

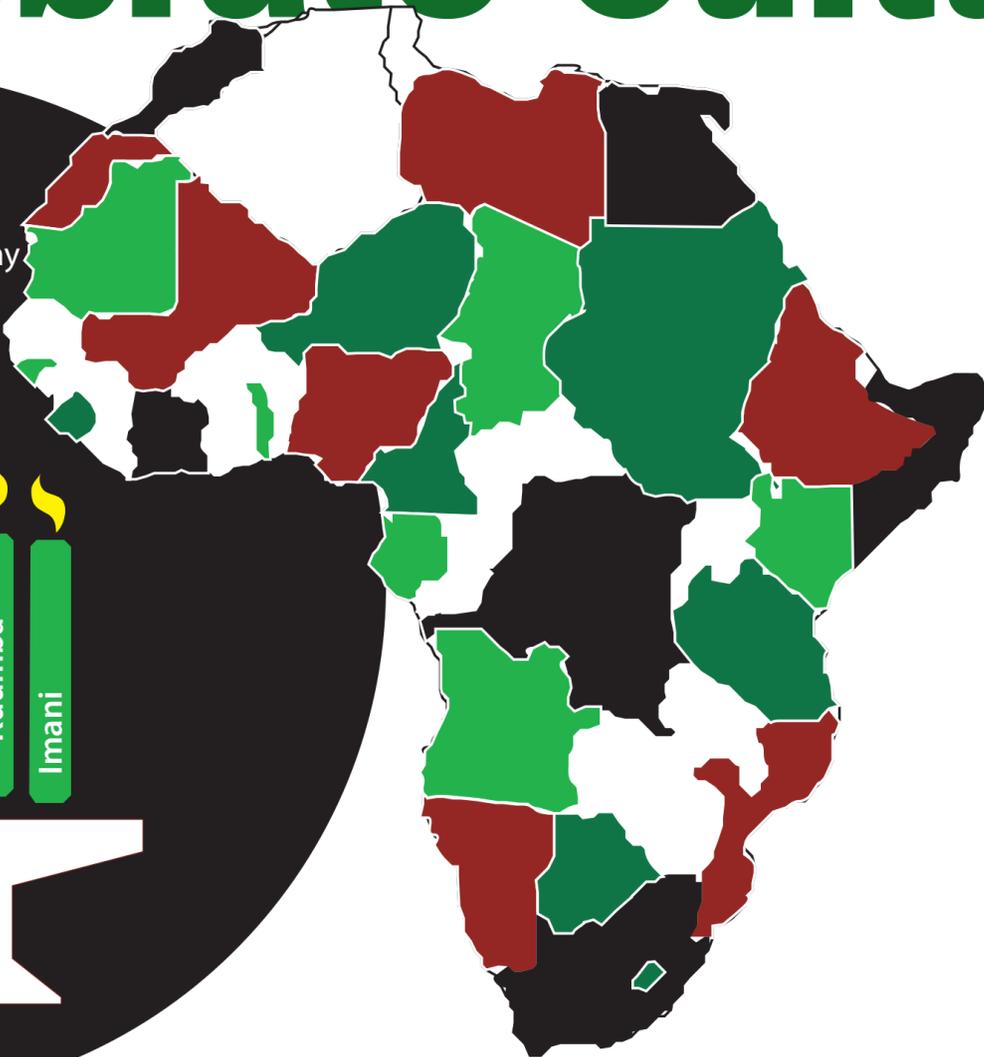
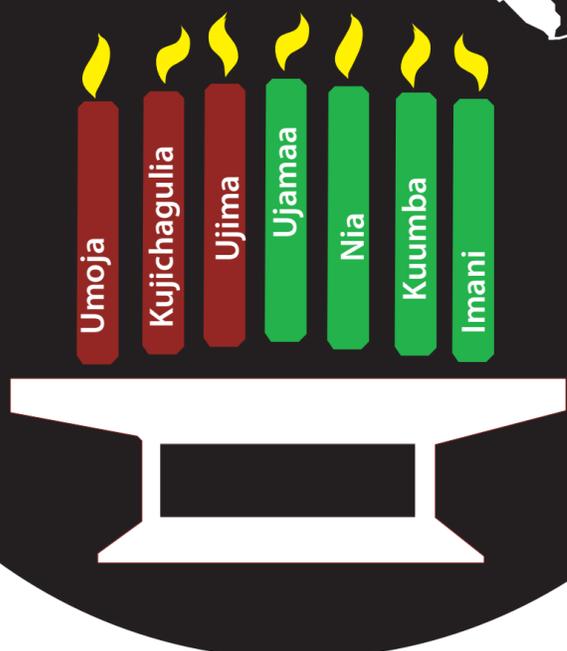


