



**KNOWING AND HONORING NATHAN HARE:
THINKING AND THUNDERING BLACK**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

Part I. On April 9, Tiamoyo and I had returned to Temple University where I conducted an *Indaba* (conversation and counsel) with faculty, graduate and undergraduate students in the Department of Africology. In setting the context for the exchange, Dr. Molefi Asante, professor and chair of Africology, noted that this day, April 9, was the birthday of Dr. Nathan Hare, first coordinator of a Black Studies program and author of the first proposal for a department, and that this process was conducted in the midst of a heroic, victorious and costly struggle for Dr. Hare, students, faculty, staff and allies to inaugurate Black Studies as a discipline in the academy. He praised Dr. Hare for his intellect, initiative and continued struggle and we bore witness to the enduring meaning of his work and struggle. I had earlier decided to write a column in his honor and this reaffirmed my commitment to do so.

It is a fundamental Kawaida contention that there is no better way to honor models of excellence, whether juniors, peers, elders or ancestors than to learn the lessons of their lives, embrace and embody their principles and practice and use them to enrich and expand our lives and the lives of others. So it is with the life, thought and practice of Dr. Nathan Hare, thoughtful and thunderous voice and activist in the vanguard of the Black Studies Movement; insightful elder statesman in the Black Liberation Movement; esteemed sociologist and psychologist; caring, committed husband and co-worker of Dr. Julia Hare; and undeterred warrior for the new world for which he and we still struggle. What I want to do here, then, is draw from a variety of his writings to engage some of the critical issues he raises that have continuing relevance in addressing some of the major concerns of our time, and through this, expand our

understanding of his message and meaning to us.

Dr. Hare comes into national focus *thinking and thundering Black* as a professor of sociology at Howard University and as author of the *Black Anglo-Saxons*, a Sixties classic, which expanded the searing criticism of the Black middle class by his renowned colleague, E. Franklin Frazier, in the *Black Bourgeoisie*. In the year of the emergence of Black Power, he wrote a letter to the campus newspaper, "The Hilltop" challenging Howard's president's desire to make Howard 70% White, and joined the students in writing a "Black Manifesto" criticizing "the negro college" and calling for a Black university with a relevant education. This earned Dr. Hare a delay in and ultimate denial of the renewal of his contract, even though the faculty committee had voted unanimously to renew his contract.

As history would have it, he is invited to San Francisco State College by the BSU under the leadership of Dr. Jimmy Garrett, then a young activist intellectual, to develop a proposal for and become the first coordinator of the first Black Studies program and department. Here he develops some of the central concepts of Black Studies, building and expanding on them over the years.

Dr. Nathan Hare is first of all concerned with the content, quality and use of education in general and Black Studies in particular. He argued that "the early advocates of Black Studies sought both the collective elevation of a people, with education of, from and for the masses, and the training of a mass-minded Black conscious middle class" as well as the working class. He suggested that the early intention of Black Studies was to "provide a working model of theoretics for both black and white colleges, correcting 'negro' colleges fallacies and seizing equitable power and

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control at white colleges”, i.e., White dominant colleges and universities.

Moreover, he posed three basic propositions which undergirded and directed the Black Studies Movement: “1) that there can be no equality of education in a racist society; 2) the type of education conceived and perpetuated by the White oppressor is essentially an education for oppression; and 3) Black education must be an education for liberation, or at least for change”. Indeed, he stated, “In this respect, it was to prepare Black students to become the catalysts for a Black cultural revolution”, a key stress in Kawaida philosophy. In educational practice, this would mean that “all courses—whether history, literature or mathematics—would be taught from a revolutionary ideology or perspective”. In a word, “Black education would become the instrument for change” and Black students and faculty would become the catalysts and vanguard of that change which by definition and design would be a radical and revolutionary change.

He conceived and defined the Black Studies Movement at its best as “a mass movement and a mass struggle based on the notion that education belongs to the people and the idea is to give it back to them”. Thus, for him “most crucial to Black Studies, Black education aside from its ideology of liberation would be the community component of its methodology”. As he interpreted it, this thrust “was designed to wed Black communities, heretofore excluded, and the educational process, to transform the Black community, and make it more relevant to higher education, at the same time as education is made relevant to the Black community”. Here he offers his

classic conception of the interrelated process of linking community and college saying “Such an education would bring both the college to the community and the community to the college”.

Clearly, tied to his concern for education as a liberating process and practice, Dr. Hare is concerned, as Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon and others, with freeing and decolonizing the Black mind. Thus, he discusses the “slave mentality” as a major challenge to the Black liberation struggle and notes that escapism is a clear mark of the enslaved mentality which wishes to forget or ignore its oppression and unfreedom. He says, “the greatest passion of the slave who has lost faith in the possibility of freedom is his longing to forget that he is a slave”. But he states, “the healthy slave, the slave who rejects his oppression, can only think of the idea of his ultimate liberation; freedom stays on his mind”.

Moreover, in such an unhealthy state, the enslaved mentality tends to over identify with the enslaver. He states that “this is sometimes labeled ‘identifying with the aggressor’ as when Jews in Nazi concentration camps would mimic the behavior of Nazi guards, even in their behavior towards other Jewish inmates, and scrambled for portions of the guards’ old uniforms as patches for their own depreciated attire”. Such a mimicry also leads toward self-mutilation in gross and self-destructive ways. The need here, then, is to remember and resist forgetfulness and oppression and keep our mind and actions directed toward freedom. For only in this way, can we truly liberate ourselves and live the good and meaningful lives we deserve.

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