

GREATER ROCHESTER BLACK AGENDA GROUP PRESENTS...

“The Black Agenda of Greater Rochester”

Implemented: June 2015 | Revised: October 2020



This document serves as an opportunity agenda for persons of Afrikan descent [hereafter, referred to as Black people]. The challenges and circumstances for Black people are varied and complex. Thus, this document is an aid to guide efforts designed to counter these challenges by focusing on core areas that cut across various societal conditions. The initial areas of focus are prioritized to activate concrete deliverables, by way of strategies, principles, and value-sets. The principles outlined below are designed to be used to inform practices, policies and environmental shifts that can be used to improve conditions and circumstances for Black people. This document will help pivot our community to respond in ways that will mobilize transformational and systemic change.

WHO WE ARE

We are a group of dedicated stakeholders committed to the uplifting and improvement of Black people.

VISION

We, and only we, are the architects of our destiny. We use our creative energy to restore, strengthen, and sustain a healthy, vibrant Black community.

MISSION

The Black community embraces and works to implement its collective interests in order to establish and maintain a comprehensive systemic framework (Black Agenda) that will be adopted to drive, influence, and endorse policies and practices in the areas of education, health and wellness, and economic development. We, as Black people, aim to accomplish our mission and vision by: (a) **advocating for educational, political, social, health and economic change**, (b) **aligning and identifying appropriate resources, supports and scaling up best practices**, and (c) **raising levels of community's consciousness by communicating appropriate messages and promoting positive media attention**.

OBJECTIVES

- Promote greater integration and collaboration amongst community members to facilitate consistency and improve performance of individual efforts designed to address Black people
- Reestablish a shared, vested interest and sense of community so that community members may know “we are all in this together.”
- Exchange information and encourage innovation and idea sharing
- Develop, review and endorse policies
- Develop a Black think tank to advise on the implications of public policies, strategies, standards and changes to statutory requirements, i.e., national and state policy, funding, etc.

These **GUIDING PRINCIPLES** help shape our work in restoring our people and communities.

NGUZO SABA (The Seven Principles):

1. **Umoja (Unity):** To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.
2. **Kujichagulia (Self-Determination):** To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.
3. **Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility):** To build and maintain our community together, and to make our sister's and brother's problems our problems and to solve them together.



4. **Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics):** To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together.
5. **Nia (Purpose):** To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community, in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.
6. **Kuumba (Creativity):** To do always as much as we can, in the way that we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.
7. **Imani (Faith):** To believe with all our hearts in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

TRANSFORMATIONAL PILLARS:

The following pillars underscore our collective interests and reflect our voices across intersecting regional domains. By each of us doing our part to achieve progress in our respective areas of action, we advance the **Black Agenda** of the Greater Rochester community.

EDUCATION



● **Pillar: School Leadership**

Together we will work to sustainably reform primary and secondary educational systems and leadership.

We agree in Principle that...

- Vested members of our communities must control the school board, central district administration, and district resources.
- Members of the Black community must be represented proportionally to the student population, on the board, in administration, in the classroom, and in the unions.
- Parents, students, family members and the community are actively engaged in advocacy efforts at the school board and school leadership levels.

● **Pillar: School Curriculum**

Together we will work to change the curricula and instructional methods to be more accurate and culturally-responsive.

We agree in Principle that...

- Educators and other personnel at the K-12 level will be trained, coached, evaluated and regularly monitored on a continual basis to ensure fidelity to culturally responsive & appropriate pedagogy.
- Black staff, faculty, and administration are recruited and retained at both the K-12 and postsecondary educational levels.
- Endowed Afrikan-centered independent community schools and surround care systems are essential alternatives.
- Skilled Trades, Arts and Career Technical Education programming are critical components for expanding career options and opportunities.
- Current institutions and educational programs will incorporate a comprehensive Black Studies curriculum that focuses heavily on the history of Afrikan cultures, philosophy, spirituality, and the various perspectives of those in the diaspora (Including: Black Political Movements, Black Women’s Studies, Black Queer Culture Studies, etc).
- Current Curriculums need to be integrated with African & Afrikan/Black perspectives to provide a better global perspective on various subjects.



● **Pillar: Youth, Parent & Family Engagement**

Together we will work to encourage and support the engagement of parents, guardians, students and community members to improve educational outcomes of our children.

We agree in Principle that...

- Parenting and family development opportunities will be available for all community members. Such opportunities help to underscore the value and role of formal and informal education, and its importance for our posterity (i.e. the children).
- Parents, students family and community members are active participants in schools as visible role models and mentors for children and families
- Opportunities for continuing education and life-long learning will be available for community members to develop themselves for the community's benefit.
- Youth, parents, and community members will be educated in effective methods of communication, accompanied with tools for conflict resolution.
Youth, parents, and community members are actively engaged in developing and implementing "safe space" criteria for all school and community spaces (i.e.: no racism, no sexism, no homophobia, etc).

HEALTH & WELLNESS

- **Pillar: Health Disparities**

Through the development and execution of inclusive and equitable health policies we will eliminate all Health Disparities.



We agree in principle that:

- Our community will understand and positively influence the social determinants of health (those things in the environment that have a positive or negative impact on health outcomes).
- We will advocate for comprehensive, age appropriate health and sexual education- which includes related training.
- In addition to increasing access to healthcare, we must develop a comprehensive culturally-specific education plan for mental health to improve health outcomes.
- We will advocate for comprehensive, age appropriate health and sexual education – including training to eliminate taboos around anatomy & body function.

