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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.

[Reply December 30, 2003 at 12:29 PM](#)

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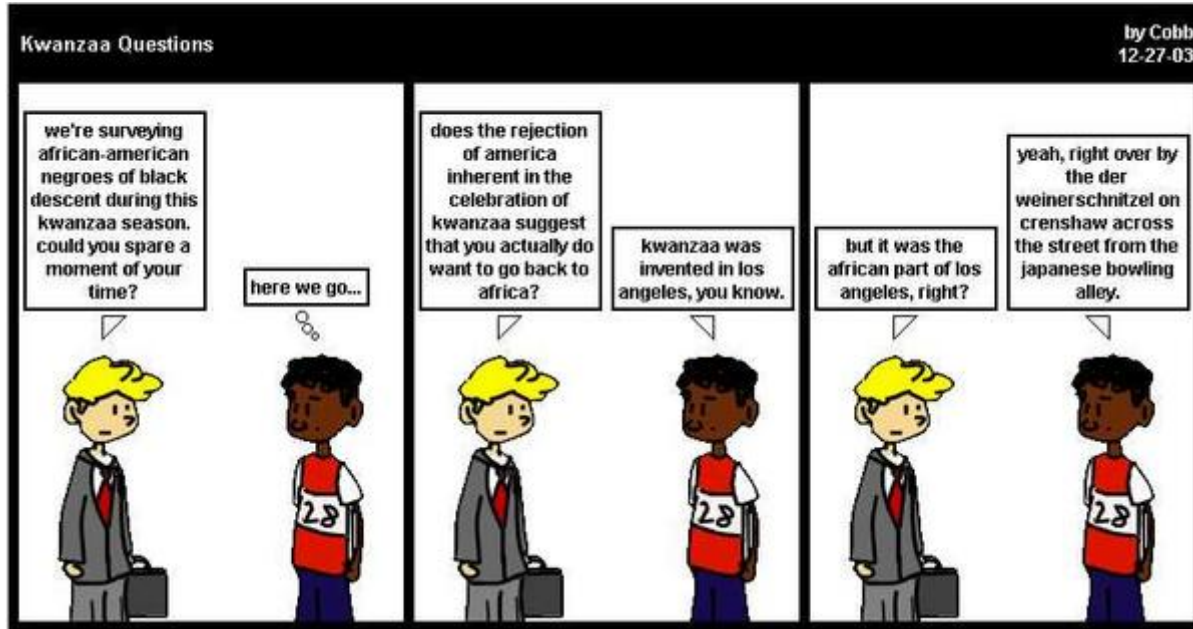
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December 27, 2003

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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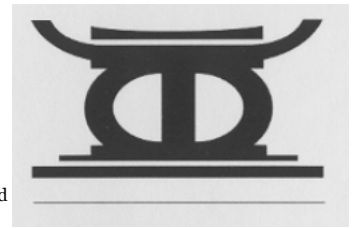
Comments

[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 Ujaama.

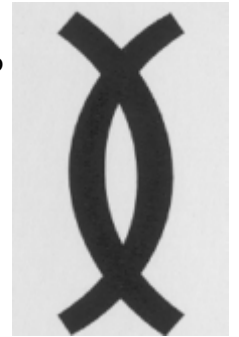
I've made peace with the fact that Ujamaa simply doesn't scale. The cooperative economics of the small shopping village, say Leimert Park, is not ever going to work as a strategy for African Americans. As a tactic, maybe. So while I accept it as a value in the Nguzo Saba, I'd have to say that it is not 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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