

Welcome to

VOICES OF UJAMAA

Volume 2

A new way to stay connected!
Get the latest updates, creative tools
and stories from our Collective.



VOICES OF UJAMAA

*A love note to Ujamaa Collective from
our elder member and Boutique
Merchandiser, **Ms. Frankie Harris***

Greetings Family,
I take this moment in time to
pause, reflect and remember what
we carry together.

To see what has come about as a direct
result of our relationships warms my
heart and quenches my spirit. It is an
honor to showcase the unique art and
holistic creations of this collective body
of sisters.

Thank you for the trust you have in me
as I continue to serve my sisters and my
community. ELEVATE EVERYTHING!
Peace, Blessings, and Bliss.

~ Sister Frankie



THE WORK IN ACTION

A REFLECTION FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Gains of Black Women in Ujamaa Collective Through Everyday Giving, Mutual Aid, and Collective Care By LaKeisha Wolf

Behind the scenes of the Ujamaa Collective, is a connected community of Black women focused on cooperation, mutual aid, and collective care, embodying the spirit of "ujamaa," which means "extended family" in Swahili. Our "sisterhood" collective approach emphasizes community and collective progress, allowing members to experience significant gains beyond economic benefits. Economic agency is a key outcome, as members pool resources to support entrepreneurial endeavors, creating a sustainable economic model that reduces financial strain and expands opportunity. This cooperation fosters economic resilience through collaborative ventures and microloans. Additionally, Ujamaa strengthens our community bonds, with mutual aid practices enhancing solidarity and trust. Members build a culture where we feel valued and understood, fostering a sense of belonging that helps navigate challenges. The collective promotes mental and emotional well-being by providing a support network that alleviates stress and anxiety, creating a safe space for sharing experiences.

Furthermore, cultural preservation and empowerment are vital in Ujamaa, as the collective celebrates cultural traditions and reinforces pride in heritage through educational initiatives and events. Through this ongoing work for almost two decades, a community of practice has emerged which allows people to engage in culture shifting work, building a sense of identity rooted in connection and cooperation, versus colonization and competition. Participation in Ujamaa encourages personal growth and development, and our members have access to peer mentorship, skill-building workshops and educational resources within an environment of continuous learning, helping us pursue personal and collective goals with confidence. Overall, the work of Ujamaa Collective illustrates how everyday giving, mutual aid, and collective care can create a supportive, empowered, and resilient community.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Germaine Gooden-Patterson, Entrepreneur and Wellness Advocate



***FIND HER PRODUCTS AT
UJAMAA BOUTIQUE***



OWNER AND MAKER OF CHAKRA AND YOGA INSPIRED WELLNESS PRODUCTS, GERMAINE CREATES BOTH SERVICES AND INTENTIONAL PRODUCT DESIGNS ROOTED IN BALANCE AND ALIGNMENT. HER WORK ENCOURAGES THE ELEVATION OF MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT.

SHE RECENTLY EXPANDED HER OFFERINGS TO INCLUDE YOGA AND CHAKRA-INSPIRED T-SHIRTS, INCLUDING HER ORIGINAL TRADEMARKED ELEVATE T-SHIRT DESIGN.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026, GERMAINE PLANS TO EXPAND FURTHER INTO TEXTILES, CONTINUING TO BUILD A WELLNESS BRAND THAT BLENDS CREATIVITY WITH CONSCIOUSNESS.

A MEMBER OF UJAMAA COLLECTIVE SINCE 2019, SHE CURRENTLY SERVES AS AN AMBASSADOR, CONTRIBUTING HER PRESENCE, LEADERSHIP, AND COMMITMENT TO COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS.

WE CELEBRATE HER DEDICATION TO WELLNESS, ARTISTRY, AND COLLECTIVE GROWTH.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Nisha Blackwell, Founder and Lead Designer, Knotzland, LLC

FOUNDER AND LEAD DESIGNER OF **KNOTZLAND**, NISHA BLACKWELL TRANSFORMS DISCARDED TEXTILES INTO BOLD, HANDCRAFTED BOW TIES AND ACCESSORIES.

