

KWANZAA

and

National Museum of African American History and Culture

For the past fifty-two years, Kwanzaa has increasingly become an important part of African American culture and history. Its reach and that of the Nguzo Saba, the principles upon which Kwanzaa is built, has permeated the lives of millions of African Americans, including African peoples on the continent and the African diaspora. This history should be honored with a permanent exhibit in the National Museum of African American History and Culture, yet surprisingly there is none.

“Kwanzaa came into being and assumed an international reach and relevance without petition for permission or recognition from the larger society. It was conceived, created and came into its own as an act of self-determination. It was and remains a way to speak our own special cultural truth, to celebrate ourselves and our awesome march thru human history and to raise up and recommit ourselves to principles and practices that represent and bring forth from us the best of what it means to be African and human in the world.”

We must organize to establish a proper permanent Kwanzaa exhibit for the following reasons:

1. Kwanzaa is a Pan-African cultural holiday created 1966 by an African American, i.e. Dr. Maulana Karenga and first practiced within his organization Us.
2. Kwanzaa has grown from a single organization’s practice to an international holiday celebrated by millions of African descendants around the world.
3. Kwanzaa is officially recognized by the federal government, e.g. postage stamps and annual White House proclamations.
4. Kwanzaa is annually recognized by numerous state and local level proclamations.
5. Kwanzaa’s fundamental purpose and practice should be honored and presented as a significant part of and contribution to African American history and culture in the museum, i.e. *“Kwanzaa’s essential activities are about that which stresses, strengthens and celebrates family, community and culture.”* This is done in five basic ways: *“INGATHERING (unity) of the People; REVERENCE for the Creator and creation; COMMEMORATION of the Past; RECOMMITMENT to our highest ideals; and CELEBRATION of the good.”*
6. Kwanzaa’s is a positive cultural holiday all African descendants can practice, because it is not based on religious or hero worship.
7. A permanent Kwanzaa exhibit would be consistent with the four pillars upon which the National Museum of African American History and Culture stands.

DC Kawaida Study Group and the United Black Community/DC Kwanzaa Planning Committee encourage Kwanzaa practitioners and supporters to organize and campaign to create a meaningful permanent exhibit at the National Museum of African American History and Culture. You may demonstrate your support of this endeavor by directing your petitions, emails and calls to: Mr. Lonnie G. Bunch, Director NMAAHC, 1400 Constitution Ave NW, Washington, DC 20560

“The future of Kwanzaa is in the hands, hearts and minds of African people. It is they who are responsible for its rapid growth and wide-reaching impact. And thus, I am confident that Africans will protect this miracle they’ve created, be rightfully attentive to its integrity, well-being and wholeness, and insist on respect for it in every venue it’s practiced and presented.” Quotes by Dr. Maulana Karenga, Kwanzaa Founder, and author of *“Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture”*

