

Introduction to the Special Theme Issue Celebrating the 50 Year Anniversary of the Publication of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose's Pioneering Article: The Dominant Values of Black Culture

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Abstract

This article provides the *Introduction to the Special Theme Issue Celebrating the 50 Year Anniversary of the Publication of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose's Pioneering Article: The Dominant Values of Black Culture*. This introductory article begins by providing an overview of the life and career of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose, followed by an overview of the 14 core articles that make up the remainder of the issue. As the main highlight, this issue includes re-publication of Dr. Rodgers-Rose's 1972 pioneering article (1) *The Dominant Values of Black Culture*—making it accessible in print and online (www.JEHonline.org) for a contemporary audience. This re-publication codifies important history made with Dr. Rodgers-Rose's original 1972 presentation of a Theory of Black Culture. Three papers delivered by Dr. Rodgers-Rose as an invited speaker follow, illustrating the depth and breadth of her theorizing, research, and scholarship: i.e., (2) *The Wisdom of Our Foremothers: Reconstructing African Spirituality*; (3) *Black Women Defining Self in the 21st Century: An African Centered Perspective*; and (4) *Threading the Needle: Will the Real Black Intellectual Please Stand Up?* Thereafter, Dr. Theodore Lewis engages in a deep analysis of Dr. Rodgers-Rose's early family and community influences, while sharing the history of her scholarship and work, and highlighting her major contributions: the 1972 article, *The Dominant Values of Black Culture*; 1980 edited volume, *The Black Woman*; other published books; work as Founder and CEO of the International Black Women's Congress (IBWC); and IBWC's grant-funded community-based work via culturally appropriate service delivery and care to people living with HIV/AIDS. Dr. Lewis uses the concept of *emancipatory embrace* to capture this work in the article titled, (5) *Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose and the Emancipatory Embrace of the HIV Community*. Next, there is an article written by her children, Henry D. Rose and Valija C. Rose, Ph.D.—(6) *La Francis Rodgers-Rose: A Clarion Call of Scholar as Social Actor*; this article captures the trajectory of her life and career as “scholar as social actor,” and explains her *clarion call* put out to others to take action to improve the lives of Black people and the whole of humanity. As eyewitnesses to and participants in the life of Dr. Rodgers-Rose, *Six Voices of Former Students* [(7) Hilary Beard, (8) Rhinold Ponder, (9) Dr. Lily McNair, (10) Carolyn Jenkins, (11) Kim Thompson-Gaddy, and (12) Kevon Chisolm, Esq.] share the impact of her teaching, mentoring, leadership, community service, and overall life work upon them; this includes the impact of those major publications of note (i.e., the 1972 article, *The Dominant Values of Black Culture*, and 1980 edited volume, *The Black Woman*) utilized in university courses they took with Dr. Rodgers-Rose. Then, Wallace shares (13) *Celebrating 40 Years of the International Black Women's Congress (IBWC): Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose's Conference Oasis of Healing Waters*, detailing the unique IBWC Annual Conference model and multitude of benefits for conference participants. The theme issue then returns to the voice of Dr. Rodgers-Rose in the article (14) *A Theory that Answers the Critical Question, “Do Black Americans Have a Culture?”: Reclaiming My Original Theory of Black Culture from 1972*. In a synthesis of the issue's 14 core articles, final observations and reflections are shared by Wallace, as the theme issue editor: i.e., a piece titled *Rodgers-Rose's “Gift of a Map” for Negotiating Toxic Environments (i.e., “Deserts with Mirrors of Hard, Distorting Glass”), for Healing Self-Definition and Self-Identity, and Refocusing Attention to the Battle to Regain Freedom*. This introductory article to the special theme issue concludes with overarching observations regarding the impact and legacy of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose.

