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December 05, 2002

Ligon Forgotten

i was there. i was about 6 or 7 years old and participated in the first kwanzaa. my family knew ron as well as the rest of the US collective. we used to meet on a fairly regular basis at the aquarian center on santa barbara blvd before it became king blvd.

the simple story is that ron as well as a number of others in the movement at the time had very powerful enemies in the government which undermined the ability for blacks to organize any sort of reasonable community political group. however karenga was one of the first to realize that a positive cultural celebration could not be targeted like a political movement. it is a fallacy to assert that karenga was the only person with any ideas at the time. part of the reason the US group disbanded was simply because intelligent black folk don't need 'leaders' the way some folk assert. out of the black arts, black consciousness and black power movements there were several brilliant ideas, but once they were developed and cultivated there was no longer a need for the movement.

as for the slanted question which appears more bent on discrediting kwanzaa rather than understanding it or any of the cultural, political and philosophical background surrounding its inception, i don't know whether or not karenga went to jail. i do know that he fell out of favor with my parents due to some ego problems (there are certain people who feel like they need blacklight posters of them, like were made of huey and angela) and that he was a 'playa' with more than one girlfriend. in any case, it is doubtful that he was convicted of any felony level matter. he is a tenured professor at long beach state as we speak. but also, let me put it to you this way. i have been detained by police officers 27 times, cited 6 times out of those for traffic violations, and arrested once for a traffic warrant. all i am is an ordinary black man. i don't have the fbi out looking for me in the context of 'national security'. trying to discredit a radical black figure of the 60s because they went to jail, is like trying to discredit a republican candidate because democrats say he's a liar. it's all part of the same process.

as for kwanzaa's links to africa, they are simple and plain. we spoke swahili. we spoke swahili like parents who send their kids to french immersion private schools speak french. it wasn't like a phrase here or a phrase there. it was conversational. if you read 'japanese by spring' by ishmael reed, you can get an appreciation of what i mean by the centrality of language in culture. in that way, the originators (note the s) of kwanzaa were more afrocentric than those of the 90s afrocentricity movement. pan africanism was real at the time, members of my family regularly visited west africa, i had an uncle who was an economics professor at the university of ghana. most of the people involved in the early kwanzaas were progressive, as one might imagine. dr. ligon, proprietor of the first and largest black bookstore on the west coast (the aquarian center) was a father figure to most. many people admire king because he studied gandhi, but ligon knew much more of eastern metaphysics and religions. the black arts movement which spawned the watts poets, and was the origin of the career of famous critic stanley crouch, now of the lincoln center jazz organization, was also centered around ligon's aquarian center. alfred ligon and his wife were the property owners and many significant political, cultural and philosophical activities began and were done in his building. the late dr. ligon is the unknown hero here. if karenga was the father of kwanzaa, ligon was the grandfather. however there were many artists and thinkers who congregated around the aquarian center over the years - certainly every major black writer from the west coast over the past 30 years has paid some tribute to dr. ligon.

<http://www.mdcbowen.org/p1/fpp/kwanzaa.htm>

<http://news.bookweb.org/news/737.html>

<http://slick.org/pipermail/deathwatch/2002-August/000212.html>

as others have said, the origins of kwanzaa are important, but what is more important is how it lives on. i am satisfied that kwanzaa is here to stay and that most celebrants have got the spirit right. as i was going to say when i began speaking about progressives, those who would be black instead of negroes in the 60s were also likely to be outspoken critics of the contemporary black christian church. those who found the confrontational, and racist aspects of the nation of islam too strident were the type more likely to find kwanzaa more acceptable. our family declared christmas commercial, hypocritical and lacking in spiritual purity in a christian nation that would subject blacks to second class status. (what a unique insight) so we celebrated kwanzaa instead. later we changed back to christmas, because by the early 70s most of the black power intellectuals like those in my family were making their impact on college campuses instead of just the streets and communities. blackness was solidified and turning the mood in the country towards crossover.

it is foolish to demonize karenga and kwanzaa. in the larger scheme of things history will show what i know to be true. these black cultural nationalists spawned the best of what most americans freely admit, as well as the world recognizes as the best of african american contributions to the world. it is facile for know-nothings to badmouth and search out "he went to jail" in looking at the person of karenga, but that's only a fraction of the story. i think that official history has forgotten dr. ligon, and that his role in the black arts movement should be emphasized especially as it relates to kwanzaa. karenga rightly deserves the credit for selecting the artifacts, but he didn't work in a vacuum. some of the very first kwanzaa karamus were held under my roof, and i feel that i should also be an ambassador for its roots.

as i celebrate it today (not religiously), many things have changed. ujamaa, for example, has a completely different context today than it did 30 years ago. i expect that kwanzaa will continue to change. but what will continue is its ability to inspire people to be their best, and remind them, in the context of a materialistic society that marginalizes and suppresses original spirits and impulses towards real freedom, that there are certain basic values that cannot and will not be denied. all that is needed is a little honest dedication and a ritualized reminder. that's kwanzaa.

December 05, 2002 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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aquarian visions said...

let's bring the ligon legacy alive !!!

[Reply January 06, 2004 at 08:35 PM](#)

meharry student said...

IF YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR EDUCATION, WHAT EVER YOU DO, DO NOT GO TO MEHARRY. IF it is your only choice apply again to another school. THERE is no objectivity at meharry. Teachers have sex with students to get grades. dishonesty is rewarded at meharry as surviving in america. Its a terrible place. Its not an academic environment it is ghetto. I mean really ghetto

Meharry sucks.

[Reply April 06, 2007 at 03:17 AM](#)

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December 12, 2002

Redondo Kwanzaa

last night was the christmas pageant at redondo union highschool. beryl heights elementary's children took the stage and sung joyous songs in celebration of diversity in the holiday season. the third graders were first, followed by 1st then kindergarten. the fourth graders followed, then the 2nd years preceded the fifth grade and the all grades finale. there were songs of winter, christmas & hanukkah. new years songs came in mexican and japanese flavors, and of course there were songs of kwanzaa.

one might very well wonder, in these days of trent lott, why white kids would sing about kwanzaa. one might be out of one's mind, this is america. in any case kids are never quite as white as their parents are, or would have them be. nevertheless, the coughs were in evidence (as opposed to polite laughter and applause) when a poor kid choked their festival of lights speech by improperly naming the holiday kwanzaa. i hope for her sake she gets to live it down.

but it raises an interesting point about the interchangeability of youthful hope which matures into diversity under the best circumstances and adversity by default. (elaboration goes here)

the other point it underscores for me is that undying fact about american culture, its ability to levitate in the anti-gravity field that i've called the semiotic swamp. (elaboration goes here)

what remains real is the bitter conflict which underlied the development of kwanzaa, which makes it all the more american. who else but americans would swing the blues into a song? aren't holidays supposed to take our minds away from struggle? yet kwanzaa, born of struggle, finds itself as the latest in the american pantheon of ex-pagan rituals. it is now celebrated by so called white kids in a so called suburb where so called struggle does not exist. and yet as it crosses over and blends into the fabric of more and more lives it will bring hope and purpose there as well.

i am strongly of the opinion that the african-american deed is done. we broke open america and made it, for the enduring moment, truly a place of civil liberty. while our wars on terror and drugs continue to erode this world historical accomplishment, the window was opened into which millions of foreigners found our society open enough to try. and having tried and succeeded, their incremental influence has changed and continues to change what the american middleclass is. this america needs a new name because it is no longer a european thing, resembling little in its expression of a mere 50 years ago.

to sing of imani and nia in this america will require exactly that. the only grit which survives down to the last breath is that born in the intimate knowledge of struggle. birth is such an appropriate word, for childbirth is an intimate and painful struggle. birth can always be celebrated in songs of youthful hope, it can even generate an immaculate mythology unconnected to mortal existence. at root, birth is laborious and unpredictable. its ritual of first fruits are as old as time, but only truly connected to the single passion which created it.

we witness kwanzaa some 35 years after its birth as a youthful celebration, respected by most yet fully and intimately celebrated by few. its destiny is uncertain, no matter how certain its creator's intent, and its fate lies in the spirits of its celebrants, no matter how near or far they are to the intimacy of struggle.

as american children sing songs of kwanzaa in an international mix of celebration there can be little doubt that such a light embrace of the hopeful creation of darker days bears witness to the triumph of hope. if we can always expect this of our children, then our future holds marvels.

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December 12, 2002

Represent

part of the difficulty in representing kwanzaa is that people take it entirely too seriously, or dismiss it out of hand. yet the dismissals are indicative of the seriousness at which they expect to take it.

and so in my further investigation of the my family complicity in the matter that is kwanzaa, i relate some of my father's reflections on black society, the holiday and the person of ron karenga. but i will do it gently for reasons that i'm certain are compelling but as of yet unknown to me. ordinarily i would just post directly words from his recent letter to me, but that's not going to happen.

firstly, i was a little bit surprised to find that the nobody in the family were ever members of united slaves. i had been itching to confront the characterization of them as a cult of personality for karenga as a bunch of revisionist hogwash with myself and my family as proof. however there were no bowens in US. on the other hand, i myself was a member of the young simbas. my bright yellow simba sweatshirt was my absolute favorite at the age of six. who wouldn't be proud to be a lion? having recently found a picture of myself marching in front of the aquarian center, i've recalled a few choice memories about the photo shoot which landed on the cover of 'look' and one other magazine.

i hadn't thought about the simbas until about 1990 when i found that very magazine on display at the afro-american museum in los angeles' exposition park. the first and foremost memory was that it took a good amount of prodding for me to put on the angry black face most appropriate for a magazine cover. i was a happy boy, not an angry boy, and i never saw the simbas as some paramilitary group. in fact, we did very little marching at all, and none that i remember for any other reason than the photo shoot. for the most part, we studied swahili and the nguzo saba in preparation for the kwanzaa equivalent of the elementary school christmas pageant. i recall being the 'z'; we held up signs and recited.

this brings up an interesting point. for as long as i can recall, i've always spelled kwanzaa with three a's. but both my parents use only two. i distinctly remember that we added another 'a' to the end because each of us kids was to recite one of the nguzo saba in the first celebration. but if there were only six letters in kwanza, the last kid wouldn't have have a placard. so there was a third a tacked onto the end. bratty prodigy that i was, i got shunted into the 'z' spot because that kid couldn't wrap his mouth around 'cooperative economics' or some such. i wanted to be the 'k', first in line, but i ended up being the 'z'. so depending on your take, kwanzaa owes it's own spelling to deference to the needs of children and parents.

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December 25, 2002

Oh Yeah, Love

i also wanted to say that the spouse and i scared each other. the prospect of losing what we've built came close, and now we realize what idiotic hotheads we were being. at least i do. yesterday, for the second or third time since our blowup, i've gotten The Look. and if you have ever loved a woman and she gives you The Look, then you've been in paradise. it's that one ineffable magic that you can never catch on film because it's the look of love, given at a hand's distance face to face. the eyes glow slightly upwards and towards you, pulling you in. you can physically feel the heat from her forehead. in that moment you know you are in love and that she's in love with you.

it's christmas morning and everyone is still sleeping. the girls tried to make it to midnight but didn't last. so we took their pictures with clocks to prove that they just missed santa. chris called from new york and i talked him through the setup of his east coast xbox, that's why i'm up so damned early.

i've split enough logs with my handy hatchet to support several fires. me, i love the tradition of throwing all the colored paper into the fireplace as everything gets unwrapped. this year we unstitched the barbie hair and twistie ties beforehand. as i sit and type, i hear the soft snoring. we are but a few moments away from that precious time.

i am bedeviled by the spectre of karenga the crook. my love for kwanzaa doesn't parse well enough. people are thanking me for exposing him and it as frauds, and i was just being balanced. one email had me up until 2:30 putting together a black mental liberation booklist at amazon.com, because the poor girl suffered through a 'black man think tank' (presumably for disaffected frosh) featuring the maulana himself. she was devastated to find in him, a woman beating past. why does everything have to be so perfect? how have we become so fragile and demanding, so desperate for god's own grace? hmm. well, there it is. god.

and so now i feel strange for the analogy to easter. i said that we couldn't celebrate it without pilate's unoriginal demand for crucifixion, but that of course we don't celebrate pilate.

perhaps it is faith itself that requires perfection. perhaps this is why we both admire and ridicule those with abundant faith in mankind, why p.t. barnum's edict and the golden rule are so permanently with us. faith is damnably difficult, so why bother unless there's a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. with god, that's easy. with people it's both angelic and foolish. there will always be a battle between the cynics and the stalwarts.

..but wait! a creature is stirring. time for gifts!

December 25, 2002 in [Cobb's Diary](#), [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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December 26, 2003

Dickerson on My Tits

Debra Dickerson gets on my last freakin' nerve today. I haven't even lit my first candle and already I'm getting upset defending my family tradition. Her [NYT editorial](#) is an insult that is popping the veins on my forehead.

First let's get to standing:

Until two years ago, the mere mention of Kwanzaa would have me cracking wise about kente cloth boxer shorts and artificially lengthened dreadlocks ♦ and cultural pride as mere show and consumerism.

and with dripping condescension worthy of Chirac

Kwanzaa, like Christianity, does nothing for me but I have to respect that it does for others.

and then the blatant contradiction:

In rejecting Christmas and Christianity, blacks reject the primary force for black American sustenance and resistance.

So presuming you are black, how the hell did **you** make it in this world if Christianity does nothing for you?

I would suspect that Dickerson has been sustained by family, friends, wit and salary, and by some measure of bourgie brotherhood she no doubt receives in the rarified world of published authors on black subjects. It's certainly her prerogative to reject Kwanzaa after her brief and superficial encounters, but to suggest that other black families are incapable of her level of perception is nothing but prejudice of the ugliest order.

From someone who doesn't celebrate it we get this observation.

Too often, though, Kwanzaa feels as if it is more about thumbing black noses at white America than at embracing the lost cause of resuming our Africanness.

Feels? Is this is what you feel when you watch other people celebrate Kwanzaa, or this is what you feel about black people who you interpret as having a need to celebrate Kwanzaa? What are we to make of your feelings, Debra?

I say we make a dash for the exit. Throw this baby out with the bathwater.

I've said it once and I'll say it again hopefully for the last time. There is nothing quite so annoying and wrong-headed as an atheist critic of religious practice. It is another example of Secularism Gone Wrong. I am insulted by the insinuation that anyone who celebrates Kwanzaa is rejectionist.. I think I have as much right as anyone to say so, considering that I was there at the beginning. It may be impossible for some to recover any spirit of Christmas from the din of commercialism that surrounds it, but that is their own failing, not the failing of Christmas itself. For someone who has only tolerance for Christianity, we can expect very little respect for Kwanzaa?

That said, it can be said of some afrocentrics, what I say of most hiphopers: grow up. But even I have lived in love with hiphop having nursed it through its infancy when none thought it would amount to anything, much less international commercial success and artistic influence. But just as it is intellectually dishonest to allow people who don't do much listening to be music critics or much reading to be literary critics, there's something wrong with people with no respect for popular celebrations being called to comment.

It is not with some irony that I recognize the sort of intellectuals, artists, professionals and political activists who established the context from which the ideas of Kwanzaa emerged would be among the first to deride superficiality and commercialism. But anyone with an ounce of reason would be able to research and discover such things. We were not all born yesterday.

At any rate, I'm not writing at my best because just dealing with this kind of ignorant and snotty bias gives me headaches. I've thrown away at least 7 paragraphs as it is. Piss on Dickerson, better yet lock her in a room with Coulter. They deserve each other.

December 26, 2003 in [Domestic Affairs](#), [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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I'm with you on this one, too. It's like she's bringing up a bunch of non-related points, acknowledging that she is basing her generalization on nothing, and then using irrelevant history to back up her thesis. Last time I checked, Christianity's hold on black America was still pretty firm. The folks I know who practice Kwanzaa aren't repudiating Christianity at all (much to my chagrin) but using the holiday as a familial time to give without being consumerist. You don't get Nikes for Kwanzaa, you get a book about black history. Or a handmade wool scarf from your hippy, activist grandma who STILL spends her whole damn Sunday praising the lord.

Who the fuck cares if churches used to be a way for slaves to mobilize? It was probably just one of the few places they wouldn't necessarily get shot or raped. I'm sure there was some organizing going on out in the fields, too. But it's kind of hard to fee close to a field where you break your back.

I don't celebrate Kwanzaa because I would rather do other things with my time. But for a lot of people it fills a space that X-mas just doesn't anymore. I went to a Kwanzaa celebration once a long time ago where the founder gave a great speech about lots of things. And you know what we had to do before we lit the candles (to, again, my chagrin)? We had to pray and hold hands. Pray to the big cookie monster in the sky.

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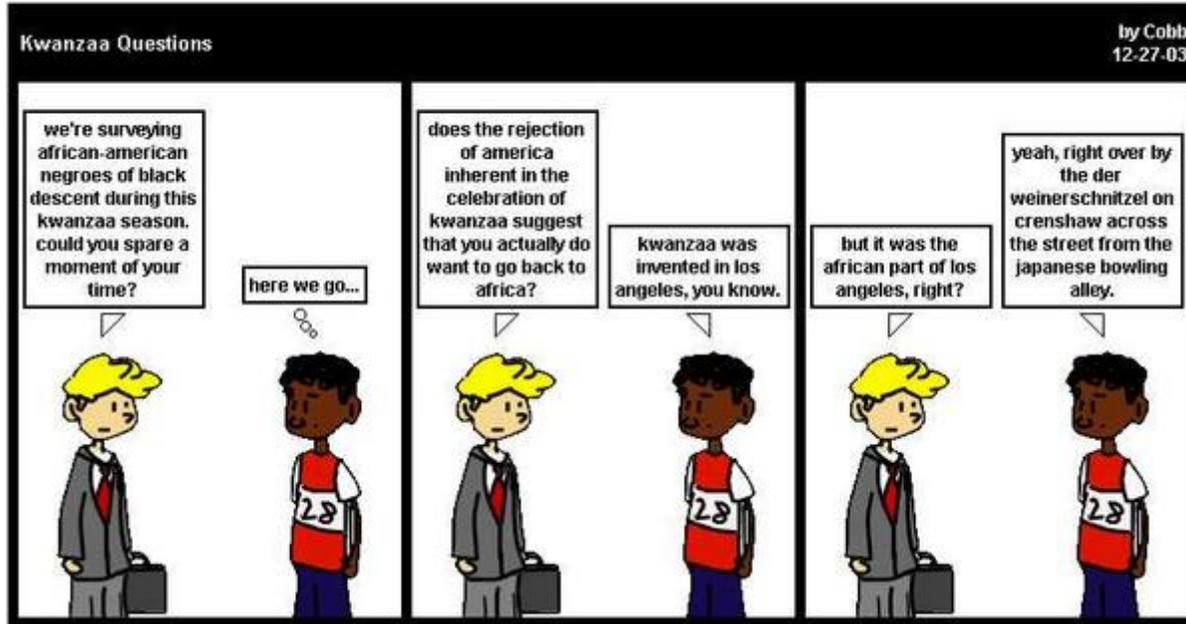
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December 27, 2003

Kwanzaa Questions



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December 27, 2003

Kujichagulia 2003

This morning, I went to the African Marketplace & Kwanzaa Parade at Liemert Park, entirely by accident.

The plan was to meet Pops at **Lucy Florence** and talk about days past and days to come. That happened uneventfully, but I got a chance to see a bit of the K in action. Interestingly enough it was who wasn't there that got my attention.

The Muir High Alumni drum corps just blew all the recorded and amplified music everywhere away. They had the kind of beat that made you change the rhythm of your walking pace. It was powerful. While I had just been hanging around the natty dreads and their incense and t-shirt booths, it was that booming that let me know a real parade was happening. I finally got out to Crenshaw and found the Dorsey HS cheerleaders, and an incredible set of steppers whose name escapes me (all in black and gold) and finally a group of about 30 black equestrians trotting in grand style.



Something about black horsemen (and women) really impresses me. Whenever I see them in parades, whether they be the Buffalo Soldier re-enactors, part of some other equestrian group, or just trotting up the street in a horse community like Altadena, it always piques my interest. These folks were styling in white longsleeves with black pants, as their horses highstepped in black, red and silver tack.

Still and all, the sparsity of the whole affair was the most remarkable thing I noticed. There couldn't have been more than 1000 folks at Liemert Park itself. Power106 had their radio truck in the parade, so it must have been announced. Still, it's hard to judge considering I was at the very end of the parade route. Everybody who wants to get their African thing on was in force including the usual suspects, but the huge crowd that shows up for the King Day parade was conspicuously absent.

Not looking for inspiration these things don't encourage or discourage. I really wished I had a little bit more cash to spend and that I had brought the kids. But there will always be another opportunity to get into roots. While I was there I was able, finally to get some red, black and green candles. I called Rite-Aid last night, they said they had them in stock but that was not the color green nor size red I had in mind. It's great when the kind of stuff I'm talking about is right there. The vendors of African objets d'art were making their small fortunes, and that's some commercialization nobody could object to. On the whole, it was a good thing.

Kujichagulia is fun to say 80 different ways, and so the kids had a field day with the word this evening. We can do what we want, just give us room.

I'm bushed this evening and don't really want to get into the personal Kujichagulia story. Besides, all of you know that being a black Republican is about as Kujichagulia as one can get. Of course, that brings one in conflict with Ujamaa. But that's for another day.

December 27, 2003 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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[Abiola Lapite](#) said...

If you're interested in reading about black horsemen in an African context, look up the history of Oyo, or that of the Hausa states. The use of cavalry was central to Oyo's rise as a major power (it's too bad they don't teach anything meaningful about **real** black African history in American schools, or the major historical West African states would be better known. We weren't all just a bunch of savages in loincloths before the white man came to give us civilization.)

[Reply December 28, 2003 at 07:45 AM](#)

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December 29, 2003

Ujamaa, The Problem Child

Ujamaa, cooperative economics, has given me trouble since the first time I understood it. That is primarily because I find it lacking as a strategy of liberation. So while I light the candles this evening, I'm not going to engage in any hypocrisy. Fortunately, it's the birthday of the spousal unit, so the festivities continue unabated.

There is, in my mind if not on the minds of everyone in the Kwaku Network, some measure of conflict between Ujamaa, Black Capitalism and Blackface Capitalism. It is a very difficult discussion that I have singly been unable to maintain in any forum, try as I may.

Now I have only been to a few colleges, so I don't have the last word. However, I cannot recall ever having met one black business major declaring that what they intended to do with their degree and first 50 thousand dollars was go (back?) to the ghetto and buy up the local 7-11 franchise. The emphasis is still cool. 70's cool. Integration cool. Corporate America cool. As we speak, it is not a recognizable black thang to invest 20 large into the local fruit stand. Now for the twisted critic, this brings up the dysfunctional culture question. Wrong turn. The fact is, we much prefer the black owned operated and oriented bookstore to the black grocery store. Kellogg's Corn Flakes will suffice, but not McKnowledge. In Eddie Murphy's Coming to America. Everybody laughed at John Amos' McDougals. A black capitalist, but not Ujamaa.

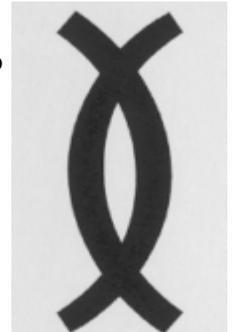
I've made peace with the fact that Ujamaa simply doesn't scale. The cooperative economics of the small shopping village, say Leimert Park, is not ever going to work as a strategy for African Americans. As a tactic, maybe. So while I accept it as a value in the Nguzo Saba, I'd have to say that it is not a transcendent value. Aside from that, anyone who has studied Liemert Park knows that cooperative economics didn't work there either. If it did, the large theatre there would be bustling with the entertainment progeny of **Marla Gibbs**, The Comedy Act Theatre, birthplace of Chris Rock would be rockin' instead of quiet and The World Stage wouldn't have gotten in trouble.

There are successful businesses in Leimert Park and in Fort Greene and in various lovely black cultural & shopping districts. But I daresay cooperative economics is not a part of the business plans they are talking with their bankers.

On the whole, I believe that the appeal of Ujamaa has much to do with nostalgia for the leadership and control black elites had over the average black in the days before racial integration. When the ladies of the Links had more scholarship money for young black highschoolers than General Electric, when your neighborhood black doctor who studied at Meharry made housecalls, when you didn't worry about redlining because Golden State Mutual Life Insurance took care of that for you. Those were the good old days.

But black banks can't compete. I can remember when it was a 'black thang' to not use ATMs because black banks like Founders Savings Bank couldn't afford to join the network. And so people stood patiently in line, for a while. Now the building that was new in the 70s on the corner of Marlton & King Boulevard is now dusty, empty and for lease. Blackfolks wanted low prices more than they wanted black owned banking. Spin that four different ways iteratively substituting 'needed' for 'wanted' in the previous sentence for subtlety's sake. Pick whichever you like, but in the end, the market wins.

In the 'black mecca' of Atlanta, there are black radio stations that advertise as ebonically as they please that black car dealers are having Juneteenth sales on late model automobiles. ("Don't play like you didn't hear it") Of course you're not going to get any guarantee that Toyota was made with black hands, the paper won't be carried by a black finance company and insurance we've already covered. But you will get black customer service and marketing, and that's all good. It crystalized the idea in my



head that there are limits to the amount of recourse one needs in a consumer economy. I continue to remind those who tilt at boycott's windmills that **black people, by all rights, have no reason whatsoever to wear cotton**. What has the cotton industry in America ever done for blackfolks but work us into early graves? Yet nobody seems to mind at all. I'm sure there are some Jews who will never, ever buy a German auto, but I don't think anyone cares about that either.

Some take this with gloom and say that it is yet another feature of our doom that there is no escaping the pervasive immorality of the Man's markets. Except the Man does not control the market and it is amoral. It's the nation of millions that holds you back (and gives you lower prices).

So try as they might, black Marxists may try to paint markets in evil colors, (generally white) but they cannot explain why millions of African Americans have made the economic choices we have, which include abandoning Ujamaa for banking, employment and other roles. Well, they say that we're all brainwashed for eating potato chips instead of 'recycling black dollars', but I'm not going to dignify any black mass hysteria arguments. It's not an explanation.

While I'm on the subject, allow me to remind you that it can be argued forcefully that the greatest enemy of Ujamaa is the Diversity Industrial Complex. Think about it for a moment. Whom are they training to be sensitive to whom? Somebody is getting paid to show Joe Millionaire how to attract the attention and respect of Jamal Ordinary. That's a good thing, but it is not empowerment despite smushy rhetoric to the contrary. It may or may not take a village to raise a child but it definitely takes a crafty capitalist to beat another. So I think that Malcolm, the patron saint of steely-eyed independence would be kicking Ujamaa to the curb and owning shares of General Electric, not painting the corporate hallways in melanin-friendly earthtones and inventing a race-normed Myers-Briggs test. But I digress.

I am convinced that it will be critical masses of African American millionaires who will be the successful conservators of all that Ujamaa might have been were it capable. Black Capitalism will work in niches as big as corners of professional sports. Yeah I admit it, I'm an elitist. Then again everyone celebrates Harriet Tubman but can't name the passengers of the Underground Railroad. Ujamaa will continue for mom and pop whom I'm all behind but don't expect any more from them than I the local Pakastani owned 7-11 to help Pervez Musharraf.

Finally, I'm going to put my boy Fleming on the spot. Is he Ujamaa? Does anybody need a PhD for Ujamaa?

Ujamaa = Howard University Drama Club

Black Capitalism = Rocawear

Blackface Capitalism = Denzel Washington movies.

Blackface Capitalism rules.

December 29, 2003 in Kwanzaa | Permalink

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Comments

Ward Bell said...

Interesting piece. The link to Rocawear leads to a very interesting group that is doing the online marketing for them. Checking out that group's client list is also interesting and checking out the current "ownership" (through licensing arrangements) of many of the Urban fashion orgs is enlightening.

And I like this particular bit of capitalism: Russell Simmons, who's wife owns BabyPhat, introduced a debit card that allows owners to get a discount on BabyPhat items and helps them to build credit. Because it is prepaid, anyone/everyone qualifies. Simmons gets the money up front and the use of it until the credit card is accessed; there is a small fee for reloading the card with additional dollars; attracts attention to the discount deals of the merchandise; and he keeps all the money that is not "spent" on the card (\$100 dollar card and the person makes a \$90 dollar purchase and sees nothing for the \$10 bucks. Card goes in a drawer, never to be used again. Simmons makes an easy 10% -- which is probably better than the margins on the merchandise. Now that is capitalism!

Reply December 30, 2003 at 09:46 AM

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December 31, 2003

Howling At The Moon

Well, it's about time to kiss 2k3 goodbye. And good riddance.

We shall highlight the evening's festivities with a number of old and new traditions. We will have noisemakers and confetti balloons. We will burn old bad news in the fireplace. We have another Kwanzaa candle to light. I will blow the digideroo I got from Sydney and most assuredly we will howl at the moon.

Nothing like a second four day weekend. See ya next year.

December 31, 2003 in [Cobb's Diary](#), [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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January 08, 2004

Black Misery Month

Since M9 is about to be promoted to M10 within the next few weeks, I have already started to think about February. You know and I know that it's Black History Month, and I've already begun to dread it.

Last year, I started out on the good foot with [Carter G. Woodson](#). I ended up doing penance by serving some time at SCAA as a community service. Considering a comment I got a few days ago, I think perhaps it's time to remind everyone how real white supremacy is in America. Here. Now.

So if you do nothing else for Black History Month, [spend an hour reading what goes on at SCAA](#) and try to imagine hearing that kind of bullcrap your entire life.

It's not that I don't support and respect Black History Month. On the contrary, I'm drawn to it for all the right reasons, just as I am to Kwanzaa. Since you may be aware of the kind of bodewash that passes for legitimate commentary about Kwanzaa, you can probably imagine (well you can see for yourself at SCAA) the kind of offal downpour heaved during February. What am I supposed to do, ignore it?

As it happens, the jagoff they shot yesterday was named Bikel and his partner in crime was named Schlagel. Somehow, some idiot kids thought it was cute to pronounce his name 'Schnigger' in my wife's presence in the local elementary school library. As she shushed them knowing they were playing around the bad word but not necessarily directed at her, M9 didn't quite understand. This means I had to give the 'this word is Nigger' speech that I created purely off the cuff.

Interestingly (or not) enough, there aren't any big pictures of lynchings on Google when you need them. But I essentially explained that this is what people did to people they considered niggers. It is a word of profound disrespect. I'm fairly certain by his brief expression of puzzlement that he has yet to be dissed in such a manner. I would hardly expect my explanation to be an inoculation, but the spousal unit and I made it clear (we hope) that we are especially intolerant of that particular word.

What a headache. I'm glad I know what I'm doing.

January 08, 2004 in [Domestic Affairs](#), [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

[djspicrack](#) said...

As someone who can't relate to the subject at all, unfortunately for the caucasian segment of the population, I've always thought that some of the things that were done during Black History Month just came off somewhat like pandering. For instance - I'm a big fan of rap, hip/hop, and the like - but when MTV2 decides that it's "Hip Hop Month" or whatever, it just comes off as a little bit odd - only because it tends to coincide on/about the time of Black History Month. Perhaps it's just me. Does this make sense?

It's like, I think I see what the point is supposed to be, but I always would like to think that people should be celebrated for all they do, all the time, not just like pigeonholed in a month. I don't forget about Martin Luther King, Jr. for the rest of the year, why should I just think about him now. I don't think about individuals like [Hiram Revels](#) or Ida Wells or people who were able to shape the USA into something (hopefully?) better than it was before their time just once a year.

I hope I'm not starting an ugly discussion here, and I *definitely* don't have the wool pulled over my eyes about the state of our nation today. I think I just am really upset about how things are working, and it's unfortunate when you think there are a lot of voices who share your opinion but don't seem to be making their way through the din.

I come to this blog because there's always some great topics to hear about and a super perspective that a lot of people miss out on, and I think it's one of those things where if I can get one or two folks to just read something similar, they would have a different thought process on things...

Okay, I'm rambling, so I'll quit now.

[Reply January 11, 2004 at 08:20 PM](#)

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July 08, 2004

Right Wing Epiphany

Over in Orkut, where I tend to be a bit more lower-case and provocative than I am here, I re-engaged the Cosby argument. And as I was engaging in the discussion I think I had a breakthrough. I think can genuinely see exactly what it is that the right wing sees in the left wing. The difference, of course, is that I'm not afraid of the left wing and I don't believe they are a threat. A danger and a menace perhaps, but not a threat.

The thing that nailed it for me was the quotation of some Z Magazine article written by a political science professor from Ohio. I didn't parse it very closely because it immediately reminded me of something else that got me right to the edge of epiphany. That other something was the NPR segment about Freedom Schools in Kansas City. Basically there was this very uplifting story about those young people that Cosby recently loves to hate, beating the odds by attending a 'Freedom School' during the summer in an super supportive environment. I'm listening to this radio segment saying, man this is so cool but I would never do that work in a million years. That's for my buddy [Monroe](#).

Now while it's true that I did a very heartfelt stint teaching Saturday School at [St. Luke's parish in Harlem](#) several years back and it was that experience that reintroduced me to my own family tradition of Kwanzaa, I have serious problems with the scalability of Ujamaa and a couple of the principles. So my enthusiasm is just for this very organic and grass roots sounding program. The voices of the people convinced me that this was done from the heart and that it was all good.

BUT.

The KC program, which included about 7 of these schools was expanded because of the charity of a large [white liberal] foundation. Now the origin of the Freedom Schools was all about education of rural blacks to understand what kinds of things they would be getting that they have always been denied in the deep South. How government derives from the consent of the governed, so black people need to vote kinds of things that the redneck highschool teacher supposedly teaching civics wouldn't cover. But now 50 years later, it's part midnight basketball, drug-free, supplemental education, afrocentric support, summer school. In combination a great point of light for those who get zilch in the ghetto. (Remind me never to say 'inner city' again - I understand that American Apartheid was designed to create ghettos and keep blacks and browns there - like Jewish ghettos from where the term originated). I cannot presume to know exactly what Mr. Liberal Daddy Warbucks sees in these poor black ghetto kids, but I have a general idea about the parameters (poor, black, ghetto kids, money for programs).

At the end of the program, the NPR announce clinches it. Some university is sponsoring a study of these kids. ARGH!

Can you feel it? Little black kids are lab rats for a university study. The volunteers who dedicated their time in 'giving back to the community' in a modified form of Deep South rural education for poor blacks victimized by poll taxes, will be replaced by professionals. The university study gets read into the Congressional Record, several left organizations line up behind it. Daddy Warbucks elbows a couple of his cronies at a garden party and the whole thing is off to the races.

Now some of this stuff works. Headstart I would say, and the kind of stuff in California under the heading of the [First Five](#). But that's not a black racialized liberal co-optation of more Civil Rights Era stuff.

So when this cat started quoting... hm let me find it:

Bill Cosby's decision to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education decision by proclaiming that poor black people deserve their fate at the bottom of America's steep socioeconomic pyramid has delighted many white Americans. Large numbers of United States Caucasians are grateful for Cosby's widely reported intra-racial top-down smack-down, which gave politically safe - because nominally "black" - confirmation to their own self-satisfied opinion that poor African-Americans have nothing and nobody but themselves to blame for their difficult circumstances in this great "color-blind" "land of opportunity."

Paul Street (pstreet99@sbcglobal.net) is an urban social policy researcher in Chicago, Illinois.

http://www.zmag.org/content/print_article.cfm?itemID=5631&ionID=30

OK it wasn't Ohio. But it suddenly hits me. How does an urban social policy researcher make money? How do they pay their bills? They are professionally engaged in the 'industry' of politics that comes up with plans and politics and basically federal government money that goes to programs. So the Cosby us against them can get rendered into policy and dollars via university studies and policy research and all of that business that goes to direct our tax dollars.

If you asked me what makes the Freedom School concept work, I think I heard enough with the interview. People saw a need right in front of their faces and did something about it. I could immediately recognize those blackfolks valid concerns - the concerns we are all rightly facing. But it's the ways and means of the institutionalization of this abstracted thing that suddenly make me say whoa. And that's where the epiphany was coming from. I see the wheels cranking, and I see the whole thing growing from the original Freedom Summer (no foundation money, no corporate sponsorship, no tax dollars), to this Freedom School (no corporate sponsorship, no tax dollars) to the next steps. Where is all the money coming from? Non-black hands.

So at the end of this rainbow I see failure and bitter disappointment. And I think that is exactly how the right sees left tax & spend. Except a lot on the right wing as we know, think the whole effort is of dubious merit. Epiphany.

July 08, 2004 in [Cobb's Diary](#), [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

[Dean Esmay](#) said...

Okay, it's kind of harsh (or maybe just blunt) but I'd like to know your opinion (and that of your readers) on [this](#).

[Reply July 09, 2004 at 05:56 AM](#)

[Adam M.](#) said...

I'm not sure I understand the rationale behind your epiphany.

You seem to immediately discredit the funding going to these Freedom Schools because it will involve a research study, making the children in the schools "lab rats." The same way that the children given the [doll test](#) -- which helped prove the psychological harm inflicted by segregated education -- for the Brown vs. Board of Education case were "lab rats"? What about the "lab rat" smokers who were studied to show that (1) cigarettes are a serious health hazard, (2) they are engineered to promote addiction, *and* (3) that tobacco companies [preferentially](#) target advertising of this dangerous, addictive drug at poor African Americans? Were they also victims of the Evil White Liberal Scientific Establishment?

I was educated in the field of science, receiving a Bachelor's degree in biochemistry. Though I didn't end up choosing a career in science, I continue to believe in it as a discipline that can be used not only to advance human knowledge but also to improve human lives and create positive social change. Why is the involvement of a scientific study in these schools' funding necessarily a Bad Thing?

As someone who happens to be a white liberal, I also take exception to your depiction of an allegedly "white liberal" [charitable foundation](#) (there is actually [a black man on the board of trustees](#), who is also described as one of the foundation's first associates) as "Mr. Liberal Daddy Warbucks" who's in it to get "money for programs." As it turns out, this foundation is actually focused on [promoting entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency](#). Which pretty much sucks all the air out of your argument. You say that you "cannot presume to know exactly what Mr. Liberal Daddy Warbucks sees in these poor black ghetto kids." How about seeing someone who could use a helping hand and deciding to provide it? What exactly is so wrong about this?

