



December 17, 2021

Hello, colleagues,

As this year draws to a close, we reflect on the values, people, and experiences that enrich our lives and appreciate the love and support we receive and are able to give to others.

For millions of people who celebrate Kwanzaa, the holiday offers an opportunity to recognize the past year's blessings and to commit to shared purpose and unity in the new year.

History and Meaning

Kwanzaa was created by Dr. Maulana Karenga after the [Watts Uprising of 1965](#) to help soothe the community's despair. It is a unique African American and Pan-African celebration based on African harvest festival traditions and taking place from December 26 through January 1 each year. It focuses on traditional African values of family, community, responsibility, commerce, and self-improvement. It is a time for reaffirming people of the Black diaspora, their ancestors, and their cultures.

During the holiday, families and communities organize activities around the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles), which are listed below in Swahili and English:

- *Umoja* (unity)
- *Kujichagulia* (self-determination)
- *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility)
- *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics)
- *Nia* (purpose)
- *Kuumba* (creativity)
- *Imani* (faith)

Observances

Though family and community celebrations vary, some common symbols are often included in ceremonies and activities, such as dried corn or other crops, African cloth, fresh fruit, a *kinara* (candleholder) with seven candles, a communal cup for pouring libation, a plaque or poster of The Seven Principles, and a decorative mat. It is also common for those who observe the holiday to include in their activities a black, red, and green flag to represent the African diaspora. Participants celebrate with *karamu* (feasts), music and drumming, dance, poetry, stories, and end the holiday with a day of reflection and recommitment to The Seven Principles and other central cultural values.

Resources

To learn more about Kwanzaa, African American heritage and culture, and supporting Black businesses, consider the resources below.

- Visit the [Official Kwanzaa Web Site](#) to learn more about the holiday, its symbols, and its celebrations
- Engage with [Black arts and heritage organizations](#) in Washington
- Learn about Black history and life from [BlackPast.org](#) and the [Black Heritage Society of Washington State](#)
- Support Black-owned businesses—you may browse by state and city on [supportblackowned.com](#)

We wish you a happy Kwanzaa and a wonderful new year!