



December 2024

WE ARE COMMITTED TO MAKING BRIO LIVING SERVICES A SAFE, WELCOMING PLACE FOR ALL TO LIVE AND WORK

WHAT IS KWANZAA?

Kwanzaa is a time for families and communities to come together to remember the past and to celebrate African American culture.

Created in 1966 by Maulana Ron Karenga, Kwanzaa is an African American and Pan-African holiday that celebrates history, values, family, community, and culture. The ideas and concepts of Kwanzaa are expressed in the Swahili language, one of the most widely spoken languages in Africa. The seven principles which form its core were drawn from communitarian values found throughout the African continent. These principles are: Umoja, Kujichagulia, Ujima, Ujamaa, Nia, Kuumba, and Imani.

Information provided by the National Museum of African American History & Culture
<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/initiatives/kwanzaa>

December Celebrations

Universal Human Rights Month
World AIDS Awareness Month

3rd International Day of

Persons with Disabilities

25th-Jan.2nd Hanukkah

10th Human Rights Day

21st Winter Solstice/Yule

25th Christmas Day

26th-Jan.1st Kwanzaa

31st New Year's Eve





Kwanzaa gets its name from the Swahili phrase “matunda ya kwanza” and is rooted in first fruits celebrations which are found in cultures throughout Africa, both in ancient and modern times.

THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF **KWANZAA**

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 communities’ 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 development of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba (Creativity): To do always as much as we can to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Imani (Faith): To believe with all our hearts in our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

CANDLE LIGHTING

A central place in the home for the Kwanzaa Set (the symbols of Kwanzaa) is chosen. A table is then spread with a beautiful piece of African cloth. Then, the mkeka (mat) is placed down and all of the other symbols are placed on it or next to it to symbolize our rootedness in our tradition. Next the Kinara (candle holder) is placed on the mat and the Mishumaa Saba (seven candles) are placed in the kinara.

The colors of Kwanzaa are black, red, and green; black for the people, red for their struggle, and green for the future and hope that comes from their struggle. Therefore, there is one black candle, three red, and three green candles. These are the mishumaa saba (the seven candles) and they represent the Seven Principles. The black candle is lit first on the first day of the celebration, and the remaining candles are lit afterwards from left to right on the following days. This is to indicate that the people come first, then the struggle, and then the hope that comes from the struggle.





What is Hanukkah?

Hanukkah is a Jewish festival that reaffirms the ideals of Judaism and commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple of Jerusalem by the lighting of candles on each day of the festival. Hanukkah is widely celebrated and one of the most popular Jewish religious observances.

Why does Hanukkah last for eight days?

When Judas Maccabeus entered the Second Temple of Jerusalem, he only found a small jar of oil that had not been defiled by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The jar only contained enough oil to burn for one day, but miraculously the oil burned for eight days until new consecrated oil could be located, establishing that the festival should last eight days.

Menorah

The most important Hanukkah tradition is the lighting of the menorah each evening. The menorah recalls the Temple lampstand and is a candelabra with eight branches, plus a holder for the shammash ("servant") candle that is used to light the other eight candles. One candle is lit the first evening, and an additional candle is lit on each subsequent evening until eight candles are burning on the last evening.



Christmas

Christmas is a Christian holiday that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is celebrated on December 25th by most Christians, but Orthodox Christians celebrate it on January 7th. The name "Christmas" comes from the Mass of Christ, a service where Christians remember Jesus' death and resurrection. Christmas is a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon with a variety of traditions and practices. Some popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends, and waiting for Santa Claus. Christmas traditions vary by region and culture. For example, in the United States, some popular Christmas dinner foods include roast turkey and ham, but other regions may have different traditions. In the Southwest, people may display luminarias, which are lanterns made from brown paper bags, on Christmas Eve. Mexican Americans may celebrate Las Posadas, a reenactment of Mary and Joseph's search for a place to stay in Bethlehem.

DIVERSITY EQUITY
AND INCLUSION



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The Winter Solstice

The Winter Solstice, occurring around December 21 or 22 in the Northern Hemisphere and June 20 or 21 in the Southern Hemisphere, marks a fascinating astronomical event. It's the moment when the Sun is at its farthest southern point in the sky for the North and its farthest northern point for the South. On this day, the Sun takes its shortest path across the sky, resulting in the least daylight and the longest night of the year.

In the Northern Hemisphere, the North Pole tilts about 23.4° away from the Sun, while the rays hit their peak at the Tropic of Capricorn. Six months later, the tilt shifts, and the South Pole experiences its solstice, with the Sun's rays overhead at the Tropic of Cancer. The winter solstice is celebrated as a time of rebirth, marking the start of winter and the return of longer days. Many ancient civilizations honored this turning point as a moment of renewal and hope. While it may be the darkest day of the year, it also signals brighter days ahead!

Source: <https://lifehacker.com>

What is Yule?

Yule is a Winter Solstice festival with roots in ancient Germanic and Norse peoples. Observed around December 21–22 in the Northern Hemisphere, it was a pre-Christian celebration that later blended into the Christmas holiday.

This age-old festival, known as "jol" to the Norse, is about themes of light, fire, and feasting. In the cold northern winters, cattle were often slaughtered for food, leading to hearty midwinter feasts and possibly even sacrifices to gods and spirits. Yule was also thought to connect with the dead, with the god Odin playing a role in the festivities.

The term "Yule" itself became associated with Christmas by the 9th century, influenced by historical figures like King Haakon of Norway, who mandated that Yule be celebrated alongside Christmas. Today, you can see remnants of Yule traditions, like the Yule log—a large log originally burned throughout the festival—now often represented by a cake.



<https://carnegiemnh.org/the-yule-goat/>