



**Sankofa is a West African Akan word and concept that means,
“We must go back and reclaim our past so we can move forward:
To better understand why and how we came to be who we are today.”**

The Sankofa Project
Archives of
Unitarian Universalists of
African, Caribbean,
Native American/Indian,
Asian and Pacific Islander,
Latin/Hispanic
Middle Eastern/Arab
Ancestries

- A Proposal by The Rev. Dr. Michelle Bentley
- In consultation with Archene Turner, Qiyamah Rahman, Wendy Pantoja
Kate Lore, Rev. Leslie Takahashi Morris, Rev. Dr. David Hubner,
Rev. Dr. Lee Barker, Rev. Dr. Neil Gerdes, and Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed

1. Fifty word summary of the project

The Sankofa Project Archives will advance a collection that digitizes, records, and showcases the lives and ministries of Unitarian Universalist ministers and laity of color ancestries. The Project is a partnership of the Department of Ministry and Professional Leadership, Meadville Lombard Theological School, and members of the Society of Sankofa.

2. Inception of this project

Archiving the achievements, accomplishments, and journeys of Unitarian Universalist ministers and lay leaders of African, Asian and Pacific Islanders, Native American, and Latin and Hispanic descent was an idea that initiated with Rev. Dr. Michelle Bentley three years ago that is now coming to fruition.



March 31-April 1, 2003 Anti-racism/Anti-oppression Consultation, Union Club, Boston, MA. U.T. Saunders Consultant.

(Concerned about the growing crises with the lack of numbers and positive settlements for ministers of color, primarily men of African descent, Kay Montgomery and Bill Sinkford called this gathering of clergy and lay leaders. It was at this meeting that Michelle Bentley suggested the idea of an Archive project of people of color that was reported to and well received by the group. Those in the picture are: Lay leader James Coombs, Rev. Jose Ballester, UUA Consultant Paula Cole Jones, Revs. Michelle Bentley and Rosemary Bray McNatt).

As Director of the Archives, Rev. Dr. Bentley is working in collaboration with Meadville Lombard president, librarian, and several ministerial students of color and Hispanic ancestry, members of the Society of Sankofa, and the Unitarian Universalist Ministry and Professional Leadership staff group. In addition to Rev. Dr. Michelle Bentley's idea and beginning the Project, distinguished Minister Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed, around the same time and upon his retirement began to bring his collection of materials to Meadville. Thus, collection and archiving has already begun of materials gathered over decades by Meadville alums Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed and Rev. Dr. Michelle Bentley, by Meadville, and others.

3. What are the goals of the project? What are the specific outcomes you anticipate?

The purpose of the Sankofa Project Archives (SPA) *is to document the history of UUs of Color* by recording the contributions of hard work in program and curriculum development, anti-racism/anti-oppression and multiculturalism consultations, dissertations, books, the ministries that did not by-pass the hurting communities on the way to church, the Good Samaritan ministries in the community, and the memoirs and recollections of clergy and laity pioneers of Color who have been in the storm so long-the struggles for liberation, for all of Unitarian Universalism and the world to see. We want to create and celebrate a dynamic, interactive, and comprehensive Archive of real/actual Unitarian Universalist men and women clergy and laity of color who have served so well our movement and the larger society.

Another goal of the Sankofa Project is to create *a virtual archive with on-line accessibility for interested parties and scholars from around the world. As the collection gathers more interest, the list of possible research projects also grows.* African American, People of Color, and Liberal Religious undone historical research includes: the history of All Souls First Universalist (a predominantly black congregation on Chicago's Southside that remains active as All Souls' Free Religious Fellowship); a selection of Bill Jones writings; the history of ancestors Lewis McGee, Egbert Ethered

Brown, David Eaton, and Francis Ellen Watkins Harper to name only a few; the interesting relationship with the UUs and AMEs; the life story of UUA President William Sinkford; the stories of women ministers of color in the UUA-Yvonne Chappell Seon, Diane Arakawa, Patricia Jimenez, to name a few of the firsts; and many more powerful stories of lives and ministries.

Internet/Web access is a way to celebrate the accomplishments, and a way *to stay in relationship with and connected to colleagues* such as Meadville Lombard graduate Rebecca Seines, President of the Unitarian Universalist Church/Movement of the Philippines, as well as *with international and other liberally religious Movements* of sisters and brothers in India, Japan, and South Africa. It is equally important for *youth and seminarians to have access to and knowledge of their history in the Movement.*

The Sankofa Project Archives *is an opportunity for people of all backgrounds to learn, through books, reports, photographs, videos, through oral tradition, and other media the journey of struggle and joy that Unitarian Universalists of Color have endured, and what they have contributed to the conversation and development of Unitarian Universalism, liberal religion, and society in general.*

Describe more fully the project for which you are applying

Despite a long history of involvement in civil rights issues by individual Unitarians and Universalists (as well as, as a denomination), there has been a lack of significant denominational progress toward becoming a more racially/ethnically diverse association of congregations. When one walks into the doors of our seminaries and churches, one can begin to understand the reasons why our shared hope of diversity has eluded us. There is a profound lack of information about racially/ethnically diverse Unitarian Universalist ministers and lay leaders who have helped pave the way of Unitarian Universalism and liberal religion.