Keywords: La Francis Rodgers-Rose, Black culture, values, International Black Women's Congress (IBWC)

Introduction

It is a rare event when a life spans a good part of the 20th and 21st centuries and stands as historical record for making outstanding contributions to the larger society and whole of humanity. Such is the life record of La Francis Rodgers-Rose, Ph.D., Founder and CEO of the International Black Women's Congress (IBWC). It is a life record that has included several significant milestones, justifying the focus of this special theme issue: “*Celebrating the 50 Year Anniversary of the Publication of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose's Pioneering Article: The Dominant Values of Black Culture*.”

More specifically, the year 2022 marked 50 years since publication by Aframailibrary in Harlem, New York of Rodgers-Rose's 1972 article, “*The Dominant Values of Black Culture*.” Rodgers-Rose's original Theory of Black

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Culture is embedded within this article. Her paper, “*The Dominant Values of Black Culture*,” was also shared in a presentation at the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton, New Jersey where she worked in the early 1970s—permitting dissemination to an audience of Black psychologists. Other Black psychologists, sociologists, and educators appeared to find in “*The Dominant Values of Black Culture*” the missing link to guide their own theorizing, scholarship, and research. Through this theme issue, a contemporary audience can find access to the original pioneering work of Rodgers-Rose from 1972 here in print and online (www.JEHonline.org).

As another milestone, the year 2023 marks 43 years since Sage Publications released Rodgers-Rose’s (1980) classic, the edited volume, *The Black Woman*—which enjoyed 11 printings. This volume supported her teaching courses at Princeton University and elsewhere. For example, within the Princeton University curriculum, for those pursuing the Certificate in Afro-American Studies, Rodgers-Rose taught her signature course that used the textbook, *The Black Woman*. Indeed, the 1980 textbook, *The Black Woman*, along with her 1972 article, “*The Dominant Values of Black Culture*,” effectively laid the foundation for the growth of cohort after cohort of students across the years that she taught there and elsewhere. These works also effectively contributed to growth and development in the fields of sociology, psychology, Black Women Studies, Black Studies, African American Studies, and the study of the Black family, child, and community across disciplines.

The year 2023 also indicates 40 years since Rodgers-Rose became the Founder and CEO of the International Black Women’s Congress (IBWC) in 1983. This is yet another milestone in the trajectory of an extraordinary career.

Also, the year 2023 commemorates 30 years since her enstoolment as *Nana Obaapanyin Akosua Asantewaa Ofosua, I of Aburi, Ghana*. We celebrate her record of distinguished global leadership and service as a Traditional African Royal.

This introductory article to the theme issue—“*Celebrating the 50 Year Anniversary of the Publication of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose’s Pioneering Article: The Dominant Values of Black Culture*”—will provide an overview of: (1) Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose’s life and work; and (2) the 14 core articles that make up the special theme issue. A final set of overarching observations are offered at the end of this article.

An Overview of The Life and Work of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose

By way of introduction to this special theme issue, we might ask: Who is Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose? What was

her training and preparation for a life that stands in the historical record for making outstanding contributions to the larger society and whole of humanity? What background and training prepared her for advancing an original Theory of Black Culture in 1972 in her article, “*The Dominant Values of Black Culture?*” What have been her accomplishments across the decades? This first part of this article answers these questions.

Deep Immersion in Sociology, Anthropology, and Empirical Testing of Theory

As a brief biography, Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose’s education included being: a 1954 graduate of I.C. Norcom High School in Portsmouth, Virginia; a recipient of the 1958 undergraduate BA degree with honors from Morgan State University in sociology, anthropology and history; a recipient of the master’s degree from Fisk University in 1960 in sociology and anthropology, while focusing on race and culture; and a 1964 recipient of the doctorate (Ph.D.) in sociology from the University of Iowa, becoming the first Black woman in the Department of Sociology, and only the 9th Black woman in the United States to earn the doctorate in sociology. As a trained symbolic interactionist theorist, her doctoral dissertation was “An Empirical Test of Three Stages of Harry Stack Sullivan’s Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry.”

