



# GYE NYAME

## Background of a Cultural Concept "whose time has come"

This New Afrikan holiday is called 'Gye Nyame.' Pronounced 'Gee-Nah-May' or 'Geen-Yah-May,' it means in the beautiful *Akan* language spoken throughout Ghana "None is greater than God the Creator." It is a central symbol among the rich, treasured *Adinkra* symbols of the regal *Akan* people.

'Gye Nyame' is not an *Akan* holiday, however. It is a New Afrikan holiday that synthesizes rich principles of faith found in several traditional Afrikan spiritual traditions, most especially the *Akan* and *Yoruba* traditions, and of course, *Ma'at*. Resplendent in its colors of black and gold being pure water sweet, this New Afrikan cultural holiday alternative was given to us by the immortal *Khallid Abdul Muhammad*.



Bro. Khallid developed *Gye Nyame* in November 1995. It was first celebrated on November 27, 1997 in Cleveland, Ohio by some 500 Pan-Afrikanists of a study circle called *Egbe Nyame*. Bro. Khallid's youngest son, Farrakhan lit the candle in the first *Gye Nyame* ceremony.

*Gye Nyame* is *New Afrikan* in that it was forged to help Afrikans captive here in amerikkka return to the Afrikan philosophy and the original Afrikan way of thinking and doing. It is also *New Afrikan* in that it consciously seeks to 'separate' us from participating in the violently hypocritical holocaust holiday unique to the amerikkkan nation state known as 'Thanksgiving.' It is *Pan-Afrikan* in that it invites every man, woman and child of Afrikan descent to participate.

As a ceremony, *Gye Nyame* was designed to be celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November and to give Afrikan people captive here in the united states a conscious and cultural choice instead of being confined to Thanksgiving.



## Gye Nyame's Symbols and Rituals

*Gye Nyame* is marked by a ritual ceremony, which includes the recognizing of the ancestors, the libation, the affirmations of thanks (the *Adura* prayer) and an altar which features the nine cardinal cultural and spiritual symbols:

- 1) The *fitila* (the Black *Gye Nyame* candleholder and the white 2 1/2-3in. candle)...This is *Gye Nyame's* chief and most central symbol representing spiritual illumination and the binding energy of our prayers emitted into the universe;...
- 2) The *Eni* and *Aseea* (the mat and the national flag)...The mat represents the elders who stand on the threshold of the Ancestral Realm; The flag, *the Universal Afrikan Liberation Flag, the red, black and green*, represents us being a 'nation within a nation' whose time has come to be truly independent and to return to the wisdom of our original statecraft traditions;...
- 3) *The Ife Irepo Ashe* (the communal unity cup)... 'the unity cup' is central to the ritual. Once the ritual is initiated, whoever lights the candle first sips (or so gestures) from the unity cup's water and then passes it on to the elders and then around the circle. To acknowledge the sacredness of the gesture, it should be held with both hands as it is being passed around;...
- 4) *The Takanda Egungun* (the ancestral scrolls)... 'the ancestral scrolls' are family documents of family ancestors that are placed on the altar. These can be important records, such as the family bible or a collection of history telling family photos, or the family tree. They are to be opened and shared in the ritual. Bro. Khallid insisted that this is "should be a solemn and sacred moment" in the ritual. Classic documents in our broader tradition can also be used, especially in a community setting. For instance, in our recent regional *Gye Nyame* ceremonies, we used *The Philosophy And Opinions Of Marcus Garvey* and a picture of Khallid Abdul Muhammad, *Gye Nyame's* founder to serve this important function. The ritual is then marked by the *Etutu*, or 'the libation' for all those ancestors represented. It is then that the unity cup is passed around for everyone to share;...
- 5) The *Omi Tutu* and *Ododo* (the water and the flowers)...water is the "mighty medium of spiritual purification." This *Gye Nyame* symbol is also representative of the growth state, the protective and nurturing state of

the mother's womb; The flowers are an offering, a sharing of sweet fragrance, love, bountiful beauty, freshness and a new beginning;...

6) *Itile Ashe Sankofa* and *the Gareta* (the golden Sankofa staff and ancestral mask)... A prominent symbol throughout Afrika, most especially used by the elders, 'the staff' is the marker, one of the spiritual symbols by which 'the call' to the ancestors is made. The golden *Sankofa* atop the staff "enlightens and instructs us to reach back into our past, in order that we can go forward into the future." This staff should be held by the presiding elder of the circle throughout the entire ceremony. 'The ancestral mask' represents our spirituality as a people and the spirituality of our ancestors;

7) The *Guguru* (the popcorn)... popcorn represents 'the continuum principle,' or the principle of 'being and becoming,' the necessary developmental tension and motion between the elders and the youth... This symbol is two part. The fully popped corn represents the state of being, or us, especially our youth, as they are now, beautiful and robust in their energy and forms, but very unfinished. The unpopped kernel represents their potential, their 'becoming,' where we hope they go with their energy. The bowl represents the community, our people, the free and independent Black nation "which is where our progress and brightest hope for the future can best be realized, enjoyed and presented to the world" and how our collective well-being depends on the health of this continuum;...

