

Thanks is given to Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson for the role he played in initiating the celebration of the contributions of people of color.

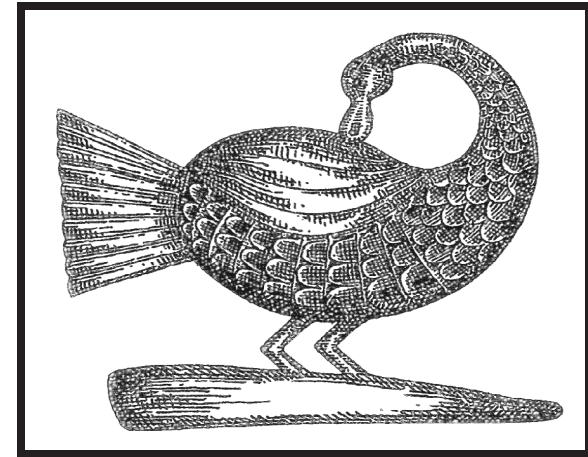
Woodson was the son of former slaves and began his search for knowledge by teaching himself. Eventually, the opportunity came for formal training and he excelled without difficulty. Constantly, he was convinced that the history of people of color was misrepresented or ignored. Therefore, he put forth every effort to rectify this fact. Woodson did his part to preserve the heritage of people of color and passed it on. Therefore, it is the responsibility of persons living today to keep this heritage alive and continue to pass it on. Are you doing your part?

Prepared by Mary A. Love
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SANKOFA



**“GOING BACKWARD TO
MOVE FORWARD”**

The Sankofa is a symbol from the West African countries of Ghana and the Ivory Coast. This area was settled by the Ashanti whose ancestors were the Akan people. The symbol depicts a bird with its neck turned back which means to “reach back and examine your past so that you may insure your future.” Surviving centuries, the symbol has meaning today as persons of color are challenged to reach all the way back to Mother Africa to find fuel to propel into the 21st century.

In the words of the Griot,

*“To go back to your roots
is to take the first step FORWARD.
For it is in the past we find the path
that leads to the present.*

And from the present we move on to the future.”

Psalm 78:1-8 (RSV) highlights the same concept as it states:

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth!
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,
things that we have heard and known,
that our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from our children,
but tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might,
and the wonders which he was wrought.

He established a testimony in Jacob,
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our fathers
to teach to their children;
that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and arise and tell them to their children,
so that they should set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments;
and that they should not be like their fathers,
a stubborn and rebellious generation,
a generation whose heart was not steadfast,
whose spirit was not faithful to God.

God’s Word through the Psalmist poses the challenge for persons to remember God’s teachings and pass them on. How else will the younger generation know “the glorious deeds of the Lord, God’s might, and the wonders that God has done?” How can people “set their hope in God, not forget the works of God, and keep the commandments” if they are not taught and passed on? Therefore, the bottom line is to “keep one’s heritage alive” by first knowing it and then passing it on. This passing process should be continuous as it reflects commitment to the obligating task. But one cannot pass something on if they have not received sufficient information to pass on to the next generation. Each individual must be nurtured and empowered to nurture others regarding one’s heritage and the Christian faith.

The colors of green, black, and red are often used by people of color. The interpretation of the colors are as follows: Green represents the natural and human geography of the Motherland of Africa, fertility, immortality, and children. Black represents the ethnic identity of the people and also the ethical symbol of the liberation-struggle of any people. Red represents the blood of the ancestral people of color and the Great Libation of God in Jesus Christ. The continent of Africa is the source of our ancestral roots and the mother of civilization. It is the country where people of color were kings, and queens and where Jesus, Mary, and Joseph sought refuge from King Herod. (See Matthew 2:13-23.) People of African descent can be found all over the world today. Therefore, there is the need to look back and become knowledgeable so that the accomplishments of our African sisters and brothers will be valued. We are also challenged to acknowledge the accomplishments of those who have struggled through trying times in America and other countries of the world, and yet were able to reach the highest heights such as being an astronaut, chemist, or a Nobel Peace Prize winner.