

Black Group Holds Feast of Kwanza

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UNITY—Umoja is one of Seven Principles.

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by
Toki Schalk Johnson

With the resurgence of the black people all over the world, and particularly in the United States, African lore has been activated: African clothing has been picked up, embellished by this generation of black designers to have a special meaning. . . . and now with the influx of many African students on this side of the oceans, the varied black holidays are being discovered.

Kwanza, celebrated the last week in the year (beginning on Dec. 26) is perhaps the most important celebration of the year. In the feasting and preparation of the feast and the celebration of the family in all things that affect each member, it means the strengthening of the foundation of the family.

Here in Pittsburgh, where there is a large segment of the black population interested in Africa and its background, and its people, and its progress, celebrated Kwanza (a festival) with a Karamu feast. It was held Thursday by the Congress of African People at 2212 Fifth Avenue, Uptown. The festival included entertainment by the Black Horizon Theatre of Pittsburgh and several musical groups.

The word itself, Kwanza means "first". Traditionally it means the first harvest, fruits or first crops which have always been a cause for great rejoicing. So Kwanza gathers the entire family together; African families very often celebrate Kwanza instead of the commercial Christmas of this country.

Togetherness

There is a togetherness which binds the family into a wonderful warm unit. The celebration is that of fruits of our brothers and a celebration of their individual efforts of each member to contribute to everyone in the community. . . . and what they have contributed in the past year.

For the individual family, various symbols are prepared. They are the Mkeka, the Kinara, the Mshumaa, the Muhindi and Zawadi.

The Mkeka is a large straw mat on which all other symbols are placed. It is the foundation, and means just that in their lives.

The Kinara is a seven-candle holder, representing the original stalk from which all sprang. To the African it represents their will and ability to reproduce themselves and their nations.

The Mshumaa are the seven candles, representing the seven principles of Nguzo Saba which are the foundation of the new Black values system.

As they prepare the Mshumaa, they teach their children of the meanings of the words, and in teaching, strengthen their own commitments.

Seven Principles

Nguzo Saba, or the Seven Principles are: Umoja (Unity) to maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.

Kujichagulia (Self-Determination) to define, name, speak for ourselves, and not being defined or spoken for by others.



CO-OPERATIVE—Ujamaa, to have your own stores, to profit together; to work with your brothers and sisters problems together.

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Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility) To build and maintain the community together; to work with our brothers' and sisters' problems together.

Ujamaa (Co-operative Economics) To have our own stores, businesses and to prof-

it together. The concept of land and food must be included.

Nia (Purpise) To build and develop their community; to restore their people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba (Creativity) To do always as much as they can, in their own way in order to



CREATIVITY—Kuumba, is to always do as much as they can, in their own way in order to leave their community more beautiful . . .

leave their community more beautiful and of more benefit than when they inherited it.

Imani (Faith) to believe with all their hearts in their parents, their teachers, their leaders, their people and the righteousness and victory of their struggle.

The week-long celebration reaches its crescendo on the 31st and the "togetherness" brings a new bond between members of the family and with all of the families in the community.