



Annual Founder's Kwanzaa Message
1966—40th Anniversary—2006

**NGUZU SABA: THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF
BRINGING GOOD INTO THE WORLD**

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The season of Kwanzaa has come again, this celebration and season of joyous harvesting and sharing of good in the world. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the recovery and reconstruction of this ancient celebration which has found a valuable and enduring place in the hearts, homes and daily lives of over 28 million people throughout the world African community. This year's theme is, of necessity, focused on the *Nguzo Saba* as a vital source of principles and practices to bring, increase and sustain good in the world. Indeed, they represent values and vital teachings of our ancestors about how we are to live good lives, rightfully relate to each other and the world, and teach our children by word and deed what it means to be an African man and woman in the world.

The *Nguzo Saba* begins with the principle and practice of *Umoja* (Unity). This speaks to the ancient African ethical understanding that we come into being and flourish in relationship and that *being of and with each other*, logically and morally leads us to *being for each other* in real and mutually rewarding ways. Thus, the principle and practice of unity cultivates in us a sense of oneness with each other and a responsibility to each other, our people, humanity and the world. It is also this principle which calls on us to stand in solidarity with the suffering, oppressed and struggling peoples of the world in their rightful resistance to oppression and their just quest for the good life we all want and deserve. And it is this principle that makes us ever conscious of our obligation to care for the environment as sacred space and to preserve and promote its health, wholeness and flourishing.

The Second Principle of the *Nguzo Saba*, *Kujichagulia* (Self-determination),

obligates us to respect our own cultural way of being human in the world and to avoid self-deforming and dignity-denying imitations of others. Moreover, it urges us to define ourselves by the life-and-dignity affirming ways we walk and work in the world, and to name ourselves in deep-rooted respect for our identity as bearers of dignity and divinity. And it calls on us to create for ourselves in the good-producing and world-preserving ways of our ancestors, and to speak for ourselves in ways that reveal our rootedness in our own culture and our commitment to the uniqueness and goodness of being African in the world.

The Third Principle of the *Nguzo Saba*, *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility) encourages us to commit ourselves to work and struggle to build the caring family, the moral community, the just society and the good world we all want and deserve to live in. It teaches us to constantly search for and sustain common ground in the best of our moral values, to engage in cooperative projects for the common good. Thus, we are called on to increase our efforts in the struggle to confront and solve the persistent and pervasive human problems of poverty, homelessness, hunger, disease and needless deaths, and war which disfigures the face and future of humanity.

The Fourth Principle of the *Nguzo Saba* is *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics). It is a principle and practice of shared work and shared wealth of the world. It calls for and cultivates economic practices which demonstrate due respect for the dignity and life-affirming necessity of work, the right to a life of dignity and decency and thus a right to an equitable share of the good and goods of the world. Moreover, as a project of cooperative creation and sharing of good,

Ujamaa seeks care and support of the vulnerable and a rightful relationship with the environment that protects it from the evils of plunder, pollution and depletion.

Nia (Purpose) is the Fifth Principle of the Nguzo Saba and it speaks to us of our collective vocation to do good in and for the world, and to restore our people to their traditional greatness defined by this ongoing creation and pursuit of the good. For in this practice, we follow the path of service like the great ones before us who gave their lives so we could live fuller, freer and more meaningful ones. This is the essential lesson of Dr. Martin Luther King's teaching on service as the substance of greatness, Min. Malcolm X's teaching on offering one's life as a testimony of some social value, and Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune's teaching that we must so live our lives that at the end we are able to stand tall on the platform of service.

The Sixth Principle of the Nguzo Saba, *Kuumba* (Creativity), calls on us to always do as much as we can in the way we can in order to leave our community and the world more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. In this principle and practice, we reaffirm the ancient African ethical commitment to constantly heal, repair and transform the world, called *serudj ta* in ancient Egyptian. It requires us to revere life and to apply the active arm and healing hand to end the social injustice and persistent suffering around us and throughout the world. And it

challenges us to become and be examples of the new world we struggle to bring into being.

The Seventh and final Principle of the Nguzo Saba is *Imani* (Faith). It is a faith founded in the ancient ethical and spiritual teachings of our ancestors, forged in struggle, and reaffirmed in the reality of every day life directed toward doing good in the world. So against all sense of despair, cynicism and the enduring evidence of evil in the world, we believe in the eventual triumph of Good in the world. We dare to believe that eventually thru *hard work, long struggle and acts of deep and enduring loving-kindness*, Africa will come into its own again, and that the people of Darfur, the Congo and Haiti, and the survivors of Katrina and all other suffering and oppressed peoples will be liberated, recover and rebuild their lives and forge a future of expansive freedom, justice and forward movement.

Let us move forward, then, confident in our right and responsibility to challenge and expand the social and moral imagination of society and the world. And let us keep the good faith of our forefathers and mothers, steadfastly devoted to justice, self-consciously open to sharing and profoundly committed to that ancient and ongoing ethical mandate to constantly strive and struggle to make good ever more present and powerful in the world. Heri za Kwanzaa (Happy Kwanzaa).