



**CELEBRATING AFRICAN LIBERATION DAY:
PRAISING THE PEOPLE, PRACTICING LIBERATION**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

African Liberation Day, May 25, has no righteous meaning unless our celebration raises in us remembrance and respect of the real meaning of the word *liberation*, evokes memory of and homage to our people and a long line of freedom fighters, and unless we recommit ourselves to that self-confident, dismissive-of-danger and victorious attitude, we, Africans everywhere, had in the 1960s. Yebo, ndiyo, yes, in the Sixties we had the outrageous audacity to say without fear, faltering or confusion, “Liberation is coming from a Black thing!!!” It would come, we said, from Black men and women in self-conscious, intense and relentless struggle to free themselves, push their lives and the legacy of their ancestors forward, and make a critical contribution to a new history of humankind.

Min. Malcolm told and taught us that the oppressed peoples of the world were rising in revolt and revolution and we, Africans everywhere, were part of that rising tide of history that would eventually end White supremacy and open possibilities for a new good world and way to be African and human in the world. He specifically urged African Americans to understand that “we are living in an era of revolution and revolt, and the (African American) is part of the global rebellion against the oppression and colonialism which have characterized this era.” And he condemned the piracy, predation and plunder of the corporations and colonizing countries for their murderous rampage and resource robbery of Africa and other peoples of color of the world, stating that “These international criminals raped the African continent to feed their factories and are themselves responsible for the low standards of living prevalent throughout Africa.”

And indeed, it has come to pass that they plunder and rob not only to feed their

factories—industrial, informational, etc., but also to feed themselves, greedily consuming African land for farming and forcing Africans on the continent and in the Caribbean to farm for export rather than grow food for themselves. Thus, they have destroyed rice farming in Haiti, banana growing in the Caribbean, and small farmers everywhere, making African peoples dependent in this and many other evil and unhealthy ways.

None of us, then, in that audacious age, could have anticipated the setbacks and reversals and the long list of martyrs, the human costs and casualties, our liberation struggles would see and suffer. But history has shown that oppressors don’t surrender or concede easily and that every real, serious and sustained victory won by the people requires great sacrifice, suffering and hard and relentless struggle. Thus, as Amilcar Cabral reminded us, we should “mask no difficulties, tell no lies and claim no easy victories.”

The long and rock-strewn road to liberation still lies before us and looks bleaker than ever before. The contending global forces that used to lobby us and lend us conditional aid to prevent our joining or being influenced by their enemy have apparently found a new faith. And capitalism is constantly claiming triumph and conversions and still propping up dictators and outlaw bands to wage war on the people, steal their wealth, block their development, deny them self-determination and to add on their own versions of viciousness learned from their European handlers.

But all is not lost or unlearned in the struggle. And the enduring lessons of history are still here: we are our own liberators and if a people have the will, they will find a way and the needed weapons. Indeed, ultimately the people, themselves, in righteous resistance

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and struggle are the indispensable weapon and way forward everywhere.

The challenge now is how do we rebuild in the midst of historical and political disadvantage and a palpable lull and loss of momentum in the liberation movement in this country, on the continent and throughout the world African community—indeed, throughout the world? In a word, how do we build on the best of our current and past practices to rebuild and reinforce a *culture of struggle*, a culture that, as Toure, Fanon, Cabral and Kawaïda teach, understands resistance, revolt and revolution as acts of culture? That is to say, the liberation struggle is what the culture requires and sustains and what the people define as foundational to who they are, what they hope and what they are willing to sacrifice and suffer to bring into being the liberated and good life they have a right and responsibility to live.

Our foremother, Maria Stewart, in the midst of the Holocaust of enslavement and colonialism, called on us, the sons and daughters of Africa saying, “Awake! Arise! . . . show forth your powers of the mind” organize, step forward and “enter the field of action.” For in daring to think and act free, we create and achieve the ground of freedom itself.

Here she anticipates Frantz Fanon who calls on us to reject caricatured imitations of our oppressor and use our minds, “to reconsider . . . the question of humanity, to invent (and) . . . make new discoveries.” For he says, real decolonization or liberation “is the veritable creation of a new man (and new woman).” And at the same time, it is the active and simultaneous creation of a new world in which men and women can be free

and flourish, and come into the fullness of themselves, as Marcus Garvey taught us. Again, this means creating and sustaining a *self-conscious* culture of struggle based on values which inform and undergird the liberation struggle.

This is our charge, then, on this 47th anniversary of African Liberation Day and the 45th anniversary of the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles): to recommit ourselves to the liberation struggle and to the practice of the *Nguzo Saba* as a fundamental way of understanding and asserting ourselves in the world. It is to practice pan-Africanism, the unity and common struggle of Africans everywhere, not by grandiose talk, but in simple and sustained capacity-building ways. This means at a minimum volunteering money, material and skills; supporting schools and hospitals; providing medical supplies and books; digging wells and encouraging even more our young people to forgo spring break and do work in New Orleans or Haiti and wherever else needed. It means also supporting democracy, the empowerment and well-being of the people and the uniting of the continent, and struggling to change U.S. and corporate policy towards Africa in positive and promising ways.

And finally, it is to continue the liberation struggle on every front, stay steadfast and hold on to the historical hope and faith of our fathers and mothers that we can and will build a new Africa and world African community, grounded in freedom and justice, loving kindness and human caring, material security, mutual respect and cooperation for mutual benefit, and always the well-being and constant renewal of the world.

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