Appendix C:
The BAKALA Definition of a Person (Asar Imhotep)¹

One of the greatest challenges I have faced throughout my years of cultural engagement among African-American people has been trying to get us to understand that we are valuable; that we are a treasure, a magnanimous people. The Western culture of colonialism has drastically devalued the human being so much that we in turn see our worth within a construct that is alien to our core spirit or being. In the West, man is inherently ‘sinful.’ This is not the world-view of the African/African-American. Man is divine and, through his wrong actions, falls to the depths of the most grotesque beings. You are born with the potential to do right and wrong; you are not born with a propensity do wrong.

It is safe to assume that the American establishment did not know what a human being was because they had/have no philosophy concerning the primacy of the person. It became our mission to personify ubuntu (human centeredness) and for our struggle to be the framework in which to define what it meant to be human.

**Side Bar**

I was in a recent communication with a friend of mine in Tanzania and I was telling him about my plans for this book. We were dialoging about the name BAKALA and its root KAA as fire or charcoal. He went on to tell me that in Tanzania, for instance, if you wanted to bake something outside in the sun, it is believed that wicked people would come by and steal your food. If you wanted to drive the people away you would place a piece of charcoal on top of the food. It could be a metaphor for the effects of light upon darkness. Here it is inferred that the essence of charcoal drives away wickedness, foolishness or evil. This idea works beautifully with our concept of BAKALA; for it informs us of our innate propensity to drive out the syndrome of foolishness from society and our obligation to do so on every front as the Charcoal People. It’s no wonder why the Bakala people have been at the forefront of human rights since this country’s inception.

Unfortunately, we did not formally make a statement informing the world of our humanistic values: our world-view. In other words, we did not develop a core philosophy for being human that could permeate throughout the channels of the African-American population.

We knew in our hearts what it meant to be human, but we did not express it in terms of an African-American philosophy. We lacked a unifying culture in which this core philosophy could be perpetuated for generations to come. As Dr. King noted in the conclusion, we did not have the leisure time to explore these dimensions in full. Assuming that we currently have the leisure time to explore these dimensions, I offer for consideration, as a basis for a theoretical framework, the *Zulu Definition of the Person* as told by Jordan K. Ngubane (1979). After reviewing this poetic *Definition of the Person*, I felt that it was a good source in which to construct our own *Definition of the Person*. I chose this appellation because I felt that it honestly spoke to what we were trying to say during the Civil Rights and Black Power eras of our struggle. The philosophy already agrees with many of our religious traditions and it even finds similitude with the core spirit of the early Hip Hop Movement. I also chose the *Zulu Definition of the Person* as our basis for self-definition because throughout my studies of African cultures, I discovered various philosophical connections between southern and western African people (from which we derived). Jordan Ngubane has come to discover this as well. He makes note that (1979:90):

Simultaneous validity was given added significance when I traveled in West Africa in 1958 and the United States in 1969. I discovered that the West Africans saw reality from perspectives I had, in my ignorance, regarded as peculiar to the ‘Buntu’ teaching in my part of the continent. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the common factor in Southern and Western African experiences was our evaluation of the person, which gave identical rhythms to our different cultural experiences.

What he is affirming in this passage is that there is an underlying spirit that unites all of the cultures of Africa as Diop proposed. It also confirms for us that the philosophy, in which I will demonstrate below, is the very notion of the human being we believed prior to being enslaved in the Americas. This is what we felt in our hearts, but couldn’t find the language to speak our own special cultural truths. So what we are doing right now is going back and reclaiming our original philosophical framework and applying it to our current circumstances. Below is the *Zulu Definition of the Person* modified slightly by me to reflect our circumstances.

