



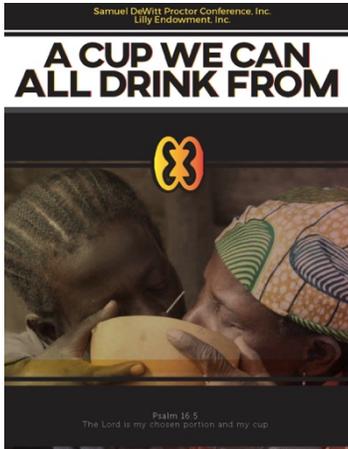
# **The Sankofa in Innovation:** Activating The Past To Reimagine Our Future

*The Called To Lives Of Meaning and Purpose Initiative  
2019 Gathering Hosted By Collegeville Institute*



SAMUEL DEWITT  
**PROCTOR**  
CONFERENCE

Itihari Toure, Evaluation & Curriculum Specialist  
Innovation Hub for Congregational Sustainability  
"A Cup We Can All Drink From".



## Initiative Overview

The Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference (SDPC) is a network of clergy and lay leaders who identify with congregations in quest for on-going ways to manifest discipleship and stewardship through congregational calls to realize Micah 6:8 – to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with Thy God.

This is historically and contemporaneously a focus of many African American congregations. The innovation hub develops in the greater Chicagoland area where the economic distress of disinvestment has resulted in low- and moderate-income communities of color continue to be one of the most critical issues confronting the nation’s cities. Joblessness, poverty, income inequality, inadequate housing, homelessness, and mass incarceration are among the many problems creating a deep concern that is leading to efforts to re-examine and redefine strategies, diagnoses, policies, and economic development theories.

Congregations find their challenges, opportunities and ultimately their voice in exploring the role of faith-based responses to this existential reality.

This SDPC Innovation hub guides and resources (over a five year period) 12 to 24 congregations through an educational process that:

- 1) invites congregations to explore available theological resources and religious practices related to calling embedded within the Christian tradition,
- 2) encourages congregations to listen to the joys and longings of among their members as they seek to live out their Christian callings and,
- 3) assists congregations as they design and launch ministries that engage Christians in the explorations of their particular callings. The hubs will gather teams from the participating congregations as communities of learning to support one another and share resources and insights from their ministry designs and launch.

### **Goal: Congregational Situated Learning<sup>1</sup> and Vocational Discernment That Transforms Practice into Being Called Congregations**

#### **Innovation Hub for Congregation Sustainability ( 6 Program Components)**

1. Leadership Institute for Congregational Development (The Mbongi)
2. CEUs Certification in Congregational Learning
3. Congregation & Clergy Peer Support Circle
4. Strategic Planning- New Concepts (Innovation & Design Thinking)
5. IHE & Seminary Partnerships for Vocational Clarity
6. Congregation-Leadership Apprenticeship Model

#### **Continuum for Congregational Sustainability (Initiative Curriculum)**

Congregational learning and the interaction of church leadership operates on a continuum that transforms how each one enters into service for God to how one lives out being fully human, fully God-conscious and fully committed to both; in this initiative, this continuum is identified as:

- “The Inward Journey” - Discipleship and New Member Development (Personal Call as One’s Divine Purpose);
- “Living Out a Collective Mission” - Vision and Mission Affirmation (Congregation and Community-Shared Meaning and Shared Vision);
- “Leading as a Way of Being” - Ministerial Leadership and Care (Ministerial leadership Training and Education)
- “To Touch the Spirit”-Worship and Liturgical Education for Congregations (Congregational Learning about Gifting through Responsive Worship and Liturgy)
- “Hold Up That Which Holds You Up” - Ministry Outreach of the Congregation- (Calling As Action/Work)

We live in a time of greed and need. We are inundated with images and lures of individualism and capitalism. Congregational sustainability is achieved not only through presence, participation and resource sharing of membership. Sustainability is also achieved through shared vision and shared meaning that is transformative personally and communally.

