

FLASH
HOMELESS IN PARADISE
July 3-9, 2020

IN OUR OWN BACKYARD - Part 36



Wanda Sue Parrott flashes homemade cardboard teeth in 2019 before marching with Monterey Recreation Department's Tap Bananas in 4th of July Parade. Could a new civil war end such joyful celebrations? Photo by Mark Roth

IS AMERICA HEADING TOWARD U.S. CIVIL WAR II?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

FINDING relief from prolonged Sheltering in Place (SIP) might be forcing you to question the future. If so, romance in your life should help relieve stress from all the recent violence on TV.

Amy Kitchener, hypothetical white 19th-century farm woman, who lived in Iowa before and after the Civil War, explores the power of romance in her Recipes and Reflections of a 19th-Century Ghost entitled *There's a Spirit in the Kitchen - Amy Kitchener Speaks to America* (Galde Press, Inc., 2001).

She tells scribes Jackie Dashiell and Wanda Sue Parrott that, since her death in 1889, she's been a "ministering angel-in-training" and America is her beat, so she is deeply concerned about the unromantic direction in which the country has been headed for the last century-and-a-half.

"The spirit of romance is sadly lacking in you modern men, women, and children," Amy says.

"Yes, children! We have watched you educate your children away from their own romantic natures. In so doing, you have turned them away from the spark of soul within themselves."

What Happens When Soul Is Unsparked?

Daily news reveals what happens to social justice when soul isn't evident. Nerves fray. Tempers erupt. Patience fizzles like a shorted-out fuse.

In SIP conditions, financial security is at risk. Boredom can be a working person's strange bedfellow. Knowing life can be wiped out by an invisible enemy raises frustration to its bursting point and pathos pours forth like burning lava instead of cool tears that dissolve anger.

Indeed, social unrest isn't very romantic and it's downright ugly if racism is involved.

For instance, looting and violence in the wake of George Floyd's tragic death last month left the country wondering: *Is a second civil war coming? If yes, when?*

Oldsters like me add: Where's the war that's been coming since the 1965 Watts riots?

People are chanting "Get Off Our Necks" and "Black Lives Matter."

I remember, after the Watts riots in Los Angeles 55 years ago, the two chants that changed history: "Burn, Baby, Burn!" plumed like smoke from overturned police cars and looting, but "Black is Beautiful!" rose like an exquisite ebony Phoenix from ashes of the riots as a young man named Ron Karenga created Kwanzaa.

As the possibility rises that Congress will make Juneteenth (June 19) a national holiday commemorating the day the last slaves were freed (in Texas) in 1865, could the hands of justice bend toward peace rather than war by reintroducing Kwanzaa?

Reintroducing Kwanzaa

What if a local Kwanzaa-inspired celebration were held in lieu of cancelled 4th of July picnics and public parades for people of every skin color in the Monterey Peninsula community?

This annual celebration of African American culture is usually held from December 26 to January 1, culminating in gift-giving and a feast of faith known as Karamu Ya Imani. According to Karenga, Kwanzaa in Swahili means: "To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race."

There are seven principles celebrated, each represented by a different candle. The names of candles are in Swahili, with definitions in English:

1. "Umjua" means unity.
2. "Kujichagulia" means self-determination (defining, naming, creating and speaking for oneself).
3. "Ujima" means collective work and responsibility (uplifting your community by building and maintaining community together; making our brother's and sister's problem[s] and solving them together).
4. "Ujamaa" means cooperative economics (uplifting your community economically by building and maintaining our own stores, shops and other businesses, and to profit from them together).
5. "Nia" means purpose (making our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness).
6. "Kuumba" means creativity (to do always as much as we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it).
7. "Imani" translates to "faith."

According to Karenga, faith in the community means "To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle."

An example of such faith lies in the "We Love Campus Town" group in Seaside that will be working toward the Campus Town project following the sunset of Fort Ord Reuse Authority on June 30. Many of their grandparents and great grandparents were slaves.

In a Kwanzaa celebration, the candle-lighting ritual is followed by a potluck. Such a romance-inspiring summer event could be a barbecue, hotdog roast, pizza feast, or watermelon fest to which the whole community is invited on Zoom if not in a public park or house of worship.

According to Amy Kitchener, romance by any other name translates to Soul Food.

Meanwhile, Back To The Question Of War! An Open Invitation

The Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula invites you to “Conflagration: The Prospect of a Second American Civil War” by Rev. John A. Buehrens, former president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and worship associate Bob Sadler, Sunday, July 5, 10:30 a.m.

Dr. Buehrens, a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, heard his call to the ministry in 1968 at protests about institutionalized racism. As a historian, he compares this moment in history to the polarization in America over race going back to the 1850s when Unitarian minister Theodore Park and black abolitionist Frederick Douglass called for a Second American Revolution.

He will analyze the prospects for revolutionary change in 2020.

To view this service on Sunday, click here [\(link disabled\)](#)

Zoom Meeting ID: 763 641 438.

Password: Sunday

Or join via phone by calling 1-669-900-6833.

Further details at www.uucmp.org .

Happy, safe 4th of July, everyone!

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About this Column: “Homeless in Paradise” is a free public service self-funded and produced by the author. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this column appears regularly on the last week of each month in the Cedar Street Times at www.cedarstreettimes.com (and as periodic FLASH columns like this one).

It also appears on Facebook, in Next Door and on private email lists. If interested in being added to the list, submit your request to the contact info below.)

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