

# SANKORE'



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا

It's a Friday late afternoon, on a sunny but cool mid August day in Cotonou, Benin. I just completed *Jaji* Jean Boyd and Dr. Beverly Mack's monumental work *Educating Muslim Women* and came to a realization about the growth and development of Islam among the Africans of the Americas. I realized that each generation of our people have been collectively in a state of *sankofa* (reaching back to move forward).



*Sankofa* is originally a Yoruba concept which literally means: 'return and get it' and represents a state of becoming where the individual, family, community or nation reaches back into its historical memory in order to know itself and be itself. *Sankofa* is an individual and collective proactive state of becoming. This state of becoming is amazing because each generation that reaches back has access exponentially to more authentic historical data about itself (thanks to the kind of research diligently put forward by *Jaji* Boyd and Dr. Mack). Thus each time a generation reaches back into a more accurate collective memory it moves forward with more individual certitude and collective purpose.

Reading Jean and Beverly's phenomenal work made me realize that each generation of our people have been endeavoring to be ourselves and our mistakes have been mostly due to a lack of accurate information about who we are. In coming to grips with and embracing who we are is not only medicinal for us, but it has proven medicinal for others as well. Although the process of *sankofa* focuses on the treatment of the historical consciousness and identity construct of disconnected Africans; it is also inclusive and brings about a cure to other people associated with this process. This explains why Latino and Anglo-American Muslims have also been transformed by the clear and uncomplicated teachings of the Fodio family. I am fascinated with how the next generations will express *sankofa* in the light of the kind of accurate, critical yet engaging scholarly work of these two prolific sisters.

I would argue, and many of my Hausa and Fulbe friends will assent, that *Jaji* Boyd and Dr. Beverly Mack themselves have been transformed by the very nature of candidly recording and captivatingly transmitting the sacred traditions of African mothers, wives, sisters, daughters and granddaughters. When I visited the *Sultan* of Sokoto in 2000, he warmly recounted the service that *Jaji* Jean Boyd contributed to the renovations and improvement of the Sokoto Palace and her close friendship with the House of the *Waziri* of Sokoto. Just recently, the present *Sultan* of Sokoto openly declared at a Harvard University presentation that the scholarship of Dr. Mack is indispensable to the future of Northern Nigeria and requested that she assists his office in helping to organize and improve the education and welfare of Muslim women of his country. Jean Boyd and Beverly Mack has made it possible for African Muslims of the Americas to be able to experience *sankofa* utilizing a genuine and authentic anthropology.

For us, *Educating Muslim Women*, is a part of our sacred history. For this we owe *Jaji* Boyd and Dr. Mack many thanks and abundant gratitude. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace once said: "The most grateful of people to Allah are those who are most grateful to people." On behalf of the *Sultan* of Maiurno, al-Hajj Abu Bakr ibn *Sultan* Muhammad Tahiru ibn *Sultan* Muhammad Bello Maiurno and the *jama`at* of *Shehu* Uthman ibn Fuduye` in the east and west; I offer the deepest thanks and gratitude to *Jaji* Jean Boyd and Dr. Beverly Mack for producing a work which will assist generations to come in the process of *sankofa*. May Allah ta'ala recompense *Jaji* Jean Boyd and Dr. Beverly Mack with a reward equal to all those who will read this research and benefit from it intellectually, culturally, socially, politically and spiritually.

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