***Discipleship and New Member Development-*** “The Inward Journey” situates reflective learning and reflective practice as critical aspects of discerning call and purpose. The prospective congregations with visions aligned with this focus in the innovative hub provide constructive pathways for applying the spiritual disciplines that deepen one’s own discernment of purpose. Opportunities are organized for both individual and groups of congregations “to journey” together both face-to-face and digitally.

***Vision and Mission Affirmation- “Living Out a Collective Mission”*** addresses the task of creating a collective mission of integrity and balance. All too often mission statements for groups/organizations center its mission as an external product, an effect upon others with less attention to the effect within the community or group. This component for congregation envisioning constructs a collective mission as transformative learning where members discern the impact of collective shared meaning within the group as well as its impact on the target communities it serves.

***Ministerial Leadership and Care - “Leading as a Way of Being”*** supports training projects for church leaders and ministers-in-training to develop vocation as interdisciplinary strategic leadership. The shift from leaderly doings to leaderly being that positions “who am I in this” as the point of leadership assessment and growth.

***Worship and Liturgical Education for Congregations- “To Touch the Spirit”*** affirms every aspect of worship and its liturgy as a divine dance in which all participants are part of the sacred proclamation. These congregational projects identify Bible study, congregational workshops, church and communitywide experiences to reinforce the intent of participatory worship and liturgies as a function of call/living out

***Ministry Outreach of the Congregation- “Hold Up That Which Holds You Up”*** uses narrative learning (stories) to engage individuals and groups in re-connecting the evidence of one’s life to just living. This project area of the innovative hub demonstrates how the



## Our Soul Looks Back and Wonder: Sankofa An Afrikan Retention

Available online at: <https://btpbase.org/our-soul-looks-back-and-wonder-sankofa-an-afrikan-retention/>

I recently was introduced to a very popular television program called “This Is Us”. After watching several episodes, I understood its popularity. For me as a keeper of ritual and memory worker, this television program reflects the dynamic relationship of the past, present and future. It embodies an African view of time that is non-linear (Mbiti, 1969). It dramatically illustrates how one’s memories live in one’s present and how memory can determine the path of decisions in one’s future. Indeed, as an African Christian, this series provoked a question in me: “Who Told Us: “This Is Us”. As African people, as a people of faith, whose past do we remember to tell us, this is us?

In the Black Christian church tradition, we recall hearing several scriptures that instructed us to remember the God of our Ancestors, the God of Abraham, Jacob, Rachel and Hagar (Exodus 4:5; Acts 7:32). We are also reminded in scripture of a ‘great cloud of witnesses’ encouraging us to run the race to the end (Hebrews 12). Even still, that these very witnesses did not win for themselves but could see our victory from afar.

It is from both a practical paradigm of the past informing the future and, a cosmological view of a spiritual “collective agency” that consideration of this African philosophical and spiritual tradition called Sankofa in our faith practice is being shared. My thanks to Dr. Willie G-dman for his contribution to this overview of defining Sankofa, invoking Sankofa, opportunities of Sankofa, being Sankofa, the benefits, rituals and practices of Sankofa that establishes its contribution to the religious expressions of liturgy, worship, Bible study and community experienced by the Black church.

### Sankofa

Definition Sankofa: A West Afrikan Akan word, meaning “to go back and fetch it” requires us to look back in order to see forward. The concept is symbolized by a heart shaped Adinkra symbol or a bird with its head turned backwards balancing an egg on its back. Sankofa is a commitment to the value of memory because the loss of memory reduces our ability to radically examine ourselves, our ancestors, and the opportunities we create for future generations. Sankofa recognizes the

significance of weighing the utility of our past upon how we carefully, cautiously position our future (symbolized by the egg) in balance with our present realities. In other words, we cannot use our past to imagine our future without engaging our present context.

