



# *The Study of Black History Is My Spiritual Practice*

## **BLACK HISTORY 365**

*“Few things are more dangerous than bowing to someone else’s definition of you. In a world that would be content to have us forget our own names, we must keep them on our tongues. Inhale: We know our own name. Exhale: It sounds like dignity.” – Cole Arthur Riley, *Black Liturgies: Prayers Poems and Meditations for Staying Human*.*

Welcome to Black History 365. The lessons are an invitation to engage on a spiritual journey of reading, listening, and sitting with a long history of God’s human family from the Continent of Africa. Life lessons are oral—speaking and aural—listening. Storytelling evolves from listening and sharing, observation, and returning throughout one’s life as lessons are integrated into your body, mind, and spirit. Stories are not a linear beginning and end but are circular, ever-evolving practices of return. Return is ritualized learning until the stories are an integral part of one’s ancestral memory. Remembering is an African concept that informs generations to go back, retrieve your history, and honor the past, learn from it, move forward and teach generations-to-come the sacred stories of your people. Free to live, breathe, dance, farm, and build civilizations.

Why engage in Black History 365? Because Africa has 200,000 years of ancient history that include art, technology, law, and architecture. [Africa invented modern education as documented from the history of Timbuktu University](#). A Sudanese proverb declared, "Salt comes from the north, gold from the south, silver from the land of white men, but the word of God and the treasures of wisdom come from Timbuktu." This city played a crucial role in transmitting knowledge from African intellectuals to the larger Islamic world, in a manner not reflected in other educational institutions of the time.

Black History 365 is a gateway to remember we are gifted and diverse people, culturally and ethnically. We are made in the image of God and members of God’s human family.

Black History 365 resources have been divided into quarterly learning sessions. Develop a plan to engage and invite members within your congregation or family. Commit each quarter on your calendars. Review the sessions individually or with groups. Join a BHM 365 learning group. For more information contact [Lovev@ucc.org](mailto:Lovev@ucc.org)

Remain curious and enjoy the journey.



People of the [African diaspora](#) recognize and celebrate their diverse cultural identities around the world. Africa is the most linguistically diverse continent, with over 2,000 to 3,000 distinct languages spoken across its 57 countries. African descendants include African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans. Before the invasion and trafficking of Africans across the world, Africa was the root of human progress. Our histories are sacred and necessary for the survival and thriving of each generation.

#### Preparation for Quarterly Learning Sessions

- Read and review all the resources.
- Journal and record what you are reading hearing, viewing, and learning.
- Develop small groups. Share your insights during small group sessions.
- Record insights and questions, observations, and how the resources change your perspectives.
- Quarterly small group sessions build authentic, caring, and nonperformative spaces with others who want to hear your voice, learn from you, and listen to your struggles and realities.
- Conversations center heart/emotional experiences and decenters colonial cognitive expectations. Thinking and processing are important for stimulating exchanges of ideals and ways of being.
- Develop Disciplines of Silence
- Sit with your emotions.
- Keep a journal of resources you need to revisit, examine, interrogate, and ask more questions to go deeper.

*First Quarter 2026*  
[How Humans Migrated Across The Globe – View Resource](#)



The earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old. Prior to the existence of the first known humans, the planet underwent changes that eventually sustained animal, vegetation, and human life.

When humans (*homo sapiens*) first ventured out of Africa some 60,000 years ago, they left genetic footprints still visible today. By mapping the appearance and frequency of genetic markers in modern people, we create a picture of when and where ancient humans moved around the world. These great migrations eventually led the descendants of a small group of Africans to occupy even the farthest reaches of the Earth.

Our species is an African one: Africa is where we first evolved, and where we have spent the majority of our time on Earth. The earliest fossils of recognizably modern *Homo sapiens* appear in the fossil record at Omo Kibish in Ethiopia, around 200,000 years ago. Although earlier fossils may be found over the coming years, this is our best understanding of when and approximately where we originated.

According to the genetic and paleontological records, we only started to leave Africa between 60,000 and 70,000 years ago. What set this in motion is uncertain, but we think it has something to do with major climatic shifts that were happening around that time—a sudden cooling in the Earth's climate driven by the onset of one of the worst parts of the last Ice Age.

This cold snap would have made life difficult for our African ancestors, and the genetic evidence points to a sharp reduction in population size around this time. In fact, the human population likely dropped to fewer than 10,000. We were holding on by a thread.

