



BARACK OBAMA

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

2022-2023

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Barack Obama Leadership Academy is an African-Centered Institution. By African-centered, we mean that the foundation on which we stand-collectively and individually, academically and socially, mentally and morally, in thought and deed-consists of the very best wisdoms, lessons and practices of African people around the world. It is the best of what has been done in the world, applied to identifying and addressing contemporary needs and issues that inform the direction, quality, and quantity of our efforts. Moving from the concrete to the abstract, historical to current, large to small, simple to complex, disorganized to organized-in study and practice-we strengthen our capacity to actualize that which is in our hearts toward the aim of realizing our life's purpose.

At **Barack Obama Leadership Academy**, we know that in order to facilitate children in their life's journey toward purposeful living (and fulfillment of their life's purpose), we must foster an environment that draws the best out of them (integrity in thought and deed), provides opportunities to experience learning (applied learning), integrates the totality of their personhood (mind, body, and heart) into the learning process (holistic learning), is safe and nurturing (nurturing learning community), and challenges children to take charge of all that rests within their hands (self-determination).

Through our efforts, we seek to develop within children insight into their individual gifts, talents and missions; we seek to connect them with the rich and diverse historical, economic, political, social and cultural realities of Afrikan peoples throughout time and space; and seek to restore a world view which reflects an understanding of the inter-

dependence of humans, plants, animals, the air, water, soil and natural elements which create the delicate balance that sustains life on the planet earth.

Our approach to education is holistic because we structure our program to stimulate the intellect of our students with a vigorous academic schedule, providing daily opportunities for intellectual, moral and physical development. Nutrition is stressed as a tool for contributing to a balance between mind, body and spirit.

Our instruction is multi-modal because we present lessons in a variety of ways to address the learning styles of all of our students. Most students have one of the following as their dominant mode of learning-visual, auditory or tactile. Student who are visual need lots of color, respond well to writing on the board, photographs and videos. Students who are auditory learners are stimulated by music, can absorb information from lectures and respond well to poetry and rhyme as instructional tools. Students who are tactile learners must have artifacts, manipulatives and plenty of hands-on experiences. These students are physically oriented and learn by doing. In reality most students learn through a blend of these learning modes.

Finally, our educational philosophy is consistent with the Ancients who believed that education is the process of drawing out that which is already inside of the student with the aim of becoming a "star," of realizing her/his humanity. Education is primarily a process of self-discovery. It is a journey of self-realization. The "teacher" is actually a guide who provides nurturing, love, information and experiences, which aid the learner in growing into knowledge of individual, collective, and self.

We believe:

- That schools have the responsibility to create environments where every child can learn at his and her level of ability;
- That all children have the right to a high-quality education;
- That all children are capable of learning;
- That dedication, practice, and commitment will ensure educational and personal development;
- That schools should educate and prepare children for social as well as academic achievements;
- That schools should provide an enriched and challenging curriculum aligned with the State's Core Curriculum, infusing African and African-American History and Culture through research.

Our Vision:

To build and maintain a model African-centered institution founded on integrity that holistically nurtures the development of critical thinkers who use science and technology to improve the quality of life for families and communities around the world.

Our Mission:

To involve the students, families, teachers and community in designing a holistic approach to learning that provides students with a firm academic, applied scientific and moral educational experience via a rigorous African-centered curriculum. Social, cultural, and physical activities will be an integral part of the learning experience. Teaching and learning will have integrity, be constructive, be applied, and have a strong emphasis on core competencies, and critical thinking toward the enhancement of the total child.

CONCEPTS

There are several concepts that have been used at Barack Obama since its inception, while others have become a part of the practices over time. Below are definitions of these concepts.

Mama or Baba: At Barack Obama children refer to adults as “Mama [name]” or “Baba [name].” Mama means *mother* and Baba means *father*. We use these terms because we see ourselves as extensions of the family. Not only are we concerned with the academic development of children, but their overall development as human beings.

African-centered Education: A system of educating the whole family that is rooted in the best of African cultures and traditions. Collaborative learning varied instruction, extended learning.

ACE is placing the African child at the center of all learning. It recognizes that African children learn best when they are loved and feel connected to the school and teachers ACE is rooted in the belief that all children can learn and that African children will learn best when you have high expectations and instill in the child the confidence and knowledge that there is nothing beyond their abilities to achieve.

ACE is guided by ancient principles of MAAT-Truth, Justice, Righteousness, Order, Balance, Harmony, and Reciprocity.