WHAT BEGAN AS A CREATIVE RESPONSE TO FABRIC WASTE HAS GROWN INTO A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED SUSTAINABLE FASHION BRAND ROOTED IN ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INTENTIONAL DESIGN.

A MEMBER OF UJAMAA COLLECTIVE FOR OVER ONE YEAR, NISHA VALUES BEING PART OF A THOUGHT-FILLED COLLECTIVE OF BLACK WOMEN CREATORS, ENTREPRENEURS, AND MAKERS.

HER NEWEST COLLECTION, TOMORROW'S GARDEN, EXPLORES AFROFUTURISM THROUGH FABRIC SCRAPS, METALS, AND RECONSTRUCTED PRINTS, MEDITATING ON THEMES OF COMMUNAL RESTORATION AND POSSIBILITY.

WE CELEBRATE HER ARTISTRY, VISION, AND COMMITMENT TO CONSCIOUS CREATION.



View Nisha's full interview
here:



Featured on Danny Glover



KNOTZLAND



CIRCLE ROUNDUP

The Roundup provides an overview of Ujamaa Collective's interconnected projects and partnerships through our cooperative circles.

The purpose of our Collective's circles is to support the cultivation of creativity, collaboration, and shared leadership within our organization through cooperative skill-sharing, collective decision-making, and mutual support. Together, we engage in initiatives that grow sustainable economics through products, services, and relationships aligned with our values of meaningful work, community, creativity, wellness, and fair trade.

Cultivating Holistic Greatness

Our **Body Care Circle** is continuing to grow its Radiant Roots Collective from the signature products currently available in our boutique. From routine market days to charting our processes and progress, our goal is to get the word out about our wonderful non-toxic products so customers can discover them.

Additionally, healthy formulas that give support in the area of home hygiene will be made accessible to us all. Catch us on the scenes of community events hosted by us and others, offering our DIY Beauty buffets, sharing healthy products and ingredient knowledge.



Ujamaa Member Bekezela Mguni

Presenting Eco-Essence Phase Two

The **Fashion Circle** is taking sustainability to the next level. We are excited to extend our Eco-Essence offerings, a series dedicated to the future of exploring upcycled textiles, transformed into fashionable art, to community in a new way

From now until June 2026, Fashion Circle members are working with a group of women from across the City to develop prototypes in the areas of clothing, home décor, and accessories. Our goal is to work collectively to produce upcycled and sustainable products that keep textiles from the landfills and help us reimagine ways to utilize what's already here, as well as root into our innate wisdoms.

Curating Connections

The **Creative Community Engagement Circle** is coming off the heels of a successful Black Love Day 2026, our first Ujamaa Collective event of the year co-facilitated by our dedicated Ambassadors and Plus Members.

We're working with community partners to create a Calendar of Events that builds culturally responsive experiences, centered on love and healing through creative practices that support wellness and sustainable community care.

Stop by our boutique to learn more about member inventory and upcoming collaborations.



CULTURE & WELLNESS

Africana Wellness Conference: March 2026

At Ujamaa, we approach wellness as a collective practice rooted in culture, relationship, and shared care. From that place, we were honored to continue our partnership with Legacy Arts Project with the 7th Annual Africana Wellness Conference. Held on March 21, 2026, at the Community Empowerment Association in Homewood, the conference continues to gather our community into a shared practice.



Malcolm Thomas: Community Conversation about Ubuntu and Wellness

Ujamaa's partnership with the conference has grown, rooted in shared values and a shared commitment to culturally grounded care. This work has never been about quick fixes or surface solutions. It has always been about creating space where healing can unfold in ways shaped by the people who show up.

In the midst of ongoing social, political, and economic shifts, it became clear why the sustainability of self and of community matters. This year, we arrived at a moment that asked more of us, with the theme "Now That We're Here, Let's Be Human." To be human requires care. Caring for ourselves was not separate from collective care; it made it possible. We tended to ourselves so we could keep showing up for our families, our communities, and the work before us. The Africana Wellness Conference offered space to practice that. A place to pause. To reconnect. To be resourced. Many left fuller than they arrived.



