



**NKYINKYIM**

**Principled Adaptability**

*Individual Treatment Plans and the Cultural/Spiritual Domain*

**[www.sankofadwuma.com](http://www.sankofadwuma.com)**

**Adinkra symbol from the Akan people of West Afuraka/Afuraitkait (Africa)**



**Nkyinkyim**

(in-cheen'-cheem)

*“Obra kwan ye nkyinkyim”*

*Life’s road is full of twists and turns. We must learn to adapt.*

*The introduction of Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) culture to Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) people as a **core transmission of inheritance** illuminates our unique approach as Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) people to wellness from a holistic or **Whole Life** perspective. When Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans~Black People) become rooted in our culture – the knowledge of who we are and the intelligence, resilience and greatness of our Ancestresses and Ancestors – we become grounded. We have a proper sense of who we have been over thousands of years and what we are capable of. We gain insight into the reality that we have a purpose or function in the world and insight into how we must operate in order to fulfill this purpose – to fully execute this function.*

***Such insight is motivational for it establishes for the Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) individual the truth about his or her inherent value.***

*When the Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) individual embraces his or her inherent value or self-worth, he or she is inclined toward constructive behavior and is disinclined toward self-destructive behavior. Such an individual has empowered himself or herself to recognize and effectively adapt to the **nkyinkyim** – the twists and turns of life – with navigational skill. Culture thus becomes the anchor for wellness: **principled adaptability.***

*[Afuraka/Afuraitkait (Ah'-foo-rah-kah'/Ah'-foo-rah'-ette-kah'ette) is the original male/female name of the first continent. This ancient name means 'Land of the Creator/Creatress'. The male aspect of the name was later corrupted by europeans from Afuraka to 'Africa'. All Black People, wherever we exist in the world, are bio-genetically, culturally, psychologically and spiritually Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans), children (nu/nut) of Afuraka/Afuraitkait (Africa) in the true original sense of the term. The terms Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans~Black People) and Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) are used throughout this paper.]*

## Individual Treatment Plans and the Cultural/Spiritual Domain

In the **Individual Treatment Plan** (ITP) or **Individual Recovery Plan** (IRP) utilized by Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) Psychiatrists, Therapists, Social Workers, Case Managers, Community Support Workers and Educators within many human service agencies, educational and medical institutions, there is one domain that is greatly under-utilized – the domain referenced as the **Cultural/Spiritual** domain.

As Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) human service agents and educators drafting or amending an ITP or IRP for Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) clients, a *Whole Life* philosophic approach must be at the core of consideration. This is a philosophic approach that addresses **physical soundness** (*inclusive of natural foods, melanin and substance abuse abstinence*) and **spiritual soundness** (*inclusive of emotional, mental and psychological balance*) centered in **cultural awareness**. The *Cultural/Spiritual* domain is an instrument that allows us to fulfill our stated mission to our community through explicitly approaching wellness through a *Whole Life* philosophy. The definition of the *Cultural/Spiritual* domain in an ITP or IRP contains certain fundamental elements:

**CULTURAL/SPIRITUAL** – *sense of heritage and connection, fulfilling cultural responsibilities/expectations, participating in relevant activities, special issues around language and race, etc.*

For thousands of years, Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans) have recognized the reality that being grounded in the *soundness* of culture is key to our physical and spiritual wellness. This recognition is part of our intergenerational intellectual inheritance. Commensurate with this recognition is the reality that there are many areas within the *Cultural/Spiritual* domain that must be addressed in order for the Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) client to truly establish wellness within the *whole* of his or her *life*. Two examples:

For hundreds of years, since the beginning of the enslavement era in the western hemisphere until this day, our people have been programmed with the false notion of Black inferiority via the media, schools, religious institutions, governmental institutions, etc. The acceptance of the insane notion of Black inferiority engenders a false sense of *self-hatred*. This accepted self-hatred plays out in our daily interactions with one another and within ourselves. It is made manifest via a series of self-destructive behaviors including but not limited to: *domestic violence, sexual abuse, gang violence, drug abuse, drug dealing, individuals ridiculing, or being ridiculed because of, their dark complexions, natural hair and African/normal facial features; darker-skinned children and adults being treated negatively by teachers, parents and others while witnessing lighter-skinned children and adults being praised, treated with favoritism, etc.*

However, when Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans~Black People) are given an accurate assessment of our biological and cultural identity, our accomplishments over **thousands of years** around the world in the establishment and maintenance of civilization, our *positive inherited cultural values* and thus the brilliance of our Ancestral legacy, such knowledge becomes an *anchored-source of empowerment and resilience*. The re-incorporation of our positive inherited Ancestral values leads to transformative changes in outlook and behavior.

Our clients live in areas and conditions that they can directly associate with racism:

*The unjust harassment by police (including intimidation, Driving While Black, etc.)*

*The prison industrial complex which many clients and/or their children or relatives are in - even if innocent*

*The daily disrespect experienced by our clients in stores within their communities that are run by non-Afurakanu/non-Afuraitkaitnut (non-Africans~non-Blacks)*

*High poverty rates and the lack of employment opportunities while witnessing illegal immigrants being employed*

*The lack of services from the government in our communities or poorly managed services: poorly managed mass-transit services in our communities, trash collection issues, emergency utility issue response delays, emergency snow removal delays, being treated unfairly or ridiculed when applying for assistance at government agencies, poorly managed hospitals in our communities, poorly run schools with teachers and administrators who have no positive regard for Black children, etc.*

*The lack of respectable retail businesses or poorly run large retail establishments in our communities (e.g. major grocery store chains and convenience store chains being regularly out of water when the temperature outside is high, rotten fruits and vegetables, expired food items on the shelves, overpricing, etc. in our communities in comparison to other communities)*

