



**BEYOND ELECTIONS AND FICTIONS OF FEAR:  
REALITIES OF RACE AND RIGHTEOUS STRUGGLE**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**A**LTHOUGH NOT OVERWHELMING, THE BLUE wave of Democratic election victories has washed over the U.S. in an important and promising way and it is good to celebrate on one hand, but also to review and stand ready to resume, continue and expand our efforts in struggle beyond the electoral arena. For regardless of the final count of votes and the naming of those who won, the realities of race and righteous struggle remain ongoing and urgent. And thus, there is still organizing work to be done, struggle for racial and social justice and equity to be waged and a radical transformation of society to be achieved around the central and enduring issues of wealth, power and status, especially statuses of race, class and gender, as well as other identities by which people are singled out, inferiorized and oppressed.

Also, we must remember that elections are not a panacea or path to liberation, only one of the various ways to seek power, critique and make policy, build alliances and layout an agenda, vision and way forward, in a word, part of a larger goal and struggle. This is the central message and meaning of Min. Malcolm's teaching that we "are living in a country that is a battleline for all of us." Indeed, then, there remain battles to achieve racial and social justice in every area of life: to achieve food for the hungry; housing for the homeless; healthcare for the ill, aged and all; security against violence internally and externally; against systemic and police violence, massive incarceration and inferior and inequitable education; for jobs and economic security; environmental care; and a sane, rational and moral immigration and international policy.

These elections clearly gave us reasons to feel a sense of triumph and satisfaction of work well-done, of people looking up from their little and large screens, seeing the crisis facing the country, becoming concerned about the strong wind and debilitating stench of evil and injustice blowing our way and deciding to take an electoral step to halt and resist it. We were uplifted by the elections to Congress of African American women for the first time from Maine and

Connecticut, a Somali Muslim woman from Minnesota, a Puerto Rican woman from New York and a Palestinian Muslim woman from Michigan. And we were reinforced by the number of women participating and being elected in general; Democrats winning back the House, 7 governorships and hundreds of legislative seats, and the strong close governor races of Stacey Abrams (GA) and Andre Gillum (FL).

But a sober assessment must also take into critical account that still the haters, howlers, wall builders and armed, angry and animus-driven persons, groups and constituencies - Trumpites and otherwise - still have a strong hold on the way this country thinks and acts. And although it is often explained and excused as fear, it is not so. Indeed, at the heart of the way they vote and act is not simply fear of us or the world, but a deeply entrenched disorder, an inability to relate rightly and give due respect to different human beings, especially Black people, unless compelled through struggle, whether we call it racism or White supremacy. The claim of fear as a motive and motivation for the mean and murderous things White people do to us and other peoples of color and those vulnerable is a fictitious fear. For it is really racial, racialized and racist *hatred* and *hostility* that is masked, manipulated and self-induced in varied personal and collective ways as fear.

By fictitious, I mean it is *false, artificial and imaginary*. It is a false fear in that it is not true, but rather pretended fear to justify their reckless and depraved disregard for Black lives and rights. Whether expressed through vigilante or police violence, it is a pretension and excuse to target, abuse, suppress and kill. Clearly, Zimmerman was not afraid of Trayvon Martin, but stalked and killed him, and then claimed threat and fear. Likewise, the cop that killed little Tamir Rice playing in a park couldn't possibly have feared for his life as he claimed. Nor were those police afraid who killed numerous other unarmed Black women, children and men. And neither are White people in general who control the police and the armed

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forces and are highly armed themselves with the latest civilian and military grade weapons.

This fictitious fear is not only false, but also *artificial*, that is to say fabricated, concocted and cooked up by politicians and others to build and sustain a base of mindless minions under the banner of a white god, steel grey guns and a *redneck*, *white*-skinned and *blue*-eyed aggressive and predatory patriotism. We are told too often on the nightly news and in various studies, the White haters, howlers and silent ones are mean and murderous because of fear of losing and change, fear of refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, Muslims and always Blacks of every age and every educational and economic level. And we are told Trump sends them dog whistles to rally and rouse them up and that's why they say, imagine and do the terrible things they do.

But this is a too convenient and exculpatory explanation. First, it is not a dog whistle, for if it were, we as humans couldn't hear it. And if it really is a dog whistle, what does it say about those who hear it? And second, there's no need nick-naming the truth here. It's not a dog whistle, but a White whistle, a White racist whistle, designed to prick the ears and further freeze the hearts of those already hating and hostile and those ready to be recruited into a moral and social madness they choose. Thus, talking about dog whistles is diversionary and again camouflages the reality of racist hatred and hostility that informs this fabricated fictitious fear.

Finally, this fictitious fear is not only false and artificial, it is also *imaginary*, that I to say, it self-induced racial fantasy. It is a boogey man of the mind, born of self-generated illusions and insecurities about a myriad of things, especially race. It is a psychological disorder on at least two counts: taking illusions as reality and reacting to them; and embracing an irrational hatred and

hostility toward others based on the specious concept of race. Like other phobias in the strictest sense, it has no basis in reality nor reason to exist. On the contrary, it is born of an imaginary threat made up in one's mind and cultivated into a mental disorder with disastrous results.

Now, it could be said that even if the basis of the claim of fear is false and unreal, the "fear" itself is real to the people who possess it. In one sense, this is so, but their claim of fear and others' claim of it for them must be seriously qualified. We must still strip away any claimed rational, moral and empathetic qualities; deny its justifying claims for doing evil and injustice; and expose it as what it is -- racist hatred and hostility that consumes, controls and increases the insecurities and irrationality of its possessors and is destructive to others.

**A**ND OF COURSE, THIS MEANS SETTING aside all illusions about America becoming great, let alone "great again" without righteous and relentless transformative struggle. Moreover, we must remind ourselves that central to all we wish, want and work for is our regaining our self-understanding and self-assertion in the world as a *moral and social vanguard* whose ethical mission is defined by the ancestral and moral imperative to bring good in the world and not let any good be lost. As our foremother, Mary McLeod Bethune, ever reminds us, "Our task it to remake the world. It is nothing less than that." Indeed, as a moral and social vanguard, our role has historically been and must remain: those who are at the forefront in defining the essential moral concerns and conversations in this country; and in struggling righteously and relentlessly in alliances and coalitions to determine its political direction in the interest of an inclusive human good and the well-being of the world. ▲

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