

## Africana-Melanated Womanism

The first African America woman intellectual to formulate a position on Africana Womanism was Clenora Hudson-Weems, author of the 1993 groundbreaking study, *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*. Taking the strong position that black women should not pattern their liberation after Eurocentric feminism but after the historic and triumphant woman of African descent, Hudson-Weems has launched a new critical discourse in the Black Women's Literary Movement. (Hill, general editor, *Call and Response*, 1811)

For over 3 decades, Africana Womanism, earlier called Black Womanism in the 80s, has been authentically operating and working from a family-centered perspective within a cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary context for global Africana Women. Having always insisted upon the need for properly naming and defining women of color as part of an overall collective movement, Africana Womanism justifiably prioritizes race, class and gender. Appearing in *The Western Journal of Black Studies* in 1989, "Cultural and Agenda Conflicts in Academia: Critical Issues for Africana Women's Studies" was the 1<sup>st</sup> call for Africana Women to name (*Nommo*) and define themselves. Then *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (1993) and its sequel, *Africana Womanist Literary Theory* (2004) was released. Today, the term has evolved to Africana-Melanated Womanism, for many of diverse ethnicities, rooted in blackness, have found the theory more compatible with their level of existence. There are 18 distinct characteristics of the Africana Womanist, which are as critical and much needed as the paradigm itself:

Self-Namer, Self-Definer, Family Centered, Genuine in Sisterhood, Strong, In Concert with Male in Struggle, Whole, Authentic, Flexible Role Player, Respected,

Recognized, Spiritual, Male Compatible, Respectful of Elders, Adaptable, Ambitious, Nurturing and Mothering. (*AW*, pp. 55-73)

A unit more concerned with family than gender exclusively, Africana Womanism has always been inclusive, needing only to refine its own paradigm. In the mid-90s, *Call and Response* introduced Africana Womanism, an important endorsement by a major anthology. According to Dr. Adele S. Newson-Horst,

In the last few decades feminism and Black feminism have gained such a stronghold in the Academy that the activities of most all of the important women writers have been stamped as feminist enterprises. While feminism provides a refreshing alternative to patriarchal hegemonic discourse, it is nevertheless inadequate to account for the numerous and varied works produced by Africana women. This is especially true when one considers that the masses of Africana women do not identify themselves as feminists. Hence, the appropriation of Africana women writers, [naming them] feminists, emergent womanists, prototypical feminists, or pre-feminist, is, indeed, a disturbing trend, sanctioned by some of our most visible critics and theorists. (*Contemporary Africana Theory*, 359)