“Inclusiveness” has been hampered in the view of some by an underlying cause and effect of institutional racism, both in our congregations and in our seminaries, creating “exclusivity” based primarily on race (and class) rather than gender, sexual orientation, or other factors. Thus, while substantial gains have been made to increase the numbers of women, openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender ministers, there has been minimal progress to increase the number of racially/ethnically diverse ministers and laity in our congregations.

Rev. Dr. Michelle Bentley says in the introduction of her 1998 Doctor of Ministry thesis the following about theological education, “The white face of theological education must change... today, even at the graduate level, it’s the same as when I was a little girl, mainly European American curriculum, Western educational methodologies and pedagogy, little, if any respected thought and works by people of color, and very few, if any professors of color who looked like me. There are few praxis-oriented courses that teach the reality of the work in which we are to minister in and raise our children as leaders. Where are the theories and contributions by people of color? They remain on

the margins, just like me. Theological education mirrors the situation of the churches and public/private education – mostly separate and unequal.” Therefore, the Sankofa Project Archives is to have a lived purpose: to take people’s lives from the margins and celebrate them.

We need to know the oral and written stories and truths, and stories of triumph and struggle, and educational theories by women and men who are, as WE.B. DuBois coined in his classic *The Souls of Black Folks* “The talented 10th” women and men often ahead of the times. We also need to see what they looked like (note: there are several prominent pictures of people displayed at Meadville/Lombard – all who are shown are white men-except for two-faculty members-Bentley/Thandeka). Good educational theory says that one should be able to walk into a classroom, a church, or an office and know, simply by the pictures on the walls, the music being played, and the readings being read, who is and who is not welcomed there, as well as the organization’s mission. *The Sankofa Project Archives will display a century’s worth of photographs of those ministers and lay leaders and their contributions to Unitarian Universalism, religion, and society for use by clergy, laity, congregations, and by society in general.*

We, Unitarian Universalist clergy and laity of African, Native, Asian and Pacific Islanders, and of Latin and Hispanic ancestries wish to collect, record, and share our knowledge of generations and assist others to grasp the enduring and universal truths that lie below superficial appearances of experience. We wish to share of ourselves our information freely with other women and men to help them tell their stories of joy and of sorrow, and to also show them the metaphors and the ropes, as medicine women/men, as wise uncles/aunts, as elders who sponsor growth and development of another’s child – nieces, nephews, your child, my child, and many a dog-eared seminarian.

4. Give a timeline detailing how and when you plan to meet your goals

This grant proposal seeks funding for Phase I and the start of Phase II

Phase I: Gathering and Displaying of Initial Materials - Today through July 31, 2007

- A. Gather materials from the libraries of Rev. Drs. Michelle Bentley and Mark Morrison Reed, and Meadville/Lombard Theological School.
- B. Create a Local Coordinating Committee
- C. Create a Council of Elders (Advisory Committee) from the different tribes called out by their constituents to speak on their behalf. Elder wisdom has a discerning spirit about the importance of multicultural and anti-oppression training on the battlefield of daily life.
- D. Implement minimal best practices
 - 1. Create Mission Statement and goals (both short-term and long-term)

2. Create Formal Definition of Collaboration and Signed Agreement
3. Create a Written Collection Development Policy
4. Create an Access Policy
5. Create Deed of Gift
6. Create Accession log

E. Purchase picture frames, enlargements of photos, display boards, shelves, cabinets, etc. to showcase these materials in the newly designated Sankofa Project Archives Room in the Fleck House of Meadville/Lombard (5700 South Woodlawn Avenue).

F. Display pictures with annotation of those ML ministers already in possession: Watari Kitashima, graduate 1891, Tokyo; Binay Mohan Sehanavis, Class of 1909 Professor, Brahma Somaj College, India; Jamini Kanta Koar, Class of 1912, Religious worker, Brahma Somaj, Calcutta, India; Totsuan Nomura, Class of 1924; Lewis McGee, Class of 1948, Ordained in AME Church, 1917, Founder Free Religious Fellowship (All Souls Unitarian Church, Chicago), 1948; Mark Morrison Reed, Class of 1979; Michelle Bentley, Class of 1986; Sunrit Mullick, Class of 1988.

