

RAISING OUR CHILDREN TO MAKE THIS  
WORLD BETTER AND MORE BEAUTIFUL

RAISING OUR CHILDREN TO MAKE THIS  
WORLD BETTER AND MORE BEAUTIFUL

Every act is political. Every step is political. Political in that we either follow the culture of alien American society or we follow the culture of liberation and struggle for our people. We, AHIDIANA, have committed ourselves to liberation and struggle, and towards that goal have built AHIDIANA Word/Study Center, an educational institution whose purpose is threefold:

1. To raise revolutionaries, develop young soldiers and warriors, and totally committed workers for the unification, liberation and independence of Afrikan people, especially those Afrikans born in America.
2. To make clear the evils of America to our children and to teach them to creatively build a better and more beautiful alternative.
3. To provide our children with the vital education necessary to equip them to continue their personal struggle for unification, liberation and independence.

Black child development, then, is serious business – both political and vital.

We believe that we as parents and teachers should be aware of and work to develop the aspects of our children's personality: the physical (body), the mental (mind), the spiritual (soul), and the conscious (self-awareness/identity and self-control/discipline).

#### DEVELOP BODY

We believe that the physical self is developed by eating a proper diet and exercising daily. A proper diet is one that supports and promotes our health. Exercise is orderly movement that strengthens and tones the muscles of the body.

A proper diet includes nutritious food, fresh air, sunshine, sleep/rest, and peace. We must have all of these for a healthy body.

Nutritious foods are those foods which are highest in proteins, vitamins and minerals, and are easy to digest. Nutritious foods are not necessarily cooked and are usually naturally grown. Our children should be taught to enjoy nutritious foods and to appreciate the value of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts. A child can live without ice cream, candy and cookies. Lettuce salads, raisins, apples and peanut butter are favorites of our children. Please read Food Guide for Afrikan People by AHIDIANA W/S Center for an in-depth understanding of essential life-promoting foods.

Food is not the only consideration for health in our children. Fresh air is quickly becoming a hard to come by need. Severe pollution lessens a good supply of oxygen and causes some diseases and illnesses we've never experienced before. We therefore teach our children to respect plants both outdoors and indoors because plants inspire life in our houses and neighborhoods. We breathe in their oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide. Plants "breathe" in our carbon dioxide and "breathe" out oxygen.

This is a beautiful cycle of life which should be taught to our children. All living creatures support each other's life in harmony with nature.

Sunshine is valuable for Vitamin D and for solar energy directly from the universe. We are the suns. Black folk depend on the sun as a healer, cleanser and source of strength.

### "Genesis"

T. David Watson

Two little girls  
walked down a country road  
looking for a place to play;  
One spotted a baby boy sitting in the sun  
and went to put him in the shade  
of an old rosebush;  
but an old lady, older it seemed than time  
spoke up  
angrily.  
"Put him back  
so the sun can get to him"  
she said in age-mellow voice,  
"don't you want him to grow up strong?"  
"Yes, ma'm"  
one of the two finally replied  
"but won't he get sun stroke  
if you keep him out there too long".  
The old woman smiled toothless  
and said  
"Our people have been sun-people  
since Creation,  
leave that baby in the sunshine  
and  
one day  
he will have the power  
to move this world."

Our children, between the ages of one and five years old, should get a one hour or two hours daily nap and ten hours of sleep at night. However, let's also be aware of how soon we sleep or rest after our meals. Digestion is work for our bodies. Our children cannot rest well while their bodies are working to digest food. It is best not to lie down immediately after eating a full meal.

Peace is social and material harmony. Noise, pressure, tension, abuse, plasticity are the trim for this sexist, materialist, white supremacist culture. We need peace! We need our Black life to be a pleasing whole with each part in agreement, giving unity to our lives. Are our homes havens of peace, supportive of our Afrikan personalities? Can we settle down in our homes (minus television and “munchies”) and accomplish some inspiring reading or quiet work for our self-development and our collective struggle? Our children should have a special place for themselves to do their work, too. We are a peaceful people in need of peaceful environments supportive of our Afrikan identity.

Daily exercise is the other essential. A properly planned exercise program practiced daily will significantly increase both our health and longevity. We often do not realize that in order for our bodies to function properly, our muscles must work. Exercise daily. Start with head/neck movements and move down to the ankle/feet movements. Exercise shoulders, arms, torso, hips, legs. Twist, turn, stretch. Parents and children should try to exercise together. Try five minutes a day.