**The BAKALA Definition of the Person**

I am;
I am alive;
I am conscious and aware;
I am unique;
I am who I say I am; I am the value of INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS
I forever evolve inwardly and outwardly in response to the challenge of my nature;
I am the face of humanity;
The face of humanity is my face.
I contemplate myself and see everything in me.
I perceive; that which I perceive is form.
Form is an unchanging value.
Value is eternal consciousness;
Consciousness is that in which all things have their origin;
It does not change; it exists from eternity to eternity;
It is an infinite cluster of clusters of itself;
It is forever evolving in response to the challenge of its nature.
It is ULTIMATE VALUE;
It is INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS.
The value metamorphoses into a phenomenon;
Each phenomenon is a total of smaller forms;
Phenomena form clusters to produce other phenomena;
The cosmic order is an indefinite total of forms and phenomena.
I am a phenomenon; I am a person.
I am INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS; I am the consciousness.
The infinity is a unity; it cannot be destroyed;
I am a constituent of the unity;
I cannot be destroyed;
The infinity and I are inseparable;
I cannot exist outside of the infinity;
For, there is no outside of it.
Everything is inside the infinity.
INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS is the Infinity.
It is a Whole;
It cannot be other than Whole, without me it cannot be Whole;
Nothing can be added to or subtracted from the Whole.
The infinity is alive;
There is no death within it;
There is life and perpetual agmination.
That which is alive has purpose;
Purpose is destiny;
Perpetual evolution is the destiny of INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS;
INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS evolves in response to the challenge of its nature.
The Law regulates evolution;
It is a constituent of INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS
It is the well of the Infinity;
It is my will; it explains everything, for there are no mysteries;
Mystery is the redoubt of the ignorant.
Everything, everywhere, evolves according to the Law;
The Law is knowable;
I cannot violate the Law no matter what I do;
I incarnate the Law;
Everything I do translates into action one section of the Law or the other;  
The processes of the Law are irreversible;  
Ultimate Absurdity is the attempt to invert the Law;  
The inversion of the Law is a cosmic cataclysm;  
It is Ultimate Criminality;  
I am the reconciler of all contradictions.  
INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS, the Law and I are together the Definitive Agminate:  
Nothing can separate us.  
I live now;  
And shall forever live, in INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS,  
For, I am INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS;  
I am eternal; I am the secret that drives out all fear.  
Perpetual evolution is my destiny.  
I evolve forever, in response to the challenge of being human.  
I have a mind to light my path in the mazes of the cosmic order.  
This mind has many sides;  
It comprehends all things;  
It establishes my right to latitude; to being heard;  
It makes me feel at home in the cosmic order.  
My neighbor has a mind;  
It, also, comprehends all things.  
My neighbor and I have the same origins;  
We have the same life-experience and a common destiny;  
We are the obverse and reverse sides of one entity;  
We are unchanging equals;  
We are the faces which see themselves in each other;  
We are mutually fulfilling complements;  
We are simultaneously legitimate values;  
My neighbor’s sorrow is my sorrow;  
His joy is my joy.  
He and I are mutually fulfilled when we stand by each other in moments of need.  
His survival is a precondition of my survival.  
That which is freely asked or freely given is love;  
Imposed love is a crime against humanity.  
I am sovereign of my life;  
My neighbor is sovereign of his life;  
Society is a collective sovereignty;  
It exists to ensure that my neighbor and I realize the promise of being human.  
I have no right to anything I deny my neighbor.  
I am all, all are me.  
I come from eternity;  
I belong to the future.  
I can commit no greater crime than to frustrate life’s purpose for my neighbor.  
Consensus is our guarantee for survival.  
I define myself in what I do to my neighbor.  
No community has any right to prescribe destiny for other communities.  
This universe I challenge, a higher being than me to show;
My knees do now quake when I contemplate my destiny;
I know my way to eternity;
I make obeisance to the million sides of the ciliate mind;
The Eternal Person is Universal Man, Universal Woman and Universal Child.
I am a Universal Constant; I am a Cosmic Constant;
I am All-In-One; I am One-In-All.
I am the circle which encompasses infinity;
I am the point that is the beginning of the circle;
I am the value behind the circle.
I am umukala, the knower of all probabilities and possibilities;
There is nothing I cannot know;
There is no tyranny I cannot crush;
The value of water is H2O; it lives from eternity to eternity;
