

PRACTICE THE VALUES AND LOVE REVOLUTION

If what we have learned is correct and struggling to apply it, at AHIDIANA Work/Study Center we walimu (teachers) are responsible to develop each mwanafunzi (student) total self. In order to make “our love and responsibility to each other as a way of life,” each of us must unify the four elements of the self or the Afrikan Personality. We teach watoto to give good example and be strong Afrikans by developing:

1. body, that is, exercise daily and eat a proper diet.
2. mind, that is, acquire knowledge and skills useful in our struggle.
3. soul, that is, do right, follow the Nguzo Saba.
4. consciousness, that is, attain self-awareness (identity) and self-control (discipline).

As we can see, values are but a part, an important part, of the total development of the self. We understand that all is relative and values mean little if the body, mind and consciousness are not also developed along with the soul. Here we will be discussing the development of the soul, doing right, following the Nguzo Saba.

The Nguzo Saba, Seven Principles of Blackness, are the values we live and believe in at AHIDIANA. This Black Value System was created by Maulana Ron Karenga and is further developed in A Black Value System by Imamu Amiri Baraka. The Nguzo Saba are our “guide, a code of common morality, a weapon, a shield, a pillow of peace.” The Nguzo Saba are as follows as interpreted by AHIDIANA:

UMOJA — UNITY

Unity means to come together and work together.

KUJICHAGULIA — SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination means to define ourselves and govern ourselves.

UJIMA — COLLECTIVE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY

Collective means to gather together material and resources or people in one group.

Work is to extend energy to get a job done. Responsibility means to take care of or maintain.

UJAMAA — FAMILYHOOD AND COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS

Familyhood means to raise (provide, protect, respect, inspire, educate and socialize) ourselves. Cooperative means to work together in peace and harmony. Economics is the ownership, production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

NIA — PURPOSE

Our purpose is to defend and develop ourselves as a people and as a nation.

KUUMBA — CREATIVITY

Creativity means to live and work in our own way to improve or beautify ourselves and the world we live in.

IMANI — FAITH

Faith means to be totally committed. We are totally committed to Afrikan people and the practice of the Nguzo Saba.

The Nguzo Saba is not dogma, not rhetoric
In fact it is nothing unless we live it
In fact it is nothing unless we live it
Nothing, useless until we live it...

The Nguzo Saba, Seven principle, is a way of life defined by action and the clarity of thought necessary to practice it.

Sun People/Kalamu ya Salaam

Upon following this value system, our lives have identity, purpose and direction. Here is the key for our children. By teaching them values, they will be able to function as leaders when they have to step into their mamas' and babas' shoes, making themselves responsible for society.

The purpose (of education) is to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society and to prepare the young people for their future membership of the society and their active participation in its maintenance or development.

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere

And our children must be prepared to do more than we are prepared to do today!

In the 1970's it is not a luxury to be able to read and write, it is a requirement; it is not a privilege to be able to compute the speed of light, measure the distance between two points, or understand the intricacies of tele-electronics, it's a necessity. It is not just for Europeans to be able to navigate the universe, explore the oceans or investigate the beauty of the brain. The 21st century is upon us and will demand of our children unknown effort, unknown discipline, unknown dedication — will demand skills and expertise unthought of by the average man of 1972 — will instill in our children the necessary skills and values that will motivate them to serve Afrika and Afrikan people.

Mwalimu Haki R. Madhubuti

How are these values taught to watoto (children) at AHDIANA Work/Study Center?

UMOJA — Unity

We stress the collective, i.e., we value all of us as a group. We struggle to meet the needs and desires of the group by meeting the needs of everyone in the group. Before moving we make sure everyone is ready. If someone is not ready, we help them. Usually when watoto are not ready it is because they is not following directions or needed but did not ask for help.

We then correct the behavior in the first case and ask why help was not asked for in the second case.

We also begin activities together such as beginning meals with a leader who says, “Tayari! Ketii!” (“Ready! Seats!”) Then once we are seated, “Tayari! Sifa!” (Ready! Praise!) We stress that moving slowly or not following decisions of the group is not helping our unity.

When making decisions, we reach agreement through consensus. This is done in steps by making sure all necessary changes are made to fit the needs of the group. And then when everyone agrees, we move on with the goal to accomplish it. We have group decisions in relation to outside activities. Or if the mwalimu (teacher) is pleased with the group’s behavior and is going to reward the behavior with a special group activity, the group must decide which activity they will participate in.

Once we reach a decision, we struggle to follow it to its completion. By daily practicing the values at our skuli (school), we are learning to get along with each other, our brothers and sisters as well as our mamas and babas (the names given to the teachers at our skuli).

