



| ANNUAL FOUNDER'S KWANZAA MESSAGE |
"PRACTICING KWANZAA AND THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES:
ENSURING THE WELL-BEING OF THE WORLD"

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55TH ANNIVERSARY

H*eri za Kwanzaa.* Happy Kwanzaa to African people everywhere throughout the world African community. We bring and send you Kwanzaa greetings of celebration, solidarity and continued struggle for a shared good in the world. And in the words and way of our ancestors, we wish for you all things good, pure and beautiful, all the good that heaven grants, the earth produces and the waters bring forth from their depths. *Hotep. Ashe. Heri.*

This season and celebration of Kwanzaa on its 55th anniversary comes at a time when humanity and the world are in crisis: the pandemic of Covid-19 with all its destructive and deadly variants; erosion of the concept and practice of democracy; failed economies; continuing conflict and war and resultant massive displacement of peoples, famine and increased suffering. And there is continuing environmental degradation, climate change, extreme weather events, rising sea levels, destruction of species and species habitats, increased pollution, disappearance of the arctic ice, and the threatened loss of island nations.

As a pan-African holiday with ancient agricultural origins, Kwanzaa celebrates the good of the earth and carries within it a commitment to protect, preserve and share this good. And Kwanzaa's modern origins in the Black Freedom Movement commits it to the achievement of liberation and social justice. Thus, in *Kawaida* philosophy, out of which Kwanzaa and the Nguzo Saba were created, environmental justice and social justice are inseparably linked in the moral

imperative to achieve and ensure African and human good and the well-being of the world.

Dr. Wangari Maathai gave her life to the practice of joining the struggle for social justice with the struggle for environmental justice. She also understood that we need not sacrifice the good of human beings for the well-being of the world nor sacrifice the well-being of the world for the good of human beings. What is called for is a complementary justice; where justice for one is conceived and practiced with and through justice for both. She speaks of how in the uncritical acceptance of colonialism's views and values about the earth "hallowed landscapes lost their sacredness and were exploited as the people became insensitive to the destruction, accepting it as progress." Thus, she calls for an expansion of "democratic space" in which the people make decisions in their own interests, rediscover their voices and values, and rebuild their social and natural world in rightful, effective and mutually beneficial ways.

Long before the concept and call of environmentalism emerged, the brilliant scientist and chemurgist, Nana Dr. George Washington Carver, was an environmentalist concerned about both social justice and the well-being of the world. He taught that we should respect ourselves and others and he asked us to "neither look up to the rich nor down on the poor." Rather we are to aid "the little and lowly people" in their struggles to overcome poverty and oppression and live lives of dignity and decency. Moreover, he taught us to love nature, listen to its speech,

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and learn its language and lessons for the good of humans and the world. And he asks us not to hoard, monopolize or be greedy in relation to the good of the world, but to be those "who take (their) share of the world and let other people have theirs."

The concept and practice of saving and sustaining the world is unavoidably linked to humans equitably sharing the world and doing what ensures the well-being of the world. And the *Nguzo Saba*, the Seven Principles, offers us a clear foundation and way forward for this. And thus, we are urged to relate rightfully, act justly and walk gently and humbly on the earth. The principle and practice of *Umoja* (Unity), teaches an ever-expanding sense of self through our sense of oneness with others and the world. With others we are fellow human beings (*watu*) with obligations of mutual respect, reciprocal solidarity and cooperation for common good. And in our relationship with the world, we are world beings (*walimwengu*), deeply embedded in the natural as well as social world, interrelated, interdependent and unavoidably responsible for the health, wholeness and well-being of both. Thus, we understand that damage to the world is damage to us and ecocide is a form of genocide, the end of all.

The principle and practice of *Kujichagulia* (Self-determination), as Nana Haji Malcolm teaches us, is "to see for yourself and listen for yourself and think for yourself." And this is to be done, not in isolation, but in community and in the midst of struggle for justice, freedom and good in the world. It means not being satisfied with prevailing established order thought, but doing deep thinking about the current conditions and future of the world, and as the ancestors taught: think deep about what is good for the people and for the future of the world.

The principle and practice of *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility) urges acceptance of the shared responsibility to work together for good in the world, the good of freedom, justice, equity, peace, mutual caring and cooperation and building the good world we all want and deserve and leave as a legacy worthy of the name African and human. It is a work and struggle that require a genuine and sustained moral sensitivity to others, their aspirations for the good as well as an ethical commitment to the well-being of the world and to the struggle to achieve both.

Upholding the principle and practice of *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics) teaches us the essential value of shared work and shared wealth and the right of everyone to a life of dignity and decency. It urges us to cultivate a kinship in and with the world, to reject artificially created conflicts between a robust economy and a rightful relationship with the environment. And it teaches respect of the earth as shared sacred space and common good, not to be plundered, polluted and depleted by corporation greed and aggression and consumerist consumption without consideration of consequences to the world.

In embracing the principle and practice of *Nia* (Purpose), we foreground and foster the ancient moral teaching of the *Odu Ifa* that we should do things with joy "for surely humans have been divinely chosen to bring good into the world." And this is the fundamental mission and meaning of human life. And it reminds us that even as we are chosen by history and heaven to bring good into the world, we must also choose to do it. It means audaciously choosing the good for the world and acting accordingly. This means choosing in thought and practice love over hate, peace over war, freedom over unfreedom, justice over injustice, sharing over hoarding, and liberation from oppressions of all kinds, forms and fashions.

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The principle and practice of *Kuumba* (Creativity) invites and urges us to work and struggle mightily for communities, societies and a world more beautiful and beneficial than the ones we inherited. It raises up the ancient African ethical imperative of the *Husia* to practice *serudj ta*, i.e., to constantly repair, renew and remake the world. We are to see this repair, renewal and remaking as both a social initiative and an environmental one. For again, the issues, impact and outcomes are interrelated and interdependent. Thus, we must, in our relations with each other, other humans, and the natural world: raise up what is ruins; repair what is damaged; rejoin what is separated; replenish what is depleted, strengthen what is weakened; set right what is wrong; and make firm and flourish that which is fragile, insecure and underdeveloped.

Finally, the principle and practice of *Imani* (Faith) teaches us and urges us to believe in our people, in the good we seek, strive and struggle for and in our capacity to achieve and share it. And we must believe in the righteousness and victory of our struggle to bring and sustain good in the world. It also urges us to believe in the coming good of the future and our young peoples' will, consciousness, capacity and commitment to forge it and to share it equitably and caringly. For we and they and what we do during this crisis and long after are actually the future unfolding through the transformative power of righteous and relentless struggle, "to bring good in the world and not let any good be lost," as our honored ancestors taught us. ▲

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