Once the climate started to improve, after 70,000 years ago, we came back from this near-extinction event. The population expanded, and some intrepid explorers ventured beyond Africa. The earliest people to colonize the Eurasian landmass likely did so across the Bab-al-Mandab Strait separating present-day Yemen from Djibouti. These early beachcombers expanded rapidly along the coast to India and reached Southeast Asia and Australia by 50,000 years ago. The first great foray of our species beyond Africa had led us all the way across the globe.

**Read and study Pre-Human Existence and The Human Migration Map**

<https://legacy.calacademy.org/human-odyssey/map/>

Reading resources:

- [The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality by Cheikh Anta Diop \(Author\), Mercer Cook \(Editor\)](#)
- [Precolonial Black Africa by Cheikh Anta Diop \(Author\), Harold Salemson \(Translator\)](#)
- [Stolen Legacy by George G. M. James \(Author\)](#)

*Second Quarter 2026*  
*Sankofa: Looking Back and Moving Forward: Sacred Memories*

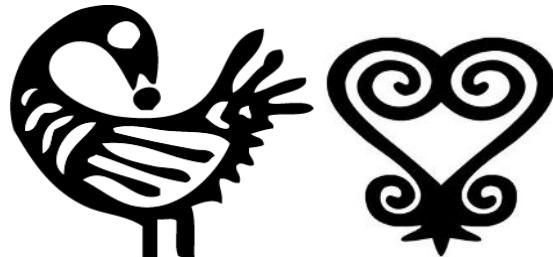
Sankofa is a word in the Akan Twi and Fante languages of Ghana that translates to "Go back and get it" and refers to the Bono Adinkra symbol represented either with a stylized heart shape or by a bird with its head turned backwards while its feet face forward carrying a precious egg in its mouth. Sankofa is often associated with the proverb, "Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi," or "Sankofa w'onkyir" which translates as: "It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten."

*"There is a history of Christianity in Africa prior to European exploration, conquest, and colonization that gets overlooked and lost in the Euro-American narrative. Africans have been fully present and fully human since the beginnings of civilization and event to the origin of humanity itself." [The History and Heritage of African American Churches: A Way Out of No Way](#), L.H. Whelchel, Jr.*

It implores Africans, African descendants, and the African Diaspora to reach back into ancient history for traditions and customs that have been left behind.



[Watch the Sankofa Video](#)



Sankofa is an African word from the Akan tribe in Ghana. The literal translation of the word and the symbol is “it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind.”

The word is derived from the words: SAN (return), KO (go), FA (look, seek and take). Sankofa symbolizes the Akan people’s quest for knowledge among the Akan with the implication that the quest is based on critical examination, and intelligent and patient investigation.

*"Sankofa means we cannot look forward intelligently or effectively plan for the future without a careful review of the past. All events arise from the confluence of some kind of antecedents; failure to appreciate the past eliminates the possibility of foresight.*

*The 'myth of the Negro' as described by the scholar Melville Herskovits will not be completely neutralized until the truth of the African is revealed. As the African American experience is fundamentally shaped by the rich ancestral past as well as by responses to racist hostility, our study of African Americans must necessarily consider the history of Africa."* [\*The History and Heritage of African American Churches: A Way Out of No Way\*](#), L.H. Whelchel, Jr.

Reading resources:

- Adamo, David Tuesday, *Africa and The Africans in the Old Testament*, (San Francisco, CA: Christian Universities Press, 1998). \*\*  
\_\_\_\_\_*Africa and Africans in the New Testament*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006).
- Mbiti, John S., *Introduction to African Religion Second Edition*, (Oxford, England: Biddles Ltd, 1975).
- Van Sertima, Ivan, *They Came Before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America*, (New York, NY: Random House, 1976).

### *Third Quarter 2026* *In a Beginning: Creator, Creation, Creatures, Humanity*

#### SACRED SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:1-4A Creation of the World

Genesis 1:26, 31 Lesson

1. *Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness... So, God created Humankind . . ." God saw everything and indeed it was very good.* NRSV
2. *And God created human beings in God's image, in the image of God humans were created, male and female. God created them.* (Revised gender neutral, non-hierarchy, imperial, and ethnic-cultural inclusive rendition)

*"Since African Religion belongs to the people, when Africans migrate in large numbers from one part of the continent to another, or from Africa to other continents, they take religion with them."* (Mbiti, 14) Citation: [\*Introduction to African Religion 2nd Edition John S Mbiti\*](#)

Although anthropologists, Egyptologists, and Africanists are not in agreement on the exact racial classification of the people of Africa, there is general agreement that Africa is indeed the cradle of civilization and one of the earliest and most spectacular civilizations of antiquity. Africans have been known for their trade with other nations,

military acumen, early intellectual and artistic expressions, which reside in museums around the world. The term African is not an original name for people who originate on the Continent.

