Drumming, Sankofa and Dr. Carter G. Woodson: In Search of Reconciliation
Film Festival - Session Thu, Oct 6, 2016 2:00 to 3:50pm, Richmond Marriott Hotel, Salon H-AV Room

Craig Woodson Story. According to my family’s genealogy book (Memphis, 1915), my ancestors Dr. John and Sara Woodson helped found this nation at Jamestown, Virginia in 1619. By taking six of the first 20 Africans that arrived by ship, they also helped begin the institution of slavery in America.

After a lifetime of my studying, embracing and enjoying African culture, music and drumming, it was deeply painful to face my family’s past. It took many years for me to publicly acknowledge our role in this holocaust. Eventually, as I understood the deeper meaning of the Ghanaian term ‘Sankofa,’ one cannot move forward without remembering the past, I felt the need to act.

Through my friend and music educator, Bette Cox, I was able to contact her friend, Edgar Woodson, the great grandnephew of Dr. Carter G. Woodson and a descendant of the first slaves in America. Edgar, his wife Aileen, and daughter Adele and I stayed in touch, meeting socially. In 1989 I moved to Ohio but worked several times a year in Los Angeles and met with Edgar and family regularly.

In time we decided that the black and white Woodson families should get together in a Sankofa reconciliation meeting where I would publicly apologize for my ancestors’ role in slavery. This took place in October 1998 in Los Angeles at the church of Rev. James Lawson, the Holman United Methodist Church. I also learned about the Asante participation in slavery, the people that I had worked with in Ghana for several years (1979-84). Edgar and I invited my Asante colleagues led by Sam Appiah and living in Los Angeles to attend our meeting as well; they did.

My presentation on October 6, 2016 at the ASALH Meeting and Conference will present two videos followed by panel discussion. The first video is an interview I did with Norma Downs in 1999 (26 minutes), and the second video is a crowd funding piece with Adele Woodson Bailey (5 minutes). Here is a summary of our Sankofa Woodson meeting at the Holman United Methodist Church in 1998.

1. Our 1998 black/white Woodson reconciliation 2.5 hour meeting, attended by 40.
   - Attended by Edgar Woodson’s family (3) Craig Woodson’s family (9), Bette Cox’s family (5), Sam Appiah’s Asante family (6), UCLA faculty (3), church members (4), media (3), clergy (3), Benjamin family (3), Diallo Riddle (great great-grandson of Eliza Riddle, mother of C.G. Woodson), Diallo’s brother, Tony, seen in the photos below, could not attend.
   - Goal was to begin a wider conversation among families about reconciliation beginning with the apology for enslavement in the white Woodson family by Craig.
   - Celebrate Dr. Carter Woodson’s achievements and those of other African Americans.
   - Audience members discussed, among other things, how ‘difference’ had appeared in their lives.
   - The Asante family expressed regret for past participation in slavery.
   - See Norma Downs 1999 Sankofa interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rx4XJOZFGtA

2. How we have moved forward as a family since 1998.
   - The plan was to continue meeting as a family, but family health issues interrupted this.
   - Edgar’s and Aileen’s health declined and they passed by 2005; Adele and Craig continued communication all through her son’s, Brett’s, cancer treatment into 2014.
   - Last year Adele’s son had been cancer free for over two years and we decided to go forward.
   - Our plan to take our story to a much larger audience was put on hold in 2016 once again.
   - Last spring, Adele felt it was time to move forward with our larger meeting but soon after had her own health issues, again postponing our larger plan.
   - During this time however, were able to film a short introduction for crowdfunding through my nonprofit, Drums of Humanity. That is now in process.
   - Recently Norma Downs provided our TV interview done after the 1999 Sankofa event (above).