Nguzo Saba: The Nguzo Saba represent seven basic values of African culture which contribute to building and reinforcing family, community and culture among African American people as well as Africans throughout the world. These values in Swahili mean the Seven Principles. Developed by Dr. Karenga, the Nguzo Saba stand at the heart of the origin and meaning of Kwanzaa, for it is these values which are not only the building blocks for community but also serve to reinforce and enhance them.



Umoja (oo-MOE-jah) (Unity): To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.



Kujichagulia (koo-jee-cha-goo-LEE-ah) (Self-Determination): To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.



Ujima (oo-JEE-mah) (Collective Work and Responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and make our brother's and sister's problems our problems and to solve them together.



Ujamaa (oo-JAH-mah) (Cooperative Economics): To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.



Nia (nee-AH) (Purpose): To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.



Kuumba (koo-OOM-bah) (Creativity): To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.



Imani (ee-MAH-nee) (Faith): To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Principles of Ma'at: Ma'at weighing of the soul in Kmt. The was believed to be the seat of the on the scale of *Ma'at*, against a which represented the principles of This symbolic weighing of the heart truth (*Ma'at*) was performed to establish the righteousness of the deceased.



represents the the heart of the deceased soul and it was weighed feather, truth and righteousness. against the feather of

According to Dr. Theophile Obenga,

Ma'at is a concept of central importance. It implies order, universal balance, cosmic regulation, justice, truth, truth-in-justice, rectitude and moral uprightness. The concept of balanced order is the permanent basis of pharaonic civilization. Balanced order brings peace, condemns crime and evil. Whoever breaks the law is punished, as a matter of course.¹

¹ Obenga, T. (2004). *African Philosophy: The Pharaonic Period, 2780-330BC*. (Ayi Kwei Armah, Trans.). Per Ankh (Original work published 1990)

To understand the concept of Ma'at, one must examine it on multiple levels.

1. On a universal level, Ma'at expresses harmony of the elements
2. On a political level, Ma'at works against injustice
3. On an individual level, Ma'at embraces specific rules for living in concert with moral principles.

Whoever lives according to the rules and principles of Ma'at achieves universal order in her/his own life. The principles of Ma'at include:

- Truth
- Justice
- Harmony
- Balance
- Order
- Reciprocity
- Propriety

VOCABULARY

Various Swahili words are used during unity circle and in protocol that need clarification. A list with explanations is below.

- **Angalia:** *Angalia* is a Swahili verb that means "look, watch, observe." We use *angalia* to denote a position that people assume when standing at attention. Sisters cross their arms over their chest with the right arm over left and fists in the Black power position; brothers fold arms across their chest (right over left) with elbows extended.
- **Asante (sana):** When thanking someone for something, we say *Asante*. For emphasis, adding *sana* makes the phrase "thank you very much." The response to this is **karibu**, or "don't mention it / no problem."
- **Hodi hodi:** This word means "hello!" and is used instead of knocking before entering a room. Prior to entering a room, all people (children and adults alike) are to call out *hodi hodi* and await the response of the mwalimu.
- **Jambo:** Hello!
- **Karibu:** *Karibu* means "welcome" and is the response an mwalimu will give to let a person know that she/he may enter the room.
- **Mwalimu:** This word means "teacher." When referring to more than one teacher, use *walimu*.
- **Umoja, mbili, tatu, Anzeni!:** Literally translated as "1, 2, 3, begin" this phrase is used during Unity Circle to prepare participants to begin the next part at the same time.

PROTOCOL

Entering Classrooms:

1. Mtoto stands at the door in angulia. If mwalimu is speaking, mtoto remains at door quietly until she/he is acknowledged.
2. Mtoto says, "hodi, hodi!" (hello!)
3. Mwalimu says, "karibu!" (come in, welcome!)
4. Mtoto then may enter the room

UNITY CIRCLE

Unity Circle is an important part of our day at Barack Obama. Each morning, children and staff sing and recited verses that reaffirm our commitment to giving our best toward fulfillment of our life's work. The practice of Unity Circle brings our community together in the morning and at the end of the day. We strive to become more disciplined and dedicated to our efforts. The full text for each song is located on our website at www.obamaacademy.org.

Unity Circle in Practice

The entire school begins its day in the gym reciting the verses of Morning Unity Circle. Afternoon unity circle is conducted with the Umoja Team Groups.

Morning Unity Circle

Roll Call – Good News
Nguzo Saba
Praise the Flag
CIBI Pledge
Words of Wisdom
Harambe
Black National Anthem

Afternoon Unity Circle

Nguzo Saba
Praise the Flag
Pledge
Black
Harambe

Nguzo Saba: We recite the Nguzo Saba to affirm its principles and remind ourselves of their meaning.

