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He is also founder of The Woodson Center—an organization that supports neighborhood-based initiatives to revitalize low-income communities.



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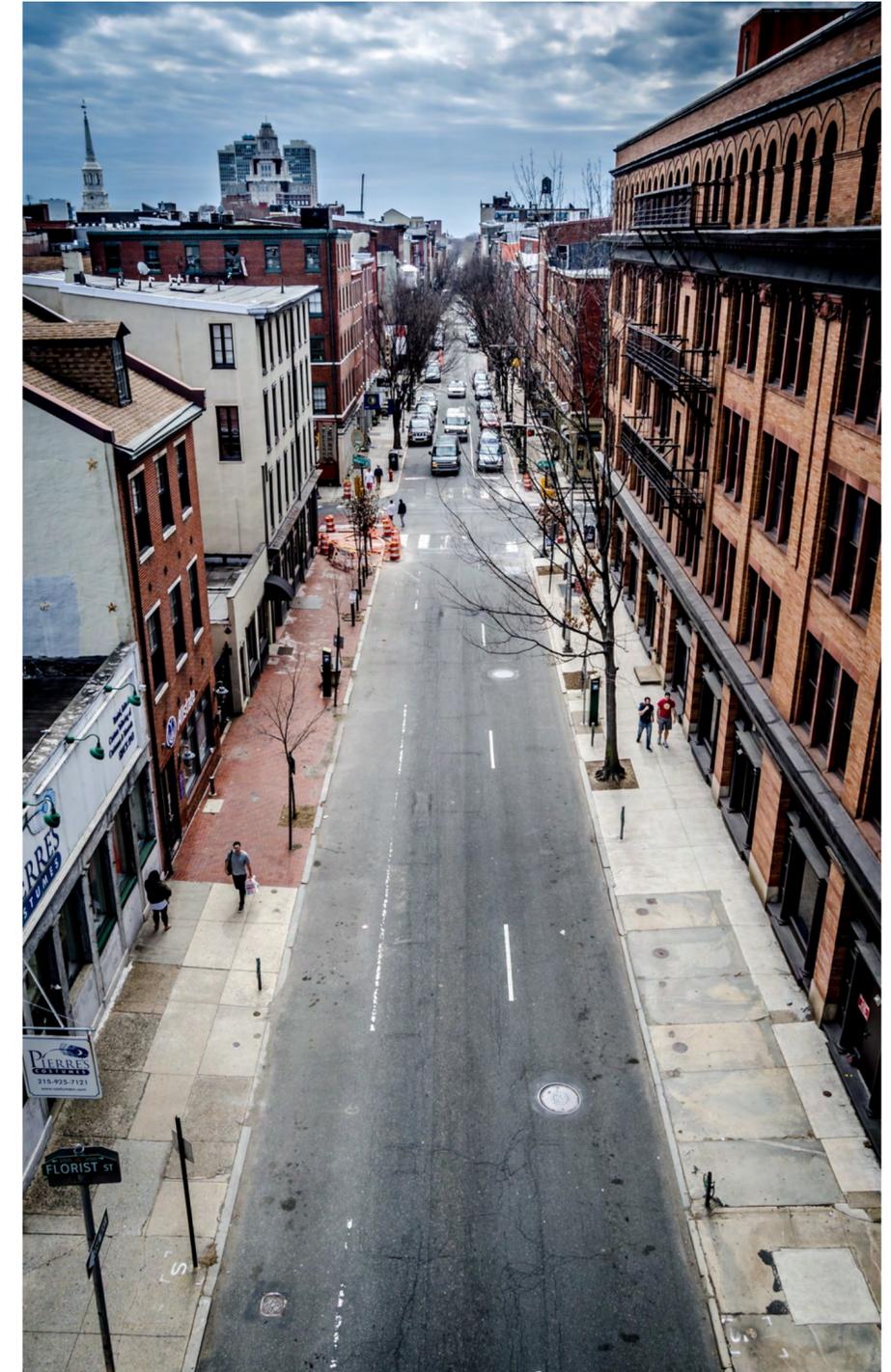
Bob Woodson was born in Philadelphia, PA. His father died when he was young, and he and his four siblings were raised by his mother.

