

Women In African Development: Black Women Moving Towards the 21st Century



10-31-01

BY PROF. WALTER CROSS

SUMMITTED TO: DR. ALMAZ ZEWDE

AFRICAN STUDIES Ph.D. HOWARD UNIVERSITY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE ISIS PAPERS, THE KEYS TO THE COLORS	3
III. CONCLUSION	8
IV. DEFINITIONS	10
V. REFERENCES	11

I. Introduction:

In choosing this book/paper, “The Isis Papers, The Keys To The Colors,” in the section, *Black Women Moving Towards the 21st Century* (May 1975) by Dr. Frances Cress Welsing I wanted to answer some of the statements and questions that had been asked in class by the sisters. Although the sisters would imply that only a man could answer some questions, the response I received to the questions and statements was to consult a Black/African Women Scholar. I must always keep in mind that I am in a class of Black Women. This is a class on Women in African Development. My mission is to share my philosophy of Blacology and Black/African Scholarship with my sisters. Also to learn from them how to develop Blacology as an Interdisciplinary Cultural Science that would be acceptable for both Black Women and men. Also, to encourage the sisters to join in to the struggle to develop Blacology as a legitimate field of study and a cultural science.

In analysing this book I am utilizing my philosophy of Blacology. The concept of Blacology is developed from the authenticity of Black/African experience. I have also provided some definitions to give understanding to my philosophy of the Cultural Science of Blacology following my conclusion. Blacology may also consist of its own Cultural Linguistics or Ebonics. In addition, it is not restricted to the Euro-centric Language Arts. This give Blacology it's own significant identifiable writing form. It is the utilization of the ideals, philosophies, theories and Beliefs of Black/African scholars and historians of the past and present.

I wanted to show them what I mean when I am talking about Blacological Thought. Most of all my intention is to display the use of Blacology in the topic of the Class: Women in African Development. It is my contention the development of Africa is basically concentrated on Black/Africans in the Sub-Sahara. These are the people of whom I am historically, heretically, and genetically tied to. I am a member of this group of people. I am a Black/African born in the Diaspora on the continent of United States of America. I have a dual citizenship, that is of my ancestral origin and that of my political birth right.

In the development of Black/Africa, it is proper and fitting that the resources of Black Culture are not limited to only those of us Black/Africans who were and/are born on the continent. The Black Culture is an extended culture and its gifts and talents are international. There was a time when we were in our villages and it was all that we knew. Our village was the world. Then the colonialist came and took some of us away against our will. Now the sun does not set on our culture and it reaches all areas of the globe. You can take Black/Africans out of Africa but you can not take Black/African Culture out of its people.

The development of Black/African women has reached international concerns. When one looks at this crisis of Black/African women, it is only wise and noteworthy that Dr. Frances Cress Welsing would be one to consider as a Blacological Thinker with much to elaborate and contribute to the discussion of “Women in African Development”.

In her book, "The Isis Papers, The Keys To The Colors" in the section, Black Women Moving Towards the 21st Century (May 1975) is very much relevant to the present struggle of Black/African today in Africa and in the Diaspora. Dr. Welsing has an international messages one that is traditional and can stand the test of time. It is good to be able to change with the time but, Black/African people must have some foundations that do not wavier under any conditions. These are the words of Dr. Frances Welsing. Let us learn from what she has to say about Black/African women in development of their culture and redemption of their people. If you have not read this book as a Black/African women everything you know about racism white supremacy will confuse you.

In analysing this book, I am utilizing my philosophy of Blacology. In the establishment of the Cultural Science Blacology, one may be able to distinguish a Blacological Research or Blacology by the capitalization of the first letter of all words that are associated with Blacology (i.e. Black People, Black Culture, Black Woman, Black Man, Black Youth, Blacology, and Blacological, etc.). It is done to give honor, respect, and importance to these words. In the Euro -Centric Culture, Black People have been taught to hate everything Black and African. Black People had been taught to hate themselves. The Cultural Science of Blacology is to undo this type of self-hatred by giving importance to all that is Black and African. So then, it is proper and fitting to capitalize the first letter in all words that are of Black/African Culture. This is also a way to acknowledge and identify a Blacological Research and the Interdisciplinary Cultural Science of Blacology.

II. The Isis Papers, The Keys To The Colors by Dr. Frances Welsing Black Women Moving Towards the 21st Century (May 1975)

Today, the world is going through a period of great turmoil and change. Individually, we are aware of this turmoil because social and environmental chaos brings an attendant increase in the stress we feel in our daily lives as women, workers in all capacities: wives, mothers and individual members of a total collective that for 400 years has been oppressed. Yes, this is a difficult period for all of us "hue-man" beings, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that we are in a time not only of turmoil, but of crisis.

