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10-10-2002

## American Commemorative Panels: Kwanzaa

United States Postal Service. Stamp Division

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# Kwanzaa

IN 1966, AN ACTIVIST-SCHOLAR named Dr. Maulana Karenga believed that forward and positive advances among African Americans required a strong emphasis on African culture and its relationship to the American present. In response to this realization, Dr. Karenga created Kwanzaa, an annual holiday celebrated for seven days, from December 26 through January 1.

Deriving its name from a Swahili word, Kwanzaa is not a substitute for Christmas, but rather a time for reaffirming the importance of the ancestors and culture of African

Americans. At its core are the Nguzo Saba—the Seven Principles—which include Unity, Self-determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity, and Faith.

There are a number of symbols that accompany the celebration of Kwanzaa. The kinara, or candleholder, is the focal point of the Kwanzaa symbols and holds one candle for each of the Seven Principles. The candles—one black, three red, and three green—are lit one day at a time throughout the celebration. In addition, mazao (crops), represented by fruits and vegetables, and muhindi, ears of corn reflecting

the number of children in the family, are placed on the mkeka (straw placemat) with the kinara. The kikombe cha umoja (communal unity cup) and zawadi (gifts for enrichment) are also included in the display.



Synthia Saint James, the artist whose work was commissioned by the U.S. Postal Service for this Kwanzaa stamp, included each of the Kwanzaa symbols in her colorful painting of the celebration. Saint James has become an internationally recognized artist as well as an award-winning author, illustrator, and songwriter. Her varied artistic projects have included paintings for book covers, as well as a 150-foot-long ceramic tile mural for Ontario International Airport in California. First issued in 1997, this Kwanzaa stamp was the first holiday stamp commissioned to an African American artist.

- UMOJA** (unity)
- KUJICHAGULIA** (self-determination)
- UJIMA** (collective work and responsibility)
- UJAMAA** (cooperative economics)
- NIA** (purpose)
- KUUMBA** (creativity)
- IMANI** (faith)



left: © Ariel Skelley/CORBIS, bottom right: © Synthia Saint James, background: Border design © Synthia Saint James.

Stamps printed by Avery Dennison (AVR) / No. 670 in a series / October 10, 2002 / Printed in U.S.A. / © 2002 United States Postal Service



**Issue Date**  
October 10, 2002

**First Day City**  
Washington, DC

**Designer**  
Synthia Saint James  
Los Angeles, CA

**Art Director**  
Derry Noyes  
Washington, DC

**Typographer**  
Derry Noyes

**Modeler**  
Avery Dennison (SPD)

**Manufacturing Process**  
Gravure

**Printer**  
Avery Dennison (AVR)

**Engraver**  
Southern Graphic  
Systems, Inc.

**Colors**  
Magenta, Yellow, Cyan,  
Black

**Image Area**  
1.05 x .77 (in.)  
26.67 x 19.56 (mm)

**Format**  
Pane of 20 (1 design)

**Plate Numbers**  
"V" followed by four  
(4) single digits

**Marginal Markings**  
©1996 USPS, price,  
plate position diagram,  
plate numbers, barcode

## Kwanzaa

Created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, Kwanzaa reaffirms African-American heritage as well as goals of unity, identity, and purpose. The celebration is based upon the *Nguzo Saba*, or Seven Principles: Unity, Self-determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity, and Faith. During the seven days from December 26 through January 1, a candle is lit daily and often-times small gifts emphasizing creativity are given. On December 31 the *karamu* (Kwanzaa Feast) is held, focusing on community and cooperative effort.

Synthia Saint James, the artist whose work was commissioned by the U.S. Postal Service for this Kwanzaa stamp, included each of the Kwanzaa symbols in her colorful painting of the celebration. Saint James has become an internationally recognized artist as well as an award-winning author, illustrator, and songwriter. Her varied artistic projects have included paintings for book covers, as well as a 150-foot-long ceramic tile mural for Ontario International Airport in California. First issued in 1997, this Kwanzaa stamp was the first holiday stamp commissioned to an African-American artist.



FIRST DAY OF ISSUE

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