**We believe in a faith that uses the past to inform our present practice. The ways in which the Black church tradition situates and values memory and remembering is evidence of our cultural retention of Sankofa.**

### ***Sankofa Invokes***

Radical examination is the act of invoking the presence of our memory, which is distinct from the psychological exercise of recall in verbatim facts, persons, conversations, and situations; it is calling into the present our memories. This process is very much akin to calling into our present, the presence of a family member or friend. We are aware of them being present with us on a number of sensory levels but their anatomy and physiology is absent. There is a distinct level of sensory awareness that signifies to us that they are present. In Sankofa, we are associating a similar level of understanding for memories, yet, to a degree, they are embodied in us and therefore they have an anatomy and physiology that is delivered as presence. The moment that we hear someone say, "that child plays that piano just like her Aunt Missy"...Missy is all *in* that child"; we are witnessing the embodiment of memory; we have called into the present the spirit of Aunt Missy. From that day on, this child has permission to sit at the piano during choir rehearsals and in the service. This affirmation by the community validates that work of memory to inform the present, even unto the presence of spiritual gifting.

Radical examination as a process of invocation of presence, of memory, and memories is the process of delivering into the present both the effect of memory and memories, as well as the affect in the present via our beliefs and practices. Engaging, igniting the process of bringing memory into our presence is akin to bringing the person, event, and/or situation into the present to examine their or its actions and outcomes. There is also an examination of person(s) and action(s) for their respective purpose(s), benefit(s), and precipitated outcome(s). In light of our example, that child possessing the gifting of her ancestor also holds a standard of using that gifting to glorify God.

Therefore, our invocation of Sankofa establishes the quality of our examination. The criteria from which we examine our present are based upon the collective memories of those who came before us in our families and in our communities. A quality factor that causes us to ask: “What did they or the previous actions achieve that is in effect, or has affected us, in this present time?” This is us.

### ***Opportunity of Sankofa***

Sankofa calls attention to Our Creator, the source and benefactor of all life and existence. The opportunity of Sankofa is to honor and do recognition of all life and existence, as the Spirit emanates through all being and life. We are brought into fuller awareness and attunement to the presence, endeavor and impact of the Spirit through all being and life.

Sankofa is an intentional act of re-remembering. The action of recall and of recognizing our truth; we are related to and connected with the source of our being. It is the recognition that it is impossible for us to be disconnected from the source of our being. To attempt to be disconnected, to accept the invitation to try to be disconnected, is to precipitate *loss of memory*. To be in Sankofa is the intentional actualizing of maintaining our connection to the source of all things. A noted Kikongo cosmologist, Dr. Bunseki FuKiau taught us that we are a seed of a seed, of a seed of a seed, of a seed of the original seed (FuKiau, 2001). Songs like “something on the inside working on the outside, Oh, what a change in my life!” positioned us to re-connect with that which dwells within, the eternal connection with God that exists even when we are not conscious of that connection. Sankofa is an opportunity to reconnect us with that source. Sankofa is an opportunity to see the vision of Our Creator that dwells within us.

We are mindful that we must know the *seed*-the vision that we are bringing into community. We must commit to knowing self in all the ways we show up. We must commit to knowing the seeds of our community, God’s vision that was birthed inside of each one of us. We must remain conscious and consider deeply the seed we bring into our communities which impacts the future of those communities. And, as much as we come to understand the nature of the seed(s) we bring into community, we also come to recognize that the seeds we bring are from the original seed/source of life energy and will continue with or without us-if properly nurtured. The tradition of the “laying on of hands” is associated with the public proclamation of eldership/leadership in the Bible. It is also a public proclamation of the “seed” that exists from one generation to the next.