3. New connections to Thelma Woodson Phillips, Edgar’s sister and family
Drumming, Sankofa and Dr. Carter G. Woodson: In Search of Reconciliation
Film Festival - Session Thu, Oct 6, 2016 2:00 to 3:50pm, Richmond Marriott Hotel, Salon H-AV Room

- We stayed in touch and in 2013 I met with the National Black Woodson Family Reunion, and I repeated my apology to this group (see photo below).
- In 2014, I worked with Sherri Green, a Woodson relative, and her non-profit for the deaf, ‘Hands That Speak Volumes’ in a three-month music project.

4. Carter G. Woodson, a “Juneteenth” celebration in Cleveland, Ohio
- In 2012, I introduced Thelma to Lynn Hampton, a Cleveland policeman and a fellow drummer friend, who that year had begun a Juneteenth celebration of Dr. Carter G. Woodson to take place each June. Last year was the 5th year of those festivities, with lectures, a parade, drumming and festival (see photos below).

5. A planned 2017 black white Woodson family reunion is in process.
- While our plan to hold a larger family reunion is on hold while Adele is recovering, we are laying plans to make presentations on our story and on the need for reconciliation.
- Our belief is to begin a discussion of reparations with the understanding that black and white Americans share family blood line ties. And that our first need is to have many conversations, for black, white and other families to come together in large numbers, with the belief that we can then move onto a common understanding of reconciliation and the need for reparations.
- Sankofa video - Adele and Craig Woodson: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKwowAt25u4

6. Discussion
- How do we move the conversation about reconciliation and reparations forward?
- What actions can be taken immediately within black and white communities?
- In a recent talk with my brother, a psychiatrist, he felt that it would help to have regular discussion groups bringing black and white adults together (note Ted Paynther story)
- Work with young people, bring in the arts—music, dance, drama, visual arts, storytelling.
- Comments, suggestions, and any feedback should be sent to Craig Woodson’s email below.

Dr. Craig Woodson is an Applied Ethnomusicologist, teacher, instrument maker and percussionist with a Ph.D. from UCLA. His company Ethnomusic, Inc. (1976) is a world music education consultancy specializing in the development of programs and simple musical instruments for young people. In 1977, Prof. Nketia invited him to head a university project in Kumasi, Ghana, the Musical Instrument Technology Workshop (1979-81, 1984).

As a performing artist/audience conductor he has worked with the National Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Kronos Quartet in venues including the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall and the Lincoln Center. He is author of the Roots of Rhythm, a world drumming curriculum, and presenter of Drum Set in the Classroom for the non-profit Percussion Marketing Council.

He traveled to Iraq and Indonesia (2009) doing humanitarian work and later formed his non-profit Drums of Humanity (2011) to support such work. In August 2016, he traveled to Honduras and Ecuador for UNICEF and Playing for Change working with broken families and Earthquake victims. He has been developing an approach to black white reconciliation beginning with the Woodson family since 1998.

For More Information or to Send Comments Contact:

Craig Woodson, Ph.D.
Owner, Ethnomusic, Inc. and Roots of Rhythm
President, Drums of Humanity
17950 Geauga Lake Road
Chagrin Falls, Ohio 44023-2210
Cell 440-725-8767

woodsonphd@gmail.com
www.EthnomusicInc.com
www.RootsofRhythm.net
www.DrumsofHumanity.org
Drumming, Sankofa and Dr. Carter G. Woodson: In Search of Reconciliation
Film Festival - Session Thu, Oct 6, 2016 2:00 to 3:50pm, Richmond Marriott Hotel, Salon H-AV Room

Woodson Family and Friends - Photos

Woodson Family with Guests 1998

Adele Woodson Bailey  Aileen, Edgar, and Craig Woodson

Tony Riddle  Brett Woodson Bailey

Carter G. Woodson Juneteenth Celebration, In Cleveland, OH (2013)

Olu Manns, drummer Son, Taye, Yolanda/Evric Woodson Phillips at Juneteenth

Thelma (Granny) Woodson Phillips (center) and family
With Lynn Hampton (Director of C. G. Woodson Juneteenth)

Black Woodson Family Reunion 2011