Praise the Flag: This song serves to remind us about the many struggles that African people have encountered and endured throughout history. In addition, it honors that which has made (and continues to make) us whole and has enabled us to survive—our blood, race, and home. The precious blood of many innocent women, men, and children was shed in the process of resisting and succumbing to European and Arab invasions and enslavement. And it is only through the unity and struggle of all African

people that we can continue to fight for freedom, self-determination and our rightful place in the world.

CIBI Pledge: We recite a pledge created by the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) to remind us of who we are and put Black first in our lives. Having strong foundations puts us on a path to forge a future of our own making.

Black National Anthem: The Black National Anthem has served as a song of hope for Black people since the turn of the 20th century. While it reminds us to keep our heads up in the face of hardship, it offers no answers.

Black: When we sing this, we affirm what we have done at the end of the day and state our intentions for tomorrow.

Harambe: We shout 7 harambees loud and proud to bring closure to our affirmations and pledges.

Nguzo Saba

The Nguzo Saba is sung in a call-and-response format. The group leader calls first and the group responds.

<u>Group Leader (Call)</u>	<u>Group (Response)</u>
Nguzo Saba!	Nguzo Saba!
Umoja	Umoja
Unity	Unity
Kujichagulia	Kujichagulia
Self-Determination	Self-Determination
Ujima	Ujima
Collective work & responsibility	I say, collective work & responsibility
Ujamaa	Ujamaa
Cooperative economics	Cooperative economics
Nia	Nia
Purpose	Purpose
Kuumba	Kuumba
Creativity	Cre-a-tiv-ity
Imani	Imani

Faith	Faith
These are the seven principles of blackness!!!	
Say what?!!	These are the seven principles of blackness
Can't hear you!!!	These are the seven principles of blackness
Nguzo Saba praise the red, the black and the green	

Praise the Flag

This song serves to remind us about the many struggles that African people have encountered and endured throughout history. In addition, it honors that which has made (and continues to make) us whole and has enabled us to survive—our blood, race, and home. The precious blood of many innocent women, men, and children was shed in the process of resisting and succumbing to European and Arab invasions and enslavement. And it is only through the unity and struggle of all African people that we can continue to fight for freedom, self-determination and our rightful place in the world.

Oh, Praise the red, the black, and the green
 The brothers and sisters are being redeemed
 Why don't you open up your eyes and see
 We're on our way to being free
 Because the red is for the blood that we shed
 The black is for the race, that's us
 The green is for the land, our home
 So the black race can take its rightful stand
 Oh, oh, oh praise the red, the black, and the green
 The brothers and sisters are being redeemed
 Why don't you open up your eyes and see
 We're on our way to being free

C.I.B.I. Pledge

CIBI stands for the Council of Independent Black Institutions. Although Barack Obama is not formally a member, we remain interconnected through our historical ties and continued efforts. This pledge can be stated loud and proud in call-and-response format (often done this way in large groups).

We are an African people
Struggling for national liberation
We are preparing
Leaders and workers
To bring about
Positive change
For our people
We stress
The commitment of
Our bodies,
Minds,
Souls,
And consciousness
Our commitment is
Self-determination,
Self-respect,
And self-defense
For our race
Asante Sana

Lift Every Voice And Sing

This is called the Black National Anthem, written by James Weldon Johnson. In the morning circle, the first verse can be sung.

Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of liberty
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies
Let us resound loud as the rolling seas
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on till victory is won

Stony the road we trod
Bitter the chastening rod
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died
Yet with a steady beat

Have not our weary feet
Come to a place for which our fathers sighed
We have come over a way that the tears have been watered
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered
Out from the gloomy past
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast

God of our weary years
God of our silent tears
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way
Thou who has by thy might
Led us into the light
Keep us forever in the path, we pray
Lest our feet stray from the places, our god, where we met thee
Lest our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee
Shadowed beneath thy hand
May we forever stand
True to our god
True to our native land
Harambe

Harambe (7x)
Pull together (3x)
(Clap 7x)
Pumoja Tuta Shinde
Uhuru Sasa
Together we will win
Freedom now!!!

