

Makinya Sibeko-Kouate (MSK) was born Harriet Smith in San Leandro, California on July 1, 1926. She was raised, went to school and worked in Oakland and Berkeley, California for over 91 years. At the height of the Black Power Movement her work as a scholar, activist and a major contributor to the creation of Kwanzaa and the Nguzo Saba, centers her in the Black Radical Tradition of Black Power.

With Black Power there was a new consciousness, Black people understood they must define themselves. “When we begin to define our own image, the stereotypes-that is, lies-that our oppressor has developed will begin in the white community and end there. The Black community will have a positive image of itself that it has created. This means we will no longer call ourselves lazy, apathetic, dumb, good-timers, shiftless, etc. Those are words used by white America to define us” (Ture and Hamilton, page 37).

The archival mapping in this project will provide documents, photos and recordings about MSK, her participation in establishing Black Youth organizations, Black Studies department, and community Kwanzaa celebrations. It is reported she traveled to 35 states and 13 countries promoting Kwanzaa all over the world.

Note: In this project the word Kwanzaa and Kwanza are interchangeable. Both spellings are correct. The additional “a” was added at a later date to correspond with the seven principles and seven Kwanzaa items.

KWANZA

1. Meaning

Kwanza is a word meaning "First" -- in this case it signifies the FIRST FRUITS. Celebration of harvesting the first crops or first fruits is traditional in Africa. At this time of year our people in Africa come together to make joyful noises, give thanks and enjoy the blessing of living and acting together for the community. Every one brings what he grew or made to contribute to the Mazmo (feast) that takes place in the celebration. Songs are sung, dances danced, food is eaten, and drinks are drunk, in a word -- life is lived in sheer enjoyment.

2. Symbols of Kwanza

- A. Mkoka (Olibela) The Mkoka is a straw mat on which all the other symbols are placed. It is a traditional item and therefore symbolizes tradition as the foundation on which all else rests.
- B. Mizira (Vizira) The Mizira is a candle holder which holds seven candles -- it represents the original stalk from which we all sprang. For it is traditionally said that the first born was like a corn stalk which produces corn which in turn becomes stalks which reproduce in the same manner so that there is no ending to us.
- C. Mibasa (Olibumwa) The seven candles which represent the Seven Principles (Nguzo Saba) on which the first born set our society in order that our people might get the maxima from it. Those Seven Principles are: Umoja (Unity) Ujichagulia (Self-Determination); Ujamaa (Collective Work and Responsibility); Ujamaa (Co-operative Economics); Uta (purpose); Kuumba (Creativity); and Imani (Faith).
- D. Mu hindi (Olibindi) The ear of corn which represents the offspring or produce (the children) of the stalk (the father of the house). The Muhindi signifies the ability or potential of the offspring themselves to become stalks and thus produce their own offspring... an unending process which insures the immortality of our race. To illustrate this we use as many ears of corn as we have children, signifying the number of potential stalks. Every house will have at least one Muhindi for there is always the potential even if it has not yet been realized.
- E. Kwazi The presents which represent 1) the fruits of the labor of the parents, and 2) the rewards of the seeds sown by the children. Parents must commit their children to goodness which to us is beauty. We must commit them to good acts, good thoughts, and good grades, etc., for the coming year and reward them according to how well they live up to their commitments. Goodness is beauty and beauty is that which promises happiness and - in a social sense - that which promises happiness to the family and community. For all acts, thoughts, and values are invalid if they do not in some way benefit the community.

3. Dates and procedures

- A. The dates are from December 26 through January 1, inclusive.
- B. Procedures. On each day of the week of Kwanza, when asked, Muhari gani (What's going on?) the answer will be the principle which corresponds with that day... on the first day of Kwanza the response would be Umoja, on the

Title: Earliest known document about Kwanza

Hyperlink: [Earliest Kwanza Document](#)

Repository: Max Rambod Rare Books

Creator: Sibeko-Kouate, Makinya,

Date of Creation: 1969

Physical Description: Two 8.5 x 11"

mimeographed sheets stapled together.

