



**ADDITIONAL NECESSARY NOTES ON RACISM:  
TAKE AWAYS WITHOUT BEING TAKEN**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

Those who seek and are satisfied with simply the minimum get just that and often less. These are those who “negotiate” or rather petition from positions without power and often depend in undignified ways, upon the false kindness and calculated consideration of others advancing their own uncaring interests. Moreover, sensing that the masses will decide that they deserve and demand more, these “negotiators” will work first to secure from those in power some minimum concession that can be used to calm the masses and to literally return them to fun and games for “the good of the game”, and the continued profits of the owners, the rich, ruthless and yes racist rulers of the games and the country. It is how they acquire and keep their “comfortable place in oppression”, serving the interests of the rich, ruthless and powerful.

Now those who seek a rightful measure of justice know that real justice like real freedom must be consciously and continuously struggled for and secured. And they also know that a people cannot depend on the false kindness and calculated consideration of their oppressors or others, but must wage righteous and relentless struggle and win for themselves the social goods and space they demand and deserve. For as the great union leader and mass organizer, A. Philip Randolph, taught us “Freedom is not granted; it is won. Justice is never given; it is extracted”. And this process and practice of winning and extracting is none other than that of self-conscious, deeply committed, righteous and relentless struggle.

Thus, the “quick” decision by NBA Commissioner Adam Silver to ban and fine Don Sterling for racist remarks was immediately praised and raised as a solution of great merit and moment. And the anger and veiled threats of players moving beyond the symbolic protest of discarding and reversing their clothes in center court, were quickly set aside,

abandoned and rendered mute and no longer relevant, without the wider discussion other communities have felt necessary in similar circumstances. Indeed, the union rep and players lined up before the ever-ready corporate mics to respond rapidly with praises for the commissioner for this minimum act, posing it as a more-than-expected solution.

Clearly, it was a minimum “solution” or rather minimal response, for it did not address the NBA’s complicity in Sterling’s racist rant and unraveling through its coddling and supporting him and turning a blind eye to other demonstrations of his early man racialized mentality. Nor did it speak to its complicity in fostering and failing to address its racist and decidedly disadvantaging culture for Black players, coaches and owners.

It is good to get righteously angry about racist conversations of defamation and degradation anywhere, whether it’s expressed in its raw meat cave man form, concealed in code words of the political, religious and ordinary peddlers of fear, hate and hostility toward others, or crafted subtly in the deceptively “objective” but no less damaging language of the academy. But it is important to note and remember about this case and all the ones which have come before and will come after: racism is not simply a problem of injurious, White self-delusional and sick language or private hateful and degrading rants made public, but is a social problem. And its solution depends upon the struggle we wage, or fail to wage, to make the most dignity-affirming and life-enhancing ideas prevail and inform our daily practice.

However, whenever we struggle, regardless of the visible or advertised results, there are “take aways”, gains at least of lessons and experiences extracted from the struggle. But we must always guard against being “taken in” by our adversaries, opponents, oppressors

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and false friends. For as Malcolm taught us, these exploitative and oppressive forces have mastered the science of media manipulation and can turn a victim into a victimizer and the victimizer into the victim. And they can turn a people away from criticizing and condemning their oppressor to criticizing and condemning themselves or those among them made into objects of hate and hostility. Nowhere clearer is this than in the case of LA NAACP president Leon Jenkins to whom media and community attention shifted in focus away from Sterling and the persistent problem of racism. The problem of Sterling had been solved, it was decided; the question now was Mr. Jenkins.

From the outset we all know we should not honor, especially not twice, people and companies with sordid minds and grossly unjust and injurious practices, and we need to say that to Mr. Jenkins. But do we need to muckrake and strip mine his past and join the corporate media in its shift of focus from Sterling to him as the object of our negative attention, talking 'bout almost everything but his momma. Yes, we can and we need to criticize our leaders if they are wrong in some way, but do we need to take the lead of the corporate media and let them dictate the times and terms by which we discuss this and other problems?

And if we are going to be honest about the concern directed toward Mr. Jenkins and not practice a selective morality and convenient moral outrage, then we should criticize all the other leaders who took money from Sterling and take it from Walmart and other such

corporations. Indeed, one of the greatest problems of leadership and struggle facing us as a people is the quest for funds and favor from any source looking for Black and other testimony to their "humanitarian" credentials in spite of labor, environmental and other practices to the contrary.

If we are not self-hating and don't imagine the worst about ourselves and our organizations, we will see two basic facts. First, this constant and not always ethical search for funds and favor from corporations and their foundations, is an American phenomenon which affects the quality of what we, on good days, call democracy. And second, as with Sterling, it happens in other communities also. For example, numerous Jewish organizations took money from Sterling including the L.A. Jewish Holocaust Museum and the Museum of Tolerance. And there is no picnicking on them from within, and of course, no Black leaders or organizations would dare criticize or even question them.

But regardless of our limitations and silence here, should we practice a selective morality and selective moral outrage within? If not, let's start making the list of offenders and if not with the intensity of criticism of Mr. Jenkins, at least with the real commitment to principles by which we claim to hold ourselves and other accountable. I know we are not ready to make that list, but let's be principled ourselves anyway, and always treat each other with the human respect and real justice each of us demands and deserves.

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