Signature Publications

Eight years after she received her Ph.D., she published in 1972 her original Theory of Black Culture in an article, “*The Dominant Values in Black Culture*”—as one of her two signature publications. It was in 1980 that Dr. Rodgers-Rose released through Sage Publications the edited book, *The Black Woman*, a major work that was hailed as the first comprehensive social science textbook in Black Women Studies, while advancing Black Studies and African American Studies. This, too, became one of her signature publications.

A Treasure Trove of Publications and Papers Delivered as Speeches and Keynote Addresses

In 1979, Dr. Rodgers-Rose developed with her late brother, Dr. James T. Rodgers, the *Training, Research, And Community Educational Services (TRACES)* organization in order to develop and facilitate community training. This included TRACES Publications, which published 4 other books, including: a work co-authored with Dr. James T. Rodgers titled *Strategies for Resolving Conflicts in Black Male and Female Relationships* (Rodgers & Rodgers-Rose, 1985); *Rivers of Tears: The Politics of Black Women’s Health* (Aldridge & Rodgers-Rose, 1993, Edited Volume);

Every Black Woman Should Wear a Red Dress: A History of the International Black Women's Congress (Rodgers-Rose & Aldridge, 2003); and, *Healing Black Women from Violence: Reclamation and Peace* (Rodgers-Rose & Zai'mah, 2011, Edited Volume).

Dr. Rodgers-Rose also published numerous other articles in peer-reviewed journals and chapters in edited book volumes. These published works are complimented by a treasure trove of papers Dr. Rodgers-Rose has delivered via well over 200 invited Keynote Addresses, Lectures, and Speeches; as powerful oratory, these were delivered nationwide at universities, conferences, churches, and community events. Still in demand, in 2022 Dr. Rodgers-Rose delivered the Keynote Address to mark the inauguration of the African American Psychologist Hall of Fame at Norfolk State University, for example.

Exposing Generations to Africa Through Educational Tours

Generations have been introduced to the wealth of Africa and rich Black cultural heritage, because of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose. She was named a 1984 Fulbright Scholar to Africa, studying in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Senegal. Having become the Founder and CEO of the International Black Women's Congress (IBWC) in 1983, it was not long before the IBWC focus came to include international travel to Africa. From 1985 to 2000, IBWC conducted Annual Educational Tours to Kenya, Ghana, Togo, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Morocco, Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Egypt, Ivory Coast, Brazil, and Barbados—with Dr. Rodgers-Rose serving as the organizer and tour leader. IBWC also began regularly holding annual national conferences in 1985. Beyond IBWC, Dr. Rodgers-Rose also exposed university students to Africa, developing in 1989 the first *January Term* program to Africa at Drew University. While Drew students had studied in various countries around the world, they had never studied in Africa. Dr. Rodgers-Rose had to fight hard for her students to experience study abroad in Africa. In preparation for their study abroad, Dr. Rodgers-Rose secured a scholar from Senegal to teach the Drew University students how to communicate in the native language of Senegal and the Gambia. An Egyptologist also taught the students how to read the hieroglyphics, the writings of ancient Egypt, in preparation for their Summer of 1989 Educational Tour to Egypt. Building on her pioneering efforts, Drew University eventually instituted an entire semester abroad of study in Ghana, West Africa.

Over Three Decades Teaching University Students

Dr. Rodgers-Rose has more than thirty years of teaching experience, starting with teaching at St. Olaf College in 1964 as their first Black faculty member, joining the Department of Sociology. After five years at St. Olaf

College, she left to join her husband at Case Western Reserve University in 1970, teaching there. Her teaching career has included Montclair State University in the Department of Sociology, Rutgers University in the Department of Africana Studies, Fordham University in the Afro-American Studies Department, and the University of Pennsylvania in the Women's Studies Program. She taught at Princeton University from 1973-1988, teaching courses on Black Self-Concept, the Black Family, the Black Woman, and Research in the Black Community that were part of the Certificate Program in Afro American Studies. Her last teaching position was at Drew University from 1988-1996 in African American Studies.

