

I Am

BECAUSE WE ARE



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“I am because we are”



African Resource Center of West Michigan
Grand Rapids, Michigan



*Our elders say,
“I am because we are.”*

*These words are more than a reflection
on individual identity
or a slogan about communal existence.*



*They offer a profound lens through which we understand
our place in this beautiful, complex universe;
a world shaped by mutual respect, shared dignity,
and a commitment to one another's well-being.*





*Ubuntu is a timeless truth,
passed down through generations;
whispered beside village fires, echoed through city streets,
and blared from horns in bustling markets
and jubilant concert halls.
It calls us back to our shared humanity.*

A cord of three strands is not easily broken.

*We are stronger together;
watching over one another, holding each other up.*

We rise because someone lifted us.



We heal because someone stayed and offered care.

We learn because someone took the time to teach.

And we belong because someone made space.



*Hatred is easy—it lets us hurl our anger at those around us.
Fear is simple—it tempts us to offload our frustration onto others.
But hatred and fear do not elevate us.
They are poison, eroding the very core of our humanity.*





*Love, on the other hand,
affirms who we are as a human family.
In a loving community: Your joy becomes mine.
Your struggle becomes ours.
And your dream?
It becomes a shared journey.*

Ubuntu teaches us that:

*A person becomes who they are
through the influence of others.*

When I am weak, I lean on your strength.

When you are in need, I share what I have.



*When we rely on one another,
we build bridges—not walls.
We listen with our hearts.
We choose love over fear.
We choose compassion over hate.*





Because when one belongs, we all become.

What one becomes reflects who we all are.

Our Elders are wise, after all:

“I am because we are.”

*We bring out the best in humanity
when we look out for one another;
when we nurture growth, foster dignity,
and help each other thrive
in this vast, shared universe we call home.*



Activity Ideas

1. The Circle of Influence Map

Participants draw a circle and fill it with the names of people who shaped them.

- Who appears in your circle, and why?
- How does seeing your influences visually change your understanding of Ubuntu?

2. The Circle of Influence Map

Invite each person to complete statements like:

- “I rise because someone...”
- “I learned because someone...”
- “I belong because someone...”

Then discuss:

- What patterns do you notice in these stories?

3. Bridge-Building Brainstorm

In small groups, identify a “wall” in your community (a misunderstanding, division, or exclusion). Then brainstorm:

- What would a bridge look like in this situation?

4. Acts of Ubuntu Challenge

Participants commit to one small act of Ubuntu for the week. Afterward, reflection:

- How did your action affect you and the other person?

5. Collective Poem or Mural

Create a shared piece titled “We Are Because ...”

- What themes emerge when everyone contributes to a single creation?

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Portions of this handbook and its accompanying video—including draft text, images, and narration—were generated with the assistance of AI tools.

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