### ***Being In Sankofa***

To be in Sankofa is to be aware of and attuned to all presences (spiritual and human) that are with us, affecting and guiding us through all of the benefits and challenges of life and living. We walk in awareness of and attunement to the presence of the Spirit because we are its embodiment. None of our being and embodiment of it via presence and action is possible without its authorization to do radical examination. This is to check ourselves by engaging the truth that we are alive and the truth(s) we are living out is by its *being*, which is in us. In other words, we live aware that nothing happens [with us] outside the Being of Our Creator. The Psalm 139 put it this way: “if I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there”. To consider that anything we experience is outside of “God” is false. Our ancestors understood this so that being a “good Christian” meant treating everybody right. One may have engaged in unacceptable behaviors yet, those behaviors never separated one from community. Praise houses had a bench for those who had inappropriately behaved but you were *in* the praise house. Sisters and brothers who passed out at the juke joint were still given food to nourish them. Being in Sankofa meant we all remembered our own journeys and valued compassion more than condemnation. In particular for us as descended people of Africa, we understood the consequences of the constant assault on our being. We understood the casualties of white supremacy to being children of God unable to show up as such. Being in Sankofa is the struggle to keep loving in the face of brokenness that caused us to do harm to ourselves and to one another.

***“I am gonna’ treat everybody, right, I’m gonna’ treat everybody right, I’m gonna’ treat everybody right till I die, I’m gonna’ stay on the battlefield, I’m gonna’ stay on the battlefield, I’m gonna stay on the battlefield til I die”.***

To be in Sankofa is to be in radical examination of the ancestors, self, community, and so forth. The purpose of recognizing the Spirit-leading radical examination is for us to look for and be apprised of the work of the Spirit through the ancestors, the community, those and us yet to be born. The work of the Spirit in and through the ancestors, us and the unborn children helps us with our arrogance and humility. These two cannot be exercised in exorbitance because the Spirit reminds us of our accountability with the ancestors, each other and generations to come. It is the Spirit that is at-work and we are in collaborative relatedness over the generations to bring the Being of the Spirit into fuller expression.

To be in Sankofa is to be in radical examination of the ancestors and not to romanticize our affinity for them. Our ancestors remind us that they remained fully planted in the context of their *being* so as to deliver the embodied presence of the *One That Made Us*. Thusly, we are helped to remain fully planted in the context of our being (life) so as not to romanticize or resist our living. To ignore Sankofa is to invite shame and self-disgust about our life/lives because we assume more entitlement in how we live by our own efforts than is actually ours to claim. In other words, we give credit to our own ability instead of the inherited capacity from our Ancestors. Here is where being Sankofa can be a source of generational healing. We have the tools to create rituals, study lessons and sermons that address this generational assault to our being that created the wounds and brokenness we live out in the present. Sankofa helps us to do the repair work our ancestors were unable to do.



### ***Benefit of Sankofa***

In the context of building and sustaining institutions, Sankofa creates the opportunity to construct a harmonious recognition of history both past and present, as well as prepare for the future. Sankofa creates the ritual wherein we invoke, teach and prepare ourselves to do radical examination, we create the space and time to remember, to assess for the future.

In the context of personal and community development, Sankofa creates the opportunity to teach the necessity of radical examination. The invocation of remembrance, creating the space and time to remember affords each person or group the opportunity to examine lived experiences in such a way as to gain insight into experiences that either distract or enhance the movement of Spirit in our lives. The ritual of Sankofa helps with the present to come to terms with absolute apparentness of radical examination in all of our lives. We build upon what was done by the ancestors and advance it in a manner that addresses us in the present because we are laying a foundation for the children. The Spirit of our Creator moves in us to remember at integral times so as to bridge us between its next presentation.

### ***Sankofa As A Function Of Justice Centered Faith Leadership***

Another benefit is Sankofa as a wisdom principle, an essential life principle and a critical field of inquiry for all who are called to leadership in African American communities. As leadership preparation, Sankofa requires knowledge of the contributions of the learned and most courageous leaders (jegnoch) and the personal commitment to their struggles. In the U.S. context, for example, not only must we know of Drusilla Dungee Houston's or Nelson Mandela's contributions to our

tradition of self-determination, we must also embrace their mission (Hotep, 2010). To Sankofa Harriet Aramintha Tubman means far more than knowing her story, it also means embracing her reliance on God, (her decisions about the way to freedom came through her dreams or black-outs); her resolve to help as many as she could to freedom (she could've freed more if only "they knew they were slaves"); and her sense of redemption (everyone was worthy of freedom). Anything short of this is not fully Sankofa and certainly doubtful to be a true justice centered faith leader.