The name Africa came into Western use through the Romans, who used the name Africa terra — "land of the Afri" (plural, or "Afer" singular) — for the northern part of the continent, as the province of Africa with its capital Carthage, corresponding to modern-day Tunisia.

*"Our roots in the Black religious experience and tradition are deep, lasting and permanent. We are an African people, and remain "true to our native land," the mother continent, the cradle of civilization. God has superintended our pilgrimage through the days of slavery, the days of segregation, and the long night of racism. It is God who gives us the strength and courage to continuously address injustice as a people, and as a congregation. We constantly affirm our trust in God through cultural expression of a Black worship service and ministries which address the Black Community."* Trinity United Church of Christ History

The documentary [Africa's Great Civilizations](#) is a study of the world's first humans, the cradle of civilization, and the birthplace of the Christian religion. Episode one begins a journey through anthropological and scientific discoveries where viewers learn that Africa is the genetic home of all currently-living humanity. Episode two debunks the myth that Christianity came to Africa with European colonialism. In this episode, Gates travels to the center of Christianity's beginnings and the people who built churches to honor Christ on the continent of Africa. As Genesis 2:10-14 claims, the Garden of Eden extended from Africa (ancient Cush/Ethiopia) to Mesopotamia (Euphrates River).

All ancient cultures presented creation as controlled by their god(s) and set in their own backyard, thus there are numerous creation stories handed down and borrowed over time. ([People's Companion to the Bible](#), Page 111) Use the documentary and the scripts above to engage the group. Use notes from the African Presence in the Bible to supplement the scripture lesson. Read and refer to *Creation of Human Beings*, [The Africana Bible](#) page 72.

#### [Africa's Great Civilizations Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Interview](#)

Host Henry Louis Gates, Jr. takes viewers to the horn of Africa, the meeting place of the Red and Arabian Seas and a trade corridor between Africa, the Middle East, and Europe for thousands of years. A book written in Greek in first century A.D., *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, speaks of the Red Sea's illustrious port Adulis, the gateway to Aksum.

Debunking the myth that Christianity came to Africa with European colonialism, Gates shows that in the northeastern corner of Africa, Christianity is as ancient as anywhere in the world. This is revealed in the early monastic practices of Egypt's eastern desert in the second and third centuries. Some of early Christianity's most important writers and theologians were Africans of Berber descent.

#### Additional resources for self-study

- Africa and the Africans in the Testament and New Testament, David Tuesday Adamo
- [The Black Church: This Is Our Story; This Is Our Song by Henry Louis Gates Jr.](#)
- The People's Companion to the Bible, Chapter 11 – The Hebrew Bible as a Text of Cultures (pages 93-106)
- Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora, Genesis (pages 70 - 72)
- [The Berlin Conference](#)

#### Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr. Collection (use the links for more information)

Review the resources. Start a monthly reading group. Discuss

- [Africa's Great Civilizations | PBS](#)
- [Black in Latin America by Henry Louis Gates Jr.](#)
- [Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow by Henry Louis Gates Jr.](#)
- [Who's Black and Why? A Hidden Chapter from the Eighteenth-Century Invention of Race by Henry Louis Gates Jr.](#)
- [Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow by Henry Louis Gates Jr.](#)

### *Fourth Quarter 2026 Black History 365*

Black History 365 Virtual Sites: Use the links to visit the websites.

- [Equal Justice Initiative: About - The Legacy Sites](#)
- [A People's Journey, A Nation's Story | National Museum of African American History and Culture](#)
- [National Civil Rights Museum | Memphis, TN](#)
- [National Underground Railroad Freedom Center](#)
- [The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute](#)
- [The Association for the Study of African American Life and History](#)
- [The DuSable Black History Museum and Education Center](#)

## RACIAL JUSTICE MINISTRIES READING LIST

**Rev. Dr. Velda Love, Minister for Racial Justice**

Baptist, Edward E., *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2014).

Brown Douglas, Kelly, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*, Books, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015).

De La Torre, Miguel, A., *Burying White Privilege Resurrecting A Badass Christianity*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing, 2019).

\_\_\_\_\_ *Decolonizing Christianity Becoming Badass Believers, 2021*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Resisting Apartheid America, 2023*

Hannah-Jones, Nikole, *A New Origin Story: The 1619 Project*, 2021

Kendi, Ibram, *Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2018).

Resmaa, Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, (Central Recovery Press: Las Vegas, NV, 2017).

\_\_\_\_\_ *The Quaking of America: An Embodied Guide To Navigate Our Nation's Upheaval and Racial Reckoning, 2022*

Wilkerson, Isabel, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration, 2010*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent, 2020*

