

SANKOFA

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SANKOFA ENRICHMENT

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Save the Date

Saturday, November 26, 2011

3PM at Nanny's

{3494 Reading Rd., 45229}

Discussion of the movie 'Mooz-lum'

Keep an eye out for more information!

WELCOME TO THE
THIRD EDITION OF
SANKOFA BRIEFS,
A quarterly online newsletter
published by the Sankofa
Educational Enrichment
Program in Cincinnati, Ohio.
Sankofa Briefs will include
the following:

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REFLECTING AND MOVING FORWARD

The national events of the past few months have highlighted the critical need for each state to transfer its focus from testing to critical thinking. When testing is the mirror by which schools, teachers and students are judged, the end product of the testing (how well students apply and use the knowledge on which they are tested) gets diminished. When a Donald Trump not only questions the citizenship of the President of the United States, but also questions his academic credentials, a call for a critical analysis of his behavior should be sounded. Certainly students will be able to remember and answer the multiple choice question: In what year or who did not believe the President was a US citizen. But there are more pressing and revealing questions underlying this event:

Such questions brought to national attention – after the election of 2008- imply fear. What are the origins of this fear? Have there been other Presidents who have undergone such scrutiny after the fact?

- What differences did those Presidents possess that made them targets for such questions?
- What is the end result that Trump is seeking? - Why is he seeking it?
- What if the President were not a US citizen? Then what? Since all this is after the election, how would such a revelation change the election process and eligibility process?

Since Obama comes to this office with a diverse set of characteristics, what would the Handbook for the next President with similar characteristics look like? Are our students able to produce such questions and then lay the groundwork to produce answers?

When not only our country, but when the entire world is ravaged by natural weather catastrophes, our children should be doing more than just adding new words like *tsunami* to their vocabulary. They should be developing questions that rest outside the box that dig deep into the disconnects that must exist to produce these tragedies. View the body as a whole and recognize the dysfunctions in behavior that occur when proper nurturing for infants and babies is absent. Brain cell growth gets stunted and abnormal behavior results. Similarly, viewing the land and water of this world as a whole unit, what nurturing features of the land and water have been discontinued, abused and misused to produce the disconnects which have resulted in consecutive eruptions displayed as earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, tsunamis?

Do we accept these signals as mere acts of nature or do we investigate the role man has played in disrespecting nature and adjust man's behavior accordingly? I am not suggesting that the answers to these questions lie in a book somewhere. What I am questioning is whether schools are producing children who have the curiosity to ask the questions and the tenacity to seek the answers. I implore that these examples provide another reason why Sankofa must exist.



Sankofa Alum Akil Wilder



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Akil Wilder, a 2005 graduate of Shroder High School (Cincinnati, Ohio) attended Tuskegee University and graduated in 2009. Akil was always the outspoken Sankofa student who had an opinion on any subject that surfaced and he was never afraid to express his thoughts. He had ample time to practice voicing his concerns because he was the son of Charles and Pam Wilder who raised their children in an environment where it was encouraged to be expressive, even if your voice is the minority. In fact, especially if your voice was the lone echo in the wind. Their philosophy was to ensure that there WAS an echo, constantly chirping and being heard.

Akil attended all the Sankofa Gran Shas (trips). His trip to Ghana was extended five extra days because of airline confusion, and though he was anxious to return home, he sucked it up and exhibited the maturity that many adults on the trip did not. Akil's life-long vision is to be a veterinarian. He has an interest in working with both large

animals (horses and cows) as well as traditional household pets. Akil is currently single, living in Cincinnati working as a veterinary technician.

← UNDER-SERVED BLACK HISTORY →

The Negro Motorist Green Book: An International Travel Guide

Because of the racist conditions that existed from segregation, blacks needed a reference manual to guide them to integrated or black-friendly establishments. That's when they turned to *The Negro Motorist Green Book: An International Travel Guide* by activist Victor Green and presented by the Esso Standard Oil Company. The *Green Book* was released in 1936 and served as a guide for African-American travelers. Originally provided to serve Metropolitan New York, the book received such an amazing response it was spread throughout the country within one year. Because of the travel guide, the catch phrase was for African Americans was: "Now we can travel without embarrassment." The publication was free, with a 10-cent cost of shipping.

The Green Book provided information on local tourist homes, which were private residences, owned by blacks and open to travelers. It was especially helpful to blacks that traveled through sunset towns; these were towns that publicly stated that blacks had to be out of town by sundown or it would be cause for arrest. Also listed were hotels, barbershops, beauty salons, restaurants, garages, liquor stores, ball parks and taverns. The Green Book also provided a listing of white-owned, black-friendly locations for accommodations and food.

Inside the pages of the Green Book were action photos of the various locations, along with historical and background information for the readers' review. Within the pages of the introduction, the guide states, "There will be a day sometime in the near future when this guide will not have to be published. That is when we as a race will have equal opportunities and privileges in the United States."

The Green Book printed its last copy in 1964 after the passing of the Civil Rights Act

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step...” - Chinese Proverb

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TRIP, by Sarah Dubose

The Canadian Arm of the Underground Railroad

- As if we had just stepped out of a dream, our journey began at the Greyhound Bus station in Cincinnati. The bus heading for Detroit left Cincinnati a little after midnight and was rather quiet and not crowded. We arrived in Detroit around 6:00 AM and were greeted by Baba Malik, the head of the Nsoroma School, who began identifying some of the key landmarks and recent changes in Detroit as we proceeded towards the Nsoroma Institute. Nsoroma Institute is an African Centered K-8 school established in 1989 by parents, educators, and activists. The classroom that I visited was colorful with projects and posters created by the students, full of plants and animals showing their purpose and helping students to understand the inter-dependence of humans, plants, animals and how this balance sustains life on the planet. We viewed the garden where the students are taught to plant & harvest vegetables. Computers are found and utilized throughout the classrooms.