Toward this end, Sankofa demands that justice centered faith leadership engage the collective agency through conducting Ancestral walks to the birthplaces, gravesites, townships, neighborhoods, and institutions of our people to enact public and private rituals of remembrance, reaffirmation and reconnection. Afri-centric faith leaders and followers for justice seek the assistance of our gifted leaders, teachers and guides on earth and in heaven.

As it impacts the larger Black community, Sankofa, from the standpoint of justice centered faith leadership for change, provides the basis for an African American religious experience as we see in the traditions of Black denominations (AME, CME, COGIC, AME ZION, Baptist) replete with its own pantheon of divinely-inspired persons of the church (Jarena Lee, Henry Mc Neil Turner, C.H. Mason, etc.,) who we celebrate through music, dance, song, poetry and drama, as well as by erecting statues and by naming our children, organizations, parks, streets, building, towns, cities in their honor.

The circle of Jegnoch (Hilliard, 2002) like Anna Julia Cooper, Sojourner Truth, Nat Turner, Martin R. Delany, Henry Highland Garnet, Ida B. Wells, Booker T. Washington, Amy Jacques Garvey, Nanny of the Maroons, Mary McLeod Bethune, Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz, Samuel DeWitt Proctor, Ron Brown, John Henrik Clarke, Jacob Carruthers, Obadele Williams, Baba Bunseki Fukiau, Sobonfu Some and Asa Hilliard III come to mind as members of the great cloud of witnesses who worked tirelessly to uplift and empower our people and thus are sacred memories in our African American religious experience. Justice centered faith leadership's concept of Sankofa is rooted in an African centered cosmology that demands public expressions of ancestor veneration, especially for those like Martin L. King Jr. and Medgar Evers who died protecting the land, the people and the culture.

### ***The Rituals of Sankofa***

The rituals of Sankofa help us to remember our story and see ourselves in the present. This is us. Rituals of Sankofa help us to engage the spaces in our lives wherein we have aligned ourselves

with other sources that are not conducive to our life and living. It helps us to access the internalizations of other instructions that continue to carry us away from the truth of *being*. The rituals help us to look at where and how we distract our self from doing radical examination, because we can no longer remember who we were before we became who we are now. Rituals of Sankofa take us on a three-fold journey of invoking and re-learning so that we can re-member our connection to Spirit while we do the work of maintaining our inheritance. Rituals reconnect us to us.

The ritual of Sankofa reminds us of our absolute relatedness with the Spirit. It helps us to address our internalization of white supremacy, gender and cultural hegemony which translates our fear into the lives others and objectifies “the other”. Rituals of Sankofa can interrupt those toxic behaviors we have adopted to relieve the pain of oppression and pragmatized fear. We accept being co-opted by these toxic behaviors because we no longer remember our absolute related to the Spirit. We no longer dream dreams (Hilliard, 2002). As our memory further degenerates, we are no longer able to navigate the pain and the fear, we become a sieve.

The rituals of Sankofa remind us of the both the sufficiency of the Spirit and the proficiency it gives us through memory. It helps us to confront personal and corporate beliefs about scarcity. We are assaulted daily with assessments of dwindling resources and instructions that push us to unhealthy measures that seemingly relieve both the sense and reality of limiting resources. The Sankofa ritual reminds us to search with the guidance of the Spirit who leads us into sense of proficiency. Recognizing that all resources are limited, they have a lifespan. All resources have a presence that is delivered by the Spirit of Our Creator. As such, the Spirit is always providing and delivering new presences to us as provision.

Sankofa has all of this benefit because it is not externally determined. It has no condition of the present or of our presence that is required to exist. Sankofa is the result of life authored by our Creator even before we in the present to recognize it! We re-member, we radically examine through ritual to add resources to our living based upon the lived experiences and move of the Spirit beyond our own existing resources.