Ultimately, I'm saddened to see that your final realization seems to pivot around the notion that the money going to these programs is coming from "non-black hands." While the "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" ethic is an admirable and quintessentially American trait, so is the notion of helping others. I see in this sort of automatic distrust of money (or other assistance) from "non-black hands" a sign of the deeper distrust and bitterness that continues to hinder efforts toward racial equality and equal economic opportunity. The black community needs to realize that many whites share their goals in these areas, so that we can all work together to make this country a fairer place for everyone.

Having said all that, I am always open to new ideas and viewpoints. None of the above questions are rhetorical. I would appreciate any insight the author or commenters would care to give on these issues, so that I can inform myself about all the factors involved. Thanks.

[Reply July 14, 2004 at 11:49 AM](#)

Cobb said...

Thanks for your concern. Let's get down to it.

First I'll answer your questions directly, then I'll explain my rationale. After I do that, then I'll check out your links and adjust my reality accordingly.

Q. Why is involvement in the scientific study a bad thing?

A. It lets KC off the hook. Nobody in mainstream middle class neighborhoods needs Harambees to get a good education. The answer is not to study the kids but study the flow of resources available to the kids.

Q. How about seeing someone who could use a helping hand and deciding to provide it?

A. My problem is not so much with the intent, but the method I perceive to be the manner in which such liberal charities institutionalize a helping hand. (This is a big and complicated argument).

As concerns 'non-black hands' I think you misread me, but I can understand the confusion given that my epiphany centers on my perception of what the right wing sees. I'm not so far out, and as I said, I see the value in such programs.

What I expect of whitefolks in the context of community standards and education is that they be motivated to support what is necessary to raise the bar for the best marginal increase, not that they participate in the creation, maintenance or modification of ideas originating out of black consciousness. So when whitefolks say they are spending x million to institutionally replicate Kwanzaa and not x million to send the best teachers into the ghetto, I have a problem.

--

I start with a not unreasonable presumption that the reason these Freedom Schools are necessary is because the public school system is failing these children and thus the communities to which they belong.

In other words, they are isolated in ghettos which are the legacy of American Apartheid. My bet says this black neighborhood is just as black as it was before the Brown decision. These are the hypersegregated - out of the mainstream of culture, politics and economics.

Whatever works in the Freedom Schools would presumably work in Public Schools, so I see the charity as an end-around the political impotence these folks have to influence their local school boards. But are the Freedom Schools real privately funded charter schools? If not, why have their benefactors not gone the whole nine yards? Because a part time program is affordable and a charter school is not, and who is just that committed? Everything I can see is that the local political community is not, and so white knights are necessary.

Understand that I am a firm advocate of integration. The ghetto does not function and it's not going to function unless and until it receives equal cultural, political and economic investment as any other community constituting the the medians of such currencies in American life. Such a community then ceases to be a ghetto. But I don't see that happening anywhere and I don't see why KC's ghettos should be the exception. So if kids are to compete, collaborate and fit into the general society then they need the same tools as everyone else, plus a specific booster to get them right and ready.

The Freedom Schools may very well provide the specific booster, and I'm certain that there are no shortage of ways to provide that boost. I myself was a beneficiary of the National Summer Youth Sports Program. So it's not a bad thing that the charity has come along to fund it, but if the 50 year problem with hypersegregation remains, it seems highly unlikely to me that the charity will be able to continue in perpetuity, which brings up my first problem with the program.

Charity in Perpetuity

Convince me that a trust is set aside in perpetuity to keep this booster program alive. The charity then ceases to be radical chic or subject to the whims of benefactors who don't live inside the troubled community itself. I have no evidence to show me that there is an interest as permanent and abiding in these children which is equal to that of the founders of the program. It seems to me if that were the case, the benefactors would have built a charter school. This is a no-win situation because I'll gripe on the other side of the coin that a permanent charity represents a permanent assumption about a black handicap. Again, I have a philosophical problem with external funding, but I would certainly be more supportive if this were step one on the way to a charter school. I don't see how this program leads to self-sufficiency or mainstreaming.

Self Esteem on the Resume

As high as this booster program goes, it does not and cannot overcome a substandard public education. Kenneth Clark may have had his day and his say, but I for one think that esteem for modern people must come from their trust and ability to flow and move freely in society. To the extent that an institutionalized Kwanzaa and Afrocentrism is what the money pays for in order to correct some perceived identity problems associated with being black and poor, I say that job belongs to the community families, not a foundation.

Let's continue this - there is much to be said.

[Reply July 14, 2004 at 01:53 PM](#)

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September 29, 2004

Black Jews

Today is Sukkot, I think.

I listened at length to an interesting inside story about a Jewish cat who found the equivalent of a Jewish Almanac which had references dating back about 350 years. He is using it to help wayward Jews find their way back to knowing Sukkot and other holidays as more than just dates on a calendar.

It immediately occurred to me, as such parallels do, that 350 years is the kind of authenticity we modern Americans drool over. So it comes as no surprise that this cat made it to NPR's radio show. But it didn't escape my notice, as he began describing the feeling of connectedness that this newfound old knowledge gave him, that it sounds precisely like what blackfolks are often found wanting. I know, having represented, how cavalierly some folks have dismissed Kwanzaa as a wannabe Jewish holiday. I take their point, but only so far.

As the Jewish cat rambled on about the significance of doing things just like the enslaved Israelites, my tolerance hit a wall. Nobody really wants to be an Israelite slave. Reenactments are so bourgeois, and modern. What we want is the feeling of home and belonging. Everybody wants that, and especially wayward Jews and American blacks. But can anyone really trace their bloodline back to the house of Levi? That's very dubious for the overwhelming majority. What Jews have, after all is said and done, is their faith. Faith is learned. Those who do, get. So as you can imagine, I began to become slightly peeved at this cat whose newfound pride had him representing the Israelites, kinda like Whitney Houston at the Slave Castles.

So what have Jews got that blacks don't? It's a dumb comparison that everyone keeps doing. It's the slavery thing, it's the political thing. There is supposed to be the special bond that Jesse Jackson famously unmade for us way back when the Rainbow Coalition was still something of a good idea. But the fact is that Jews have nothing blacks don't, culturally speaking, because whatever Jews can get by faith, blacks can too. Just join your local synagogue.

Huh? What?

There's something slightly unbelievable about a 40 year old man receiving First Communion in the Catholic Church, but there is nothing unserious about it. I don't see why it is that Evangelical Christians should get all those who 'get it' later in life. Furthermore, there are so many different degrees and sects of Judaism, there must certainly be one ready for new converts. Considering how many slacking Modern, Reformists for Jesus there are (if you believe the Lubavichers) it's a wonder that more folks don't take to Judaism. Well, I can see why certain whitefolks might think they have something to lose, but for blackfolks that might not apply.

As for me, I'm rather devout to the church of American Black History, so I've always looked at our acceptance of our Africanness not so much as a necessary recovery but as a global cosmopolitanism. There was a time when I considered myself a New World African, never so much as when I was dating an Afro-European within a year of my first trip to Europe. It was a Diaspora thing and she did a lively business in Kente and Mud Cloth. But that was then. The point is that I'm hardly looking for that ineffable something that Jews supposedly have 'over' us putatively 'rootless' blackfolks. I know my family tree back 7 generations. That kind of kills a lot of longing for me - and I think the more one knows one's family the more ideological Black Nationalism suffers, but I digress.

For those who need a groove and something a bit more historically weighty than Kwanzaa.com, the Jewish faith should be wide open. So consider it.

September 29, 2004 in [Critical Theory](#), [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

Laura said...

I think the thing Jews have isn't only traditions that go back many years. They also bond within the group. Don't black people have opportunities to bond? Black Family Reunion? All the service clubs? Historic (and I do mean historic) black churches? Maybe it's just around here.

[Reply September 30, 2004 at 10:36 AM](#)

Lola said...

There's Holy Orthodoxy . . . a good number of early Christian saints were African - St. Moses the Black, St. Monica, etc. Here's a good page about St. Moses the Black . . .

http://www.stmaryofegypt.net/saints_moses.shtml . . . also, look at the other pages at this site.

[Reply September 30, 2004 at 11:00 AM](#)

cobb said...

Sure blacks have plenty of room to bond, but I sometimes perceive a petty jealousy of Jews, because nobody particularly says that Jews' traditions are 'invented' for a sense of self. But of course they are, as are everyone's.

[Reply September 30, 2004 at 11:37 AM](#)

CyberRev said...

The Jewish blood is universal of the Hebrew Ethiopic Christ that is first African, Arawack Indian and then gets lighter as the colonial terrorist and invaders of the world rape, kill, destroy and fabricate historical and biblical accounts. That is how you get a Roman Jesus replacing a Hebrew Christ who's only name is Yahshua. How can you ignore or change the Hebrew alphabet or sacred meaning of the Son of YHWH's name even when there is no Hebrew "J"?

[Reply January 06, 2007 at 09:02 PM](#)

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December 20, 2004

Kwanzaa Defended

It's about that time of year when people with too much time on their hands and too much bile in their guts begin to spit on the celebration of Kwanzaa. I cannot abide this. I think it beneath any honorable spirit which finds reason to ridicule another's convention.

I started my blog because [this issue riled me](#). It's difficult for me to understand what perverse pleasure people must get from their sanctimonious bleating. You'd think they'd pick something actually wrong or hurtful. It comes as no surprise that most of the barbs come in the form of questioning its legitimacy. I needn't remind you of the sort which question the purity of another's origins.

Today, I guess I'm just too old to care why people are foul. I simply call them as I see them. And like so much of the world's wrongheadedness, I'll steer clear of it until such time as I have the power to stamp it out.

In the meantime, a few references from the Archives:

- [The Thankless Task](#)
- [Kwanzaa Reborn](#)
- [Kujichagulia 2003](#)
- [Kwanzaa Google](#)

December 20, 2004 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

[Scott](#) said...

I have had a problem with Kwanzaa for the last two years ever since I found out that it was based on communist principles.

Before that I had a plaque on my wall for it.

I think as conservative black Americans we should abandon it. And find something real to remember. MLK birthday is a no brainer of course. Juneteenth maybe, maybe signing of 14 amendment. I think it something we need to think about.

Black pride is great, communism disguised as black pride isn't.

[Reply December 21, 2004 at 07:31 AM](#)

Cobb said...

Kwanzaa is not based on communism. There were socialistic aspects to it, but believe me, there was nobody in US at the time who didn't believe in private property.

As for the 'real', what was real was that Kwanzaa was a necessary component of the 'spiritualization' of black nationalism. The historical context was that these were college educated folks putting together an intellectual vanguard, much as we do in the blogosphere. What they accomplished through this simple ritual is the very thing we have yet to achieve - which is to have a grass roots method of getting the principles of our message out to ordinary folks.

Imagine that you are trying to get ordinary blackfolks to understand the true principles of conservative thought. As a blog writer, you would come across as a pointy headed intellectual. What if simultaneously, the masses of blackfolks also attended churches where the ministers were preaching liberalism in direct contradiction to whatever you are saying. How do you become spiritual instead of strictly intellectual?

This is the context for understanding the creation of Kwanzaa. Communism had nothing to do with the reasons for which it was created. In fact, communism is 'scientific' with an express disdain for all spirituality. Kwanzaa recognizes at the outset, the need for spirituality. Considering Dr. Ligon's influence, there is no way it could be otherwise.

[Reply December 21, 2004 at 10:13 AM](#)

[Xrlq](#) said...

Karenga is a thug, who made up a phony holiday based on a reference to a culture few black Americans even descend from. Why honor that?

Don't worry, I'll be consistent. If some white guy ever makes up a phony holiday, I promise to bash that, too. Twice as hard, I might add, if he says anything that could be construed as speaking for me.

[Reply December 21, 2004 at 09:00 PM](#)

Cobb said...

...and Thomas Jefferson owned slaves, and Henry Ford supported Hitler, and your dad fucked your mother.

I'm not going to be gracious in this moment. I reserve the right to erase this message when it suits me.

I don't expect everybody in the world to revere Karenga, in fact, I don't expect anyone to revere him or even respect him. It's irrelevant to the spirit of the holiday. I understand that there are people in the world who believe all Christians are idiots and that the whole of Christendom was a farce because of the Crusades or the Inquisition. They have a logical point which makes no sense. I grant all critics of Kwanzaa the same insignificant margin of credibility.

I say this. Considering the fact that I was present at the first Kwanzaa, I would be content to take every drop of heat for it. I am Kwanzaa's poster-child. I am the proof. I am the one it was created for and because of this I will always take it personally, I'm afraid.

Nevertheless, it continues to amaze me how such shallow ad-hominem attacks pass as worthy criticisms of the Nguzo Saba. What can I say? Black power freaks normally logical people out. Get over it. Your children will outlive you and celebrate Kwanzaa. It is a permanent artifact of American culture, like Jazz, like the Ford Mustang, like Monticello.

Bite me, haters.

[Reply December 21, 2004 at 09:38 PM](#)

[La Lubu](#) said...

Xrlq says: "If some white guy makes up a phony holiday, I promise to bash that, too. Twice as hard, I might add, if he says anything that could be construed as speaking for me."

Well, Xrlq, you are in luck! Some white guy *has* made up a phony holiday; it's called "Columbus Day." In it's modern incarnation, Columbus Day is portrayed as a celebration for Italian Americans, but that's certainly not how it started. The Tammany Society was the first to get the ball rolling, back in 1792. Then Father Michael J. McGivney formed the Knights of Columbus (1882) to give Catholic men a fraternal/social organization similar to the Masonic Lodge. The Knights are who really pushed Columbus Day as an issue.

Why Columbus? Because he was credited as being Catholic (some histories will give his religion as Catholicism, some as Judaism, but frankly the man didn't seem to practice either), and his arrival in the Americas was **prior to the Protestants**. That's all. "Columbus Day" was all about getting Catholic legitimacy in the public sphere, and asserting the "real Americanism" of (white) ethnic Catholics during a time when their Americanism (and whiteness) was vigorously challenged.

And the Italian American community? Well, the Italian American community was basically backing Garibaldi for "their" holiday (ethnic-pecking-order "holidays" handed out as a patronage thang). When community groups were basically told by (let's face it) Irish political overlords that Garibaldi wasn't happening, but tellya what, we'll compromise with Columbus....there ya go: Columbus Day! Some Italian American communities went with the flow, and others didn't. That tended to go along the traditional North-South (Italian) lines, too.

Anyway, I'm anxiously awaiting your takedown of Columbus Day as a phony white man's holiday! Ciao!

[Reply December 23, 2004 at 08:52 AM](#)

Xrlq said...

I think Karenga has a lot more to do with Kwanzaa than any random Crusader or Inquisitor does with Christianity, whose history predates both by a millennium. Kwanzaa is faux African silliness, all the way down to its name. How many black Americans do you know who speak Swahili, or descend from anyone who did? One might as well sing "God Save the Queen" in Farsi.

It's too bad I'll be dead by the time you're betting my kids will celebrate Kwanzaa. I guess that means I won't be around to collect on that bet.

LaLubu: it never ceases to amaze me, the lengths to which some liberals will go to create a false moral equivalency where none existed. Few celebrate Columbus Day, and of those who do, none celebrate it as a "white pride" holiday to the exclusion of any other race, as a Catholic holiday to the exclusion of Protestants, or to promote any other form of separatism.

[Reply December 24, 2004 at 09:12 PM](#)

LaLubu said...

Xrlq: Columbus Day was not created as a holiday of separatism, its creation was all about the *inclusion* of ethnics previously not considered white---a bid for whiteness, you might say.

Anyway, it (along with other tactics) worked.

As for the "few celebrate Columbus Day", define 'celebrate'. You won't find any parades or nonsense around where I live, but banks, city and state offices, and schools are closed. And so is my daughter's day care. It's not a day off for me, and there are no paid "days off" in my line of work, so I get to lose a day's pay because of this phony white holiday. I take it this is not the case in California? Your banks, schools, and public offices are all open?

[Reply December 26, 2004 at 04:45 PM](#)

Front Page Magazine said...

While public officials, schools, and the ACLU worked overtime this year to ban every vestige of Christmas from the public square, the recently invented holiday known as Kwanzaa is gaining in popularity among black Americans. These occurrences are not unrelated.

In an earlier time, blacks held a strong faith in God. But over the past 40 years, the black community has largely let God slip away. Sure the community has maintained the outer trappings of religion, but the solid morality at its core is nearly gone.

Enter a God-hating black racist named Ron Karenga. Born Ron Everett on a poultry farm in Maryland, Everett invented Kwanzaa in 1966, based on an African harvest festival (though it takes place during the Winter Solstice!), and celebrating the first Kwanzaa with his family and friends.

Calling himself "Maulana" (Swahili for "Master Teacher"), Karenga became a black nationalist at UCLA, and formed his group, the United Slaves (US) for the purpose of igniting a "cultural revolution" among American blacks. US members followed Karenga's "Path of Blackness," which is detailed in his Quotable Karenga: "The sevenfold path of blackness is think black, talk black, act black, create black, buy black, vote black, and live black."

The United Slaves had violent confrontations with the Black Panthers on campus, and were actually considered more radical than the Panthers.

The biggest dispute between the United Slaves and the Panthers was for the leadership of the new African Studies Department at UCLA, with each group backing a different candidate. Panthers John Jerome Huggins and Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter verbally attacked Karenga at the meeting, which infuriated Karenga's followers. After the meeting ended, two United Slaves members, George and Larry Stiner, reportedly confronted Huggins and Carter in a hallway, shooting and killing them.

Incidentally, on March 31, 1974, it was discovered that both Stiner brothers had escaped from the family visiting area in San Quentin State Prison. Larry Stiner turned himself into the FBI in Caracas, Venezuela, on December 13, 1994. He remains in custody at San Quentin. But George Stiner remains at large and his whereabouts remain unknown. He is currently on California's 10 Most Wanted List.

The shooting at UCLA apparently caused Karenga to become extremely suspicious. On May 9, 1970, Karenga and two others tortured two women who Karenga believed had tried to poison him by placing "crystals" in his food and water.

The Los Angeles Times described the events: "Deborah Jones, who once was given the title of an African queen, said she and Gail Davis were whipped with an electric cord and beaten with a karate baton after being ordered to remove their clothes at gunpoint. She testified that a hot soldering iron was placed in Miss Davis' mouth and placed against Miss Davis' face and that one of her own big toes was tightened in a vice. Karenga, head of US, also put detergent and running hoses in their mouths, she said."

Karenga was sentenced to one-to-ten years in prison on counts of felonious assault and false imprisonment. At his trial, the question arose as to Karenga's sanity. The psychiatrist's report stated: "This man now represents a picture which can be considered both paranoid and schizophrenic with hallucinations and illusions, inappropriate affect, disorganization, and impaired contact with the environment." The psychiatrist reportedly observed that Karenga talked to his blanket and imaginary persons, and he believed he'd been attacked by dive-bombers.

Eight years later, California State University Long Beach named Karenga the head of its Black Studies Department. By this time, Karenga had "repented" of his black nationalism and had become just a harmless garden variety Marxist. This must be our esteemed university system's idea of repentance!

Karenga's Kwanzaa celebration consists of seven "principles." They are Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination – code for "buy black"), Ujima (collective work and responsibility – groupthink), Ujamaa (cooperative economics – socialism), Nia (purpose) Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith – in man, not God).

To provide a symbol of his seven "principles," Karenga used the menorah from Judaism with Kwanzaa's colors (red, black, and green), and re-named it the "kinara."

Karenga also created a Kwanzaa flag that consists of black, green, and red. The Kwanzaa Information Center states the color red represents blood: "We lost our land through blood; and we cannot gain it except through blood. We must redeem our lives through the blood. Without the shedding of blood there can be no redemption of this race." The Kwanzaa Information Center also notes that this flag "has become a symbol of devotion for African people in America to establish an independent African nation on the North American Continent." (Emphasis added.)

When once asked why he designed Kwanzaa to take place around Christmas, Karenga explained, "People think it's African, but it's not. I came up with Kwanzaa because black people wouldn't celebrate it if they knew it was American. Also, I put it around Christmas because I knew that's when a lot of bloods would be partying."

Karenga has explained that his creation of Kwanzaa was motivated in part by hostility toward both Christianity and Judaism. Writing in his 1980 book *Kawaida Theory*, he claimed that Western religion "denies and diminishes human worth, capacity, potential and achievement. In Christian and Jewish mythology, humans are born in sin, cursed with mythical ancestors who've sinned and brought the wrath of an angry God on every generation's head." He clearly opposed belief in God and other "spooks who threaten us if we don't worship them and demand we turn over our destiny and daily lives."

Through ignorance or racism, growing numbers of black Christians are either celebrating Kwanzaa or incorporating it into their Christmas celebrations. Now many preachers are incorporating Kwanzaa into their messages. This is a horrible mistake.

First of all, as we've seen, the whole holiday is made up! You won't find its roots in Africa or anywhere else. Second, Kwanzaa's "principles" are straight from Hell. Third, and most importantly, Christians who celebrate or incorporate Kwanzaa are moving their attention away from Christmas, the birth of our Savior, and the simple message of salvation: love for God through his Son. To add or subtract from that message is evil.

In recent years Kwanzaa has become increasingly popular and mainstream. President Bill Clinton commemorated Kwanzaa, stating that Kwanzaa's seven principles "ring true not only for African-Americans, but also for all Americans...bring[ing] new purpose to our daily lives." In 2002, President Bush, though a devout Christian, also commemorated Kwanzaa. The U.S. Postal Service issued a Kwanzaa stamp in 1997; the Smithsonian Institution sponsors an annual celebration; and greeting card companies churn out Kwanzaa cards for profit.

It is now clear that Kwanzaa is a phony, wicked holiday created by an ex-con who hates God, Christians, Jews, and blacks – yes blacks. Why else would he try to pull them away from Christianity and indoctrinate them in racialism and socialism? Blacks, particularly black Christians, need to stand up for Christmas and reject Kwanzaa. If they refuse, they will be helping to stamp out the true meaning of Christmas, and allowing evil to have its way in America.

This is a future we cannot allow.

[Reply December 13, 2006 at 10:59 PM](#)

[Cobb](#) said...

You can't tell me squat about Kwanzaa that I don't know. I was there. I am a conservative and I absolutely love Christmas, not XMas but the one about Christ Jesus and all that implies. So go peddle your paranoid agitprop to some weaker minds. And while you're at it, go tell them about the radical associations of David Horowitz and how what he did in the 60s should poison all of his endeavors including Front Page.

I shouldn't weigh you down with important lessons about history that might contradict your precious pack of distortions, but you should understand that everyone who aspires to values doesn't always live up to them. That is why those of us with families and children attempt to teach them to do better than we have. I am a child of Kwanzaa, and my children will express it too. They and I will embody its value better than any of your out-of-context smear. We will persist long after your handlers cease paying you, so have your little arrogant fun while you can. The true and appropriate spirit of Kwanzaa will continue long after Frontpage is bankrupt.

Then again, considering your presentation, they already are.

[Reply December 14, 2006 at 03:54 PM](#)

[Tugar](#) said...

Mr. Front Page is as annoying as an Atheist visiting a Nativity scene.

The people who practice Kwanzaa, Christmas or Hanukkah pose far less of a threat to anyone in this country than those who spend a great deal of time and energy trying to "expose them for what they are".

Does trashing Kwanzaa somehow create a greater legitimacy for Christmas? If thousands of African Americans are peacefully celebrating Kwanzaa, what is the big deal?

Live and let live for crying out loud. I'm happy to stand up for all of these holidays but not one at the expense of the other.

Nobody who celebrates Kwanzaa, Christmas or Hanukkah and really means it has ever wronged me or anyone I know of. Nobody I know who celebrates Kwanzaa is a Communist or a Marxist.

I don't really celebrate any of these holidays. I wouldn't bother with Christmas if it weren't for the rest of my family.

I grew up being taught that Swahili was a sort of African Esperanto and that Kwanzaa was a holiday created to try and unite a people who had been ripped from their cultures with a something that resembled what they may have left behind.

Most white people I know think of it in the same terms. You get the occasional dreg like Mr. Front Page up there spouting off, but for the most part, we (collectively) are not pulling out our hair over it. Despite what Coulter and Snow wrote about it.

(OT Threadjack- Cobb, the mention of Swahili reminded me of someone. He's probably a lurker if he's still alive.

Airman Moss, if you are reading this, shoot me an email.)

[Reply December 15, 2006 at 01:16 AM](#)

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December 23, 2004

A Little Kwanzaa Research

Now that I've been fishing, I'm in a bit of a more charitable mood and decided to write up something new that I haven't seen compiled anywhere about Kwanzaa. Those of you that know me, know I defend Kwanzaa like I defend my parents, sorta. That is because my parents have something to do with the creation of Kwanzaa, sorta.

The man on the left is 'Brother Damu'. We kids are the Young Simbas. That's me in the front. We are marching for the cover of Look Magazine. I would guess that's the summer of 67 and we are most definitely in front of Dr. Alfred Ligon's Aquarian Center on Santa Barbara (now MLK) Blvd. in Los Angeles.

It turns out that Damu died in '95. Unless the following excerpt (which was all I could get for free) is not an obituary:

Shelia Hardwell

Los Angeles Sentinel

02-22-1995

Sam Damu, Longtime Angeleno.

Sam Carr Damu was born Dec. 15, 1930 in Dayton Ohio. He moved to Los Angeles during the summer of 1960.

After arriving in Los Angeles he developed an interest in acting and joined a black actors ensemble while simultaneously working with various political campaigns.

These early interests introduced him to a variety of people to include Dr. and Mrs. Alfred Ligon, owners of Los Angeles' oldest black bookstore and the Aquarian Spiritual Center.

In 1964 while taking a night class in Swahili from Dr. Ron Karenga at Fremont H.S., the Afro American cultural group "US" was formed with Damu as a founding member. He was the founder of the "US" Taifa Dance troupe in California. It was a great success boasting performances at the Dorothy Chandler Pavillion, several local television shows and numerous community and college events.

So Googling 'Taifa Dance' I came upon [this conference program](#), and I'm going to see what I can get out of [Scot Brown](#) at UCLA about Damu and others influenced by the ideas behind Taifa Dance in LA. All this is part and parcel of the intellectual ferment behind Kwanzaa.

I cannot tell which came first for Damu, Taifa or US. But I think the simple fact that he saw his contribution to black society through the vehicle of dance as very significant. I would hope others stop and consider this before being cowed by the virulent diatribes against the founding of Kwanzaa.

Now that I think of it, I have another old photo which is worth mentioning.

This shot was taken in October of 68, the year everything was burning. The fashionable woman on the left is my mother, and this was the backyard of a friend of the family just south of Liemert Park. It was a community art show organized under the auspices of my father's little group. I helped build the displays which were constructed of 2x2s and pegboard, painted white. Again, this is the kind of black cultural power we were all about.

My point in bringing this forward is, as I wrote to Dr. Brown. As an original member of the Young Simbas, I have been frustrated by the distortion of the origins of the celebration of Kwanzaa which travel around the net around this time of year. In particular I am offended by the 'legitimacy' of Kwanzaa attacked through ad hominem attacks on the person of Karenga. I find these attacks a constant source of irritation, and I am motivated to fight back with some historical precision as well as personal passion. Moreover, I seek to express some dimension of the intellectual ferment of the black cultural nationalism independent of the individuals, organizations and politics of the time.

It is not my aim to be an uncritical champion of Kwanzaa. In fact I am particularly put off by its association with the person of Karenga as if its celebrants were victims of a cult of personality. I have my own interpretation of its value and applicability as both symbol and substance. Yet there is no question in my mind that it has transcended its origins. It is that transcendent quality I seek to preserve, and if I stand as something of a heretic, so be it.

Here are a few more links from last year:

[Ujamaa: The Problem Child.](#)

[Dickerson On My Tits.](#)

December 23, 2004 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

[Scott](#) said...

Thanks for posting more about this. It is helping me get over the unease I have been feeling the last two years. I hope in time my appreciation of Kwanzaa will be increased by taking a critical look at it instead of being weakened.

[Reply December 23, 2004 at 07:36 AM](#)

[Lester Spence](#) said...

All of my children have African names. The name I go by when around family is not Lester, but rather Kenyatta. I am a different sort of cultural nationalist though, and I am not one for the cult of personality that surrounds people like Karenga, Asante, and others. I wasn't for Kwanzaa for much of the same reasons--we KNOW what the Ancients revered...why do we have to INVENT anything? It's already THERE.

But the critiques of Kwanzaa that I've seen are at base ahistorical (every holiday is invented, every one--including xmas--has either pagan roots or influences) or ad hominem (the first president of the modern nra was a convicted murderer...do we toss out the 2nd amendment now?). And all with a slick patina of racism. What people should appreciate about your account is how much our experiences with holidays in general are really driven by socialization. If we lived in Israel we would think about Hanukkah the same way Americans think of Christmas. If we were Jehovah's Witnesses, we wouldn't think much of Christmas (or any other holiday) at all.

Socialization.

[Reply December 23, 2004 at 12:31 PM](#)

[Xrlq](#) said...



If we lived in Israel, we wouldn't think much of Hanukkah at all. It's relatively obscure, as Jewish holidays go. It's just a big deal here because it's so close to Christmas.

As to separating Kwanzaa from Karenga, I'm not sure how that's possible, or why it is even desirable. Even if it can be, so what? Black nationalism is no better than white nationalism or any other attempt to carve out some separate nation within a nation. It's nothing to celebrate.

[Reply December 23, 2004 at 12:50 PM](#)

Cobb said...

It's interesting that one of the central purposes of Kwanzaa was to break the socialization of the Negro from the apolitical aspects of the Black Christian Church. When US' braintrust (such as it was) dispersed and it all fell to Karenga, it became a cult of personality with the most ugly sort of socialization.

[Reply December 23, 2004 at 12:51 PM](#)

Cobb said...

I think it's just as legitimate a study to understand the difference and distance between the black nationalism of Karenga and its current proponents as it is to distinguish between the Zionism of David Ben Gurion and Benjamin Netanyahu.

In fact considering the facts of citizenship and loyalty, it is far more reasonable to draw broad conclusions about Israelis than it is to draw them about Kwanzaa celebrants. If nationalism is 'nothing' then perhaps there is nothing to celebrate. But I think anyone who studies the matter will find that men like Vernon Jordan and other prominent African Americans took the concepts of black nationalism and transferred them to America when it became permissible, but the core of nationalism is the same.

I think you will also find anywhere you read that people who prefer the term 'black' to 'African-American' do so because of what black nationalism was and is, and that this is an intense and important distinction.

[Reply December 23, 2004 at 01:00 PM](#)

[Lester Spence](#) said...

"Black nationalism is no better than white nationalism."

This is the type of comment that sounds good but sheds no light, and very little heat.

What are the components of black nationalism? Of white nationalism? What type of material benefit has organizing around "blackness" given black citizens?

Finally this is a sentence fragment--black nationalism is no better than white nationalism at WHAT?

[Reply December 23, 2004 at 05:48 PM](#)

[Xrlq](#) said...

| Finally this is a sentence fragment--black nationalism is no better than white nationalism at WHAT?

Not a sentence fragment, just a general statement. Any form of nationalism that attaches to anything other than a nation breeds balkanization, which is bad for that nation as a whole.

[Reply December 24, 2004 at 08:14 PM](#)

harryo said...

Why does Ujamaa work for asians, hispanics and Black immigrants but not African Americans. Black immigrants, Asians and Hispanics have no problem pooling their money to start businesses, having the whole family work the business and to have family, friends and relatives live together under one roof. Are African Americans too economically independent financially and socially to engage in cooperative economics and all that entails?

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 06:59 AM](#)

[CNU](#) said...

| Are African Americans too economically independent financially and socially to engage in cooperative economics and all that entails?

resistance is futile harryo..., you MUST BE ASSIMILATED into the pure capitalist individualism of the [New Racial Domain](#) and all that that entails, politically, economically, morally, and otherwise...

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 09:16 AM](#)

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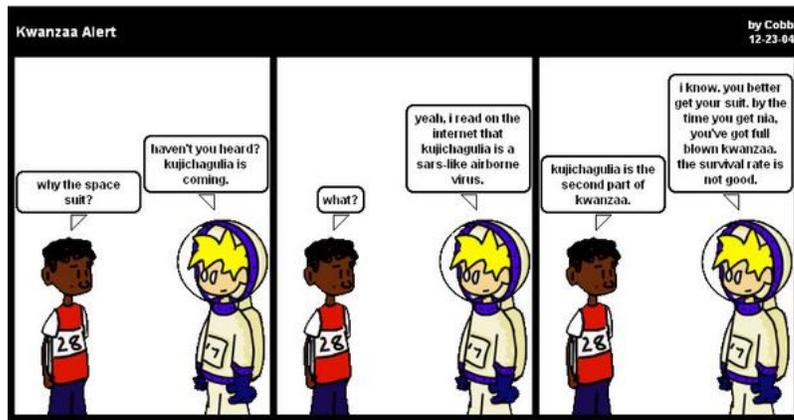
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December 24, 2004

Kwanzaa Alert



December 24, 2004 in [Kwanzaa, The Comic](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

[George](#) said...

Heh. Careful, Cobb, your kuumba is showing.

[Reply December 24, 2004 at 12:33 PM](#)

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December 29, 2004

Karenga, Copernicus & Kung Fu

I've been thinking briefly about what Spence mentioned yesterday about Kwanzaa. He said that nothing particular about the slander against it warms him to the celebration although he is sympathetic in principle. But if there were to be a more real Kwanzaa, we know what it was that West Africans celebrate and we could legitimately assimilate real African traditions into modern celebrations. I can dig that.

However on second thought it occurred to me that in 1966 when this party started, that body of research didn't exist. There weren't even Black Student Unions on campuses, much less Afro-American Studies departments. Who was going to provide that research? It's as if people believing the Earth was the center of the universe upon reviewing Galileo 30 years hence was chiding him for not thinking about ellipses instead of circles. My history of science is sketchy, but you get the point. What Karenga has set in motion will inevitably be refined and changed over time.

As one commenter has pointed out, St. Patrick's Day was a holiday invented for political reasons. Today it's just an excuse to drink green beer, and among GenX, get a green dye job. But Spence's idea of incorporating some actual West African traditions into Kwanzaa might not be such a bad one after all.

In 1991 at BAM, I learned to dance the Sounou and the Koteba. It was easy. I just walked in and the instructors were patient. It was a great experience and every bit as deep as learning a martial arts form. I don't expect that West African dance studios will begin cropping up in every strip mall, but it would be a great addition to the American cultural scene.

I wonder if American students of Karate and other Eastern disciplines consider their schools to be authentic. Here too is a practice that only began taking shape in the 60s. Nobody who watches Batman really thought any of them could beat Kato, and every Western bar fight on TV now looks completely staged. In the light of Jennifer Garner of Alias, there has never been a real female superhero. And now Batman is being reloaded, centering him on Eastern martial discipline.

We evolve, apparently.

December 29, 2004 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

[Lester Spence](#) said...

I'm working on a much longer piece for publication about black nationalism. Trying to make an academic argument for an old school nationalism centered strictly in black american norms and values. what struck me about your comments was that for YOU kwanzaa is what Karenga intended. It isn't a "replacement" for xmas. It IS xmas. If Vince G. had a Charlie Brown Kwanzaa CD, you wouldn't just be on it, it would resonate with you the way that the original CB resonates with me.

The Ancients divided the year into 36 10-day weeks. Each week was dedicated to a specific neter (loosely translated as "spirit"), and each day also dedicated to a specific neter. Five days were added outside of the year, or between years, and those days were considered holy days. If I were to reclaim it, it would be easy. Folks are [already doing it](#). But still this wouldn't evoke in me what Xmas does. And it still wouldn't be american...like I would suppose Kwanzaa now is.

[Reply December 29, 2004 at 04:33 PM](#)

[P6](#) said...

Apparently.

[Reply December 30, 2004 at 04:16 PM](#)

[YvetteP](#) said...

...just as I was starting to feel a little guilty about our unorthodox, mish-mash Kwanzaa observance. Yes, evolution is good (necessary, even). It'll be interesting to see what my kids do with the celebration when they get older.

[Reply December 30, 2004 at 06:00 PM](#)

[Liz Ditz](#) said...

Well, there were certainly Anthropology departments, and persons who knew and loved the cultures of Africa....I believe there was a BSU at Berkeley and Stanford by 1965...I started Stanford in the fall of 68 and the BSU was well organized. I also learned a lot of African dance 1963-1968, mostly from Berkely African exchange students but then again I went to that hippy school. Well, we wanted to dance....

So Kwanzaa is a synthetic holiday? How about Mother's Day? How about Veteran's Day? How about Armistice Day? All synthetic. Christmas has changed in my lifetime, and I'm only 54. I can remember my grandfather saying they didn't have a Christmas tree at all until after the turn of the century (he was born in 1884 I think)...the subject came up because Grammy had purchased (gasp) an entirely fake tree.

And go read up on some modern Jews who are say, creating a vegan Seder WITH gender neutral liturgy. Or bat mitzvahs.

Oh, and Kwanzaa? Just think about the Mormons and the Angel Moroni and the tablets of gold. Kwanzaa is rock solid steady.

At any rate, my very best wishes to you and yours in this auspicious season.

[Reply January 01, 2005 at 12:42 AM](#)

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October 16, 2005

Malkin Extends Her Rant Against Kwanzaa

I've got one gripe with Michelle Malkin, and that's her vendetta against Kwanzaa, which is little more than a broadside against Ron Karenga which is nothing more than a continuing insult to people who celebrate the holiday. Every opportunity she gets to slander the festivities is just another kick in the groin to honest, decent people who find many reasons to recall and rededicate themselves to fine values and a young but growing tradition.

There can be no denial that Karenga himself had plenty of trouble with the law, some of it his own doing. But that is the price paid for having the audacity to assert a black cultural revolution. However as I've patiently explained, Karenga wasn't the only one who saw the usefulness of the idea, nor did it blossom based upon his example alone. Suggesting that Kwanzaa celebrants are somehow bound to the conduct of Karenga is irresponsible and mean-spirited.

I wonder how Malkin would react to someone who suggested that the Japanese Tea Ceremony was the product of murdering, suicidal Kamikazes, and therefore anyone who drinks tea with any reference to it is morally and intellectually suspect. If she's going to keep up her tirade against Kwanzaa, she's going to have to review her logic. From where I stand, it stinks.