Prison Puppies
Inmates at a Kansas prison train pets for future owners as rehabilitation

See Inmates
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Celebrate Culture

Kwanzaa is celebrated from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1, and each day represents a principle



Design by Karen Schwartztrauber/Index

Holiday means reverie



Erin Sadzewicz
Features Editor

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas — everywhere you look, in fact.

In our generally monolingual, monocultural nook of the nation, Christmas is really the only holiday many think about, and the media make sure of that. We are bombarded with images and advertisements telling us that getting the newest Barbie, iPod or the latest, coolest toy will make our family and friends happy. If Santa were real (sorry to break the news), he'd be making crazy amounts of money in endorsements.

I don't think our consumer-driven society controls everyone's idea of happiness and celebration. I know plenty of people — OK, plenty of broke people — who cringe with every bad videogame commercial. I doubt anyone really believes the holidays solely to be about business and receiving gifts.

The holiday season, to me, means family time, convincing my roommates to buy a \$15 tree from Wal-Mart and then decorating it when I should have been writing a paper, baking, singing and, above all, it means an excuse to celebrate and spend quality time with the people I care about. I mean, I'm not pure anti-consumer who thinks Christmas is a farce — I asked Santa (my dad) for an iPod. But the connection between the religious nature of the holidays and why I celebrate them has faded, as it might have for many.

Baby Jesus often does not enter my thoughts this time of year. I like singing Christmas carols because I know all the words. I like putting up a Christmas tree because it's easy to get everyone together and excited about it. I like walking outside and seeing the contrast of colored lights against the night. I like going to Chicago and looking up at the tree on State Street and feeling so tiny. I like how everyone is generally in a better mood and more generous. I only think about the three wise men when someone inevitably is trying to name the three gifts, and, come on, they're fun to say, right?

When I look around my world, I see, hear, feel and interact with people. Human beings comfort, love, trust, hurt, are hurt by, give to and take from me, and it is through these relationships I find the spirit of celebration, not in a story about the birth of a miracle savior.

Kwanzaa is an African holiday celebrated around this time that is meant to reaffirm bonds, reverse the creator, commemorate past events and learn from what lessons they offer, according to the official Kwanzaa Web site. This holiday is not so unlike why many of us celebrate Christmas. Different cultures and different religions often celebrate basic ideas of attaining a higher good in life.

If we took time to learn about other people in the world and why and how they celebrate, we can get to the roots of this holiday season without sinking into a sea of wrapping paper and gift receipts. I can't speak for anyone else, but I've realized that it might not be the religious nature of the holidays that is most important but the way it connects us with humanity.

Sadly, today is the end of my reign as features editor, and unfortunately for me, I've only just realized I have the power to slap my words on the front page of TruLife. No more showing my ugly mug or my ponderings in your faces. So long, and happy holidays.

Coalition honors African traditions

Celebration recognizes cultural traditions and a collectivist struggle

Maggie Wolcott
Staff Reporter

Although it was created in America in 1966, Kwanzaa has its roots deep in African tradition and culture.

The Coalition of African American Women, Multicultural Affairs and the Funds Allotment Council sponsored a Kwanzaa celebration last Saturday, which demonstrated the meaning of Kwanzaa and its seven principles.

Bertha Thomas, director of Multicultural Affairs, said the principle of Umoja, or Unity, encompasses all the principles of Kwanzaa.

