



Kwanzaa (/ˈkwɑːn.zə/) is a celebration held in the United States and in other nations of the [African diaspora](#) in [the Americas](#) and lasts a week. The celebration honors African heritage in African-American culture and is observed from December 26 to January 1, culminating in a feast and gift-giving. Kwanzaa has seven core principles (*Nguzo Saba*). It was created by [Maulana Karenga](#) and was first celebrated in 1966–67.

Kwanzaa celebrates what its founder called the seven principles of Kwanzaa, or *Nguzo Saba* (originally *Nguzu Saba*—the seven principles of African Heritage), which Karenga said "is a communitarian African philosophy," consisting of what Karenga called "the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world." They were developed in 1965, a year before Kwanzaa itself. These seven principles comprise *Kawaida*, a Swahili word meaning "common". Each of the seven days of Kwanzaa is dedicated to one of the following principles, as follows:

- *Umoja* (Unity): To strive for and to maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.
- *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination): To define and name ourselves, as well as to create and speak for ourselves.
- *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers' and sisters' 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 hearts in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Kwanzaa celebratory symbols include a mat (Mkeka) on which other symbols are placed: a *Kinara* (candle holder), *Mishumaa Saba* (seven candles), *mazao* (crops), *Muhindi* (corn), a *Kikombe cha Umoja* (unity cup) for commemorating and giving shukrani (thanks) to African Ancestors, and *Zawadi* (gifts)..