October 16, 2005 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

brotherbrown said...

Do you think it would help to videotape and webcast my family's Kwanzaa celebration? Maybe then people could see that it is about reaffirming family values, and that Karenga's name never comes up.

Nah, some people live their lives to put down any and all things Black.

[Reply October 16, 2005 at 10:45 PM](#)

[Dell Gines](#) said...

Glad you brought this out Cobb. Like I posted on Booker...

People will first claim blacks don't do enough for themselves, they rely to much on the government, and they need to concentrate on their own issues.

Then you have a black centered holiday celebration that promotes the values THEY say we lack, and they criticize it.

[Reply October 17, 2005 at 07:11 AM](#)

[Kevin](#) said...

She probably wouldn't care about you slagging the Tea Ceremony. She might even approve, seeing as how she's Filipina, not Japanese, and the Filipinos remember the Japanese occupation real well. Lot of grudges down there, even sixty years later.

[Reply October 17, 2005 at 09:19 AM](#)

Cobb said...

You learn something every day.

[Reply October 17, 2005 at 09:43 AM](#)

[mahndisa](#) said...

10 17 05

Dell is right Cobb:

She is Filipina. But she has NO LOYALTY WHATSOEVER TO OTHER ASIANS, PARTICULARLY JAPANESE!!! She wrote one of the most revisionist, disgusting books justifying the Japanese internment camps during WWII. My question to her is how come German Americans weren't interned? She has espoused WAYYYY too much hate and DISRESPECT for anyone who is not a cultural REVISIONIST; this is what bothers me; people think that you have to LIE and REWRITE history to be a true conservative. B.S.! She is a self hating, hater of others and a meanspirited person. There is a lesson I once learned; listen to the msg irrespective of the messenger. Mr. Karenga certainly ain't a saint, but what he did in the sixties will be forever cherished by us. Creating our own is the goal and always shoulda been. I don't know what her plm is but she needs to check herself! :(

[Reply October 17, 2005 at 10:18 AM](#)

[Juliette](#) said...

mahndisa: According to [this](#), Germans were interred during WWII. Just FYI.

[Reply October 18, 2005 at 01:15 PM](#)

Temple3 said...

her story is regurgitated and her links provide false information. karenga's no saint - doesn't have to be. besides, if malkin wants to go down that road, let's set fire to the DOI and Constitution immediately. i've got matches. nice take cobb.

what's up with the SCAAAAARRRRYYYYY facial stretch on the website...yikes. looked like one of the backgrounds on windows that should be tiled instead of stretched. not sayin' that means anything - just sayin' sup wit dat?

[Reply October 19, 2005 at 01:11 PM](#)

Temple3 said...

true, they were interned, but the US was too busy tracking down nazi scientists and academics and waltzing up to places like Columbia and Harvard...and allowing them to run NASA.

"Boy, you got brains...you shouldn't be in no camp. What you gonna do in camp. Go out and build me a rocket!"

[Reply October 19, 2005 at 01:13 PM](#)

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December 26, 2005

On the First Day of Kwanzaa My True Love Gave To Me

Umoja, meaning unity.

I tried to buy a Charlie Brown tree this year. No such luck. I'm trying to have Kwanzaa lite this year. Maybe I'll be more successful. It's amazing that people have managed to convince themselves that Christmas itself is under attack. What a bunch of maroons. Of course I have been too busy and too happy eating all of the abundance of homemade grub to pay much attention. In fact, I think we've gone through more eggnog this year than any in memory. But I'm also tightening the belt and taking it light in multiple dimensions.

So instead of getting into yet another pointless pissing match with Michelle Malkin (although I have yet to be provoked). I'm going to change the pose on the poster child that is me and give the **Official Guide to Kwanzaa Lite, A Compendium of Authentic Yet Spiritually and Intellectually Inexpensive Activities for the Kwanzaa Season.**

Today's Kwanzaa Lite Theme is Unity

That means everybody in the family has to agree to do three things together and stick it out to the bitter end. We're going to play that favorite game 'Life' by Parker Brothers. We're also going to finish watching Oliver! the musical and everybody is going to watch it all the way to the end without getting up and going to do something else. We're also going to all do the Kwanzaa thing together tonight before dinner.

Since this is the first day, we've got to get the basics in order. We've already got the old kinara and the mkeke still has some wax splatters on it from Kwanzaas past, but it's in good shape. All we have are a few ears of Kwanzaa corn. Right now, I'm going to run out to Rite Aid and see if they have all the colored candles I need. Actually, that's the hardest part. Finding the right hues of red black and green is a real pain, especially if you want to get them all in the same size. I should have done that earlier, but I am in time. So I'll check with y'all tomorrow, and I'll let you know who won in Life.

BTW: If you prefer a more expensive and serious approach, then click [HERE](#).

December 26, 2005 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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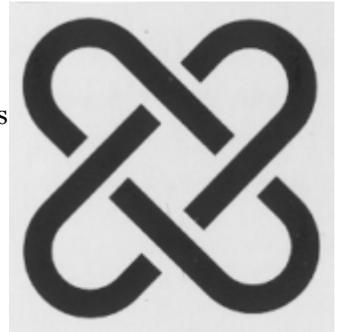
Comments

[XYBORG](#) said...

Merry Christmas! [Merry Christmass](#)

[Reply December 26, 2005 at 04:01 PM](#)

Comments on this post are closed.



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December 27, 2005

Cobblers Alert: Dap & Kwanzaa

It looks like I'm coming back around to some cultural work that needs doing in the fabric of cyberspace. These days I'm focusing on three reference sites that I think are fairly important. They are the Wikipedia, Flickr and LastFM. Black culture is what it is, but a lot of what it is hasn't been translated well into cybermedia. So I'm doing my share, and I ask Cobblers to pull a little weight too.

It turns out that nobody has really got a good definition of Dap. Now that's a damned shame. Most everybody knows what dap is, but it's kind of hard to express in writing. I mean little babies learn how to slap five before they can even talk, so dap is deep. My understanding is that dap originated among the black troops in Vietnam and made a big splash in the US when they returned. Of course there was the black power handshake as well as the black power salute that originated back then. Today everybody gives a pound and men all over give love.

It's interesting that the embrace and handshake is just a thing I call 'giving love', and until this moment, I never really thought about another name for it. I know that after the LA Riots in Los Angeles it was considered very offensive if black men didn't recognize each other with the head up or didn't give love when greeting. (excuse me, I'm tearing up, seriously). I was in Brooklyn at the time but I got the word clearly from my brothers, Deet and Doc. So there's no question that dap is deeply embedded in contemporary African American culture.

Of course dap also has verbal components. I'll only comment on one, which is the offense of 'leaving me hanging'. If I offer you five by raising my right hand to slap you and you don't offer your upturned palm, then you are leaving me hanging, which is similar to not offering a hand to shake, except sometimes with Tom connotations - a greater insult.

As for Kwanzaa, I see that Wikipedia is cleaning up its game, but on Flickr there are only 50 photos tagged with Kwanzaa. Damn. I know we can do better than that. You'll see me in both places for the week. I'm on a mission. Join me.

December 27, 2005 in [Cobblers](#), [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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[mahndisa](#) said...

12 28 05

Hey Cobb: I disagree with LaShawn, Ambra AND MALKIN!!! How absolutely absurd. The Malkin criticism only bashes Mr. karenga for past indiscretions and does nothing to attack the foundation for the celebration(s). I think that Ambra and LaShawn are on a similar trip. It always disturbs me when people say it is a fake holiday, like all other observances are innate and have always been celebrated since Time immemorial. Nope, wrong! One thing that I have been exploring is the philosophical underpinnings of conservatism. Since when is COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY against those ideals? These criticisms are simply irrational made by good people otherwise! Kwanzaa has been absorbed by Christmas celebrations in my family. Yet we recite the principles. And my dad made us memorize them when we were young. I don't know what is up with these folks, but oh well. I appreciate you explaining and exploring this topic:)

[Reply December 27, 2005 at 04:57 PM](#)

[Yvette](#) said...

This is brilliant. And a mission of "dap definition" is a small, do-able, but also somehow extremely important one.

Cobb

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December 27, 2005

Have Yourself a Divisive Little Kwanzaa

All married couples should learn the art of battle as they should learn the art of making love. Good battle is objective and honest - never vicious or cruel. Good battle is healthy and constructive, and brings to a marriage the principle of equal partnership.

-- Ann Landers

I'm not married to LaShawn Barber, but we used to be league mates in The Conservative Brotherhood. LaShawn, however has outgrown our smallish coterie and has become a blogging superstar on her way to media stardom. It is therefore with a bit of sadness that I find myself having to battle her over a matter of personal concern, which is the integrity of Kwanzaa. I've had to deal with [Malkin](#) on this before as well as some stuff written years ago by Mulshin. Now [Ambra's got troops on the wrong side](#) of this too. (sigh)

Although I didn't ask to be, I am probably the foremost authority currently writing on the origins and meaning of Kwanzaa on the web today. That's because I was there at the beginning. Any of you who care to get a nuanced understanding of these origins are welcome to check out my blog which has [plenty of references](#), some serious, some lighthearted. Right now, I need to be serious.

The most important thing that I would like to stress in this post is that Kwanzaa is not anti-Christian. It has transcended its roots and has become something different than what it started as. I think what it has become depends entirely on the spirit of the people who celebrate it. Which is to say that somewhere there is someone just as evil, wicked, mean and nasty [as LaShawn states](#) who celebrates Kwanzaa just to spite people like LaShawn. I'm not sure it's very charitable to consider them as the poster children for Kwanzaa. If anyone, I am the poster child for Kwanzaa. As I said, we started it.

When I say we, let's get one thing clear. Ron Karenga didn't go from house to house burning down Christmas trees and demanding that blackfolks substitute Kwanzaa. The people of the time, including my parents, the Ligons, brother Damu and other families took the celebration into their homes and spread love and started the tradition. So if you learn one thing from your 'What is Kwanzaa' question, keep in mind that Karenga is not the celebration, but the spark. His Kawaida philosophy made a big book and everybody didn't live their life from it like a bible, Kwanzaa was simple and good. Think of Karenga as you might think of Jefferson or Franklin, but understand that among the founders were my family. If you want to hate, know who you're hating. You're hating me and my family, and I don't appreciate being lied about.

I'm sure many of you have heard the old saw 'religion is the opiate of the masses', and there is no Christian of any experience who doesn't know some fakers who are the reason the other expression 'God helps those who help themselves' is in existence. Just as there are fools who call themselves Christians and attend service for the wrong reasons, there are fools who celebrate Kwanzaa for the wrong reasons. That's not who we are here to talk about.

The reason Kwanzaa was created lies fairly parallel to why the Afro was created, why 'black is beautiful' was created and why James Brown sang 'Say it Loud: I'm Black and I'm Proud'. It was about evolving a mindset towards independence and liberation. It was about black people doing something for themselves for a change - not demanding that the government, or Jesus, do things for them that they ought to be doing for themselves.

Today we take it for granted that there is a level of independent mindedness among African Americans that nobody ever expected of the Negro. And in creation of that omlette, a lot of eggs needed to be broken, a lot of militant posturing, angry rhetoric and loud protests were made. That's called mental revolution and it doesn't come easy. Sometimes people are crucified for radical ideas. That's the way of the world. But I think anyone with half a brain recognizes that militant posturing,

angry rhetoric and loud protests are associated with Kwanzaa. It's in Wal-Mart already - the place that can't handle gangsta rap.

To the extent that the Negro Church was considered the only legitimate expression of African American culture in the 60s, the founders of Kwanzaa and like-minded people fought bitterly for attention. Anyone who has watched television to see the most ignorant blacks 'represent the community' knows exactly how intolerable that can be. Imagine that in the days where the very idea of a black journalist working on a white newspaper was unheard of. This is the proper context for understanding the antipathy between kwanzaa's founders and the black church.

Such antipathy is no longer necessary or encouraged. Anybody who says different is just shouting to be shouting. There is plenty of room for Kwanzaa and Christmas. I celebrate both and I think I do so in the proper spirit without contradiction. But every year ignorant people come out of the woodwork the spit on Kwanzaa as racist, separatist, militant and anti-Christian. Why? Why is Osama bin Laden? Why ask why? I just have to deal with that nasty fact, and every year it gets me more and more steamed, even though I try not to be. The insults are intolerable.

I understand that there must be some orthodoxy in Christian sects which forbid the celebration of Kwanzaa or any number of other events not on the official calendar. I don't have any problems with Jehovah's Witnesses who find birthday cakes to be blasphemous or Southern Baptists who find Harry Potter sacreligious. That's them, but that's not all Christianity. But I would hardly expect to take a Jehovah's Witness' word on what goes on in the minds of people who celebrate birthdays. So I don't expect that reasonable people should give anti-Kwanzaans a great deal of credibility as to what goes on in my mind when I celebrate Kwanzaa.

So here's my message to all you Christians who think they are doing the world a favor by spreading ugly ideas about who celebrates Kwanzaa and why. Stop burning your crosses on our lawns. Your ignorance and hatred is nauseating.

[kwanzaa](#)

December 27, 2005 in [Domestic Affairs](#), [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

[james manning](#) said...

Well, you learn something new every day. I don't celebrate Kwanzaa but it was apart of my upbringing. But I do agree that folks that oppose Kwanzaa seem to be off point about it. I know some very ugly (on the inside) Christians and that has never made me question my faith in God. The same with Kwanzaa. I'm not sure if I'll ever celebrate it but I see nothing wrong with its principles and I see nothing wrong with black folk wantign to celebrate it.

[Reply December 27, 2005 at 03:04 PM](#)

Jonathan said...

Should've ended every day of Kwanzaa w/ a drinking game, then it'd be a no-brainer for Americans! ;) No really, only problem i've got with it is that it seems on the surface as divisive . . . 'a black thing'. It's one thing to add to American culture, but damn I've already got 4 holidays in 7 days at years end . . . including 2 birthdays of family!! I'm up to my ears! Well, good luck.

[Reply December 27, 2005 at 04:42 PM](#)

adolfo velasquez said...

Interesting post. I'll still never agree with the principles of Kwanzaa because of the socialist roots and the man behind it, but you've opened my eyes on the people who celebrate it. Thanks.

[Reply December 27, 2005 at 05:06 PM](#)

Cobb said...

That would put you into a Kwanzaa debate instead of an insulting dismissal.

[Reply December 27, 2005 at 06:36 PM](#)

[DarkStar](#) said...

I don't fully understand the full bore attack. It smells.

[Reply December 27, 2005 at 06:40 PM](#)

Cobb said...

Yeah tell me about it. I'm going to sleep on it and see how I feel about it tomorrow, but LaShawn deleted my response out of her blog, which of course she has a right to do. But this is particularly annoying to me, and I'm not quite sure what to make of it.

[Reply December 27, 2005 at 06:55 PM](#)

David said...

I cannot separate the holiday from its founder.

I am willing to listen to the people who do celebrate the holiday, but I cannot respect the holiday.

Sorry.

[Reply December 27, 2005 at 07:36 PM](#)

Cobb said...

I wonder David, if you could separate the personal flaws of signers of the Declaration of Independence with the value of the document? If you were to discover that some individual signer, say Button Gwinnett of Georgia were convicted of a felony five years after he signed it, would you disavow America entirely? If that were true, would you look back on your family celebrations of Independence Day as an endorsement of that crime?

What about the people of Iraq? Would you hold it against them that they were citizens of an Arab Socialist state indefinitely? What about the citizens of Mississippi? Would you hold invalid their humanity because Mississippi was once a slave-holding state? Could you not separate the current champions of Mississippi from those in Jim Crow or Civil War Days?

[Reply December 27, 2005 at 07:54 PM](#)

David said...

The intent of the signers holds importance, as does Ron's intent with Kwanzaa.

Eventually the holiday may overcome its parentage.

Maybe I'll still be alive to see that day if it ever comes.

[Reply December 27, 2005 at 08:01 PM](#)

[james manning](#) said...

Is it fair to assign Kwanzaa to one individual? It would seem to me that there was a movement and he was the one that brought in national exposure. I think there is more to the opposition than what people are letting on.

[Reply December 27, 2005 at 09:28 PM](#)

memer said...

Not sure what to make of Kwanzaa, really. Where I'm from it has this stigma of cheapskaterism, but I still don't understand the level of haterism about it, in general. It's like people who hate on Oprah. Hate? Like you hate Sadaam H? I agree she's annoyingly uppity and self-absorbed sometimes, but is she worthy of *hate*? Does she do far more harm than good?

Why is Kwanzaa worthy of that much open disrespect?

p.s. Cobb, the sooner you realize La Shawn is pathologically insecure, the better off you'll be.

[Reply December 28, 2005 at 09:24 AM](#)

[Aaron](#) said...

Jesus Christ! Hepp' me Lord!

I'm so sick of this BS put forward by pseudo Christians who have so little room in their heart and are so insecure in their own beliefs that they must put down and disrespect everything that doesn't coincide with their view of Christianity.

It's a good thing Christ isn't around to see what people are doing in his name. Because no doubt many of these people would get a rule waking at the hands of their Lord and Savior.

On second thought make that **WILL get a rude awakening**, because he's coming for you, so you better get yourselves right with the Lord... before it's too late.

PS Queen LaShawn will never be the Star of anything, except of course in her own pathetic little warped mind.

Reply December 28, 2005 at 10:29 AM

Elizabeth Ditz said...

Liz here, the li'l old (white) lady from Los Altos. I forget when I first heard about Kwanzaa -- probably at Stanford in the 70s when I was studying anthropology.

What interested me at the time was the drive to create ritual or ceremony to make sense of the changing world. American life in the middle of the 20th century had a particular or peculiar lack of ritual and ceremony. With the hindsight of several decades, I think that lack was part of the social ferment of the 60s, and boom in cultural appropriations--the whole idea of the "plastic shaman" (a good website on the whole issue can be found at:

<http://users.pandora.be/gohiyuhi/nafps/index.htm>)

So one of Ms. Barber's complaints about Kwanzaa is that it is "made up". To that I reply, Christian Science or Church of the Latter-Day Saints, anybody? Are these two faiths completely invalid because they were the brainchildren of individuals?

How about Armistice Day--a public, secular celebration that didn't exist before 1918? It too is "made up".

I do agree with one point Kwame Anthony Appiah made, in the article Ms. Barber linked to: the fallacy of unanimism:

http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.17961,filter.all/pub_detail.asp

we shall not be surprised at what is one of the most tiresome features of Afrocentrism, namely its persistence in what the Beninois philosopher (and current Minister of Culture) Paulin Hountondji has called "unanimism:" the view that there is an African culture to which to appeal. It is surely prima facie preposterous to suppose that there is an African culture, shared by everyone from the civilizations of the upper Nile thousands of years ago to the thousand or so language-zones of contemporary Africa.

Unanimism is also a feature of the new-age appropriations of Native American spirituality--it assumes a commonality of expression that just doesn't exist.

So is Kwanzaa tainted with the "plastic shaman" charge? Not in my book. Why? Karenga was clear that *he* had created (or "made up", if you are being accusatory) the concept, and that his ideas were derivative and syncretistic, not a direct descendant of any particular spiritual tradition.

Is Kwanzaa irrevocably tainted by being the brainchild of Maulana Karenga, a person who has committed crimes and who has a questionable political philosophy? We would have to throw out a whole lot of public mythology if that were true. Good things can come of the work of bad people.

I think your point is well-taken:

It has transcended its roots and has become something different than what it started as. I think what it has become depends entirely on the spirit of the people who celebrate it.

The seven values (Unity, Self-Determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity, Faith) are core American values.

Collective Work is a *socialist* value, some say. Nonsense. What do you call a barnraising? Cooperative Economics is *anti* American, some say. More nonsense. Look at farmers' collectives and credit unions, for two examples.

Reply December 28, 2005 at 11:08 AM

Cobb said...

We very well understood that there was not one Africa, but we sustained the naive belief in the power of Swahili to be a uniting force. So while it was clear that there was no singular African culture surely there was some ism we could create which would be as comprehensively positive as the twin powers of racism and colonialism. Of course that didn't work either, but it gave rise to the kind of hope necessary to overcome.

One could not be any part of pan-africanist thought and not witness the incredible phenomenon that was Muhammad Ali's fame and success in the muslim and African world and not feel that American blacks could influence Africa for the better. That power still exists in hiphop. People all over the world ape American black cultural production, hell the very idea that American black cultural production is a powerful force was part and parcel of the impetus behind cultural nationalism.

Reply December 28, 2005 at 11:46 AM

amengeo said...

Kwanzaa makes more sense to me than Christianity and Christmas. If this offends, sorry. There are some of us out here who have chosen alternate beliefs and they work for us. I revere my ancestors because they are more real and immediate to me than Jesus Christ. In Africa ancestor worship after centuries of disparagement and demonization by white missionaries is having a rebirth. In Brazil the syncretized African religion of Candomble which enslaved Africans kept alive has experienced a tsunami of revival. There are now 5,000 Candomble temples in Brazil. Candomble priests went to Brazil's Supreme Court to have their religion recognized after Christians harassed their faith. Kwanzaa, whatever its origins is part of the worldwide African search to reclaim our identity and the fact that it has grown and is celebrated in countries all over the world testifies to its resonance among a people seeking their own rebirth. It will continue to grow despite its detractors. As for Lashawn Barber the less said the better, but there are still a few self-hating blacks who desperately seek white approval and patronage because they have so little credibility among their own people.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 07:29 AM

amengeo said...

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Reply December 29, 2005 at 07:40 AM

dan hop said...

You make many statements but you offer no analysis as Ms Barber did in her piece. You leave it at celebrate Kwanzaa if you are black because I was there in the beginning. You give no meat. Nothing to refute what Ms Barber has said. Why ask why? Is all I as the reader an left with.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 07:52 AM](#)

Cobb said...

I posted two long pieces at Barber's site which were promptly deleted. Miss Barber felt that I was insulting her personally, and so I began this particular thread starting with the quote from Ann Landers.

I am not expecting all blacks or even the majority of blacks to celebrate Kwanzaa. It really doesn't matter to me if they do or don't. Just as I don't expect all blacks to join the Republican party. I just expect that people consider the probability that those who do either, do so for legitimate reasons. Barber suggests vehemently that there is no room for both Christianity and Kwanzaa in any black household, and I offer my own as a counterexample. My counterexample, probably unique among Barber's readers ought to be one that is worth examining, however she has decided that cannot and will not happen on her website. I think it's a poor choice, but that she is not likely to regret it. I have my own website and plenty of time.

What would you like to see analyzed?

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 09:15 AM](#)

dan hop said...

>

What are you referring to when you say "spirit"?

>

What was your specific role?

>

What does Kwanzaa do for people?? How does your insulting a huge segment of black people world wide by demeaning their faith that Jesus will do for them strengten your position??? THAT SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO START..

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 09:45 AM](#)

dan hop said...

One more thing...what does kwanzaa or Karenga have to do with Jefferson or Franklin??

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 09:59 AM](#)

Cobb said...

When I mention 'the spirit of the people who celebrate Kwanzaa' I mean just that. Are they racist? Are they anti-American? Are they actually anti-Christian? What is their aim in celebration? Is it to tear down Churches?

My specific role was to be young gifted and black. You could consider me an Eagle Scout of the times. If you would take some time to read some of the 20 odd posts I have written about Ligon, St Luke's Church, Damu and other Kwanzaa material here, that's what I think it will take to get the proper context.

I don't feel that I am insulting black Christians anymore than a Physics professor insults black Christians. There is no room for Jesus in Computer Science, does that mean you should turn off your computer and ride the bus? Of course not. You're being silly, unless of course you actually believe that no worldly knowledge is useful if it is not authenticated by scripture. If that's the case we have serious quarrels as citizens in a nation of laws.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 10:37 AM](#)

Temple3 said...

Hey dan, are those belligerent question marks? or the "I just don't feel like reading today" question marks? LOL.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 10:43 AM](#)

dan hop said...

I have read some of your other posts. I see that I am wasting both your time and mine with inquiries. Thank you for your time.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 10:47 AM](#)

dan hop said...

I have read some of your other posts. I see that I am wasting both your time and mine with inquiries. Thank you for your time.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 10:48 AM](#)

[Justin](#) said...

Hey, I do not believe in Kwanzaa (because it seems a bit communist to me) but I have to say nice website.

I live in Los Angeles, and my people are creole too. My grandparents still speak that French to each other now and then.

Anyhow, great blog, oh, and a good discussion about Kwanzaa went down at La Shawn Barber's corner. Be sure to check that out.

Good look and God's speed in all things.

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 06:58 PM](#)

[Justin](#) said...

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Anyhow, great blog, oh, and a good discussion about Kwanzaa went down at La Shawn Barber's corner. Be sure to check that out.

Good look and God's speed in all things.

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 06:58 PM](#)

[Justin](#) said...

BTW - James Brown might have made a song Im black and I am proud, but I saw him on tv about a month ago gallivanting around Europe with a white woman. So much for that.

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 07:02 PM](#)

[Patrick Haggood](#) said...

"*I'm* black and I'm proud; *she's* Polish and she's proud" I might have sung in highschool 22 yrs ago..

But I digress.

Love the thread; hate this blog (dammit, it's 5:30am now - I need sleep to finish this damnable SBIR app in coherent english - stop writing good thoughts you evil conservative sellout!)

Anyway, much of the Old Testament was written by a murderer, and much of the NT was written by a Christian hunter - time to ditch the bible I 'spose; 'cept maybe all the red text in Matthew, Luke, John and Mark.

[Reply January 04, 2006 at 02:29 AM](#)

Comments on this post are closed.

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December 27, 2005

In France They're Ten Days Late



Actually, my favorite comparison to other holidays is [this one](#) about Chanukah.

The central story of Chanukah--the oil lasting eight days, yadda yadda yadda--is not only a lie, but an obvious one: it is nowhere mentioned in either of the two Books of Maccabees, which provide the central textual source for the Chanukah story. It's just made up. And by the way--where are those Books of Maccabees, anyway? Roman Catholics have included them in their Bible, and some Protestants usually append the Apocrypha (where they are found) to the back of their Bible, but Jews leave it out. It's almost as if we're embarrassed by it.

December 27, 2005 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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December 27, 2005

A Kwanzaa Counterattack

Here follows an open letter to all defenders of liberty.

I have found myself in a very uncomfortable predicament. You see I celebrate Kwanzaa. I do so for all the best reasons you might imagine, including the rather unique fact that my parents and I were there at its inception. Because I am a blogger and have no mainstream media credentials, there isn't much that I have been able to do to correct the revisionism attending much of the publicity given to Kwanzaa by certain Christian activists and their defenders on the web. Yet I feel very strongly that there should be some balance given the distortions of this tradition and its meaning, and so I appeal to you.

The difficulty with defending Kwanzaa is part of its redeeming quality. As with Christmas, there is no central authority that controls the way its celebrants behave or what they think. People come up with all kinds of reasons and ways, some good some bad, but not strictly dictated and controlled to spend Kwanzaa week. And yet the primary attack on this meek celebration presumes that very thing - that all of us who enjoy Kwanzaa are under the spell and thumb of its primary founder, Ron Karenga. There are plenty of ugly things to say about Ron Karenga, and the enemies of Kwanzaa have spared no details. I think it is sufficient to say that he was a convicted felon. But those who continue their attacks on the holiday have found no end of ways to putting their interpretations of his intent on center stage in their rants against it. To say that Karenga's definitions of Kwanzaa supercede all others is very much like saying there could be no improvements to America and those who celebrate it based on the sins of Thomas Jefferson - whatever those sins might be. Literally that the sins of Karenga should and do haunt everyone who celebrates Kwanzaa.

This is particularly disturbing and hurtful to me, not only because it indicates the depths to which people will debase themselves to smear others, but because of my personal connection to it and my relative inability to counter the onslaught. In a very real and significant way this has come to represent to me a failure of the blogosphere to live up to its promise of getting useful information to the public by people who are personally invested but not attached to some media machine. But I hold out hope.

My initial inclination is to find some blogging allies to spread the word, and I'll probably continue to do that, but my first move is going to be getting my own blog in order. There's no easy way to describe my relationship to the holiday other than mostly good, as with Christmas, and I cannot say at this moment that I'm in a charitable mood. Part of me is saying, what is the point of explaining something like this to these morons. Yet I have to recognize that people may come here with an open mind. Anyway, I'm creating a Kwanzaa category under which you'll find a bunch of related blog entries. I've left everything in it's original form including my defense of Karenga when I didn't know what had gone on years after my parents and he parted company.

So I think I may have said enough over the past two or three years to show a nuanced appreciation for the holiday, its strengths, weaknesses, origins and practices, but I hope to get some intelligent questions and maybe a trackback or two.

[kwanzaa](#)

December 27, 2005 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

[Dell Gines](#) said...

I have consistently said that what these people say have no material value.

How many black folk listen and read Malkin, Barber, and unfortunately Ambra that take them seriously on issues like this?

Fact is only a small percentage do, and that small percentage is the group that tends to hold those persuasions anyway so in effect they are preaching to the choir.

Which brings us to whom their real audience is, white people.

I personally believe that we do not need to defend Kwanzaa from white people, they have not demonstrated themselves worthy to have us defend what we do to them. In fact, it should be the opposite based upon history, in that they should be defending what they do to us.

In the end, although I don't celebrate Kwanzaa, I 100% support and respect those who do based upon the nature and the structure of the holiday itself.

Ironically, these same whites, Filipino's, and blacks who seek to debase the holiday based upon Karenga, in turn offer nothing material to elevate blacks themselves, other than to say, "Dem negra's is bad and need ta change".

So I will roll with you on this on.

[Reply December 28, 2005 at 06:24 AM](#)

[mild mannered reporter](#) said...

It appears that Kwanzaa is more of a Black Pride movement than a religious celebration. From Kwanzaa's beginning and its association with the Black Panther movement, Marxism, and Anti-American philosophies, the goals of Kwanzaa appear to be Anti-Christian. Historical documents and statements from Kwanzaa's founder appear to reaffirm a movement based more in afro-centric politics and less in deeply held religious beliefs.

I pose this question to myself: If Jerry Falwell's Baptist ministry would have viscusly attacked another race of people and denounced Christianity as spookism, would he have a ministry today? I suggest he would be out of the ministry business.

America, what a wonderful country. It is a place where the founder of Kwanzaa can still have a Kwanzaa ministry at UCLA preaching his Marxist and Anti-American ideas. God Bless America.

[Reply December 28, 2005 at 07:11 AM](#)

[Yvette](#) said...

Thank you so much for this.

So far, I have been mostly amused by the thought of Whites and others for whom Kwanzaa is a relatively new discovery imagining Black families sitting around the kinara discussing Marxism and anti-capitalism and plotting to overthrow the government. That is just so far beyond the experience of ALL Blacks celebrating Kwanzaa that I have ever known about.

Oh well. I am glad I decided to return to blogging about Kwanzaa this year. I may not be changing views of those with already negative attitudes about the celebration, but hopefully I am doing my part to balance the blogospheric universe a little bit.

[Reply December 28, 2005 at 08:25 AM](#)

Cobb said...

"the goals of Kwanzaa appear to be Anti-Christian"?

The goals of Kwanzaa are not anti-Christian, otherwise I, as a Christian wouldn't celebrate it. Kwanzaa had no association with the Black Panthers. In fact one of the reasons for Karenga's troubles was that he fell out with the Panthers and ran a rival organization, which by the way was by definition non-militant. The Panthers carried guns, US refused that. Karenga wasn't Marxist until after Kwanzaa was launched.

What is anti-American about black pride? And since you distinguish a cultural holiday from a religious one and see that Kwanzaa isn't religious, how does that make it anti-Christian?

[Reply December 28, 2005 at 08:58 AM](#)

[Lester Spence](#) said...

(US did carry guns. You remember the shootout don't you?)

[Reply December 28, 2005 at 09:53 AM](#)

[Dell Gines](#) said...

Why does it have to be religious in orientation? How many American holidays are 'religious'. Most of them in fact are not.

Secondly, there is nothing inherently anti-christian about Kwanzaa, in fact, I would argue many of the principles of Kwanzaa are distinctly closer to biblical Christianity than our modified eurocentric version of it today.

[Reply December 28, 2005 at 10:02 AM](#)

[Raymond](#) said...

Give it up man. Stop trying to rewrite history. Karenga was a racist piece of filth who created that kwanzaa garbage to advance his hate for whites and the nation as a whole. He hated God and called Christianity a myth. The seven tenets of kwanzaa are socio-communist in nature and have NOTHING to do with Black people coming together. Socialist in nature so much that the seven heads of the cobra symbol of the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) are the EXACT SAME as the seven tenets of kwanzaa and their mission was the overthrow of the US government.

You cannot separate Karenga from the holiday.

Let it go man.

[Reply December 28, 2005 at 10:37 AM](#)

[Raymond](#) said...

By the way, you will be fighting people like me. I actually TEACH Black children the TRUE history of kwanzaa and why it is such and insidious evil.

[Reply December 28, 2005 at 10:39 AM](#)

[Cobb](#) said...

Assuming you are college educated, Raymond, would you repudiate your alma mater and degree if it could be proven that any of your professors was an atheist? Over here we believe that the value of knowledge does not attach itself permanently to teachers, but has its own intrinsic worth.

I have no desire to rewrite history, in fact, I am happy to represent what I know to be true, which is what this is all about. You may have been convinced that people who celebrate Kwanzaa bow down and worship Karenga but that is an ignorant myth, a lie. You may feel confident in teaching lies to black children, but that's your business.

You speak of all the seven tenets of Kwanzaa as if you understand them, their intent or even their names. How do you expect to teach out of such ignorance? What, pray tell, is socio-communist about Kuumba?

Assuming you can read my very large header, you would know that I am pro-capitalist. How could I possibly be celebrating something 'socio-communist'? I think you need to take a few minutes and clear the cobwebs, bro.

[Reply December 28, 2005 at 10:57 AM](#)

[Temple3](#) said...

Raymond, your resignation papers should be submitted post haste. Use electronic media, it's faster. Why don't you sell cars or something? Your pernicious tone and lack of understanding suggest you're ill-equipped for your current profession.

[Reply December 28, 2005 at 11:28 AM](#)

[abdul-halim](#) said...

I'm glad to see a few positive comments on kwanzaa and i'm glad to see that some people are having a more nuanced take on the holiday. I wouldn't say I'm "celebrating" the holiday in any sense but I am planning on blogging a little on each principle.

Something I suggested for next year was that people who plan on blogging positively on kwanzaa could maybe link up somehow...

I agree that one has to separate kwanzaa from karenga. The validity and worth of the principles is a totally separate question from karenga's behavior.

Personally I don't think I "celebrate" kwanzaa but I am interested in trying to think about, reflect on, unpack and apply the Nguzo Saba.

In terms of whether Kwanzaa is anti-Christian or not I think that depends entirely on how one understands Christianity and understands the Nguzo Saba.

There have definitely been some cultural nationalists who, at least in the past, have seen the Nguzo Saba as a rival to the 10 commandments and are trying to create a black values system which is an alternative to "white Judeo-Christian civilization".

But if you look at the actual 7 principles they promote some unambiguously positive values which few Christians could really object to.

Reply December 28, 2005 at 02:27 PM

mild mannered reporter said...

May I respectfully argue that Kwanzaa is linked to Karenga. And, Karenga's criminal past, Marxist views, and his desire for a bloody revolution in America, makes for interesting reading. I would like to separate his teachings from Kwanzaa.

However, Kwanzaa and Karenga are linked. Hopefully, he has changed his thinking. And, I wonder if he has repented and moved past his troubled start.

I have the following questions. First, does Karenga still believe his writings in "Quotable Karenga". In his Path of Blackness, which is detailed in his Quotable Karenga: "The sevenfold path of blackness is think black, talk black, act black, create black, buy black, vote black, and live black."

Second, I wonder if Karenga still thinks living in a Marxist country is better than living in America.

Third, A few years ago, Karenga was in dire need of psychiatric care as determined by the State of California. "Karenga was sentenced to one-to-ten years in prison on counts of felonious assault and false imprisonment. At his trial, the question arose as to Karenga's sanity. The psychiatrist's report stated: " This man now represents a picture which can be considered both paranoid and schizophrenic with hallucinations and illusions, inappropriate affect, disorganization, and impaired contact with the environment. The psychiatrist reportedly observed that Karenga talked to his blanket and imaginary persons, and he believed he'd been attacked by dive-bombers." I wonder if he has received treatment and is he still in therapy.

Fourth, Karenga explained in his 1977 Kwanzaa: Origin, Concepts, Practice, "Kwanzaa is not an imitation, but an alternative, in fact, an oppositional alternative to the spookism, mysticism and non-earth based practices which plague us as a people and encourage our withdrawal from social life rather than our bold confrontation with it." The holiday "was chosen to give a Black alternative to the existing holiday and give Blacks an opportunity to celebrate themselves and history rather than simply imitate the practice of the dominant society." I wonder if he still thinks that Christianity is spookism?

In conclusion, I think the redemption of mankind is a wonderful blessing. We have all stumbled and fallen short of the glory of God. Hopefully, Karenga has realized the folly of his past and moved on to appreciate the wonders of a diversity of religious beliefs in America. America, what a wonderfully tolerant country. It is a place where even an Anti-American Marxist and "Doubting Thomas" professor with a violently troubled past can preach the spiritual nature of Kwanzaa at UCLA. God Bless America.

Reply December 28, 2005 at 05:27 PM

Cobb said...

Reporter, you have said nothing whatsoever about the message of Kwanzaa nor of the practice of Kwanzaa in the United States. Further, you keep making the mistake of saying that Karenga taught at UCLA. He taught at Long Beach State. You're not making any cogent points that are relevant to the celebration.

Let me try to spell out an analogy for you. Imagine if you will that Catholic priests were found to be pedophiles. Your argument would be that Christianity is inseparable from those who preach it. Further, you are saying that since the leaders of churches are sinners, then all those who ever followed those leaders cannot separate the message from the messenger.

So what is the name of your pastor?

Reply December 28, 2005 at 05:44 PM

mild mannered reporter said...

Dear Cobb, I am glad you asked for clarification on the UCLA matter. Karenga did preach and teach at UCLA, before leaving. He was working on a Ph.D when his organization shot and killed two men on the UCLA campus. He is currently a professor at Long Beach State.