Woodson dropped out of high school to join the Air Force. While in the Air Force he earned a G.E.D.

**Do you know what a GED is?**

After leaving the Air Force he went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics and a Master's Degree in Social Work.

**What does a Social Worker do?**



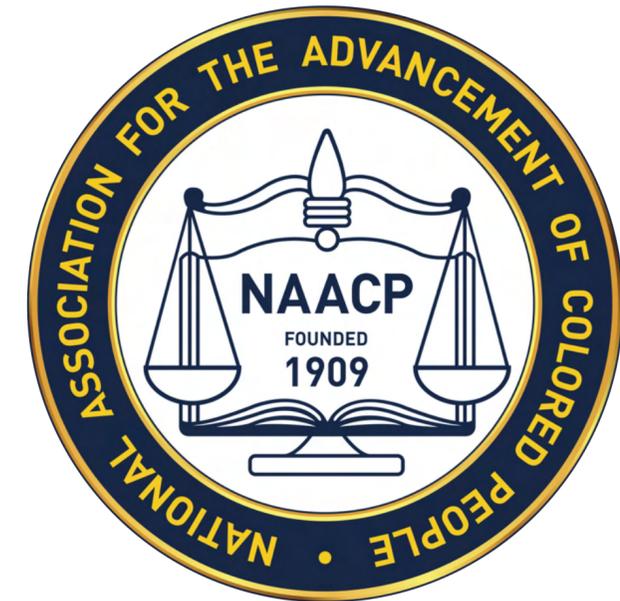
# Civil Rights Activism

Robert Woodson has been involved in civil rights and community development since the Sixties.

He has worked with groups such as the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the American Enterprise Institute.

Have you heard of any of these groups before?

What kinds of things do these groups do?



# Strengthening Communities & Neighborhood Empowerment

Woodson developed a strategy to fight crime by strengthening community institutions that were closest to the problems of high-crime areas.

He also developed the idea of neighborhood empowerment to seek solutions to the problems of low-income communities.

He seeks the “social entrepreneurs” who already live in these communities, rather than a poverty program directed by a government agency or stronger involvement by law enforcement.



# Strengthening Communities & Neighborhood Empowerment

Woodson's program seeks out families in these troubled neighborhoods that have prospered and persevered to learn from their success.

He prefers to focus on what is positive and on what is working, in order to overcome challenges.

He looks for the natural leaders in the community and seeks to empower and equip them to lead others.



# The Woodson Principles

Bob Woodson developed a list of 10 Principles that he has used in order to transform struggling neighborhoods and to empower the people within them.

Jot down the ones that interest you the most as we go through them.

**Competence**

**Integrity**

**Transparency**

**Resilience**

**Witness**

**Innovation**

**Inspiration**

**Agency**

**Access**

**Grace**





# Competence

Look first among people suffering the problem for a solution. Then, rely on the practical knowledge of those living in the same geographic and cultural zip code as the people experiencing the problem, instead of lofty ideas from distant “experts.”



# Integrity

Relationships are the necessary condition for transforming others, and trust is the common currency. Before you can help others, you need to consider your personal motives and level of commitment. Then, seek out leaders that are moral practitioners of virtue, honesty, and integrity and who are trustworthy and honest.



# Transparency

Good leaders willingly open up and share their triumphs over the challenges they have faced in their lives. They describe how they overcame brokenness and suffering, refusing to hide behind their pain or their pride, instead humbly offering up stories of their struggles in the interest of establishing trust.



# Resilience

In searching for healing agents within toxic communities, study those who are “in” troubled circumstances but not “of” those circumstances—those who have managed to survive and thrive—to discover the secret of their success.





## Witness

Look for those who have overcome hardship. They possess more credibility with the lost and struggling than the most accomplished experts. For example, those who are in recovery from an addiction are living proof that recovery is possible.