"It is kind of a collectivist idea of really linking black people to a collective struggle to help all black people in the United States and around the world to unify," Thomas said.

Kwanzaa was founded by Maulana Karenga to link blacks to their ancestors and culture, Thomas said.

The language of Kwanzaa is Swahili. Kwanzaa means "first fruits of the harvest" in Swahili. The extra "a" was added to the American spelling of Kwanzaa so the seven letters would represent the seven principles.

Kwanzaa celebrations in the United States find their traditions in the harvest celebrations in Africa, Thomas said.

She said Kwanzaa demonstrates the common purposes to think about family and about what people can do for each other and for society.

Kwanzaa is a weeklong holiday, and each day celebrates a different principle.

At the Kwanzaa program, Thomas said each principle was

examined individually.

She said the underlying meaning of each principle was explained, the candle was lit on the kinara, and then the principle was demonstrated.

Thomas said it was wonderful how students demonstrated their creativity in each principle.

She said her favorite principle is Nia, meaning purpose. Thomas said it is interesting to see how students

represent their purposes, both for the community and their individual purposes for their lives.

Sophomore LaTanya Mackey, fundraising and programs chairwoman for the Coalition, said principles were demonstrated through singing, dancing, poetry and art.

"The whole point is to present every principle with some kind of talent," LaTanya Mackey said.

LaTanya Mackey said that although she does not celebrate Kwanzaa at home, she did learn about it and always has celebrated it at school.

"When I was little [my family] made sure we knew about Kwanzaa because it is not really a religious thing," she said. "It is cultural."

LaTanya Mackey said the program emphasized that Kwanzaa is not a religious holiday but a cultural holiday. She said it is a fun celebration that incorporates many values.

"[Kwanzaa] is an African-American holiday, and it is another way for the community to get together and celebrate culture," she said.

The principles of collective work, responsibility and coop-

erative economics encourage people to join together and help the community, LaTanya Mackey said.

She said Nia is something she often thinks about.

"I think about my purpose being here at Truman and being in college, and later on in life and my future," LaTanya Mackey said.

One of the central activities of Kwanzaa is a large feast, the Karamu, which was served in the middle of the program.

Part of the Kwanzaa celebration is making gifts for each other, LaTanya Mackey said. She said her favorite part of the program was giving gifts at the end. She said Members of the Coalition made jewelry boxes for each member, with the seven principles of Kwanzaa written on each

box, she said. Freshman LaShonda Mackey, a member of the Coalition, said her favorite part of the program was the performance for the principle of faith. She said a group of students performed a Bible study discussing faith, and they made it fun and educational.

LaShonda Mackey said many people seem to be aware of [Kwanzaa] but not what it means and represents.

She said the weeklong celebration of Kwanzaa makes the principles known.

"It is a cultural holiday," LaShonda Mackey said. "It is meant to celebrate African ideals and what African Americans here should strive for in their daily lives."

Last year about 50 people attended the Kwanzaa program, LaTanya Mackey said. She said this year almost 200 people at-

"It's kind of a collectivist idea of really linking black people to a collective struggle ..."

Bertha Thomas
Director of Multicultural Affairs



Courtney Robbins/Index

Freshman Sammone Kidd plays music in celebration at a Kwanzaa dinner Saturday night in the SUB Georgian Room.

tended the free program, and the audience was more diverse.

"Our whole goal on campus is to be more diverse, and the only way to do that is to go out there and experience other things," she said. "It broadens your horizons to know more about other people."

LaTanya Mackey said diver-

sity programs are important to educate people about different cultures.

She said she does not think a lot of people are aware of Kwanzaa.

"Hopefully next year we will have a more integrated audience so that everyone can ... experience something new," LaTanya Mackey said.

The Seven Principles

Dec. 26



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

Dec. 27



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

Dec. 28



Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)
To build our community together and make our brother's and sister's problems our problems and to solve them together.

Dec. 29



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

Dec. 30



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

Dec. 31



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.

Jan. 1



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