PART 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 useless 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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