- Our next stop was the Charles Wright Museum. The Charles Wright Museum was founded in 1965 by Dr. Charles Wright in partnership with 30 others. The Charles Wright Museum established in Detroit is the first International African American Museum. This museum is noteworthy as the world's largest institution dedicated to the African American experience. As we started on our tour of the museum, I was completely fascinated with the Ring of Genealogy. This ring was made of tile with bronze name plates of prominent African Americans in history. Some of the students & I quickly identified many of

the names that we were familiar with as well as those that we were not.

- After our clearance check (via your passport or birth certificate) into Canada, our first stop was the John Freeman Walls Historic Site and Underground Railroad Museum. Our tour guide was Allen Walls, the brother of Dr. Bryan Walls and author of the book, *The Road That Led To Somewhere*. Allen provided the highlights of the journey of his family to Canada from North Carolina in the 1800's. As we toured the historic site, on which the book was based, we had a chance to participate and observe several scenarios and enactments which gave you some insight into obstacles that were encountered by thousands of enslaved Africans. Allen, a school teacher, discussed how his family story shaped his life and determined who he was. All the names of the family members that are deceased are found in the cemetery located on the Walls site.

- Our next stop was the Elgin Settlement which is also known as Buxton. This was one of four organized black settlements to be developed in Canada. Although the Buxton Settlement was one of the last settlements to be established, it was the most successful. This site was about 5 acres and we toured a church, sawmill, cemetery and the cabin. Three schools were developed in the 1800's and one was in operation until 1968 and is the only school built by fugitive slaves still in existence in Canada. This school system provided the students with an excellent education and was noted to graduate several prominent scholars over the years. Our tour guide was a graduate of this school and she shared stories of how all the subjects were taught in one class room by one

teacher. She even pointed out the desk where she sat. A Homecoming Celebration is held every year where descendants of former slaves have made this weekend comparable to a pilgrimage "home" where memories are rekindled, ties and acquaintances are renewed. We then toured the Uncle Tom's Cabin site which not only commemorates the life of Josiah Henson but this area recognizes the accomplishments of fugitive slaves.

- Our journey concluded back in Detroit, at an Ethiopian Restaurant known as the Blue Nile. The atmosphere was quite colorful and relaxing. Once we were seated we were provided with warm wash cloths to wash our hands. In fact they provided assistance with washing your hands. The menu contained meat dishes such as lamb, goat, chicken and beef as well as vegetarian dishes. I soon discovered that eating and sharing bread from the same plate is significant in the Ethiopian Culture. The meals are served on a large shared round of flat spongy bread called injera. This actually was the table cloth. We used pieces of the injera with our hands to soak up the food and the juices soak into the under-injera so that is the last part of the meal, in fact it was the tastiest. The Sankofa students were not too excited about Ethiopian culture! Visiting these historical sites in Canada was like taking a journey into history. It provided greater insight into and appreciation of Canadian Black History.



Deep Thought, by Akil Wilder

On Thursday, July 8th, 2010 LeBron James, a NBA basketball player, announced that he would depart from the Cleveland Cavaliers franchise. He decided to join forces with Dwayne Wade and Chris Bosh in Miami as a member of the Miami Heat. Much controversy and scrutiny followed this decision. People were burning his jerseys, cursing him and threatening him, amongst other things.

At the time that LeBron James decided to leave Cleveland he was a free agent. Free agency means that his contract had expired and he had the option to either leave or stay. Obviously, he opted to leave Cleveland. Many of the Cavalier fans were upset because they felt that he promised a championship and did not deliver. The fans were also in an uproar due to how LeBron made his decision. He organized a television special entitled "The Decision" on ESPN where he announced where he would sign his next contract to play basketball. His intention was to donate all the proceeds from special to the Boys and Girls Club of America.

Are the fans and media being overly critical of the decision that LeBron James made? In my opinion I feel that they were. At the end of the day basketball is just a sport and it is for pure entertainment for the viewers. There has to be a line drawn between business/entertainment and someone's personal life. It is unfair to be upset with someone for attempting to better themselves by taking advantage of a great business opportunity. If we step back and put ourselves in LeBron's situation we have to realize that we would probably make the same decision.

Another issue that arose was the owner of the Cavalier organization made comments about LeBron option to cut all ties with Cleveland. Comments along the lines of "I own you" were uttered from the owner. The organization/franchise is a business but the owners of the franchise own the organization, not the staff of the organization. Many people feel that this is the slave owner mentality; like the owner is the slave owner and player is the slave. It doesn't help that the majority of the stars in the NBA are African American and the majority of the owners are White Americans.

"The Decision" has benefitted LeBron's career due to

the Miami Heat made the NBA Finals this season. Now that this is the case, you won't hear all of the scrutiny and negative remarks from the fans and media. I wish him the best and the most success in his future endeavors.

SAVE THE DATE! Saturday, November 26

Sankofa is sponsoring its second RETURN and RETRIEVE event of 2011. Join us at Nanny's on Saturday, November 26 at 3pm as we "Explore and Understand our Diverse Environment". There will be a discussion of the DVD 'Mooz-lum'. Mooz-lum depicts a strict Muslim upbringing and the effects it has on a young man's social life. Too often in our society we fail to understand the challenges that emerge because of our past. If we fail to understand our own challenges, in most cases, we won't even acknowledge the challenges of others, making it much easier to succumb to stereotypes and warped values. We are anticipating a live discussion. Please plan to join us.

Pictures from our first 'Return and Retrieve' event

