

## **African Centered Education: Culture, Community & Maroonage**

### **By Kmt G. Shockley**

#### **Summary**

Dr. Kmt Shockley discusses what we can learn from Maroons and Maroon Villages. Maroons are people of African descent who were able to escape from enslavement during the Middle Passage and create free societies that they enhanced and protected with their lives to ensure that they would never have to return to the plantations. Maroon villages still exist. In this document, Dr. Shockley presents what we can learn from these villages and what could be transferred to the US context to help create better circumstances for African American children, who are struggling in US public schools, and African American people, who are struggling in US society because of White supremacy.

This project illustrates the importance of using culturally responsive practices highlighting:

- African Identity and Pan Africanism
- African cultural values
- Intellectualism
- Criticality
- Joy

#### **Guiding Questions**

After viewing this project, consider the following questions?

1. What resonated with you?
2. What did this spark in you or inspire you to think about?
3. What was an Aha moment for you while reading?
4. What is 1 thing you will do as a result of reading this piece? Explain.

**Don't have time to view the project? Here is the cheat sheet with what we learned.**

**To create an African centered culturally responsive community, educators must do the following:**

Provide education versus schooling which is a transformative process that leads toward skill mastery and knowledge of oneself instead of training – which is a process of learning how to get along in a system.

Help students

- Understand their African identity and cultural heritage
- Focus on the needs and interests of the Black community
- Develop a sense of agency towards fixing the problems within their own communities
- Become agents for Black upliftment
- Reattach to positive African values

<b>MdV Values</b>	<b>Non-MdV Values</b>
Traditional values & culture (Nguzo Saba, Maat, etc)	Clothing and appearance
Looking at yourself from the inside out	Looking at yourself from the outside
Mental, familial, and socio-emotional soundness	Jobs, convenience, appearance and self-promotion
Dialogue for problem solving and community maintenance	Minding your own business/shallow engagement/individualized behavior

Create Kuagros, small groups of non-relative brothers/sisters, to last a lifetime to imbed belonging. Additionally give roles to each group member:

- Guards to protect the community
- Leaders to problem solve pressing issues and leading discussions
- History and culture council responsible for ensuring the entire community is educated about the issues of unity, historical culture, and connections to the Pan African community; the council advises on threats to unity and mechanisms for neutralizing threats;
- Maat and Nguzo Saba council that ensures the values are adhered to within the environment and calls attention to behaviors and attitudes that threaten the community

**What is an Afrocentric education?**

Afrocentric (also known as African-centered or Africentric) education centers the experiences, perspective, history, traditions, culture, and ways of knowing of African people and those of the diaspora. The ultimate purpose is for a transformative and liberating process that has historically marginalized and disenfranchised them.

The 7 building blocks of Afrocentric education (Shockley, 2011, p. 1032):

1. Identity—the importance of identifying the Black child as an African;
2. Pan Africanism—the idea that all Black people in the world are Africans;
3. African culture—the long-standing tradition of Blacks using African culture to sustain themselves and bring order to their lives and communities;
4. African values adoption and transmission—inclusion of an African ethos into educational process for Black children;
5. Black nationalism—the idea that Blacks, regardless of their specific location, constitute a nation;
6. Community control with institution building—the ability to make important decisions about the institutions that exist in one's community; and
7. Education as opposed to schooling—education is the process of imparting upon children all things they need to provide leadership within their communities and within their nation, while schooling is a training process (Shockley & Frederick, 2010).

## Tool for Creating African Centered Culturally Responsive Spaces

Let's get started. Use this tool to develop your own unit.

GUIDE	NOTES
<p><b>Cultural Knowledge</b> What do you know about African culture and traditional knowledge, such as but not limited to Adinkra symbols?</p>	
<p><b>Cultural Values</b> How can you create a space that centers African knowledge and values, such as but not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Nguzo Saba--seven principles of African Heritage</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Umoja (Unity) To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race</li> <li>• Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)</li> <li>• Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility);</li> <li>• Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics);</li> <li>• Nia (Purpose)</li> <li>• Kuumba (Creativity)</li> <li>• Imani (Faith)</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. <i>MAAT</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• order, truth, justice, righteousness, harmony, balance, and reciprocity</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. <i>Importance of culture</i></li> <li>4. <i>Looking at self from the inside out</i></li> <li>5. <i>Mental, familial, and socio-emotional soundness</i></li> <li>6. <i>The importance of dialogue for problem solving and community maintenance</i></li> </ol>	
<p><b>Criticality</b> How will you support education vs schooling in your space?</p> <p>Once students have begun to understand some African knowledge and values, go a step further to get students to reimagine what topics, issues, could look like from an African values approach. Ask</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Does this reflect our values? Why/Why not?</i></li> <li>• <i>What would Maat or Nguzo Saba say about this topic/issue?</i></li> <li>• <i>How does this uplift the Black community?</i></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Affirmation</b> How will your instruction/leadership affirm African culture and identities in your space?</p>	

**Create your own Kuagros. Identify students for the following roles:**

- Guards to protect the community
- Leaders to problem solve pressing issues and leading discussions
- History and culture council members responsible for ensuring the entire community is educated about the issues of unity, historical culture, and connections to the Pan African community; the council advises on threats to unity and mechanisms for neutralizing threats;
- Maat/Nguzo Saba council which ensures values are adhered to within the environment and calls attention to behaviors and attitudes that threaten the community
- Unity Member - one person who makes sure the group stays together throughout the duration of members' lives.

Guards	Leaders	History and Culture Council	Maat & Nguzo Saba Council
*Unity Member:			

**Make memorable moments by making the groups a big deal.**

- Introduce each role as prestigious and honorable
- Have a ceremony to “install” members for their roles
- Make weekly meetings a very important part of the week
- Have each member check-in and provide a weekly report

**Weekly Meeting Protocol**

1. Start with a check-in including updating contact information if needed
2. State what is happening in your life that you would like to discuss
3. Each member presents weekly report
4. Present something new/interesting related to a Black cultural group
5. All members are responsible for making sure the group always stays together, but one specific group member is called the “unity member” who works to make sure the group stays together throughout the duration of members' lives.