

Walker

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to feel it as a living work of art, as something useful. My interest in creating anything is that it be useful. People can love the beauty of it, but they should also use it to grow, to deepen.

KW: What was it like dealing with the blowback for the next several years coming from critics who said The Color Purple was anti-black men?

AW: It actually lasted for a decade. How could you imagine that people could be mad at you for so long? I felt a great deal of weariness. But because it wasn't the first time that I had been heavily criticized, I learned that you just keep going and turn to other things. Which I did. I went on to write "The Temple of My Familiar" which may be my favorite of my novels, because it was a miraculous gift that I had no idea how I got it. I had a dream one night that I went down into a non-existent sub-basement of my little house in Brooklyn. There was a trap door and I went down further and found these indigenous South American people speaking Spanish and making all these incredible things. I didn't speak a word of Spanish but I sensed that I was being guided to a new focus. And to make a long story short, I ended up going to Mexico, I learned one word, "leche," which means milk, and I started writing this novel. So, the blowback, in a way, faced me in a new direction which was very interesting.

KW: Attorney Bernadette Beekman asks: What did you think of the stage version of The Color Purple?

AW: I so loved working with the musicians. It was just wonderful! It was great and I felt like it was such a tonic for people to see it.

KW: Dinesh Sharma says: In my new book, "The Global Obama," Professor Ali Mazrui refers to the President as a "great man of history." Professor Henry Louis Gates of Harvard agrees. You have written several essays about Barack Obama. How do you feel about his presidency thus far?

AW: I'm very disappointed in Obama. I was very much in support of him in the beginning, but I cannot support war. I cannot support droning. I cannot support capitulating to the

banks. I cannot support his caving in to Netanyahu [Israeli Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu]. There's a long list of this administration's initiatives that I find unsupportable. I think many black people support him because they're so happy to have handsome black man in the White House. But it doesn't make me happy if that handsome black man in the White House is betraying all of our traditional values of peace, peoplehood, caring about strangers, feeding the hungry, and not bombing children. I'm very disappointed. More than disappointed, I think I've actually returned to a kind of realism about how the world works. That's helpful. Because in a way, no matter who's in charge of the corporation that the United States is, the direction in which it is

.. the best way to get children to read, is to read. They will absolutely copy you. That way, you don't have to worry about what's supposedly age appropriate, a child will pick something up when the child is ready. — Alice Walker

taken seems to be inexorable. So, you just get the job of being the front man for four or eight years. Now, most people realize that's what you are.

KW: Talking about being a good or bad president is like talking about being a good or bad rapist.

AW: [LOL] That's a very good thought.

KW: I think the black community sort of got checkmated in terms of its own agenda. And very vocal folks who try to hold Obama accountable are having their blackness questioned or their blackness revoked, like Tavis Smiley.

AW: That's okay. It's better to have your blackness taken away than to stand there and lie about who you actually are.

That's the trap. In fact, Cynthia McKinney just sent me a piece by somebody about how, for the first time in history, black people are supporting the wars, the military strikes on Syria, and other awful things, as if they woke up and became entirely different people. It's totally distressing! Look at the NDAA [The National Defense Authorization Act], look at the Patriot Act, look at the NSA, and the ruthless droning of civilians. I pretty much lost it when they droned the grandmother who was teaching her grandchildren how to pick okra. It seems to me the ones who are the real threat are the ones who are in power.

KW: Film director Rel Dowdell asks: Did Danny Glover fully personify the character Mister in The Color Purple?

AW: No. I love Danny, and he did a good job, but no. Mister is a small man. Danny is huge! And that matters, because what I was showing was how even a small man can be a terrorist in the home because of all the patriarchal weight that he brings to any situation. That would've been very powerful. In a way, making Mister so big undercut that message because we're kind of afraid of big people anyway, because they take up so much room. I felt that at times there wasn't enough subtlety in his abuse of Celie and her sister, Nettie, because what I've discovered and observed is that often it's the subtle oppression that deeply wounds the soul. The parting for instance, which is so horrendous, where Nettie leaves, and is forced out by Mister. In the novel, that's handled with a lot of restraint. Filmed with that restraint it would've been just as powerful, even with a little Mister, just by virtue of his being a man and having patriarchy as his backup.

KW: Are you interested in writing your own screenplay?

AW: At this point, no, because I have gone back to writing poetry, which I absolutely love. And I write on my blog, which I enjoy. And life being what it is, every once in a while I'll have a book which will have developed without my actually having paid that much attention to that part of it. I'm really only interested in each day's gift.

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