



Akron African/American Community (The Village)

Brief Overview

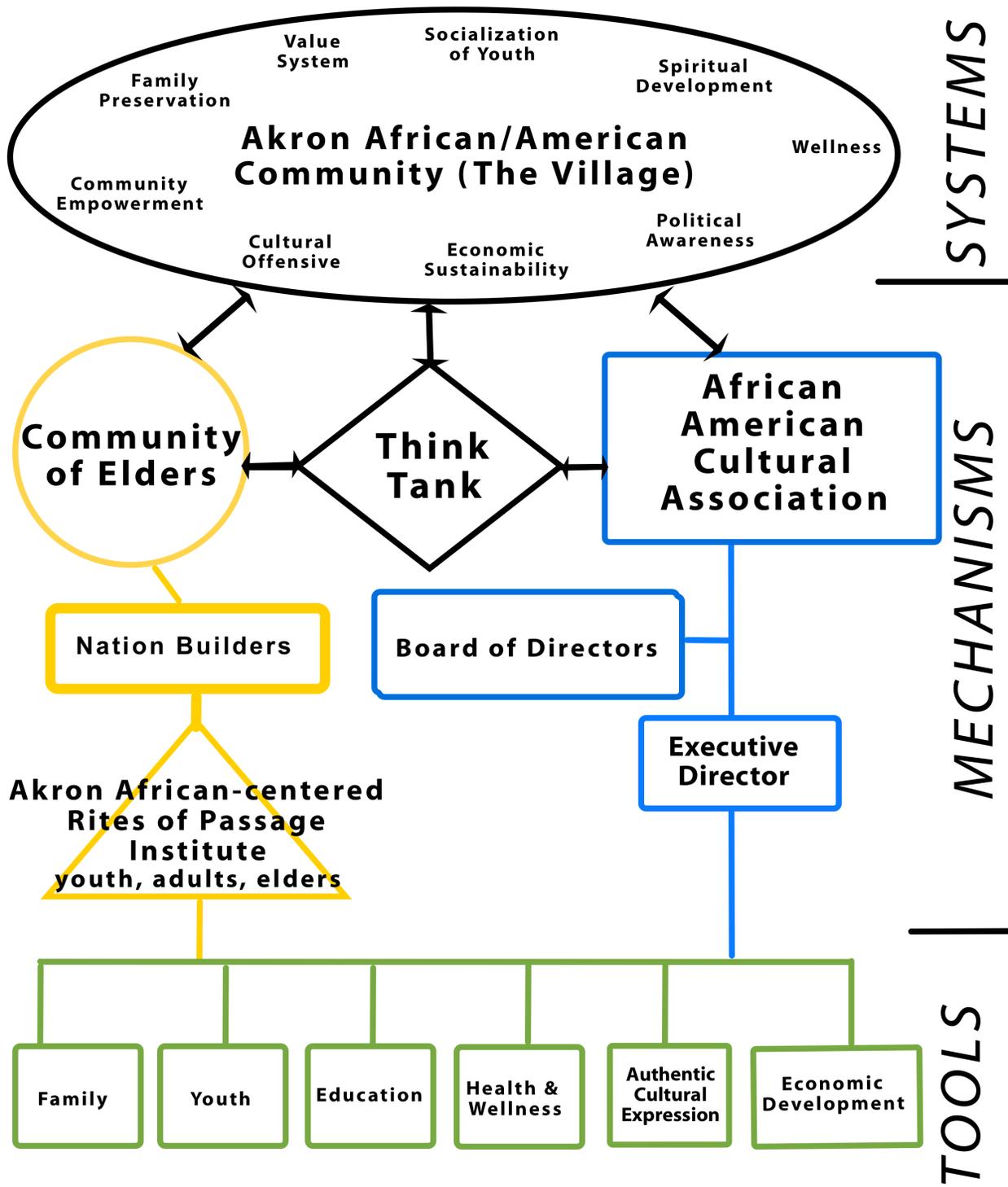
Over the past few months a small group of Elders and Nation Builders have been drafting a concept/framework for us to establish an African-centered village for the Greater Akron area.

We believe that the Village is the manifestation of a system of values and ideas that support individuals and families around a core agreement. In our framework, we see those systems primarily focused around Family preservation, value systems (spiritual code of conduct), socialization of youth, political awareness, spiritual development, cultural offensive, community empowerment, economic empowerment and wellness. These represent the ideas that are at the core of the village concerns, conversations, and actions. However, while values and ideas become the nucleus around which village is structured, these values and ideas must be put into practice.

African Village Framework

The Akron African/American Village framework model represents our thoughts regarding what a village looks like and how it operates in Akron Ohio amongst those of us committed to African-centered thought and way of life. The purpose of this framework is to provide guidance towards a more authentic way of engaging each other, building institutions, developing community, and passing on heritage to the next generation.