- **Pillar: Mental Health**

Together we will provide the necessary support to understand and remediate the effects of trauma and Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome and cultivate social-emotionally responsive parents, guardians, and advocates with the skills to improve stress management behaviors in our community.



We agree in principle that:

- We will use current and historical materials to better understand the concepts of White Supremacy, Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome, Implicit Bias, Structural Racism, and Stereotype Threat.
- We will command, create, direct, and manage the mechanisms (programs, services, and resources) for our own healing.
- All will understand the varied gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations – including references to the presence of such identities in other Afrikan cultures throughout history.
- We will identify, develop and support wellness practitioners and resources from our own communities.
- We will teach and learn one another's cultures and stories to avoid making erroneous conclusions and decisions regarding how to deal with one another.
- When observable, we will hold practitioners accountable for considering and formally acknowledging Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome in their diagnosis when working with our community.

- **Pillar: Physical Health and Fitness**

Together we will provide culturally responsive approaches to improve the physical health of our people and address the primary health concerns for our community (Diabetes, High Blood Pressure, heart disease, stroke, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and obesity)



We agree in principle that:

- Mental and physical fitness will be encouraged and supported.
- We will encourage our entire community to adopt a routine health check-up regimen.
- Positive health behaviors will be passed inter-generationally.
- We will promote the adoption of culturally responsive activities to improve the nutrition and physical activity of our community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Pillar: Community Ownership and Investment**

Together we will own, operate and control of our own neighborhood resources, including housing, local stores, fuel and energy stations, real estate, laundromats and other shared resources in the Black community.



We agree in Principle that...

- We reside and/or are vested in our community, and should thus own the majority of its shared assets.

- **Pillar: Black Community Trust**

Together we will work to ensure Black entities have better support from the Black community and equitable representation in regional initiatives.

We agree in Principle that...

- The establishment of a Black Community Trust and Chamber of Commerce is imperative.
- The entire community will learn the value of supporting these entities throughout the region.
- We must initiate our own training and development programs to ensure Black economic prosperity.



- **Pillar: Financial Literacy & Wealth Building**

Together we will establish self-directed financial institutions and investment communities to encourage financial freedom and trigger inter-generational wealth development.

We agree in Principle that...

- Entrepreneurs and the workforce must be contextually trained in a variety of professional and basic life skills—including financial planning, budgeting, saving and investing—in order to excel economically.
- We must thoroughly engage our content experts to develop effective models that lead to the building and sustaining of wealth.
- Education around the positive effects of spending and investing in our own communities must be included.

- **Pillar: Business Development**

Together we will leverage all economic resources in our community, to encourage and support entrepreneurship.

We agree in Principle that...

- There must be a community-wide approach aimed at changing that aspect of our current value systems that glorifies consumption versus production.
- Utilize small, medium and large neighborhood groups and community-based organizations to increase financial literacy, particularly in the area of economic development.
- Establishment and use of the Black Chamber will promote and fund the development of a Black business incubator.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS: The ability to learn from, relate to, and respond respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other cultures.

STRUCTURAL RACISM: The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics-historical, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal- that routinely advantages whites, while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. It is a system of hierarchy and inequity, primarily characterized by the preferential treatment, privilege and power for white people at the expense of Black, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Arab, and other racially oppressed people.

POST TRAUMATIC SLAVE SYNDROME (PTSS): Describes a set of behaviors, beliefs, and actions associated with or related to multi-generational trauma experienced by African Americans that include but are not limited to undiagnosed and untreated Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in enslaved Africans and their descendants.

BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE / COMMUNITY CHEST: An entity dedicated to economically empowering and sustaining African-American businesses and enterprises, by promoting entrepreneurship, economic interests, and “fair play” for its constituents.

COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: A comprehensive picture of the organization’s strategy. It clarifies how individual efforts and team projects can be connected to achieve the best outcome. It includes meaningful target measures and a sequence of activities that help focus on the key efforts that implement the strategy.

VESTED INTEREST: A personal stake or involvement in an existing system, arrangement, institution or undertaking, for particular personal reasons.

BLACK THINK TANK: A think tank or policy institute, research institute, etc. is an organization that performs research and advocacy concerning topics such as social policy, political strategy, economics, military, technology, and culture.

WHITE SUPREMACY: The belief, theory, or doctrine that white people are inherently superior to people from all other racial groups, especially Black people, and are therefore rightfully the dominant group in any society.

IMPLICIT BIAS: Refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance.

BLACK LIVES MATTER: Black Lives Matter (BLM) is an international activist movement, originating in the African American community that campaigns against violence toward Black people. BLM regularly organizes protest around the deaths of Black people in killings by law enforcement officers, and broader issues of racial profiling, police brutality, racial inequality in the United States criminal justice system.

DOMINANT CULTURE: The dominant culture in a society is the group whose members are in the majority or who wield more power than other groups. In the United States, the dominant culture is that of white, middle-class, Protestant people of northern European decent.

This agenda has been blessed by the Elders of our community. In the spirit of Sankofa it is crucial that we look to our Elders to provide the necessary context and wisdom as we continue to do the work of bettering our community.

For questions, comments, and feedback please visit www.BlackAgendaGroup.org or email Info@BlackAgendaGroup.org.