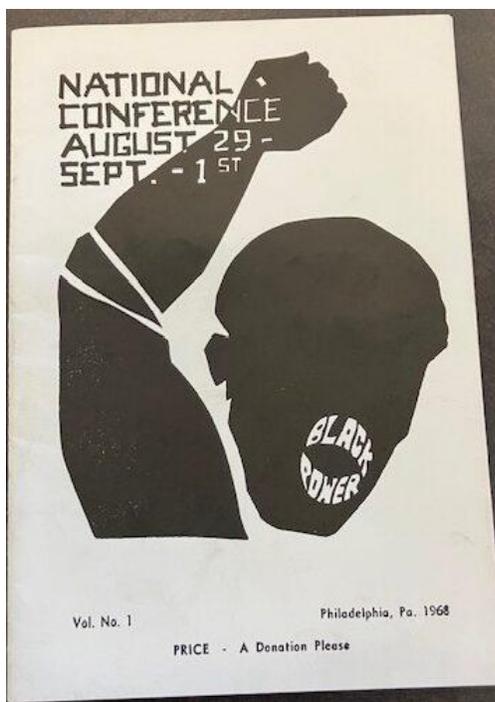
The archived document is one page of two

mimeograph pages produced by Harriett Smith

aka Makinya Sibeko-Kouate. This significant

document is the earliest version detailing the meaning of Kwanzaa. According to Max Rambod Rare Books, which has the document in its repository, it was created in 1969. It is reported Sibeko-Kouate helped organize the first Kwanzaa celebration in the Bay area in 1967. In the first paragraph of this paper Kwanza is connected to Africa through the tradition of the celebration of the harvest. Kwanzaa means the first fruits, which is celebrated in several African countries during harvest season. During slavery and after and to this day there has been a move for Black people to return to Africa. While most have preferred to stay in America, many more desire to stay connected to Africa. Kwanzaa was created for Black people to connect to their African heritage. Community and family has been vital for the preservation of Black people in the face of state sponsored terrorism, oppression, brutality, discrimination and attempted extermination of Black people. The document describes five of the current seven symbols of Kwanzaa. The *Mazao* which represents the fruits and vegetables of the harvest and is placed on the Kwanzaa table it is mentioned in the *Meaning* section of this document,

“Everyone brings what he grew or made to contribute to the Karamu”. The other Kwanzaa symbol missing is *Kikombe cha Umoja*, the unity cup. Also revealed are the dates and procedures to celebrate Kwanza. This original document can be purchased for \$750.



National Black Power Conference Program

Hyperlink: [MSK Archives Berkeley Library](#)

Repository: University of California, Berkeley Library

Creator: Unknown

Dates of Creation: 1968

Physical Description: Program Booklet

This program from the 1968 National Black Power Conference is archived in the papers of Makinya Sibeko-Kouate. Makinya attended as an activist and student. Participants at the conference were from all over the United States.

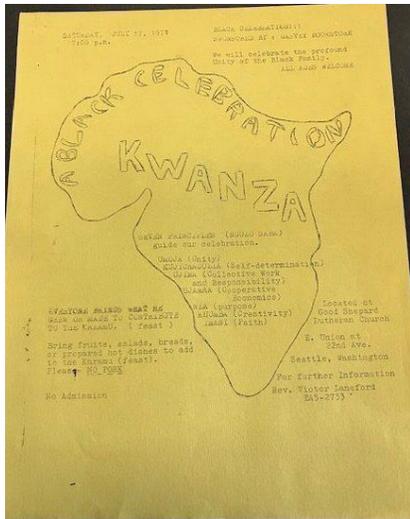
There were moderates to revolutionaries all with divergent views about the way to move forward, even different views of what Black Power is. However, all were united to address the issues and needs of Black people in America.

During the 1967 conference, of the 80 resolutions proposed only the *Black Power Manifesto* won a majority approval. "This document condemned neo-colonialist control of Black populations and called for reparations from white, capitalist America. It also outlined how the Black Power movement intended to use the reparations to improve education and health care in Black communities", (Joe. Arthur Ashe Today).

The Black Power Manifesto was rolled out during the '68 conference yet decades later Black people continue to fight for compensation for the centuries of slavery, Jim Crow subjugation and other disparities in health, education and the closing of the wealth gap.

There were subsequent conferences however, there is not a definitive number due to the various Black organizations gathering under the mantle of "Black National Conference". It should suffice to say that following the Civil Rights movement of the 60's

Black people were gathering to win liberation. By 1972 the original National Black Power Conference's attendance rose from thousands to tens of thousands.



A Black Celebration Kwanza

Hyperlink: [MSK Archives Berkeley Library](#)

Repository: University of California, Berkeley Library

Creator: Unknown

Dates of Creation: 1971

Physical Description: Flyer

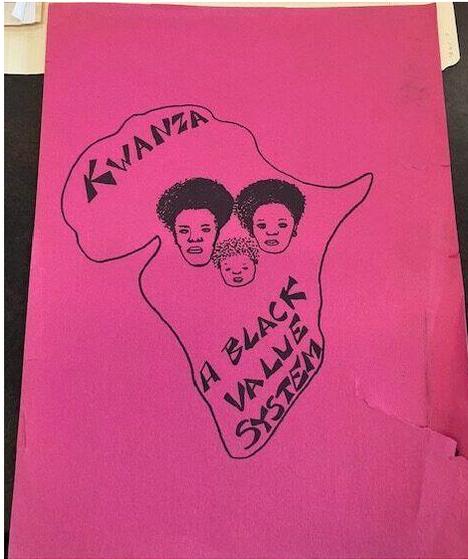
This document is for a Kwanzaa event July 17, 1971.