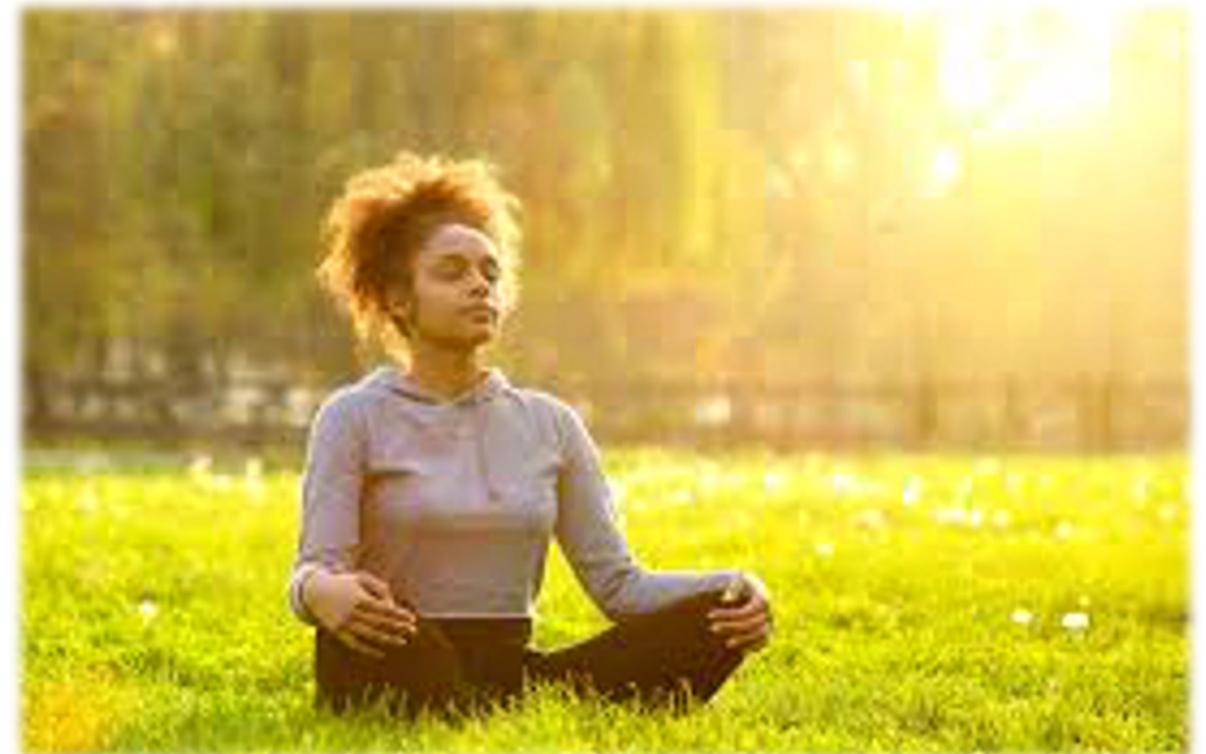
# Innovation

In our market economy, just three percent of people are entrepreneurs, but they create 70% of all new jobs. In like manner, a small percentage of social entrepreneurs can generate large-scale changes and improvements in the social economy, and their innovative ideas are by far the most effective. Empower the leaders and leverage the skills that are already available in the neighborhood.



# Inspiration

You can learn nothing from studying failure except how to create failure. Recognize the capacity that people possess. People are inspired to improve when they are presented with victories that are possible, not injuries to be avoided. Provide them with the tools for self-determination and help them strive to succeed above all reasonable expectations. Then, look for ways to celebrate even modest improvements.



# Agency

No one should have to surrender his or her dignity as a condition for receiving help. Unconditional giving leads to pity rather than the desire to succeed. People should be agents of their own uplift. Never do more for them than they are willing to do for themselves. There must be reciprocity as the framework of any meaningful relationship. In other words, a person should be given the opportunity to give in return for what is received.





