

Caribbean Women Healers Decolonizing Knowledge Within Afro-Indigenous Traditions

Clip of Interview with Miladi and Amelia, Ceremony (Translation)

Recorded by Dr. Ana-Maurine Lara and Dr. Alai Reyes-Santos

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My name is Amelia [inaudible] Moya-Constantino, omo Yemayá Oggún. My grandmother, the first santera of Santiago de Cuba was [inaudible]. My mother started with receiving ofa, Orula told her,

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To marry, you must first marry Yemayá. Yemayá crowned her in the year 1950. Yemayá tells her

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that she is going to have three daughters. If they did not make an ocha, they were going to die. The first was born, at the age of two she died. When she came back,

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my sister was born, and my mother said, "I can't have another daughter die. They make her the saint, Saint Barbara Bendita Changó at four months old. They made me, they made me the saint, because I was born,

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And my mama said "On my birthday I'm going to make a saint for my daughter so that it will be the two of us together." And so it was on August 14 the saint was made, and we were crowned by my godfather,

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Echutlu, he is omo Elegua. And he comes from the branch of Aurora la Mar, the [inaudible] that lived in Regla. It was his grandmother and his godmother was Baba Funque

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who lived or [inaudible] who lived in the hills of Havana. So we are of the branch of Aurora la Mar which is what we have left now, the children, the grandchildren.

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But the grandchildren already have Cofa, the Mano de Orula, the ones who do not have Olokun, have Saint Lazarus. Like one, in what Orula marks

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they already have it marked and they have it until, each one has the capacity to give them their saint. So I tell you, that they already know and if you ask them what do they call you in Orula they tell you your name, everything.

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The youngest one, she is three years old, and when asked she will say, "I am a daughter of Oshun and so and so." So that tradition passes from generation to generation. Which is all that we want to keep in this house.

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Look, everybody comes where we are. You lived it today. Some people don't like it and it bothers them. Yes, this religion is black. Because this religion was brought by black Africans when they came to the Americas.

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It wasn't just Cuba, it was Colombia, the Dominican Republic, the South of the United States, Brazil, the South of Paraguay. Because there is Candombe and Candomble. The blacks were introduced to work

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because they had already finished with the Indians. What happened, the Spaniards were Catholics. Catholicism, as my aunt used to say, always belonged to the whites. But, they forced the blacks to be baptized.

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They forced blacks to believe in the Catholic religion. What was the surprise of the blacks, when they decide to go to the Catholic Church, they were through with the mistreatment and starvation. So the Church began to speak of the Santo Niño de Atocha,

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they began to speak of San Antonio de Padua. And they were shocked. They said "But they are talking about *Elegua*," because they already came with their own saints. They're talking about Changó - Santa Bárbara Bendita. But that same story of Changó is Yoruba:

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The most feared of the pantheon, the worst womanizer, the most terrible, the one who likes the drum the most. That's when the religious syncretism comes. And it is there,

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when even the white man begins to believe in our religion. Because he knows that bankruptcy was coming, these things came. They were not men of study. They were not men of knowledge. So those blacks, partly through fear, and partly because some no longer had a family, they had no one,

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where they were going to go even if they gave them freedom? And in payment the white man gave them freedom. And they said to him, "Sir, I can't leave here. Where am I going to go if I don't have a place to go?" Then, that white man,

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with his riches, of course those were poor blacks, they had no knowledge, they had no study, they had nothing. And now we who believe in this religion, we believe in much, we believe. Because we have had proofs. We don't believe in it

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to dress better, or to eat better, no no no. I believe in the Caridad del Cobre because she has given me stability. Because what she said to me, I had to run so it wouldn't happen to me.

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But then she saves me. Then when I have a pain, when I have a problem, that's when I'm most attached to her. Because she gives me a lot of strength.

[END]

You can find this healer interview and others on the [Caribbean Women Healers Website](#).

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