

Ahidiana, Inc., Ahidiana Work/Study Center, Ahidiana Enterprises, Inc (1972 -1987)

**“Lessons Learned by Being Faithful to the Ahidiana Operating Principles”
at the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary Conference of the Nguzo Saba (9.23.2015)**

by Mtumishi St. Julien

1. The effectiveness of the cadre to make change.

- a. A cadre is a closely-knit disciplined group of persons who shared values and commitment.
- b. Members of Ahidiana built and maintained Ahidiana Work/Study Center, a school from pre-school to 4th grade;
- c. We operated a bookstore and our own printing press;
- d. We hosted annual community Kwanzaa events, bringing key African American thinkers and activists to New Orleans—among them Maulana Karenga, John H. Clarke, Sonia Sanchez, Mari Evans, Dr. Ben Johannan, Imari Obadele, and numerous others;
- c. We organized various anti-apartheid, anti-police brutality demonstrations and community educational events as well as hosted the annual African Liberation Day celebrations;
- d. We organized Media Watch, Inc. to hold the mass media accountable for fair and adequate community access;
- e. We organized annual Black Women's Conferences to promote empowerment and capacity-building of Black women;
- f. We worked closely with the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI);
- g. We used the cadre as our means of teaching and implementing the **Nguzo Saba** around the New Orleans community.

2. The indispensability of our Operating Principles.

- a. The Ahidiana Operating Principles (1973) shaped the members' identity, purpose and direction.

b. We maintained intellectual and ideological contact with the Ahidiana Operating Principles by our weekly membership study, not only of the Operating Principles, but also the works of other African and African American thinkers and activists such as Amilcar Cabral, Dr. Maulana Karenga, Fannie Lou Hamer, Malcolm X, Carter G. Woodson, Virginia Collins and many more.

c. We always emphasized the importance of balancing work and study for the purpose of building our productive capacity and maintaining our revolutionary zeal.

d. The foundation of the Ahidiana Operating Principles and our practice as members of Ahidiana is the ***Nguzo Saba***.

3. The importance of consensus in Ahidiana governance.

a. Coming out of a painful experience with a previous organization, the early members of Ahidiana saw how "majority rule" could create un-mendable divisions in an organization. We therefore consciously chose "consensus" as the Ahidiana governing structure.

b. We found that consensus was more conducive to relationship building and enhancing the productive capacity of the organization, as a whole.

c. We also found that consensus created an environment that enhanced the role of women both in governance and in promoting their productive capacity.

d. Consensus emphasized how Ujimaa-Collective Work and Responsibility not only includes participation in governance but also in productive labor.

e. We learned that consensus not only meant everyone participated in decision-making but everyone (i.e both men and women) accepted responsibility to mop the floors, bring the children home, clean the bathrooms, get supplies from the store, and other necessary tasks for maintaining and operating the school, the bookstore and community events.

f. We learned that it takes work, i.e. specific, common and often mundane work to build and maintain an organizational structure for struggle.

g. Both in our study and work we would refer to the ***Nguzo Saba*** for clarity of purpose and inspiration.