G. Purchase a digital camera to digitalize these materials for use on the internet/web and discs to save.

H. Purchase computer, printer, and scanner.

I. Design and implement Sankofa Project Archives Website in collaboration with RevolUtion Web designers (Web proposal appendix A)

J. Hire technical assistant to upload materials and on-going maintenance

K. Hire clerical assistant for correspondence (on-going/dynamic and not static)

L. Contact all Meadville and Starr King School for the Ministry Alums for Color for 5x7 photos and bios for display and for website – this would include all honorary degreed folks of color as well (Norma Poinsett, Leon Spencer, Jacquie James to name three) and faculty (Michelle Bentley, Thandeka, Yielbonsie Charles Johnson, Ibrahim Farahaji Jones, Alma Crawford). This could be posted on the DUUB (Dictionary of UU Biography).

M. Collect, record, and display, and digitize dissertations, reports, books, spiritual cultural artifacts produced by people of color in affiliation with Meadville Lombard Theological School.

N. Begin paid Director at approx. 1/8 time (4.0 hours/wk).

Phase II: (Begin April – June 2007 and beyond)

A. Coordinating Committee to devise outreach and marketing plan beyond Meadville Lombard to primarily the Central Midwest District and some beyond.



Society of Sankofa (SOS) members

The November 2003 signing of the Society of Sankofa Incorporation Papers -11/03 gathering. The mission of SOS's UU Women of African descent of the Central Midwest District is to mentor and offer program for youth and young women of color whose lives are in crises. SOS members are from All Souls Free Religious Fellowship, the First, Second & Third Unitarian Churches of Chicago, Unity Temple Oak Park, and UUs at large. UUA President Bill Sinkford and Dr. Angela Merkert, Congregational Services Director for the Central Midwest District were present for this occasion.

B. Devise outreach and marketing plan to Unitarian Universalists at Starr King School for the Ministry, Harvard Divinity School, Andover Newton Theological School, and to all seminaries where UU students and faculty of color attend or have attended. Extend outreach and networking efforts to Unitarian Universalists throughout North America to learn of this new resource and to solicit donations of additional materials and funds.

C. Use the Antiracism Timeline set forth by Tom Stites (See appendix B) as a guide for the collection and documentation of significant UU antiracism efforts and events.

D. Create links to companionable websites such as DRUUMM, LUUNA, UUA, UU History, Meadville Lombard, Starr King, UUMA, DUUB, etc.

5. Please describe your specific plans for raising income in addition to the proposed UUFP grant. How do you plan to sustain the project?

A. Initiate fundraising projects such as special UU calendars and address books featuring racially and ethnically diverse UU ministers and lay leaders and bios. Sell via General Assembly booth and via the website.

B. The creation of a contribution and/or membership link on the website.

C. An on-going line item in the Professional Development budget of Ministry and Professional Leadership, UUA.

D. A fund-raising drive to people of color-and all Unitarian Universalists.

E. Provide professional education presentations of the Archive material to UU congregations.

F. Create and provide continuing education courses for ministry students, ministers, and laity to assist the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, UUMA CENTER Committee, Identity Based Ministry, Religious Education credentialing, Intergenerational Religious Education in their formation work, and for general professional development purposes.

G. This seed money from the Unitarian Universalist Funding Panel will allow the Archive to get on its feet, grow, and show success, which will enable SPA to reach out for other grants and to other granters and to patrons of the arts.

6. How will this project strengthen Unitarian Universalism, its ideas, influence, and/or its organization? Explain how Unitarian Universalism will benefit from the successful completion of this project.

“All our ancestors and all future generations are present in us. Liberation is not an individual matter. As long as the ancestors in us are still suffering, we cannot be happy, and we will transmit their suffering to our children and their children. Now is the time to liberate our ancestors and future generations. It means to free ourselves. If we can take one step freely and happily, touching the Earth mindfully, we can take one hundred. We do it for ourselves and for all previous and future generations. We all arrive at the same time and find peace and happiness together!” Thich Nhat Hanh - *The Long Road Turns to Joy*

7. Individuals who will carry out the project plan:

Rev. Dr. Michelle Bentley, Sankofa Project Archive Director, M.A. Education & Inner City Studies, Professional Development Director in the Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group of the Unitarian Universalist Association (MPL), President of the Society of Sankofa Board of Directors (SOS).

Rev. Dr. Lee Barker, Meadville Lombard, Sankofa Project Archive Fiscal Agent, President of Meadville Lombard Theological School

Rev. Dr. Neil Gerdes, Sankofa Project Archive Librarian & Principle Investigator, Head Librarian Meadville Lombard Theological School & Chicago Theological School.

