



**LIVING IN A LAND OF ILLUSIONS:
REAFFIRMING REALITY IN RIGHTEOUS RESISTANCE**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 10-30-25, p.C-1

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

THIS IS A *SANKOFA* REMINDER THAT WE must constantly lift up the light that lasts and drive away the illusions, shadows and showboating that pose as a reality worthy of respect. Deny this country what you will, it is without question a land of illusions, illusions about the meaning of truth, the measure of greatness and the almightiness of weaponry, wealth and whiteness. There is this thing about claiming to be “the best” without being able *to just be good* and about becoming a “more perfect union” without having first achieved perfection, something which in more sober moments is deemed humanly impossible. And there is this all too prevalent “need” to stand on other peoples’ heads in order to have height, to deny everyone else’s relevance in order to claim more than deserved, and to deny other peoples’ humanity in order to justify and disguise the savageries of oppression, violence, degradation and suffering inflicted on them.

There are also self-comforting illusions about maintaining a gun culture and raising and nurturing children on a daily diet of aggressive violence against innocents and vulnerable people in the world without it coming back to hunt and haunt them and us in homes, schools, movies, malls and other public places. And there is the moral madness and illusions about engaging in global plunder and resource robbery without restraint or restriction, mercilessly bloodying the world without

blowback, strike back and rightful resistance. Illusions abound also about seeking security behind apartheid walls while waging total war against the targeted peoples; and claiming superior moral status for the oppressor rather than the oppressed; and an immoral immunity from criticism.

Clearly, it would be easy and somewhat self-medicating to singularly assign the source of this tendency toward illusions to that tragi-comedy and horror show called the Trump regime. But it is the country, at least, politically speaking, that chose him as the “great white hope” that would *turn America around, turn immigrants away, and turn up the heat on both enemies and allies at home and abroad*. Now, the sowers and cultivators of such seeds of fantasy, fog and moral mayhem do not explain what any of this means for all the people negatively affected. It is simply and arrogantly acted out in what the pretending and pretentious President does and says in his daily disaster runs. But the traces, tragedies and horrors of history and current events are already there, ample and unmistakable signs for those who want to see. The conception of “make America great again” is about greatness as smallness and meanness of mind and heart and the racist return of unapologetic White dominance without burdensome disguises or the need to justify itself morally or rationally.

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It means waving flags and stroking its weapons of mass destruction while flashing phallic cue cards and declaring “my bomb is bigger than yours”. It means defining and accepting prosperity as an obscene monopoly of wealth by the few and favored and what’s left over for the manipulated and misused majority, not to mention those “others”, those politically counted, but not morally considered. And it means America standing alone, clutching and striking its weapons and fetishizing its flag: one imaginary nation; clearly divided; obviously under illusions and under the influence of something other than God; and with liberty and justice for all those with the right race, religion and class.

The U.S. wants so badly to forget its history and thus, it creates illusions to suppress its troubled and troubling memory. Even its calling the Holocaust of enslavement “America’s original sin” is not so much a moral concession to us, as it is an immoral evasion of the reality of and responsibility for the genocide against the Native American peoples which began long before we were forcibly brought here as chattel and in chains. Moreover, while paying lip service to the disadvantages, disparities and deadly consequences of racism, there is no real programs to deal with the daily and enduring realities of it and the disabling differences in terms of *wealth, power and status*.

Thus, there is created the illusion of the post-racial society, which employs agents of color to co-sign and contribute to the illusion, not noticing or admitting that relations of wealth, power and status haven’t substantially changed. Indeed,

even if we stop using and considering race as a category of disabling difference, racial hierarchy and racism still exist. What is needed, then, is not the illusions of a post-racial society, but the lived reality of the end of racism, itself, in all its forms. Conversations on race, relationship-building, symbolic appointments and elections, and manipulated statistics are essentially illusions of progress, for relations of wealth, power and status remain in place. Therefore, even the welcoming embrace of White liberals or leftists demonstrates our racial outsidership and their power to receive or reject. And only a radical restructuring of society can change these unequal relations and access to the vital goods of society, those needed to live a really free, good and flourishing life and contribute to the ongoing well-being of the world.

If we ever are to free this country from its illusions and free ourselves from its oppression, we must not find ourselves in the circles of seduction and the houses of fantasies and illusions for sale that they regularly and routinely prepare for the oppressed. Nor must we engage in *Wakanda-wishing* for a past that does not rightfully represent us, a present that does not empower and advance us, and a future we ourselves have not imagined and forged through “hard work, long struggle and a whole lot of love and understanding”.

We assert this well aware that one of the most difficult problems to deal with in teaching and learning is not ignorance or unawareness, but illusion. For unawareness is simply the absence of knowledge, but illusion is the assumption of

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knowledge even in its absence. Illusion bills itself and even boasts of itself as knowledge. It refuses to be bothered with troublesome truths, uncomfortable evidence, and facts and figures that call for facing reality. Those so caught up in illusion insist that we discuss their illusions as real, as a path that leads to a deeper understanding of reality, rather than promoting social escapism and inactivism. But illusion accepts no mirrors in the house, and thus has no way to see or reflect on itself. It has only itself and other illusions to rely on.

We must, then, resume and reinvigorate our critical role as a moral and social vanguard in this country, boldly bearing witness to truth and setting the scales of justice in their proper place, especially among those who have no or less voice, the marginalized, devalued and vulnerable. We must not simply speak truth to

power, but equally important, speak truth to the people, so that they can choose rightly for themselves and the well-being of the world. And we must remember and act on the fundamental lesson of struggle that it is patient, pervasive and persistent education, mobilization, organization and confrontation that lead to real and radical transformation on the level and to the extent needed for new lives and a new history for us, this society and humankind.

Indeed, it is the essential and enduring wisdom of our honored ancestors that we, ourselves, must ultimately make the miracles we hope for, that work really works, that love uplifts and strengthens, and that righteous and relentless resistance and struggle will bring us the victory we deserve, and eliminate the conditions and consciousness that produce and peddle illusions and make them feel and seem real and necessary.▲

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