

Sample Letter to the Editor

[insert date]

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[insert newspaper name]



To the Editor:

Kwanzaa is a time for African-Americans to reaffirm their commitment to themselves, their families, their community, and the struggle for equality. It's a time for celebration and reflection on the seven principles designed to uplift the African-American community.

One of Kwanzaa's seven principles deals with responsibility. During this time of year when many celebrate Kwanzaa – and other holidays — that responsibility extends to educating our loved ones about the dangers associated with impaired driving, and the importance of selecting a designated driver before attending any event where alcohol will be served. We must also be prepared to intervene if we see someone who has had too much to drink attempting to drive home. This one act can save many lives.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2005, more than 250,000 people were injured in crashes where police reports indicated alcohol was present – an average of one person injured every two minutes. Every 31 minutes, someone is killed in an alcohol-related crash. Moreover, African-American drivers and pedestrians over 40 years old are especially at a higher risk for alcohol-related fatalities than whites of the same age, and for being unbelted at the time of the crash. As far as young people, alcohol use contributes to the three leading causes of death among African-American 12- to 20-year-olds: homicide, unintentional injuries (including car crashes), and suicide.

African-Americans and others should also know that NHTSA's new *Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.* campaign means that drivers who are caught driving while impaired or allowing another to do so can be arrested, have their license revoked, have their insurance rates increased, or be given hefty fines. According to the Centers for Disease Control, in 2004 more than 1.4 million drivers were arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. This is an arrest rate of 1 for every 139 licensed drivers in the United States.

Driving while impaired or allowing another to do so can result in tragic consequences, so remember the principle of "Umoja" that reminds African-Americans to strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race. Let's define ourselves as positive, safe and healthy. Alcohol-related crashes destroy families and that destroys our communities, so embrace the principle of "Collective Work and Responsibility" that makes us responsible for each other.

Celebrate, but please do it safely.

Habari Gani