8) The *Koro* and the *Didun* (the bitter and the sweet)... 'the bitter' can be any fruit or oil known for its bitter taste quality. Much like the place of bitters in our naming and wedding ceremonies, the bitter represents our need for strength to deal with adversity; 'the sweet' can be any fruit or oil known for its very sweet taste quality. Honey is the first example that Bro. Khallid, the conceiving and convening ancestor, suggested. But he said that it can be anything wholesome of that character that we choose;...

9) The *Ipese* (the daily bread)... 'the daily bread' is a symbol which serves to remind us to appreciate "being blessed with the basics of life,... to never take God for granted, to be mindful and thankful for the small things as well as the great"...

The *Adura*, the affirmations of thanks, are to be said last before the *Ayeye*, the feast of thanksgiving for the sacrifices of all who gone before on us. This should include the family's or the circle's favorite wholesome dishes... Give thanks...

### Why Not Just Thanksgiving? Why Gye Nyame?

Of course this all begs a question 'If we have Thanksgiving already, then why is *Gye Nyame* necessary? Why is it so important to have this choice?

First, *Gye Nyame* is an act of cultural self-determination, in which we seek to distinguish ourselves and separate ourselves from the traditions of our oppressors which celebrates their ancestors who affirmed their world at the bloody expense of our ancestors, Thanksgiving just being one.

Two, Thanksgiving as a holiday is one that actually exults the rise of the amerikkkan state, and the rise of that state as one based on white supremacy. While it symbolically acknowledges the indigenous ancestors of this land, in practice, the forgers of the amerikkkan state in no way saw anything special, respectful or sacred in the lives and traditions of the people who were here first. To be sure, to conscious Indigenous people, Thanksgiving, as well as that other holiday rooted in genocide, Columbus Day, is in fact, a day of mourning and fasting. To these regal people both the coming of the Columbus and the first projections of Thanksgiving represent '*the beginning of their end!*'

David Stannard in his work, *The American Holocaust*, asserts that between 1492 and the closing of the western frontier in 1892, some 100,000,000 people indigenous to the Americas lost their lives. The greatest lost was in what we now refer to as the united states. The escalation of that genocide took place in the 1600s after the Pilgrims instituted and celebrated Thanksgiving and turned on the very people who saved their lives.

Just as horrific, as those proud peoples were being decimated, the settlers then turned to Afrika to supply them with cheap labor to develop and harness the vast natural wealth of these lands. So with the destruction of the Indigenous peoples of this land, there then came the escalation of that other mammoth atrocity, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, or as the late master teacher Dr. John Henrik Clarke rightfully called it, 'The Afrikan Holocaust! This supreme barbaric atrocity cost our people 100,000,000 lives in just 'the Middle Passage' alone! Even though the rest of humanity has just acknowledged that "the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was a crime against humanity" at the recently convened UN World Conference on Racism, not once has the united states government ever even seriously engaged in a meaningful discussion about the virulent legacy of racism that emerged from that genocide, a legacy that is still very much with us.

In conclusion, at the dawn of this new century, we are convinced that it is time for our people to separate themselves from cultures and cultural practices that have that kind of very genocidal luggage. We believe that we must do that in order to insure the emergence and the maintenance of a good, wholesome and liberated national mental

health. Right now, just a few of us are practicing this enriching tradition in the bleeding shadows of Thanksgiving. We live for the day, however, when it becomes so popular among our people that it ultimately supplants it!

Come! It is time for *Gye Nyame!*...Help our people 'return to the way'!



# ADURA AFFIRMATION

(The audience repeats after the ritual leader)



I am good, health, happiness, love, success, sisterhood, brotherhood, familyhood, nationhood, prosperity and a mega-medium of exchange, for which I say '*Adupe,*' give thanks;

I have food to eat, water to drink; I am awake from sleep and slumber, still able to breathe the air; I am in control of all my faculties; I have use of all of my limbs and presence of mind, for which I say '*Adupe,*' give thanks;

I am grateful to be able to witness the might of the ocean, the push of the river, the treasures of the earth and the sweet fragrant smell of the flowers; I am grateful to be able to witness all of the Creator's wondrous creation to behold, for which I say '*Adupe,*' give thanks;

We are striving to live our lives daily in Truth, Justice, Righteousness, Harmony, Balance, Order and Reciprocity, and we say '*Adupe,*' give thanks;

In spite of all our people have been through, in spite of all that we still face, we have come a long way, and so for this we say '*Adupe,*' give thanks...

\*This affirmation is to said communally at the end of the **Gye Nyame** ritual and to commence the feast...

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'Bro. Zayid' Kazi Angaza Kikongo Muhammad\*

\*'Bro. Zayid' is the Eastern Regional Chief of Staff and National Minister of Culture for The New Black Panther Party. He is an associate editor for Nation Time Newspaper and a serious citizen of the Republic of New Afrika...Interested in Gye Nyame? Contact him at 201-602-0780 or [zayidmuhammad@hotmail.com](mailto:zayidmuhammad@hotmail.com)...