### ***Sankofa Practice***

Sankofa is a way of being and a practice. It has a life of its own and will do what it is supposed to do in our lives. It causes and facilitates remembering while presenting opportunities for realignment

with the *being* and subsequent attunement with our Creator. It delivers opportunities for radical examination by exposing all the manipulative attempts at managing our fears, worries and anxiousness. Sankofa as practice keeps us aware of oppressive ways that carry us away from our fullest relatedness with the *Source of All Things*.

The practice of Sankofa instructs us that the Creator is always at work. It is always bringing us to our fullest relatedness with God. The frailty of our memory is that we did not consciously know fully the depth of Sankofa when many of us adopted this way of *being* as our recovery of African identity. We did not know what we were asking or what we were preparing ourselves to encounter and do. The Spirit knew and is bringing us to awareness of our presence with our Creator, the ancestors, community and unborn children. As the Spirit becomes, we become intuitively, so now it is bringing to consciousness that which we have forgotten.

To invoke Sankofa is to invoke fullest relatedness with the *Sovereign of the Universe* and therefore it is to invoke life; therefore, intending the practice of radical examination.

We, the institution of African centered scholarship across disciplines, invoked Sankofa and therefore we called forth the life energy of the institution. We invited the process of radical examination. Therefore, by calling forth life, we invoke the *Owner of Heaven* and the removal of everything that is counter to the life of this institution which is the result of radical examination. We invite the *Author of All Things*; therefore, we also call for the removal of everything that is counter to that Spirit and its presence within us. We know we are indeed practicing Sankofa when the presence of Our Creator is recognized through the embodiment of its presence in the people of this institution.

### ***Sankofa Is Sacred***

Our ancestors claimed an inheritance for us. We must do radical examination of our ancestors, the inheritance that they claimed for us, and the path they set us upon toward its realization. The Spirit is at work and so we must radically examine all of this and ourselves along with the inheritance we are setting for next generations of students, church and religious leaders, activists and all those in service of humanity, because we are committing them to an inheritance that they too must examine in light of the *being* of the Spirit embodied in us.

The usual Sankofa practice is to call the name of the ancestors. It has evolved to include naming the spaces and places of experience of our ancestors. They are venerated for their living, accomplishment and legacy.

Sankofan practice dictates that we must call their name, consecrate their places of experience with the understanding of what they desired and committed to us. We call their name with understanding of what we said “yes” to as our commitment. Both of these poles are embodied in our presence and subsequent action which demonstrates our memory.

The practice of Sankofa calls for us to put away our naiveté and lay claim to being enlivened by the Spirit. It calls for us to become fully aware of our commitment; even though we may have made it based upon self-effacing reasoning and *selfish* rationales that pointed toward our survival. Our ancestors laid claim to an inheritance for us that is older than their enslavement and a *freedom* that many of them did not see. They built and set us on a path of faith and belief that brought about the establishing and building of institutions and communities.

Let us embody the Spirit work of Sankofa, it is time to proclaim the truth of Sankofa. This is Us!

---

## Referenced Sources

Mbiti, John S. (1969). *African Religions & Philosophy*. Heinemann.

Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau, Kimbwandende. (2001). *African Cosmology of the Bantu-Kongo: Tying the Spiritual Knot, Principles of Life and Living*.