Nothing exists anywhere which can destroy it.
I am who I am;
I am not a creature; nothing can destroy me;
I am the self-evolving value KALA; I live forever and ever.
I am the phenomenon MUKALA.
I am a person; a [state your last name]; I am a son/daughter of Mary McLoud Bethune;
I am a cluster;
The cluster has vital elements;
They are the center and core: the value KALA;
The body, the aura, the LAW and INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS.
The Law and INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS are the environment in which I exist.
I am a [state your last name]; the Skeletons tell my history; they, too, define me.
I am adequate; I have in me all I need to be the best I can be.
I have contempt for that which is not freely given to me.
Whoever wishes me good,
Let that good go to him.
Whoever wishes me to be a prince,
Let him become a prince;
Whoever wishes that I should die,
Let his wish be his fate,
For I want nothing to which I have no right.
I am the servant of my ancestors;
My ancestors are humanity;
All I live for is to be the best I can be.
I do not prescribe destiny for my neighbor;
My neighbor is myself in a different guise;
Equals do not prescribe destiny for each other;
They hold conversations of minds;
They oppose ideas with counter ideas.
This, my ancestors told Dr. King,
Was the behavior of civilized men.
They told him this from the church pew.
Dr. King forgot nothing;
He carved everything in the hearts and minds of his people;
My adequacy makes me magnanimous; 
It makes me wise when strong and brave when weak.
There are no frontiers I cannot cross,
For I, the person, am my own challenge.
Disease has no power over me when I know;
I determine my health, I am what I want to be;
I see mankind on the highroad to eternity;
It marches along many routes;
The Light in the person guides the march;
It leads mankind along safer routes to a better future.
I join my hand with the hand of my neighbor;
This is my guarantee of reaching the future I desire;
I march confidently and triumphanty into the future;
My harmonized personality enables me to see my goal clearly;
Every moment is a rebirth into a new dimension of being human;
My duty is to guide the rebirth;
I and I alone guide the rebirth.
I outgrow the use of crutches;
I face the challenge of being eternal;
I align the cells in my body;
I know each, by name;
I am self-knowledge without end;
That which I eat, drink, or learn I convert into myself;
I walk in humility in the presence of the person;
I can afford to be humble; I am not afraid; I am adequate;
That doctrine shall prevail which is not afraid of the person.
I reject all dogma, for dogma is a prison of the mind.
I am the egg in my mother's womb;
I draw to myself that which I need to evolve;
Every moment of my life I evolve,
For perpetual evolution is my destiny.
I am the clot that extends itself into the person;
I am the person who extends himself into humanity;
The mind of humanity comprehends infinity;
Humanity is the blanket that covers my body; it is my flesh;
It is the matrix in which I grow;
It is the face of the infinity which sees itself.
For INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS knows itself;
It knows its nature;
It knows its destiny;
It has within itself everything it desires;
It is itself;
It has not race and no color;
The human value has no race and color;
Each value metamorphoses in response to its environment;
Behind each complexion is the environment;
In each environment is a section of the Law;
The Law is a Whole.
INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS is an infinite cluster of forces;
Life is one of its components;
The Law is another;
So is Energy;
So are others, seen, unseen and incapable of being seen;
My mandate is to know them all;
To understand them all.
I move from eternity to eternity to understand them.
My sojourn on earth is a moment in my never-ending journey.
My destiny is forever to respond to the call of the morrow.
I have in me all I need to make the journey;
I move from one dimension of being human to another;
I move in proportion to the degree that I know;
Knowledge is the key to the gates of every dimension;
My title to the key is that I am human;
I contemplate myself to discover myself;
The key is my birthright;
He is the enemy of humanity who denies me the key.
For the key is the Law.
I am born according to the Law.
I live, grow, and die according to it:
My mother is the Law;
My father is the Law;
My relatives and neighbors are the Law;
We are all bound together by the Law;
My neighbors are mankind;
Mankind is the Law.
Phenomena divide and fuse according to the Law;
Conflict is a dimension of the Law;
Conflict is a moment of agmination;
The stages of agmination are collision, disintegration and fusion.
Harmony and equilibrium are the fulfillment of the Law;
The world is the Law;
Everything is the Law; I am everything.
I am the Law; I am a jewel of the cosmic order;
The Law is my and my neighbor’s will;
I am a value; I have all the power to be what I want to be;
There is glory in being human; in being a self-defining value;
My name is Man; my name is Woman;
I formed myself from my mandate;
