

Lessons From the Kwanzaa Candles (adapted)
By Gail Forsyth-Vail

We honor the struggle for justice by speaking of history.

You represent the first generation of West African people who came to this new world in slavery, coming in the year 1619 to Jamestown.

You represent the children of those people, born between 1625 and 1650, and you remain enslaved.

You represent the children's children of those Jamestown slaves, born between 1650 and 1675, and you remain enslaved.

You represent the children, three times removed from those Jamestown slaves, born between 1675 and 1700, and many of your generation remain enslaved.

You represent the children, four times removed from those Jamestown slaves, born between 1700 and 1725. Many white people have come and taken land for their towns and cities. The cities and towns are doing well, but you remain enslaved.

You represent the children, five times removed from those Jamestown slaves, born between 1725 and 1750. The Indians who used to live in the area have been driven out to make way for the expanding number of cities and towns in these British colonies, but you remain enslaved.

You represent the children, six times removed from those Jamestown slaves, born between 1750 and 1775. These British colonies have begun a way of independence, stating that "all men are created equal." But you remain enslaved.

You represent the children seven times removed from the Jamestown slaves, born between 1775 and 1800. These British colonies are now a country, the United States of America. Many native peoples have lost their lands as the United States has become bigger and bigger. The cotton gin has been invented, meaning that the farmers can grow lots more cotton and make a lot of money. It takes lots of people to take care of the cotton. Many white people choose to get the help they need with the cotton crop by buying more slaves. Thousands more West African people, kidnapped from their homes, arrive in chains. You also remain enslaved.

You represent the children eight times removed from the Jamestown slaves, born between 1800 and 1825. This country is twice as big as it was just a few years before. Many white people are going West, looking for more places to build towns and cities. The cloth mills in the North are hungry for cotton, so farmers in the South grow more and more, needing more and more slaves. As more and more slaves arrive, you too remain enslaved.

You represent the children nine times removed from the Jamestown slaves, born between 1825 and 1850. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 is pushing Indians from their land. Many Indians are slaughtered. In 1848, the United States takes a huge piece of Mexico and now rules over Spanish-speaking citizens. There are now groups of people writing and speaking against slavery, but still you remain enslaved.

You represent the children ten times removed from the Jamestown slaves, born between 1850 and 1875. The country has fought a Civil War. The railroads have been built by Irish and Chinese workers. The Indian Wars continue in the West, as native peoples are forced into small areas of land called reservations. Slavery has

understand the struggle, to have and realize dreams about the future.

Finally, we represent today – the children sixteen times removed from the Jamestown slaves. We are the generation that will witness an African American man occupy the White House, built by slaves, as President of the United States.

We bear witness to the promise of all of our tomorrows.