

An African-American Newsletter

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Ancient Times and Cultures

Those lovely, welcoming wreaths that today decorate doors, fireplaces and walls have a noble history that reaches into Greek mythology and ancient Rome.

In fact, wreaths were first created in ancient cultures to adorn the bonnets and noggins of the rich and royal. In the ancient cultures of Persia, Partha and Greece, the wreath was known as a diadem, from the Greek work diadema, or "thing bound around." A diadem worn on the head or bonnet in these cultures was a symbol bearing royal and even spiritual significance.

According to Rob Pullen, author of *The Wreath Book* (Sterling Publishing, 1988), the diadem was regarded as so lovely that other cultures, and other classes, soon adopted it

as a headdress to celebrate not only status, but also festive mood and occasions.

The Romans initially scorned the diadem as a symbol insulting to their belief in democracy, but soon were crowning their own military and athletic champions with a diadem of laurels. Later this laurel crown went upscale when gold and jewels were added and became the prototype corona, or crown.

Somewhere along the line the wreath became a door and wall ornament and the maker's choice of materials said a lot about what the wreath meant. A wreath made with holly and mistletoe might be intended to shelter a home from the spirits of cold and winter.

A wreath of birch given by a woman to a man meant she



accepted his advances as a lover.

Today, wreaths may reflect the personality and spirit of the maker, who can use natural ingredients of dried herbs, weeds and flowers combined with ribbon or even some of the fabulous fake flowers and leaves widely available at craft and art stores.

Whatever the material, wreaths today continue to symbolize welcome, eternity and a joyful spirit.



far earlier and in a place and a culture that is specific and honorable.

Each day from December 26 to January 1, celebrants greet each other with "Habari gani" (What's the news?) The answer is the principle for that day.

The seven principles are "umoja: (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), "ujima" (collective work and responsibility), "ujamaa" (cooperative economics), "nia" (purpose), "kuumba" (creativity), and "imani" (faith).

Kwanzaa teaches 'a way of life'



The celebration of Kwanzaa has grown with each passing year since it was first observed in 1966. It's more than an African American event that starts on the day after Christ-

mas. Kwanzaa teaches and celebrates a way of life.

The seven principles that are the foundation of Kwanzaa promote spirituality, faith, goal setting, family values, and community values. They are principles that followers are urged to live by every day. In Swahili, the principles are called the "Nguzo Saba."

One goal of Kwanzaa is to show African American children that their history did not begin with slavery. It begins



Good-for-you ginger in gingerbread or ginger tea

If you've puzzled over uses for those knotty-looking ginger roots in the produce department, just put one into your shopping cart. Then check your cookbook for recipes that begin with the word "ginger."

Ginger has been revered around the world for more than 7,000 years. It has slightly pungent natural taste that adds a touch of its flavor and enhances all other flavors in a recipe. Ground ginger has a different flavor and is not interchangeable with fresh ginger.

In China and many other parts of the world, ginger is well-known for its power to calm an upset stomach. Common anti-nausea medications work through the central nervous system, caus-

ing drowsiness. Ginger acts directly on the digestive tract. In one study, people who took 1 gram of ginger before surgery had less nausea afterward. It is useful for chemotherapy patients and for pregnant women having morning sickness because it will not harm the fetus.

Ginger's reputation as a remedy for motion sickness and seasickness is well documented by a famous Danish study. Ginger extract is available in health-food stores.

Next time you're feeling a little queasy, brew a cup of ginger tea. Slice some ginger root. Put it in a tea ball and place in a teapot. Pour boiling water over the tea ball and let it sit for 10 minutes. Sweeten with honey.

Christmas Gingerbread

In a pan, melt 1/2 cup butter, 2/3 cup brown sugar, and 1/3 cup molasses. Cool slightly, then beat in 1 egg.

In a bowl, sift together almost one cup of white and almost one cup of whole wheat flour, 1 teaspoon ground ginger, and 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon. Stir into the melted mix.

Mix 2/3 cup warm milk, and 1 teaspoon baking soda and add to the mix. Stir in 1/2 cup dried fruit. Bake in a pan lined with wax paper for 1 hour at 300 degrees. Cool, remove from the pan, and discard the wax paper.

For best flavor, store in an airtight tin for a week before serving.

What's Going On In December 2005



Holiday intox: You won't get away with it



Be forewarned, holiday revelers. The police department, highway patrol, and military police are ready for the holidays.

December has been National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month since 1991 when the 3D coalition was formed. It's made up of representatives from the federal government, highway safety organizations, public health organizations, law en-

forcement, and the military.

Getting impaired drivers off the street has always been important, but particularly during the holidays.

Law enforcement officers intend to be very busy ... looking for you.

According to the California Office of Traffic Safety, impaired driving could cost you thousands of dollars in fines, towing, storage, at-

torney fees, and increased insurance. You might have to attend DUI classes or perform community service.

A cab ride home after a party is the best investments you can make. Even less expensive is designating a nondrinker to drive you and your friends home. Ask a friends to volunteer not to drink for the evening.

If it's your party, be sure not to serve alcohol to minors.

Computers can be a pain

Does your neck feel stiff when you awake in the morning? Or do your neck muscles seize painfully at times?

There are many kinds of neck pain. Doctors at Harvard Medical School estimate that seven out of 10 people will be troubled by it at some time in their lives. That's because the neck supports a heavy weight, your head. But it must still allow you to turn, tilt, and nod your head easily.