It is hard to separate Kwanzaa from the founder Karenga. A quick search of the internet will show that the two are linked closely. Without being disrespectful to Jesus Christ and Christians, many supporters of Kwanzaa praise Karenga as a savior and cultural icon. I questioned this relationship on pro-Kwanzaa blogs, and there seems to be a tremendous amount of hostility toward anyone who tries to shed light on Karenga's past and the reasons for establishing Kwanzaa. Karenga's troubles at UCLA years ago and his imprisonment reveal a lot about Karenga and the formation of Kwanzaa.

"At the beginning of the 1960s, Karenga met Malcolm X and began to embrace Black nationalism. Following the Watts riots in 1965, he interrupted his doctoral studies at UCLA and joined the Black Power movement. During this time, he awarded himself the title "maulana", Swahili for "master teacher." He formed United Slaves, later called the U.S. Organization, an outspoken Black nationalist group."

"In 1969, the US Organization and the Black Panthers disagreed over who should head the new Afro-American Studies Center at UCLA. According to a Los Angeles Times article, Karenga and his supporters backed one candidate, the Panthers another. The Black Student Union set up a coalition to try to bring peace between the groups, which ended when US members George P. & Larry Joseph Stiner shot dead two members of the Black Panthers, John Jerome Huggins and Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter. The killing was dismissed by UCLA chancellor Charles E. Young as an unrelated incident."

"Time in Prison. In 1971 Karenga, Louis Smith, and Luz Maria Tamayo were convicted of felonious assault and false imprisonment for assaulting and torturing two women from the United States, Deborah Jones & Gail Davis. A May 14, 1971 article in the Los Angeles Times described the testimony of one of the women: "Deborah Jones, who once was given the Swahili title of an African queen, said she and Gail Davis were whipped with an electrical cord and beaten with a karate baton after being ordered to remove their clothes. She testified that a hot soldering iron was placed in Miss Davis' mouth and placed against Miss Davis' face and that one of her own big toes was tightened in a vise. Karenga, head of US, also put detergent and running hoses in their mouths, she said." They also were hit on the heads with toasters."

I have tried to be objective in my approach to Kwanzaa and Karenga. Hopefully, he has overcome his troubled past and moved on to higher ground. God's Redemption is a blessing. Karenga is an excellent writer and I am sure he has influenced people in a way that enhances their lives. If Kwanzaa is used to build self esteem and provide the motivation to live a productive life, Kwanzaa will be a positive force in America. I pray this is true.

I almost forgot, you asked for the name of my pastor. I would be glad to discuss my theology with you, if you will e-mail me the name of your pastor. Take care and may the Lord bless you always.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 03:36 AM](#)

Temple3 said...

mild mannered distorter:

we're gonna have to get some points of clarification/elucidation is you're to continue this line of argument. these are not in any particular order.

first, what was the name of karenga's organization? are you sure? check your references. if this is your only source of data on mk, you should either diversify or desist.

second, let's assume you don't separate the event from the founder. do you know the practice of the man or the beliefs of the man today? for the past five, ten, fifteen, twenty years? has anything changed? are you casting aspersions and asking others to do the heavy lifting? in other words, is your "beef" current and timeless, or is it time-worn and anachronistics?

third, what role do you ascribe to the fibby (FBI) and the cointelpro operation in the violence between US and the BPP? certainly your research has suggested some significant role here. if not, please feel free to peruse your local library...something should turn up.

fourth, the complimentary language about mk may or may not be sincere, but the bottom line is that you've set up a house of straw seeking flames. do the research and answer your own questions before listing a series of semi-accurate events from 1971.

your lack of critical effort here is troubling. as is your confession that you "teach" black folk. a bit more elbow grease, a bit more integrity and you might surprise yourself.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 07:31 AM](#)

Raymond said...

Mr. Cobb,

I appreciate your passion, but presenting Kwanzaa tenets a la carte in a strawman fashion do not give the total concoction any validity.

Kwanzaa simply does not pass the smell test. Selling Kwanzaa is like selling the myth of Rosa Parks. Just one of many lies told in the so called "black community" designed to artificially create accomplishments where there are none thus diminishing real and constructive accomplishments.

I woke up this morning and could not believe my eyes. The local FOX affiliate was doing a story on Kwanzaa and all they showed (and which is all is really is anyway) was a buch of silly @\$@ black folk jumpin' around doing some dumb dances with drums as if this mess came from Africa.

It was repulsive and revolting.

For the record, I possess 2 degrees from Florida A&M University. One being a Sociology degree. Dude, I have been into the belly of the beast.

Have a great day!

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 07:53 AM](#)

Raymond said...

Please post Karenga's repudiation of his racist past (or present). Please post any apologies and pleas for forgiveness and redemption.

Please post where he rejects socialism, racism and accepts Christianity as a legitimate religion and that God and His Son Jesus Christ are real?

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 07:55 AM](#)

Raymond said...

Are you an Alpha?

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 07:56 AM](#)

Temple3 said...

You do know a sociology degree is nothing to shout about from the top of the rafters. There simply are not enough strong academics in the field. After all, your idea of a footnote is citing the name of author and the year the book was written. That's pretty consistent with your posts so far. You should really reign it in a bit - and head back to the library - hunt down a few page numbers, contextual citations and even a primary source or two. It would really strengthen your delivery of the curriculum you use and build strong research habits in your students. And whatever you do, dissuade them from the pseudo-science that masquerades as sociology.

I wonder that other degree is in. I hope it doesn't have anything to do with basketweaving. Besides, since you were so quick to put it out there, it must mean to you than the people who issued the degree. You've gotta relax about your credentials. You don't prove with where you studied or what skins you hold...you prove with skillz on the qwerty. So, settle down, do some heavy lifting and come back when you're ready.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 08:11 AM](#)

amengeo said...

Kwanzaa makes more sense to me than Christianity and Christmas. If this offends, sorry. There are some of us out here who have chosen alternate beliefs and they work for us. I revere my ancestors because they are more real and immediate to me than Jesus Christ. In Africa ancestor worship after centuries of disparagement and demonization by white missionaries is having a rebirth. In Brazil the syncretized African religion of Candomble which enslaved Africans kept alive has experienced a tsunami of revival. There are now 5,000 Candomble temples in Brazil. Candomble priests went to Brazil's Supreme Court to

have their religion recognized after Christians harassed their faith. Kwanzaa, whatever its origins is part of the worldwide African search to reclaim our identity and the fact that it has grown and is celebrated in countries all over the world testifies to its resonance among a people seeking their own rebirth. It will continue to grow despite its detractors. As for Lashawn Barber the less said the better, but there are still a few self-hating blacks who desperately seek white approval and patronage; call them the 'psychic walking wounded.'

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 08:20 AM](#)

Raymond said...

I only mentioned the Soc degree to point out an area of expertise. Those being Black Social Issues and I mentioned FAMU so you wouldn't use the typical charge of calling me a white or a sell-out or some other stupid label.

OK, how about an MBA in Production and Operations Management and a Marketing degree from the University of Florida's Warrington School of Business? Can I shout about that? LOL

I'll quit here. The rest of my CV might frighten you. LOL.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 08:26 AM](#)

Raymond said...

Maybe if I was a Black Studies professor with a criminal record teaching Negronics at Long Beach State you'd respect me more LOL!!

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 08:28 AM](#)

Raymond said...

Maybe if I was a Black Studies professor with a criminal record teaching Negronics at Long Beach State you'd respect me more LOL!!

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 08:28 AM](#)

Raymond said...

Happy Kwanzaa. Don't bust a whole in your drums.

Peace!

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 08:31 AM](#)

Cobb said...

I know everything about Karenga. Even if you go to every one of the static websites that are "Officially" about Kwanzaa you'll find more material here. I have organized it for you to read under the category of Kwanzaa. I'm also going to continue to put more material here. It is astonishing how Americans continue to barf back personalities and call that a nuanced understanding (or the 'real truth') about history.

The US organization met on the property of Alfred Ligon, the Aquarian Center. It was one of a number of community groups organized to convert the Negro into the Black Man. Ligon, a metaphysicist of international repute, was in effect, the godfather of a large number of such activities and not incidently the proprietor of the first and largest black bookstore on the West Coast. Karenga was not the only thinker in the house, and it wasn't a bunch of idiot groupies calling themselves African names, that is to say that it wasn't at the beginning.

You cannot separate the origins of Kwanzaa from the context of the Black Power and Black Arts Movements in Los Angeles, and that is what the anti-Kwanzaans are attempting in this annual smear. They are saying nothing more than Karenga is a criminal and everything he was involved in was idiotic and criminal. I cannot get too upset that few people are good stewards of real black history, because I have my share to do. I was there.

Yes I'm an Alpha. Centennial year is coming up.

Whether or not Karenga rejects Socialism is besides the point. He was pro-black economic improvement. In 1966 the majority of economics professors in American universities were Socialists. Today none are. America was more socialist in the 60s than it is now - considering he wasn't educated in economics, one could hardly expect him to create anything in that regard of lasting significance. In fact, part of the whole point I am saying was that if there weren't a great deal of synergy between what various black consciousness and cultural nationalist groups were doing in Los Angeles at the time, Kwanzaa would have never

gotten off the ground. Karenga didn't make Kwanzaa happen, Kwanzaa happened because hundreds of black families made it happen, and reducing that to snippets about the murder of Bunchy Carter and gang warfare is not only a distortion of history, but an insult to those black families who were there at the outset, including and especially mine.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 08:47 AM](#)

Raymond said...

From this Kappa to a most Noble Member of Alpha Phi Alpha. Happy Centennial "OH-SIX!"

Congratulations.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 08:50 AM](#)

Raymond said...

Do you think that maybe just maybe, the more history you post about Kwanzaa may be even more ammo for those who see it as a comical abomination?

History paints a nasty picture of Ronnie, but the other history which you deem so positive is repulsive and painful for many and not something they want to rehash and certainly not celebrated.

I think if there was (and there is not) the ability to accurately define a POSITIVE "black" culture, more Blacks would jump on board, but the fact remains that the present and commonly accepted definition of "Black culture" or "Black community" is not something people are actually proud of nor should they be.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 08:54 AM](#)

Temple3 said...

Hardly language and scholarship worthy of one who has crossed the burning sands of Phi Nu Pi...pick up your books, get back in the library and be quiet until you can come correct on this. This is beneath any "teacher" of black children...you can really do much better - or of course, you can continue to revel in the glamour of your college days...

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 09:36 AM](#)

said...

That's an interesting observation Raymond. I wonder if you are among those who find nothing redeeming in black literature. I wonder if you are one of those who sees no connection between, say the music of Archie Shepp and the writing of LeRoi Jones. If you believe that there is no positive black culture worth speaking of, then your points about Kwanzaa are certainly taken with the appropriate grains of salt.

I don't believe that more blacks will 'jump on board'. Who hasn't heard of the Dance Theatre of Harlem? Just knowledge of their existence doesn't make one go. Knowledge of Alpha Phi Alpha doesn't make one pledge, and even all who pledge don't cross. And clearly not all who cross even agree. My expectations of blackfolks are that they will do what they do and need no convincing. That means you respect what's respectable. Kwanzaa is.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 09:37 AM](#)

Temple3 said...

I hear that prayer and meditation are good for insecurity. Enough with the overwhelming (not) academic background. Show and prove or Step and move.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 09:41 AM](#)

DarkStar said...

I think if there was (and there is not) the ability to accurately define a POSITIVE "black" culture, more Blacks would jump on board, but the fact remains that the present and commonly accepted definition of "Black culture" or "Black community" is not something people are actually proud of nor should they be.

OK, for me, that says it all about where you are coming from.

Look, Cobb and Temple3 are challenging you. Temple3, specifically, is asking for citations to back up your claims.

So far, nada, nothing, zip, zero, zilch.

Dude, **MAN UP!**

Reply December 29, 2005 at 09:48 AM

Raymond said...

Kwanzaa is comical at best. A joke. A sick caricature.

What is "black" literature as opposed to just plain old literature. Same with "black" history month. Why does it have to be labelled "black." Is it not history still without the label?

Cobb, you can tell me to pack it up and all of that other school yard sissy stuff all you want, BUT I REMAIN and I WILL TEACH. Regardless of whether you like the lesson. It goes both ways. You support kwanzaa and I will kill it.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 10:56 AM

Raymond said...

My TEACHINGS convinced my local chapter of The 100 Black Men of Tampa Bay to quit sponsoring a kwanzaa themed event. We also are in the process of killing off the so-called "Juneteenth Celebration."

BOTH historically irrelevant to our true purpose.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 10:59 AM

Raymond said...

Kwanzaa and Juneteenth. Too silly and divisive. Hurt fundraising activities and cheapened our brand.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:00 AM

Raymond said...

OK, IF there truly exists a POSITIVE Black culture, then describe it.

RULES: If I can assign that same value to another racial demographic, it will be discounted. Must be unique to this group called "black people."

Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:02 AM

Cobb said...

Well I say to hell with public Kwanzaa events too. Kwanzaa only works in intimate settings. That's the point of the Karamu. That's the point of the libations. That's the point of lighting candles. It's reflective and inspirational, not bombastic or expository.

Are you serious about this positive black culture thing? If so, then here is my assignment to you. Go buy Wynton Marsalis' Majesty of the Blues and play it end to end. Then read 'Premature Autopsies' on this website. Then read 'My Dungeon Shook' on this website. Then go to your library or bookstore and read 'Drylongso' by Gwaltney then 'Speech & Power' edited by Gerald Early.

Put those items in a new bookshelf in your living room. You will then have acquired about 1/80th of my library and earn the right to return to Cobb debate black culture with me.

Jeez. I wish I'd a pledged you... Invictus ain't got nothing on me.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:15 AM

Raymond said...

You guys are not licensed by ANY authority, earthly or otherworldly to validate or invalidate what I see. We can spend all day citing the useless opinions of others to support our rantings. The fact remains that I was once a ding dong, kool-aid drinking, shufflin', chitlin eatin' plantation slave.

One day I realized that most of the Negroes telling me what I was or was not were complete idiots unworthy of my ear so for ANY of you to dare ask me to validate my beliefs down at your level is tantamount to me justifying my actions to my 7 year old child.

I really could care less whether or not you accept my message counter to the nonsense you CHOOSE to accept as some type of truth.

I have been asking the same questions over and over and over again and I have yet to receive even a BASIC attempt let alone a coherent answer to the question "What is the definition of Black?" or "What is positive about this so-called "Black culture."

And no GPS system I know of can direct anyone to "the Black community."

The time for trying to unite people melanin in their skin under the same dumb, comical, useless and counterproductive constructs is not going to happen.

As Coloreds become more educated and affluent, we simply cannot reconcile that intelligence and common sense with the total BS generated by morons the likes of Jackson, Sharpton, Farrascum, Smiley and the Congressional Black Whiners.

Some of us choose to accept our INDIVIDUALITY and place in this nation as Americans FIRST! It does not mean we no longer believe racism exists. It simply means we will deal with it as it comes and not let it be pre-emptively and ineffectively dealt with by our sophomoric garbage.

Some of us are tired of the celebration of mediocrity and the reverence of failures and because of the unprecedented access to information available to us, we no longer have to accept the cacaphony of lunacy spewed by the so-called "keepers of blackness."

According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, Black men have approximately 70 years to live on this Earth before moving on to the afterlife and I'll be damned if I will allow two-bit jackasses like Corrine Brown and MAXine Waters speak for me or try to validate or invalidate my blackness.

The only way forward in my opinion is to embrace who we are and where we are from FIRST and I AM NOT A @#\$%ING AFRICAN! Africa is just a place to me. Sorry if that hurts your feelings and causes you to llok down on me, but that it the reality you had better quickly learn to deal with.

I will never put a daishiki on my body, and where Kente cloth. I AM NOT FROM GHANA. LOL

At some point many others will wake up and see that are not obligated to belong to a "community" defined more by its crime rate, AIDS, misbehavior, bad language, counter-culture, violent music and 70% bastard production rate. Why the hell ANYONE would want to claim membership in that club is way beyond me.

"Black" and proud? No. American Christian and proud. Yes.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:32 AM

Temple3 said...

Well Raymond...at least we know you're not a DJ...you simply refuse to dig in the crates. then you gon come with stuff about what you stopped folks from doing in tampa. oohhhh. monte kiffin stopped the falcons - i'm more impressed with his work in tampa.

i see you don't have the skillz. i'll let you retire to the land of truisms, tautologies and sociology degrees. next time i see u in cyberspace, expect a beat down.

by the way, temple3 and cobb are not the same - though i would certainly agree with his baby step prescription for your cultural education...it's sophisticated material but you're oft-referenced education should equip you to get through it. i'm the one who thinks you should hand in the tools of trade - even if it is only 1 book.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:34 AM

Raymond said...

You could never have pledged me. :-) I chose the CORRECT path remember? In fact, I have never seen an Alpha pledge.

By the way, did you actually pledge or are you one of those intakees? You look a lot younger than I. :-)

You started it it, but I'm just funnin' with ya bruh. Much respect to your organization. My father is an Alpha. I bet you think he failed with me don't you.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:36 AM

Temple3 said...

"The fact remains that I was once a ding dong, kool-aid drinking, shufflin', chitlin eatin' planatation slave."

That's a helluva confession. Since there is no evidence in your world - and only testimonial, preach on! Don't hurt your jackleg on the way down.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:36 AM](#)

Raymond said...

Temple,

And you keep on "keepin' it real" my "nig."

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:40 AM](#)

said...

"One day I realized that most of the Negroes telling me what I was or was not were complete idiots unworthy of my ear so for ANY of you to dare ask me to validate my beliefs down at your level is tantamount to me justifying my actions to my 7 year old child."

What if the question was, "Tell me why you believe what you believe what you believe." A 7 year-old might simply say, "Why?"

By the way, since you won't be justifying yourself to your own 7-year old, let's hope you've accidentally come by the humility that will preclude you from directing the actions of other people's 7-year olds. And if you can't get to that, maybe you can justify yourself to the parents of other 7-year olds.

Small worlds for small minds. Dope beats for interesting times. May you find the crates with beats and books for eloquent rhymes and hooks...don't look too far, but in the crannies and nooks. Look, over yonder, it's a library.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:40 AM](#)

Temple3 said...

so, raymond, you've proclaimed your superiority and now you use contemptible terminology like "nig" without being man enough to simply spell out the whole word. is your frustration so high and sense of personal power so low that you would resort to these "tactics." what is the purpose of going there. is this what you teach our children? to resort to terms like "nig" when they are frustrated and incapable of articulating their views. are you really this weak?? holla back brother man. your elevation may come against your will and without your knowledge, but it is possible - even today. i know you learned more on the pledge line than this. your dean would have smacked you have way across campus for some nonsense like this. how do you really get down??

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:46 AM](#)

Raymond said...

Trust me. I did not spell out the word out of respect for this man's site. Don't know what his rules are on the use of certain language. If you have ever been over at Dellgines.com you would know the LAST thing I do is bite my tongue. Comprene?

Still waiting for you to "elevate" me. Have it. Give it your best shot. IF you make sense I will credit you.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:50 AM](#)

Temple3 said...

"The fact remains that I was once a ding dong, kool-aid drinking, shufflin', chitlin eatin' planatation slave."

at this juncture, it might be more appropriate if you affixed this as a signature to your post - and removed any indication that this time period has passed. i would invite you to come into a deeper understanding of yourself - not based on melanin or cultural alienation...there is much work for you to do in the halls of learning. be not so arrogant in your rejection of frauds and hucksters that you reject the very discipline that is the cornerstone of intellectual liberation. your ceaseless ranting, over-reliance on CAPS, references to your education betray a profound level of insecurity that demands immediate attention. while you've selected the classroom as a hideout (children as passive recipients, parents as grateful caretakers, administrators as lax rubber stamps, co-educators as pliable co-signers), it's an obvious ploy that will have repercussions on your development. your growth will be stunted as a man, as an educator, and as a communicator. you're going to have to step your game up.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:52 AM](#)

Raymond said...

Temple,

I your so called intellect was made of gasoline, I doubt you'd have enough to fill up a piss-ant scooter and drive it half way around a dime.

If you want to play the ad hominem game play with someone else. You've got a better chance of sweetnin' the Atlantic Ocean with a 5lb bag od sugar than convincing me that you are any deeper than a plastic wading pool.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:56 AM](#)

Cobb said...

yeah raymond, you're way off topic here and running on your neighbors' nerves. I suggest you chill a bit - for the sake of focus on the matters at hand. I would also point you to negrorage.com, a brother who gets rather deeply into the existentials of blackness. I really don't have the inclination at the moment.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 12:01 PM](#)

Raymond said...

Temple,

You are the poster child for the very type of Negro I have been describing. Predictable as the noonday sun only lacking the illumination.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 12:01 PM](#)

Temple3 said...

"Trust me. I did not spell out the word out of respect for this man's site. Don't know what his rules are on the use of certain language. If you have ever been over at Dellgines.com you would know the LAST thing I do is bite my tongue. Comprende?"
senor, you have not addressed the initial questions put to you. you have not addressed secondary questions put to you. you have launched personal attacks and use the single most pernicious word in the english language (with respect to black folk). you are a man in need of healing. if you not embarassed at such naked conduct in the face of civilized discourse, your needs may be more profound than even a good hazing can cure. quite frankly, your behavior epitomizes that very behavior you've proclaimed as part of your past. it's like running into Kirk Franklin at the Rolex (now go 'head and front like you don't know 'bout the Rolex.)

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 12:02 PM](#)

Raymond said...

Actually it was suggested that I visit here. I am returning where I came and will leave you gentlemen to continue your pity party.

I do thank you for the free speech opportunity and wish you and your family all the best in the New Year!

Take care and may God bless you all!!!

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 12:04 PM](#)

Temple3 said...

"nig" - "negro"

Where do you get this stuff? How much contempt to you really have deep down inside? Let it out. Let it out. Want a cyber hug?

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 12:05 PM](#)

Temple3 said...

Taking flight is only appropriate. Proclamation, insults...not a single demonstration of fact. Next.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 12:08 PM](#)

brotherbrown said...

Sorry, guys, we noticed raymond's door was opened but he wasn't inside. We'll try not to let it happen again.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 12:32 PM](#)

amengeo said...

Raymond! Get back on your meds right now! You are becoming too shrill!

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 10:46 PM](#)

Pro-Choice Kwanzaa said...

Without having all of the gory details concerning Dr. Karenga, I began the celebration of Kwanzaa many years ago because of its principles which define a better community for African Americans. It never replaced Jesus, or celebrating Christmas. That wasn't its intent.

However, as a good Christian, I have studied at length, the history of Noah (who got drunk); Abraham (who cheated on his wife); Lot, who had sex with his own daughters, Moses (who killed in anger); David (who took someone else's wife after setting the husband up), Matthew who used to collect corrupt taxes, Peter who failed to keep his word to Jesus--and later cut off someone's ear, Judas who was a real sell-out, and Saul (who incidentally changed his name to Paul) who killed and tortured every Christian (perhaps even Stephen) he could get his hands on! Yet, with each and every one of these people, I've read about, it is very easy for me to separate their human failure from the higher truth that transcends their experience and then helps me grow in my own experience of being a Christian.

Just as it is imperative to always look for truth, and goodness where it can be found (from the Bible)---it is just as imperative that I look for truth and goodness within society where it can be found. I don't have to become a socialist to observe Kwanzaa anymore than I have to lop off someone's ear because they don't respect Jesus!

If we look to the early crusades, inquisitions, the witch burnings, and all the things so-called devout people have done in the name of Christianity, it certainly requires an ability to distinguish between early church leaders and where Christian thought must be finally lodged. Why, then, is it so terribly difficult to separate people, their pasts, and principles--when it comes to the goodness of Kwanzaa? Is that not what we have done for religion? Particularly, Christianity?

Reply December 30, 2005 at 04:56 PM

themedicalman said...

It is understood that people have to identify with a similar-to-themselves group. The problem with Kwanzaa is "re-segregating" the "black" community from others. Disregarding the Felony conviction, the founder is a very, very intelligent man. It was founded during the Civil Rights movement. Current generations would not see BLACK and WHITE if it were not so socially classified as so. Upon "Kwanzaa"'s creation, the founder was in a state of a psychologically imbalance, categorized as a Paranoid-Schizophrenic; and heavily involved with the Civil Rights. Our current national community has no use for this "holiday". Its focus is only to include one race, those derived from the days of "segregation", and not to forget slavery ended over One-hundred years ago. I am young and have always stopped racial classification between those around me. We are all people, I classify others by their name, mine is Dan.

Reply January 01, 2006 at 05:46 AM

themedicalman said...

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Reply January 01, 2006 at 05:52 AM

themedicalman said...

It is understood that people have to identify with a similar-to-themselves group. The problem with Kwanzaa is "re-segregating" the "black" community from others. Disregarding the Felony conviction, the founder is a very, very intelligent man. It was founded during the Civil Rights movement. Current generations would not see BLACK and WHITE if it were not so socially classified as so. Upon "Kwanzaa"'s creation, the founder was in a state of a psychologically imbalance, categorized as a Paranoid-Schizophrenic; and heavily involved with the Civil Rights. Our current national community has no use for this "holiday". Its focus is only to include one race, those derived from the days of "segregation", and not to forget slavery ended over One-hundred years ago. I am young and have always stopped racial classification between those around me. We are all people, I classify others by their name, mine is Dan.

Reply January 01, 2006 at 05:54 AM

Temple3 said...

I wonder what that evidence of paranoid schizophrenia looks like. That's gotta be one helluva report. Hmmm. State psychologists interviews subject who is allegedly in the employ of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. His employer is engaged in a highly structured infiltration, disinformation campaign against numerous armed groups. Subject is allegedly engaged in counterespionage and fears for his life if identified as such. Subject is aware that his employer (and its agents) were complicit in the deaths of national black leadership. Subject is aware that employer (and its sister agencies) were complicit in the assassination and assassination plots against other leaders with a similar ideology (Lumumba, Castro, etc.) Subject has intimate awareness of tactics of alleged employer. What does paranoid schizophrenia look like in this situation? The only place language like that has any meaning is on the decontextualized pages of the Los Angeles Times. In the real world, it's as meaningful and as accurate as saying, "Ice is pretty. Heat melts ice. Heat is bad."

One of these days, Dan, you may decide to introduce a new measure of rigor to your thought process. I'm not suggesting you're entirely incorrect nor am I suggesting that you don't have a reasoned position. I am suggesting that your point should be internally consistent and defensible. It's not. It could be - with a new measure of rigor. Happy New Year.

Reply January 01, 2006 at 08:19 AM

Temple3 said...

Constructing ad hominem arguments is difficult because they don't stand logical scrutiny and they tend to create a culture of demonization. It is clear that even the worst of Karenga's behavior is not worse than that of many revered figures. What, then, is the real purpose of demonization? If it is not logical (bad founder = bad idea) and is not predicated on a consistent morality (Karenga bad = Bad Kwanzaa, Paul bad = bad Christianity), is it much more than a marketing ploy?

And if it is marketing, what are you selling? Is it simply the idea that cultural identification by black folk with any tradition that is not explicitly christian and/or american is bad form? that sounds like politics. that sounds like ideology masquerading as faith. that sounds a lot like "follow me or go to hell, literally." admittedly, that is a Christian position, but you can see how, generally speaking, this might be a turn off.

Reply January 01, 2006 at 08:30 AM

Chris said...

Happened across this page during an internet search on Kwanzaa. I'm posting this more to Cobb than others, because of his association with the origination of this holiday.

I'm confused. Some claims are that Kwanzaa is a religion, others don't. Some claim this is a Black-only occasion, and universal by others. I've read that it's a promotion against Whites, Christianity, the government, etc... Even its founder appears to have shifted around his reasoning behind Kwanzaa over the past 30 years.

What is it?

As a White male from a middle-class background, I can't say that Kwanzaa has ever been much of a topic of conversation around the dinner table. But, as someone mentioned above, this time of year for several years now, Kwanzaa jumps into the media limelight and stirs emotions, both pro and con.

So far, my take is this: Kwanzaa is not a religion; is not an actual African holiday in itself, but instead created from various cultural practices in mainly Eastern African countries; its alleged founder is not someone who should be looked upon with reverence or respect, however, being a separate issue from the tenets of Kwanzaa; and that the seven principles, minus the SLA's interpretation, are something that applies universally and is actually found across pretty much all cultures.

Speaking of Karenga, I've noticed quite a few sites depicting the creation of Kwanzaa and the SLA as either coinciding or Kwanzaa stemming from the SLA's principles. However, looking at a timeline, it appears that Kwanzaa was formed in 1966 and the SLA sometime in the early 70's. Is that right?

Reply January 02, 2006 at 04:57 PM

Cobb said...

Kwanzaa was intended to replace (crass, commercial) Christmas. The 'Eastern African' connection is only related to the use of the Swahili language which was the official language of Kenya under it's first black president. The Black Power movement in the US was connected to the Pan African Movement and thusly a set of Pan African symbols were adopted including the Red Black & Green flag and the Swahili language.

For those of you who don't know, lots of Swahili was used in marketing campaigns for black oriented products of the time, most notably Afro Sheen hair care. Their slogan was 'Watu Wazuri use Afro Sheen' (Beautiful People use Afro Sheen). Neither that, nor Kwanzaa nor lyrics from Stevie Wonder songs had so much to do with 'Eastern African Countries' as significant of anything other than the fact that African Americans, then known as Negroes were acknowledging the possibilities of associating themselves with a greater context than simply second-class Americans - ie. with Africa.

Now that I think of it, I wouldn't be surprised if Coulter comes up with some new twisted spin on the symbolism of the US emblem. At any rate, I was not aware of any connection between the Nguzo Saba and the SLA.

It's not so surprising that very little of what's said about Kwanzaa makes sense, and that is because of the attempt to smear it takes it out of the context of the Black Power, Black Arts, and Black Consciousness movements. When you realize and recognize that all of those efforts were to convert the Negro, it becomes more clear. As well, since all of those values are associated with independent people, there isn't much controversy to speak of except from two fronts. There are basically folks who believe that blackfolks shouldn't have anything separate or apart from anyone else, and there are evangelist Christians who believe anything that competes with Christmas and Christianity for hearts and minds is evil.

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 08:15 AM](#)

Raymond said...

I couldn't resist. One last thought on kwanzaa (unworthy of capitalization):

If the best argument for accepting kwanzaa is that one should look at what it symbolizes now as opposed to who founded it and why it was founded, then I think I am in safe territory when I say you people have NO OPPOSITION WHATSOEVER to the display and wear and flying of the Confederate Battle Flag.

I mean, today it symbolizes heritage and not hate. Right?

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 09:54 AM](#)

Cobb said...

Proof that all analogies fail. But fwiw, I always enjoyed the Dukes of Hazzard.

Nobody is trying to fly the Kwanzaa flag over a state capitol. But what you put on your bumper sticker or on your property is your business.

Nevertheless, there is never a good reason to distort the facts of history. That's what I demand.

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 10:18 AM](#)

Raymond said...

Good. At least you, one of the few is intellectually honest on the issue.

Somehow I don't think most kwanzaa celebrants would accept you thinking the Confederate Flag is so inert.

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 10:51 AM](#)

Cobb said...

I don't know how many Kwanzaans are upper middle class, and therefore essentially unassailable by rednecks. If I felt vulnerable to rednecks and other low class racists, maybe my opinion would be different.

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 10:58 AM](#)

Chris said...

While I agree that some are opposed to the notion of a "Black Holiday," I feel that for most, it's due to a sense that it has become increasingly imposed upon our national culture, along with Cinco de Mayo and such. However, for radical Christians to proclaim that Kwanzaa is an affront to the faith, but a fat, old, White man riding in a flying sled and squeezing down your chimney once a year is not as bad... sort of leaves me scratching my head. Yes, he was a real person, but passed out treats to

children around the 14th century to celebrate the birth of Christ. That's about it, aside from people fighting over bones after he died.

It's true that we celebrate semi-secular holidays of European origin already, ie. St. Patricks Day, but I'm not aware of them being a requirement in schools and workplace. Ironically, there's plenty of misinformation about those holidays as well. All true Irish do not actually have red hair, nor do they chase leprechauns.lol

In a nutshell, I'd say that most people of all backgrounds in this country really aren't that opposed to Kwanzaa or its celebration by other, just so long as its not in their face. This probably has more to do with the media and columnists, such as Coulter, who use the debate for drawing attention.

By the way, the connection with Nguzo Saba and SLA can be found [here](#), I believe:

Question: Since the vast majority of Africans brought to this continent are of West African origin, why not choose a language from that region?

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 12:51 PM](#)

Chris said...

In regard to the Confederate flag, it actually seems to be a pretty good analogy, IMO. Reason being, the flag's representation of oppression is only one aspect among many that it stood for. It also symbolised the authority of the State to manage its internal affairs without Federal intervention. This, at time when most citizens of this country had a much stronger connection to their state than to the federal State. If you really want to dig into it, take Robert Edward Lee, aka. General Lee, who wrote on several occasions prior to the Civil War that he disagreed with slavery and with secession, and wanted nothing to do with fighting his own countrymen. Jefferson Davis was another reluctant participant, ironically. To say that the Confederate flag only symbolizes hatred and oppression is about as valid as saying Kwanzaa is only about hatred towards Whites and White culture. However, it does symbolize a defeated rebellion and has no place being displayed on a public building, outside of being a museum. I also disagree with people flying flags of other countries in deference to our own, ie. Mexican, Brazilian, Italian, etc.

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 01:11 PM](#)

Cobb said...

Well, lets see. Karenga at his absolute most deadly might be responsible for hmm, say 15 people. That would include anybody killed by the SLA. How about General Lee?

The Battle Flag was literally that. The banner under which tens of thousands of men with rifles, cannon and warships fought to the death. They killed over 110,000 soldiers.

Like I said. The analogy is broken.

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 03:16 PM](#)

Cobb said...

As for Swahili, I don't know how to make it any clearer than this: Swahili is to Africa as Latin is to Europe. It doesn't matter what part of Africa.

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 03:36 PM](#)

[Patrick Haggood](#) said...

*the flag's representation of oppression is only one aspect among many that it stood for. It also symbolised the authority of the State to manage its internal affairs, specifically, to **own slaves**.*

I'm guessing that if the southern states were fighting mainly for their right to own licquor, station wagons, iPods or sea lions, 11% of the US' population probably wouldn't have a problem with this 'symbol' as they now do.

[Reply January 04, 2006 at 03:06 AM](#)

oneblackman said...

Do what you like, I celebrate Kwanzaa because I like the spiritual meaning that it conveys, I think we as a people have the right to determine what we want to accept as the things that we value as a people. To the ones(sell out blacks in particular) who don't want any part of the celebration, do Christmas or whatever it is you do, but don't try to convince me that the things

that I believe is wrong. I have eyes and a mind that can think for itself, I don't need you or the likes of you to think for me. To the ones that is white, oriental, latino, ect. mind your own business, because you have enough problem on your own plate to tend with.

[Reply January 07, 2006 at 06:47 AM](#)

Comments on this post are closed.

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December 28, 2005

Kujichagulia 2005: Do For Self

Of all of the Nguzo Saba, none resonates for me as much as Kujichagulia. First of all, it's the most fun to say, and it's the one I remember above all. It's not squishy like some of the others and it resonates with talented as well as conservative folks (not that there's a necessary dichotomy there).

Of course my boy Ray Nagin got in trouble for putting together an emergency plan in advance of Katrina that employed the value of Kujichagulia. He said, we might be first responders, but your primary safety is in your own hands. That sounds like hard medicine to swallow, but should it be? In perhaps the biggest racial bombshell of the year, Kanye West said George W. Bush doesn't care about black poeple. Had Kanye a bit of common sense and some Kujichagulia he would have understood that George W. Bush's care is besides the point. Do for self means care for self. It means not putting your destiny in the hands of others who may or may not have your best interests in mind. It means having your own plan, defining your own place in the scheme of things.

In that meditation penned by the great man (the likes of whom we may never see in my lifetime) Reinhold Neibuhr he wrote:

God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the Courage to change those things I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference. --(Reinhold Niebuhr 1892-1971)

We select our destiny according to our ability. We accept help when we need it, but we pick our orientation. We decide which way we must go. Doing for self doesn't mean working alone. It means defining a self and investing it with integrity. It means not letting anyone turn you 'round. it meands killing the little demons inside your head. the demons of self-doubt and inferiorty. It means being proud of determining your own fate and not being afriad to put your name and reputation behind things you believe in. It not about being solopsistic or living in your own little nasty world. It means confronting challenges and staying true to true purposes that are at the heart of yourself.

There are lots of ways of expressing this value. I like what Shakespeare said in Hamlet about being true to yourself such that you can be false to no other man. I like what Nikki Giovanni said in 'Revolutionary Dreams', and I leave it at that:

Revolutionary Dreams
 i used to dream militant
 dreams of taking
 over america to show
 these white folks how it should be
 done
 i used to dream radical dreams
 of blowing everyone away with my perceptive powers
 of correct analysis
 i even used to think i'd be the one
 to stop the riot and negotiate the peace
 then i awoke and dug
 that if i dreamed natural
 dreams of being a natural



woman doing what a woman
does when she's natural
i would have a revolution

Sounds like a plan.

December 28, 2005 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

Ras Abraxas said...

HABARI GANI MY BROTHER,

AND MAY YOU BE EXCEEDINGLY PBLESSED ON THIS 4TH DAY OF KWANZAA 2005 MORE TO COME...

[Reply](#) [December 29, 2005 at 09:33 AM](#)

Comments on this post are closed.

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December 29, 2005

Blogospheric Kwanzaa Annex

It's always nice to have academics and sensible people around when things get hairy. I've found a swell compendium of nicely stated pieces on Kwanzaa, including some dissertation stuff that I added [over at Wikipedia](#). Our first stop is at Rising Up where Joe puts LaShawn into context.

Kwanzaa Deserves Respect

The problem with such reasoning isn't that it's dumb; Barber makes a fine, coherent case. The problem is that critical distinctions between religion and culture simply haven't been well differentiated at the traditionalist/rationalist stage of development. At Barber's level of analysis, all religions and cultures are to be weighed against the One True Myth. Surprise, it just happens to be HERS! Yes, HER Myths. HER Church. HER Sacred Books. HER Country. HER Culture. What is reasonable is that which is in conformity with the One True Myth... and surprise! It's okay to celebrate Christmas, but not Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa is bad because it's a "made-up, anti-Christian observance." And Christmas is good because it's a "deep-rooted, historical, [and] true observance."

