



ANNUAL FOUNDER'S KWANZAA MESSAGE  
1966—42<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary—2008

**“KWANZAA AND THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES:  
REPAIRING AND RENEWING THE WORLD”**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

This season of the celebration of Kwanzaa comes at a time of heightened hope and historic turning, not only for us as a people, but also for this country and the world. There is this wide-spread sense that we are on the verge of new possibilities to repair and renew the world, to reorder our lives and priorities and engage in practices that promise new ways to relate to each other and the world. And there is also this companion sense, more developed than it has been for some time, that if we are ever to have a just, peaceful and good society and world, we must respect each other, work together and share the good and goods of the world in just and equitable ways.

It is this model and moral stance of cooperatively creating, cultivating, harvesting and sharing good in the world that grounds and shapes the vision, values and practices of Kwanzaa, whose ancient origins are centered around the celebration and sharing of the harvest of good. And this celebration is rooted in the cooperative project of gathering together in harmony, planting the seeds and possibilities of good, cultivating them with required care and consideration and patiently working to bring them to fruit, flower and fulfillment. For there can be no harvest nor indeed no hope or sharing of good without the cooperative and mutually respectful work that makes possible and produces the good we all hope for and deserve.

Created in the context of the Black Freedom Movement, Kwanzaa also stresses the cooperative nature and need of the struggle required to achieve this shared goal. It is the lesson of the life, struggle and teachings of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Marcus Garvey, Fannie Lou Hamer, Malcolm X, Martin King, Amilcar Cabral, Yaa Asantewa

and countless other ancestors of heavy weight and worth in the world. Moreover, Kwanzaa marks a profound reorientation put forth in the 60's in terms of the way we understand and assert ourselves as an African people in the world. It marks both a cultural and political struggle to return to our own history and culture, to reaffirm our identity and dignity as African people and to reaffirm our social justice tradition in and thru transformative struggle for serious social change. Thus, we must not forget this nor the obligation in the morality of remembrance and recommitment.

The moment of history in which we live is not only hopeful, but also demanding and dangerous because of the life-and-death nature of the issues that confront and challenge us and the awesome damage being done throughout the world. There is unfreedom, oppression, injustice and exploitation everywhere and thus, there is the ongoing and urgent need to repair our damaged world, heal the gross and grievous injuries and human suffering, and free and empower the oppressed and disempowered peoples of the world. This is clinically clear in any honest assessment as evidenced in the ongoing genocide in Darfur; the lingering catastrophe of Katrina; the centuries of suffering and current occupation in Haiti; the enormous destruction of life and resource theft in the Congo; the brutal occupation of Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan; the social disruption and human destruction of globalization; the joblessness, poverty, ill-health, hunger and homelessness in the world; the continuing spread of HIV/AIDS and other devastating diseases; sexual and labor enslavement; the continuous predation on women and children; and the progressive

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degradation and destruction of the environment.

All of these problems require a process and practice of repairing the world which in its inclusive ethical sense involves our healing and repairing ourselves as well. Indeed, it is in the process and practice of healing and repairing the world that we heal and repair ourselves. This interrelated ethical ideal and practice is rooted in the ancestral sacred teachings found in the *Husia* that we are morally obligated to constantly repair, restore and renew the world, making it more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. This is called in ancient Egyptian the moral obligation of *serudj ta*. This world-encompassing principle and practice provides us with an expansive concept for understanding and approaching our struggle and work in the world and offers us a collective vocation worthy of our history and reflective of our commitment to the well-being and wholeness of the world.

This means we must imagine and engage the world in a decisively different way than that of the established order. And this requires an ethical vision that privileges and promotes struggle directed toward a future and flourishing worthy of our highest ideals. And, of course, at the heart of this practice and struggle must be The Seven Principles, *Nguzo Saba*. Indeed, each principle calls for a corresponding practice. *Umoja* (Unity) calls on us to practice a principled togetherness in our relationships, rooted in mutual respect, justice and shared good in the world. *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination) teaches us to define ourselves by the good we do and the way we assert ourselves in the world in the

life-enhancing, world-preserving and upward ways of our ancestors. *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility) reminds us that we must together build the good world we want and deserve to live in and leave as a legacy worthy of our history and consciously concerned with our future and that of the world. *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics) urges us to share the work and wealth of the world in just and equitable ways and seek the good life of dignity, decency and prosperity for everyone. *Nia* (Purpose) calls on us to pursue the collective vocation of bringing, increasing and sustaining good in the world in emulation and evocation of our traditional greatness. *Kuumba* (Creativity) requires that we constantly strive to make and leave our community and world more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. And *Imani* (Faith) teaches us to believe in the good, hope for the best and work and struggle relentlessly to make both a reality.

Our task, then, even in this emerging era of great expectation, is as it has always been and remains: *to know our past and honor it; to engage our present and improve it; and to imagine our future and forge it in the most effective, expansive and ethically-grounded ways*. This means boldly and continuously facing the difficulties and dangers that confront us; seeking and speaking truth; doing and demanding justice; treating each other with ultimate respect and loving kindness; walking and working together righteously; resisting wrong, oppression and injustice everywhere; and struggling constantly and conscientiously to bring, increase and sustain good in the world.

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