



Frequently Asked Questions about the South Florida Council of African Elders

1. I am not from Africa. Does this Council have anything to do with me?

In the Cultural Wellness movement, we use the term 'African' to refer to all people whose families originated on the continent of Africa, including those whose ancestors were trafficked to other parts of the world during the atrocity of enslavement.

The purpose of using the term African to collectively refer to these descendants is to eliminate all the artificial and needless divisions between us that arise when we refer to ourselves by geographic or other sub-groupings (African American, Jamaican/Jamaican American, Bohemian, Haitian/Haitian American, etc.) Referring to us as African is not designed to ignore or remove our other cultural affiliations and pride and is intended only to help us find strength in unity.

2. What is this South Florida Council of African Elders?

The South Florida Council of African Elders is a new governance group for our area, born of feedback from the community during local Community Think Tank meetings where the needs of people of African Descent are discussed. During the meetings, people of all ages acknowledged and expressed great longing for a restoration of the role of Elder in our communities.

African communities on the continent historically and in the present-day count on the wisdom and lived experience of the people who have thrived through times good and bad. These elders share knowledge with people who are traveling through life and encountering various opportunities and concerns. Our work here and now is to capture the historical strengths and leadership of our Elders, and blend in the power and resilience we have developed in our survival and thriving through enslavement, for use as tools for tomorrow.

3. What will the Council do?

The Council's purpose is to harvest the lifelong skills and wisdom of African American Elders for the good of the community. The Council will interact with our communities, local and eventually, national, leadership in faith, government, or other areas on behalf of the people of African Descent in Broward, Miami-Dade, and West Palm Beach counties.

According to African American History Professor Manu Ampim, "Every 'Black' community should establish a council of elders to help guide that particular community. There are a number of examples of African societies governed by elders (gerontocracy) because of their collective and accumulative wisdom. This is an important philosophy that should be adopted because a council of elders could be consulted in a variety of matters, ranging from family or marriage disputes, community-wide issues, naming of buildings and community centers, and directing resources to supporting important projects. Without a council of elders most Black communities will remain disorganized and lacking direction and effective leadership."



4. Will the council follow ancient African religious or spiritual practices that I might not be able to support due to my own faith, religion, or cultural practices? Will it adhere to ancient practices that might have excluded the role or involvement of some community members?

The community and council members need not worry that the activities of its governance will conflict with personal, spiritual, or religious beliefs. The Council's composition will include men and women who have lived a quality life of service and who have achieved the esteemed status of Elder as they have advanced in years.

Restoring the necessary and healthy relationship with the Elder phase of life and status retrieves the humanity of all, setting our worldview back in proper balance. The council returns power to communities and decreases involvement with law enforcement or governmental units to regulate environments and hold norms for safety. People of African descent will have role models much more powerful than mentors, who will afford us a new vision of what is possible for our lives.

5. How will the council be selected and installed?

Nominees must meet these criteria:

- The Elder must be of African descent.
- The Elder must be one who embraces leadership and growth, not defined as an Elder merely by age but rather by good repute and service to the community.
- The Elder must be 62 years of age or greater.
- The Elder must complete an Elder's Rite of Passage.
- The Elder must be nominated by one or more members of the South Florida African (descent) community.

·The Elder must attend council meetings and be available to provide guidance to the diverse local African community, including individuals, organizations, government, and faith leaders.

The Elder's service to the community will be reviewed by the Nominating Committee. This review includes an interview of the Elder and his or her references. After completing the Elder's Rite, the Nominees will be installed in a public ceremony, and this will establish the first South Florida Council of African Elders.

Do you have more questions?

Please contact us at (754) 777-0806 or email theculturecures@fireforgedrecovery.com.

Thank you for your participation in the process of helping our culture heal.