KUJICHAGULIA — Self-Determination

The values stressed here are concentration, self-motivation and initiative.

Concentration deals with developing an attention span. In understanding that the pre-school’s job is to prepare the mtoto for further studies, attention span is essential to develop so that one may listen for a given period of time and complete tasks. Discipline is closely linked here because discipline is self-control. Each mtoto must control her/himself to listen and complete tasks, to relax and sit during an activity for a certain time period.

We develop discipline and concentration on an individual basis in Kazi (the work room) and on a group basis in Darasa (the classroom). In Kazi we develop these first finding the child's attention span level, then requiring the child to remain working with an activity to his/her limit, reinforcing that accomplishment with praise and/or reward. The child is required to do this again later in the day or again the next day. Each time we increase the time limit in which the child must work on the activity. In Darasa we require the watoto to be disciplined or they are not allowed to participate in the class at all. Each child makes the decision to participate in the group activity or be isolated from the group. Seldom is the latter needed because part of our responsibility as walimu is to first, help our children understand why their education is important for the benefit of Afrikan people, and secondly, to develop interesting, informative lessons which makes it difficult to do anything but listen.

In developing self-motivation and initiative, the watoto themselves motivate each other. They share activities, encourage and help each other. The prepared environment is also an aid in self-motivation in that it is clean orderly and purposeful. Also, we have periods in the day called Kazi, in which the child is allowed to decide on those activities he/she is motivated to work with. We always say, "Afrikan people have a lot to do. We are always doing Kazi." In instilling initiative or self-reliance, we struggling along with each mtoto and when she/he completes the task, there is much praise and excitement. For example, a brother has been having a hard time controlling his body whenever he disagrees with his brothers or sisters. One particular time the mwalimu may see this brother hold his hand back and control himself consciously. There is great joy. The mama will say, "Brother John, Njema!! Njema sana!! I am so proud of you. You are struggling not to fight your brothers and sisters. Did we see how strong

our brother is? We are strong Afrikan people!!!” Children are then moved to depend on their own strength because they are praised based on their strength.

We teach the watoto to be specific and explicit in naming people, places and objects. We struggle not to say “stuff” or “things” because these words are non-determining words. We require the wanafunzi to name everything and if they cannot, we help them to name that which they could not name. We say that Afrikan people are called brother, sister, baba and mama. All other people are called by their nationality: European, Japanese, and Chinese. People of other nationalities are called boy, girl, man and woman. Another example is that many parents and teachers allow watoto to give what we call “silly” names to certain body parts and excretions. We say penis, vagina, buttocks, rectum, mucus, urine, bowel movement. These body parts and excretions are not silly but functional. We laugh at what is funny and we respect or change that which is not.

We teach watoto to speak in a loud, strong voice and assert themselves in a strong Afrikan manner so that we might all gain from each other’s gifts. We require a sentence or statement to all questions instead of accepting the hunched shoulders or shaking the head. We usually say, “We can’t hear you when you shake your head,” or “...hunch your shoulders.” We speak for ourselves and allow no one to speak for us. We say, “Sister Nia, let Brother Henry speak for himself. Allow him to practice Kujichagulia.”

Ujima — Collective Work and Responsibility

The values which are contained in this principle are orderliness, cleanliness, leading/following, to ask for help and accepting it, and finally, accepting responsibility.

Orderliness and cleanliness are inspirational, i.e., uplifting. These two values encourage work and study and give peace and direction. When the watoto have completed a job, we require all tools to be returned to their place in order. Whenever a group activity ends, we all make sure there is order before moving on. If there is something out of order we say, "Is that the way we leave our building blocks?" or "Is that the way our books are supposed to look?" If all is in order, we give praise and are very proud that we made our room look orderly again. Also daily we collectively clean Chakula (the dining room) with each mtoto having a specific job.

At Ahidiana W/S Center we also teach the value of responsibility for leading and following. Understanding our present day limitations as seen in the failure and/or in the ineffectiveness of many black organizations because members can neither lead nor follow, we have tried to instill in our watoto as early as possible the responsibility and ability to lead as well as follow. A leader directs. He/she is a guide who gives good example. He/she is a star to us in every sense of the word. A follower accepts authority and responsibilities. He follows directions in a strong Afrikan way.