Ujamaa Member Tia Baker leading a workshop on menopause

We were reminded that interdependence is not something to outgrow, but something to return to. The conference day reflected this way of being. There was space to engage and space to rest. Workshops invited reflection, learning, and embodied care. We shared a meal, connected with community health and resource vendors, and held conversations without rushing. Nothing needed to be consumed. Everything was meant to be experienced.

As we move forward, we carry what was practiced that day. Wellness is not meant to be carried alone. It is something we practice and grow into together.



BLACK LOVE DAY

BLACK LOVE DAY 2026 @ HILL DISTRICT LIBRARY – SAT, FEB 14, 2026

Black Love Day is a commemorative observance centered on celebration, forgiveness, reconciliation, atonement, and ritual according to Ayo Handy Kendi, who founded the day of observance in 1993. Traditionally it has been celebrated annually on February 13th around the nation and the world as a 24-hour demonstration of Love in Action. Mama Ayo Handy-Kindi chose the thirteenth of February “because 13 symbolizes death to an old way of living and thinking – to old attitudes of love in action which can be symbolic or actual physical acts of lovingkindness.

This year, Ujamaa Collective celebrated Black Love Day on February 14th to focus on community connection and affirmation. The celebratory atmosphere was warm and inviting on such a cold day. We opened with an InterPlay warm-up led by our Membership Director, Tia Baker, who is an InterPlay Leader-in-Training. InterPlay uses movement, voice, story, and relaxation to tap into the wisdom of our bodies in creative ways.

Collective members of the Community Engagement Circle, Mama Toni McClendon and Carmella Jones, both gave a wonderful explanation of Black Love Day and how it can apply to every part of our lives. Toni provided the background and history of Black Love Day as envisioned by Mama Ayo Handy-Kindi.

Carmella poured her heart and soul into presenting the five tenets. She was truly “Love in Action!” Everyone eagerly took part in a special demonstration of Black Love by contributing lines to a collectively written poem. The love vibration was further heightened with the Love Line. Folks whispered positive affirmations to each other as we were led down two rows in a soul train line. Through laughter and tears, we heard wonderful things about ourselves from others, even from those we didn’t know before that moment. It was both a magical and spiritual time.

Mama Toni led the Black Love Day Pledge as we made commitments to act on the tenets in the coming days and throughout the year. Everyone then had an opportunity to speak on what they had learned or received from the program. Gathering in a Unity Circle, we ended the event together by sending out positive Love Vibrations to each other, to our families, to the community, and to the Creator. After that we joyfully danced on Behalf of Black Love Day.

The Five Tenets of Black Love Day:

Love for the Creator
Love for Self
Love for Family
Love for Community
Love for Black people

[Click here to read our Black Love Poem](#)



Ujamaa Member Carmella Jones



DEAR UJAMAA SISTERS

What if Black Love isn't about emotion at all, but collective responsibility? This edition of *Dear Ujamaa Sisters* explores how community begins with the planned intention to show up for one another.

We hear the phrase Black Love often...

Spoken as encouragement, written in affirmations, and offered as resistance.
And it feels right when we say it because we instinctively understand it means more than kindness or cultural pride.

But what does Black Love look like?

For our community, love has never been merely emotional. It has always been practical, hands-on. It has always been protective. It has always been the way people cared for one another when larger systems did not.

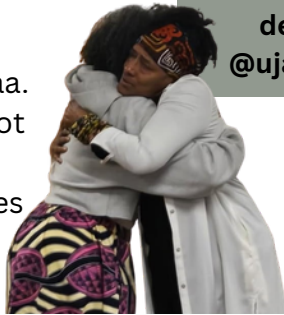
Black Love is the adult who keeps an eye on *all* the children, not just their own.

What about meals shared during illness, unemployment, or grief?

Or information passed along quietly — who's hiring, who needs help, where can we be safe?

Your ancestors did not survive merely because they felt affection toward one another. They survived because they practiced responsibility toward one another.