During periods of crisis and stress, the easiest thing to do as an expression of our pain, despair and hopelessness is to moan, groan, cry or attempt to escape through alcohol, other drugs, fantasy, laughter or just fun and games. However, another possible behavioral response, which channels the body energy upward and onward as opposed to downward, is the use of the crisis as a stimulus for analysis, challenge, responsibility, growth and great creativity.

The word crisis evolves from the Greek word, "krisis," which means decision. A period of crisis is a time for decision: an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs when the decisions that are made and acted upon become all-important for determining future events. Both men and women throughout the world have key roles to play in the resolution of this crisis, but my singular emphasis here is on the role of Black women.

Before specifically defining our present period of crisis and our response to it, we must contemplate our identity, the self-image that we carry in our brain-computers. For all that we can imagine doing and all that we will do or fail to do is a result of that picture of "self," derived from our total experiences from birth onward. That picture becomes the basis for all our behavioural patterns. Unfortunately, a major part of these self- and group-images for all too many of us Blacks consists of a brief and inaccurate history. Accordingly, this history began 400 years ago when we were brought to North America in the holds of slave ships by the "very advanced" Europeans (whites). It continues with the "advancement" that we have made since our emancipation in 1863 in becoming full-fledged "Americans"; and, finally, this history insists that many of us now are just like the whites. There is a proverb that states, "The tree grows strong and tall only to the extent that its roots are deep and firmly planted in the soil." If Black people are at all disappointed in our present level of achievement, it may be because our roots are not planted deeply enough in the past - resting upon such a shallow, inadequate and faulty data input of only 400 years of history.

The facts of our true identity are that we, as Black people, are persons whose dominant genetic and historic roots extend to Africa, "the land of the Blacks." Men and women of science today, with few exceptions, are satisfied that Africa was the birthplace of humankind that for many hundreds of centuries there after Africans, meaning Black people, were in the forefront of all human progress. As John Henrik Clarke states, "It can be said with a strong degree of certainty that Africa has had three Golden Ages. The first two reached their climax and were in decline before Europe as a functioning entity in human society was born."

Factually speaking, this means that Black women and Black men are the parents of the entire family of people - black, brown, red, yellow and white varieties. Black people can and have produced all of the colors of mankind, including white. White skin is simply the product of a recessive genetic mutation to skin albinism. Whites cannot be the parents of humankind because whites can only produce white. But Blacks can produce a range of colors from as black as the proverbial ace of spades, to as white as the proverbial driven snow. Not only are Blacks the genetic parents of all people in the world today, but Blacks produced the first scientists, architects, musicians, mathematicians, astronomers, astrologers, philosophers, statesman, priests, prophets and generals. Indeed, Africa produced some of the first fighting women generals.

I am reminded of some ancient and important wisdom of Africa, as seen in the following two proverbs:

- 1) *"When you educate women, you educate a nation,"; and*

2) *"The hand that rocks the cradle rules the nation and its destiny."*

With this wisdom of our Black ancestors in mind, let us examine the current world crisis and the role of Black women in its resolution. What is the nature of this crisis?

Critical in the history of white supremacy was the decision not to control Black and other women of color, but to control the men of color. Men are the initiators of the act of reproduction. Ultimately, women are dependent upon their men for protection because of the greater physical strength of men compared to women. If one simply controls the men of a people, the women are controlled also. Thus, the white collective went about the business of systematically developing a plan and power mechanism worldwide to bring all of the world's men of color under their ultimate control. Once this was established, the men of color were informed overtly as well as subtly that if they ever should seek to alter the power relationship of white over non-white, they would have to fight and many would die. Thousands upon thousands of Black men in the U.S. were lynched and castrated to drive home the message that white men intended to control the "balls" in this world, both on and off of the court!

White males understood that they needed white women as well as Black women to help them achieve and maintain this power relationship. White women always have known what they stood to gain - their own survival as whites. Black women have been confused and less clear in fully understanding how they have been led to cooperate in this deadly power game of white supremacy. Further, Black women do not understand fully that they have nothing to gain and everything to lose if this deadly game continues.

The first lessons to Black women were harsh and cruel ones of sexual assaults and abuse, taking their children away and forcing them to watch their men being lynched and castrated. But then these harsh lessons were followed by milder treatment of Black women as compared to Black men. Black women were given extra food, money, clothing and other gifts for their special personal favors to the masters. They were rewarded for correctly teaching their children to conform to the masters' wishes, as well as for telling their men to calm down and be patient so that they too could be; rewarded. Perhaps Black women really became seduced by the illusion of power, being so close to white males.