Incorrect posture while using a computer can cause neck pain. If you sit for hours with your shoulders slumped and your head thrust forward, you are stressing

the neck muscles.

Some steps you can take to correct your posture:

Position your chair at the correct height to coordinate with the position of the monitor.

If you must lean forward to see the screen clearly, check with your optometrist to see if you need glasses that are right for computer use.

Adjust the monitor so you can work easily with your eyes focused slightly downward and your head erect. If the monitor is too low, use a desktop shelf under it.

Check your seated posture at various times of the day to

ensure that you are seated correctly with your back slightly arched and your neck is straight with your head squarely on top of it.



Most people want to change the world to improve their lives. What a wasted effort. If they would only improve themselves, they would be better off and so would the world.

Gerhard Gschwandtner

Exercise helps you think better and faster

If your job requires good judgment and quick thinking, you'll do it better if you exercise regularly.

Some people think regular exercise is for self-centered people who want to improve their appearance, but studies show that it increases brain function. As a "side effect," exercise reduces anxiety and depression and helps to ward off the mental effects of aging.

A report published in the Journal of Exercise Physiology looked at fitness scores of 884,000 students. They compared them to state-mandated test scores and found the fittest students scored much better than others.

A study of the cognitive consequences of exercise published in the journal Acta Psychologica shows that exercise facilitates thinking, especially information processing.

Other research shows that exercise can make the brains of older people act younger. Magnetic resonance imaging scans before and after six months of aerobic exercise show that the brain activity of older people was similar to that of 20-year-olds, according to the University of Illinois.



Mass Media Records

Mass Media Records is an independent record label. We are based in the New York City district. We were established by the Classic Hip Hop artist Ernest "Super" Cooper Sr. We are currently specializing in Black History Hip Hop, Good Health Hip Hop, Spiritual Hip Hop and R&B music.

Our aim is to produce high quality records free of profanity and degrading material. We believe that a good seller does not have to

always produce an angry, negative and degrading product but to produce a product useful to uplift our souls in a positive way. Now lets focus on that.

Our Mission Statement is to create some new classics in Hip Hop music. We love to write and record new music that captures the soul. We love to maximize our artists' potential and give off a Positive Message in our Hip Hop. We would love to release new masterpieces by searching to find

more hidden talent of other artists in the same frame of mind as our Mission Statement.

Mass Media Records is looking for hardworking artists in all genres of music. If you are looking to further your career in music or simply to get a start in one, Mass Media can help. Please contact us and send a press kit with a good sounding demo, picture and bio.

http://www.ernestcooper.com/mass_media_records.html



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An African-American
Newsletter



*Earth provides enough to
satisfy every man's need,
but not every man's greed.*
Mohandas Gandhi

Christmas candles reflect belief



Long ago a wonderful story was told on Christmas Eve. On that night, those who believed told of the Christ Child wandering throughout the world. He was searching for places where He would be welcomed with warmth and shelter.

Those who loved Him, hoping that He might find their homes, placed lighted candles in their windows.

This story is now seldom told, but the world still burns candles on Christmas and Christmas Eve. We burn large glowing candles, tall red tapers, and candles in the center of our holiday tables. Twinkling electric candles are seen in windows and on the branches of Christmas trees. Many still believe that candles are silent witnesses to the glorious light of Bethlehem.

Candles in the windows of our homes welcome our neighbors and friends. And perhaps, just perhaps, even He will see the lights in our windows, and His spirit will be with us on Christmas Eve.



African-American heroes helped shape the U.S. after the Civil War

Stories of heroic African-American soldiers who fought in the Civil War are well remembered. Some fought for the South, and some for the North. But little is known about their progress after the Civil War. Here are some personal histories to fill that gap of knowledge.

Robert Smalls, Naval hero and U.S Congressman (1829-1915): Smalls was born a slave in Beaufort, S.C. He taught himself to read and write. In 1851, to learn the skills of a seaman, he signed on as a rigger in Charleston, S.C. During the Civil War, he smuggled his family onto a ship while the crew was on shore and sailed out to the Union Navy.

His daring escape brought Smalls into national prominence. He was granted a sum of money for the surrendered ship and was appointed a pilot in the U.S. Navy. Later, he was promoted to captain for heroism in battle.

During Reconstruction, Smalls returned to South Carolina and was elected to several terms in state government offices, then to the U.S. House of Representatives where he served five terms.

Mifflin Wister Gibbs, Judge and United States Consul (1823-1918): Gibbs was born in Philadelphia, but migrated to San Francisco in 1849. There he operated a bootblack stand before forming a partnership with Peter Lister in a shoe firm on Clay Street.

A restless man, Gibbs migrated to Victoria, British Columbia, in 1858. There he established the first general store that was not connected with the Hudson Bay Company. He became an influential person and a councilman from the James Bay District. At the same time, he studied law with an English barrister, became a contractor, and built a railroad from the coal mines of Queen Charlotte to Skidgate Harbor.

By 1869, Gibbs had moved to Little Rock, Ark., where he studied at Oberlin College. He was admitted to the bar in 1870 and elected city judge in 1873. He held several positions for President Hayes and President Harrison before being named U.S. Consul to Madagascar in 1897.

The names of heroic and influential African Americans in history go on seemingly without end. These are just two who can make us proud to be Americans, one and all.