



**ANOTHER LETTER FOR LIMBIKO:
SPRING AND SUMMER SOUNDS OF HAPPINESS**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

THIS MONTH OF MAY marks the seventh year we have celebrated your birthday at the Center without the spring and summer sounds of you happy, the loving appreciation of your eyes and voice and the warmth of your presence and reaching out, filling the room and adding to the sacred good of us all being together. And we miss you, remember you with words and songs, poetry and music, and the joyful sharing of our collective meal *kikoa* for you. But although we set aside a seat and plate at the head of the table for you and always feel your spirit among us in both actual and imagined ways, we still miss your physical presence and will never get used to your absence.

It was as always a beautiful celebration and homage to a beautiful person, you, Limbiko, my beloved sister and sacred friend; you who came like flowers and unfolding promises in the spring and summer of '79; you who learned out of love a whole new life, lived it well and left a legacy of good that will last forever. You became beloved sister and sacred friend, teacher, mentor, publisher, ambassador, Seba-Simba, a teacher-soldier for all seasons. A lion of a woman, not only in the warmest of life's summers, but also in the worst of life's winters, i.e., a terminal illness and all the stress, pain and challenges that come with it. How beautiful and strong of you to ask "What can I do to help", even when you needed assistance and added support yourself during that difficult time of declining health.

I will always remember and raise up all we shared and all you invested in our family, organization and movement. Indeed, I remember you constantly in all the ways we shared the good and beauty of life: a love-filled friendship; *ujima* work; *umoja* struggle and an *imani* look toward eternity and our meeting again in the sacred land of our ancestors, Africa—in the other-and-after-life. We used to

talk about this spiritual concept developed during the Holocaust of enslavement when, it is reported, our enslaved and resisting ancestors would link struggle, death, freedom, rising in radiance in the heavens and returning to Africa in one seamless spiritual and moral whole. And we liked the idea, for it was not only culturally grounded, but also spiritually uplifting and generative of a faith in the future gathering together again of all of us and in a hope that inspires a happiness of great and elevating expectation. Indeed, it is one of the things I whispered in your ear as you were making transition, i.e., "Tutaonana huko Afrika"—"We will see each other again in Africa".

Here, I continue where I left off last time, trying to deepen my spiritual understanding, recalling and mulling over in my mind the sign-seeing, dream-reading, and rock-firm faith of my mother's and father's generation in things spiritual and transcendently special. As the *Husia* says, I am constantly reaching out to recover more of "that which endures in the midst of that which is overthrown". In this and all my quests to understand African spirituality more deeply, I recognize, respect and hold up its distinctiveness, depth and beauty. Nothing illustrates this beauty, depth and distinctiveness more than the Kawaïda narrative I have often shared with the advocates, you will remember, about an African explaining to a European missionary an African concept of holiness which is clearly distinct, depthful and beautiful. He tells the European "when abundant rains fall during the night and all the earth, leaves and cattle are washed clean, and the rising sun shows a drop of dew on every blade of grass and the air breathes clean, that to us is holiness!"

Here is a spirituality that involves the Divine, nature and humans in reciprocal relationship, that sees holiness in the natural and

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ordinary, that teaches us to have reverence for creation and all in it, including ourselves. And it teaches us to link the Divine, natural and social (human) and see, believe in and care for the good and beauty of life around and within us, respecting ourselves as possessors of dignity and divinity. Indeed, it is this system of thought and belief we can find throughout Africa in all its diversity. And it is this sacred land, Africa, that teaches that profound respect is due not only for persons as physical beings with heart, mind and soul, but also as spiritual beings, especially when they assume this form after transition.

Remembering you is a joy to me although the missing brings an ache from your absence and a longing for your presence that will never go away. And when I remember you I feel beauty and think eternity. And this is when I do my daily *tambiko*, i.e., libation of remembrance, raising up, reaffirmation and recommitment, as well as when I write these letters, re-read your notes and cards, listen to our shared music and messages in my mind and mediate on all we've shared and share anywhere and anytime.

Sometimes, I think I miss you most in the early morning when the world is still quiet and a rising wind whispers memories in the ear of my heart and mind. And I hear and see us laughing life, living goodness and talking abstract and deep, depending. Then sometimes, I miss you deeply also when we talk about what we are going to do at home or at the Center and I miss your voice and active sharing. And then there are all the times and places we travelled together nationally and internationally—Tiamoyo, Chimbuko, you, and I—but cannot now, not in the same way. And there is also missing you and the times of

having breakfast and lunch together at a nice restaurant by the ocean to mark a new Sankore Press release, and of course celebrating together *Kwanzaa*, *Kuanzisha* (the Founding of Us), African Liberation Day and every other time of special marking, remembrance, raising up, reaffirmation and recommitment.

But again, as Africans, we know that you and all our ancestors are always present and it is on us to remember, relate and act in ways that honor our ancestors and loved ones who have made transition and ascended and that ground, enrich and expand our lives within the beautifully varied and deeply insightful context of our culture. In other words, here we must understand and assert ourselves in the world as Africans in the most expansive sense—self-consciously living, shaping and sharing our lives as those who are rich and reaffirmed in memory, rooted in the ongoing reality and wholeness of our personal and collective history and grounded in loving relationships that will *actually* and *unquestionably* last forever, regardless of the forms they take in this life or the next.

As I end this letter, in my mind a gentle wind and special spirit is rising, whispering good and beautiful things, and causing the tree leaves and flowers to sway and dance; a heavy rain is washing the world clean and again I see that bright kente cloth called rainbow arch across the horizon and you, Limbiko, are again holding it in your hand and smiling. And I smile, stand up strong and reaffirmed and begin another day of rich memory, uplifting love, essential work and indispensable struggle and in this, you and all our ancestors are powerfully and permanently present.

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