Daily we take turns leading. Our leader for the day guides us in reciting our pledge, beginning snacks and our meal, reciting Sifa and passing out tools for the day. We take turns leading in Taburu (exercise period) and in Darasa. For example, we might say, "Who is prepared to lead us in counting today?" Sometimes the mtoto who just gave leadership will raise his/her fist again. The mama will reply, "We believe in collective leadership and one person cannot always lead." Or if no one is prepared to lead, we say, "We cannot move forward without a leader. There is no progress without a leader." We try to keep a balance in understanding the value of collective leadership as well as singular leadership.

We also understand that we are always leaders whenever we give good example.

“Brother Juju, you gave good example by helping Brother Thomas snap his pants. You are a leader and a star. Njema sana!” The watoto take pride in leading and begin to understand that leading is involved on two levels: 1. in the sense of leading a group of followers and 2. in the sense of giving a good example.

We struggle against leadership being competitive. A child may say, “I beat you.” We ask that we say, “I gave good example. I led.”

We give praise to those who are following too: “Njema, Sister Shana, you gave respect to the leader and listened to what he had to say.” Or, “Are we giving the leader respect if we talk when she is talking? Njema, to those who are listening.”

We also teach the wanafunzi to stand up for whatever they do. We question the watoto’s actions by saying, “Did you wash your hands before coming to the table?” or “Did you break the wheel off of the car?” We require a fearless answer by assuring the child that the truth is important. We respect the truth and when watoto speak the truth they are praised and not punished. If a children refuses to speak the truth, they are isolated until they can do so. At first it is hard for children to give a fearless answer because at home a child is usually punished after speaking the truth. Children answer to a question such as “Did you do such and such” is usually no answer or a negative one because they don’t want to be punished for what they did. We feel that the act of correcting by a mama or baba is better than punishment in most cases.

What also helps watoto to be responsible for their actions is by the walimu being responsible for their actions. We humbly take correction from the watoto and stand up for our

mistakes. We willingly admit to not knowing the answer to a question, but add that we will struggle to find out.

Finally, another important aspect of Ujima is asking for help and accepting it. It is our understanding that we Afrikan people can do anything if we have each other's help. We instill this value in the watoto by requiring them to ask for help instead of saying, "I can't." We accept the help from our brothers and sisters understanding that it is their responsibility to give help and our responsibility to accept it so that we may complete our job.

“ ‘You either serve the people or you use the people.’ There is no in between.”

UJAMAA—Familyhood and Cooperative Economics

Ujamaa deals with building an attitude about ourselves as a family as a basis for such values as respect of self, others and property; sharing and being non-materialistic. We believe and teach that all Afrikan people are our brothers and sisters. We are a family. What harms one of us, harms all of us; what helps one of us, helps us all. This is the basis of sharing, or caring for each other, of giving respect. To the watoto, we say their peers are brothers and sisters and that their adults are their mamas and babas (mother and father in Kiswahili). We believe we should be just that responsible for each other. There is security in Afrikan familyhood which speaks strongly to our children when they know that not only their biological parents love and respect them but their teachers and all other adults as well. And we know that we must give as well as receive. Our children must be taught this.

Usually sharing is difficult at first for young watoto who are given many examples of us not sharing, but in explaining the concepts we've mentioned here and saying that we will share and/or take turns with a given tool, helps greatly. In acquiring educational tools we will purchase or create one or two of each type so that sharing is necessary in the work we do. Seldom do we have educational materials which are just enough so that each mtoto will have one to him/herself. If a child refuses to share, he loses the opportunity to work with the tool. We explain to him/her that we share and use our possessions collectively and not selfishly.

Sometimes a brother or sister or even a mama or baba may bother a child so that the child will swing out at them or throw a fit. When a fight does occur, we sit down and talk about why the experience happened and where the problem really lies.

"Brother Allen, did you hit Brother Randolph?"

"Yes, Mama."

"Why did you hit him?"

"He hit me!"

"Brother Randolph, did you hit Brother Allen?"

"Yes, Mama."

"Why did you hit him?"

"He won't let me take a turn."

"Brother Allen, was it Brother Randolph's turn?"

"No, Mama."

"Well, maybe if you would have given him a turn, all of this would not have happened.

You could have another turn after Randolph takes a turn. That's how we share what we have.

And Randolph if you could've been a little bit more patient maybe Brother Allen would have given you a turn. Is Brother Randolph your brother, Brother Allen?"

"No Mama."

"Yes, he is. We are all Afrikan people and we practice Ujamaa. What does Ujamaa mean Brother Randolph?"

"Ujamaa means Familyhood and Cooperative Economics."

"Yeabo, njema. We are a family and we respect each other and not fight each other. Brother David and Brother Charles are brothers and if you need help with being strong you ask for help from one of the Mamas."

"Yes, Mama."

