

***Bi Nka Bi* Professional Development/Community-Building Workshop Series
Facilitator, Ama Oforiwaa Aduonum (Nana), PhD**



“I would say that if every instructor takes this workshop, the quality of education that students receive would jump exponentially.”
Testimonial 2023

Bi Nka Bi Practice

My vision is for Communities that uphold Belonging, Equity, Justice, Respect, and Love for all. I cultivate welcoming, sustainable, and productive healing spaces where everyone’s authentic selves are welcomed, valued, and celebrated at different organizations. I provide workshops using ancestral knowledge, proverbs, music, movement, games, play, storytelling, and other indigenous teachings to help craft a plan to build sustenance and the common good of our communities. The sessions are grounded in several Ancestral teachings of the Akan of Ghana: Wisdom, Respect, Love, Humility, Bravery, Truth, Honesty, Interdependence, and Community.

Mission

My mission is to:

- Celebrate our authentic selves
- Embrace full human experiences and life journeys
- Care for each other and ourselves
- Heal land and our spaces
- Cultivate welcoming spaces
- Bring joy and amusement, play to each other

Proposal Title

Bi Nka Bi (“One should not bite another”): Finding, Celebrating, and Sustaining Our Authentic Selves as Artists, Scholars, Instructors, and Professionals

Proposal Description

How do we do EDIAB+ work when we don’t know ourselves? How do we interact with students, our colleagues, and community members when we do not know ourselves or each other? How can we get to a place of healing, belongingness, and love when we do not know ourselves? In this 2-day radical, immersive, intensive, inclusive, and holistic journey, participants will connect with other colleagues to create a campus community and others where everyone’s authentic selves are welcomed, valued, and celebrated. We have been talking about students’ and workers’ belongingness and well-being

but have not explored faculty and staff belongingness and well-being. In this multi-sensory, embodied workshop, we'll explore our identities, celebrate our authentic selves, and explore ways to sustain our energy as artists, instructors, scholars, community members. The sessions are grounded in several ancestral teachings of the Akan of Ghana: Wisdom, Respect, Love, Humility, Bravery, Truth, Honesty, Interdependence, and Community.



Adinkra: Ghanaian Akan Intellectual Tradition

We use various modalities of arts, indigenous knowledge, and journaling exercises to actively engage our senses as we chart our own journey for well-being and community. After the workshop, participants are encouraged to participate in bi-monthly check-ins to continue their journey in the supportive community. Ultimately, I hope *Bi Nka Bi* will become a way of life.



Multisensorial activities: Beading Our Authentic selves



Facilitator, Nana Ama Oforiwaa Aduonum, PhD

Number of Participants
12-15 (Faculty/Staff)

Materials

Wood beads, Beading thread, Journal, Air dry clay, drum buckets, and drumsticks

Timeline and Schedule

There will be a total of 2 sessions, 4-hrs, per session.

Schedule

Day 1:

Sankofa—Uncovering Ourselves towards Discovery

Duafe—Our Beautiful Authentic Selves, Alone and in Community

Day 2:

Ahwene Pa Nkasa: Our Beautiful Authentic Selves, Alone and in the classroom towards
Inclusive Pedagogy, Belongingness

Bi Nka Bi in Practice—Putting it all Together

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to

1. Connect with other colleagues to create a community where everyone's authentic selves are welcomed, valued, and celebrated.
2. Appraise participants' thoughts about their sense of belonging and well-being in different spaces.
3. Critically engage, examine, and explore ways to sustain our energies as artist-instructor-scholars, members of communities.
4. Understand how different modalities of arts and journaling exercises promote well-being.
5. Chart our journeys for well-being and community.
6. Promote camaraderie, collegiality, harmony, and productivity for the good of the community
7. Work towards an inclusive pedagogy and community.
8. Explore, understand, and engage with several Ancestral teachings of the Akan of Ghana as frameworks for this walk/journey.
9. Understand the importance of multi-sensory approach in exploring our identities and celebrating our authentic selves.
10. Promote sustainable supportive communities.
11. Understand the transformative power of the arts.

