



University Relations

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‘Lost Manuscript’ author to highlight UCCS Black History Month celebration

The historian who unearthed a long-lost Carter G. Woodson manuscript will speak publicly about its contents for the first time Thursday, Feb. 7, at a free University of Colorado at Colorado Springs community forum.

Daryl Michael Scott, a Howard University black history scholar, will offer excerpts from the soon-to-be-released Woodson manuscript from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. in the University Center Overlook Café. The public is invited and hors d’oeuvres will be provided.

Woodson, frequently referred to as the “father of black history,” is perhaps most famous for creating the institution now known as Black History Month. Woodson also authored “The Mis-Education of the Negro,” a 1933 classic in African American literature and considered a primer for black activism.

Until now, historians believed they’d seen and catalogued everything Woodson had penned. One afternoon in 2005, Scott discovered otherwise.

Scott, a journal editor and officer for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, is a preeminent Woodson scholar and unofficial keeper of the Woodson archives. Scott was exploring a defunct file ASALH file cabinet in a Washington, D.C.-area self-storage unit when he spotted a weathered gray envelope bearing handwriting he recognized as Woodson’s. Inside was a typewritten 236-page document entitled “The Case of the Negro,” dated 1921.

Scott knew immediately that he was on to something big.

“It was kind of heady,” Scott said. “I’m very familiar with the books he’d published. I knew right off this had never been published.”

That Scott will be sharing its contents with the UCCS community before larger venues is testament to the power of personal relationship. It was La Vonne Neal, dean, UCCS College of Education, who asked Scott to debut his findings in Colorado Springs. Neal, like Scott, edits an ASALH scholarly journal.

“When La Vonne asks me to come, I come. I don’t say that to everybody,” Scott said. “I admire her commitment as editor of the Black History Bulletin. You don’t usually get a dean of a college of education with such a busy schedule to edit a journal. She has bigger fish to fry.”

Neal, for her part, can’t conceal her delight that Scott agreed. At last fall’s ASALH annual convention, Scott revealed to members that a Woodson manuscript had been found. Until now, he has not shared excerpts or commentary.

“We will be the first place he is going to go public with this,” Neal said. “That’s what’s so cool.”

The event is being hosted by the UCCS College of Education’s Community Learning Series with funding provided by CU President Hank Brown’s office. Scott also will meet with Pikes Peak Community College faculty and staff, implementing a feature of the UCCS 2007-2012 Strategic Plan that calls for the university to provide a leadership role in coordinating and promoting diversity in Southern Colorado, said Neal.

For more on Scott and the College of Education’s Quality and Excellence Community Learning Series [click here](#).

Scott spent two years editing the book, researching its origins, and writing an introduction that would situate the found pages within the framework of Woodson's oeuvre and the national conversation on race relations that has ensued since "The Case of the Negro" was penned. As such, Scott changed the title to "Woodson's Appeal," in order to place it in the tradition of similar black activist writings as "Walker's Appeal." David Walker was an American black abolitionist who promoted black pride and defended violent rebellion as a means for slaves to gain freedom.

The first printing of "Woodson's Appeal" is slated for early summer in a hardcover, limited collector's edition to be produced by the ASALH press, with proceeds to benefit the organization. Scott then hopes to partner with a mainstream publishing house to produce a paperback edition.

He's confident there will be commercial interest in the new release, as Woodson continues to snare new readers. "Mis-Education" has been in near-constant print since it first was published 75 years ago.

"Woodson is known for being provocative," said Scott. " 'The Mis-Education' sells better on Amazon than [W.E.B. Du Bois'] 'The Souls of Black Folk.' "

"The professors will tell you to read 'The Souls of Black Folk' but the guy on the street will tell you to read 'The Mis-Education of the Negro.' "

Scott promises to share some "doozies" from "Woodson's Appeal" that might explain why the manuscript was suppressed – most likely by Woodson himself. Among the more inflammatory statements in "Woodson's Appeal," are those that accuse white Americans of corrupting Christianity, including:

- "The Negro agrees with the writer who says whites nail Christianity to the cross."
- "The trouble with so many white men today is that there are too many to live on the labor of a small number of Negroes."
- "There's much doubt that actual Christianity ever existed in Europe and even if it did, it suffered an untimely death in transit across the Atlantic."

Woodson was not one to censor his fiery opinions. Moreover, he owned and operated his own printing press. However, Woodson might have been faced with a difficult choice in 1921 with ASALH teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. He had just received a cash windfall from a white philanthropic organization that made it possible to further his cause to restore black contributions to the pages of American history.

"To compromise on principles," Woodson wrote, ". . . is to lose your soul."

Nevertheless, to publish what would amount to a scathing critique of white society could have alienated the very group that made his vision come to fruition.

"In contrast to 'The Mis-Education,' which focused on the shortcomings of the so-called educated classes of black Americans, 'Woodson's Appeal' is a defense of the black race that points up the shortcomings of white Americans," Scott said.

That Woodson went on to publish nearly two dozen more books after this writing – including the scathing "Mis-Education" – before his death in 1950, could also indicate that the material in "Woodson's Appeal," had become dated, or more accurately expressed in his later writings, said Scott.

Woodson established ASALH in 1915 and founded Black History Month, formerly Negro History Week, in 1926. ASALH is considered the oldest black intellectual and scholarly organization in the world. Woodson was born in West Virginia in 1875, to impoverished ex-slaves. In 1912 he became the second black American to earn a Ph.D from Harvard.

-- Jane Wampler

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