"Brother Randolph, if Brother Allen was not prepared to share at the time you were ready to take a turn, you should've ask one of the Mamas for help."

"Yes, Mama."

During this, we sat very close together and gained an understanding about each other, we said, "We fight, but we only fight our enemies. We work out our problems with our brothers and sisters and help each other be strong. If someone refuses to work out the problem with you, ask for help or move away from that brother or sister until he/she is ready to struggle." Then we required each one involved to apologize to each other.

Sometimes children will laugh when someone falls. We then say, "We laugh at what is funny. A family members falling is not funny because they could be hurt. Please help them."

We also give respect by trying to be respectful in our tone of voice with each other and using certain phrases which are more respectful such as, “Would you please...” when making a request.

There are three ways in which we give respect: by acknowledging worth, giving attention to presence and appreciating what is offered. We acknowledge worth by teaching the watoto to give praise and say when something is good. We give attention to presence by making sure we greet everyone correctly and say “excuse me” at the proper times. We appreciate what is offered by saying “thank you” and being grateful for what is given and not greedy by asking for more. We respect ourselves by giving respect to others and keeping ourselves clean and attractive and by giving good example.

NIA—Purpose

Nia deals with values as alertness, ability to take criticism, understanding the importance of work and study as well as having a purpose for everything.

Alertness is being ready, prepared, to quickly understand and act. This is a difficult value to instill in the watoto. We reward alertness and encourage those who move slowly to move faster. Thus we stress preparedness. For example, at Ahidiana Work/Study Center one of our responsibilities in nutrition is to introduce the children to the healthful vegetarian diet. At first the children refuse to eat the food by picking at it or not touching it at all. We then give the children a small amount and those who do not finish are required to miss out on ten minutes of outside play. Those who finish are given praise and sent outside immediately. Eventually most of the children begin to enjoy the food and eat at a normal pace. For the particularly difficult

cases, that is, those watoto who do not eat much or are “hooked” on junk foods, we have a slightly different approach because these children will lag behind and slow drag for a longer period of time and the first approach will only reinforce these problems in eating. First we give them a small amount and require them to eat all of their salad at least and then giving them permission to go outside. After the child has accepted eating his/her salad, we then begin to work on the vegetables. Confidence is built when the child does complete the stated amount of the food, the goal and eventually even the difficult cases are enjoying and appreciating the meals. We all are then eating at a normal pace with everyone finishing at the same general time. Then the Chakula period becomes another time where we collectively work together.

We also build alertness by example and by keeping a schedule and rhythm in our daily routine. Eventually the watoto learn the rhythm and move to the pace that is set. This is balanced in teaching the children that rushing is not correct either and taking your time is the most efficient and effective way to move.

It is important to take criticism so that we may improve ourselves. Criticism helps us in the development of all four elements of our personality. We help the mtoto take the criticism by making the criticism group responsibility as well as the child’s. That is, we say that we should help our brother/sister struggle to be strong and do what is correct. Another way we help the mtoto in taking criticism is by giving praise and then giving correction in a respectful tone. For example, “It was correct of you to struggle to help you brother put those building blocks away, but you should not have pushed to make him listen. If he didn’t listen, you should not have pushed him to make him listen. If he didn’t listen, you should say, ‘Mama Tayari, I need help with Brother Axum.’ We don’t fight each other, but we do help each other.”

We also learn to give criticism. First we say that the corrector must know what is being corrected then he/she may give the criticism. A result of this is that teachers are criticized, and also parents at home. Many times parents will proudly tell of the time that their child refused to eat junk food and sat watching their parents “do what was incorrect.” This is one means in which our teaching reaches parents. A child may tell his mama or baba at home, “Mama that was incorrect to shout at my little brother. Would you please struggle not to do that?” Or the child will demand that mama and baba constantly do Kazi and not watch television or lay around. The child will also demand books to read, paper and crayons to write with and to help around the house.

We also teach the watoto that there is a purpose for everything that they do: everything has a place, there is a time to do everything. We often ask, “Why did you write on the table, sister?” or “Why did you pull the leaf off the plant?” Usually the response is: “I don’t know.” (Of course, if the child give a reason, we deal with that too.) Then the Mama will say, “Nia means purpose. We should have a Nia, a purpose for everything we do. You didn’t have a reason for what you did, so you should not have done it.”

We also teach that there is no purpose in just wanting something. We ask for something only when we need it. We teach our watoto to say, “I need this or that.” versus “I want this or that.” After all our needs are met we can then begin to satisfy wants and desires, but needs supersede wants. But at this time we have so many unfulfilled needs that we have little resources to spend on desires. Usually our people today buy what we want and beg for what we need. So we have homes filled with closets of fine clothes and no food in the refrigerator. We have to change up and see that this is backwards.