# Access

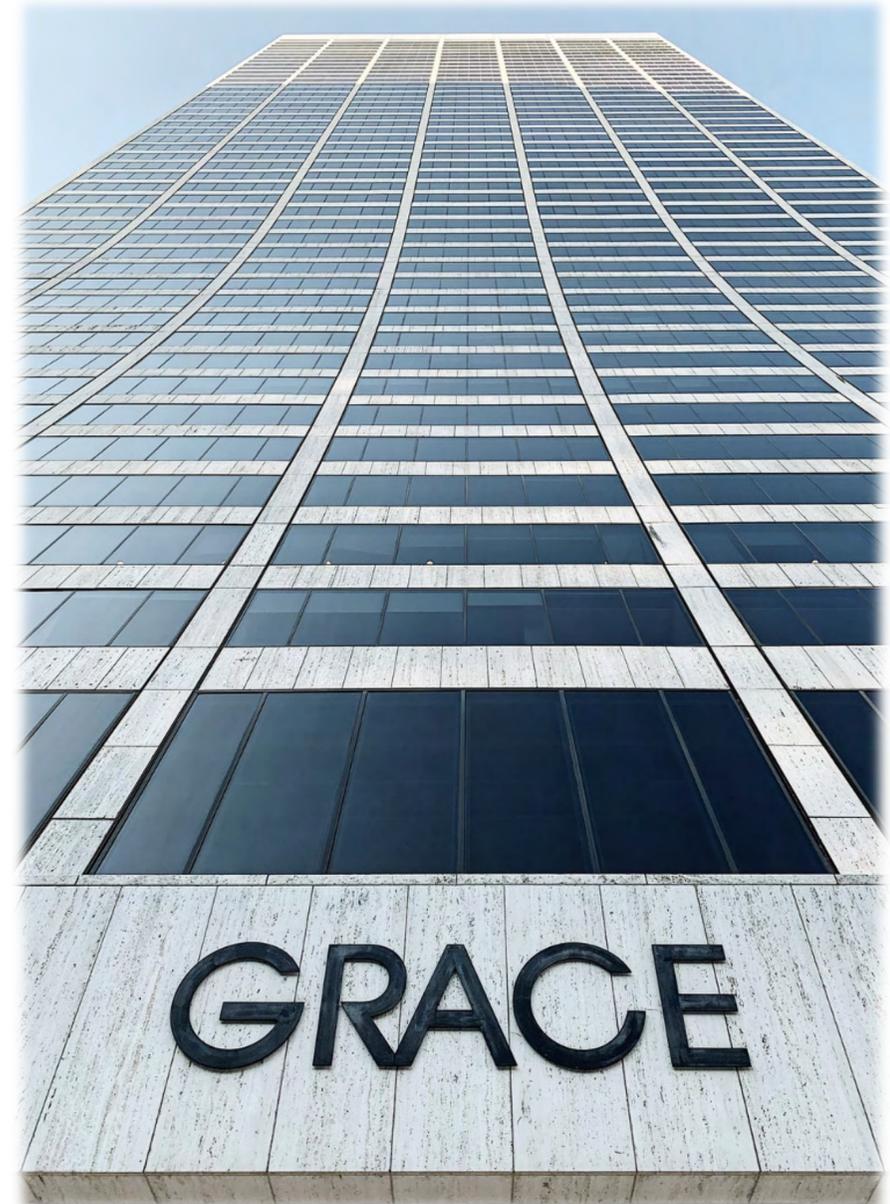
Eliminate barriers to access and serve all who suffer. Support small, positive change. People must be given the tools to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them.





# Grace

Love and respect others, even when it's inconvenient. Look at neighborhoods as filled with people who have potential, not dysfunctional victims. Be free of bitterness, regret, and uncertainty about the future.



# Self-Reflection

What do you think about Woodson's 10 principles?

Do you already possess or practice any of these principles?

Which interest you the most?

Which one do you think would be hardest for you to practice right now?

How might you begin to develop these principles in your own life?

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