Kwanzaa is traditionally celebrated in December, but

the Nguzo Saba is encouraged to be practiced daily.

This document reveals Sibeko-Kuoate's dedication to encourage the Nguzo Saba as a way of life. The image of Africa is front and center. The event to be held in a Christian church and in the city of Seattle in Washington state. Attendees are invited to bring food to contribute to the Karamu, "bring what you have grown or made", There is also a request of "no pork". Karamu is the feast that happens during Kwanzaa. Family and food and community is a Black Tradition that builds bonds and strengthens the mkeka of Black people in times of challenge and triumph. The Karamu generally happens on the 6th or 7th night especially for a family or community that are observing Kwanzaa every night.

During this celebration there is usually drumming, spoken word, and the lighting of the mishumma saba (seven candles). The mishumma saba are held in a kinara, a wooden candle holder. The wood which comes from a tree represents heritage and lineage.



Kwanza Black Value System

Hyperlink: [MSK Archives Berkeley Library](#)

Repository: University of California, Berkeley Library

Creator: Unknown

Dates of Creation: circa 1968

Physical Description: Kwanzaa Flyer

This flyer is among Makinya Sibeko-Kouate's papers.

It reads: Kwanzaa, a Black Value System. The

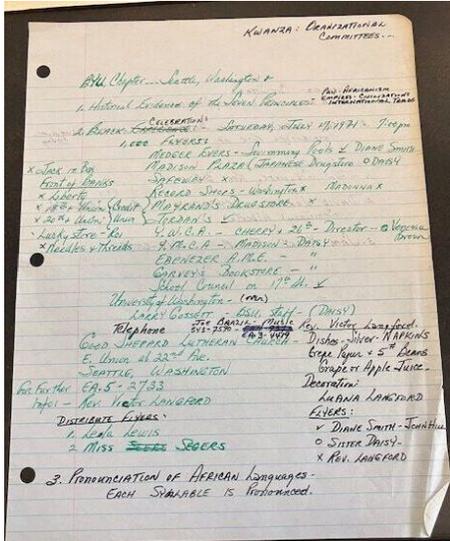
gathering of family and community during Kwanzaa

reinforces the strength in numbers. One of the Kwanzaa items is the *Mkeka* (mat). The weaved mat represents family and/or community. The stronger the mat, the stronger the community.

The Nguzo Saba, the seven principles, are grounded in traditional African values and are affirmed during Kwanzaa and are encouraged to be practice throughout the year. Each principle can be read as a statement or can be embraced as an affirmation. An even deeper practice is to treat each principle as an agreement and commitment.

Umoja (Unity) is the first principle and is an agreement to maintain unity in the family and community. The second principle is Kujichagulia, this principle is about self-responsibility, an agreement to oneself. To think for oneself, speak for oneself, and to name oneself. The principle Kujichagulia led and many Black people in the 1960's and 70's to change their English name to an African name with meaning. Makinya Sibeko-Kaoute was born with the name Harriet Smith. She took the name Makinya which means footsteps in the context of friendship and always being present for family and friends. This is reflected in the principle Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility). This

principle demonstrates the meaning of working together to solve problems, that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics) is about building and supporting and maintaining families and businesses in the community. Nia (Purpose) is about the greatness of Black people. Kuumba (Creativity) speaks to the genius, the gifts and talents of Black people and a commitment to leave any place better than it was found. Imani (Faith), faith has sustained Black people's traditions. Black people's very existence is anchored in a faith of better days to come.



Kwanza Organizing Committee

Hyperlink: [MSK Archives Berkeley Library](#)

Repository: University of California, Berkeley Library

Creator: Kwanza Organizing Committee

Dates of Creation: 1971

Physical Description: Document

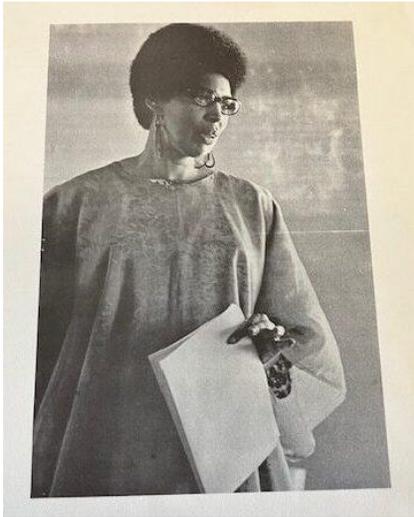
This document details notes from the Kwanza Organizing Committee's Seattle Washington's BYU Chapter. It details the plan for 1000 flyers to be distributed for a Kwanza celebration at Good

Sheppard Lutheran Church on July 21, 1971.