We have told ourselves that these behaviors were survival tactics and the only way that we could have "come this far." But as our survival increasingly is becoming threatened, we are forced to wonder if we have been mistaken in our analysis and our strategy. But, again, there is something to be learned from our African past. And we must never forget that those who do not learn from "history," "their-whole story," are bound to repeat it.

The specific story to which I refer is that of the African (Black) queen, Cleopatra. Born in 69 B.C. Cleopatra came to the throne that she shared with her brother, Ptolemy XIII, when she was 13 years old. Egypt was then a Roman protectorate. It was beset with internal strife and intrigue. Cleopatra aligned herself with the Roman general, Julius

Caesar, whom she thought would reinforce her power and help her people. She saw her political and sexual relationship with Caesar as a maneuver to save Egypt from the worst aspects of Roman domination. This maneuver failed in spite of her second Roman lover Mark Anthony, who came after Caesar's death. Her suicide is a profound statement about the series of decisions that she made. Egypt fell and became a Roman colony. And all of the harsher aspects of Roman rule, which Cleopatra had sought to prevent, settled over Egypt and the Middle East.

There were other Black queens in Africa who fought the white invaders to their death; they did not submit or cooperate with their oppressors. Instead, they moved to resist and destroy that oppressive process. They urged their men to do likewise, thus leaving their marks as heroines and warriors for their people who died in honor. These Black women have not been known simply as "beautiful" queens who committed suicide in their own disgrace.

This brings us to the pertinent question: Should we continue our alliance with the present "Romans," or having learned from the past,; should we choose an alternate course? In the context of all that we may want to call progress and material prosperity, we must face the reality that today Black men die younger than white men, white women and Black women. Black men are the most frequent victims of homicide and they are being killed by one another in increasing numbers. The suicide rate for young Black men is the only Black suicide rate greater than the rates of whites. Black women and Black children are the most frequent victims of rape and other physical assault and violence. Black infant mortality remains two to three times the figure for whites. Black women are more often left alone to care for their children than any other female group in the country. Nearly one-third of our so-called "Black family units," which I refer to as "survival-units," are single-parent families. In the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, there are over 60,000 Black male children growing up in homes without fathers or other surrogate father figures. We continue to have the highest rates of separation and divorce and, thus, family dissolution. We continue to have some of the highest rates of teenage parenthood, and thus, immature and inadequate parenting of the next generation. We continue to have high levels of juvenile delinquency, gang wars and drug addiction. Young Black people continue to leave school in record numbers prior to high school graduation. There is a virtual epidemic of low reading and math scores amongst our young people, and as a result, these youngsters are leaving school with totally inadequate preparation for this highly technological, computerized and industrialized social system.

Black people are in a very serious economic depression, while whites are still at the stage of recession. Blacks remain the last hired and first fired, in spite of the supposed achievements of "affirmative action." The relative levels of Black unemployment and white unemployment have not changed since 1945. The housing situation for urban Blacks is not improving. Black men continue to be sent to prison in record numbers, out of proportion to our population percentage. Black men presently constitute 90% of the state prison population. And we now witness the nationwide return of the death penalty.

What must we as Black women do? It is my conviction that the African proverb "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the nation and its destiny" is true. Black women are the mothers and, thus, the first teachers of Black females and Black males alike. With increased consciousness of their importance as the first teachers, Black women can determine whether future generations of Black children will be warriors or if we will continue to be slaves living in a highly refined state of psychological oppression, which is no less a death than direct physical destruction. Black women as mothers and teachers can teach the first powerful lessons in pride and respect for cultural, historical and genetic Blackness, while steadfastly refusing to impart any part of the white oppressors' lesson in Black self hate that we learn as children: "If you're Black, stay back; if you're brown, stick around; if you're yellow, you're mellow; and if you're white, you are all right." Black mothers must cease making their first concern whether or not their babies will have light skin and straight hair.

The newborn infant can tell from the mother's first touch whether she is pleased or disappointed with its color, appearance and gender. Certainly later the child can tell! The mother's respect for Blackness by the comments she makes about who is a pretty girl, who is a handsome boy and who has the proverbial "good" and "bad" hair. All of these lessons that we have been taught by our white oppressors to teach our young we must refuse to teach ever again!

But Black women as mothers and first teachers can take their consciousness to an even higher level. They can give the first lesson in what constitutes Black manhood. They can teach all of their sons that they are not their "babies" or their substitute lovers. Black women can be the first to inform their sons, with loving kindness, that they did not bring them into the world to be oppressed. Rather, they brought them into the world to be free men, warriors who have to war to be free, and to die if they so happen to die in the fight for their right to be full men under the stars.

