



**MEDITATION ON THE ESSENTIAL MEANING OF STRUGGLE:  
THOUGHTFULNESS - EMPATHETIC CARING AND DEEP THINKING**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**I**N THESE TIMES OF INCREASING OPPRESSION and resistance, of collective starvation and genocide committed and condoned by the so-called civilized and sanctified of the White supremacist world, we reaffirm in speech and conduct the ethical and urgent imperative of continued and intensified struggle. Indeed, since the 1960s, we of Us have taught and lived a life of struggle, a struggle to be ourselves and free ourselves, and a struggle to achieve African and human good as a shared and inclusive potential and possession of all. It is a well-known and often cited teaching of Kawaïda philosophy that struggle is a defining feature of being human. As we say, we struggle to come into being, and that's called birth. We struggle to make the most out of our being, and that's called life. And we struggle not to go out of being, and that's called the quest for immortality. Struggle, then, is essential, even indispensable, to our grounding and growth, our development, flourishing and coming into the fullness of ourselves.

But struggle is also indispensable to our creating conditions and capacities that make possible the strong thoughtful people we want to be and the good life we all strive for, want and deserve. At the same time, it is striving and struggle that opens the way to conceiving and constructing a future worthy of the name and history African and all that represents humanity at its best in its ongoing unfolding. To center my discussion of struggle, I want to introduce our *Taamuli ya Yangumi*, our struggle meditation, that has personal and social relevance in terms of struggle. And I want to pose meditation as thoughtfulness, an empathetic caring and deep thinking about ourselves in the world and all in it. And it is a thoughtfulness that in the Kawaïda tradition is always directed

toward conceiving and creating good in and for the world.

But we know from the library of lessons from our most ancient of human histories that this struggle is a long and difficult one and we must build the internal strength and social capacity to wage and win this most difficult, dangerous and demanding struggle. And meditation, thoughtfulness, and empathetic caring of the most attentive kind and deep thinking of the most incisive and insightful form is vital to this centering, grounding and directing of our lives toward good and expansive ends. What follows below then is a *Taamuli* (meditation) developed over the years but whose origin is in the decades of struggle that produced it. In grounding our thoughtfulness which is focused on struggle, both internally and externally, we say the following *Taamuli* below.

“Now I assign everything to its place in my mind. Struggle stands in the forefront. All else is set aside. *I think water* – hard and soft, yielding and yet overwhelming as an ocean. *I think mountain* – I will not be moved in my firmness or faked out in my movement. I will hold my ground and dare victory. *I think battle* – I capture crocodiles and subdue the raging bull. I love life but will not be frightened by the threat of death. *I think patience* – I will pursue my goal without undue haste. To learn, I will listen like one who is deaf to all else and who strains to see. *I think calm* – I am silence before the strike and stillness after the storm. *I think indestructible spirit* – I will be one who obeys no magic and one who is not burnt by fire or wet by water; and *I think humbleness* - I make no boasts; I will win without words. Strength-thru-wisdom is my name. Victory over the aggressive and overconfident is my memorial”.

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First, we focus on water which we say becomes a model for what we as all-seasons soldiers must emulate. We say, “*I think water* – hard and soft, yielding and yet overwhelming as an ocean.” We strive to be as strong and resilient as we need to be but also flexible, yielding to the good and at our height being able to overwhelm our opposition and clear our path for a new way of relating and living. Water also is important to us in our sacred texts, for example the *Odu Ifa* says it wants us to be of benefit to all humanity and the world as essential as water, and of such value to others no one wants to be our enemy.

We say, “*I think mountain* – I will not be moved in my firmness or faked out in my movement. I will hold my ground and dare victory.” Here the mountain is a symbol of steadfastness of being firmly established in the good and upward ways of our culture, of being firm in commitment and conduct. The *Odu Ifa* calls the mountain “one who cannot be conquered”, the immovable and firmly established forever. In Us, we talk of “unbudging Blackness”, of an unbreakable commitment to our people, our culture and our struggle to achieve and sustain African and human good and the well-being of the world.

We say, “*I think battle* – I capture crocodiles and subdue the raging bull. I love life but will not be frightened by the threat of death.” To capture the crocodile and to subdue the raging bull is to control negative forces within and without. We use the asymmetrical strength of our opponents and oppressors against them and their arrogant assumption of invincibility. For we know they are as weak as they want to be strong and it’s at that weak point that we apply our strength. And we are also concerned with the ethical quality of our struggle and thus we say with our ancestors “may the battle we fight always add to our honor”. And as Simba,

lions, all-season soldiers, we quote them with pride when they say, “the battle that brings honor belongs to the lion”, the courageous, the defiant and fearless.

We say, “*I think patience* – I will pursue my goal without undue haste. To learn, I will listen like one who is deaf to all else and who strains to see.” The *Husia* teaches us “be patient that you may learn righteousness”. And remember “no one hasty achieves excellence and one is impatient is not leaned on”. Indeed, the sacred teachings tell us “be gentle and patient then your character will be beautiful. It is in the development of character that instruction succeeds.” So we say, be patient that you may learn struggle; that you may learn love and life and good in all its forms and feelings.

We say, “*I think calm* – I am silence before the strike and stillness after the storm.” This is to say there is no need for noise and nothing gained by broadcasting strategies for struggle. The point is to act decisively, to do it, not declare it beforehand. This means being disciplined knowing that without discipline there’s no development and no defense against the mistakes made in disorder. And we are stillness after the storm, having ridden the storm and remained intact and being the storm ourselves against our opponents and oppressors and enjoying a quiet satisfaction of small and large victories, being as the *Odu* says, “at peace inside and out”.

We say, “*I think indestructible spirit* – I will be one who obeys no magic and one who is not burnt by fire or wet by water.” This is a teaching again on the radical refusal to be deceived by illusions or defeated by fire or water or anything else used against us or by obstacles we unconsciously or consciously set for ourselves. Emulating the Divine, the prayer and teaching of our ancestors counsel us saying “may your spirit always be kind, for

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at its best, it is the lifted up light that lasts and the centering good that will never perish or pass away.”

**A**ND WE SAY, “*I THINK HUMBLENESS* - I make no boasts; I will win without words. Strength-thru-wisdom is my name. Victory over the aggressive and over-confident is my memorial.” This teaches us that we must enter a room or a relationship, or take up a task or go on a journey with a sense of humbleness and honor to be chosen

to do good in and for the world. Indeed, *Odu Ifa* teaches us that we must be like Ofun, the constant giver, of whom it is said, “Ofun is giving out goodness everywhere. Ofun does not make noise about it.” He does this without clamor or grand claim, but rather as a part and expression of who he is and as a natural and necessary act of being African and human in the world. And so it is with Us as an organization and as a sacred and soulful people.▲

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