



**A RADICAL REFUSAL TO BE DEFEATED OR UNDONE:
CREATING SPACES OF FREEDOM, BEAUTY,
MEANING AND GOOD, REGARDLESS**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

BY ANY MEASURE OR MEANING OF DEFINING and understanding the tenor and texture of our times, we are living, working, and striving and struggling in difficult, dangerous, destructive and demanding times. These are times that deliver us a daily dose of sickening expressions of White supremacist generated and AI facilitated genocide, injustice and oppression. And these racially and religiously sanctioned holocaust horrors and emerging fascism create deep and widespread anxiety, apprehension, fear and incipient hopelessness about the health and future of the world among us and the other peoples of the world.

Indeed, these are times that tear at the heart, tax our strength, and test our will to continue the struggle, keep the faith and hold the line. And as Marvin said and sang, they “make us wanna holla and throw up both our hands”, and ask in all sincerity and seriousness, “what’s going on”? What’s going on when an emerging fascism, a bloodlust genocide and a resurgent colonialism and imperialism find the ranks of resistance so thin, with most of the liberals on leave with a hypocritical case of selective morality and much of the religious community actively complicit, self-savily silent or otherwise occupied with safer and less problematic issues?

What’s going on when an American proxy and dependent can wantonly commit genocide with the total support of the major White powers of the world and kill the Palestinian people with a level of technological savagery, gifted supplies and conscienceless support the Nazis could only dream of? What’s going on when even the slaughter, starving and every day and night indiscriminate bombing of babies, infants, women, men, elders and innocent civilians have no

place, let alone moral priority, in the media, minds, mouths or hearts of fellow human beings? And what’s going on when in our name the American regime and gangsta government can continue to occupy and savage Haiti, is extorting critical resources from Congo as protection from massacres of its people by U.S. proxies, and is likewise letting loose its genocidal proxies on the peoples of Sudan, wreaking on them mass murder, famine and displacement?

What’s going on when the dirty-dollar deal maker and man who would be king can make Republicans crawl, Democrats cower and run for cover, and the Supreme Court right-wing majority come when called and dance a jig of anti-justice and twisted interpretations of the constitution at a moment’s notice? And what’s going on when immigrants of communities of color can be targeted and terrorized, arrested and imprisoned without due process and also shipped to countries they have no connection to, and when universities are pushed and penalized to attack and arrest their students for struggling to end genocide and secure an inclusive freedom and peace for all?

The question, then, is how do we handle all this both psychologically and practically? Indeed, what is to be done and where do we go from here as our honored ancestors constantly asked themselves in situations and times which were much worse than these? Clearly, we must go forward, radically refuse to be defeated or undone, and create spaces of freedom, beauty, meaning and good, regardless. It is the only rightful response we can give to Nana Harriet Tubman who taught us that we must go forward and be free or die, and that we must realize freedom is not free or cheap or achieved by thoughts and acts of

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escape or crossing lines, but rather through full liberation for the whole people.

So, we too must go forward for freedom, justice and peace and all the essential shared human goods. And we must go forward together, not leaving any class, group or person behind. This means too that we must not leave ourselves behind; that is to say, not leave the best of what it means to be African and human behind, or leave behind our sense of self in the most rightful and righteous meaning, our sense of the good beyond material wealth and body comfort, and our sense of ourselves as humans that have essential obligations to ourselves and other fellow human beings and ultimately the world and all in it.

In going forward, as we must, I would like to pose five fundamental ways forward, ways to strengthen ourselves in struggle and reaffirm our commitment not to walk away from the battlefield until the struggle is won. The first speaks to the need to strengthen the mind and heart as a shield against the oppressor's attempt to intimidate and terrorize us, make us afraid to fight for our rights and the rights of others as a shared obligation.

This first way is *thoughtfulness* which is about thinking deeply and caring greatly about things that matter, not allowing the oppressor's definitional dominance to go unchecked or unchallenged. By thoughtfulness I want to stress the ancient Egyptian concept of ibic reflection, heart and mind reflection, being both considerate in thought and caring in feeling. The oppressor wants to convince us to stop caring for others and even for ourselves, and normalize the cold and uncaring heart and make us accept the ordinariness and uneventfulness of their radical evil. But we must resist and reject this.

Secondly, we must reaffirm and deepen our *spiritual and ethical grounding*. This means embracing, practicing and embodying the best of our spiritual and moral values. As

we always say at every one of our Soul Sessions, we must love and respect our people and each other, seek and speak truth, do and demand justice, be constantly concerned with the well-being of the world and all in it, and prefigure the good world we work and struggle for. And we must bear witness to truth and set the scales of justice in their proper place, especially among those who are made voiceless, who are degraded, downtrodden and oppressed.

Thirdly, we must embrace and practice a deep and inclusive *relatedness*. That is to say, we must relate consciously and rightfully to each other, others and the world. Thus, we embrace the teachings of our Zulu ancestors and the fundamental moral concept of *ubuntu*, summarized in the ethical assertion, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, a person is a person through other people. In a word, as we say in Kawaida, we come into being and are sustained and flourish through our relationships with others. And therefore, the *Husia* teaches us that we are interdependent in the most essential ways and that the good we do for others, we are also doing for ourselves, for we are building the moral community and good world we all want and deserve to live in.

Fourthly, we must keep the *faith*. That is to believe in all that makes us beautiful, strong and the best of what we are and can become. As we say in the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles), this is the foundational principle that undergirds our efforts in all we do. For faith here is a confidence in what is good, true, beautiful and possible. We say in the *Nguzo Saba* concerning faith, *Imani*, we must "believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and in the righteousness and victory of our struggle". Faith causes us to hope, to long and look for, wait and work for, and strive and struggle for the good with patience and perseverance,

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that is to say, full liberation and a whole new history and hope for humankind.

Finally, we must *struggle* to bring into being the good world we all want and deserve to live in and leave as a legacy worthy of the name and history African. This means that resistance must be more than opposition to the established oppressive order. Resistance must have three interrelated positions and practices; it means we must oppose evil, affirm ourselves and the good, and aspire in action for the new and good world we all want and deserve to live in.

THIS REAFFIRMS THE KAWAIDA MAATIAN moral imperative of *serudj ta*, to constantly repair, renew and remake ourselves in the process and practice of repairing, renewing and remaking the world. For we realize that we have a history to honor, a present to improve and a future to forge in the most ethical, effective and expansive ways. Indeed, this is a recognition and reminder that our ancestors are always with us, our people require our best in these critical times, and our descendants are already relying on us. ▲

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