We teach our children the balance of work and study. Work without study is aimless; study without work is fruitless. We teach that whatever we learn must be functional and useful. If it is not, we don't need it. Once we learn/study, we apply/work. This is why our school is called a work/study center and this is why we are struggling to institutionalize the concept of work (Kazi periods) and study (Darasa periods) in our teaching approach.

KUUMBA—Creativity

Overcoming obstacles and finding solutions to problems are values to be stressed here. It takes creativity to build a block tower, or to string a bead pattern or to solve a math problem. "Creativity involves the stimulation of the mind so as to move it from idea to practice" says Mwalimu Haki. Whenever we do something in a functional, positive manner, we are practicing creativity.

One way we help watoto overcome obstacle is by requiring them to struggle with small problems (which are really big ones to children) like putting on and buttoning their coats, putting tools away correctly, helping a brother or sister complete a job after completing the one you were responsible for.

We also encourage our students not to tattle and creatively work out problems they may have with their brothers and sisters in the group. We say, "We should not go outside of those who have the problem and tattle or gossip; we should work it out ourselves with our brother or sister. Ask for help when you really need it."

The watoto understand that keeping order and keeping clean is part of improving our environment. Often we ask the watoto for suggestions in running the skuli. We listen to their

suggestions and struggle to follow them. Several times their input has been very creative and helpful.

Whenever we create a strong Kazi sheet or drawing or painting, it is respectfully placed on the wall to décor and beautify our skull. The watoto take pride in struggling to always create neat, orderly work.

IMANI— Faith

Perseverance, patience and struggle are the values linked with faith. Each child who is in need of perseverance has been taught to despair and not believe in his strength to accomplish a goal. What we do is sit with the child and struggle as hard as he/she will, always giving much encouragement for the slightest move toward the goal. We exemplify perseverance by working with the mtoto and not giving up. This process usually succeeds and the reward is tremendous as seen and heard in the knowing laughter of success which bursts from the child at each step by step achievement.

Imani also deals with children valuing their Afrikan self and heritage. They understand that they must struggle so that we will win. They believe that we will win so they struggle. This involves the belief in the ultimate victory of our struggle if we prepare to win.

We teach the value of struggle by giving the children tasks to accomplish of varying degrees of difficulty. At first most of the tasks are easy tasks. At every step, each accomplished task is praised and/or rewarded immediately after its accomplishment. In this manner children are taught confidence in their own ability to succeed and this confidence encourages them to tackle and overcome larger and more difficult problems.

These are techniques we use to teach values, but finally we know that example is the best teacher. Therefore, we require our teachers to exemplify our values at all times. In order to do this, we must develop good work/study habits and be constantly conscious of applying our ideology.

Habits are the result of repeated reinforced actions. Routines are important. They must be established and followed if they are to be effective. However, we do not substitute blind allegiance to dogma for rational application of our ideology. There are always decisions to be made concerning the correct application of our principles.

Our children must be allowed to watch and participate in the decision-making process. This is very important to their development because the practice of our values is not mechanical but is rather a creative process of weighing the relative merit of each and every variable under consideration and then finally reaching a decision based on our assessment of the total problem.

This calls for consciousness on our part. This demands that we always be aware of what we are doing and are requiring the children to do. This also means that we do everything in a disciplined manner which means that we are in full control of ourselves when we move.

The practice of our values is a full time job. We are not interested in simply teaching our children to memorize the Nguzo Saba or to make mechanical movements like little black robots. We are struggling for National Liberation, for our unification, liberation and independence of Afrika and Afrikan people everywhere. We are struggling to raise (provide, protect, respect, inspire, educate and socialize) children who will be able to continue this awesome task and responsibly carry it through to its conclusion.

This is why and how we teach our children to

PRACTICE THE VALUES AND LOVE REVOLUTION NOW.

“We must be value bound, shaping ourselves to fit the value system and not shaping the system to fit us, bound by values, value bound, i.e., ready to commit ourselves to doing what we got to do and not simply just all the things we want to do.”

Kalamu ya Salaam

**Pamoja Tutashinda
Mama Tayari Kwa Salaam
AHIDIANA Work/Study Center**

For those unfamiliar with the Kiswahili words used within the text, the following brief definitions may be helpful:

asante – thank you
chakula – food
mtoto – child
njema – good
shule – school
skuli – school
wanafuzi – student
yeabo –yes

baba – father
darasa – class
mwalimu – teacher
sana – very
sifa – praise
taburu – drill
walimu – teachers