

HOW THE KWANZAA PRINCIPLES RELATE TO COOPERATIVES

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Ifateyo for
Ujamaa
Collective*



UMOJA (OOH-MOE-JAH)

Unity

To form and sustain a co-op, we have to come together as one, to unite, around a common goal. We will have unity of purpose and direction in order for the co-op to work; we unite our funds and creative capital to finance our co-operative businesses. We unite our hearts and soul energies to achieve the one goal of success. We unite our neighborhoods and communities around our efforts. Through co-ops we create Umoja.

KUJICHAGULIA (KOO-GEE-CHOCK-KA-LEE-YAH)

Self-determination

To create a cooperative, we must have a strong desire for self-determination – the ability to control our own lives – to successfully organize a cooperative because it requires self love, self sacrifice, energy, and love of people and community. It requires hard work and patience and only those willing to work hard enough for true independence will see the work through. KUJICHAGULIA.

UJIMA- (OOH-GEE-MAH) (1 OF 2)

Collective work and responsibility

Ujima, or collective work and responsibility, is the heart of cooperation, particularly worker cooperatives. We come together to share the work in a democratic way – not in a structure where the owners do not work, yet reap the majority of the profits – but in a structure where the workers share in the profits and losses of the business. We come together to be accountable to each other, to submerge egos and to respect the unique gifts that each of us brings to the work, to give birth to a product or service that reflects on us all in particular and on cooperatives, in general.

CONTINUED- UJIMA- CONTINUED (2 OF 2)

We work to be efficient, as every penny lost is a penny out of our pocket. We also work on a higher or broader level of responsibility. Co-ops are often formed to provide services where none exist, or a better quality of service or goods, and to provide independence and freedom for people and communities, so it is in this sense we work collectively to address and take responsibility for the collective needs for our community. Ujima!

UJAMAA (OOH-JA-MAAH)

Cooperative economics

A cooperative by definition is the practice of cooperative economics, a group of workers, consumers, buyers, owners come together to take care of their needs and/or jointly own a business. It often involves pooling money, expertise, and hopefully doing business with others who have formed cooperatives or who share similar principles. Ujamaa can be practiced in many forms: a worker co-op, a child care co-op, a business where the community owns shares, a housing cooperative, a nonprofit owning a business whose profits fund community groups, a community-owned shopping center, a nonprofit whose staff makes collective decisions, a gallery owned by local artists. Ujamaa is limited only by our creativity!

NIA (NEE-YAH)

Purpose

To set up a cooperative, or to do anything for that matter, you need purpose. Is the purpose to fill an unmet need not met by traditional capitalism which is only motivated by profit which it puts before people? Is it to do business in a way that is not harmful to Mother Earth? Is it to be able to give back to the community like the now-defunct Café Mawronaj who fed hungry kids, or Collective Copies in Amherst which gives 10% of its profits back to the community. Is it a way to make a living by giving your creative energy to the community instead of an exploitative corporation. Through Nia we create work that allows us to build on creating larger purpose in our communities.

KUUMBA (KOO-OOHM-BAH)

Creativity

To organize a cooperative, one must dig into the soul of our creativity. How do we creatively address all of the needs of our communities? How can we make do with less? How can we make this work without a lot of money? How do we use the unused resources, including people, in our communities? How can we create more beauty and joy in everything we do? How can we make work fun? How can we heal our people from the wounds of racism, sexism, ageism, heterosexism and the other “isms” that kill our love and damages our spirits? How can we create more love and trust among each other so that we value each other, and our businesses and our communities? Creativity is essential, and as a people, we are brimming with Kumba.

IMANI (EE-MAH-NEE) (1 OF 2)

Faith

To create and sustain a cooperative, we must have unshakeable belief that we can successfully run a business, that we can learn whatever we don't know, and come up with creative solutions for all problems. It takes faith in self and others of like minds to pull together and for the community to support a cooperative venture. We must have faith in our ability to choose the right workers to do their share of work and support, and faith in our abilities to prevent one person stealing all the money, faith in communities to support an effort of Ujamaa. We must believe in the brilliance, competency and commitment of our people to make the sacrifices of time, energy and comforts necessary to be self-supporting.

CONTINUED- IMANI- CONTINUED (2 OF 2)

And we have faith in the power of the unseen, a power greater than ourselves that influences the direction of humankind, to aid us in our just struggle for Kuchichagulia or self determination. Imani will see us through.