Black women must cease saying to child psychiatrists, "I'll never tell my 'baby' anything like that!" Black women can teach their sons and their daughters that the definition of a Black man is not simply someone who can buy things (a nice home, a car, a yacht and clothes), but rather someone who will respect, support, protect and defend himself, his woman and his children. And finally, Black men are those who will do whatever is necessary to ensure their families' respect, support, protection and defense.

Black women as mothers and teachers consciously can teach their daughters that Black women, as the mothers of all mankind, are the alpha and the omega of women on this planet. They were here in the beginning, and if humankind remains, they will be present in the end. Black mothers can teach their daughters that they should never seek to look like or be like anything other than themselves. They can set the standards of what women will be like on this planet. For this is their responsibility, coming from the tradition of the first mothers and queens. Black women can teach their daughters that respect is not given to women by men, but that Black women carry in themselves the highest possible level of self-respect that commands respect from men and women of all races. Black women can teach their daughters how they possibly assist in the destruction

of Black men and Black people by allowing Black men to hide out in the vagina. To allow this hiding out (attempts to climb in the womb to be babies or fetuses again) when they know the men should turn and face their oppressors is an extreme level of self-destruction.

Likewise, Black women can teach their daughters never to refer to Black men as "baby" and never to allow Black men to refer to them, when adult women, as "mamma." Thus, they systematically can refuse to reinforce the image the white man wants reinforced: an adult Black male baby and thus the proverbial "mother-fucker." It is clear that a "baby" will never track down "The Man." Finally, Black women can teach their daughters that they can change the; tide of Black destiny by only giving their most intimate pleasures to the providers who also prove themselves as warriors against all enemies of the Black collective.

These lessons will not be: practiced until we Black women reach a new level of respect for ourselves. We must struggle as individuals to build this essential new Black: self-respect through the following exercises:

- 1) We must stop gossiping about one another;*
- 2) We must stop name-calling one another;*
- 3) We must stop squabbling with one another;*
- 4) We must stop competing and comparing ourselves with one another;*
- 5) We must stop making babies of our sons and lovers and then calling them incompetent behind their backs; and*
- 6) Instead of looking into the mirror each morning asking, "mirror, mirror on the wall, am I the fairest one of all?," we should begin to ask, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, am I fooling my Black self at all?"*

We do not have many choices remaining. The time is short and the crisis situation, though not of our own making, is upon us. Will we continue to be the "Cooperating Cleopatra's" or will we be the fighting, struggling warrior-queens? Racism, now as in Cleopatra's time, is war against Black people, against the Black family, against Black men, against Black women and against Black children, throughout the world. There is no war in history that has gone away with a wish or a prayer. Wars must be fought with the willpower, knowledge, courage and determination of people.

There is not a Black problem that I mentioned in this book, which is not related to the reality of white domination of Black people. We are not "Americans," just as the Jews were not considered "Germans." In code language, both "German" and "American" mean white! We, as Blacks, are the victims of the Americans, like the Jews were the victims of the Germans. We are the victims of those who classify themselves as white. The Jews gave their response to their white oppressors. What will be our response as Black women? How will we decide to influence the course of Black destiny as we rapidly approach the 21st century? Mothers of mankind, the decision is ours.

III. Conclusion:

Blacologically speaking, it has been taught to Black/African women that they should be interested in the struggle of all women. This is problematic and a falsehood because Black are not in a position where they can afford to clean some one else's home before they clean their own. Black/African women have been taking care of the homes of others far to long, now it is time to take care of their own home. With Blacology Black/African women can organized and structure in a way that is beneficial from a monolithic and autonomous perspective. This is needed so that each ethnic group can know their own value. Without this type of education and preparation Black/African Culture can not developed global recognition. The Black/African Culture is an extended culture that reaches to all four corners of the earth. Through the regional approach these goals can be accomplished.

By seeing what other cultures have will help to educate Black/African Women and people. This will bring to their conscious those who can speak the European languages. Once Black/African Women observe the development of Europeans, Oriental, and other countries they will be able to translate this information to their understanding. This will encourage the writing of Black/African languages. The traditional languages of Black/Africa must be written out so that each individual ethnic group can see what he or she is saying. This would be a task taken on by Black/African scholarship. Black/Africans must be able to read their language. This should be a major concern of technological development of all of Black/Africa. This will lift up the culture of Black/Africans so they can see their culture is real. Black/Africans must see their culture as something worth obtaining and something of value. This is something that we must not take as though Black/Africans are not capable of doing. Black/African women should not depend on other cultures for their sources of knowledge. By seeing what other cultures have will help to educate Black/African people. This will bring to their conscious those who can speak the European languages. Once Black/Africans observe the development of Europeans, Oriental, and other countries, they will be able to translate this information to their understanding. This will encourage the writing of Black/African languages.

The traditional languages of Black/Africa must be written out so that each individual ethnic group can see what he or she is saying. This would be a task taken on by Black/African scholarship. Black/Africans must be able to read their language. This should be a major concern of technological development of all of Black/Africa. This will lift up the culture of Black/Africans so they can see their culture is real. Black/Africans must see their culture as something worth obtaining and something of value.

What Black/Africa Women need to understand and acknowledge is the necessity of striving for a monolithic, authentic and autonomous culture that is productive and creative. Black/Africa Women must think about developing Africa from the beginning and going back to basics building from scratch. Building Africa as though you would build one person at a time. The development of Africa must be from the indigenous people and their extended cultures. It may seem far fetch and extreme to talk about

building as all countries have begun. That may be more realistic for some of the international theories that have been utilized by Europeans in the past 230-440 years.

Africa is a continent not a country. It is made up of many cultures. Each culture needs to be developed. Each culture needs sustainable development. Each culture must have its own means of collective bargaining. When you take a look at the United States you must look at how it was developed. The research has revealed that there are two types of means, legitimate and illegitimate means. In building a country one must utilize both these means to have a sustainable develop country. When you take a look at European colonialism wherever they went, they occupied the land by force. Set up a means for collective bargaining and brutal mind control. Now that they are stable they are more covert in their endeavors. As once stated before, this is not an example of how to develop Africa. Black/Africa must be more humane and educated in the development of technological growth process. Black/Africans Women must utilize the knowledge and the wisdom of their scholars and ancestors. Black/Africans must be as wise as the serpent and as harmless as a dove. For Black Women this is a MUST READ TEXT.

IV. Definitions:

1. Blacology - refers to the scientific research and study of the evolution of Black/African People and their culture from the past and present which includes video, audio, written, and oral documents. The perpetuation and utilization of Black/African ideas, philosophies, theories, beliefs, concepts, notions of the past and present as cultural knowledge. The acclamation, affirmation and proclamation of Black/African Scholarship as an Interdisciplinary Cultural Science.
2. Blacologically Speaking - To speak from a perspective that is operatively Black, that is of, from, by, for and about Black/African people and their culture; developed by Black people.
3. Black Cultural approach - To approach a ideal or program from the perspective of Black culture and experience.
4. Black Cultural Knowledge - The information provided by the heritage and traditions of Black People both oral and written for the perpetuation and utilization for advancement and survival.
5. Blacks - the dark race, the native people of Africa, the people from the land of the Gods, the people of the first civilization, the descendants of African Slave trade, the people of Ancient Egyptian, Ethiopia, Carthage, and the Descendant of Ancient Black Civilization.
6. Blacological - the logic of Black/Africans, from the experience, the struggle, logic that is based on the chronology and evolution of their thinking, logic that is of, from, by, for, and about the survival and advancement of Black people past and present both oral and written.
7. Black/Africans - an evolutionary identity in the chronology of Black people, a specific way to identify the descendent or the original people of Africa, the dark skin people.
8. Black/African Culture - Black represents a time without cultural consciousness only color consciousness. African represents the acknowledgement of kinship, locality and cultural connection and consciousness Chronological evolutionary acknowledgement of your ethnical orientation, and cultural development. (spiritual substance and ethnicity)

V. REFERENCES:

1. Black Women Moving Towards the 21st Century by Prof. W. Cross, instructor Zewde, Almaz Ph.D, Women in African Development, (230-231) Fall Semester 2001, African Studies Ph. D. Program, Howard University, Washington, DC 20059 DeNeke@Starpower.net
1. Audio Tape Produced by Prof. W. Cross, Women in African Development 10-17-01, Fall Semester 2001, African Studies Ph. D. Program, Howard University, Washington, DC 20059, Blacology@home.com , CulturalScience@cs.com
2. The Isis Papers, The Keys to The Colors, ISBN:0-88378-104-2, LC#: 90-071890, Copyright © 1991 Dr. Frances Welsing First Edition THIRD WORLD PRESS, P. O. BOX 19730, Chicago, IL 60619
3. Cross, Walter Blacology: A Cultural Science. A Brief Introduction, Washington, DC: Library of Congress. 1990. <http://www.libraryofcongress.com>
4. Blacology Research And Development Institute Inc., CULTURALSCIENCE@CS.COM , Ft. Washington, Maryland 20744, 1997.