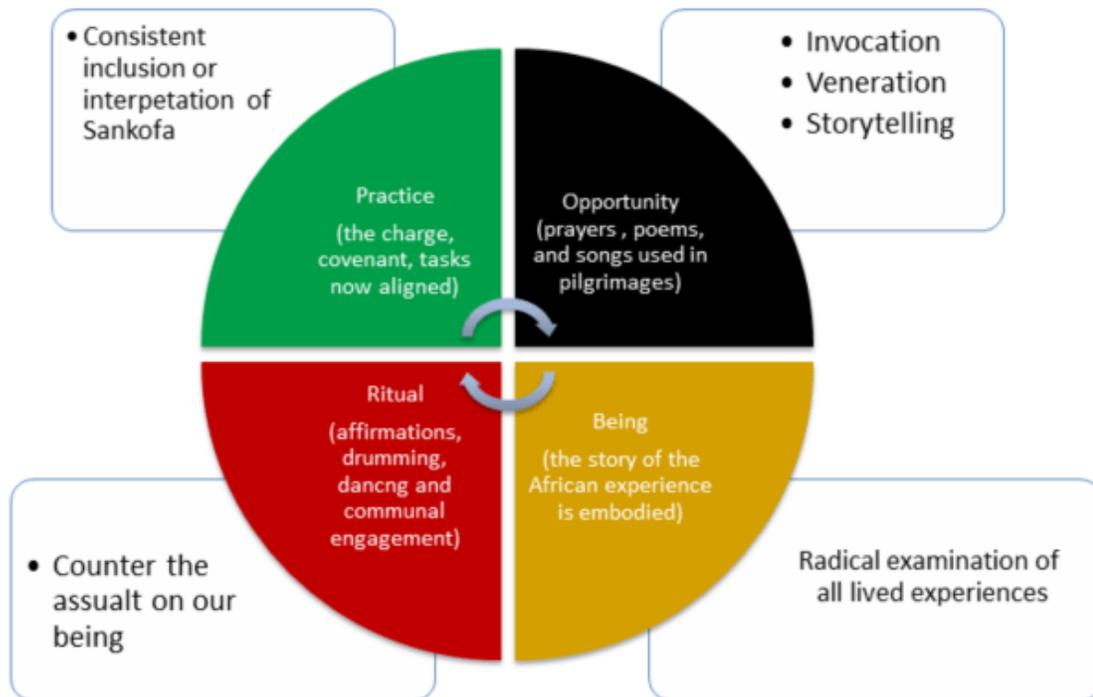
Hotep, Uhuru (2010) African Centered Leadership-Followership: Foundational Principles, Precepts, and Essential Practices. *Journal of Pan African Studies* . 2010, Vol. 3 Issue 6, p11-26.

Hilliard III, Asa (2002). *African Power: Affirming African Indigenous Socialization in the Face of the Cultural Wars* Makare Publishing (Hilliard III, Asa (2002))

Note: In 2002 a group of spiritual teacher/activists created in Atlanta, Georgia, “The Jegna Collective with Dr. Asa G. Hilliard III, Nana Baffour Amankwatia II as our spiritual guide. The Jegna Collective requires us to go into our collective memory and recall ways of being that are in alignment with our Afrikan sense of communal organization. Our mission is to contribute significantly in re-invigorating Afrikan standards of excellence through transformation. “Jegna” in Amharic means Healer,

Protector and these spiritual leaders hold to the standards that a Jegna is :To be tested in battle; To show extraordinary courage; To produce an exceptionally high quality of work; To nurture and protect our land, culture and people with one’s very life; and To speak the truth.

Example of Sankofa Intent, Being and Practice—



*Itihari Y. Toure, Ed.D., also is the Director is The Sankofa Center for Data Evaluation and Quality Enhancement and, Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia.*

## An Example of StoryLinking



### Ida B. Wells and Modern Day Lynching Bible Study

An example of an Online Bible Study based on #Charlestonsyllabus delivered to the Third Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Church Planning Meeting, Columbus, Ohio, November 6, 2015.

\*Based on Anne E. Streaty Wimberly's Storylinking Method in [Soul Stories: African American Christian Education](#)

This study reflects on the mourning mothers of children victimized by police brutality and builds on the story of Sandra Bland as the everyday story. Sandra Bland was found hanged in a jail cell in Waller County, Texas, on July 13, 2015 after being pulled over for a minor traffic violation on July 10 by state trooper. The biblical text is John 19:25-27 when Jesus tells his beloved disciple to watch over his mother from the cross. Mary's child son is in trouble -- arrested, unfairly tried, condemned, and now dying, but she is there and Jesus gives her back to his beloved disciple, essentially to the church to deal with, to mourn with, and to love on. The African American heritage story is a selection from the Ida B. Wells-Barnett's 1895, work *A Red Record: Alleged Causes of Lynching* featured on the [#CharlestonSyllabus](#).