...

As a celebration of culture and diversity within a context of affirming both traditional values and development to a greater stage of Unity, Kwanzaa is a premiere holiday of the multicultural pluralistic historical stage... and derives from a truly integral expression of wisdom. In this sense, Kwanzaa is an elite cultural holiday: it's based on a vision that simply could not have arisen until the arrival of modern and postmodern intellectual expressions in the African-American community in the mid 1960s. And it is a vision that has succeeded where so many other pie in the sky ideas have failed: it has become part of the cultural mainstream. By some reckoning, Kwanzaa has been celebrated by as many as 60 million individuals. Kwanzaa-related segments are regularly featured on Oprah, Martha Stewart Living, and the HGTV cable channel.

I'm not so convinced that [Kwanzaais](#) or should be considered post-modern. But Joe's got a good grasp on the false dichotomy forced into the premises of Christian fundamentalist attacks on Kwanzaa.

Additionally, we find some great stuff at [Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast](#)

[Over there](#) I found most notably, [this entry](#) which gives a good perspective on what ought to be the discussion about Kwanzaa:

This dissertation examines the creation and early development of Kwanzaa as a response to racial and cultural oppression in the 1960s and 1970s. Though Kwanzaa was created by Maulana Karenga and the US Organization, the response in creating and celebrating a new black holiday quickly transcended Karenga, involving a broader section of black cultural nationalists, local grassroots activists, and many more attempting to raise the level of black consciousness. The dissertation also discusses the appropriation of Kwanzaa by American corporate and cultural institutions in the 1980s and 1990s. By the late 1980s and 1990s, Kwanzaa ceased being the sole property of the black nationalist community; it had been embraced by a broader segment of African-Americans, corporate and religious bodies, cultural and media institutions, and well as the Federal government. In crossing a number of historical terrains, the dissertation explores the following: Kwanzaa's place within the two-century-old black holiday tradition and the development of a black cultural calendar; the origin of Kwanzaa in Los Angeles; the growth of black cultural nationalism and Kwanzaa's diffusion within the black neighborhood public sphere in American cities; the corporate and cultural institutional commodification of Kwanzaa not only for profit, but for public relations and goodwill. In examining these areas with the use of oral histories, mainstream and community newspapers, magazines, academic periodical literature and personal collections, I have

uncovered two Kwanzaas: one, the black nationalist Kwanzaa steeped in ideas about traditional Africa, the essence of race, and the absence of culturally viable representations. This Kwanzaa was designed to liberate African-Americans from white oppression by rejecting American culture. The second is the multicultural Kwanzaa—a holiday less concerned with liberation and Black Power, but more attuned to bringing people together and celebrating diversity. The multicultural Kwanzaa was a product of corporations, museums, schools, the media, and the state.

I'll continue to update this one as I find material on the subject of [Kwanzaa](#) that is new and not covered somewhere here. Over at Economists View is a review of the [Ujamaa as the model for Cooperative Economics in Hip-hop](#):

[T]hose who are involved in the business end of hip-hop seem to be following in Gordy's footsteps ... These present-day entrepreneurs are not just artists, they are part owners of the labels and they produce and create distribution deals that help them build and accumulate wealth. ... The real story is who these artists are and their ability to build viable, successful businesses with friends and family as supporters. The careers of Russell Simmons and Jay-Z illustrate this point. Each has started a small business that now includes recording labels, soft drink products, and clothing lines. Russell Simmons was president of Def Jam, perhaps the most well known if not most successful hip-hop label. Simmons is currently president of Rush communications. ... Simmons has sold off his interest in many of his companies for an estimated \$400 million. It is said that Simmons is more successful than Barry Gordy was during his tenure in the music industry.

December 29, 2005 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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December 29, 2005

The Truth about Kwanzaa Attackers

My third day into my mission of being a one man hit squad has yeilded some interesting insights. I can state them as the axioms of opposition.

1. Karenga is an athiest, therefore Kwanzaa is anti-Christian.
2. Karenga is a criminal, therefore Kwanzaa is illegitimate
3. Karenga is a racist, therefore Kwanzaa is racist.
4. Karenga is Marxist, therefore Kwanzaa is Anti-American.

That's it. This is basically what all the fuss boils down to. You'll notice the pattern Karenga is therefore Kwanzaa is. It's a clever little trick that really boggles the mind of someone like me. You see I would expect more cogent arguments to say something about the people who celebrate Kwanzaa, rather than the guy who kicked it off.

Secondly, you would think that people who go one step beyond the ad hominem would say something substantial about the Nguzo Saba. That is to say that they might show their reasoning that Kuumba, for example, defies one of the Ten Commandments. Not that anyone swears a sacred oath to Kawaida or the Nguzo Saba. But perhaps they think that even repeating one of those 'East African' words might send them straight to Gehenna. Who knows? There's plenty of credibility in the vaguely stated arguments that Karenga is Marxist and therefore Kwanzaa must be Anti-American in some way, but nobody has really mentioned 'Ujamaa' itself. The irony is that they'd get no quarrel from me. I think Ujamaa is provincial and that most ideas about 'recycling black dollars' are impractical and of very little use. But it's one thing to say that going to black barbershops, black car washes and putting your money in black banks is useless as a basis for economic uplift in the American context, and another altogether to say it is racist or un-American. It's simply a level of discussion these folks don't wish to pursue.

So what is unsaid give rise to speculations about the considered yet unexpressed. Perhaps there's something sinister that nobody really wants to say straight out. It's implied with the Ham story but not said much. Yes, there have been people who have said 'Happy Kwanzaa, Niggers' and such rot. But for the most part these attacks, owing primarily to Mulshin, Horowitz, Ham, Barber & Coulter are skating around the issue. What issue is that? The issue of race of course. Put plainly, only bad negroes celebrate Kwanzaa, good negroes don't. Why are they bad negroes? Because they follow Karenga, who is clearly a bad negro. Oops. Did I say negro? Let me put this politically correctly... The truth about Kwanzaa is that it was invented by Ron Everett who calls himself 'Maulana Karenga' who is a psychopathic FBI stooge and torturer..blah blah blah... So is this a truth that Kwanzaa celebrants know? Or is it a truth that good people are supposed to know? What is the point of bringing the ugly facts about Karenga front and center as they have on a regular annual basis?

Which brings us to a very interesting conundrum. What are we to make of all of the corporate and commercial and government co-sponsorship of Kwanzaa? When the guys at The Gap and your local PTA and Virgin Mobile stick Kwanzaa into their agendas, what does it mean? Are we to assume that they are endorsing the bad negro(es)? Do the anti-Kwanzaans expect to criminalize Kwanzaa, are they working to take Kwanzaa out of the public domain? Do they wish to make Kwanzaa an enemy of the state? Perhaps all Kwanzaa celebrants should be shipped to Gitmo? Really, what is the point?

I think there are two things going on. The first insidious but predictable, the second less obvious but equally pathetic.

1. (Insidious & Predictable) Black people should....
2. (Obvious & Pathetic) Multiculturalism sucks...

What's insidious about the 'black people should' in this equation is that it's basically a Christian Fundamentalist thing. The rest of the story is that Black People Should Dismiss Kwanzaa. There are about a thousand reasons why that is completely wrongheaded, not the least of which has to do with the regressive nature of the provincial Negro Church. I will discuss this at length, but the summary of that discussion is this: The Negro Church stands in political opposition to Black Power and Black Liberation. Kwanzaa is a little piece of Black Liberation. There are lots of ways to come at that, but I'll want to talk about the specifics in the context of black intellectuals in the 60s who wanted to break the monopoly of the Negro Church on black political organizing, cultural expression and economic habits. In other words, that kinda transformation Malcolm X went through once he broke with the Nation of Islam is what black intellectuals would have ordinary Negroes do in breaking with the Negro Church. To become citizens of the world, or at the very least an African Diaspora was the aim of such intellectuals, who in the 60s saw a bigger role for African Americans than just in the margins of society. They were making way for the Bill Cosbys of the world. To criticize the Negro Church in any context is to pick a bone with Christian Right and, via their crude calculations, make one an Enemy of Christ(mas), which is the victimology du jour for 2005. It's an interesting form of patronization that seems to work, at least for the likes of Jesse Lee Peterson and those who find him refreshing.

I am only marginally conflicted on this score as a Conservative, that is because I am a civil libertarian and I believe strongly in the idea of a global presence for African Americans. I don't think we should view the world strictly in provincial religious terms or be represented strictly through the Negro Church but through a variety of modes. But like I said, more on that later.

As for the Obvious and Pathetic whinging against Multiculturalism... well what else can you say? It's obvious and pathetic. At least with the Nguzo Saba you have something concrete to base your whining against. It's not like trying not to insult Native Americans because of some sports teams logo. What can be said for Kwanzaa unlike other squishy PC garbage is that Kwanzaa actually states what it is all about. This is something declared and principled, not something ineffable and essential. Anybody can be equally into Kuumba, just like anybody can eat Thai food. It's about something whereas a lot of PC nonsense is about nothing at all.

And this is where the enemies of Kwanzaa fall flat. I mean how could you not see that huge softball teed up and not take a swing. What is Kujichagulia and why is that Anti-American? Well, Kujichagulia is Self-Reliance. Oops, can't go there. How about Ujimaa? Well, that's Collective Work and Responsibility. Hmmm. Can't really knock that. How about Umoja (Unity), Kuumba (Creativity). Imani (Faith), Nia (Purpose).. Damn, strike six. All anyone can really point an accusatory finger at is Ujamaa, the little Marxist problem child of Kwanzaa. But when you really look at where Marxist and socialist influence comes from in American politics, it ain't Kwanzaa. So there's a bit of a chicken and egg problem here. Simply stated, Democrats are more influential on black politics than Kwanzaa, so tearing down Ujamaa (which most Americans have never even heard of) is kind of a non-starter, propaganda-wise.

Therefore the criticism of Kwanzaa can't get most of its weight from the substance of Kwanzaa itself. Much better to go after Karenga, a convicted felon.

This year, however, the litany of complaint has got a new twist. Without really talking about the substance of the Nguzo Saba, the Korageous Kwanzaa Killers have decided to go bring up another American nightmare and use the old guilt by association trick:

Coincidentally, the seven principles of Kwanzaa are the very same seven principles of the Symbionese Liberation Army, another charming invention of the Least-Great Generation. In 1974, Patricia Hearst, kidnap victim-cum-SLA revolutionary, posed next to the banner of her alleged captors, a seven-headed cobra. Each snake head stood for one of the SLA's revolutionary principles: Umoja, Kujichagulia, Ujima, Ujamaa, Nia, Kuumba and Imani – the same seven "principles" of Kwanzaa.

I'm quite sure that this is what my local Rite Aid had in mind when they stocked the shelves with Kwanzaa cards, and what the PTA of my school was all about when they taught the kids Kwanzaa songs in Swahili. Coulter and her ilk are so lunatic on this because they can't stand the idea that the President is actually a Compassionate Conservative who does actually care about black people. Even us bad negroes who celebrate Kwanzaa.

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Comments

Scott Ferguson said...

I can't speak Symbionese. Do they speak English in Symbion?

Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:00 AM

Cobb said...

You have to put the little symbiot worm in your ear, then you can understand it.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:04 AM

Scott Ferguson said...

Don't have none here in Milledgeville, Georgia. Oh wait, the Wal-Mart Supercenter on Hwy 440 might. Or maybe Lowe's down the road apice.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:09 AM

Scott Ferguson said...

Telecommuting from my Dad's place ain't all it's cracked up to be. (banging head against wall)

Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:11 AM

DarkStar said...

Cobb.

Whoa.

Bruh.

Hot **DAMN!!!!** as we used to say back in the day.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:39 AM

Dell Gines said...

I am just tripping that you said Gehenna :)

A brother on Shays site attempted to point out how the tenents of Kwanzaa were anti-biblical. I hopefully put a stop to that nonsense.

You know the bad part about this whole discussion Cobb, is the primary talking bobble heads on this subject fail to truly engage in any serious debate or discussion on this subject.

It is as you said, Karenga is bad, therefore Kwanzaa is bad, and blacks who support Kwanzaa or supporting Karenga, therefore they are bad.

How non-sensical. But that is how you know that they have no legitimate concern for blacks (the talking bobble heads) as they refuse the dialogue to create true transformative change and instead embrace the rhetoric.

Such is the state of modern media.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 11:53 AM

Temple3 said...

That's tight bruh...nice work...I give you a hard time on certain things, but never when you come with a straight argument - regardless of whether or not we agree.

Reply December 29, 2005 at 12:42 PM

memer said...

x is y, therefore all x-related things are y.

it's the same issue people have with separating a religion from its practitioners. the people/person from the idea/l.

some other in some other thread brought up history of kwanzaa. that's another battle (perhaps THE battle), over whos perception is to reign.

some folk forget that it's quite natural (tho, no, not necessary) for a thing or concept to mutate over time and take on meanings/associations much different from those at concept's conception. i hope none of the kwanzaa bashers drive

volkswagens.

p.s. i do wonder tho, if Cobb would feel the same way about kwanzaa if it were invented by Tookie W. i keed. a little.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 01:14 PM](#)

Cobb said...

If I were to discover tomorrow that in fact Kwanzaa were invented by Tookie, my head would explode. I'd make sure I did it next to my father and take him out with me.

I'm really going to have to start talking about 'the Founders' of Kwanzaa. That means I'm going to have to bring in people like the Watts Poets, more on Ligon, talk about the Black Arts Movement in LA including Taifa dance, distinguish between the progressive black church and the Negro Church in LA (Father Hannibal comes to mind, but there were plenty of others), and yes the movers and shakers who got MLK hospital built and those who brought black student unions onto college campuses and started black studies departments. At least this is stuff I am directly aware of because of my parents' involvement.

The other thing I think that has to be stressed here is what relatively little work was involved by today's standards, and yet how barren the landscape was at the time. Today it's a no-brainer to think about an engagement of intellects surrounding black culture and politics. We do it here online all the time. But in those days it was a much rarer thing, and I think because of it, those who pioneered were a bit more accomplished and serious than we are. Completely off topic of Karenga, I am talking about folks like Hoyt Fuller and Richard Wright, John O Killens and LeRoi Jones. It was the establishment of the mindset of the New Negro, the Black Man, that was the great creation. Karenga certainly wanted to be a philosopher but more a political leader via US as rivals to the Panthers. He was clearly outclassed on all sides, but it was the coming together of these communities that made Kwanzaa take off.

But understand that Kwanzaa as a ritual has legs because it is a ritual. The real irony is that it was a downscale creation, it was designed to be something for the masses, but not a high expression of black thought. I'm sure in everyone's mind, and certainly my parent's minds that the higher expression was in literature and music as well as dance and theatre, and the the purpose of the politics was to serve the welfare of the unserved black masses. Then again, they were college educated sociologists and civil servant social workers, how could they think otherwise?

In that regard, as a creation for the masses, some black Christians have a legitimate beef with Karenga's intent with Kawaida. But to over or under-emphasize its role in the context of Black Consciousness is the mistake that folks are making. I mean the whole deal about not being from Africa is completely wrong. It doesn't have to be anymore 'from Africa' than speaking French is 'from Europe'. The point is that American (black) intellectuals of the time engaged in the transition from Negro to Black were in real dialog with African intellectuals. The OAAU was not a figment of people's imaginations. Wole Soyinka didn't ignore America. The Bandung Conference happened.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 01:47 PM](#)

Cobb said...

Speaking of the Bandung Conference, raise your hand if you had a Nehru jacket. Me!!

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 01:49 PM](#)

T-Steel said...

Amen Cobb. Amen. I'm speechless.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 08:22 PM](#)

Dessalines said...

I'm sure the Germans, Norweigns, and others appreciate seeing your Black face wearing thier cultural outfits and your children wearing the headgear of the frozen northern mountains of Europe.

What you said abot Kwanzaa.....

Yusufu

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 09:51 PM](#)

Dessalines said...

Bad day at church? What do antlers, German caps and the other things you/your childern wear/ mention have to with Jesus Christ or his message?

You must be a friend of Morgan Freeman...Do you walk like a ...too? It would come from the mouth of a colored man pretending to offer something insightful...Dream on knee-grow, Kwanzaa will outlast you and your christian illusions.....

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 09:59 PM](#)

Cobb said...

Yusufu. Ya nini kusema hivi? Usiwe na matata.

[Reply December 29, 2005 at 10:01 PM](#)

Temple3 said...

I see you're flexing your muscles. Pretty buffed!! First the Gehenna, now this. Erudite and all right. I'll still need a translation. That Swahili-English online dictionary is not doing me any justice. I'll wait for Jean-Jacques' response to you, BTW, so no rush.

[Reply December 30, 2005 at 06:11 AM](#)

[mild mannered reporter](#) said...

Exploring Kwanzaa and its founder Karenga has been interesting. It appears that Pro-Kwanzaa blogs are out-numbered by Anti-Kwanzaa blogs. Pro-Kwanzaa blogs and Anti-Kwanzaa blogs are both passionate about their ideas. Unfortunately, after reading several Pro-Kwanzaa blogs, it appears that many Pro-Kwanzaa supporters devalue Christianity.

I have more history and research to share on the topic of Christian reconciliation and redemption. However, in the interest of diplomacy, I will reserve my writings on the aforementioned subject for my new book. I have read a recent book by UCLA professor Dr. Scot Brown with a good forward by Dr. Claybourne Carson titled "Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization and Black Cultural Nationalism." And, I would recommend those interested in historical research to consider this a good read.

I am not a legalistic Christian. My theology is quite liberal; however, I have started to devote more time to studying the Holy Bible. In addition, I have pulled the following books from my personal library for further review. I recommend the following books for those wanting to get closer to Christ: "The Holy Bible" of course, "A Savior Worth Having" by E.V. Hill, "Life of Christ" by Bishop Fulton Sheen, "Power Thoughts" by Rev. Robert Schuller, and "Angels-Gods Special Agents" by Rev. Billy Graham. I had a 400 book library, until I donated 350 books to Azusa Pacific University, to be used in a new college campus being built in Africa.

Being a gracious Christian and sharing my ideas on Pro-Kwanzaa blogs has been a real challenge. However, something good has come of this experience. I have become a more commented Christian. And, this experience has solidified my belief that we are saved by the grace of God.

I pray that America does not turn its back on God. E.V. Hill from the Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles, who went home to be Jesus not long ago, said in his book "A Savior Worth Having", "One of the great thrills of my life was preaching in Moscow several years ago-just a couple of blocks from Lenin's Tomb, in the heart of Moscow. I was speaking to about 6,000 preachers (I suspect old Lenin was turning over in his grave) about this wonderful Jesus. For now, even in Moscow, the name of Jesus can be publicly spoken. Who would have thought four or five or ten years ago that the name "Jesus" could be uttered freely on the streets of the former Soviet Union? Tragically, while in Russian public schools He can be read about and discussed freely, in our own public schools, it is forbidden to speak His name."

In an interview awhile back, Pastor E.V. Hill said it best, ". . . my message all the time to any community that we're all one blood-we came from one Creator who gave us one Savior Jesus Christ our Lord and that's what I'd like to say."

Yes indeed, we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. What a wonderful blessing to be saved by God's grace, mercy, and charity. May the Lord be with you all in your faith journey. Praise the Lord.

posted by mild mannered reporter at 8:57 PM 0 comments

Wikipedia

[Reply December 31, 2005 at 06:03 AM](#)

Cobb said...

I do not expect nations to reconcile themselves with God, and yet I expect many good things of nations.

I appreciate that Christians are quite capable of making moral and ethical assessments of every manner of event and occurrence in the passage of time. It is a valuable and useful thing for society to have a critical evaluation from that perspective. Our country would be far worse off without it. However since men are imperfect it should go without saying that singular perspective is bound to have flaws. Some of these flaws are great, others are small.

From the perspective of liberty for the African in America, the single greatest Christian prophet was John Brown. I judge every anti-racist and every would-be liberator of Africans in American history against his standard. Brown, like few before or after him recognized the absolute equality of all men before God and considered any society that made legal, or political distinctions as an affront to God. He dedicated his life, not only as a member of the Underground Railroad, but to the point of armed rebellion, to the purifying of America of the great sin of racism. In the end, of course, John Brown failed. And there is no Church in his honor because America failed too. The great accommodations made by this nation on behalf of the liberty of the African has come by legal fiat. These may have been inspired by the same type motivations of John Brown, but we know there is no single denomination of American Christians whose laity was thusly committed. There is no American Church who made its congregants more Christian than White. That remains an affront to God for which those Churches and laity will account - especially those who boldly claim to work to make this a Christian nation.

So the tasks of liberation, both large and small, have fallen primarily on the African Americans themselves. The history of freedom in the contemporary West is significantly their story, without which any American claims of diversity would be a mockery. America is a global melting pot, not merely a western European melting pot, owing to the successful freedom struggle of the African American. If this were still the home of the Colored, and the land of Post-Reconstruction injustice, no Indians, Muslims, Asians or any other group would be in any position to enjoy the liberty they do.

And so we owe more than a little bit of respect for those freedom struggles, not only specifically to those historical figures who make headlines and history books, but to the families who carried the torch for liberty in their hearts and homes.

At such time as I see clear signs of a reconciliation between the black and white Christian Church over the matters of the history of African liberation in America, then I will put aside any controversy. But for now I hold the majority of Christian Churches and the Negro Church responsible for foot-dragging and intransigence and of leaving aside worldly concerns in sanctimonious vanity.

Liberation Theology is not a new idea, and there are many Christian denominations who profess it. I have been a fan of Cornel West's in this regard, and I expect that Liberation Theology might be a cornerstone of a proper multiculturalism. But in my opinion, Conservative Christians are a great deal more forward in their efforts to minister to the nation than those Christian liberators.

The Nguzo Saba is what it is, and so I predict that you will find no Kwanzaa supporters who would deny you brotherhood in moving forward an agenda supportive of liberation struggle. That would include reconciliation of black and white Christian churches. That's not missionary work, that's institutional reform. So I would be one to argue that there is work to be done in America as a priority over Russia, and that this divisiveness over Christianity and Kwanzaa is one of those reforms that should take priority.

[Reply December 31, 2005 at 10:12 AM](#)

[Laura\(southernxyl\)](#) said...

"There is no American Church who made its congregants more Christian than White."

Quakers.

John Brown's violence put a lot of people off, probably, in the way that abortion clinic bombers smear pro-lifers. Probably Harriet Beecher Stowe and Julia Ward Howe ("as He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free") did more for changing hearts and minds.

Also, regarding attempts at reconciliation, remember [this](#) 10-year-old story?

[Reply December 31, 2005 at 11:30 AM](#)

Cobb said...

There are probably more Kwanzans than Quakers, but your point is well-taken. I believe they are known as the Society of Friends these days. There's interesting stuff at Wikipedia.

I am trying to turn and keep up with changes in the Church...

[Reply December 31, 2005 at 11:47 AM](#)

Das said...

Hey just love that mean ol' oppressive black church that locked down all freedom of expression. Glad that Kwanza fired the faith of Martin and his dad and 99% of the movement to get black folks over -

Yeah right, preach it brother.

[Reply December 31, 2005 at 08:23 PM](#)

Das said...

Hey just love that mean ol' oppressive black church that locked down and out all freedom of expression. Glad that Kwanza fired the faith of Martin and his dad and 99% of the movement to get black folks over -

Yeah right, preach it brother.

[Reply December 31, 2005 at 08:25 PM](#)

Mike said...

I think there is a third thing going on. Maybe it's an offshoot of number 2(2. (Obvious & Pathetic) Multiculturalism sucks...) It's viewed as separatist or a rejection... It's not historically American (I know none of the other traditions were started here) It wasn't adapted by mainstream America as a way of finally admitting in an ethnic group by adopting one of their holiday traditions. (Halloween, St. Patricks day, Easter eggs, Christmas trees...) It was a holiday created to say we are different and we reject your traditions. There is nothing un american about any of the concepts. It seems to say we reject you and your culture. People don't like rejection. I think if an actual even if minor tradition had benn adopted it would have gained a little more acceptance. St. Patricks day and Cinco Del Mayo, are celebrated far more excessivly here than in their native countries. The fact that it was created in the 60s seems to add to that rejection. Just a thought.

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 08:12 AM](#)

Cobb said...

And yet Kwanzaa gains more and more acceptance in the mainstream every year. What's interesting about all this is that there is nothing more to Kwanzaa today than there ever was. The Nguzo Saba has not been modified. Which is to say that in the 60s it was 'OK' to spy on Negroes who had ideas like Kugichagulia. But today everybody expects Black people to do for self. Obviously the Black Power Movement was a success.

I'm sure a case could be made for separatism on an individual basis. Maybe 60% of people who celebrate Kwanzaa don't vote. Then again, 60% of all Americans don't vote.

On the other hand, the biggest movement to integrate blacks and white Americans has been Affirmative Action. Isn't it separatist to defeat programs of racial integration?

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 08:27 AM](#)

Mike said...

Another thought. Kwanza today suffers from the proximity effect. That is it is being pushed into the spotlight at the same time Christmas is being pushed out. This is being done by SOME of the same people. This puts a "guilt by association" perception on Kwanza. People associate the two activities even though there is none. Also since it is easier to attack something than to defend it, a backlash is being created against Kwanza that is out of proportion.

[Reply January 03, 2006 at 08:29 AM](#)

[UncleSmrgol](#) said...

Since the United States Postal Service, an official arm of the United States Government, designates Kwaanza to be a holiday via a postage stamp...

Personally, do I care? Should I?

And with regard to John Brown, you are wrong; if you look at who John Brown killed (e.g., Bleeding Kansas), he rarely got the right guys. There are others who were more noble: 600,000 died in that war (most serving the Union), and there is ample historical documentation that many died knowing the real reason for the fight, Our nation came close to Lincoln's second inaugural prophacy: "Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be repaid by another drawn with the sword..."

[Reply January 04, 2006 at 12:48 AM](#)

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December 19, 2006

Kwanzaa 2006: First Shots Fired

This year I have decided to be a little bit sweeter in my defenses of Kwanzaa. So I'm basically going to do a roundup for you so that you can sniff out the haters with a bit of facility. My basic response, which I haven't quite written up yet will be something to the effect that we should pray for people who feel the need to attack Kwanzaa. Maybe that will be my Kwanzaa prayer.

All of the essays and background are in the [Kwanzaa category](#) that I organized last year. I'll find some way to make it prominent.

Anyway I've discovered that Technorati is actually working on Cobb now, and this new blog has finally gotten most of the links that went to the old Cobb. I'm still short about 100. Last March before I switched over to Typepad I was a Large Mammal and had over 250. So I'm crawling back slowly. So I may not make as big an impact as I should. One of these days I'll get a marketing department. In the meanwhile let me introduce you to the first propagandist, [Mr. Minority who says](#):

What bothers me most about Kwanzaa is that duped people and the Gov't (US Postal Kwanzaa stamps) are starting to give legitimacy to this racist 'holiday' without acknowledging its background and purpose. It is not a 'holiday' which all people can celebrate, it is a holiday for Blacks to separate themselves from the rest of America.

On the off chance that Mr. Minority is not beyond redemption let us take a moment to recall that the background and purpose of black consciousness movement was to devise a way for African Americans to [break the Negro Church Monopoly](#). It's what people do who want to separate church and state. Kwanzaa was one of the most successful artifacts of the black consciousness movement. Now there may be some of you who remain convinced that having a black consciousness movement in and of itself is racist. I would politely remind you that the alternative is permanent dependence. Blackfolks, my family included decide it best to take care of our own in ways the black church hadn't and the rest of America wouldn't or couldn't. So be careful where you tread on that one. We're all better for it, and that's the truth.

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Comments

Saudia said...

Up until I read a comment in regard to one of your post I have indeed blindly celebrated Kwanzaa. Not the commercial stuff that hallmark does put actually have feast, and libations, family and making gifts and the whole nine. I had been celebrating this holiday since my birth. After reading the commentators post I did what any self respecting intellect does and I did my research. I am now in the forming an opinion stage and I seem to be stuck. I am indeed disturbed by Mr. Karenga's past criminal behavior and some of his views in regard to religion. I also see that he has gone on to do a lot of good things with is life and in the lives of others. My question to you is how you separate the man from the holiday that he created.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 06:43 AM](#)

Cobb said...

The same way I separate good Christians from bad ones. It's really that simple. Kwanzaa is something of a sacrament, an outward sign of an inward commitment, a yearly rededication to some solid moral ideas. If you take that part seriously, that's all that matters.

His views on religion, with regard to the creation of Kwanzaa amounted to this: Negro preachers are holding African Americans back, because they are preaching against black mental liberation. Just as there are preachers today who are corrupt and degrade the intellectual life of their congregations, there were those in the 60s who said no to the 'black is beautiful' concept.

So Karenga asked the fundamental question of how you can get people who are not ever going to take a college level class in black history (because there was no such thing), how they are going to participate in their own liberation. The answer was to create a celebration.

Now here's where I understand something fundamentally that people overlook. My family were 'early adopters'. We spread the word about Kwanzaa to our friends, family and associates. US wasn't the only black organization around, you know. My father's Institute for Black Studies was influential as well. As my parents were both sociologists, their area of influence was in city and county government among the new class of black civil servants. And again let me emphasize the point that neither of my parents were members of the US organization, and both became wary of Karenga before he had trouble with the law. That doesn't change the fact that Kwanzaa was and is a good idea.

Again, this was just a facet of the revolution in consciousness that was the creation of blackness. It's not about the personalities, but about the ideas.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 08:25 AM](#)

Saudia said...

Thank you for your honest and sincere opinion. I look forward to continuing to read your post.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 09:48 AM](#)

[brotherbrown](#) said...

Karenga should not be the excuse for choosing not to celebrate Kwanzaa.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 09:51 AM](#)

[Carlotta](#) said...

I've been following your Kwanzaa rantings for quite a while, but this is my first time ever responding. My site, I do believe, you have mentioned and placed on your Kwanzaa hater's list. (www.christocentric.com/Kwanzaa). I just started a new blog on the topic that I write about. Not as fancy and well put together as yours, but a basic beginner's blog.

Anyhoo, I do have a question for your after reading your previous paragraph. You said that the alternative to having a black consciousness movement is permanent dependence. Permanent dependence on what or whom?

Carlotta Morrow

writer/researcher on Kwanzaa

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 11:40 AM](#)

[CNU](#) said...

Oh NO SHE DI'INT!!!!!!

I've been following your Kwanzaa rantings for quite a while

Your "rantings"? ROTFLMBAO!!!!

GAWD I love it when a bible-buddy calls out a Black Conservative. That's like the dustup that happened at the last American Renaissance convention between the anti-Semites and non anti-Semite wings of the white supremacist spectrum.

I'll be getting my popcorn out the microwave and pouring myself a refreshing beverage to settle in for what promises to be some mighty fine entertainment.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 12:19 PM](#)

Cobb said...

Oh shut up Craig.

The alternative to a black consciousness movement is relative ignorance. If no black thinkers wrote books or taught classes about who African Americans could be, we would have nothing to combat white supremacy. We would be nothing more than descendants of slaves whose fortunes would not lie with ourselves but with others.

Would you as a black woman could you consider your Christianity complete if you never experienced a black minister? Just as there was a need for black leadership in an independent black Church, there was a need for independent black cultural thought. Would you rather we never had James Baldwin or LeRoi Jones? Would you rather we never had black studies departments in universities? Would you cosign the belief that all any black American needs to know about himself and his potential is what non-blacks teach him? In other words would you suggest that the black man is incapable or should be restrained from thinking for himself - that he should be permanently dependent on what others think about him to form his identity and destiny in the world?

I don't think anyone who has sympathy for people would suggest that sort of thing. God gave us minds and free will, who dares restrain us? For what purposes? With what justification?

So the question more specifically about this schism, is whether or not one believes that the black Church (itself a creation of independent action) deserves a monopoly on the moral development of African Americans. I understand the threat to this monopoly posed by secular intellectuals and by Muslims. From my point of view, the only legitimate claim that Christians might offer is whether or not the principles of Kwanzaa themselves constitute sinful behavior. I think it would be foolish to consider Kwanzaa idolatry.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 12:52 PM](#)

Peter Gee said...

It's easy to understand that African-Americans have a lot to celebrate and reflect on in their history but is it necessary to do so in an exclusionary fashion of Kwanzaa for what is not a religious exclusion, but a racial one? I find this retrograde, in the end. Of course, if people following Kwanzaa were also following a specific religion, it would be normal to exclude non-members. For example, this is the case with Jewish religious festivals. However, as one can see in Israel, these days Jews are all sorts of races. Uni-racial religions are almost extinct and that trend is accelerating. Of course it is hardly African-Americans' fault that much of America's history has voided their contribution and even existence as contributors, but that is changing. At what point should anyone be invited to Kwanzaa? Or is it to continue as a racial festival only? Lastly, it proposes a socialist view of African-American life, being heavily influenced by mid 1960-s Tanzanian revolutionary socialism. In contemporary Africa such ideas are highly discredited.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 01:17 PM](#)

Carlotta said...

What make my Christianity complete isn't whether or not I'm black but who I am as it relates to whom God is. God completes me through His Son Jesus Christ. Nothing more and nothing less. I don't need a "black consciousness" to make me a better black person. All I need is God and His principles for my life found in the Bible to make me a better "person" -- period!

While married to a black preacher, I went to his church and was not fed at all spiritually. I hungered for more but in obedience to God and submissiveness to my husband, I followed him to his church of choice. Meanwhile, still hungering for the word of God while going to this social club called the "black church" (only this particular black church) I tuned in to LA's christian radio stations and was brought up on the word of God through great bible teachers such as John MacArthur, David Hocking, J Vernon McGhee (reformed racist) and many others who happen to be white. (Ironically, I do believe that racism kept other great black bible teachers such as Dr. Tony Evans (Dallas, TX) from having as much air-time as these white preachers.) But nevertheless, color isn't a necessary issue in my spirituality although believing that color-blindness won't be achieved in this life-time.

The danger in Kwanzaa is the thinking such as yours, that somehow black people need a "black consciousness" to complete them as people. Revolutionary social change through culture is the push of Karenga's holiday of Kwanzaa and unlike you who considers it foolish to think that Kwanzaa is idolatry, I think it is foolish to think that it's not. It's plain idolatrous to believe that one can achieve a better life and a better consciousness other than through God Himself.

cm

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 01:35 PM](#)

Cobb said...

Gee,

Kwanzaa is not racially exclusive, period. There is not so much as a single paid organization or sanctioning body for Kwanzaa. It is structurally incapable of being racially discriminatory, because there is no formal structure. It is exactly what people do with it. Go to your City Hall and find out about who gives the permits for the Kwanzaa parade or celebrations in your town. You'll find that it's all above board - it couldn't happen otherwise. It's no more racially exclusive than Christmas. If you have friends who don't invite you to Christmas dinner you wouldn't be suspicious of their motives.

Kwanzaa is no more socialist today than the Democrat Party. I don't doubt for a moment that there are a lot of Lefties who dig Kwanzaa, including my parents. But there is only one principle - ujamaa that gives me any trouble and I'm a conservative. Again, there are no Kwanzaa police.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 01:48 PM](#)

Peter Gee said...

It's interesting what Cobb, Saudia and Carlotta have to say and I am learning a lot. I cannot pretend to be any sort of expert on Kwanzaa and consciousness matters. However, when Carlotta writes that "revolutionary social change through culture is the push of Karenga's holiday" she does have a point. It's "revolutionary" in the sense that it stresses socialism (or Nyerere and others Pan-Africanist Eden view" over individualism, which is the stronger American thread - indeed the stronger universal impetus as of now. The exchanges on the prior church grip on African American thought is most interesting and provocative. Sounds a lot more interesting overall than the debate over Christmas vs Winterval!

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 01:57 PM](#)

Peter Gee said...

Thanks Cobb for your comment. Of course I understand there are no Kwanzaa police etc, but I mean the concept, as it originated, was not universalist and on the contrary. Yes the ujamaa bit is a problem. Nyerere built a whole country around it, which collapsed in poverty. It is doubtful if "ujamaa" existed in more than lip-service or idyllic form, even in pre-colonial Africa. It reminds me of the old sawhorse that "socialism is a good idea in theory". Maybe it's not a good idea in theory or practice.

There is certainly more communitarianism practised in Africa than say the West. But is this enforced by circumstance, historical, environmental or cultural? Seeing how Africans rapidly absorb individualised lifestyles in contemporary Africa over communal ones, and more importantly observing the hidden dynamics of individualism even in the most ostensibly communal groups certainly helps put the "ujamaa" thing into even more doubt.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 02:07 PM](#)

Cobb said...

Morrow,

I take it that you would disregard the merits of a university degree which was not conferred by 'God', and that you would have no books in your house which are not divinely inspired. If that were the case, I would suspect that you have no context whatsoever to judge what other people find valuable in such things.

You might think that when you say 'black' that you know all there is to know about it, but you would be very presumptuous. People study the matter with as much integrity and inspiration as you might study the Word. But the fact of the matter is most African Americans don't call themselves 'negro' any longer, and that is because they accept the premise that 'black is beautiful'. The deed is already done. Black consciousness is already established. Some people leave it simply, others study at a higher level. No matter what the level of acceptance or study is today, it was during the 60s that more people were focused on the matter and it was much more difficult then.

Karenga might have thought he was a revolutionary and he may have convinced a lot of people that he was. But I don't think he even absorbed enough Marxism to be a professor of economics much less somebody who could lead men to revolution. In other words if Karenga is a revolutionary, he's certainly a mediocre and discredited one. I wouldn't consider him such a pivotal figure as say Rev. Frederick Price, or the men who run Maranatha or Faithful Central. Karenga's 'church' is a classroom at Long Beach State. He is incapable of leading a revolution and Kwanzaa is incapable of sustaining a revolutionary mind.

In the fullness of history, we will recognize that what endures about Kwanzaa is the what is enduring about collective work and responsibility, purpose, creativity, self-determination, creativity, faith and cooperative economics. These are the Nguzo Saba, fundamentally universal values wrapped up in an African American bow. The invention of Kwanzaa, like the adoption of the Afro hairstyle and calling each other 'brother' and 'sister' was part of a movement that has already made its mark, and it continues with an open and gracious spirit. The world can always use another way to remind people of their potential. That doesn't sound revolutionary to me. It sounds like a good idea.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 02:08 PM](#)

Peter Gee said...