Running or jumping rope is also very healthful. Start with one block a day. If daily exercise seems hard to begin with, try weekly or bi-weekly exercise sessions for the family. Exercise promotes a positive personality.

Another consideration for physical development is enrolling your child in karate, gymnastics, or dance classes. All of these involve exercise.

## DEVELOP MIND

We develop our minds by acquiring knowledge and skills that are useful in our struggle. For our children, language and reading are key to gaining knowledge and skills.

Our children learn language from their environment. Language should be a natural part of our homes. If our children are not spoken to or not allowed or required to speak, when they need to speak outside the home, in school or with their peers, they will not be able to. Our children will only be frustrated because we parents/teachers have refused to teach them to express themselves.

Language teaches values. Our children develop likes and dislikes from what people in their environment say. They learn what is important or valuable and what is not.

Our children’s viewpoint concerning themselves and the world about them is also affected by the language used around children. What effect does name-calling have on your child’s viewpoint of the person called out of name? Are body excretions called by their rightful name or by sounds or by numbers? Do we generally speak to others in a respectful warm tone of voice and smile? Being aware of our example and doing correct actions will improve our children’s language twofold.

Ask and answer questions of your child. Require your child to follow verbal directions. Discuss places you've gone or places to which you are planning to go. While at the supermarket or department store talk about what is happening – talk about sights, sounds, smells. The senses are our tools of learning; let's be especially aware of them.

Enunciate and use correct grammar. Require your child to use language. Encourage children to verbalize their wants.

With babies encourage sound. With toddlers encourage words. With one year olds encourage sentences. With two year olds encourage conversation. With three year olds encourage total use of language.

Reading is an essential skill in acquiring information. To develop early confident readers, first, our children need correct models, good examples of the use and importance of reading. Seeing their parents, older brothers and sisters, and other adults reading daily is a powerful reinforcement. When cooking or cleaning, painting or repairing around the home, read the directions on labels out loud so that our children can experience the usefulness of the reading skill. Parents referring to books for information concerning instructions or skills, such as electronics, carpentry, sewing, art, and graphics, help our children understand the value of reading.

Parents should read with and also read to their children daily. Vocabulary increases with each reading session. Discuss what you have read. Use the knowledge gained in your life and relate it to your child's and family's experiences.

A home should have a special place for all books to teach respect and the value of books. Children should have a small library of books that they can refer to and read at will. When a book is torn or written in, this should be looked upon as a serious mistake and the child should be corrected.

Trips to the library, bookstores and newsstands also reinforce the importance of reading.

All these experiences will bring your child and words together. For further development of reading skills, send your child to a pre-school that teachers reading to children who are ready to read.

Toward the development of handwriting, develop our children's manipulative skills by allowing them to fold towels, dress themselves, button their clothing, tie their shoes, wash their faces and brush their teeth daily. Have plenty of paper, crayons, felt pens and scissors for other manipulative work such as doing free/independent drawing and coloring, coloring inside of a shape, tracing simple patterns, cutting on lines (zigzag, straight). There should be a special place to store these tools and in easy reach whenever they are ready to be used.

Praise our children's successes. Be patient with our children's efforts. Praise and patience are essential for positive development.

The following are suggested for parents/teachers in developing our children's minds:

### Places To Go

For each place, prepare a lesson beforehand explaining where you will be going and why. These trips should be natural parts of your day or a special activity done for a special occasion. You are also interested in these places, too. You and your child can learn and study together. Discuss major concepts while there and those aspects that most interest your child. Listen to your child's sounds and watch your child's reactions. Upon returning, review the experience, give your impressions and allow your child to do the same. Here are some examples of places to go:

library	the levee
zoo	museums
parks	green houses
street car ride	pet shops
the lake, the river, the bayou	ferry ride

Our culture and history are integral parts of New Orleans. Teach our children about:

Mardi Gras Indians	Congo Square
Jazz and the Second Line	New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival
Ujamaa Afrikan Market	French Quarter and Market
House of Suma/New Afrika Books	

### Music To Hear

In listening to music, ask your child what message is being given or what mood is being set. Is the music fast or slow, loud or soft? What instruments are being played?

