

KWANZAA

Kwanzaa is a week-long celebration in the United States that honors African heritage in African-American culture. A relatively new holiday compared to other U.S. holidays, Kwanzaa was created and introduced by Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966, an author, activist and professor of African Studies at California State University, in response to the LA Watts riots of 1965. ([History.com - Watts Rebellion](#))

Kwanzaa is celebrated from December 26 to January 1 each year, culminating with a family / community feast on December 31st. And though Kwanzaa falls right after the Christian holiday of Christmas and often falls during Hanukkah (depending on the Hebrew calendar), Kwanzaa is a secular holiday that celebrates the traditions and cultures of African community harvest festivals. Families of all religious and faith backgrounds - Islam, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu - celebrate Kwanzaa.

A significant tradition of Kwanzaa is the lighting of a candle each night that represents one of the seven principles of African culture and community.



One black candle in the center representing the principle of:

- Unity

Three red candles representing the principles of:

- Self Determination
- Cooperative Economics
- Creativity

Three green candles representing the principles of:

- Collective Work and Responsibility
- Purpose
- Faith

The candle colors represent the people (black); the blood shed in the struggle for freedom (red); and fertility and hope for the future (green).