

KWANZAA GREETING

The greetings during Kwanzaa are in Swahili. Swahili is a Pan-African language and is chosen to reflect African Americans' commitment to the whole of Africa and African culture rather than to a specific ethnic or national group or culture. The greetings are to reinforce awareness of and commitment to the Seven Principles. It is: "Habari gani?" and the answer is each of the principles for each of the days of Kwanzaa. For examples, today is Ujamaa (oo-JAH-mah), the fourth day. So when I say "Habari gani" you say Ujamaa Habari gani.

KWANZAA

THERE IS NO WAY TO UNDERSTAND and appreciate the meaning and message of Kwanzaa without understanding and appreciating its profound and pervasive concern with values. In fact, Kwanzaa's reason for existence, its length of seven days, its core focus and its foundation are all rooted in its concern with values. Kwanzaa inherits this value concern and focus from Kawaida, the African philosophical framework in which it was created. Kawaida philosophy is a communitarian African philosophy which is an ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world.

Dr. Maulana Karenga, creator/author

NGUZO SABA

(THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES)

Kwanzaa was created to introduce and reinforce seven basic values of African culture which contribute to building and reinforcing family, community and culture among African American people as well as Africans throughout the world African community. These values are called the Nguzo Saba which in Swahili means the Seven Principles. Developed by Dr. Karenga, the Nguzo Saba stand at the heart of the origin and meaning of Kwanzaa, for it is these values which are not only the building blocks for community but also serve to reinforce and enhance them.

Dr. Maulana Karenga, creator/author

Kasserian ingera - And how are the children?

Among the most accomplished and fabled tribes of Africa, no tribe was considered to have warriors more fearsome or more intelligent than the mighty Masai. It is perhaps surprising then to learn the traditional greeting that passed between Masai warriors. "Kasserian ingera" one would always say to another. It means "and how are the children?"

It is still the traditional greeting among the Masai, acknowledging the high value that the Masai always place on their children's well-being. Even warriors with no children of their own would always give the traditional answer, "all the children are well." Meaning, of course, that peace and safety prevail, that the priorities of protecting the young, the powerless, are in place, that Masai society has not forgotten its reasons for being, its proper functions and responsibilities. "All the children are well" means that life is good. It means that the daily struggles of existence do not preclude proper caring for their young.

I wonder how it might affect our consciousness of our own children's welfare if in our culture we took to greeting each other with this daily question: "and how are the children?" I wonder if we heard that question and passed it along to each other a dozen times a day, if it would begin to make a difference in the reality of how children are thought of or cared for in our own country?

I wonder if we could truly say without any hesitation, "the children are well, yes, all the children are well."

Adapted by Pat Hoertdoerfer from an excerpt of a speech by Rev. Dr. Patrick T. O'Neill

LIBATION

It is tradition to pour libation in remembrance of the ancestors on all special occasions.

Kwanzaa, is such an occasion, as it provides us an opportunity to reflect on our African past and

American present. Water is suggested as it holds the essence of life and should be placed in a communal cup and poured in the direction of the four winds; north, south, east, and west.

In the past it would be passed among family members

and guests who may either sip from the cup or make a sipping gesture today we will simply pour into this plant.

LIBATION

For The Motherland cradle of civilization.

For the ancestors and their indomitable spirit.

For the elders from whom we can learn much.

For our youth who represent the promise for tomorrow.

For our people the original people.

For our struggle and in remembrance of those who have struggled on our behalf.

For Umoja the principle of unity which should guide us in all that we do.

For the creator who provides all things great and small.

Farewell Statement

Strive for discipline, dedication and achievement in all you do. Dare struggle and sacrifice and gain the strength that comes from this.

Build where you are and dare leave a legacy that will last as long as the sun shines and the water flows. Practice daily the 7 principles.

And may the wisdom of the ancestors always walk with us. May the year's end meet us laughing and stronger. May the children honor us by following our example of love and struggle. And at the end of next year, may we sit again together in larger numbers, with greater achievement and closer to our promise and a higher level of human life.

HARAMBEE

Harambee means “let's pull together”

- please stand and raise your right arm (show them by raising yours)
- with our right arm - we are all going to pull down as as we do – make a fist
- at the same time we are going to shout Harambee 7 times – each time raising our right arm and pulling down
- the last time, we are going to shout Harambee and hold it as long as we can.

TAMSHI LA TAMBIKO

THE LIBATION STATEMENT

Our fathers and mothers came here, lived, loved, struggled and built here. At this place, their love and lives and labor rose like the sun and gave strength and meaning to the day. For them, who have so much, we give in return. On this same sod we will sow our seeds and build and move in unity and strength. Here too, we will continue their struggle for liberation and a higher level of human life. May our eyes be like the eagle, our strength be like the elephant, and the boldness of our life be like the lion. And may we remember and honor our ancestors and the legacy they left for as long as the sun shines and the waters flow.