Kwanzaa is traditionally celebrated in December starting on the 26th and ending on January 1st. This event shows MSK's involvement to expand the practice of the principles beyond seven days and to establish the values of Kwanzaa as a way of life.

The document links the "Seven Principles to Pan Africanism". It documents the committee's plan for decorations and refreshments to be served and the people responsible for the execution of the plan. It lists the locations where the 1000 flyers would be distributed. Included on the list is Meger Evers Swimming Pool, and Garvey Bookstore, both named after two Black men pivotal in Black Liberation in Black Radical Tradition.

Kwanzaa is a community event that involves families, friends, businesses and places of worship. The fact that it is planned as a summer event shows the possible impact it could have in the city of Seattle and its African American residents.



Teacher Makinya Sibeko-Kouate

Hyperlink: [MSK Archives Berkeley Library](#)

Repository: University of California, Berkeley Library

Creator: Unknown

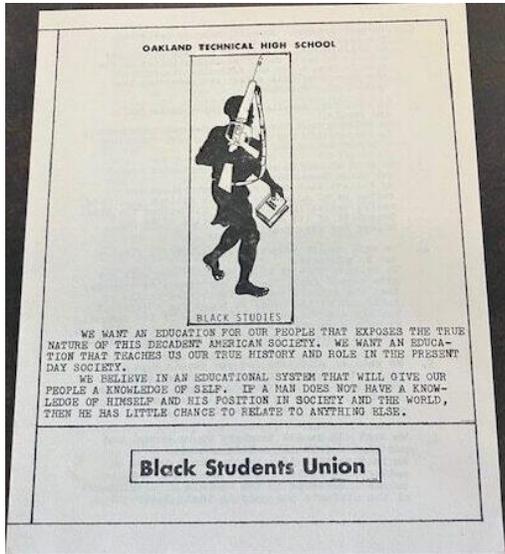
Dates of Creation: circa 1985

Physical Description: Photograph

In the photograph Makinya Sibeko-Koute (MSK) wears and Afro and is dressed in African wear. She stands with papers in her hand. She appears to be teaching in a classroom. In the late sixties Black people's turn to Africa was the most dramatic since the kidnapping. The New York Times called 1960 "The Year of Africa". It was at this time 17 African countries gain their independence from European political control. What is significant and a major inspiration for African Americans during this time was the arrival of African leaders from the Motherland who were admitted into the United Nations. The United Nations is headquartered in America's largest city, New York city. The large African American population must have been floored to see these Africans not swinging from trees, barely clothed, but instead, witnessed regal, powerful, confident Black Africans in person. The airport workers, the hotel and restaurant workers, the political and community leaders, the everyday New Yorker, Black and white, faced the reality it had all been a lie. Black women threw away their pressing combs, Black men trashed their jars of conk. Conk is a hair relaxer popular for Black men desiring to straighten their natural hair. Instead, Black people began to grow their hair naturally. Black people changed their names and named their babies with African

names that meant something powerful and profound. Some learned and spoke Swahili which is currently spoken by over 100 million Africans and the official language of Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Democratic Republic of the Cong. Black people were connecting and naturally the travel began again to African countries.

In 1966 MSK was in college and was elected as the first Black Student Body president. She helped develop the first Black Studies Department in America. She graduated and earned a teacher's credential. This photo from her archives depicts a teacher teaching from a Pan African world view. She taught from 1985-2005.



Black Student Union, Oakland Tech High School

Hyperlink: [MSK Archives Berkeley Library](#)

Repository: University of California, Berkeley Library

Creator: Unknown

Dates of Creation: circa 1970's

Physical Description: Flyer

The Oakland Black Student Union (OBSU) flyer was among MSK's archives. The flyer depicts a Black man with a gun in one hand and a book in the other. In the text Black Oakland Technical High School students demanded knowledge from an expanded view to include Black people.

The flyer communicates their demands for the knowledge they deserved and self-protection which is in the context of Black Radical Traditions. "Ida B Wells said the virtues of the Winchester and concluded self-defense was the sole protection afforded black women... One had better die fighting against injustice than to die like a dog or a rat in a trap", (Hartman). This statement is true for Black men as well.

In the 60's the violence and organizing disruption perpetrated against Black people had intensified. FBI stepped in again to thwart the gains of Black people politically and economically.

Determined, Kujichagulia, Black people were willing to fight fire with fire and for their rightful education and knowledge, Black people superpower. MSK was in the middle of this, organizing students, sharing knowledge, and inspiring young people of all stripes.