This is the beginning of Ujamaa. Cooperative economics cannot exist without cooperative relationships. Before resources can be shared, trust must exist. And trust grows only when people remain present with one another.



**We would love to hear
your feedback and
questions.**

**Please email us at:
dearujamaasisters
@ujamaacollective.org**

Yet many of us now live near each other but remain strangers. We care about community in principle but often operate in isolation. We were trained to rely only on ourselves because, historically, we often had to.

Ujamaa is Black Love organized. It is love translated into everyday planning and action.

It's recommending one another, supporting one another's work, and protecting one another's resources. Individual success does not secure a people, but collective stability does.

So, I offer a reflection:
Who around you is not asking for admiration and accolades, but for connection and partnership?

Black Love begins when we move from appreciation to responsibility. And when we do, Ujamaa stops being an idea and becomes the way we live with one another.

Anita D Russell

**But survival alone cannot sustain a people.
Black Love begins when we choose engagement.
It's learning names and remembering stories.
It's checking on elders and mentoring youth.
It's sharing opportunities without competition.**

**Black Love is not merely agreement.
It is a commitment to staying in the conversation
long enough to understand.
It is correcting without humiliation and supporting
without control.
It is showing up consistently.**

COLLECTIVE WISDOM

Take a moment to respond to this quarter's question and add your voice to the wisdom we are growing together.

What are you building now that will sustain you later?

Submit your response to: dearujamaasisters@ujamaacollective.org

Reach us at: www.ujamaacollective.org
2512 Wylie Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Tues-Fri: 11am-5pm and Sat: 11am-4pm

Next edition: July 15, 2026

We are committed to securing a permanent home where Black women artists and cultural workers can thrive. This space will support creativity, collaboration, and community impact. Your support helps bring this vision to life.

JOIN US

Special thanks to our Creative Community Engagement Circle (CCEC) members:
Tia Baker, Bekezela Mguni, Alana Griffin, EMPRESS Jenni,
Lois Toni McClendon, Anita Russell, Nisha Blackwell



COLLECTIVE WISDOM RESPONSE

OUR RESPONSE TO LAST VOLUME'S QUESTION

Question: How do I break toxic patterns, step into my gifts, and build community through cooperative economics, sisterhood, food, childcare, and creativity? -Sis R.

Dear Sister R,

Thank you for trusting us with such an honest and expansive question. What you shared reflects a deep desire for personal growth and community impact.

You said you love to paint. That is a meaningful place to begin. Creative practice can be both grounding and connective. Consider inviting two or three women to gather and paint with you regularly. Keep it simple and consistent. Sisterhood often begins in small, intentional spaces.

Breaking toxic patterns is important work, and it does not have to be done alone. It is healthy to seek guidance beyond yourself. This may look like therapy, spiritual direction, coaching, mentorship, or joining a creative or healing circle. Emotional support strengthens the foundation for everything else you want to build.

If cooperative economics is on your heart, begin with conversation and relationship. Meet with one or two women to discuss shared needs and shared resources. Explore starting a small contribution circle, a skill exchange, a shared childcare rotation, or a community meal schedule. Trust, transparency, and accountability come before expansion.

If you feel called to feed your community or support families, start with one day, one meal, or one partnership. Sustainable impact grows through steady commitment. You do not need to build everything at once. Choose one starting point. Develop it with care. Allow it to grow naturally.

We are encouraged by your vision. Women who ask these questions are already shaping change.

Warm regards,

Your Ujamaa Sisters

DISCLAIMER

As our community continues to grow, we may not be able to respond to every submission. Please know that each question is valued, and we appreciate you trusting us with your stories and reflections.

COMMUNITY RECAP

FROM OUR COMMUNITY: JANUARY-APRIL



BLACK LOVE DAY PARTICIPANTS



WELLNESS CONFERENCE: GUEST SPEAKER
JULIUS BOATWRIGHT



MACEDONIA FACE HERBAL COMMUNITY CLASS



RACIAL JUSTICE SUMMIT



UJAMAA STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING



ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT