Today is the first day of Kwanzaa, focusing on the principle of Umoja (unity) – meaning to strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race. We hope that you’re planning to support some of the scheduled activities throughout the city this week.

As we bring 2012 to a close and look forward to the upcoming year, we realize that African Americans have the ability to come together when necessary, in times of need, yet will need to find ways to combine our efforts in the future. Basically, unity is critical to our survival.

Think about it… We put on our hoods and marched for justice in the Trayvon Martin case, then car-pooled to the polls and stood in hours-long lines to re-elect President Barack Obama. When Black folk put their minds together, powerful things happen.

But, we need much more unity in our community on a much more constant basis.

They say the ruins of a nation begin in the homes of its people.

Considering what’s going on in some of the houses within our neighborhoods across the country, the children suffering from neglect and abuse among adults trying to cope with drug addictions and mental illness, or the struggles of good, hard-working people just trying to keep a roof over their family’s head and food on the table, we believe it's time we get back to knowing our neighbors, looking out for one another, and just lending a helping hand.

It’s definitely time for us to support existing Black-owned businesses and institutions, as it’s imperative for us to build solid foundations for our children to stand upon.

If we fail to do so, too many of our people will forever become relegated to second-class citizenry. This is not what our ancestors fought and died for. This is not the stock from which we descend.

It’s high time we move toward collective responsibility and cooperative economics to strengthen us as a nation, but we can’t even begin to implement any of the other principles until we first unify.