*The inordinate number of liquor stores, liquor advertisements, cigarette advertisements, etc. in the community*

*Having to patronize retail establishments where consumers must purchase everyday items through bullet-proof glass - criminalization of the entire community*

*Struggling to pay market-rate rent for apartments that are owned by slum lords: rodent and insect infestation issues, heating issues, loitering issues*

*Living in high crime areas where the police look the other way with regard to drug dealing, prostitution, robbery, assault and other criminal activities*

When our clients live under many or all of the above-listed conditions and can trace these injustices directly to racism it can be overwhelming. Such issues when internalized by our clients can contribute to chronic anxiety, depression and anger. This further leads to physical disease such as hypertension, “self-medicating” such as alcohol and other drug abuse and overeating, which in turn leads to obesity and disease: diabetes, kidney disease, heart and lung disease, liver disease, etc. Moreover, the lack of coping skills and the internalization of self-hatred related to racism contribute to some clients exploding via domestic violence incidents, acting out other forms of violence or imploding under suicidal ideation, self-denigrating or self-harming behaviors. The confluence of these factors gives rise to high incidences of physical illness, death, incarceration and/or mental illness in our community inclusive of youth and adults – ‘uneducated’ and ‘educated’/professional.

However, the negative emotional, mental and psychological effects upon and destructive behaviors manifested by our clients can be reversed through engaging the clients through the *Cultural/Spiritual* domain. This is affected by providing our clients with accurate information about our *identity* as Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans~Black People), our *positive inherited cultural values* rooted in our

identity and our *unique approach* to the resolution of conflict and eradication of disordered thoughts and behavior rooted in our inherited cultural values.

Below is an example of a *Cultural/Spiritual* domain **Goal** and a corresponding set of three *Objectives* that can be utilized in an ITP or IRP for Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) clients:

**Embracing a sense of heritage to become grounded in a positive set of inherited values unique to the individual as a path to empowerment**

*Consumer will address racism and cultural bias and where its impact is felt in different areas of life*

*Consumer will educate herself/himself about her/his heritage and positive inherited cultural values with the help of Community Support Worker, Therapist, Case Manager, Social Worker, Psychologist*

*Consumer will actively work to incorporate learned/re-discovered positive inherited values into different aspects of life*

An example of an intervention in the *Cultural/Spiritual* domain that we have used successfully with young children as well as adults for over a decade is educating the individual on **melanin**. We provide the client with a 7-part definition of melanin (*see our: NKWAMUA Whole Life Journal [www.sankofadwuma.com](http://www.sankofadwuma.com)*). A few points:

Melanin is the chemical in our bodies that gives us our color. Melanin is found in our skin, hair, eyes and all major internal organs and systems. Without melanin, the organs would not function properly. Melanin is also found in animals, plants, minerals, the Ocean, Earth, clouds, stars, the Sun and is the Black Substance of Space making up over 99% of the universe which physicists refer to as *dark matter* and *dark energy*. Melanin is found at the site of infections, cuts and wounds. It helps to clot blood, and produces the natural black band-aid (*scab*) which bars further contamination while the body is healing. With regard to toxic drugs: The melanin molecule readily binds with drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, nicotine, etc. Black people, because of our high melanin content, therefore get hooked quicker and stay hooked longer on drugs than any other race. Drug use is thus more devastating to us than others.

Invariably when clients hear about how melanin, the chemical that makes them Black, is a chemical found in every aspect of Nature (Earth, Sun, Stars, plant life, animal life, mineral life – *all around them*), is key to the proper functioning of our organs and even helps to heal us, they develop a great respect—rooted in biology—for being Black. *They can no longer inferiorize themselves or other Black people by accepting the insanity of Black inferiority*. Clients, children and adults, are invariably intrigued, surprised and greatly appreciative of this lesson. Moreover, many begin to immediately and seriously reassess the idea of contaminating this wonderful chemical with toxic drugs and behavior.

There are innumerable lessons from Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) Culture that can transform notions of identity and *naturally* increase self-esteem leading to positive changes in behavior and motivation. These lessons span such issues as *resilience, decision making, conflict resolution, critical examination, the value of education/study, the value of cultural precedent, encoded values – the value of symbolism, natural foods and exercise and their effects upon physical and spiritual balance (inclusive of emotional, mental and psychological balance), the value of principled adaptability* and more from a

Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) *Whole Life* perspective. Such lessons can be shared in individual or group settings on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

Critical to the process of disseminating such lessons is the Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) human service agent or educator *facilitating the client's self-discovery* of how these lessons are part of an *inherited* set of *positive cultural values* – a *direct inheritance* from our Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) Ancestresses and Ancestors that is internal, *inborn*, and therefore can never be taken away from us. This set of positive inherited cultural values has applications that are transferrable to every aspect of life – the challenges we must meet and obstacles we must overcome. This set of positive inherited cultural values is as ancient as Afuraka/Afuraitkait (Africa), yet has particular relevance to and resonance with our functioning in a productive life-affirming manner today.

Utilization of the *Cultural/Spiritual* domain by Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) human service agents and educators in the service of our Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) clients expedites their recovery/restoration by increasing our clients' motivation and awakening their innate propensity toward personal and group empowerment. They *learn to adapt* and are thus empowered to navigate the **nkyinkyim**, *twists and turns of life*, with skill and dexterity. This is an expression of the Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) approach to wellness, a *Whole Life* approach reflecting *principled adaptability*.



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**NKWAMUA** *Whole Life Journal* is a publication used by Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) human service agents and educators as an official or unofficial curriculum guide when engaging their Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) clients in the *Cultural/Spiritual* Domain. It is also a publication for Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African~Black) individuals and parents who desire to enhance their awareness and their children's awareness of our trustory and culture. For more information about this publication please visit:

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