

OUR VIEW

Kwanzaa Time

Kwanzaa is nearly upon us. So we begin this editorial with a quick refresher on the only African-American holiday that truly belongs to us. Umoja (Unity): to strive for and 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 brother's and sister's 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 heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Such a refresher is necessary for several reasons. One, Kwanzaa is rapidly becoming as commercialized as Christmas. The "reason for the season" has been lost, and lost for a long time. A similar fate could befall Kwanzaa, which was never meant to become a reason to load up on Afrocentric baubles and gifts. To avoid that fate, we must be reminded of Kwanzaa's deep roots.

Its site says: Kwanzaa is an African-American and Pan-African holiday which celebrates family, community and culture. Celebrated from December 26 thru January 1, its origins are in the first harvest celebrations of Africa from which it takes its name. The name Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase 'matunda ya kwanza' which means 'first fruits' in Swahili, a Pan-African language which is the most widely spoken African language. The first-fruits celebrations are recorded in African history as far back as ancient Egypt and Nubia and appear in ancient and modern times in other classical African civilizations, such as Ashantiland and Yorubaland. These celebrations are also found in ancient and modern times among societies as large as empires like the Zulu kingdoms of Swaziland or smaller societies and groups like the Matabele, Thonga and Lovedu, all of southeastern Africa. Kwanzaa builds on the five fundamental activities of Continental African 'first fruit' celebrations: in gathering; reverence; commemoration; recommitment; and celebration."

The second reason we need to be reminded of Kwanzaa's principles is that they're applicable throughout the year. Many of us practice the principles every day and don't even know it. When we sit down for a family dinner or reinforce pride in the African-American race, we're practicing Umoja. When selecting African-inspired names for our children, clothing lines, civic groups and companies, we embrace Kujichagulia. When we speak out and act/react, as the members of the Safe Village Coalition do when violence strikes, and work to repair and improve the fabric of our community, we reflect upon Ujima. When we procure services from African-American professionals, buy our food from supermarkets, restaurants and vendors, flowers from florists, and procure services from CPAs, insurance agents, Realtors, lawyers, media professionals and all other manner of Black entrepreneurs, we embody Ujamaa.

You can see remnants of Nia in the spoken word and poetry corners held throughout town and in the Afro-American studies department at UNLV: we're getting back to our roots, tapping into our once and future greatness. Creativity is on display in many facets: in the movement to play a vital role in the upcoming presidential caucus (something Blacks in Las Vegas haven't done before); in establishing an educational/recreational corridor on Lake Mead and a burgeoning one on Carey Avenue; in the books published, websites created and business models perfected by local African-Americans. Imani is how many of us live. We supplicate ourselves to a higher power and work to abide by the tenets of spirituality, humanity and decency.

Kwanzaa deserves our utmost respect and devotion. It's something we need to pay attention to all year long. It's the only holiday by us, for us.



Words without action only words

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

First of all, allow me to thank you, the readers of this column, for writing, calling and e-mailing your comments, suggestions and other information to me.

Your kind words are encouraging and they strengthen my resolve to keep doing what I do. Although I cannot respond to each of you, I deeply appreciate your taking the time to do so. Thank you for your words of inspiration; I will continue to act upon them.

Speaking of acting upon words, I often quote famous Black people, as I am sure most of us do. We refer to their writings and their speeches, citing their words of wisdom and deriving inspiration from their knowledge.

I recently thought about how we often recite the words of famous Black people after they have passed away. It's sad to think that so many of our forebears said so many important and enlightening things that we failed to heed or even repeat until long after they died.

I hope my words are not merely quoted and used simply to stir the emotions — now or after I have left this earth. Too often, we let opportunity slip away because we fail to act upon information when we receive it; we'd rather wait and use the words



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to temporarily satisfy and soothe our pains.

Let's look at some examples.

In the past two or three decades, the phrase "by any means necessary" has been used millions of times by our brothers and sisters. Had we followed some of Malcolm's words at the time he was saying them, imagine where we would be today.

Still many Black men and women quote him and use his words to stir the emotions, but few are willing to incorporate the words into their daily lives. How many of us are willing to have economic empowerment by any means necessary?

Marcus Garvey is another brother who is quoted quite often. How many of us actually live by his words?

How about Mary McLeod Bethune? She told us what to do economically before she died, and we just love to hear her words today. Have we turned her words into action?

Martin Delany, T. Thomas Fortune, William Wells-

Brown, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, and many more have told us what we must do for ourselves in order to have a strong economic foundation. Are we following the principles they espoused?

Let us not forget about Booker T. Washington who practiced what he preached and demonstrated the results of his words. And probably the most quoted of them all, Frederick Douglass, who told us what to do and how to do it more than 100 years ago.

We love to talk about "power" and how it "concedes nothing," and we rejoice in his notion of "agitation."

Are we merely interested in feeling good about economic empowerment? Do we just like to hear the words of these and more famous Black men and women? Or, are we willing to act upon those words as well?

Speakers can recite the words of famous people and bring the audience to a fever pitch; but if the audience goes home and does not act upon those words, they become, as another famous writer and activist said, "Sounding brass and tinkling cymbals."

As we face our collective economic future, we can look at it in one of two ways: as a speeding train about to run over us, or as a train we are about to board and take a nice long trip. What's it going to be?

If we had followed a few of the words our mothers and fathers uttered when they walked this earth, I shudder to think how powerful we would be, how together we would be, how truly rich we would be — not only financially, but in most other ways, as well.

(See Clingman, Page 9)



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