



Applying Kwanzaa Principles to Education: Ujamaa

By Educator Barnes – December 29, 2021

Kwanzaa is celebrated from December 26 to January 1. According to the book “The Seven Days of Kwanzaa” by Angela Shelf Medearis, “In 1966, Dr. Karenga created Kwanzaa, a cultural holiday based upon the ancient customs of Africa ... Dr. Karenga hoped that the things that were studied and practiced during Kwanzaa would guide African-Americans all year long.” Each day of Kwanzaa covers one of the seven Kwanzaa principles. On each day of Kwanzaa, Indy K12 will explore how these principles can be applied to education.

The fourth principle of Kwanzaa is ujamaa which means cooperative economics. This principle means we should build our own businesses so we all can be profitable. For some reason, people forget schools are businesses. This business is supposed to produce people who are able to pursue their dreams whether that be to enroll in college, enlist in the military, or obtain employment. The reality is all schools don't serve Black students well. We need to have our own schools as an option.

In the book "Polite Protest," author Richard B. Pierce explained the history behind education in Indianapolis. I didn't have to read this book to know this history. I only had to look back a few generations. In 1936, my paternal grandmother graduated from Crispus Attucks High School. At the time, the high school was only attended by Black students. The high school was built for the purpose of keeping Black students from attending school with white students.

An idea born out of hate produced greatness. The Black educators were the best and possessed degrees beyond just the bachelor's degree. These Black educators pushed their Black students to Black excellence.

Today, when Black educators and Black parents say they want their own schools, it brings about anger and accusations of divisiveness. There are schools that are all white or mostly white, and that's by choice. Those people chose the neighborhoods they moved into. They chose not to live in diverse areas and hardly anyone complains. When we say we want the same, why do we get attacked?

If we want our own schools, we must support Black educators and leaders in creating them. We must support organizations that can be used for the benefit of students. For example, I donated money to Black World Schoolers Mobile Bookstore because I see the need of having a bookstore that is Blackity, Black, Black. The last book I purchased for my sons was from there. Could I have gotten the book somewhere else? Yes, but this time I know who I am supporting.

If Black educators produced Black excellence with fewer resources back when my grandmother was in high school just think of what we could do if we supported each other financially. Below, I have included Black people you can support. If I know you and I missed you, please charge it to my head, not to my heart. If you know someone I should add or if you want me to add you, let me know, and I'll update this piece.

Jason Allen, EdLanta

Dr. Erica Buchanan-Rivera, Identity Affirming Classrooms

Sarah Carpenter, Memphis Lift

Nita Creekmore, Love Teach Bless

Sharif El-Mekki, Center for Black Educator Development

Nehemiah Frank, The Black Wall Street Times

Kaya Henderson, Reconstruction

Ontay Johnson, EmpowerED Families

Dr. Stephen Jones, Dr. Jones Books

Dr. Valerie Camille Jones, Math Consultant

Baruti Kafele, Award-Winning Educator and Author

Natalie Pipkin, Black Worldschoolors Mobile Bookstore

Dr. Dena Simmons, LiberatED

Derrick Slack, Know Wonder Publishing

Julia E. Torres, Disrupt Texts

Educator Barnes, Blazing Brilliance