

WHAT'S WRONG WITH KWANZAA?

Written by Jeffrey L. Boney, Associate Editor
Wednesday, 02 January 2013 00:00



You know it truly saddens me how many Black people shun and seek to marginalize something as empowering to any community as the seven principles of Kwanzaa.

Maulana Karenga created Kwanzaa in 1966 as the first specifically African-American holiday. Karenga said his goal was to “give Blacks an alternative to the existing holiday and give Blacks an opportunity to celebrate themselves and their history, rather than simply imitate the practice of the dominant society.”

Kwanzaa celebrates what its founder called the seven principles of Kwanzaa, or Nguzo Saba (originally Nguzu Saba—the seven principles of African Heritage), which Karenga said “is a communitarian African philosophy,” consisting of what Karenga called “the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world.”

These seven principles comprise Kawaida, a Swahili term for tradition and reason. It always amazes me how most Black people in the U.S. embrace manufactured holidays like Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving, without reservation, but when it comes to a holiday developed to embrace our African roots, they seek to marginalize it.

It's easy to marginalize and mock something that isn't understood and something that we haven't been told to accept.

Now, tell JBoney what is wrong with embracing principles like:

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Umoja (Unity): To strive for and to maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

Kujichagulia (Self-Determination): To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves.

Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems, and to solve them together.

Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics): To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together.

Nia (Purpose): To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba (Creativity): To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Imani (Faith): To believe with all our hearts in God, our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

It is absolutely okay to embrace Kwanzaa and not be ashamed to do so, as if you are going to catch a disease or get struck down by God for doing so. Most of you celebrated the manufactured Christmas holiday didn't you? You do know that you should celebrate Jesus everyday right?

Over-hyped Christmas praise gets a little annoying honestly.

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No, I don't forget the baby or the reason for the season. I remember Him daily.

If Jesus can be praised during the manufactured Christmas holiday, can't He be praised and exalted during a celebration of Kwanzaa? There is nothing in the handbook that says you can't worship God or acknowledge Jesus during Kwanzaa.

What I am saying is that Jesus is the "reason for the season" every season and every holiday, not just during the select holidays that we choose to highlight and acknowledge.

Why do Jewish people celebrate and attach themselves to their historical and foundational roots.....Passover, Hanukkah, Good Friday, etc.? They embrace their culture, while continuing to honor God.

What's questionable about an individual connecting themselves to a community or group? Don't we do it every day with religion, politics, educational institutions, fraternal organizations and socioeconomic class?

So, while Kwanzaa was birthed out of the struggle in the 60's and 70's, should we seek to discredit and marginalize these principles because of that?

The FBI was instrumental in disrupting the power of unified acceptance of our traditional roots through creating discord for those seeking to empower the people. I strongly encourage you to avoid doing the same.

When it comes to Kwanzaa, I say forget a week, how about celebrating Kwanzaa every day?

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