### Phase 1 (Engaging the Everyday Story)

**Activity 1:** Disclose the Everyday Story (Case Study Video)

[Sandra Bland's Mother Speaks With Rev. Al Sharpton](#)

- Listen for contexts: who was Sandra Bland? Where is her home, community, church, workplace?
- #whathappenedtosandrabland? What happened to Sandra Bland?

**Activity 2:** Critically Reflect on the Case Study, Identify with the Case Study

- In what ways are Sandra Bland and her mother's story your story?
- What experiences or memories does their story trigger in you?
- Did anyone have difficulty relating to the story? What was difficult? Why was it difficult?

## Phase 2 (Engaging the Christian Faith Story in the Bible)

**Activity 1:** Disclose the Scripture

### **John 19:25-27**

25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman,[a] here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

**Image for Reflection:**

[Vanderbilt University Art in the Christian Tradition](#)

[Jesus Mafa-JESUS MAFA. The Crucifixion; Jesus dies on the cross, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.](#)  
<http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=48390> [retrieved November 5, 2015].

**Musical Offering:**

Listen to Aretha Franklin "[Mary, Don't You Weep](#)"

**Activity 2:** Focus on the Bible as Mirror

- Who are Jesus, Mary, Mary Magdalene, Jesus' Sister and the disciple whom he loved?
- Who are the church and community in this moment? How are they present?
- What does the painting say about the dynamics of mourning? Who are the bearers of mourning?
- How does this song make you feel? What memories do you have surrounding it?
- What story is being told in the song?
- When we think about police brutality in 2015, what does this song bring to mind?
- Who is Pharaoh in 2015? Who's in Pharaoh's Army in 2015?

## Phase 3 (Engaging Christian Faith Stories from the African American Heritage)

**Activity 1:** Disclose the Faith Heritage Story

[Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Chapter 7 The Red Record, THE CRUSADE JUSTIFIED \(Appeal from America to the World\)](#)

- “No matter how heinous the act of the lynchers may have been, it was discussed only for a day or so and then dismissed from the attention of the public.” **How does Wells-Barnett’s appeal mirror what hear in the press today?**
- “To those who are not willfully blind and unjustly critical, the record of more than a thousand lynchings in ten years is enough to justify any peaceable movement tending to ameliorate the conditions which led to this unprecedented slaughter of human beings.” **Why are contemporary movements like #BLACKLIVESMATTER having to justify themselves as well?**

#### Phase 4 (Engaging in Christian Ethical Decision Making)

##### **Activity 1:** Discerning God’s Call

- What responsibility did Jesus assign the beloved disciple when he said “Here is your mother”?

##### **Activity 2:** Decide Concrete Actions

- How can the church help mothers and families of crucified children?
- How can the church engage in direct action that supports local and national police reform?

Programs and Next Steps:

<http://www.joincampaignzero.org/#campaign>

<http://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>

**Closing Ritual:** Go to [The Thoughts Room](#) and share your feelings and prayers with God.

\* Storylinking is a process whereby we connect parts of our everyday stories with the Christian faith story in the Bible and the lives of exemplars of the Christian Faith outside the Bible. Phase One engages the everyday story, phase two engages the Christian Faith Story in the Bible, phase three describes liberation and vocational strategies while engaging Christian Faith Stories from the African American heritage and phase four calls us to discern God’s call for concrete action as we engage in Christian Ethical decision making.

## Now, Let Us Try StoryLinking Work Page

Phase 1 (Engaging the Everyday Story)

Phase 2 (Engaging the Christian Faith Story in the Bible)

Phase 3 (Engaging Christian Faith Stories from Your Community/Church Heritage)

Phase 4 (Engaging in Christian Ethical Decision Making)

Generate 2 Questions







SAMUEL DEWITT  
**PROCTOR**  
CONFERENCE

4445 South Martin L. King Drive Chicago Ill. 60653

[www.sdpconference.info](http://www.sdpconference.info)

(773) 548 - 6675

[info@sdpconference.info](mailto:info@sdpconference.info)