Beyond the time spent in the classroom, Dr. Rodgers-Rose has mentored over the past five decades generations of students—impacting their educational and career trajectories. She also impacted their consciousness and decisions to engage in community activism.

An Influential Presence in and Leader of Organizations

As impressive accomplishments across the decades, the legacy of Dr. Rodgers-Rose includes her leadership and participation in many organizations, as follows: serving as a founding member and Past President of the Association of Black Sociologists (1976); Founder and CEO of the International Black Women's Congress (1983 – present); and, Past President of the Association of Social Behavioral Scientists (1996). She is a deeply respected member of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations, the American Sociological Association, the Association of Black Sociologists, the National Council of Negro Women, Iota Phi Lambda Business Sorority and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Recognition for Outstanding Accomplishments

The highest honors and awards have been bestowed upon Dr. Rodgers-Rose in recognition of her pioneering scholarship, stellar leadership, and extraordinary record of service. Such awards are many, including her being named a *Distinguished Sociology Scholar* (1972) and a *Fulbright Fellow to Africa* (1984). She received the highest honor known in Ghana with her 1993 enstoolment as *Nana Obaapanyin Akosua Asantewaa Ofosua, I of Aburi, Ghana*. Dr. Rodgers-Rose was honored by the National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women with their highest award, the *Noble Women International Leadership Award in 2000*. She was honored in 2004 by the Governor of New Jersey, the New Jersey General Assembly and the Cities of Newark, East Orange, Trenton and Camden for her community leadership and service in the state of New Jersey. She was selected the *National Woman of the Year* for Iota Phi Lambda Sorority (2007-2009). Dr. Rodgers-Rose received the *Founder's Award* from the

Association of Black Sociologists in 2011. In May 2017, she received the *Malcolm X Unity Award* from the African Arts Festival of Brooklyn, New York. Dr. Rodgers-Rose received the 2019 *Unsung Hero Award* from the Norfolk Public Library for Black History Month. She won the 2020 *Divine Nine Award*, as the highest award from all the Divine 9 chapters from Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Norfolk, and Suffolk, Virginia. She was then selected the Norfolk Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta *Unsung Hero* in 2021. Most recently, in February 2023, Dr. Rodgers-Rose was acknowledged and honored for her *Trailblazing Life as St. Olaf's First Black Faculty Member*.

In October 2022, Dr. Rodgers-Rose celebrated the 20th Anniversary of her heart transplant. She has been a devoted volunteer for LifeNet Health, affording opportunities to share about living with heart disease and her heart transplant experience. For nearly two decades Dr. Rodgers-Rose has held an *Annual Organ Donation Gala* in Norfolk, Virginia, in order to increase awareness in the African American community regarding the need for organ donation.

Overview of the 14 Core Articles in the Theme Issue

Beyond this introductory article, the first article in the theme issue, (1) *The Dominant Values of Black Culture*, is a re-publication of the major work by Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose. This re-publication as Rodgers-Rose (2023a) commemorates the 50th anniversary since the initial 1972 publication of the article. It presents her original, pioneering sociological analysis of Black cultural patterns and values. The Black value system consists of a pattern of behavior centered around: (1) *communal existentialism*; (2) a belief in the *uniqueness of the individual*; (3) *humanistic values or the affective existential basis of Black culture* (i.e., affective-humanistic behavior); and (4) the *diunital relationship between good and evil*. These values and beliefs fit together to make a unified whole. This original Theory of Black Culture published 50 years ago resonates as timeless and brilliant, standing the test of time. This work provided a foundation for evolution in numerous fields, as a testament to the inherent value. This publication centers the original work of Dr. Rodgers-Rose on the dominant values of Black culture as the source of ideas to be treasured as our cultural wealth, just as she is to be treasured for her genius in bringing them forth.