My mandate was the Law;
I entered earth as an act of will;
I came to realize the promise of being a value;
To realize the glory of being human;
To discover more satisfying dimensions of being a person.
I am not alone; I have never been alone;
I shall never be alone,
For I am a cluster.
I am Father-Mother;
I am the cluster of phenomena which constitute me.
I am Father-Mother-Child.
I am the past, the present, and the future.
I have no beginning and no end;
I am the geodesic circle in which Father and Mother merged to become Me.
I extend myself into the child.
I am the brick out of which society is built;
I am the Eternal Person.
In everything I think and do, I describe myself;
I show how I face the challenge of being human.
The Law is a component of INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS.
It has an infinite number of sections;
The sections interact on each other;
The interactions produce thought;
The Law interacting on itself produces thought;
I translate thought into action;
I create the world I desire through action;
I evolve in response to the challenge of my nature.
Thus to evolve is life’s purpose for me and my neighbor;
We have in us everything we need to evolve;
To discover satisfying dimensions of being human;
To realize the promise of being persons.
I am a witness of eternity;
So is my neighbor;
We are witnesses of what we are;
We are living moments in eternity.
I am a tiny component of INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS
I am an element, a substance and an incarnation of INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS
I am an incarnation of the Law;
I live in the Law; the Law lives in me;
It acts through me and fulfills itself through me.
When I know, the Law fulfills itself freely.
When I am ignorant I disorganize the Law’s interactions;
I create disharmonies in my personality;
I hurt my neighbor;
I sow dissension in my environment;
I frustrate life’s purpose for humanity.
I flee from the challenge of being human;
I live in terror of myself;
I plant terror into my neighbor’s psyche;
I terrorize all human beings;
I move the world in cycles of conflict to catastrophe;
I finally collapse amidst the ruins I build;
I rot in the prison of the mind I create;
Passers-by note the stink;
Here lies one who fled from the challenge of being human, they say.
For I create my destiny in everything I do;
I and I alone know this destiny,
The challenge of being human is forever to explore myself;
It is forever to understand my neighbor;
Forever to reveal the power of the Definitive Agminate.
The cosmic order is the seraskierate of the Definitive Agminate;
I am the vizier of the seraskierate;
The Law is my scepter;
To know it is the challenge of being human;
Forever to discover it is the promise of being human.
Perfection is the continuing response to the ever-beckoning hand of the Law.
Conquest forever distorts my personality;
It is the aching wound that never heals.
I listen to the call of the morrow,
I wait in the shadows of eternity;
I wait for the day of rebirth into a satisfying destiny.
I do not apologize for being human.
I walk in humility in the presence of the person;
If aught there is to worship, it is the person.
To worship the person is to glorify myself.
The person is real; he needs no oracles to interpret him;
He has compassion in his bosom; the forces of nature are capricious;
They are crutches for all partisans for ignorance.
The forces of nature are trustees of my estate, I am the master.
I grow in understanding.
I outgrow the need for divine trustees; I stand on my feet;
I march into the future on my terms.
Nothing can strike terror into my heart,
For I am a spark of the INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS.
I know every one of my cells;
My mother taught me how to count them.
My mother is all women; all women are my mother.
I prostrate myself before all women;
I cry out to them; Arise, mothers of the person!
Lead your children along safer routes to a better future!
To all men I cry: Arise, fathers of the person!
Create the world in which it will be no crime to be your children!
For all I desire is to realize the promise of being human.
Good and evil are related;
Either translates the Law into action
Virtue is knowledge and practice of the Law;
Vice is ignorance of the Law.
To know the Law is the glory of being human;
It is ukuba ngumuntu; (to realize the promise of being human)
Perpetually to be responsible is ukuba ngumuntu.
I have all I need forever to be responsible,
For I am the source of all meaning, all value and all authority.
I build a Civilization in homage to the person;
The highest points reached by other civilizations are in the sky;
These zeniths are the levels from which I start building;
I entered the earth to create order out of chaos;
I recognize the person as my Light;
I pay homage to the Light:
The Light will prevail,
For I know the heights from which they made me fall;
I know the depths into which they thrust me;
I know I shall prevail;
For I am who I say I am;
He has not been born who shall say he has conquered me.
I am BAKALA
I am an enlightened being
A living sun full of life and vitality
I am because we are. We are, therefore I am