Pledge

We are the first and the last, the Umoja and Imani
We pledge to think black
Speak black
Act black
Buy black
Pray black
Love black
And live black
We pledge to do black things today
To assure us of a strong black tomorrow

Asante Sana

Black

We have done black things today

And we're going to do black things again tomorrow

We have done black things today

And we're going to do black things again tomorrow

Will you? Yes I will **Will you?** Yes I will

Will you? Yes I will **Will you?** Yes I will

Will you? Yes I will yes I will yes I will

Asante Sana

OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN CENTERED CONCEPTS BY GRADE

Fulani Village: Myself and Others

Using a familiar context for five and six year olds, watoto in Fulani Village learn about the African Humanities disciplines (history, philosophy, ethics, science and engineering) through the lens of "myself and others."

Dogon Village: Families and Relationships

In first grade, watoto continue to explore African Humanities disciplines through the context of families and relationships.

Wolof Village: Neighborhoods and Communities

In the second grade, watoto continue to explore African Humanities disciplines through the context of neighborhoods and local communities.

Zulu Village: Kmt Studies

Third grade students explore history, philosophy/ ethics, science and engineering through the lens of Kmt (Ancient Egypt). Building on prior knowledge and applying new concepts of each discipline to the complex social environment of Kmt, the third grade content expectations help prepare watoto for more sophisticated studies in later grades.

Ashanti Village: Continental Africa Studies

Using the context of Africa (East, West, Central and South), fourth grade watoto learn significant African Humanities concepts with an increasingly complex social environment. They examine history, philosophy/ethics, science and engineering through the lens of Africa's regions.

Masaai Village: Africans in the Americas

Fifth graders examine history, philosophy/ethics, science and engineering through the lens of African people's presence in the Americas.

Kmt Village: Human Development and Civilizations

Sixth graders apply a more sophisticated analyzes to the study of the development of early human populations and African civilizations.

Kru Village: Kmt Lessons and Contemporary Applications

Building on sixth grade knowledge, seventh graders extract lessons from each earlier moment for application to contemporary problems and issues.

Nzima Village: Forward Directions

Eighth graders will examine each area of material culture.

BEHAVIOR

Our ancients taught principles and practices that cultivated righteous action and guided people to make morally sound decisions that led to self-mastery. With such strong foundations laid, we hold within our hands the capacity to bring to life our greatest good—living purposefully. In striving for our greatest good, from heroic tiny seeds, we will remake ourselves and our world in rightness. This is a purpose to which all can aspire in this lifetime.

- **Truth:** Accordance with reality
 - Demonstrates honesty and directness
 - Accepts responsibility for actions
- **Justice:** Unswerving righteousness of thought and action
 - Demonstrates fairness toward others
 - Refrains from profanity
- **Harmony and Balance:** Alignment in thought and action
 - Demonstrates respect for other people’s property
 - Demonstrates respect for others
- **Reciprocity:** In kind responses toward the actions of others
 - Helping
 - Behavior
- **Propriety:** Do what is right because it is right
 - Demonstrates ability to listen at the appropriate times
 - Demonstrates effective decision-making skills
- **Umoja (Unity):** Commitment to togetherness, unity
 - Demonstrates positive character traits
 - Demonstrates productive character traits
 - Participates in class
- **Kujichagulia (Self determination):** Demonstrates commitment to take charge of own life and be accountable for own actions and decisions.
 - Attendance/ promptness
 - Preparation
- **Ujima (Collective work and responsibility) & Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics):** Demonstrates a commitment to self-criticism and personal evaluation toward the common advancement of the community, while sharing time, resources, ideas and self for the betterment of the collective.
 - Works collectively
 - Sharing
 - Resourcefulness

- **Nia (Purpose)**
 - Follows directions
 - Remains on task
 - Allows others to remain on task
- **Kuumba: Creativity**
 - Reflection

CLASSROOM SET UP

Criteria for African-centered classrooms:

1. Unity of essence and appearance: aesthetically pleasing, while functionally meaningful
2. Display representations of people, traditions, products of Africa and her children throughout time and space (move beyond conventional and overused icons)
3. Reflect a home-like learning environment with plants, splashes of fabric, reading spaces, among other things
4. Organized and neatly arranged and configured
5. Appropriately organized reading and hands-on learning areas (learning centers)
6. Appropriate and timely themes represented
7. Representation of Village that they represent—perhaps even displayed outside the classroom; can coordinate efforts with co-teachers
8. Posted expectations of performance—academic and social
9. Relevant posters that reflect what the children are learning at the given moment. Consider eye level of students
10. Periodically updated and changed bulletin boards. Explore how to involve students in the process
11. Places where student work is featured
12. Evidence of cross-curricular efforts (integrated learning)
13. Posted learning objectives for unit lessons