

Daily Meditation 08-26-24

On the Black Madonna in a Time of Kamala Harris

Good morning.

This morning, we continue our meditation on the Black Madonna and its relationship, Her relationship, to our time. And I allude to two books: this is one, *God Is a Black Woman*, by Christene Cleveland, which explores very much her experiences with the Black Madonna, especially in pilgrimages she took to France. So her experiences heavily with the French Black Madonna. The Black Madonna has been recognized not only in Italy and France, but Switzerland, Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, and Soviet Union (Russia) and other places.

But today, I want to talk about this book, *Healing Journeys with the Black Madonna* by Alessandra Belloni, and she comes from Southern Italy. She's working in America for many years, and I shared with you this powerful story of hers. And this is what I was asked to write a foreword to, and which I titled "The Return of the Archetype in Time of Need." Because I argue in that foreword, that Black Madonna is returning because we need her.

And again, I'm making the connection, as I began doing my Saturday meditation with you, that there's an energy in Kamala Harris, who represents both her roots from Africa and her roots from India. And of course, India is very well-known for its emphasis on the Great Mother. And so really, she's being fed from two powerful rivers of the Divine Feminine: that of the Black Madonna from Africa, and the dark feminine from India.

And here's what Alessandra Belloni says in the beginning to her preface to her book — and by the way, her preface is entitled, "Four Mystical Experiences that Led Me to the Black Madonna." You see, this has been my experience. I'm not only speaking about the Black Madonna, but hearing people's stories. And people have many stories, many dreams, and people from many spiritual traditions. Christena, for example, does not come from the Catholic tradition, but from Protestant tradition. And she's experienced the Black Madonna. And people in many traditions have, and even have no traditions. And often She has been coming in people's dreams. But Alessandra, she says,

I am fascinated and inspired by the Black Madonna. She is the female embodiment of God. Her power hails from the fact that she influences all of humanity in a very global and inclusive way. She embraces everyone, and everyone has access to her Divine Spirit and power. She also represents the cradle of humanity, which began in Africa.

Years ago, I was invited to speak at Morehouse College, the alma mater of Martin Luther King Jr, and where Howard Thurman taught for years about the Black Madonna. And that was a very moving experience for me, because the black church, the black culture, had not heard, still has not heard a lot about the Black Madonna. And that's one thing that excites me very much about Christena Cleveland's work, that she's bringing it to her people.

Now, Alessandra Belloni tells the story of the experience of the Black Madonna in some churches in southern Italy, and being very surprised by it. She says,

The Black Madonna was a Christian tradition with deep roots in the pre-Christian worship of Mother Earth. And I did not know why the Madonna was black. When I asked the priest this question, he said 'She is black because she is black.' I took this to mean that it was a mystery, and should be respected as a mystery. But still, I wanted to know more.

And she also had the experience that I had at Chartres Cathedral, when I asked a woman about the Black Madonna, when I first encountered it there, that “it is candle smoke.” But she says,

It was obvious that was not the truth. These statues often have white and red dresses and cloaks, blue mantles, gold stars, none of which turn black from candle smoke. And there are many Black Christs around the world, including a number in Italy. There are also a proliferation of Black Madonnas.

So she went on this search to find more answers. And she was working as an artist with music and theater in America, and she suddenly had a very serious condition, that was pre-cancerous. And she had to undergo surgery immediately. And it was a dangerous surgery and very scary, because it determined whether she could have children in the future and so forth. She says her mother, wonderful mother Elvira, came from Italy to be at her place at Mount Sinai Hospital.

When I woke up in the recovery room, I had a crystal clear vision of the Black Madonna embracing me and protecting me. She was standing over my bed with Her benevolent black face beaming down at me. She wore a blue cape and a gold crown, holding Her arms wide open, and Her hands straight in front of her, as if sending me powerful rays of healing energy. There was a bright white light emanating from them. Full of compassion, the Black Madonna told me that I was to follow Her path, which was to feel other people's pain. I knew that my heart had suddenly opened to understand the suffering of the world, and of the Earth herself.

I immediately turned to my right in the recovery room, and knew clearly that someone nearby was dying. It wasn't frightening; it was just part of Life's circle.

I don't know how much time passed, in this blissful moment of spiritual awakening initiated by the Black Madonna. But it was so real. I felt so protected, that I did not want it to end. I told the doctors who came to check on me that I felt fine, and that I knew the woman on my right was dying, I told them that I felt an immense sadness for her. The medical team was in disbelief, seeing that I was no longer bleeding, that I had absolutely no pain, and was so awake and aware, and that I had also sensed death in the room.

That was the beginning, she says, of a spiritual awakening that has transformed my personal and artistic life. I told my mother about my vision of the Black Madonna. She understood immediately that I had inherited the gift from her: the ability to communicate with the Virgin Mary and receive Her grace. It was a vision of the Madonna that literally saved my mother's life during a bombing of World War II in Rome.

And she talks about the Black Madonna as Mother Earth: Alive, but suffering today. She talks about being in an airplane, a smaller plane with two friends, flying over California, and she said she was in the back seat. Her friends were in front.

Suddenly, I heard a powerful voice speaking to me, a beautiful, haunting woman's voice coming from the ocean and the Earth. It told me that She was the voice of Mother Earth. She was the voice of the beginning of life, the primordial waters. She said that She was alive, breathing, thinking, nurturing, and at times destroying. In a whisper, She told me that She was also in great pain, and that human beings were not respecting Her. She said, 'Because of this, we do not have much time left.' Finally, She announced that She was the voice of the Black Madonna.

Held in the arms of Father Sky, the Great Spirit, God, I began to understand the mystery of this connection. It was so overwhelming that I began to cry. I realize now that a powerful dream of the Earth Mother had guided me here to Hawaii, 20 years earlier. In this dream, I was flying over the Earth, over the ocean, but I was in the form of a rare bird. I could see that the greed of human beings had destroyed much of the Earth. I was in pain and felt desperate. Suddenly, floating over the ocean, I saw an island shaped like the stylized profile of a woman. And I saw that the woman was crying a tear of lava. But I heard Her voice. I knew that it was the voice of the Earth crying out, asking me for help. I woke up sobbing, not knowing what this dream really meant.

So Alessandra relates these beautiful stories. And I've heard many other stories similar to these from many people, and I've had my own experiences too.

So the virtue and the value of protecting Mother Earth, that is all carried in the story of the Black Madonna. And it's interesting that while in Hawaii, she saw a connection with Pele as well. I was once invited to come to Hawaii to do a dialogue with a Pele scholar and practitioner about

the Black Madonna and Pele. And it was a wonderful learning for myself and others, I think, who attended, to realize that these incarnations of the Divine Mother, how they all interact. And they are stories that touch us all.

So I do think that we want to gather these stories at this time, when Kamala Harris is representing, I think, a new era, a turning of the page, not only in terms of female leadership, but in terms of putting forward the values that are those of the Black Madonna: values of sympathy and compassion and caring and justice and truth.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.