8. Supporting Groups

The Professional Development Office of Ministry and Professional Leadership has given approximately \$9000 to this project and \$10,000 of in-kind contribution. Please see the letters of support from Rev. Dr. David Hubner, Rev. Dr. William Sinkford, and Ms. Kay Montgomery of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Meadville Lombard also has given close to \$7000 of in-kind contribution. Please see letter of support from Rev. Dr. Lee Barker.

In addition, several of the members of the Society of Sankofa have given of their time, expertise, and full support. Please see Ms. Kimary Lee's letter of support.

Ministerial students of Meadville Lombard Theological School and other seminaries have also given of their time, resources, and ideas and heart to this project. Please see their letters of support.

In addition, the President of DRUUMM, the Director of the UUAs Identity-Based Ministries Staff Group, and many ministers of color and of Hispanic ancestry and UUA organizations believe The Sankofa Project Archives to be an idea whose time has come, and they give it their full support and are willing to work to make it a success.

9. Evaluation and Criteria for Success

A. Criteria of success will be discussed annually addressed by the Coordinating Committee and Council of Elders.

B. Director will provide a written evaluation to the Advisory Committee at the conclusion of each phase.

C. Director will provide a written evaluation to the UU Funding Panel.

D. 50 hits to the Archive website in phase I, a total of 100 hits in phase II. Monitoring of the website will be by RevoluUUtion Media Solutions. The number of site hits to be determined by coordinating council.

E. Success will also include the number of visits (25 for phase I, 50 for phase II) to the Archive site located at Meadville Lombard (5700 South Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, IL). To be determined by coordinating council.

F. Success based upon 10 archive boxes filled of material submitted.

G. Success based 10 researchers using the archive materials.

H. Archive representative(s) to visit ten UU congregations for presentation of archive materials.

Appendix A

Revolution Media Solutions Proposal for
Online Database Integration and Website Development

Appendix B

Racism/by Tom Stites,
Antiracism Timeline (UUA-Two Decades of Grappling with Racism)

Appendix C – Letters of Support

Rev. Dr. Lee Barker
President Meadville Lombard Theological School

Kimary Lee, J.D.
Board of Directors Society of Sankofa

Rev. Dr. Bill Sinkford
President Unitarian Universalist Association

Ms. Kay Montgomery
Executive Vice President Unitarian Universalist Association

Rev. Dr. David Hubner, Director, Ministry and Professional Leadership, UUA
Executive Secretary, Ministerial Fellowship Committee

Archene Turner, Meadville Lombard (MLTS) and Seminarians of Color not at ML

Qiyaman Rahman, MLTS Ministerial Student
Former District Executive, Thomas Jefferson District

Kate Lore, MLTS Ministerial Student

Description	Proposed Grant	Existing Funds	Total	In-Kind	Adjusted Total
The Sankofa Project					
(Archive Budget)					
				Current)	
Archives Assistant	2000	400	2400		2400
Student Assistant	1500		1500		1500
Librarian				ML- 3000	3000
Entertaining & Travel	Personnel				
	Director**				
Operations	4.5 hours/week	7000		7000	(**7000
Telephone/Internet		750	750	MPL 200	950
Maintenance/Copying		500	500	MPL 400	900
Utilities/Misc		250	250		250
Archive Room Rental				ML 5000	5000
Administrative costs	2000		2000		2000
Materials & Supplies					
Books, Periodicals				MPL 500	500
Office Supplies		400	400		400
Archival Materials	1500	1000	2500		2500
Web Design					
Web Design, Interfacing, Hosting, Maintenance	4000		4000		4000
OPAC software, (Online catalog)	1000		1000		1000
Equipment					
Shelving, cabinet, paint,		1500	1500		1500
Audio-Visual/Digital Camera	500	100	600		600
Computer		2500	2500		2500
Printer, Scanner, Fax		250	250		250
Maintenance		350	350		350
Digitization of photosets					
Printing		750	750		750
Professional Devel Archive Training		750	750		750
Total	20000	*9500	30000	9300	38800
		* Ministry Profess. Leaders		** 17300 current – in-kind	**46800 with in-kind director*

		Budget, UUA		director	
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Phase III: Maintenance and Updates

- A. Institutionalize the website and physical Archives Project site by creating a membership base and by hosting an annual campaign at General Assembly.
- B. Create outreach and marketing to the liberal religious communities in International Religious Association.
- C. Initiate voice recordings onto the web and videotape library resources.
 - D. Expand uni-unique idea of archive artifacts for sale.*