The second article, (2) *The Wisdom of Our Foremothers: Reconstructing African Spirituality*, is based on a 2004 paper. In this work, Rodgers-Rose (2023b) analyzes qualitative data from interviews conducted in northern New Jersey from 1987-1995 with more than 100 African American women aged 65 and above. The women were asked questions about their mothers (e.g., “What values did your mother give you?” and “What sayings/proverbs did she use?”). Emergent values, proverbs, and spirituality are highlighted as representing the heart/core of the Black community and Black culture.

Rodgers-Rose (2023b) selects 10 values from the interviews and juxtaposes them with 10 values from ancient Egyptian/Kemetic culture codified in the forty-two affirmations of Maat—which date back at least 5000 years. Rodgers-Rose’s juxtaposition provides convincing evidence that core values and African spirituality from ancient Kemetic culture remain in Black culture up to the 21st century. Through this article, validation for there being a core Black culture builds directly upon the first article in the theme issue (“*The Dominant Values of Black Culture*,” Rodgers-Rose, 2023a). Here, Rodgers-Rose (2023b) furthers her contribution in answering the core question: “*Do Black Americans have a culture?*” Compellingly, she provides an answer regarding how the roots of this culture may be found in ancient Kemetic culture.

As the third article in the theme issue, (3) *Black Women Defining Self in the 21st Century: An African Centered Perspective*, Rodgers-Rose (2023c) shares a version of a 1998 paper. The crucial questions posed are: “What should be the self-defined identity and image of Black womanhood, and what is the ideal model of Black womanhood for the 21st century?” Toward answers, emphasis is placed on the importance of Black women knowing their history; this includes history of the first civilizations in Africa—with a focus on ancient Egypt, which was Black. Compelling images of Black womanhood are identified from ancient Egypt and African American history. Citing ancient Egyptian text, the *red dress* is embraced and advanced as a symbol of Black women’s feisty nature, queenship, and spirit. This symbol has value for Black women in contemporary times engaged in the task of defining self. Rodgers-Rose (2023c) concludes with presentation of an original model of African centered womanhood. The model is based on 20 Black cultural attributes to guide Black women’s return to self and re-creation of self. She asserts that this is the most important task for Black women in the 21st century.

In the fourth article, (4) *Threading the Needle: Will the Real Black Intellectual Please Stand Up?*, Rodgers-Rose (2023d) shares a 2001 paper, which focuses on the Black intellectual: i.e., one whose “work necessitates having a fine eye to see through the lies of our conquerors;” this work is comparable to the difficult task of “threading a needle.” Rodgers-Rose (2023d) describes the requirements for the Black intellectual. She acknowledges their special contribution to the development of their people, meeting a need. They must have the courage to tell the truth again and again. Challenges include being unwanted in the land of our birth, in an era of growing despair. Focus must be maintained on the battle to get back a freedom lost so long ago that we almost can’t remember that freedom. To name that freedom could well be the most important thing we do in the 21st century. Rodgers-Rose (2023d) completes the analysis through a synopsis of the life and contribution of 11 Black intellectuals within African American history. She

highlights how they “thread the needle.”

Dr. Theodore Lewis provides the fifth article in the theme issue, (5) *La Francis Rodgers-Rose and the Emancipatory Embrace of the HIV Community*. This review encompasses her background, training, family and community roots, life mission focus, scholar-activism, and lifelong contributions. Especially central is her work as Founder and CEO of the International Black Women’s Congress (IBWC) and organizer of the IBWC Annual Conference. Focus is placed on IBWC’s place in HIV service delivery and care, which is analyzed as exhibiting *emancipatory embrace*: i.e., *a moral perspective wherein one receives humans eagerly and gladly by engaging humankind in liberative ways that free both self and community from bondage, oppression, and restraint*. Lewis (2023) explains how the *emancipatory embrace* of Dr. Rodgers-Rose has roots in her family and the community in which she spent her formative years. Considered key is the legacy of the work and ministry of her father, the Reverend Carroll Rodgers, Sr., and her grandfather, the Reverend James E. Rodgers. As evidence of Dr. Rodgers-Rose’s work as *emancipatory embrace*, Lewis (2023) identifies IBWC’s provision of culturally competent service delivery and care to people living with HIV/AIDS that was accomplished with grant funding.

