

BUXTON-FRIENDSHIP EXPRESS

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

KWANZAA-African-Centred Values of CHRISTMAS

By Rennie Parris

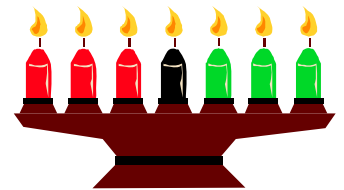
The traditional celebration of the birth of Christ during the season of Advent has lost its values due to a shift from its spiritual significance to an emphasis on consumerism and commercialism. The birth of Christ represents the source of hope and peace in a world that is rife with violence, disrespect for humanity, oppression, various forms of abuse, ignorance, starvation, and a lack of self-worth.

As we prepare for

Christmas we may also meditate on the seven principles of Kwanzaa that can change our lives for the better. Kwanzaa is not a substitute for Christmas, nor is it a political or religious activity. It is a unique cultural celebration that is observed by people of African descent all around the world. It emphasizes the traditional African values of family, community responsibility, commerce, and self-improvement. The word Kwanzaa is derived from a Kiswahili phrase – “matunda ya

kwanza” which means “giving thanks for the first fruits of the harvest”.

Kwanzaa was recreated in 1966 in the western hemisphere by Dr. Maulana Ron Karenga to unite and strengthen the communities of people of African descent. It is celebrated each year from December 26th through January 1st. It is a seven-day African centered spiritual celebration of African culture, family, community, and history. In addition, Kwanzaa is an occasion for reflection when African



people assemble to remember, reassess, reward, recommit, and rejoice over the things that happened to them during the past year or years.

According to Bakari Akil, Kwanzaa creates a lasting positive impact on the psyche of Africans and makes them into strong Blackmen and Black-

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KWANZAA



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women. Nehusi described Kwanzaa as rites of passage for youths of the nation. It may be used to provide them with new ideas and concepts of African heritage. This new knowledge of our African heritage could positively impact their thinking and change their lives for the better.

Worrel claimed that the purpose of Kwanzaa is to introduce black people to seven core principles that contribute to unity and community empowerment. These principles are called the Nguzo Saba or the seven principles of Kwanzaa. A principle is observed each day of the celebration. The week begins with the principle of Umoja (unity) which requires us to recognize and accept our identity as African people and maintain that togetherness in our families, schools, communities, and nations.

The other principles in order of observance are: Kujichagulia (self-determination) which requires us to define, name, and speak for ourselves; Ujima (collective work and responsibility) which reminds us of our obligation to bond together to solve our present and future social, economic, and moral problems; Ujamaa (cooperative economics) which invites us to build and maintain businesses using our collective resources to change our state of economic impoverishment; Nia (purpose) which encourages to discover

that unique something that we have been born with to do in the world, claim it, and fulfill it; Kuumba (creativity) which calls upon us to use our individual talents to build and maintain strong and vibrant communities better than those we inherited from our ancestors; and Imani (faith) which demands that we have confidence and belief in our abilities to succeed in struggles.

Kwanzaa celebrations have several significant implications for people of African descent throughout the world. Learning and practising the Nguzo Saba – the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa will empower people of African descent to:

- ♣ Realize our connectedness to our brothers and sisters throughout the world who are languishing under the cultural and geopolitical hegemony of white supremacists.
- ♣ Continue the struggle against economic exploitation, racial oppression, starvation, and the genocide of humanity from the spread of HIV and AIDS.
- ♣ Heal the pathologies in our communities that were culturally induced from the relentless bombardment of eurocentric values.
- ♣ Alter our minds and self-image to withstand the onslaught of racism, and predatory global dominance of the new world order.
- ♣ Embrace the wisdom of our ancestors as we seek to up-

lift, protect, nurture, support, and edify each other.

