualism and material gain creates a negative and divisive spirit in the people of a society.

Nia is the candle that brightens the fifth evening of Kwanza. The definition of Nia is purpose.

Nia stresses the need for having a purpose or reason for saying and doing things. We must stop doing things because there was nothing else to do and begin to do things because they needed to be done.

The sixth day of Kwanza, Dec. 31, the candle represents Kuumba. Creativity is the meaning of Kuumba.

As a part of this evening's activities, a big karamu or feast is held for the adults. During the karamu, pledges are made for the new year, cultural activities (historical features, poetry, etc.) are presented, and gifts are given.

The gifts can be fruit and other food for the feast or homemade items for an individual or family.

On the last day of Kwanza, the guiding principle is Imani. Imani means faith.

On the last day of Kwanza, a big karamu is held for the children. There is plenty of nourishing food. Cultural activities are presented. There is singing and dancing. Games are played. Gifts are presented to the children.

Kwanza is deeply rooted in African tradition and celebrates the first fruits of the harvest.

Happy Kwanza!