

Specialist Brother Kitwana

Emmett B. Hagood, Jr., “Kitwana Olugimi” was born in Columbia, South Carolina on April 13, 1941. He and his brother Henry moved to Detroit in 1953, to live with their father. That same year they joined newly founded Central Congregational Church, which held Sunday worship services in the Carole Crossman School auditorium. He and his wife had two sons, Emmett III and Mark.



After graduating from Cass Technical High School in 1959, he attended Tennessee State University, and Columbia University where he received his bachelor’s degree in Architecture. Kitwana is one of only 1700 African American male licensed architects in the United States. In 1981, he established his own architecture firm, EBH, Inc., in Michigan.

Community service, political activism, faith and a total commitment to children and young adults were at the core of Central Congregational Church’s mission and theology. It was actualized through its renowned Youth Fellowship Program that has undergirded Kitwana’s commitment of service to the Black community to this day. He moved to the East coast to attend college and to work as an architect in Philadelphia, New York and Boston. He returned to Detroit early in 1981, but did not immediately return to the Church, which by this time, had morphed into the Shrines of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church (PAOCC) with an evolved theology, Black Christian Nationalism (BCN). Community service and the development of youth remained at the heart of the BCN theology. In 1995 Emmett reintroduced himself to the Church by walking down the aisle of Shrine No. 1 to embrace the most fundamental tenet of BCN: “NOTHING IS MORE SACRED THAN THE LIBERATION OF BLACK PEOPLE” and to receive his African name : “Kitwana Olugimi (God gave me this - Pledge to live).

Kitwana has volunteered in elementary and high school mentoring programs in several cities. He participated in the U of M’s Architectural Community Design Centers to teach Detroit High School students about awareness of space and the built environment within their own communities. He has sought out opportunities to mentor adolescent and young adults to give them tools necessary to help them negotiate the “quirks” of life. Using the tools he knows best, Architecture and BCN, he promoted cognitive thinking in problem definition and problem solving, setting goals and objectives to heighten spatial concepts that allows them to look at the world from a different perspective and to try to find their place within it. He taught them to read critically, to examine and ask questions and to not just accept whatever they were told about themselves and their Black Culture. He made them aware they have a rich Black History to be proud of. He taught them to seek out others they trusted to explore “who they are” and “what they are” and to define themselves and not to allow others to define them. He helped to imbue them with a sense of responsibility to be positive and to have a commitment to give back to the Black Community upon whose shoulders they stand.

Kitwana has volunteered his urban design and architectural services to a number of community, neighborhood and faith-based organizations, including PAOCC, to help them visualize their concepts and plans for a healthy environment that provides more people with opportunities to escape poverty. Another one of his significant roles was when he served as part of a small core group of volunteers working directly with Dr. Charles H. Wright, as a member of the Steering Committee to plan, organize and manage the first Detroit African World Festival in Hart Plaza in 1983.

For several years Brother Kitwana served on the review panel for the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. The panel reviewed applications for grants to arts and culture organizations, municipalities, and nonprofit organizations throughout the State of Michigan. Also, he was one of the founding members of Detroit architects to reestablish, in 1984, the defunct National Organization of Minority Architects Detroit Chapter, originally established in 1971. One of their goals is to contribute the knowledge and expertise to address problems confronting our communities.

Finally, but not least, Specialist Kitwana, as one of the core members of the PAOCC Brotherhood, administrated the Marcus Garvey Middle School’s Academy’s 8th Grade after-school Boy’s Rites of Passage Program, under the guidance of and in conjunction with Pastor Mbiyu Chui. The main goal of the program is to prepare the student to effectively navigate the journey from “Adolescence” to “Young Adulthood”.