Lewis (2023) analyzes several of Rodgers-Rose’s publications and papers/speeches. Emergent key concepts in the writings of Dr. Rodgers-Rose include *self-definition, self-identity, African spirituality, and beliefs of Ancestors*. Lewis (2023) places special attention to Dr. Rodgers-Rose’s pioneering description of the Black cultural values: (1) *communal existentialism*; (2) *uniqueness of the individual*; (3) *affective-humanistic behavior*; and (4) *the diurnal relationship between good and evil*. These were first published in her 1972 article, “*The Dominant Values of Black Culture*,” and re-published in this theme issue as the opening article (Rodgers-Rose, 2023a, pp. 8-18) and cause for a 50th anniversary celebration. Recognizing the value of her work, Lewis (2023) speaks to the current need for the article being made accessible, as in this issue.

The children of Dr. Rodgers-Rose—Henry D. Rose and Valija C. Rose, Ph.D.—author the sixth article in this issue, (6) *La Francis Rodgers-Rose: A Clarion Call of Scholar as Social Actor*. They provide a sweeping review of her life and body of work. Rose and Rose (2023) provide a compelling portrait of their mother as “*scholar as social actor*.” The cultural and social context that shaped the life course of their mother is described. An analysis is presented of her theory, research, scholarship, intellectual breadth, leadership, and service contributions. This necessitates highlighting her work and service as Founder and CEO of the International Black Women’s Congress (IBWC) for the past four decades (1983 – present). In sum, those who know her best, her children, provide a powerful portrait of their mother: a woman of great stature who has repeatedly put

out a powerful *clarion call* that propels people to action. This is a *clarion call* to other thinkers, researchers, scholars, community members, and a larger national and international audiences. It is a call to take action to improve the lives of Black people. It is a call for others to emulate her life work in going beyond being a scholar to also being a social actor. Dr. Rodgers-Rose’s trademark *clarion call* is succinctly conveyed in a line frequently shared at the end of many of her speeches: “*The time is late, the hour is now, and your mother is calling you.*” In response to reading what her children have recorded in this article, any can claim knowing Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose as a noteworthy figure in history worthy of honor.

Lewis (2023) and Rose and Rose (2023) solidify the historical record of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose making outstanding contributions to the larger society and whole of humanity. Both Lewis (2023) and Rose and Rose (2023) provide intimate portraits of the family and community roots and key life experiences of Dr. Rodgers-Rose. Yet, another dimension is added from the voices of some of her former university students. In the next series of 6 short articles, *Six Voices of Former Students*—(7) Hilary Beard, (8) Rhinold Ponder, (9) Dr. Lily McNair, (10) Carolyn Jenkins, (11) Kim Thompson-Gaddy, and (12) Kevon Chisolm, Esq.—share the impact of Professor Rodgers-Rose’s teaching, mentoring, leadership, community service, and overall life work upon them. This includes the impact of those major publications (i.e., the 1972 article, “*The Dominant Values of Black Culture*,” and 1980 edited volume, *The Black Woman*) utilized in the university courses they took with Dr. Rodgers-Rose.

The prior articles by Lewis (2023) and Rose and Rose (2023) firmly establish the historical significance of the International Black Women’s Congress (IBWC). IBWC stands as a key part of the life work and legacy of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose. This lends legitimacy to the next article. Wallace (2023b) offers (13) *Celebrating 40 Years of the International Black Women’s Congress (IBWC): Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose’s Conference Oasis of Healing Waters*. The article details the uniqueness of the IBWC Annual Conference model as the creation of Dr. Rodgers-Rose. Wallace (2023b) reveals the multitude of benefits for conference participants, and likens the conference to being an oasis of healing waters. The conference model emerges as one in need of continuation, replication, and dissemination—given the many benefits.