Thanks Cobb for your comment. Of course I understand there are no Kwanzaa police etc, but I mean the concept, as it originated, was not universalist and on the contrary. Yes the ujamaa bit is a problem. Nyerere built a whole country around it, which collapsed in poverty. It is doubtful if "ujamaa" existed in more than lip-service or idyllic form, even in pre-colonial Africa. It reminds me of the old sawhorse that "socialism is a good idea in theory". Maybe it's not a good idea in theory or practice.

There is certainly more communitarianism practised in Africa than say the West. But is this enforced by circumstance, historical, environmental or cultural? Seeing how Africans rapidly absorb individualised lifestyles in contemporary Africa over communal ones, and more importantly observing the hidden dynamics of individualism even in the most ostensibly communal groups certainly helps put the "ujamaa" thing into even more doubt.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 02:08 PM](#)

Cobb said...

Well, Ujamaa basically rolls out as nothing more or less than what Ice Cube did in that movie *Barbershop 2*. There are no significant socialist productions of Ujamaa. I mean even Maxine Waters, in seeking money and jobs for people in her South LA district was looking for capitalist investors.

When I say Ujamaa was a problem, I probably understate the extent to which a great deal of black economic empowerment thinking in those days was shaky. Quite frankly I would guess that Karenga had no idea what he was talking about when it came to economics. All I can think of was the Panther's idea of giving out free lunches to community folks which has actually been adopted in the mainstream. Very little else has held. So there are economic flaws in black nationalism that are still unaddressed. Ironically, black Christian ministers have a headstart on the black radicals and intellectuals. They're more part of the Ownership Society than the likes of Angela Davis.

So if there's a socialist revolution, it's with tenured black radical professors who live under the care and feeding of the university system. Everybody else out here is hustling in the job market. We have way more to fear from real labor unions than fake revolutionaries.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 02:18 PM](#)

Mr Minority said...

On the off chance that Mr. Minority is not beyond redemption...

Cobb,

There is no issue with my redemption, that has already taken place, with Jesus.

I have several points in which I would like to make:

- 1) I wrote my posting so as to inform people about Kwanzaa and it's background. Who the founder was and why he created it.
- 2) No matter how you feel, Kwanzaa is a 'holiday' meant to separate Black Americans and White Americans, and how can something that is meant to separate us be right?
- 3) Part of the problem I see (as a Middle Aged White Christian Guy) is that there is too much talk about what differentiates Black and White Americans and not enough on what binds us together. And as long as there is a 'Black Consciousness Movement', Dr King's dream is dead.
- 4) Christianity is not a 'White' religion, it is a religion that is embraced by all people of color. And happens to be the fastest growing religion in the continent of Africa.
- 5) If you are celebrating Kwanzaa to celebrate your Black uniqueness, then you are part of the problem, not the solution.
- 6) I celebrate Christmas, not because it is a 'White' holiday who's current symbol is an old White guy in a red suit, I celebrate it because I honor the birth of my savior (and your's too). And who happens to be color blind.
- 7) Kwanzaa's roots are racism, that is the truth. And I for one can't abide by this, so I informed my readers of this. I also don't like the idea of a celebration that was created by a racist criminal being legitimized by people that are ignorant of Kwanzaa's creator and the reason behind it.

So if you want to celebrate Kwanzaa, that is your right as an American, and I would die to protect that right, but keep in mind, that it is not something that brings Americans together, it's purpose is to separate Americans, and I feel that is wrong.

And a shout out to Carlotta, because her site was one that I used in helping develop my post.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 04:46 PM](#)

Cobb said...

Ahh.

Point by point.

- 1) If you didn't inform your readers about the context of the invention then you do them a disservice.
- 2) Considering that I've paid a lot more attention to it I would say that you're the one doing the feeling. I'm an original source. I was there. I am not anti-white. If you cannot distinguish between pro-black and anti-white how can you expect to pass credible judgment?
- 3) Sure there's a lot of talk about differences. That's not what Kwanzaa is about. The Black Consciousness Movement is done. You clearly haven't read any history of it. Read Stephen Biko's biography to start. Understand that Nelson Mandela is a champion. King is not the only moral leader on the planet worth minding, nor is there a conflict between black consciousness and King's ideals.
- 4) I am aware of this. It is not an item of contention.
- 5) I am celebrating Kwanzaa as part of a family tradition and out of respect for the values of the Nguzo Saba which you completely ignore. This is like me suggesting that you celebrate Christmas in the same way Adolph Hitler did without minding the message of Christ.
- 6) Yes of course. Good for you. God is fully aware of my color, are you suggesting that he cannot see it and love me as well? Or is that your particular shortcoming?
- 7) I am not ignorant of Kwanzaa. You may find people who are. Chances are they'll listen to your bad faith. More's the pity.

You're probably the type of person who won't believe Kwanzaa isn't divisive until you see black, white and brown children singing the Kwanzaa songs in unison at the Winter Carnival. I'd be happy to provide you with such video, but I have ethical concerns about publishing other people's children on the internet.

You have a lot of learning to do my friend. This website is open to your perusal. Avail yourself.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 05:05 PM](#)

[brotherbrown](#) said...

it's purpose is to separate Americans

That is patently false. If you have never been to a Karamu (feast), how can you even say that?

For our family, getting together for Kwanzaa is as traditional now as getting together on the 4th of July. That one celebrates freedom for a nation that still allowed slavery. Still, no one enjoys shooting fireworks more than I do, and I get the same feeling when the children of our family light the candles on the kinara.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 05:18 PM](#)

BrewFan said...

Thanks for the invitation to visit your blog. Several things 'jump out' at me as I read some of your writings.

First, anybody who disagrees with your assessment of Kwanzaa is a 'hater' or a bigot. This is very convenient for you because it means you don't have to make a case for the merits of your position.

Secondly, the 'content of someones character', a basis of moral judgement in the eyes of Dr. King, means nothing to you as long as you perceive that person made some kind of dubious contribution to the 'black consciousness movement'.

As regards Kwanzaa, I have no problem with it as a cultural celebration. I could also live with the fact that it was the idea of a violent criminal (even the blind squirrel finds a nut from time to time) that has gotten mainstreamed over time. But what bothers me is the attempt to define it as something spiritual and to fool people into thinking its a substitute for faith in their Creator. There is no salvation to be found in Kwanzaa.

BTW, your theory on the Negro Church Monopoly is kind of hokey but I don't have time to pick it apart now. However, we do have common ground as regards your opinion of Al Sharpton. I would venture to say, though, that he's as much a Christian as I am a kangaroo.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 07:10 PM](#)

[brotherbrown](#) said...

Kwanzaa is not a substitute for anything. And I have never heard anyone declare that salvation was its end game.

By the way, salvation is just a state of mind, because you really don't know what happens when your mortal life ends.

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 07:38 PM](#)

[Cobb](#) said...

Brew,

My position is simple. Kwanzaa is neither racist, anti-American, shallow nor anti-Christian. There is a conspiracy to defame it and its adherents by substituting the person of Karenga for the values of the celebration itself. This is based on propoganda of individuals with an agenda who don't care about the disrespect they do. The end result is a prejudice against the holiday, and the people who celebrate it based, not on any real experience with either. That's bigotry. I name those people by name and point to their writing.

The content of someones character is of paramount importance to me. But there is a line of diminishing returns in character assassination. Is a Jew a hypocrite for driving a Ford or a Mercedes Benz given the ideology of the founders of those companies? Are blacks hypocritical for wearing cotton? Is the Constitution nullified by the character flaws of the Founders? Wasn't Columbus a criminal? And what of Saul, who slew Christians for sport? Should we discount all of his contributions as Paul? What of Jacob's sons who left their brother for dead? How can any of their sins be forgiven?

You suggest that people are searching for some salvation in Kwanzaa. Let me only presume that you are not complete with your arguments, because you absolutely fail to address the core of Kwanzaa itself, the Nguzo Saba. As I mentioned before, I am all for discussing Kwanzaa's principles on their merits from any number of perspectives - but that's not going to happen until people get past their ignorant slander.

As a confirmed Episcopalian, I recite the Nicene Creed. Imagine a critique of Christianity that never once approached any principle in that profession of faith? How seriously am I supposed to take such a criticism?

[Reply December 19, 2006 at 09:17 PM](#)

[Yvette](#) said...

I am not sure the why the "exclusionary" claim seems so valid to some. I have held and attended Kwanzaa observances in the past in which White people were welcome to and did come. In the private observances, they have been spouses and parents of African Americans; In the public ones some appeared to just want to find out more about what Kwanzaa was all about.

Additionally, when I was a preschool teacher, I led the children in lessons about Kwanzaa along with the other traditional winter observances. Children of all races participated and seemed to enjoy it.

In the end, if you are not Black, and you wish to observe Kwanzaa as a way to learn about Black history and culture, then I can assure you that no Black Police will come breaking down your door, impounding your candles and ears of corn.

[Reply December 20, 2006 at 06:17 AM](#)

[CNU](#) said...

My position is simple. Kwanzaa is neither racist, anti-American, shallow nor anti-Christian. There is a conspiracy to defame it and its adherents by substituting the person of Karenga for the values of the celebration itself. This is based on propoganda of individuals with an agenda who don't care about the disrespect they do. The end result is a prejudice against the holiday, and the people who celebrate it based, not on any real experience with either. That's bigotry. I name those people by name and point to their writing.

WOW!!!

put this way, Kwanzaa sounds almost exactly like a metaphor for Blackness. You maybe ought to consider that next time you launch into one of your embrace Americanness/End of Blackness musings...

[Reply December 20, 2006 at 06:21 AM](#)

[Carlotta](#) said...

Thanks for the shout out Mr. Minority and glad my site was a help to you!

Cobb, more later when I have the time.

cm

[Reply December 20, 2006 at 06:43 AM](#)

[Temple3](#) said...

Cobb:

Just wanted to say that I appreciate these pieces. Too bad you didn't get to flex this year...it would have been nice to read some of the nuances of the argument you'd be making. The battle between Black cultural nationalists and that extreme sect of culturally oppositional Black Christians has been going on since (I'm guessing here) those first Africans were terrorized for speaking in their native language or retaining their indigenous practices. Principally, I see the extreme Christian response as a logical response to American terrorism. It all makes sense, but at this juncture, these are largely irreconcilable differences.

[Reply December 21, 2006 at 04:08 PM](#)

KAYA MAGA said...

I've noticed certain people seem to have a problem with the idea of "black consciousness", especially as it relates to being incompatible with "true Christianity". While I can't see the problem with one's desire to gain awareness of black culture and history (especially since great efforts have been made to rob us of it), perhaps it would be easier for some to digest if we took out the 'black' and just called it "consciousness". Surely it can't go against Christian values to be conscious of the world around us and the history thereof. With that in mind, let us understand that without black or some other type of consciousness, everything we as black people think or perceive is through the perspective of "white consciousness"- something far more dangerous considering the history of their actions toward all the darker peoples of the earth. An example that pops up instantly is the idea of Christianity as blacks have come to understand it, based on our adoption of it from our former slavemasters and from a book that we've come to accept as the Bible, first "revised" (more than half of the scriptures removed) at the insistence of a morally corrupt Roman emperor (Constantine) in the 4th century a.d., then "revised" again centuries later by King James, yet black people have no problem accepting this as the unadulterated word of God. I would question the sincerity of any so called Christian who doesn't make the effort to know the history of their religion. I don't mention this to start a religious debate, but to drive the point home that consciousness- "black consciousness"- is not a bad word but a necessity for breaking the "white consciousness" aka slave mentality that continues to plague black people. Who else would we look to for moral and spiritual guidance, and for a world view if not our ancestors (Jesus Christ included)?

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 05:09 AM](#)

CNu said...

Blackness is inherently and indubitably Christian..

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 05:41 AM](#)

CNu said...

Once conscious of this fact, you realize that that other old mess is a pale imitation only suitable for provoking its forlorn adherents to spasms of envidious comparison.

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 05:48 AM](#)

Carlotta said...

Cobb, what I find disturbing about your views on Kwanzaa, is how you have completely tried to reinvent it. In support of Karenga, he is the one who can correctly define what Kwanzaa is because he created it. He created it as an anti-Christian, anti-religion, anti-American, racist, black-separatist celebration. If you want Kwanzaa to be anything else, then you need to give your celebration a new name. Kwanzaa IS Karenga and no matter how one tries to shape it into their own celebration, it will never escape it's designer – Ron Karenga.

Another disturbing thing about your earlier comment to me when you said:

"I take it that you would disregard the merits of a university degree which was not conferred by 'God', and that you would have no books in your house which are not divinely inspired. If that were the case, I would suspect that you have no context whatsoever to judge what other people find valuable in such things."

I guess the message you were sending me was not to disregard a person's education in regards on what they believe black consciousness is all about? Okay, let me take the time here to explain something to you. You made the comparison of the "afro movement" and Kwanzaa as being similar expressions of black identity. True, but the problem is that there is nothing about wearing an afro that dictates how one should live. Kwanzaa, on the other hand, attempts to do what religion tries to do: provide a way of life complete with principles for how one should live. That's why I, as a Christian, am making a big stink about Kwanzaa. True revolutionary social change is brought about in a radical spiritual transformation through Jesus Christ - not by Kwanzaa principles. The black consciousness that attempts to live its life through Kwanzaa is practicing a form of idolatry. Social change is God's territory! No matter how many Ph.Ds one may have, it will always pale to God's principles found in the Bible, as a way for man to live.

Of course, many who celebrate Kwanzaa are not doing so for social change, spiritual transformation, or anything religious for that matter. They simply want to celebrate their heritage. There are ways of celebrating one's heritage, but one (the Christian) must be cautious that they are not treading into an area of spiritual compromise.

I also see your support of Kwanzaa as being more emotional than logical anyway. You were there from its inception. You were one of the first celebrants. So, inspite of plenty of scriptural warnings that would have the Christian to turn its back on this humanistic celebration, you have compromised your beliefs to support it. I don't blame the Christian who unknowingly takes part in this celebration, but the Christian who has been warned by fellow Christians on the danger of being a part of this pseudo-religious celebration, there is really no excuse.

You are a brother in Christ and celebrating Kwanzaa isn't going to take that away from you. Just some words of warning: educate yourself on what Kwanzaa TRULY represents and run from it as fast as you can!

"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them." Ephesians 5:11 (NIV)

cm

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 09:31 AM](#)

KAYA MAGA said...

uhhh... what? I'm new on this blog so I'm not sure if you were responding to my comment or not, but if so I don't see how references to European scholars perceptions of 'black' serve to do anything but support my conclusion. Again I couldn't tell if you were in agreement or disagreement with what I said or what exactly you were trying to convey at all. A further explanation would be helpful, thanks.

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 09:37 AM](#)

KAYA MAGA said...

I was responding to cnulan by the way.

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 09:39 AM](#)

CNu said...

Kaya maga,

everything I wished to convey is spelled out above and in considerable detail in the link embedded in that comment. Not to put too fine a point on it, but I'm an orthodox Christian Black partisan who's personally indifferent to Kwanzaa while finding no fault or harm in it whatsoever and in fact recognizing the way in which it evinces the core principles of genuine Christian praxis.

OTOH, I find the anti-Christian Bible-buddy mischief simultaneously pernicious and ridiculous, and I mock it accordingly....

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 10:27 AM](#)

Cobb said...

Carlotta,

I'm a scientist by training. What we understand about science is the same thing that theologians understand about revelation. The truth owes to the nature of the universe, it is embedded in creation. Ours is but to discover it. I read the beginning of the Gospel of John to demonstrate that Christianity is merged with Western thought and indeed all proper thought. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. Word meaning logic. You have an evangelistic mission to go and label everything as belonging to God. That's your bishop's doing, not mine. For Episcopalians and Catholics, we don't evangelize, but we understand everything good and great to be part of God's mind. We don't require the prodding that your flock do. All truth that is part of Kwanzaa is part of God, all that is sinful is not. The values of Kwanzaa are therefore a small part of God's revelation. I know that may sound strange and mysterious to you, so perhaps you will have to accept it as a mystery.

Still, what you and all other critics have been unable to do is to show how reverence for the values of Kwanzaa have motivated anyone towards sin. Nor have you or anyone shown the innate value of the Nguzo Saba themselves to be sinful or anti-Christian. All you have done is lamented that everyone doesn't do your bishop's bidding according to whatever his interpretation of

the will of God happens to be against Kwanzaa. Again, your effort is to establish you sect's way over other Christian interpretations.

The other thing you don't seem to understand or want to admit is that my parents who celebrated the first Kwanzaa did so NOT as members of the US organization. Which is to say their distrust of his leadership and the dubious merits of his organization were apparent to them years before he ran into trouble with the law. You, however still believe I am defending Karenga. I am not.

In fact, when Mulshin first published the felony conviction about Karenga several years ago, I was shocked. I had no idea about what he had been up to all these years. So I confronted my father about the matter and he straightened me out about their association. It was at that point that I learned that although I was with the Young Simbas as part of my learning Swahili, that they were in fact not members of US. Again, our association with Karenga was primarily through Dr. Ligon of the Aquarian Bookstore and Aquarian Center on whose property US often met.

Karenga was philosophically predisposed to be a seeker after truth. Marxists may be wrong about any number of things, but their aims are to improve the fate of mankind. Insofar as Karenga sought after truth it makes him the same as a scientist or theologian, and heretic in that tradition. But he has been disgraced by his own foolishness and grave errors. That doesn't change the nature of his discovery or the process by which people seek truth. (And I think it goes without saying that if the black Church in LA were perfect, none would need to seek on their own. As it stood, we spent a lot of time with Father Hannibal, but that's a different story). But as peers with Ligon and others like Brother Damu, once the new ideas were out there, they were out there.

Karenga made the error to assume that people who saw the value of his creations would make him a prophet, and all those who attribute the failings of Kwanzaa to the failings of Karenga fall right into his trap. If I were to say that all the good of Kwanzaa comes from the mind of Karenga and all honor to those values be attributed to Karenga, I would be an idolator. That's what you think I am, and it should rightly draw your righteous indignation. But I'm telling you that what is good about Kwanzaa is universally good and that owes to the very nature of God's creation. Kwanzaa is flavor, it is a rite, it is a cultural bundle that works, and all of that clever packaging goes to Karenga as an invention, but there is nothing new under the sun. The good of Kwanzaa is God's good, and the devil take the rest.

I don't mind if this interpretation troubles you or anyone. I know that there is no contradiction between my Christian faith and the continuing celebration of Kwanzaa. In fact, it was a harvest celebration in St. Luke's in Harlem that re-awakened the spirit of Kwanzaa in me after many lapsed years back in 1992. I wrote about that here. Hmm.. I need to republish that under the new blog.

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 12:10 PM](#)

[Cobb](#) said...

Kaya,

I agree with what you're saying, and I have followed along the lines of liberation theology back in the early 90s to the extent that Cornel West was teaching/preaching it. I have failed to follow up by reading James Cone, but I think that's the way to go. Again, a lot of my writing owes to the inspirations of West's notions of the prophetic tradition of Christianity and that of the necessary provocations of public intellectuals.

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 12:38 PM](#)

[Carlotta](#) said...

Cobb, before I continue with another lengthy response to your post, I had a question about one line you had just written:

 | "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. Word meaning logic."

The Word was logic? Maybe it was just an expression, but do believe that the Word was Jesus Christ? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God? I think I may have misunderstood you there. But I do want clarification on that before I explain incorrect assumptions you made of me in your posts.

cm

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 01:27 PM](#)

[Cobb](#) said...

What I believe, this is my profession of faith. It hasn't changed in 30 years. It's not about *my* faith, it's about my membership in the body of Christ.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God,

eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light,

true God from true God,

begotten, not made,

of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven:

by the power of the Holy Spirit

he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,

and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again

in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,

and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come.

As for the word and logos, there's not a particularly simple way to express it, but I think you're going to have to study a great deal to disabuse my notions. And although I've published a bit of that here under 'Matters of the Spirit', it's frankly none of your business. I doubt your motives.

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 01:45 PM](#)

[Carlotta](#) said...

If none of my business, then why answer me at all?

Just wondrin'...more coming up!

cm

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 01:53 PM](#)

[brotherbrown](#) said...

I have to confess this growing fear of Kwanzaa is startling to me.

As someone whose family has celebrated Kwanzaa for many years, I can assure you we are not attempting to "overthrow" Christmas, Christianity or the teachings of Jesus the Christ.

I can't actually find that many people who do anything to commemorate Kwanzaa, but I have no problem finding those who attack it.

Therefore, I am going to introduce a new word into the vernacular: Kwanzaaphobia, the fear that Kwanzaa is an attack on Christianity and traditional American values.

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 01:55 PM](#)

[Cobb](#) said...

It's none of your business to question my faith here in my house. If you don't have the good sense to recognize that, I have to employ restraints that your arrogance won't allow you to employ on yourself.

I give you the benefit of the doubt as a representative of your particular sect of Christianity and of those ideas. And I answer your questions for the sake of those who read here and don't speak - the many hundreds that come every day at this time of year. I do so for the sake of clarification as I do with every other commenter on every other subject.

You may be possessed of good ideas and good intentions, and I wouldn't let your character flaws stand in the way of a clear presentation of them, a courtesy you are clearly unwilling to grant to Karenga.

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 02:06 PM](#)

[Carlotta](#) said...

Cobb, you say the following:"

| | "It's none of your business to question my faith here in my house."

And,

| | "You have an evangelistic mission to go and label everything as belonging to God. That's your bishop's doing, not mine. For Episcopalians and Catholics, we don't evangelize, but we understand everything good and great to be part of God's mind."

Firstly, you ignore the great commission for ALL Christians and it is to do as Christ has said in the bible:

| | "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

So, yes, it IS my business to question your faith even if it's in your house. I can't make a disciple of you if I don't know where you stand with Christ, can I? We Christians just can't go baptizing folks if they are already saved, and the only way to find that out is to ASK!

But being YOUR HOUSE, you can decide whether to have me here or not. You do have that luxury.

And it's not my "bishop's" doing that I'm evangelical. It is God's word, doing. In obedience to God's word, I evangelize whenever the opportunity to presents itself. You opened the door to your invitation to Kwanzaa. I accepted.

You also said the following:

| | "Still, what you and all other critics have been unable to do is to show how reverence for the values of Kwanzaa have motivated anyone towards sin. Nor have you or anyone shown the innate value of the Nguzo Saba themselves to be sinful or anti-Christian."

Then Cobb, you haven't done your research. I won't go into detail here, but my [website](#) has more than enough information to show anyone that the [Nguzo Saba](#) is racially inclusive, SELF-centered instead of God-centered, and dangerously points to one to have faith in an unnamed god or in man himself. If the Nguzo Saba is not sinful, then tell me what you think one would need it for?

You said,

| | "The other thing you don't seem to understand or want to admit is that my parents who celebrated the first Kwanzaa did so NOT as members of the US organization."

And,

| | "You, however still believe I am defending Karenga. I am not."

Wrong! Please re-read my posts to you. I perfectly understood that your parents were not of the US organization and that you aren't defending Karenga. I said earlier because of your early ties to Kwanzaa, you are emotionally attached to IT, not to Karenga.

I would agree with you however, if one sought any good in Kwanzaa they would find it. I'm sure if anyone sat in a church service lead by the Grand whomever of a KKK meeting when they used the Christian bible in the past (or in the present perhaps too) I'm sure they would find good in that too. Do you get the picture here?

| | "The good of Kwanzaa is God's good, and the devil take the rest."

Just replace your words "Kwanzaa" with "KKK, slavery", or anything else that had questionable elements in it but with good also. Evil is evil no matter how you color it. Just because you find some "good" elements in it, doesn't make it right.

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 03:38 PM](#)

[Carlotta](#) said...

If it's getting too hot here in "your house," I'll finish my comments to you in [MY HOUSE!](#)

Peace and goodwill brother,

cm

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 03:45 PM](#)

[Cobb](#) said...

I think you have amply demonstrated exactly the kind of presumption against which thoughtful people resist, which is the presumption that everything not dictated by your interpretation of scripture is sinful. Such presumptions are part and parcel of the arrogance of the Negro Church whose moral monopoly has been broken.

I am thankful to live among people who recognize that there are multiple valid interpretations of holy works and that throughout history there have been many paths to the truth. This is in no way an excuse for relativism. It is an acknowledgment that human beings speak different languages and come to universal truths in different ways. More directly, we are fortunate that African Americans, at a crucial point in history decided to move beyond the same pulpits and the same messages, to confront restrictions on their liberties and minds from a new perspective. The best of that perspective embodied in works of the Black Consciousness, Black Nationalist, and Black Arts Movements, is still alive, and some part of that is carried forward in the spirit of Kwanzaa.

We can't expect any of our interpretations to be perfect. All have sinned and fallen short, everybody makes mistakes. I hold that it is a grave mistake to attack liberation movements. And it is also a mistake to assume bad faith in people.

I think I understand why some Christians feel threatened by the persistence of Kwanzaa. I believe most of them are poorly informed due in part by the demonization of Karenga and ad hominem attacks on the holiday itself, as well as a general disrespect for Kwanzaa celebrants. Black history teaches us that this is nothing new, and we soldier on. Still some of them are better informed and take it as their duty to insist that ALL praise be given to God. This, I take as your angle, and if I'm wrong at that, I cannot be corrected, for it is the lesson I have taken from this exchange and that cannot be undone. It is also that lesson that affords me the most respect for you and your position, the merits of which I dispute.

History will judge whether my interpretation of the meaning of Kwanzaa will survive. I hope it does, for it has given me joy, and defending the deep values I associate with the celebration has given me a sense of honor. In many ways fighting for the truth about Kwanzaa is more rewarding than the celebration itself - like many others, the values of Kwanzaa are pretty deep already. This time of year is just a commemoration, not a renewal of vows.

I expect that next year will bring echoes of the same debate, and having done this makes me a little bit calmer. I think I've heard it all now. And so I wish you peace.

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 04:21 PM](#)

Ukali said...

Cobb,

Well... I finally made it to your blog, have checked things out, and feel ready to join the exchange on Kwanzaa (if it's not too late).

It's at once heartening and damning to witness the variety of opinions on this one little holiday. From the closed-minded opponents of Kwanzaa to its die-hard proponents, I savor each nuanced expression of ideological difference -- and shudder at every instance of stubborn self-righteousness.

What a world! What a way to spend the "holiday season"!!

May I enter...?

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 05:58 PM](#)

Cobb said...

By all means do. I had a little bit of a headache this afternoon meditating on the best ways to say what I felt must be said, but I'm feeling that I've done the right thing.

Interestingly enough, we're going to see 'The Nativity' with family this evening. I didn't pay much attention to Hugh Hewitt's griping about the Mayor of Chicago, but we'll see what the fuss is about. I actually expected to hear a lot more about Will Smith's movie this week. Not a peep.

[Reply December 22, 2006 at 06:05 PM](#)

KAYA MAGA said...

cnulan,

To make mockery of something without disproving it or even pointing out fault in it seems rather childish, especially on a blog that has thus far been thought provoking. To call it pernicious is nothing more than a deaperation tactic; an oft used rhetorical scapegoat cried out by religious zealots. If you have a problem with what I said point out the inaccuracies and let's argue it out theologically.

As far as the link you provided initially, how does pointing us to European intellectuals to define "black" do anything but bare witness to the truth of what I said in my initial post?

[Reply December 23, 2006 at 05:44 AM](#)

KAYA MAGA said...

Carlotta,

With all your ranting about how Kwanza is incompatible with Christianity(which I as a believer in the teachings of Christ disagree with), I would think that you would be even more up in arms about the celebration of Christmas, which was not ordained by God/Jesus, nor advocated anywhere else in the Bible, but by guess who? the Roman authorities. Christmas was NEVER celebrated by the apostles or the apostolic church. Even more shocking is the fact that Christmas was assigned to be celebrated on Dec. 25th, the exact same day as the Roman celebration of the 'Natalis Solis Invicti', the unconquerable sun, by the cult of Mithras. I can show you the pagan roots of almost every Christmas tradition and how the Roman church has mixed paganism with all of what you now consider to be Christianity. With that being said you should probably leave Kwanza alone until you straighten out your own house. As Jesus said, before you try to remove the smote from your brothers eye you should first remove the smote from your own. Peace.

[Reply December 23, 2006 at 06:21 AM](#)

CNu said...

| To make mockery of something without disproving it or even pointing out fault in it seems rather childish, especially on a blog that has thus far been thought provoking.

Why thank you. Your recognition of the distinctive absence of starch in my own thought exteriorizations should be cautionary. In my experience, it is the stultified, wannabe grownups who play the serious role because they lack any real free improvisational depth. Judging by your email alias, NU-KEMIT, there's a very high probability I will soon be mocking you. You see, afro-trekkies get about the same level of derision from me that confederate re-enactors and dungeons and dragons players might expect to receive, particularly afro-trekkies on a soapbox.

| To call it pernicious is nothing more than a deaperation tactic; an oft used rhetorical scapegoat cried out by religious zealots.

While I'm sure you're well down the field in this rhetorical dialogue you're having with yourself, I disengaged with you up thread.

| If you have a problem with what I said point out the inaccuracies and let's argue it out theologically.

Listen baba maga, while I'm sure your [50 page book theory of theological africanity](#) is just the shizznit to you and to whoever you routinely chew the fat with, count me uninterested.

| As far as the link you provided initially, how does pointing us to European intellectuals to define "black" do anything but bare witness to the truth of what I said in my initial post?

Ah, you didn't understand what you read. Your bad...,

[Reply December 23, 2006 at 08:14 AM](#)

KAYA MAGA said...

LLLLLOOOOOOOOOLLLLLLLLLL!!!!!! Afro trekkies... that's some funny ish right there kid. I gotta remember that one. If this was the Def Comedy Jam Blog you'd be kickin ass right now, but I don't think that's Russell Simmons' picture at the top of the page. Meanwhile, you haven't been able to dispute any of my points, so take your 'L' and go back to the whatever orthodox plantation masked in the name of Jesus you come from for some more good ol' shuckin and jivin, nahmean? Ignorance is bliss for some people. *steps off soapbox*

[Reply December 23, 2006 at 09:26 AM](#)

Carlotta said...

I'm amazed at the amount of assumptions that many of you have made on this forum about me. For example, Cobb's assumption that I'm a Christian that attends a "Negro" church under a black "bishop." (I haven't attended a black church in decades. I'm a member of a multi-ethnic non-denominational church here in Southern California.) And now an assumption that I haven't done my homework on Christmas. I have.

Christmas is a no brainer. It is simply the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Nothing ordained by scripture, nor anything forbidden for us to enjoy. It is neither a sin to participate in it, nor is it commanded for men to do. I have several articles about Christmas linked on my [website](#) if any of you are interested in knowing about my complete views on Christmas.

God is the center of Christmas (for Christians) and man is the center of Kwanzaa. God is celebrated in Christmas and man is glorified in Kwanzaa. The glorification of a sinful man is enough for a Christian to be at odds with Kwanzaa. Candles are lit, libations are made, liquid is poured, poems, songs and dance, all for the celebration in "worship" of men. And to cap it all off, principles are given to make one's life better as if the bible is not enough. Many, many problems with Kwanzaa that have been spelled out in detail already on my website. A very "religious" celebration for it to be considered "non-religious."

So Kaya, yes, I've done my homework and I'm satisfied to know that I'm not offending God by celebrating the birth of His Son. I just can't say the same for Kwanzaa.

Reply December 23, 2006 at 11:19 PM

Ukali said...

As I read this thread, it seems that the opponents and proponents of Kwanzaa are talking past one another.

Much of what has been said here is rehashed every year, a clear sign that people aren't willing to soften their positions - no matter how wrong, inaccurate, or illogical.

My own thinking is that some aspects of Kwanzaa have been established beyond anyone's personal opinion. Hardened ideological stances don't help us better understand the subject at hand. They only further polarize the ideas already spoken... without resolution.

It seems so incongruous (to me) that during this annual season -- where there's much *talk* about peace and goodwill -- there is so little actual **practice** of the same.

My hope, then, is to help establish some **common ground** elements upon which even those with the most adversarial stances can find concurrence (if not complete agreement).

Maybe this has been tried before. Well... here we go again.

Reply December 24, 2006 at 03:55 PM

I.Rise said...

I CELEBRATE KWANZAA because it is another piece to the puzzle that will bring African-Americans closer to a sense of wholeness and civility particularly amongst those we seem to hate the most - ourselves. Kwanzaa is a beautiful holiday that affirms the past, present, and future possibilities for a people who need all the help they can get. Only a foolish black person would find fault in such a meaningful celebration.

God bless ALL of the brothers and sisters of the 60's who had the courage to stand and fight against a government that set out to imprison, murder, divide, and/or "neutralize" anyone who attempted to affirm black humanity. To the naysayers, I say don't hate....relate and CELEBRATE KWANZAA!

Reply December 24, 2006 at 11:52 PM

KAYA MAGA said...

Carlotta,

I apologize for making assumptions about your lack of knowledge of Christmas. However, the fact that you are aware of the origins of Christmas leads me to question your judgement in condoning its celebration. How could you possibly say "God is the center of Christmas (for Christians) and man is the center of Kwanza" knowing that neither God, Jesus nor the apostles ever instituted Christmas but a pagan Emperor did? As you assert that Kwanza cannot be separated from the man who started the celebration (Karenga), how then could you attempt to separate Christmas from the man who started the celebration (the Roman emperor Constantine)? Even more sickening is the fact that you would condone its celebration on the same day as the veneration of a pagan god (by no coincidence), following the footsteps of mainstream (read:white) Christianity. This all goes back to my first post above which questioned your assault on "black consciousness" (and which all bloggers present, bar Cobb, have avoided like the plague). As a Christian and as someone who feels black consciousness is unnecessary, your response to that post would be appreciated.

Reply December 25, 2006 at 04:09 AM

Carlotta said...

Christmas was created to counter the pagan celebration of Saturnalia. Christmas is its very own celebration which ISN'T pagan.

So I don't have a problem celebrating it. Kwanzaa is the opposite of Christmas. It was created to counter Christmas as documented on my website using Karenga's own writings to show his intent.

Reply December 25, 2006 at 08:05 AM

KAYA MAGA said...

Perhaps you need to revisit your history studies because Christmas was not created to counter the pagan celebration but to create a fusion of Christian and pagan rituals that could coexist for the purpose of creating an internal peace, thus strengthening the Roman empire. To be sure of this you needn't look any further than the present day Christmas traditions such as evergreen trees, wreaths, and misle toe, all well known pagan symbols used during the winter solstice hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus. This can be confirmed by historians as well as the Bible (Jeremiah 10:1-10 should leave you with no doubts). What about other "Christian" traditions such as nativity scenes, statues of Mary and the infant Jesus (changed from Isis and Horus), crosses with the image of Jesus, and the abundance of Jesus portraits on canvas or stain glass windows - all forms of idoltry forbidden in the Ten Commandments. In 1 Thes. 1:8-10; 5:22 Paul says to turn from idols, not rename them and Christianize them.

This all goes back once again to my initial post (Dec 22, 5:09 am), which you once again chose not to address. I would still appreciate if you would have the moral and intellectual courage to deal with what I presented instead of trying to think of ways to dismiss it (if you do so, at least put it in words and show the readers why it's not worthy of consideration). I'm only doing what you suggested for Cobb: "have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them." Ephesians 5:11

Peace.

Reply December 26, 2006 at 02:42 AM

Carlotta said...

Kaya, your post wasn't directly made to me which is why I chose to ignore it. It was filled with typical anti-christian discrepancies which I truly didn't feel like getting into. But since you've asked, I now feel obliged to answer your posts.

Back to your previous post of Dec 22. You said the following regarding the bible:

"An example that pops up instantly is the idea of Christianity as blacks have come to understand it, based on our adoption of it from our former slavemasters and from a book that we've come to accept as the Bible, first "revised" (more than half of the scriptures removed) at the insistence of a morally corrupt Roman emperor (Constantine) in the 4th century a.d., then "revised" again centuries later by King James, yet black people have no problem accepting this as the unadulterated word of God."

Once you made that statement, I realized then I was dealing with a black person who has no true knowledge on the makeup of the bible. It's almost laughable but not funny because so many people believe what you believe about Christianity.

"Ancestor worship. Something I talk about in my writings about Kwanza"

Who the hell said anything about worshipping ancestors!? For someone who criticized Cobb and I for making assumptions, you seem to be the living embodiment of the word. You may have your own personal take on Kwanza, but don't try to pin that sh#@ on me. I said we should look to our ancestors for moral and spiritual guidance... the same way we look to our parents and grandparents for moral and spiritual guidance but don't worship them... we can learn from studying the history of those that came before us, many of whom believed in the one true and living God before they were brought into slavery.

I'll be back to address the Christmas issue in a few hrs when I have more time. Peace.

[Reply December 26, 2006 at 01:28 PM](#)

[Carlotta](#) said...

Kaya, before I continue, I do want to know exactly where you stand as far as Jesus Christ is concerned. You say you do not consider yourself anti-christian. What's most important is who do you believe Jesus Christ is? Son of God? Equal to God? Or a myth from "white man's" Christianity?

Your answer will determine whether or not you are not anti-christian as you say you are. And I'll get back to you afterwards.

Thanks Kaya,
cm

[Reply December 26, 2006 at 04:27 PM](#)

[Cobb](#) said...

One's position on Christianity is not a subject I find relevant to the meaning or celebration of Kwanzaa. If you would please, have that discussion elsewhere.

[Reply December 26, 2006 at 04:45 PM](#)

[Carlotta](#) said...

But our discussions about the bible are relevant to Kwanzaa? Am I sensing some kind of bias here?

One's position has everything to do with this discussion. If you reject Christ as Savior, then you are going to pile up anti-christian sources to support your beliefs.

What are you so fearful of Cobb? Especially for one who claims to be a Christian!

[Reply December 26, 2006 at 05:05 PM](#)

[Carlotta](#) said...

You know, I am removing myself from this forum because I've never seen a "Christian brother" who worked so hard against me.

At least Kaya and others are willing to engage in discussion without questioning my educational background and nit pik about what to talk about.

If any of you wish to continue discussions, meet me at "my house."

[Reply December 26, 2006 at 05:20 PM](#)

[Cobb](#) said...