The programme for the seven days of the Kwanzaa festival includes: drumming, chanting, dancing, impromptu presentations from the floor, poetry, the pouring of libation, candle lighting ritual, greetings, feasting from a variety of cuisines, distributing of gifts, and question and answer sessions. Kwanzaa ends with a day of assessment on which each celebrant rises and pledges his/her recommitment to making the principles viable throughout the year.

In our community (Buxton-Friendship and, by extension, Guyana), this African tradition is not widely celebrated. It is overshadowed by the celebration of Christmas. However, as we seek to embrace our African traditions with greater enthusiasm, the celebration of Kwanzaa could be an additional cultural event on our calendar. It remains regrettable that in our widely Afro-centered community, Kwanzaa is narrowly celebrated.



Past Xmas Festivities in Buxton

Vivid Recollections of the Xmas Festivities at Buxton By "BUXTONIAN" – December 30, 1948

PEACE and quietness can truly be said to have reigned all through the festive season so far as Buxton was concerned but there was not an absence of jollity, mirth and pleasure among the populace, but whenever manifestation they made of them was very much tempered and modified. A walk around on Christmas day revealed that there was not made that kind of elaborate preparation which was a marked feature of old time Christmases. In times gone by there was always something to greet the eye, for even the humblest cottager did not neglect to show by his drapery over her cottage door and new or fancy blinds on the windows, if balloons could not have been procured to give taste to the kind of decoration made, that it was Christmas – a season that must be given a kind of special welcome.

NO DRUM BEATING

There was no drum beating, nor was there any street singing of wild songs with the usual accompanying gesticulations to disturb the stillness which prevailed throughout the day. It was Christmas Eve night that merriment made itself felt. As soon as the evening shades appeared the singing of Christmas Carols by various groups of young men and young women began; and they continued all through the night. This particular feature was unprecedented and the zest and excellence with which it was all done were commendable.

CHOIR IN GOOD FORM

The Catholics as has been the age long custom had their Mid-night Mass and the little church of St. Anthony was as usual, brilliantly illuminated. There was the accustomed procession to the manger, but there was no profusion of gifts. The invitation to visit the Crib was given in the usual way by the singing of "Come! Come! Come to the Manger, children! Come to the children's king", which the choir beautifully rendered. The mid-night Mass was followed by two others masses at daybreak. The Anglican, the Methodist, the Congregationalist, the Church of God, each had its own service after daybreak to celebrate the Christmas, and each congregation joined heartily in the singing of some of the hymns specially written to tell of the birth of the Saviour of Mankind.

CHRISTMAS SUNDAY

On this day which in former years was always the grayest of the season when the young folks of both sexes endeavour to vie one with the other in their Christmas Sunday Garb, there was, not in evidence much to attract attention of the observer.

There was much sobering down of any display in apparel as there was in public festivities. the usual crop of christenings followed by "Candles" was there and there were several unions of hearts and hands of young man and maidens; and one clergy man was heard to remark at marriage feast that he had his hands full

and was kept busy nearly all day long baptizing, preaching giving communion, and marrying; and it was his good fortune not to be called upon to do any burying.

SACRED CONCERT

At Arundel Church a sacred Concert was staged in the afternoon, but the many attractions in other directions robbed it of the attendance it deserved. The items on the programme were all splendidly rendered and told of the energy and time that must have been expended in its preparation.

ON WITH THE DANCE

MONDAY was officially observed as Boxing Day and the sport-loving and holiday-merrymaking homesters and friends and acquaintances from abroad had a day all to themselves to indulge in their particular tastes and fancies at the picnics and dances that were promoted. These were held at the Tipperary Hall, the Congregational Schoolroom, and the ideal Recreation Club Bungalow. During the day as well as the night there was a jam session and patrons just let themselves go in the latest in jiving. Oh! how their hearts were light; how they danced and jived, though moon and stars were not shining bright, the while the bells of the orchestra went tinkle-ting.

Source:

Covering the Country Districts – the Daily Chronicle – Thursday, December 30, 1948: Page 6
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