

Editorial

## Sankofa Time

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**Abstract:** Amongst the Akan people of Ghana, the word “Sankofa” can be broken down into three syllables—“san” (return), “ko” (go), and “fa” (take)—that can be translated into “go back and take it,” or more philosophically, go back to learn. It is often represented by the Andinkra symbol of a bird with its feet facing forward and its head tucked behind; an apt metaphor for the practice of genealogical research. In Black communities in the United States, it is often evoked in attempts to reflect upon and engage with an African past.

**Keywords:** African diaspora; slavery; plantation spaces; rice agriculture; enslaved Africans; descendant communities

Antoinette Jackson standing next to a sign on Highway 17 near Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, where descendants of enslaved Africans used to sell sweetgrass baskets along the side of the road (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Photograph courtesy of Antoinette Jackson.

I remember only that I have arrived  
and that I must not forget. . .  
The wind blows the waves across the Atlantic  
and without a boat I drift in spirit and in thought  
towards an unknown land of people taken,  
of people sold, of people with brown skin and bright eyes  
and names lost and homes lost and customs altered  
and rituals forgotten.  
. . . I strain to remember.  
I struggle in the present to understand  
your passage here to this land,  
to this new home.

My world  
has been created by your very survival  
by your ability to be African in America,  
your ability to plant, to grow, to build,  
to give birth, to give praise, to sing and dance with life  
and stare past death's pale skin and  
experience the communion of life on other shores.  
There is much to remember and much to recover  
So I will follow your spirit across the Atlantic  
and listen to your stories. . . scattered in time,  
joining me to you, to then, to now.

I see words in the wind and  
hear voices in grains of rice and  
see other faces in my mother's smile.  
I am going back because I must.  
I am going back because I cannot go further  
until I return.  
It's Sankofa Time  
and I'm going back  
so that We  
can go forward.

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