You can tell me exactly to what extent, as a Christian, you would support the offices of the FBI to undermine black consciousness. That is to say, that if the FBI were to institute domestic surveillance on me today, as they did of so many other blacks [40 years ago](#), do you think it would be your Christian duty to aid them?

Kwanzaa is cultural and political. What is your political duty as a Christian? Who are your political enemies as a Christian? Where do you get your enemies list?

Answer that and you'll have my attention here. I'm not interested in a theological discussion of Kwanzaa - only to the extent that you engage political enemies, as you have with your references to Ann Coulter and Michelle Malkin on your Kwanzaa information page.

[Reply December 26, 2006 at 05:56 PM](#)

KAYA MAGA said...

Cobb,

I think you ask some good questions above, but im sayin, just because you are not interested in a theological discussion of Kwanza should it mean that others can't engage in that discussion? I know this is your house brotha, but damn!.. I don't think runnin people outta here is the solution. Soon your forum could be reduced to sarcastic half-wits who have nothing of substance to add on like 'cnulan'.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 09:25 AM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

The reason Kwanzaa shouldn't be argued theologically is because its intent was to separate from religion. Karenga would have it practiced secularly because he is an atheist who would prefer to see religion smudged out to fit his Marxist views. Cobb sees it as a political boundary to more clearly identify the cultural and political condition of the Black community without religious influence (which is strong enough on its own), i.e. Separation of Church and State. Am I wrong Cobb?

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 10:50 AM](#)

[Cobb](#) said...

You got it.

Interestingly enough where a lot of Afrocentrics fail is when they go beyond cultural symbols to religion. African Americans are generally receptive to sharing cultural traditions with Africans from the Continent, but very few adopt any religious traditions.

Ishmael Reed has written extensively about the African origins of voodoo and various spirits and loas associated with West African traditions. Most of those have been preserved more or less through Mardi Gras. But African spiritual influences on Christianity are very well documented. I think I'm right when I say that the entire phenomenon of possession and speaking in tongues is heavily influenced by Africans taking up Christianity and adopting their old ways to it. I believe that James Cone is the expert here.

I think Christian activists understand very well that blackfolks aren't particular interested in African spirituality and that's why they believe they can win.

I would add that Dr. Ben Jochannan and his crowd go deeply into the 'Kemeti' knowledge systems. Many of us recall the big to do between Bernal and Lefkowitz several years ago in which academics really called Afrocentrism on the table. Hard Afrocentrism has fallen out of favor, while Kwanzaa and soft Afrocentrism remain appealing.

As for directing this thread, I only wish to say that Kwanzaa itself is not religious nor intended to be. It is strictly cultural. Kawaida is a philosophy and an ethical system but very few people take Kwanzaa to the level of Kawaida.

Somewhere in this blog are some excellent comments by the man who hosts an annual public celebration in Leimert Park. I need to find that.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 11:11 AM](#)

KAYA MAGA said...

Cobb,

I never intended or advocated for Kwanza to be religious, but in a Kwanza discussion forum you can be sure that it will be scrutinized by religious people for religious reasons, so to bring the issue full circle the moral authority of the religious critics must also be scrutinized, that is all. Knowledge was been dropped and we weren't really interrupting the flow of any existing discussion, so I don't really see the problem with what we were doing.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 01:12 PM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

I know I wasn't asked for an opinion, but it's relevant. Cobb and I have been going round for round on the meaning of Kwanzaa. I came into the discussion with the understanding that Kwanzaa is a cultural rather than religious practice and it's taken me a while to connect with Cobb's message of how he sees its modern purpose for socio-political identity and change in the Black community. If I had any religious detraction in those discussions I may never have come to an understanding and might still feel bitter about the whole concept. Hence, for how Cobb wants this forum to function, the discussion should be directly relevant to the context of Kwanzaa so that other newcomers aren't confused.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 01:29 PM](#)

Cobb said...

Yeah that's my bad. I was trying to get Morrow to accept that Kwanzaa makes sense from the POV of black liberation which is already a fait accompli to the extent that Kwanzaa implicates anti-social conflict. That is to say I acknowledge that when Kwanzaa was initiated its implications were far more threatening to society than today - but that now they do not.

But I perceive her as being unwilling or unable to grant any legitimacy to any secular behavior which threatens a monopoly of Christian virtue, despite the fact that there are different sects of Christianity. So if she is unable or unwilling to grant that no secular code of ethics is good - that philosophy that is not theology is worthless and sinful, then we have nothing to discuss. So I didn't want to get into a discussion of the moral basis of secular ethics with someone who essentially sees that as oxymoronic.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 02:37 PM](#)

Cobb said...

I would add that if I got into a theological discussion on that comparative morality of my Christian values, I would imply a concession that Christian values are the only values worth moral defense, and that gets me in a world of trouble vis a vis my geopolitics. I know that there are Republican values and American values that are not Christian values, and I'm not going to flatten all the black, or the Republican, or the American for the sake of the Christian even if they overlap or are redundant.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 02:42 PM](#)

CNu said...

| Soon your forum could be reduced to sarcastic half-wits who have nothing of substance to add on like 'enulan'.

awwww, widow fiddypage afwo-twekkie got his swollen ego bruised...,

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 03:11 PM](#)

Ukali said...

Kawaida, I believe, incorporates both secular and sacred concerns into one area of culture: mythology. So it isn't inappropriate to discuss Kwanzaa from a theological perspective - the aim, however, is to **balance** the discussion with due respect for, and acknowledgment of, non-theological perspectives. Anyone unwilling to do this is not prepared to examine this holiday in depth.

[Reply December 28, 2006 at 10:53 AM](#)

Ukali said...

[Cobb said...]

| ...I only wish to say that Kwanzaa itself is not religious nor intended to be. It is strictly cultural.

I think it's more accurate to describe Kwanzaa as "**non-religious**" to stave off arguments that it is "**anti-religious**" in practice, intent, and purpose.

[Cobb said...]

| Kawaida is a philosophy and an ethical system but very few people take Kwanzaa to the level of Kawaida.

You are so right (correct) about this... people in general have a tendency of divorcing Kwanzaa, the holiday, from its philosophical roots (Kawaida). This leads to all kinds of confusion.

Kawaida, I should add, does not exclude the different and differing expressions of human spirituality. It argues that New Afrikan (or African American) people should practice forms of spirituality that advance their own interests and that spring from their own authentic historical traditions and experience.

[Reply December 28, 2006 at 11:13 AM](#)

CNu said...

| Kawaida, I should add, does not exclude the different and differing expressions of human spirituality. It argues that New Afrikan (or African American) people should practice forms of spirituality that advance their own interests and that spring from their own authentic historical traditions and experience.

ah yesss, the refreshingly cool breeze of a moment of abject clarity.

priceless....,

[Reply December 28, 2006 at 11:20 AM](#)

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December 19, 2006

The President's Kwanzaa Message

Just in case you didn't catch it:

I send greetings to those observing Kwanzaa.

During the seven days of Kwanzaa leading up to the New Year, friends and family come together in a spirit of love and joy to honor their rich African heritage, reflect on the Seven Principles and give thanks for the blessings of freedom and opportunity. Forty years after the first Kwanzaa, this hopeful occasion remains an opportunity to build the bonds of family, community and culture and move ever closer to the founding promise of liberty and justice for all.

Our nation is a better place because of the contributions African-Americans have made to our strength and character over the generations. As you gather to celebrate your ancestry this Kwanzaa, I encourage you to take pride in your many achievements and look to the future with confidence in your abilities and faith in a brighter tomorrow.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a joyous Kwanzaa and a blessed New Year.

Thank you Mr. President.

December 19, 2006 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

Mistifica said...

I am happy to read all this succes: you deserve it completely. Proud to work with you in Boston, next june. Please, take all the good thoughts streaming from my heart to you...

[Reply July 04, 2007 at 04:28 AM](#)

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(You can use HTML tags like <i> and <u> to style your text. URLs automatically linked.)

Email address is not displayed with comment.

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December 20, 2006

I Was The Z

Kwanzaa Contextualized



Warning, this video contains boring, non-controversial, common sense responsible talk about Kwanzaa. It will not enflame passion. In fact it may put you to sleep.

A couple clarifications.

- Ligon was a metaphysician first and a philosopher second.
- When I was in the 7th grade reciting the poem about Santa Claus, we had already returned to our Christmas traditions. We only skipped it one or two years.

Here is another interesting reference I haven't really thought about. I generally take it for granted that people have some passing familiarity with the Black Consciousness and Black Arts movements. Since there appear to be people who seem to have no idea about the connections to other intellectuals of the day:

As the movement matured, the two major locations of Black Arts' ideological leadership, particularly for literary work, were California's Bay Area because of the *Journal of Black Poetry* and the *Black Scholar*, and the Chicago-Detroit axis because of *Negro Digest/Black World* and Third World Press in Chicago, and Broadside Press and Naomi Long Madgett's Lotus Press in Detroit. The only major Black Arts literary publications to come out of New York were the short-lived (six issues between 1969 and 1972) *Black Theatre* magazine published by the New Lafayette Theatre and *Black Dialogue*, which had actually started in San Francisco (1964-1968) and relocated to New York (1969-1972).

In 1967 LeRoi Jones visited Karenga in Los Angeles and became an advocate of Karenga's philosophy of Kawaida. Kawaida, which produced the "Nguzo Saba" (seven principles), Kwanzaa, and an emphasis on African names, was a multifaceted, categorized activist philosophy. Jones also met Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver and worked with a number of the founding members of the Black Panthers. Additionally, Askia Touré was a visiting professor at San Francisco State and was to become a leading (and longlasting) poet as well as, arguably, the most influential poet-professor in the Black Arts movement. Playwright Ed Bullins and poet Marvin X had established Black Arts West, and

Dingane Joe Goncalves had founded the *Journal of Black Poetry* (1966). This grouping of Ed Bullins, Dingane Joe Goncalves, LeRoi Jones, Sonia Sanchez, Askia M. Touré, and Marvin X became a major nucleus of Black Arts leadership.

That's from a [Modern American Poetry](#) website.

Here's [another reference](#) by the same author, Kalamu ya Salaam.

I should also include my original scans of Negro Digest from Pops' Institute for Black Studies Library (which I inherit, whoohoo!).

- [Set One](#)
- [Set Two](#)
- [Set Three](#)
- [Set Four](#)

Also I would add that we knew Mr. Cauthan of the Ebony Showcase Theatre, and later I was also a member of PASLA. It was my connection with Cauthan that got me my auditions for the television show [Julia](#). I was going to be Cory Baker. I also was going to be the first black kid on Bonanza, but we had problems with the script.

December 20, 2006 in [Cobb's Diary](#), [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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December 20, 2006

On Knowing Kwanzaa

A well-meaning person suggested that it's not a good idea for me to link to this blog from Wikipedia. I replied:

I don't know what to tell you, I'm a primary source. I'm an eyewitness. It happened in my house. I haven't written a book, I've written a blog. I'm in a situation in which some reporter interviews me and the newspaper article is considered more credible than my own memory, even when they get subtle details incorrect. I imagine that if I were to write a book about Kwanzaa, that would be self-promotion. People will just have to read the material I present and judge for themselves, but there is no way the picture is complete without the detail I provide.

It's a queer situation in that being a primary source is never quite useful as one might think. I mean if it weren't for Juan Williams we would not have Eyes on the Prize. So which comes first, the interviewer or the interviewee? I leave that question for journalism students. As you see, I'm a blogger and my mind is already made up. I know what I know and I self-represent. I am, by dint of my experience and the context of my life, biased and informed. You can't get one without the other. While I recognize and respect the need for Wikipedia to appear unbiased as a reference, I cannot help but notice how this need shapes what is considered relevant. It seems to me that the best history and anthropology seeks to restore context, but I'm not going to wait for some research student's attempts try to breathe life into an otherwise bloodless text 50 years after I'm dead.

I can recall a huge debate I had several years ago with David Horowitz over in Salon before he got Front Page. We were discussing the implications of the LA Riots. I said something then that I regret now. I told him that his interpretations were so off-base that I could care less if he never got it right. It was a very disrespectful dismissal and something my arrogance had done before and would replicate again. Despite our differences, Horowitz acknowledged my persuasiveness and quality as a writer and even went on to suggest that I should apply for my own grants from Sciafe. I dismissed the notion but remembered the compliment. I don't feel particularly bad about my disagreement with Horowitz, but what I would do differently today is be more serious about my concern for his knowledge. This is something I say I officially learned this year but has been a lesson a long time coming. One should always pay attention to the quality of one's enemies, which is to say one should never be so lazy as to allow those opposed to you believe lies when the truth is at your disposal.

It is in this spirit that I defend Kwanzaa. It is in this spirit that I represent as a black man. I never say that what I know is something you *can't* understand, because it always implies that I'm either incapable or unwilling to explain.

That's not to say that ignorant people don't try my patience or that dainty folks annoy me with their unwillingness to face ugly facts. It is to say that I make an honest effort, even if sometimes I repeat myself. It's important enough for me to be interested, therefore it's important enough for me to make clear.

I cannot know, nor will I presume to know exactly which Strunk or White is the perfect delivery vehicle for what the Maitres D'Wikipedia prefer. I'm not interested to know. In fact my line is quite clear. I will give you what I know to be true in my own words. I leave the metadata to others.

December 20, 2006 in [Kwanzaa](#), [Obligatory Seriousness](#) | [Permalink](#)

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[P6](#) said...

I will give you what I know to be true in my own words. I leave the metadata to others.

That, my friend (if I can still use the term) is all I ever wanted to see from you. We'll probably get annoyed at each other again somewhere around May 2008 but until then you stay that clear, you retain my respect (if not my agreement).

[Reply December 20, 2006 at 08:46 AM](#)

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December 22, 2006

Kwanzaa Reborn

As I was writing a response to the big Kwanzaa thread for this year I was going to include a link to [St Luke's Church in Harlem](#). Lo and behold it seems that I have started something. It turns out that they have continued to celebrate Kwanzaa, hopefully in the proper spirit. This is a pleasant surprise. I'm humbled by it.

I was also going to reference this post which I discovered had not been copied over here into the Typepad blog. It still brings tears to my eyes reading it today. I hope it can be of some use to you.

Regarding the picture below: That is me, the smallest in the line of boys. We were marching for the covers of Life and Look Magazines. We didn't ordinarily march, but that's what the photographer wanted. I found that picture in an old album and scanned it. The location is Ligon's Aquarian Center on Santa Barbara (now King) Blvd. Now that I think of it, it would not come as a surprise if the existence of Ligon's bookstore and center were not an important reason that Santa Barbara was chosen to be King.

From the archives. Originally posted in Salon in 1999

I returned to the practice of celebrating Kwanzaa about 7 years ago when I was living in Brooklyn. On Saturdays I spent my mornings teaching school age children at St. Luke's church in Harlem, right down the block from city college. After a time, as one would expect, I grew rather fond of and attached to these kids.

That fall, we arranged a field trip over to rural jersey to go apple picking. Johann, the young priest who ran the program had suggested this as part of a harvest mass in the church calendar. While we were over in jersey we got huge bags of apples and a few giant pumpkins to boot. The mass was a great success; it's always pleasant when you can excite young people to participate in church and I was feeling pretty good. But as this rite progressed I was shocked into recognition. This was Kwanzaa all over again - and watching these kids took me back to my own childhood.

We agreed to celebrate the Karamu on one Saturday instead of attempting to do the entire 7 day rite. I would lead. Some of the adults were concerned that it not be commercial or phony like the big Kwanzaa / black expo being advertised on the radio. Some of them had gone in prior years to the convention center and considered it all a big hustle. I shared their concerns.

I did a lot of reflection on why I hadn't celebrated it, and what it would mean to do it once again, since I was there at the very beginning and celebrated the first Kwanzaa in 1966 as a 5 year old kid. Our family had foregone Christmas to celebrate Kwanzaa and did so for several years. I came to the conclusion that I had become too secular - that exactly the kind of spirit Cornel West had been talking about was missing from my own dialog with the black community. Here I was teaching kids math and science and geography. Here I was writing essays and hanging out on the New York spoken word scene. Here I was having spirited debates on things like black cultural production (oh god can I recall how much we went on about Terry McMillan vs. Julie Dash vs. Ousman Sembene vs. Living Colour...) But in my real community work, I was teaching sterile things. I wasn't communicating, other than through force of personality, any of the spirit of where my energy was coming from. I exemplified something 'positive' but I never explained that something. We debated the meaning of being black (and how we should teach black children (for days)) but I wasn't sharing what it meant to me, and how I came to be the man I am.

o there was a great deal of rediscovery and rededication in my approach to the celebration. As the elder, I was to be the caretaker of spirit for this occasion. I bought a new kofi, and borrowed my cousin's full length boubou for the occasion. I encouraged everyone to get some clothes or something - even if it was just a pin - to wear. One of the ladies brought some cloth to wear as sashes for kids who had nothing else. I photocopied some terms and passed them around.

That Saturday we sat in a circle on the raised stage in the parish hall for our Karamu. I started it off with a hearty harambee! And made sure everyone responded loud and clear. Habari gani, I said. Njama asante sana, they replied. It was just like the good old days, and corny too - like the kids on that old Stevie Wonder black history song. There were four or five adults and twice as many children in our circle, and we went through the Nguzo Saba each telling a story of how they've seen it and how they might practice it in the future. We sang Kumbaya and passed the libation. The libation was solemn and tearful, certainly more for us adults than for the children. For this was a kind of sharing we were unaccustomed to doing, and it shamed us and elated us at once. It was a transformation I can still feel, the bunch of us that cold winter day in Harlem.

When it was over, we all promised to do it again next year. But for me it was not to be. I moved to Boston, the coldest city in the world.

I married the following year and my family have practiced a small and simple ceremony along the full 7 days. We made our own Kinara and sanctified a few other household objects too. The broom from our wedding is part of the ceremony these days, and we tend to use a lot more candles, turning off all the electric lights in the house.

When we moved back to California, I was somewhat surprised to know that my father had returned to the celebration as well. It was his decision to break with Karenga and Kwanzaa long ago. He had a serious problem with Karenga the man, whose ego was unrestrained and consequently made for a poor leader, thus the eventual demise of Us.

We had the final Karamu at his house Kwanzaa before last which included some neighbor's children. I remember this Kwanzaa in particular for his seriousness when one of the children got a case of the giggles as another was speaking. He explained in a tone whose gravity shocked me why this, of all times, was not one where we should be laughing at each other. Silliness was put to rest. In the end, it was a great celebration, with about 20 family and neighbors in attendance. A reunion of sorts, older, wiser and much better.

mbowen



December 22, 2006 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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December 26, 2006

Umoja 2006



It happens to be a picture from 2005, but some things never change. And so I reflect on Unity this year.

As I'm writing, I happen to be listening to David Allen White's second hour of Shakespeare from the Hugh Hewitt show, but the writer who most made me think about the cause of unity was Yukio Mishima. From him I got the concept of the unity of pen and sword. The fact that White's a professor at the Naval Academy is not lost on me. He says his students pay particular attention to the History plays as do I, and Taymor's Titus has been spinning in my DVD player lately.

But today I am struck by the necessity for Christian unity, especially in light of the extent to which claims on the soul of African Americans are tied up in that which is honest about the Conservative Christian anti-Kwanzaa agenda.

I do not take it for granted that Kwanzaa is racialized as do most people. And my eyebrows have been recently raised by the observance of my daughter's Barbie play in which they have declared that various of their dolls 'look Jewish' and thereby have play-marital consequences. More on that as I investigate. But clearly the elementary school take on Kwanzaa for these people, Hanukkah for those, Christmas for them is pervasive.

Lastly as a preface for the conclusions to follow, I offer in recent recognition of a fairly well-put post from last year the following excerpt from a comment I made:

From the perspective of liberty for the African in America, the single greatest Christian prophet was John Brown. I judge every anti-racist and every would-be liberator of Africans in American history against his standard. Brown, like few before or after him recognized the absolute equality of all men before God and considered any society that made legal, or political distinctions as an affront to God. He dedicated his life, not only as a member of the Underground Railroad, but to the point of armed rebellion, to the purifying of America of the great sin of racism. In the end, of course, John Brown failed. And there is no Church in his honor because America failed too. The great accommodations made by this nation on behalf of the liberty of the African has come by legal fiat. These may have been inspired by the same type motivations of John Brown, but we know there is no single denomination of American Christians whose laity was thusly committed. There is no American Church who made its congregants more Christian than White. That remains an affront to God for which those Churches and laity will account - especially those who boldly claim to work to make this a Christian nation.

So the tasks of liberation, both large and small, have fallen primarily on the African Americans themselves. The history of freedom in the contemporary West is significantly their story, without which any American claims of diversity would be a mockery. America is a global melting pot, not merely a western European melting pot, owing to the successful freedom struggle of the African American. If this were still the home of the Colored, and the land of Post-Reconstruction injustice, no Indians, Muslims, Asians or any other group would be in any position to enjoy the liberty they do.

And so we owe more than a little bit of respect for those freedom struggles, not only specifically to those historical figures who make headlines and history books, but to the families who carried the torch for liberty in their hearts and homes.

At such time as I see clear signs of a reconciliation between the black and white Christian Church over the matters of the history of African liberation in America, then I will put aside any controversy. But for now I hold the majority of Christian Churches and the Negro Church responsible for foot-dragging and intransigence and of leaving aside worldly concerns in sanctimonious vanity.

Liberation Theology is not a new idea, and there are many Christian denominations who profess it. I have been a fan of Cornel West's in this regard, and I expect that Liberation Theology might be a cornerstone of a proper multiculturalism. But in my opinion, Conservative Christians are a great deal more forward in their efforts to minister to the nation than those Christian liberators.

I happen to be one of those people who believes that a significant minority is enough, even in a plural democracy, so long as their resolve goes to the death. We owe most of that which is tractable in history and morality to those who would die trying. It is truly the only bar for the measure of man. Yet there are clearly things that are highly valuable but not worth dying for. More importantly there are those inevitable conflicts thrust upon us for which others are willing to die for in defiance of things we may not have held so dear. And this, I would hope more astute readers have already surmised, is the cause of liberty for which so much blood, treasure and jawboning has been expensed our War on Jihadis in the theatres of Iraq and Afghanistan. (It may yet become the Muslim War).

I have no desire to declare or take up the cudgels of Crusade, for it is not Christianity that the world needs so much as it is the freedom to choose Christianity or not. The divine gift of free will has been denied and there are a thousand reasons to restore that gift whether mercenary or ordained. But the ability to recognize the value of liberty in the affairs of men needn't owe to Christian evangelism, in fact it doesn't. I have no doubt that somewhere in the Neoconservative mind is a willingness to give props to various interpretations of Christian duty, but I cannot be convinced that the geopolitical expertise and guidance given George W. Bush amounts to a missionary exercise. Liberty is not a sacred covenant. It is a contract between men.

This is a contract that was broken in America that has been mostly restored. And although I choose to deem John Brown as the prophet, one could hardly count Frederick Douglass an infidel. Douglass sent his sons upright into battle, Brown's were covert agents. In matters of honor, the soldier always stands taller than the spy. Be that as it may, the reasons for African participation in their own liberation came without the need for Christian charity, evangelism or even participation. Men know when they aren't free and need no divine intervention to get such an understanding. Men will fight for their freedom whether or not they acknowledge God, and all who champion the causes of freedom are equally right. There are no bonus points for divine recourse. There are however double strikes for religious foot-dragging.

And it is religious foot-dragging that I intend to indict when it comes to matters of unity. For all the talk of what Conservative Christianity should be, they have no Church. The enemy of 'secular humanism' too has no Church, and it doesn't need one because its doctrine is not disciplined; it's adherents have no loyalty oaths and most likely don't even know who they are. The extent to which Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists attempt to be an overbearing force in the affairs of this nation are evident, but they do so as a scattered force. What we need is a singular target and focus, an alliance of fatwas as it were. We need a singular uniting dogma for those who would align themselves as Conservative Christians in order to make this movement clear because it is poisoning Christianity.

My vehemence against the Protestantism of Creflow Dollar is not unrestrained, but all such faithdome ministries do very much get under my skin. I see them as a diasporic blight, and I grow quite weary of their haughty appropriation of all claims to morality and Christian ethics. Loudmouths, the lot of them.

For Christian unity and for the unity required of the defenders of liberty we need appropriate places in struggle. I have no idea where such order may come. It cannot come from the Presidency because we are not suited to be an Empire as we are currently Constituted. None of us has that much loyalty, or vision quite frankly, as much as I'd like it to be - we don't have the right stuff as did other Empires in their day. And it's not going to come from the Christian Right or their influence over the Conservative Movement.

So the great unity required of the West to survive the War against Jihadis will not come about through the vain political overproductions of the Rove-assembled Big Tent. When they swoon over the potential death of the Senator from South Dakota you know desperation rules the day. The forward efforts of the Christian Right suffers from arrogance and an ill-defined set of goals which are stepping on the toes of righteous defenders of liberty from all quarters as well as other good Christians. Somehow that has to be set right.

A unity of purpose for the aims of our government's defense of our liberty would be sufficient. Such a thing might even be possible for 2008, but there's a lot of work to be done. And if Democrats take the Presidency, then the Christian Right will hopefully become as wise as Ralph Reed became as he stepped back from his provocative role of whip-snapping over political work.

One can dream.

As for black unity... As I mentioned last week, I see a very important role for a righteous cultural nationalism that takes some responsibility for the Sound of the Drum. I put it like this:

More simply said and exemplified. What continues to be considered culturally black for the next generation of ever-increasingly successful African Americans depends upon what we successful blacks cosign. What's difficult about this is maintaining the kind of relationships that keep such existential juices flowing because we are a diaspora. There are real geographical, political, educational and cultural hurdles to overcome.

This is something of a different tack than that I've been taking with regard to the Old School, which has appears somewhat defensive and combative. You have to admit that works well in blogospheric context. I think that is part and parcel of the way this kind of writing works, in contrast to what comes across when I compose video blog entries. For me personally, I am much more the person you see than the persona you read. In text, I can get right down to business.

There are two primary assertive conclusions to be drawn from these observations.

1. From a black perspective, the only benefit to be gained from anti-racism owes to a positive forthright engagement with non-blacks in the spirit of direct action.
2. Within African America the value of culture is higher than that of politics.

There are some very profound consequences that I see for black politics that flow from these axioms which will change the direction of Cobb with regard to blackness. From time to time I will bring to light the assumptions that undergird this thinking.

For now I think I will express blackness in the Old School form of 'soul'. Because I am beginning to believe the post-soul brotherhood was a bit too post-modern. Chuck D ain't no James Brown.

We've got to get a lot of unity into the pen, the cross and the blood before we can bring it to the sword. Aluta Continua

December 26, 2006 in [Critical Theory](#), [Geopolitics](#), [Kwanzaa](#), [Matters of the Spirit](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Comments

[Thorne](#) said...

How would you suggest the church move forward? The traditional white church is reacting right now to people leaving the church, a by-product of post-modern philosophy. In the grand scheme of things, I think we're losing the war. I think 20-something white Christians have become so entangled in this war that some have lost sight of racial unity. I wonder if it's also a by-product of a "McDonald" society where everything is "have it your way." In this world we only go to church to feel comfortable and better about ourselves. Racial Unity is an effort that forces all sides to feel uncomfortable for the sake of health and growth. In our society today, saving the rainforest gives us goosebumps, saving racial relations gives us a headache. This should not be- how can we change this?

[Reply January 02, 2007 at 09:49 AM](#)

[Cobb](#) said...

Churches have to stop using Powerpoints. They have to stop changing their names. They have to stop emulating corporations and they have to believe in what they say.

I am thinking about what it is about churches I've been seeing that keeps me from finding them appealing, and I have to say what strikes me is the lack of men. By men I mean unbroken men. Men who gain strength not of the sort that gets one out of bed in the morning. I don't want to hear people praising God because He spared them a couple bucks for a lottery ticket. I'm talking about people who command respect outside of the building because of the assurance they have from within the building.

I see nothing of the sort. I don't see churches as communities of strength, but rather as communities of weeping and worry, of succor and sadness, of nurture and condolence from that bad old world. So there are no masters of the world in church. I see a church that swings on the coattails of the expediencies of amoral power. I see a church unable and unwilling to reckon with any but the huddled masses, which has no message for nor clout with men of means. And so oppositional from a society of ambition it become just another alternative lifestyle for those who feel, for whatever reason, that they can't hack it.

Because of this the Church is merely another minority interest in the multitude of voices clamoring for airtime.

[Reply January 02, 2007 at 12:52 PM](#)

[J.C.Wolf](#) said...

We should all learn about peace and unity from GHANDI. His words are the best words covering peace and non violence.

Humor and smarts also can play a role in non violent settlement of conflict. FOR EXAMPLE, what if the black kids in JENA had not reacted violently to the nooses in the tree. What if they just quietly said "let's get even with the idiots who did this" and one night threw a few dozen empty beer cans, condoms, a bra, some paraphenalia etc under the tree and then called the cops and said there was a party on the school grounds. The evidence was there.

AND TO PREVENT FURTHER CONFRONTATIONS, THE PRINCIPAL AND THE POLICE CHIEF HELD MORNING MEETINGS IN THE AUDITORIUM EVERY MORNING FOR A WHILE WITH THE STUDENT BODY letting them get a grip.

[Reply October 19, 2007 at 08:44 AM](#)

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December 23, 2006

Twas The Night Before Kwanzaa

Twas the night before Kwanzaa and all through the Sphere
All the wingnuts were praying it would disappear
For their very own president said to the nation
That he too respected this new celebration.

Compassionate's one thing but this went too far
They thought to themselves while out scrounging for tar
They loathed the idea of black african drumming
Somehow they must try to stop Kwanzaa from coming

So they dug up their references and scribbled up notes
And tried to keep all of that bile in their throats
But they couldn't. It spilled out on all of their pages
In their poison pen poems and raggedy rages

On Mulshin, on Malkin, on Coulter on Shaidle
On Barber, on Frontpage and on Redstate unbridled
The vomitous spew flowed without restraint
Telling all who would listen just what Kwanzaa ain't

Aint Christian, legitimate, reverent or true
And you know that it surely ain't red white and blue
Just a sham holiday that some Negroes enjoy
(Hey can we say Negroes? OK, just not 'boy')

But their secret weapon was no watermelon
But the hideous fact of Karenga, the felon.
Karenga? Who's that? Some would bother to ask
Why the black racist commie who started this task

They replied with abandon, back in 66
This FBI stoolie, he tortured some chicks
And shot up some Panthers, though that can't be proven
This is the moonbat who got Kwanzaa movin'

The Nguzo Saba and all Kwanzaa people
Were crammed in one grinchbag and hung from the steeple
No patriot ever loved Kwanzaa they said
And marched away confident Kwanzaa was dead

The bloggers they blogged and the writers they wrote
And so it just happened that some did take note
That something was fishy in this Kwanzaa smear
For there was one argument no one could hear

It seemed that the haters in their rush to judge
Indulged in an argument, well more like a fudge
Of making Karenga the butt of all jokes
While completely ignoring the millions of folks
Who love Kwanzaa and celebrate year after year
Without bile or hatred, racism or fear
Who quietly with loved ones light candles at night
Who pour the libation, who live clean and right.
And like JFK who was labeled a papist,
The wingnuts said Kwanzaans were just like a rapist
The sins of Karenga they laid on masses
And view them askance through their dung colored classes
And these seven principles, where is the crime?
Americans take pride in these things all the time.
Kujichagulia might be hard to say
But Self-Determination's the American way
It doesn't much matter when bigotry's spoken
That some part of our plurality's broken
I wish I could say that these wingnuts were joking
It's just too unclear what it is they are smoking
Some say wingnuts fear Christ is under attack
Some say they fear anything that is black
Some say they fear the same virtue they lack
Some say that the wingnuts are strung out on crack
No matter the angle no matter the reason
It's clear that these fears have all poisoned the season
For just when we claim our good will towards men
The haters start off with their rants once again
And so desecrate what they claim to hold holy
Perhaps when they see this more clearly then slowly
The truth of their neighbors devotions will show
Additional light added to Christmas' glow
And in that new light, new faith will arise
Without conflict or malice, without compromise
More true than the legend of Santa and elves.
We'll all love our neighbors as we love ourselves.
December 23, 2006 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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December 26, 2003

Umoja 2003

You may not know it, but under ordinary circumstances, I would be a celebrity of sorts. Who knows, in time my story may make headlines. But the obscure fact of the matter is that I was something of a privileged youth. Although I don't often think or talk about it, I was the original kid cast in the role of Corey for the groundbreaking television series 'Julia' starring Dianne Carroll. I was also the fist black kid scripted to star in an episode of Gunsmoke. None of that actually happened because my parents were not stage parents. It's deeper than that, but that's a story for another day.



One thing that I mention more than those other brushes with fame is my association with **the origins of Kwanzaa**. So in my middle age, I feel some responsibility to the celebration and its values. In fact, a year ago I got much of my impetus to blog publicly over the venomous idiocy being spread by Ann Coulter. At the time I was rolling my own blog and then transitioned it to 'Cobb Static' at any rate. Here is the [kwanzaa section of my first days of Cobb](#).

This year as my kids have become old enough to understand more than simple symbols, I will bear the burden of exemplifying various of the values with tales of my own youth. I cannot believe that my children will be black in the same ways I was, but as I have said on behalf of the Old School, there are certain strengths forged in the furnace of yesteryear that maintain their fortitude today. They can be admired for what they are even if they are not duplicated, as if they could be. No one need race a tortoise and a hare today to understand the moral of that story. So while I am an exponent of Kwanzaa, I am not a die-hard for strict interpretation. This is why I have no particular objections to whitefolks celebrating watered down or [variant versions](#), multi-culti style.

On this, the first day of Kwanzaa, the theme is Umoja. Unity. It is of great value in the proper context, and nothing has demonstrated greater power for African Americans than our unanimity in opposition to those who have initiated perpetuated conditions which subjected us over the centuries. There are others who have dedicated themselves to the purple prose of all that, I'll just tell one old personal story and allow you to consider the resonance.

The first is the story of New Year's Day some year between 1975 and 1977. I was in highschool and Deet was three years younger.

My brother and I had just come back from a dance at St. John's Church on the bus. We got off at Adams and Crenshaw and were walking home at about 10:30 or 11pm. As I get to the first block south of Adams, about 6 blocks from my house, some kid approaches me with the question. 'Where's the party at?', which in the context of walking down Crenshaw at this time of night is clearly the opening dance of a jack move. He's trying to assess if I know where I am which he is defining as his turf. Sooner or later, he tells me he as a knife and all money that he finds on me, he can have. I tell my little brother to wait on the street while I have a discussion in the alley. If I'm going to be in a knife fight, I don't want my little brother to see it.

Two minutes later, my brother is calling me. Right about this time, Lonzo, Darell, Rabo and Pickens are heading to the Pastrami Stand. Deet sees them and lets me know. Meanwhile, 'Punkin' is trying to impress upon me his gangbang credentials. I head back to the 'shaw and sure enough my boys are right there. We are not in a gang, we're neighbors. But it is certain that now Punkin knows that I've got backup.

It turns out that Punkin indeed was some sort of a Crip, but lived about 12 blocks west near Vineyard Park. Pickens played ball at Vineyard and so... The issue was resolved by Punkin disappearing quietly into the night. No blows, no

| blood. But the lesson was clear. Numbers count.

The nuance to today's lesson in Unity is threefold. The first is that unity is useful in conflict, but needn't be established for the purposes of conflict. My boys and I played football, basketball and other ghetto games, but we weren't gangbangers. Nevertheless we cultivated a respect and friendship that survived gang threats.

Secondly, unity doesn't mean that you drag everyone you know into conflict. Some battles need to be fought alone. Not everyone needs to always have every dog in every fight, especially if it's a matter of pride and principle. There is a case for unilateralism.

Thirdly, real unity is a credible deterrent. If people understand that you have strong alliances, there are certain tricks they will not attempt. When somebody has got your back. You can walk taller than ordinarily.

I myself was being arrogant and probably a little bit foolish. Yeah I was the best wrestler in my neighborhood and I knew that once this fight got to the ground I would win, but I never fought anyone with a knife before. I had no reason to expect that Lonzo and them would be around or come to the rescue, I was just amazed at the nerve of this kid and I could not stand the idea that anyone would jack me. (I have never lost a dime to stickup kids, although I never faced a gun).

And so Unity is our principle for the day. Learn it and be wise. Practice it and be strong.

December 26, 2003 in [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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December 27, 2006

Consciousness Costs Money

I have bumped my head against one of the glass ceilings of the Internet. Among the many conversations I have had with folks online and offline in email, I have gotten the distinct notion that a significant portion are unaware of the connections between Kwanzaa and the Black Arts, and other Black movements of the 60s. To many it sounds like an indistinguishable hodgepodge. I can almost predict that when I hear the earnest sentiments in introductions by folks when they joke about how 'white' they are. Well everybody's got to start somewhere.

What we have out here in the wild, wild web is essentially Google and Wikipedia. Google tells us what's hot, for better or worse, Wikipedia tells us what people can agree upon, generally speaking, to be factual. Both are very good for navigating the truth. Neither are good for determining the truth in context.

One of the things that I learned during the time I hung out with academics is about the power of narrative. Even as a writer up until that point I didn't recognize that power. Since then I have used it, especially in this blog. It is one of the reasons I personalize my experience with Kwanzaa, and one of the reasons I've begged off of doing the Wikipedia thing.

At any rate I still get upset that those artifacts of the net are insufficient to combat the onslaught of ignorant echoes of the propaganda started by several oxygen-sucking righty pundits, and I encourage folks who get paid by the footnote to take a battle of facts to Wikipedia. Fortunately, George Kelly, a journalist straddles the fence. [Checking his blog](#) took me to the [Oxford African American Studies Center](#), and it reminded me immediately why many academics don't bother with the web.

I think it would be rather obvious that if the best syllabi and materials were freely available on the web and the pedagogy of linking and blogging were credential-worthy, a heck of a lot of smart people would be out of a job. That holds a lot less for the sciences I think and that is a good reason why [MIT doesn't mind](#). So it comes as no surprise that those who are blessed with the gift for academic writing should make themselves scarce. Why give away to the world on the web what middle class Americans scrimp and save for - 200 bucks a unit. And so I take it as axiomatic that superior factually correct, contextually rich texts will not make much of a dent in the free internet, google be damned.

