



**HOLDING GROUND AND MOVING FORWARD:  
IN RIGHTEOUS AND RELENTLESS STRUGGLE (PART 2)**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**P**ART 2. IF WE ARE TO HOLD OUR CULTURAL and moral ground in the midst of the life we live, the work we do and the struggle we wage, then, it must be done in the midst of quality relations and relationships that anchor, build and strengthen us as persons, families and communities, and cause us to develop and flourish. In spite of reports to the contrary, we, as people, are not lost or looking for directions from our oppressor, or seeking salvation in the arms of our oppressor, or striving to be responsible in the jaundiced eyes of our oppressor. We, at least most of us, understand, through a rightful reading of history and current realities, that we are our own liberators and that a people that cannot save itself cannot and will not be saved by others, no matter how sincere or allegedly saintly.

Thus, the third major ground on which we stand must be our quality relations with each other -- principled, reciprocal, loving and caring relations with each other on every level, in every place and at all times. Our cultural and moral grounding give us the ground on which to anchor, orient and expand our relations. Indeed, it is within our relations that our cultural and moral grounding express and prove themselves and reveal whether the culture and morals we claim are real sources from which we draw, develop and flourish or little more than convenient references we make to seem more than we are and to appear to be the kinds of persons we, in reality, ought to be. The centrality of relations in African culture is summed up in the Kawaida contention that the hub and hinge on which the whole of human life turns is relations. Indeed, we come into being in relationship and our identities are rooted in and reflective of relationships. Therefore, to be a person, a woman, man, child, father, mother, husband, wife, daughter, son or *relative* of any kind is to be in relation. Likewise, to be anyone is to be in relation, i.e., whether a teacher or student; doctor, nurse or patient; a judge, jury member or person to be judged; a lawyer or a client; an author or a reader; a performer or member of an audience; an ancestor and parent or a descendent in

the present or one who will come in the future. Thus, the quest, cultivation and commitment to quality relations and relationships is a moral imperative and moral obligation.

Here commitment and recommitment to the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles) is essential, for they offer us an African, Black value system, which provides a culturally and morally solid ground for our relations and relationships. Indeed, the relational ground on which we stand and which we must hold, begins and ends with our *Umoja* (Unity), our togetherness as persons and a people, as Black men and women and children in life, love, work and struggle. In this regard, our togetherness must be a principled and purposeful one. This means we must constantly strive to ensure our relations are always rightfully caring, mutually respectful, equal, reciprocal, mutually beneficial and constantly self-reflective to make sure we always measure up to the best of our cultural and ethical principles and practices. It is in this context that the principle of *Umoja* (Unity) calls for a practice of striving for unity in the family, (local) community, nation (national community) and race, i.e., the global African community.

The principle and practice of *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination) calls on us to define the right and wrong, the good and bad, the useful and unuseful in our building, developing and sustaining our relationships. Here again our oppressor cannot be our teacher and our allies cannot be our tutor. On the contrary, we must reach inside ourselves and within the rich, ancient and ongoing resource of our culture, consider carefully where we are, what we need, and then choose how to go forward to achieve and gain the good we've chosen. After all, what can an oppressive, unjust, hating and hostile society teach us about freedom, justice, love or the peace that comes from choosing, creating and sharing good together? It is our life, our struggle and our choice and we ourselves must choose to be ourselves and free ourselves from all forms of oppression, internally and externally.

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*Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility) causes us to come together for good purposes to cooperate in all things for shared and common good, and to take personal and collective responsibility for building the good relations and relationships, community, society and world we all want, work for in our various ways, deserve and wish to leave for those who come after us. Again, it is about being actively responsible in and for our lives, families and community. Also, we know this must extend to responsibility to change the conditions of our lives in society, for they affect our relationships. And thus, the call and responsibility for loving freely in our own self-determined ways is at the same time a call and responsibility for creating the condition of freedom which foster, facilitate and cause to flourish such an expansive concept and practice of life-sustaining and life-enhancing love.

The concept of *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics) teaches us the principle and practice of shared work and shared wealth. Our relations must demonstrate we put people over profit, cooperation over competition, satisfaction of needs over crass consumerism and unbridled acquisitiveness as a substitute and surrogate for the possession and practice of freedom. *Nia* (Purpose) is about our choosing as a collective vocation a shared work and aspiration to restore our people to their traditional greatness, a greatness rooted in and reflective of doing good in the world. It means that restoration begins with restoring and strengthening our relations, on every level by doing good for and with each other, rightly caring, reciprocally serving and righteously contributing to each other's happiness, well-being and development.

*Kuumba* (Creativity) calls on us to do always as much as we can in the way we can in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. For we are the embodiment of the community, its heart, head, soul and substance and thus this means helping each other to become and be more beautiful and beneficial than when we first met each other.

And finally, there is *Imani* (Faith) in ourselves and the Transcendent Good, faith in our mothers and fathers, our grandmothers and grandfathers, our elders, our youth; faith in all that makes us beautiful and strong. And faith that through hard work, long struggle and a whole lot of love and understanding, we can again step back on the stage of human history as a free, proud and productive people, ever conscious of our obligations to each other and humanity, and the well-being of the world.

Now with cultural, moral and relationship grounding, we can indeed hold our political ground. This means recognizing and retaining the victories we've won, the achievements we've made, and the aspirations we have for liberation and the good life in their largest and most meaningful sense. It means refusing to accept less than we deserve and our history and dignity demand and continuing to fight for the people and the principle when others counsel compromise, concession and calling it a day.

**A**ND AS ALWAYS, IT MEANS THAT WE MUST: continue the struggle; keep the faith; hold the line; love 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 dare rebuild an overarching movement that prefigures and makes possible the good community, society and world we all want, work and struggle for and definitely deserve.

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