Take Away/Artefact

Clay molding, Wrist Bracelet, Personal Manifesto/testimonials/statements

Bibliography

“Akan Philosophy of the Person,” 2016. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/akan-person/>

Merriam, Sharan B, and Kim, Young Sek. 2008. “Non-Western Perspectives on Learning and Knowing.” *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, no. 119, pp. 71-81.

Testimonials/Manifesto from *Bi Nka Bi* Cohort 1 (May-June 1, 2023)

“The *Bi Nka Bi* workshop series is a radical, inclusive perspective on knowing, learning, and teaching by fostering a classroom community where both instructors and students (individually and collectively) can express their beautiful, authentic selves. I thoroughly enjoyed the articles, reflection, drumming, clay sculpture, storytelling, sharing, enacting classroom scenarios, and beading. Learning and teaching with the *Bi Nka Bi* philosophy is embodied, representational, informal, communal, and holistic. I’m incorporating the activities in my pedagogy and practice as a writing instructor.”



I
was
sand
buried
beneath
rivers
sea
fossil
coral
stones
unearthed
seeds

embryonic
trees
now
on
You
on
You
known
on
You
enough
on

You
seen
on
You
beautiful
on
You
loved
together
glorious

Cynthia Nwakudu, Ph.D. Graduate Student
Creative Writing
English Department
Illinois State University

“Attending the *Bi Nka Bi* workshop was one of the highlights of my summer. I have attended many professional development and team-building workshops during my academic career, and I can honestly say the *Bi Nka Bi* workshop was by far the best. This workshop was hands down the most meaningful to me not only as an educator but as a human being. From the first day of the workshop, it was clear that our facilitator, Nana, was incredibly passionate about creating a community and that she cared deeply about getting to know each of us and our individual lived experiences. I would highly recommend this workshop to others because I know for certain that I have been profoundly changed for the better after taking part in it. I know the lessons I learned and the connection I made with Nana and the others who took part in the workshop will continue to enrich my life infinitely”

Megan Hopper, Associate Professor
Journalism Program Coordinator
School of Communication
Illinois State University

"The *Bi Nka Bi* workshop with Ama Oforiwaa Aduonum was the most meaningful and memorable professional development workshop I've participated in. The multimodal activities we did and the discussions we had, informed by concepts from Akan culture in Ghana, facilitated a deep exploration of our relationships with ourselves and others, and what it means to live and work in community. I would highly recommend the *Bi Nka Bi* workshop to anyone.”

Rachel L. Shively
Editor of Study Abroad Research in
Second Language Acquisition and International Education
Professor of Spanish and Applied Linguistics
Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
Illinois State University

The "Bi Nka Bi" workshop was a refreshing break from the usual Eurocentric Western ideas we tend to be exposed to in the United States. I've gone to a lot of equity workshops, but none would emphasize philosophies from Africa like this. It was so interesting and I wish this was a more common occurrence. Nana has a very charismatic personality and made the workshop so fun for the participants. Doing some introspective activities that focused on who we are as individuals was a wonderful break from other professional development I've done. It was a beautiful bonding experience for participants to get to know both themselves and each other. Taking some time to reflect and express ourselves creatively was enjoyable, therapeutic, educational, and enlightening."

Lesya Zhukovska
Department of Mathematics
Assistant Professor
Illinois State University

It was truly an opportunity to explore yourself, your identities, personhood, and more through an Afrocentric pedagogy. There are many concepts of this workshop that I will be incorporating into my courses in the Fall. Nana Ama is truly a gem and a gift to our campus, our community, and our country. I have praised her name and shared about Bi Nka Bi in many places since then. I look forward to continuing my journey of growth and self-learning.

Nathan Stephens
Assistant Professor
School of Social Work
Illinois State University