Description: The Akron African/American Village Framework Model



Village is the manifestation of a system of values and ideas that support individuals and families around a core agreement. In our framework, we see those systems primarily focused around Family preservation, value systems (spiritual code of conduct), socialization of youth, political awareness, spiritual development, cultural offensive, community empowerment, economic empowerment and wellness. These represent the ideas that are at the core of the village concerns, conversations, and actions. However, while values and ideas become the nucleus around which village is structured, these values and ideas must be put into practice.

In the Akron African village framework, we see the mechanisms to put those values and ideas into practice as the responsibilities of the Council of Elders, Think Tank, and African-American Cultural Association. The Council of Elders is modeled after the traditional African village; particularly those village structures we see in Ghana. The Council of Elders are responsible for maintaining cultural integrity and legitimacy. The Council of Elders are to be recognized and respected as counselors, mediators, and if necessary judges. In addition, the Council of Elders are responsible for directing the community-based African-centered rites of passage in Akron Ohio.

The Think Tank consist of scholars and experts, in the core systems, dedicated to the assessment of Akron's African community. The Think Tank is responsible for identifying and researching prevailing issues. This is to include, a regular report on the condition of Akron's black community and the effectiveness of agencies working within our community. The Think Tank's assessments are to inform the Council of Elders and the work of African-American Cultural Association to the current state of the Akron African Village.

The African-American Cultural Association is the “primary” mechanism to implement the recommendations of the Think Tank and the Council of Elders. The African-American Cultural Association is the legal entity through which the Akron African Village will engage the Akron community at large and various foundations. The African-American Cultural Association is a 501(c)(3) and thus has a board of directors and executive director. As suggested by the framework model, the board of directors are guided by the articles of incorporation, the Council of Elders, and the Think Tank. The board of directors are primarily responsible for selecting the executive director and overseeing the affairs of the Association.

Tools represent the actual programs, events, and activities (the solutions) to address the prevailing issues identified by the Think Tank and to put into practice the core values around which the Akron African Village has emerged. We have identified key “toolboxes” such as, education, health and wellness, economic development, and authentic cultural expression. As indicated by the model, nation builders, those entering the village through the rites of passage process, will find a place to exercise and be supported in the Creator's intent for their lives. We believe this brings about a balance of personal and family growth and community development leading towards authentic selves and liberation.

VILLAGE SYSTEMS DEFINITIONS & EXPLANATIONS

SYSTEMS

The deliberate construct, concept and theory of practice with elements of reciprocity and boundaries that supports the people (individuals, family, community, race) as a whole living in the Akron African/American Community (The Village) and the supportive process for collective understanding and day to day living – freedom, liberty, equality and dignity..

MECHANISMS

Processes and institutions developed and operating in the Akron community to promote self-sufficiency and the highest level of functioning of the citizens of the Akron African/American Community (The Village)

TOOLS

Events, activities and programs from an African-Centered perspective designed to improve the conditions in the Akron African/American Community (The Village).

COMMUNITY

A people living in the same place or having particular characteristics, social values & responsibilities, services, institutions attitudes, and goals designed to serve the best interest of the citizens in the locality.

AFRICAN CENTERED WORLD VIEW

This area will focus on Africa as the origin of all human civilizations. World view determines how one makes sense of the world they live in. People gain an understanding of guiding principles/values of the African Centered ideology and personality.

"worldview" refers to the framework of ideas and beliefs through which an individual interprets the world and interacts in it.

A learned perception of reality, a mental framework for thinking, believing and understanding reality – world & human existence, purpose of mankind and human relationships. It is the way a people make sense of their environment, universe, surroundings (people to nature/environment, time orientation, people relations, preferred mode of activity, nature of man and things, institutions and things) their life. D.W Sue 1981).

World view is also the moral beliefs, principles and philosophy of conduct of which a person responds to and behaves, perceptions of right and wrong (Dr. Linda Myers).

rites of passage

Rituals developed to aid the individual to passage in various stages in their life to ensure transition and entry into a new life situation or to ensure a successful departure from a disturbing life crisis.

History of our people

This area will focus on the initiates developing a basic understanding of the history and contributions of Ancient Africa. The study should also include the accomplishments of African leaders, heroes and sheros.

Council of Elders

Select set of elders (55+) identified and trained from the Community of Elders to serve as the guardians of the Akron African/American Community (The Village) to reach the optimal level of functioning, wellness and being thru the life cycle.

Nation Builders

A group of individuals (21-54) committed to the work of unity, nation building, uplift and humanity of all people but particularly those of African ancestry– (individual, family, nation, race) in the Akron community and implementation of theoretical frameworks and African

Centered conceptual systems which are effective in practice for African Americans. These individuals will have submitted to a process of membership that reinforcement their cultural group.

FAMILY PRESERVATION

The family is viewed as the single most (primary) unit whose members assume certain obligations for each other. It is also the vehicle to transmit values and culture in the community who share common residence. It is in the family that the learning and utilization of rituals, customs, ceremonies and approaches to enhance the social bonds, mutual roles and responsibilities, structures and economic functioning of African/American families in the Akron community. Interventions and planned efforts will focus on strategies to promote family strengths, relationships, sustainability and offer solutions to problems using the life cycle.

This area will focus on encompassing the immediate family, genealogy/history as well as the concept of the extended family (kin), intergeneration or community. Parents/Adults are critical in the process of the rearing of children in the community.

Attention will also be given to the equal and effective management of the household.

VALUE SYSTEM

This area will focus on basic understanding and importance of the development of an African values system operating daily in one's lives. It will assist citizens in the examination of one's current values. It will include identification of the customs, standards, conduct and principles considered desirable by our people in the community. There will also be events and activities that will assist in the development and achievement of a value system in the community for future generations.

Ethos - The fundamental character or spirit of a culture; the underlying sentiment that informs the beliefs, customs, or practices of a group or society; dominant assumptions of a people or period.

The character, disposition or moral element of a person, group and community that determines action.

SOCIALIZATION OF YOUTH

Development of processes to promote the healthy development, socialization and being of youth whereby they learn who they are and their individual purpose for being. Ideally through a rites of passage attention will be given to human development, self-esteem, racial and group identity as well as group ethics. Behavior expectations, roles and responsibilities and development tasks will be addressed from an African –Centered paradigm.

HEALTH/WELLNESS

Health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, but the state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being.

This broad area will focus on covering personal care, hygiene and includes nutrition, exercise, hair and skin, use of natural products for healing, stress management and well-ness. Social skills/roles will also be addressed. Citizens will understand how the physical health and wellness interplays with other aspects of life – mental and spiritual. The basic function of the body and brain to deal with a disturbing life crisis – African response to stress will also be addressed.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

This area will be devoted to the immaterial part of humanity and nature with attention given to an orientation of a people's religious, moral or emotional self. Without focusing on a specific religion, this area will address the concepts of spirituality and how it works in our lives to assist in meeting our basic needs, reaching our full divine potential and to effectively cope with crisis.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Power is the capacity to decide for one's self. This area will focus on the process of increasing understanding of power, strength and influence and how it is used to advance the needs and improving the circumstances of the community

The concepts, practices and skills of leadership in general and in the African community will be addressed. It will encourage skill in

assertiveness, conflict resolution and mediation in attaining established goals. This area will encourage critical thinking and analysis of thought in looking at problems.

From a system perspective, this area will focus on the working of political structures, building as well as sustaining institutions and how they work collectively for the improvement of power for African/American in the Akron community.

CULTURAL OFFENSIVE – AUTHENTIC CULTURAL EXPRESSION

Culture is the people's way of living with shared patterns of interpretation of one's reality and design for living.

This area will focus on support, protection and perpetuation of culture within the individual family and community.

Through use of the mythology, arts, literature, music, dance, etc. to promote pride, wholeness and being of the citizens in the community that are shared in their own image.

This area will also focus on developing a basic understanding of the African influence in music, art and dance of the people of the world.

Citizens will gain an appreciation of Africa contributions in the area of art/dance and how it currently influences – attitudes, thought development and behavior for survival, liberation, healing freedom and daily living (being).

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY/DEVELOPMENT

This area will focus on the general understanding of economics in our society. People will learn how to use money to maintain balance in their lives and to have needs properly met. The area will also promote the concept of cooperative economics as a value that best serves the African individual, family and community.

The products, goods and services, their allocation, distribution, use, ownership and association with social status power and privilege as well as the social relations that characterize the system will be addressed to promote self-sufficiency in the community.

POLITICAL AWARENESS

The process of racial awareness, collective struggle, sense of nationhood, common destiny and historical prospective will be addressed. Attention will also be given to coordinated efforts to influence social change in the Akron African/American community.

EDUCATION

This area will focus on acts or processes related to learning, knowing, including thought, awareness, judgment and revelation. It will address public education system based on an analysis as to whether or not it is meeting the needs of African/Americans in our community.

Definitions/Explanations

Developed by Mama Sondra 'Esi' Bryant 1/2015

Adapted from the following sources:

Usensi Eugene Perkins

Dr. Anthony Mensah/

ANRORUK – Rites of Passage

Dr. Linda Myers

The Social Work Dictionary