You could try

- [Debroah Lustig](#)
- [Waldo Martin](#)

But you can only get so far.

I've had my issues with this state of affairs for some time now, and I cannot say that I am completely at ease with it. I will have to console myself with the faith that people who know what they are talking about will speak more freely when their knowledge is challenged by ignorance. It's something of a central theme in my writing, isn't it?

Well, I think there's a lending library workaround, and fair use is still fair play, so I'll do what I can to bring some of the better chunks of words that are salient to the discussions we have out here in the free world. In the meantime, there is some good background at the Oxford Center. Get what you can while you can.

December 27, 2006 in [A Punch in the Nose](#), [Cobb's Diary](#), [Kwanzaa](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Roger Alicea said...

Unless I were a scholar, student, or just really interested in Black history it's hard to justify nearly 20 bucks a month for information that is readily available at a local library. Sure, the OAAS Center is specialized, but what good does that do me? It won't make me understand the Black struggle any more than I will with any other reliable resource. Why? Because I'm not Black. It should be enough that people have a general understanding of your history. That's not ignorance, it's simply the human condition.

I was more light hearted than joking when I identified myself as "pretty gosh-darn white" because that is the source of my strongest influence- European. This is true particularly since my father was in the military and we spent several years in Europe as opposed to no time in Puerto Rico or even much around that culture in the U.S. Ask me what my national identity is and I'll tell you specifically U.S. American. Alternatively, I am proud of my Puerto Rican ancestry and intend to visit the island and become more familiar with the culture.

What disturbs me about a lot of the philosophies behind the movements you mentioned is that if you're Black it can't be enough to simply be American. One must be African American or, ideally, of the African Nation. This isn't an ignorant "righty" opinion. It's hard fact based on quotes of the very leaders of those movements. These movements are designed to create an entirely separate Black Nation. Integration is not an option. As you know, this is often referred to as Racial Nationalism and since Kwanzaa is so connected to those movements it is also inseparable.

The culture of the United States is often said to be nonexistent, but I completely disagree. The culture of the United States is the open blending of the various cultures that live in this country. How beautiful that in one area of the country you get Southern comfort food and few states away you get Creole yet no part of the country is void of another's influence. This is why racism has no place here. If I were to try pushing White Nationalism I would rightfully be called a racist. What's the difference?

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 09:32 AM](#)

Cobb said...

You shouldn't take this personally Alicea, but you're ignorant because you haven't read the books. In the same way you are ignorant of the life of English poet Ben Jonson.

So the question of why you bring your own identity in the question, that is to say why you say you are white, rather than simply American or don't even say, indicates that you think perhaps you ought not know or respect such matters on purpose. That is to say this is a part of American, African America, that white people generally don't pay attention to. You're white, therefore you don't.

But as you note, the books are there in the library. You simply haven't bothered to check them out.

Is Puerto Rico a state? Why not? Should it be? It never was before. Why would Puerto Ricans care about being a state? What's a boricua? Why can't they just be satisfied? These are the kinds of rude and ignorant questions I'm sure you've heard before? There's certainly a history appropriate to instruct me properly.

The history of America shows quite clearly, and I'm rather amazed that you are unaware of this history, that it was never enough to 'simply be American' for blacks. Did you realize that during WW2 that Nazi prisoners of war had better accommodations on American trains than blacks? My grandfather worked those trains. This is not imaginary. This is not fiction. America said that if you're black it's not enough simply to be American.

The only reason that changed was because blackfolks got off their butts and made it change. The principles of Kwanzaa, particularly the one commemorated today Kujichagulia, self-determination are remembered because of that victory.

There's a difference you haven't noted between separatist nationalism and cultural nationalism. Perhaps you haven't gotten that far in your studies. But there are very few separatist nationalists operating. Farrakhan is the only notable one of them. Cultural nationalism says there should be black music, black dance, black literature, black styles of dress and that

blackfolks should support such things. In 1965 that was a huge idea and it was alien to America. Today it's done, and most people don't think twice about it.

Thinking twice is what history is all about. Fortunately there are reference materials and civil discussions.

Let us continue.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 10:12 AM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

I'll try to be more fair in my postings. I've discovered some of the previous exchanges you've had with other people and I see that you have addressed certain questions in multitude. So, I am going to ask a question that is very specific and argue my reason for it (I've already touched on this in my last email to you, but I'd like some input from other people as well).

How can you separate Kwanzaa from Karenga and its original purpose?

As I've pointed out, I can try to reinterpret the doctrine of the KKK for the benign purpose of European awareness, call it the Kinder Kindred Krauts, and even call it a holiday in which we burn crosses to "warm Jesus". It wouldn't matter how much I try to make that "new" practice it's still the KKK. As a rhetorical question, how can you be so callous as to ignore the concerns of people based on the factual history and intent of Kwanzaa?

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 10:19 AM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

I didn't notice that you posted before I posted again...

My "identity" is not White. I am American. My primary cultural heritage as a point of reference is "White". Very different.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 10:26 AM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

One more thing:

You keep referring to the 60's and I keep saying there is no comparison to 60's America and America of 2007. The overwhelming belief among all cultures is that in the U.S. you are American regardless of race. So, what is the point of continuing the radical movements except to dominate?

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 10:31 AM](#)

Cobb said...

I cannot reduce the context of The Movement (I'll refer to Civil Rights, Black Arts, Black Power, Black Consciousness and Black Nationalism as 'The Movement') to one player. My reaction is how could you NOT see Karenga in the context of Angela Davis, Medgar Evers and a hundred other pioneers of that era? When Stevie Wonder recorded 'Do The Walk', when James Brown sang 'Say It Loud', all these were elements of a struggle for liberty.

There is no 'regardless of race'. That's like saying it doesn't matter if you are Sunni, Shia or Kurd, you're all Iraqis. And today there is no 'regardless of politics', it matters if you are politically for or against Kwanzaa. And there is no 'regardless of culture'. It matters if you understand the celebration in context. So just forget all of this generic American stuff, there is no generic American. There is the law of the land which is one law and all the people are particular and different.

Why do you think Kwanzaa is not illegal?

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 10:45 AM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

Excellent direct response.

Kwanzaa is not illegal for a number of reasons not the least of which is that it is practiced peacefully as encouraged by people such as yourself. There is also the other blinding fact that is somehow missed by people as passionate as yourself for Black advancement- Kwanzaa has been accepted into AMERICAN culture. If that doesn't scream "Black is American" then I guess we'll always be stuck in the sixties according to you.

Your own ignorance of the totality of what the race struggle has been in the U.S. is apparent every time you suggest that someone else is ignorant for not liking the history (in other words, someone who did research) of Kwanzaa. The struggle through racism has always been a Black AND White issue. There is no way on God's wonderful planet that Blacks would have come as far as they have for equality if it weren't for the help and support of MILLIONS of White, Red, Brown, and Yellow Americans. Every time the radical philosophies of the Black movement are used to "advance" Black culture through Kwanzaa, or whatever, all of the overwhelmingly supportive Americans of all colors can't help but feel smited and ask, "What more are we supposed to do?" and wonder just how far the Black movement intends to go.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 11:06 AM](#)

Cobb said...

You can see my problem then, when you realize that I've been living in an upper middle class neighborhood that is only about 3% black for five years. You see all the kids at the elementary school sing Kwanzaa songs every year for the winter carnival. So I have become accustomed to whitefolks who have no problem introducing their children to Kwanzaa. I guess that makes me a bit provincial.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 11:24 AM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

First, let me retract from the word "ignorant" as I applied it to you. While I wasn't trying to be insulting, it's not very applicable to a person who is well educated and probably aware of all the players of the civil rights movement. Perhaps I should have said "selective view" or something...I don't know.

Ask yourself how familiar those people are with Kwanzaa. Do they know how it originated? I'll bet that to most of them it is an ancient, African tradition that is an idealized representation of African culture. They have no clue of how new it is or the struggle it truly represents. It's probably as shallow of a concept as Indians whooping, greeting each other with a raised hand and saying "How", and all the other saccharin, Disney-esque images of an unfamiliar culture.

As you said, though, "...everyone's got to start somewhere."

What I find more interesting about your observation, though, is that it completely blows out of the water the idea that "There is no 'regardless of race'". It is an immense American strength to eventually take the best of a particular culture and integrate it into the "melting pot" of American culture regardless of race. Even now, as we engage in conflicts in the Middle East, we can see influences in music and other arts, which is usually the beginning of social acceptance.

Establishing and maintaining Black identity is important. To ensure that there is always a clear reference to racial identity will always be the responsibility of that particular race. The rest of us need only accept their uniqueness, learn what we can, and move on in a peaceful and productive co-existence. Hence, you get what you're seeing in your community.

Alternatively, those of us who strive for a deeper understanding must not be dismissed as simply ignorant or hateful for questioning this or that about a particular practice or even the practice as a whole. Kwanzaa started as a racist, separatist movement. Simple as that. If it has evolved in the Black community, or even just with you, into something that is more benign than the first thing you should do is acknowledge it's crappy origin and then educate people on what its modern function is.

I can accept that a sociopath such as Karenga is losing control of his own creation. It's going to continue to be a long, hard struggle, though, to convince thinking people that Kwanzaa is a celebration of culture instead of a separatist movement as long as the credit and definition of Kwanzaa continues to be Karenga and his blatantly anti-White efforts.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 01:02 PM](#)

Cobb said...

I can't know how wise people are who celebrate Kwanzaa, I just give them the benefit of doubt, because the only way you can employ the values of the Nguzo Saba and have it only mean black is if you live in a black community. There's a reason that black neighborhoods in America are the same places they were before WW2, and Karenga had nothing to do with urban planning in your town or mine.

I don't expect Kwanzaa to be anything more or less than a commemoration and personal rededication to good values. I couldn't celebrate it otherwise - but it's true that people do whatever for their own reasons.

As for myself, I'm on a bigger mission which started in the pitch and moment of The Movement, which is to reconcile Old School values to that which passes for black culture and politics today. There has got to be a reason that the difference which is black is useful and edifying, and that forces me to deal with rather serious questions which I see as intimately tied with the defense of liberty.

You see I see African Americans as just a particular people who are emergent. Ours is an emergence from slavery to freedom, and along that process there are lessons for mankind that should never be forgotten. Some of that process is violent. Some of that process is educational. Some of that process is spiritual. How to get all the best of that together is part of a lifelong journey for me, and I expect, at the end of that journey to have a very clear understanding of the unique gift of Africans in America to the world.

Karenga's struggle is same as my struggle, nor was his struggle the same as that of Harriet Tubman. But all of us play some part in the African American story. I don't know when that will end - when people will no longer care or when it will no longer be relevant. I know that few issues of the black middle class would be of interest to people around the world despite the fact that the world took notice of our struggle to get into the middle class. I think the world will take notice of the first African American president of the US, and I think the world would take notice of a powerful black upper class. So I am focused on the culture and politics of black partisans in my generation to move us forward to those ends. Perhaps I am ahead of my time. I don't know.

Anyway, the point of this is that all of this knowledge is not easy to come by for me or for anyone. I believe that is because that which is both liberating and academically correct lies in the hands of people who profit by keeping it closely held. But that too is a complicated matter. In any case it is very clear that the political enemies of Kwanzaa benefit from the relative ignorance of the crowd of people they can seduce on their side. We all understand the phenomenon of negative advertising. Unfortunately, it works. Especially when the truth is complex.

I will continue to defend the complex truth of Kwanzaa and The Movement no matter what.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 02:23 PM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

Fair enough. I have a much clearer understanding of Kwanzaa than I did the day before yesterday, so I thank you for your insight. My only suggestion is that you continually evaluate exactly what it is that you are embracing. Sure, everyone has sins in their past. Some of those people, however, carry those sins into the present. Questioning their intent isn't wrong, it's self-preservation. Sometimes, that preservation requires disassociation. This isn't the same as forgetting or even judging. It's just making the final distinction between the good and the bad that you allow in your own life. Hence, there is a Heaven and a Hell.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 02:37 PM](#)

said...

Cobb, this thread plainly illustrates why it's clearly not worth the effort. Let them twist in the ill-begotten wind that their own ignorant and presumptuous wickedness has borne...

"hark! what's that I hear?"

ah, the clucking of chickens come home to roost!"

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 03:48 PM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

WHOA!

What a scathing remark regarding what were otherwise friendly, intellectual discourses that actually ended in Cobb's favor. How did you come up with that conclusion and why are you insisting on being anonymous about it? The only thing I can gather is that you thought in my closing that I was disassociating from Cobb. Quite the contrary. It was merely advice. Having read the link "not worth the effort" I'm even more confused since I rather appreciate the article. And what does "not worth the effort" mean exactly? You come off as rather militant.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 04:33 PM](#)

CNu said...

What a scathing remark regarding what were otherwise friendly, intellectual discourses that actually ended in Cobb's favor. How did you come up with that conclusion and why are you insisting on being anonymous about it?

Anonymity was no fault of mine, Typepad simply tweeks like that from time to time..., as a matter of course I proudly own everything I write. As for my conclusion, you write something as unselfconsciously dickheaded as this;

My only suggestion is that you continually evaluate exactly what it is that you are embracing. Sure, everyone has sins in their past. Some of those people, however, carry those sins into the present. Questioning their intent isn't wrong, it's self-preservation. Sometimes, that preservation requires disassociation. This isn't the same as forgetting or even judging. It's just making the final distinction between the good and the bad that you allow in your own life. Hence, there is a Heaven and a Hell.

and you're inviting ridicule. No different than the bible buddy or the fifty page book man over yonder clucking at one another on the Kwanza thread.

You come off as rather militant.

the unique irony with which such a comment resonates when originating from a .mil mail address speaks volumes about a solipsistic little man already covered near head-to-toe in chickenshit....,

With regard to your worldview roger.alicea@us.army.mil, forward looking Black Partisans have very much in common with the biblical Lot...

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 05:24 PM](#)

DarkStar said...

My only suggestion is that you continually evaluate exactly what it is that you are embracing.

Which means you assume he does not do so. Hell, reading his archives shows progression of thought in predictable and unpredictable ways.

You come off as rather militant.

Meanwhile, I suspect, if you read him going after Blacks who call Republicans racist, you would not call him "militant" but "rational" or God forbid, even "an independent thinker."

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 05:55 PM](#)

Ukali said...

Roger,

As I (too slowly) read through this exchange, I am tickled and exasperated by some of your remarks. Your "attitude" reminds me of the haughty, all-knowing 'white' people I've met who really believe they are being sincere, non-judgmental, and objective when discussing 'Black' issues with 'Black' people.

When you say:

I was more light hearted than joking when I identified myself as "pretty gosh-darn white" because that is the source of my strongest influence- European.

I have to roll my eyes backwards, as you suggest that being 'white' equates to something "European" rather than something **racial**. If you are 'white' in the United States, you need to know that not all Europeans were considered 'white' during the developmental history of this socially-constructed identity. That is, there are several different groups of people who can be classified as 'white' -- some not of European origin. If you identify as (racially) 'white' in the United States, you are embracing all the benefits and baggage that come along with this identity.

When you tell us your national identity is "U.S. American" you are telling us that you really don't know the distinctions between national identity and nationality. Listen up... briefly stated, your national identity tells others which **group of people** -- which nation -- you descended from; your nationality tells others what **country** has political jurisdiction over you.

Without extending this too far, I add that each of us is a **particular kind of human being** with a compound identity that defines who we are and what we represent in the world. Aspects of our identity can be self-determined (in both the individual and collective sense) or *imposed* on us. Racial identity was imposed on the peoples of this planet by Europeans who had the power, will and purpose(s) for doing so.

Now my question...

You have asserted your racial identity ('white') and revealed your nationality (American) -- what is your national identity?

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 06:19 PM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

Cnulan: Your stupidity doesn't even deserve a response.

Darkstar: I was making no assumptions. Does offering advice automatically mean that I think Cobb is void of the consideration? Who is assuming? Besides, I don't see the harm in such advice either way. It's just friendly advice. Good Lord, I'd think you'd celebrate that someone is taking an active role in learning about Black culture rather than knit-pick something I said that was rather disassociated from the original subject of Kwanzaa.

Ukali- "Haughty"? Because I'm exploring the relevance of my opinion on Kwanzaa through a person who celebrates it I am haughty? Should I just keep my mouth shut and walk in line with the misconceptions I had prior to my discussions?

As far as associating "White" with European I did so because my European decent is German, Irish, and God knows what else that isn't Greek or Latin. Besides, it's only a point of reference.

You might find it naive, but I consider my National Identity as U.S. American as well. My background is very mixed and I would be a fool to select which one I am going to decide is the most important to select as my "National Identity". If you truly believe what you say, then you need to consider that your own National Identity has nothing to do with Africa. It is Egyptian, Chad, Nigerian, South African, or any of the other many sovereign Nations within the continent of Africa. I'll bet, though, that if your ancestry starts in the U.S. through slavery, your ancestry is so mixed that you too have a problem with something as specific as "National Identity".

Anyway, I enjoy discussing this, but please don't stoop to the level of cnulan or I will just ignore you. Such arrogance can't be reasoned with.

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 08:26 PM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

Cnulan: You got me pretty hot, but as I go over your post I can't be sure if anything is intended as an insult to me or if you're just making wild comparisons. What is your point?

[Reply December 27, 2006 at 08:36 PM](#)

Consciousness costs humility said...

please don't stoop to the level of cnulan or I will just ignore you
Such arrogance can't be reasoned with.

Cnulan: You got me pretty hot,

but as I go over your post

I can't be sure if anything is intended as an insult to me

or if you're just making wild comparisons.

What is your point?

such confusion...

My point to Cobb, *was that the arrogance you unselfconsciously demonstrated on this thread*, makes you personally (and more importantly, the worldview you articulate) generally ineducable and completely unworthy of being reasoned with...

In my opinion, Cobb and Ukali indulged you waaaaay beyond what you deserve.

What you read, but could not comprehend, was indifference.

Listen closely.

Silence the epistemological racket in your head,

maybe you'll begin to hear the ontological roar of all those chickens

[Reply December 28, 2006 at 07:02 AM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

Cnulan,

You use the terms "dickheadedness", "wickedness", and "unworthy", and call me ineducable and arrogant, but you're indifferent and NOT arrogant? Indifference is not expressed through vulgarities and comparisons to people you clearly have contempt for such as President George Bush (Little Man. Yeah, I read the review, and, in a term you can relate to, it sucked. It was emotional and incoherent. Such parallels). DarkStar was wrong in thinking that I haven't read some of your earlier posts. You tend to rant in them too and Cobb himself has pointed it out.

I suspect you have a few good ideas floating around in your head, but you can't articulate them. Instead, you resort to abstract links that have no connection (Orson Wells, Lot??). No doubt, in your mind, I'm just an idiot.

Epistemology. Hmmm, new word. So, I looked it up and this is part of the definition, "In other words, epistemology primarily addresses the following questions: "What is knowledge?", "How is knowledge acquired?", and "What do people know?"".

"What is knowledge" is a pointless question, "How is knowledge acquired is" obvious, and "what do people know" is sought EVERY TIME SOMEONE ASKS A QUESTION.

Alright, you got me. SMACK DOWN!!! I'm 1/3 epistemological. Let's move on.

[Reply December 28, 2006 at 10:39 AM](#)

Cobb said...

I am particularly sensitive to the desires of those seeking wisdom and I find Alicea has demonstrated humility appropriate to this blog without being wimpy in the process.

[Reply December 28, 2006 at 11:40 AM](#)

Ukali said...

| *In my opinion, Cobb and Ukali indulged you waaaaay beyond what you deserve.*

Please, please... don't assume too much here.

Though I address Roger, I speak to the wider audience viewing this exchange. Roger is the perfect foil (in this instance) for reaching others who might be a little shy in open forums.

Reply December 28, 2006 at 11:55 AM

CNu said...

| You use the terms "dickheadedness", "wickedness", and "unworthy", and call me ineducable and arrogant, but you're indifferent and NOT arrogant?

Why Roger, until you called me out, I hadn't addressed you at all...

I opined to Cobb, *as I have many, many, times before*, that his efforts to reach a certain demographic - *which your expressions happen to exemplify* - are squandered.

Since you felt compelled to call me out thus;

| What a scathing remark regarding what were otherwise friendly, intellectual discourses that actually ended in Cobb's favor. How did you come up with that conclusion and why are you insisting on being anonymous about it? The only thing I can gather is that you thought in my closing that I was disassociating from Cobb. Quite the contrary. It was merely advice. Having read the link "not worth the effort" I'm even more confused since I rather appreciate the article. And what does "not worth the effort" mean exactly? You come off as rather militant.

I've had a little rough fun at your expense, precisely because I am indifferent to you inasmuch as I don't consider you teachable, **and**, I consider your collective comeuppance to be a pending karmic fait accompli...

| I suspect you have a few good ideas floating around in your head, but you can't articulate them. Instead, you resort to abstract links that have no connection (Orson Wells, Lot???). No doubt, in your mind, I'm just an idiot.

No doubt..., and for precisely this reason, I personally eschew outreach to the incurably white.

Frankly, I would much prefer seeing Cobb channel his talents toward other Black folks. You see, the ideal of a colorblind society in America cannot be realized so long as the pernicious social construct "whiteness" persists. Since you've volunteered as the very poster child for that construct on this thread, and because you've asked for a little blunt, plainspoken directness, here it is, are you ready? *It's not Black folks who need to busy themselves melting into your wicked and doomed pot, rather, it's YOU who need to make superefforts to acquire a little humanizing Blackness, and in the process embody the ideals that Black folks have exemplified more fully than any other people on these shores.*

Only in-so-doing, do you have any chance of avoiding what's headed your way, (*that'd be the Martian metaphor*) and even then, it may well be too late. In any event, I have no intention of doing anything more for you than turning my back and not looking around to see what happened to you. (*that'd be the Lot metaphor*). Perhaps Cobb can save of you from yourselves after all, assuming he can muster the same noble zeal toward Blackness as he does for it's symbolic embodiment in Kwanzaa:

| *put this way, Kwanzaa sounds almost exactly like a metaphor for Blackness. You maybe ought to consider that next time you launch into one of your embrace Americanness/End of Blackness musings...*

since Cobb says you're not a wimp;

| I find Alicea has demonstrated humility appropriate to this blog without being wimpy in the process.

I will pay you no further heed...

Reply December 28, 2006 at 01:29 PM

Roger Alicea said...

Cnulan,

Finally, coherence.

"It's not Black folks who need to busy themselves melting into your wicked and doomed pot, rather, it's YOU who need to make superefforts to acquire a little humanizing Blackness, and in the process embody the ideals that Black folks have exemplified more fully than any other people on these shores."

I am now rather amused. Behind all of your vulgarities and sarcasm you are ashamed of being White. Ukali said:

"If you identify as (racially) 'white' in the United States, you are embracing all the benefits and baggage that come along with this identity."

There are benefits and baggages to ALL races and I, for one, and not going to be ashamed of any of mine. The benefits only need to be kept in check and the baggages are lessons to be learned.

You, however, would rather be lashed for the shortcomings of our ancestors than use them as the stones for path to higher wisdom. In fact, if the lashings stop, you would be one to promptly remind everyone of how us whitefolk once kept blackfolk as slaves so that you could continue receiving the beatings for it.

You've become a slave of your own history and that is indeed very sad.

Reply December 28, 2006 at 01:56 PM

CNu said...

| "Us?"

ROTFLMBAO!!!!

Reply December 28, 2006 at 03:17 PM

Roger Alicea said...

"I will pay you no further heed."

Um, that's ONE BIG, FAT, CHECK MARK in the ALICEA corner. (and the crowd goes wild!)

Reply December 28, 2006 at 05:02 PM

Ukali said...

[Roger said...]

| *"Haughty"? Because I'm exploring the relevance of my opinion on Kwanzaa through a person who celebrates it I am haughty? Should I just keep my mouth shut and walk in line with the misconceptions I had prior to my discussions?*

"Haughty", Roger...

...because you lack the humility and honesty to admit that you just don't know enough to intelligently discuss Kwanzaa or Kawaida. As Cobb plainly stated "you're ignorant because you haven't read the books" -- a necessary (though not sufficient) precondition for being taken seriously.

...because your pride won't let you politely **ask** "Black" folks to teach you something. Instead, you barge in here armed with nothing more than regurgitated misinformation; a woefully wanting grasp of African American history; and nothing substantive -- zilch -- to contribute to this ongoing dialog.

...because you thrust your 'whiteness' on us like it's no big deal. You blithely call it "a point of reference" (your primary cultural heritage) not understanding or respecting what this means to your primary audience here. In short, you've been as blindly rude as most 'white' people who intrude on "Black" intellectual turf.

Put this all together and you *might* figure out why some consider you an unteachable waste of precious time and effort. You might also wake up to Cobb's paternalism toward you.

And, no, you shouldn't keep your shut... you should adjust your attitude; graciously sit at the feet of those with more knowledge, experience, and insight than you; and inoffensively raise pertinent questions (rather than blurting misinformation that exposes your cluelessness).

[Reply December 28, 2006 at 05:25 PM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

Ukali,

Impulsively, I want to say that you are presumptuous. However, the abundant humility that I do in fact possess (that statement seems to really contradict itself doesn't it) makes me take a step back and try to look at this thread from your perspective. What I find is that I may very well appear haughty because there was more to this discussion than exists on this thread. I wrote earlier:

"So, I am going to ask a question that is very specific and argue my reason for it (I've already touched on this in my last email to you, but I'd like some input from other people as well)."

I had made it clear in my previous emails to Cobb (in which, ironically, I specifically ASKED for his input) that I was unfamiliar with Kwanzaa and wanted to learn about it from someone who practiced it. All of my challenges were intended to unabashedly, but respectfully present my own assumptions and echo those that I have heard from various sources. I did this for two reasons.

1. The vast majority of people who don't celebrate Kwanzaa know nothing of it and to have a serious interest in the subject I am one of those (as most people are) who likes to have open dialogue about it first.
2. I challenged Cobb with everything I could think of to see how well he would respond. Would he be an emotional jerk (ahem, cnulan), or would he accept my challenge and take an effort in teaching me. He chose to very patiently teach. I may not agree with some of his opinions, but that's not important. What's important is that I understand better and with my new, stronger interest in Kwanzaa- and, consequently the Black Movement- maybe I'll learn to agree more or at least understand better why I should disagree.

So, I was humble in my approach to Cobb, I've been humble and teachable (OMG, the White boy can learn) by entering this with misconceptions that I've accepted as incorrect, AND (this is REALLY important) I brought this discussion to this thread (as opposed to the safety of email) specifically so that I could get "some input from other people as well" knowing full well that I might be perceived as trying to "intrude on "Black" intellectual turf." Hence, I am responding to you.

Cobb, I sincerely thank you for what you have given me and for what I expect to continue to learn.

So, are there any other problems that you see, Ukali?

[Reply December 28, 2006 at 10:39 PM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

Just to make it real clear, Cobb and I had already exchanged several emails before moving to this thread.

[Reply December 28, 2006 at 10:44 PM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

Oh, yeah...one last thing. Just because I view my White reference as just a "reference" means absolutely diddley about how I respect how you embrace being Black. While I don't and never will understand it I am fully aware and respectful of the fact that your "Blackness" has a much deeper meaning to you than my "Whiteness" has to me. What I find insulting is that, no matter how I try to explain it, you stick to your own preconceived notions about Whites and suggest that my point of view is offensive.

You have to understand that you have a distinct advantage when it comes to defining your identity by having ancestry at least from the same continent. I, on the other hand, have (very simply) split ancestry. In my opinion, if I pick one I disrespect the other. Am I European or Puerto Rican? Screw it, I pick American and I am as proud of that as I am when I talk about either side of my ancestry.

[Reply December 28, 2006 at 11:04 PM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

Cobb,

I've been thinking. Ukali was right to a certain extent when it was said that I don't bring much to the table. I am not a particularly book smart individual. I have a few strong points, but they are certainly not in the matters of sociology. However, Ukali was equally wrong in assuming that a deep knowledge of history is all that is of measurable value. I bring to the table my perspective with a willingness to change it. I believe that I am a good observer, I am a thinker, and I am somewhat bold so as to not waste my qualities in the shadows indifference. Those attributes (including a will to read) along with a desire to gain a higher wisdom are enough for a person to develop at least a decent philosophical (as opposed to academic) foundation for debate and learning. I hope I have presented as much in our discussion.

What I have been pondering (and failed to fully acknowledge earlier) is your statement, "So the question of why you bring your own identity in the question, that is to say why you say you are white, rather than simply American or don't even say, indicates that you think perhaps you ought not know or respect such matters on purpose." Reading through your blogs, I have been unable to grasp exactly what you meant by that statement, but I get the feeling that our discussion may have led another way if I understood it better. What exactly did you mean?

[Reply January 02, 2007 at 08:27 PM](#)

Cobb said...

Richard Feynman famously said, that simply because one lives under the effects of gravity all their lives does not make them a particle physicist. And in that way simply because you live with a certain racial identity all your life doesn't mean you understand it or what its effects on you are.

Sure we all understand gravity in a very certain and predictable way, but we have no idea how it works or why it works until we start studying particle physics. In the same way people think they know a lot about race enough to say "I'm white or I'm black", but that's elementary school my dear Watson.

I've been around these discussions long enough to know that when somebody protests ignorance and white identity within a paragraph that they haven't studied the matter. It makes them fish in a barrel for certain types of partisans both black and white.

When I really cared, and I don't really now, I used to stress to such whitefolks the dangers of essentialism, which is the unsophisticated attribution of cultural, spiritual or other attributes to the social conventions of race. Basically, everybody in the US inherits a racial identity just from living here. So you have to think your way out of it if you expect to be fully human. If you think 'white' is good enough, then you haven't thought your way out of it. This is a sin of omission.

Look at it this way. Assume that only 10% of blackfolks actually hate whitefolks. That means that you should be perfectly comfortable in 90% of all blackfolks, or in the blackest part of town in your part of town, the overwhelming majority of blackfolks will be cool with you. But you won't go there. Why not? Because you're white, and you know somehow that you're not supposed to. That makes you believe in your white identity because now you're not challenging its boundaries. The less you challenge your white identity, the more it suits you.

Blackfolks on the other hand, have little to gain from not challenging the identity they inherit. Some folks like me challenge it so much that we freak other blackfolks out. But that's beside the point. Everybody has to challenge the racial identities we inherit because they are inherently false, reductive and immoral. The black consciousness movement made this explicitly clear which is why we became black instead of Negro. 'Negro' was the name society put on us, not one we created for ourselves.

The entire point, or so it seems to me, of whiteness studies was to get the average white person to undergo a similar revolution of identity.

This is problematic for several reasons that I really don't want to go into in depth. Suffice it to say most whitefolks don't care that deeply about their souls and a good fraction of them just compare themselves favorably to their cousin Jethro and figure they're OK. In the end whitefolks are their own worst enemies because they accept being honkies, rednecks, ofays everything else. They say aww we're all a little bit racist.

I don't buy it. I don't think we're all a little bit racist any more than we're all a little bit communist. Either you're in control of your soul or you're not.

Understand that I don't see it as a pre-requisite for whitefolks to undergo shedding of this skin for any purpose other than their own. But you can bet I see the character flaw in those who don't. And considering how easy it is in America to know something ain't right.. well I can't accept any excuse. I also understand, which is something other folks here don't seem to, that my destiny is not in the hands of people who choose not to elevate. 'Black' destiny might, but I'm not owned by that identity either - or at least my interpretation of it is sufficiently different that the collective is not exactly my collective. The presumption is, of course, that something will trip in the white collective unconscious and like a mass of Manchurian Candidates, they'll zombify and begin the new era of black genocide. I take their point, considering how many whitefolks don't undress their racial birthday suits, but I'm not worried about it. On that fateful day, people will 'come to Jesus' or not. Such things must be made explicit if real purposeful action is to take place.

All that is to say when you seriously question the unquestioned racial identity it is a virginity you cannot get back. The question is how far will you take it? Are you willing to say, for the sake of your soul, "I'm not white. I don't know why I accepted the idea that I am, but I know it doesn't really fit me. Now I'm going to start telling my friends."

And now you are chugging to the top of the first hill on the rollercoaster.

[Reply January 03, 2007 at 12:43 AM](#)

Cobb said...

Also check out [Mystery of the Black Blogger](#), and think about what 1000 word essay you would write about your racial identity.

[Reply January 03, 2007 at 12:54 AM](#)

CNu said...

Consciousness also costs knowledge and effort;

Understand that I don't see it as a pre-requisite for whitefolks to undergo shedding of this skin for any purpose other than their own. But you can bet I see the character flaw in those who don't. And considering how easy it is in America to know something ain't right.. well I can't accept any excuse. I also understand, which is something other folks here don't seem to, that my destiny is not in the hands of people who choose not to elevate. 'Black' destiny might, but I'm not owned by that identity either - or at least my interpretation of it is sufficiently different that the collective is not exactly my collective. The presumption is, of course, that something will trip in the white collective unconscious and like a mass of Manchurian Candidates, they'll zombify and begin the new era of black genocide. I take their point, considering how many whitefolks don't undress their racial birthday suits, but I'm not worried about it. On that fateful day, people will 'come to Jesus' or not. Such things must be made explicit if real purposeful action is to take place.

Taken in its entirety, this last entry of yours is excellent magne. This paragraph above, however, highlights our fundamental difference of opinion. See, from where I Work, the ordinary waking state is already typified by an uninterrogated, uncultivated, and essentially ungovernable subconscious. In other words, sleep and suggestibility are the necessary preconditions for self-identification as "white".

Such sleep and suggestibility is an inherently dangerous and unpredictable thing. Humanization, *or ensoulment*, presumes both method and effort, (*supereffort*) in order to make what is below the threshold of ordinary awareness real and accessible - in other words - waking up.

Collective response to the municipal collapse brought on by Hurricane Katrina was a microcosm exemplifying American preconditioning around the cognitive error of race under emotional stress. American performance under those circumstances was most instructive....

[Reply January 03, 2007 at 07:58 AM](#)

Cobb said...

And this begs the question of what it is that keeps the sleepwalkers walking instead of awake and working. That, to you, is the consumer industrial complex, fueled by a dwindling commodity.

However you say that when the oil shock shakes, sleepers will fall into a deeper sleep. I the shock is far away if it comes at all, but then sleepers will awake. But its possible that we're both possibly right. Perhaps the oil will drain in dribs and drabs and consumer choice will narrow slowly enough for the sleepers to remain aslumber, in which case there will be less for all and the deprivations will become deeper.

In my world when the deprived become sick of enough of being the victims of the depraved, they will revolt. This revolt will revive the silent majority and call them to action. But there's a boiling frog in that pot too. The deprived might just sleepwalk their way to self-destruction accepting the belief that human dignity is not their birthright. And maybe the Cosby shock and the Katrina shock were not enough to get the deprived on their feet. But there sure is a lot of shouting from the sidelines.

[Reply January 03, 2007 at 09:05 AM](#)

CNu said...

However you say that when the oil shock shakes, sleepers will fall into a deeper sleep.

Just to keep things clear, *sleep* being the implicit biases and de facto denial of humanity of others based on skin color. When supplies begin to tighten up on the American lifeboat, that's precisely when tendencies mollified or suppressed during the time of plenty, will flip back to their antecedent norms...

Gradual systemic reduction in consumption is called the soft landing scenario. If relative privations (or more accurately, suspension of gluttony) could be born collectively and uniformly, then the soft landing would be feasible. However, this requires a social and civic baseline and a command structure which at present does not exist in this country. The fact of the matter is that American history, politics, and mass media (*instrumentalities under the control of American elites*) have striven very diligently to erect a system of permanent psychological (*racial*) balkanization that forestalls any such mass insurrection by the deprived against the depraved. That's precisely why the pernicious construct was instantiated some 400 years ago.

Watch your implicit biases Cobb, that last paragraph of yours puts an ill-fitting Black face on privation when the fact of the matter is that 4 out of every 5 of the American poor and pissed is of the Caucasian persuasion.

[Reply January 03, 2007 at 09:31 AM](#)

Cobb said...

Yeah I know. But then again who indeed was defensive about Katrina, and whose hearts bled? Was Kanye West speaking for America? Was that a wide awake analysis? I didn't hear any racial traffic about the officers who've been indicted for shooting deaths in the tragedy... nevermind. I don't want to go there. I stand corrected.

If you're going to talk about instrumentalities of elites and a real figure of 400 years ago, you're going to have to focus that zoom lens a bit more precisely. That is to say it is going to be about the racial presumptions of various members of the Virginia House of Burgesses, and do they trump the Framers? And did the Framers read race into Locke?

The more I listen to this cat Arnn, the more I hear him fudging, perhaps for the sake of brevity, but there's a lot of ways to go in Western Civ, and it's difficult for me to see how racial balkanization by 'intelligent design' survives a better theory of evolution. That is to say I find it very difficult to believe that the Greeks were racist, the Romans were racist, the Christians were racist and on through Shakespeare, Bacon, Martin Luther, Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, Darwin, Nietzsche and the rest.

I mean if Martin Luther was racist, then aren't all Protestants and Pentacostals racist?

[Reply January 03, 2007 at 12:10 PM](#)

Roger Alicea said...

C'mon Cnulan, let's not engage eachother on a thread unrelated to this discussion.

In "Back to Front" all you can do is attack my being a soldier as a means to attempt to discredit me. Which is, at least, a change from attacking me for being white. You haven't really addressed my points which can only mean that you CAN'T address them or you would have.

BTW, if I am "disclosing some rather feminine traits", to what extent should I be offended (have you now redefined yourself as a sexist racist, cnulan)? I'm not so sure how I'm exposing them any more than you are by constantly picking cat fights, but I'll wholly embrace them if that's what it takes to keep you going.

[Reply January 04, 2007 at 12:26 PM](#)

VaSteve said...

MMMMmmm...It is said, "the complex truth of Kwanzaa". "It is easier to attack than defend". That being said, and an additional hundreds of thousands more words defending Kwanzaa, any sort of thinking person clearly sees. The truth in anything can easily and simply be stated. Otherwise you are 'spinning' or showing all how well you can articulate. Clearly both. Happy Kwanzaa!

[Reply December 11, 2007 at 07:16 AM](#)

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(You can use HTML tags like <i> and to style your text. URLs automatically linked.)

Email address is not displayed with comment.