The theme issue then returns to the voice of Dr. Rodgers-Rose (2023e) in an article titled (14) *A Theory that Answers the Critical Question, “Do Black Americans Have a Culture?”: Reclaiming My Original Theory of Black Culture from 1972*. Rodgers-Rose (2023e) shares the process by which she answered the question “*Do Black Americans have a culture that differs significantly from the larger American society?*” This review allows her

to share the many influences upon her, her decade of deep thought and study in academia, and the resultant 1972 publication some fifty years ago of her emergent Theory of Black Culture; it was introduced in the article entitled “*The Dominant Values in Black Culture*” [i.e., re-published in this theme issue as Rodgers-Rose (2023a)]. Rodgers-Rose (2023e) shares the manner in which others have appropriated the content from her 1972 “*The Dominant Values in Black Culture*” publication—without acknowledging her as the reference and source for information. This plagiarism may have, inadvertently, spurred advancement in several fields with her Theory of Black Culture providing the foundation for these advancements. These advancements occurred in the fields of education and academic achievement, counseling, assessment, and research. This occurred by virtue of her elucidating the critical role of culture as essential for consideration.

As the editor of the theme issue, Wallace (2023c) ends with final reflections and a synthesis of the preceding 14 core articles: Rodgers-Rose’s “*Gift of a Map*” for *Negotiating Toxic Environments* (i.e., “*Deserts with Mirrors of Hard, Distorting Glass*”), for *Healing Self-Definition and Self-Identity*, and *Refocusing Attention to the Battle to Regain Freedom*. Here, emphasis is placed on how the corpus of work provided by Dr. Rodgers-Rose provides a timely *ideal antidote* for exposure to toxic environments. She offers a compelling response to contemporary issues for which urgent solutions are needed. The solutions provided by Dr. Rodgers-Rose include vital guidance on how to negotiate toxic environments; for example, the toxic environment in Florida with a movement to erase the truth of Black enslavement and the ongoing oppression of marginalized populations. The guidance and solutions provided by Dr. Rodgers-Rose have the power to assist not only Black people in negotiating toxic environments, but also the Indigenous, People of Color, people with disabilities, and any diverse individual—while constituting a “gift” for the whole of humanity.

Conclusion: Overarching Observations on the Impact and Legacy of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose

The first main section of this article took a biographical approach to the life of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose, while seeking answers to the questions: Who is Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose? What was her training and preparation for a life that stands in the historical record for making outstanding contributions to the larger society and whole of humanity? What background and training prepared her for advancing in 1972 an original Theory of Black Culture in her article, “*The Dominant Values of Black Culture?*” What have been her accomplishments across the decades?

Indeed, it might be said that it is through the presentation of the forthcoming 14 core articles in this special theme

issue that all of the above questions are answered. What also emerges is the rationale and significance of this special theme issue’s focus: i.e., “*Celebrating the 50 Year Anniversary of the Publication of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose’s Pioneering Article: The Dominant Values of Black Culture.*” Collectively, the 14 core articles to follow in this theme issue codify the rationale for viewing Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose’s body of scholarship and service as an historical life record illustrating outstanding contributions to the larger society and whole of humanity.

Vital is full appreciation of Dr. Rodgers-Rose’s accomplishment of an *emancipatory embrace*, which Lewis (2023) describes as: *a moral perspective wherein one receives humans eagerly and gladly by engaging humankind in liberative ways that free both self and community from bondage, oppression, and restraint.* Dr. Rodgers-Rose’s engagement in *emancipatory embrace* is at the core of her existence and resultant legacy and life record as a leading theorist, scholar, social justice activist, and humanitarian. It is a life record that has included several significant milestones, necessitating this special theme issue.



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