Our children should be aware of all types of music and if possible become involved in music at an early age. Music is our breath of life, our juju, our Black spirit forever free. Listen to blues, soul as well as rhythm and blues. Be conscious of the positive aspects of our music. Any music played by Black folk will not do. A list of positive musicians are listed below:

Bob Marely and the Wailers	Stanley Clarke
Bernice Reagon	Andy Bey
Ella Jenkins	Doug Carn
Gary Bartz	Pharoah Sanders

Books To Read – [See attached Suggested Reading Lists.](#)

After reading a book to your child or for your own development, ask what lessons were taught in this story. What concepts were taught in this book? Then try to link this to your family and its experiences or our people and our experiences.

## DEVELOP SOUL

We develop our souls by doing right and practicing values. We at AHIDIANA practice the values called Nguzo Saba/The Seven Principles of Blackness:

[\(See attached paper of Nguzo Saba, The Seven Principles of Blackness\)](#)

We have outlined the teaching of values to our children in an article called “Practice the Values and Love Revolution,” [Black Books Bulletin](#), Volume 2, Winter 1974. Read this for an in-depth discussion of values for our children.

Briefly we would like to stress several values of the Nguzo Saba which we believe to be of importance in our children’s development. Being orderly and clean are necessary for healthful living and strong work. Require your children to be responsible for making up their beds first thing every morning followed by a morning routine which should include wash up in the bathroom, getting dressed and combing their hair. By setting routines, order is inevitably taught. Your children should be taught to organize their materials after “playing” in their room or on a desk or table. A daily household job as a part of housekeeping teaches our children to desire and appreciate cleanliness. Our children will feel responsible for themselves and their surroundings.

Respect of self, others and property and sharing are necessary for strong societal relationships. Our children will be able to work with and work among our brothers and sisters if they possess these values. Teach respect by requiring and rewarding respectful behavior and correcting disrespectful behavior.

Having a reason for our every act is purposefulness. If we are not sure why we are doing something, we should not do it. Teach our children to have a purpose for everything by questioning their actions and by promptly and truthfully responding to their questions about our actions.

Patience and perseverance will help our children develop the skill to overcome obstacles and be strong in the midst of struggle. We help them develop patience and perseverance by encouraging them to complete the tasks they can do and by helping them complete tasks they cannot do alone. In either case, we should always stress “struggle,” for there are many tasks that require only a little extra effort in order to be successful.

Truthfulness is most important, especially today. How can our children defend and develop themselves and our people if they are armed with lies and falsehood rather than truth and reality.

Call all things by their rightful name. Give an honest answer to your children's questions. Rather than suppressing truth through punishment, praise our children when they stand up for the truth.

And finally, we must teach our children to value our Afrikaness, our heritage. We must never again turn on or against each other, hating ourselves. We are an Afrikan people committed to our own unification, liberation and independence.

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 make mechanical movements like little Black robots. We are struggling for National Liberation of Afrikans born in America. We are struggling to raise (provide, protect, respect, inspire, educate and socialize) our children who will be able to continue this awesome task and responsibility as well as carry it through to its conclusion.

### DEVELOP CONSCIOUSNESS

We develop consciousness by attaining self-awareness and self-control.

We can help our children be self-aware by simply asking or reminding them about their actions. Many times we are not aware of what we are doing with our hands or our tone of voice or personal outlook.

Self-control is hard to accomplish, but worth the work in attaining it. Can we discipline ourselves at the dinner table with the amount and type of food we eat? Can we control ourselves and not waste water, paper, time? Can we discipline our bodies, minds, soul and consciousness toward self-development? Parents' and teachers' examples are the best teachers in developing our children's consciousness.

Consciousness stresses self-awareness and self-control but also awareness of our people, our beliefs and our goals.

We should help our children understand our collective condition as a people. At the same time we must make clear our commitment and direction in reaching our goals.

We teach our children that the only way to create unification, liberation and independence of our people is by gaining, maintaining and using power. Power is the capability (will and ability) to self-determine, self-defend and self-respect ourselves. Today, the most effective technique of gaining, maintaining and using power is building independent Black institutions, Black in color, culture and consciousness. We teach our children to understand that our people's needs are food, clothing, shelter, transportation and also a nation. We need a nation, a land of our own, to control for our defense and development. We teach our children that there are four parts to a nation: government, education,



economics and defense. We define these and ask our children in what part of the nation will they work. This is essentially ideological development for our children.

We therefore see that today our immediate goal is building and maintaining independent Black institutions and our long range goal is nation-building.

Let us then see our role as Afrikan parents and teachers as one linked to our people and our collective needs and condition. Let us study our past, analyze our present and develop a vision of our future. If we do, we will become examples of what we wish to see our children become.

Respectfully,

Tayari Kwa Salaam  
Kwanza 1976-77