



SANKOFA

A proverb in the Twi dialect of the Akan language states, “*Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi*,” which translates to “It is not wrong [taboo] to return to fetch that which you have forgotten.”

Imbedded in the proverb is the word *Sankofa*, which translates to “go back and get it” (*san*: to return; *ko*: to go; *fa*: to look, to seek and take). The Asante people of the Akan ethnic group of Ghana visually express this idea using Adinkra symbols, which are pictograms of proverbs, philosophical concepts, and aphorisms common in the Akan culture. The *Sankofa* is represented by two Adinkra symbols: a stylized heart shape and a bird with its feet firmly planted forward, reaching its neck back over its body with an egg in its mouth.

The *Sankofa* signifies that the wisdom of the past can help us reach our full potential in the future. The symbol has been used in traditional Akan art, pottery, cloth, and architecture. Today, it has become an important emblem in the United States in relation to the African American and African Diaspora as we recognize the need to reflect on our history to shape a more equitable and affirmative future.

If knowledge has been lost, it is vital to take the opportunity to reclaim it for future generations. As we celebrate Alabama’s 200th birthday, we keep this in mind as we uncover and highlight the accomplishments of African Americans in Alabama and inspire those who come after us.

