



**NEW YEAR, ENDURING ISSUES:  
CRAFTING AN AGENDA, REBUILDING A MOVEMENT**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

The issues, events, concerns and conflicts that affected our lives and informed our struggles of 2010 still stretch out before us as vital and unfinished work, following us into the New Year with the persistent counsel and caution of Amilcar Cabral to: “Mask no difficulties, tell no lies and claim no easy victories.” The critical issues and areas of concern and struggle this year and last, of necessity, include the indispensable repairing and strengthening of male/female relations and building the Black family; unemployment and economic enterprise; the quality and cost of education; affordable and accessible health care and housing; massive incarceration of Black men; the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the increased relentless toll it has taken on our community as a whole; continuing loss of homes, land and wealth; return and rebuilding New Orleans; relations with the labor movement; and mutually beneficial alliances with Latinos and others.

There is also policy toward Africa, Haiti and other African peoples and our pan-African responsibility toward them; as well as international policy as a whole and the struggle for peace and ending the wars and waste of lives and resources in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine; and the racism, religious chauvinism and imperial banditry that undergird and inspire these direct and other proxy wars. And in the midst of all these problems, there is a rising rightwing force that is negatively affecting the language, moral reasoning and sense of possibility, even among us as a people, and an obvious lack of a national Black agenda and a Movement to craft, embrace and pursue this agenda.

We have been told that a Black agenda is a narrow agenda and cannot be embraced

by the President, advocated by the major Black groups or put forth as a good case for funding. But the Black agenda for America has always been inclusive and about freedom, justice, equality and shared power. It is the White agenda that has been restrictive, racist, nativist, segregationist and enslaving. It is our struggle that not only expanded the realm of freedom and justice in this country, but transformed it in ways that its White founding fathers could not imagine or accept. Indeed, it is our struggle and its human and civil rights and social justice agenda that has become a model, inspiration and constant reference for oppressed and struggling groups and peoples in this country and around the world.

Thus, the need is for us to craft a Black agenda rooted in the best of our human rights and social justice tradition and build a Movement to do this and then use this agenda to inform the struggle we wage and will ultimately win. This, then, is again the beginning of another year of our ongoing striving and struggle to achieve, secure and live good lives – lives of dignity and meaning; material, physical and psychological well-being; and of a solid sense of security and harmony in rightful relationship with and in the world. And this struggle, rightfully waged and eventually won, will not only serve our interests but also the interests of this country and the world. For it will complete the transformation of U.S. society into a really post-racial-and-post-racist center and force for freedom, justice and human development in the world without the need for propaganda or pretention. This means waging a relentless, resourceful and resilient struggle to create visions, spaces and practices of life and living that are rooted in

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freedom, anchored in justice and grounded in principles of respect, caring and responsibility for ourselves, others and the world and a resultant ethics of sharing.

To really go forward without woeful confusion and paralyzing contradictions, it is indispensable that we work within a philosophical framework which grounds our collective vocation of work and struggle. Every right and righteous agenda must begin, be conceived and carried out with genuine moral consideration for real live human beings as possessors of dignity and divinity, whose very persons and lives are sacred and worthy of the highest respect. It must be a respect that recognizes their right to live lives of freedom, dignity and decency. Too often people give inexpensive and easily-offered lip service to respect for other humans as an abstract principle which requires little or no practice. But as we say in Kawaida, every idea reveals its relevance and reaches its fulfillment in concrete practice on earth, whether in respect and rightful treatment of humans or in the witness and worship of God.

Thus, this respect must be immediately joined with a profound caring, a moral sensitivity and active concern for and commitment to the well-being of the human person. It means feeling for fellow human beings, empathizing with them and wanting for them a better life, and working and struggling with them to achieve it. Likewise, there must be added to profound respect and caring, a deep sense of responsibility for and to ourselves, others and the world, rooted and reflected in constant and enabling practice.

Central to any project and program, any real and relevant agenda must also be the cultivation of and commitment to an *ethics of sharing*, i.e., of creating and sharing good together. It requires a commitment in principle and practice to: *shared status* of equal worth and rights; *shared knowledge* for a good life and a decent living; *shared space* of neighborhood, country and environment; *shared wealth* of country and world; *shared power* of people over their destiny and daily lives; *shared interests* in the rights, well-being, health and wholeness of persons, families, communities, humanity as a whole and the environment; and *shared responsibility* for building the good world we all want and deserve.

Said another way, our fundamental task and overarching agenda is to create a *basis*, *bulwark* and *beacon* of life that honors our past, effectively engages our present and frames and fosters a future worthy of the name and history African. By basis I mean a solid moral, material and rational ground for a good life, rooted in our own culture, on which to stand, grow and continuously grasp for the good, great and eternal. By bulwark I mean a self-conscious capacity and social force of our people themselves, to pursue our goals and produce and protect our gains and pass them on to future generations to guard and expand. And by beacon, I mean that in waging this struggle and building this life, we “lift up the light that lasts,” those spiritual and ethical principles that speak to and reflect the best of what it means to be African and human and serve as an indispensable source of positioning, plotting course and pushing forward.

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