



**NGUZO SABA'S AND US' 50TH ANNIVERSARY:
A UNIQUE AND ENDURING ACHIEVEMENT**
Los Angeles Sentinel, 10-01-15, p.A6

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

The Founder-Chair's 50th Anniversary Message, delivered at Nguzo Saba 2015 Conference and Awards Luncheon, 6255 September 26, 2015.

This is a beautiful, uplifting and momentous point and place in our history as an organization, the reaching of our 50th Anniversary. It is an anniversary brought into being by continuous work, ceaseless service, righteous and relentless struggle, and an ongoing active commitment to institution-building, all in the interests of our people. It is a unique achievement given our size, our bare-bone budget and our refusal to dilute or disguise our Blackness or to go along with the myths which a sick and oppressive society creates to congratulate itself, hide its horrors and crimes, and seduce its shameless collaborators into simply seeking comfortable places in oppression.

Clearly, there are lessons to learn from our history of work, service, struggle and institutional building and from our capacity to overcome government suppression and all kinds of obstacles and opposition, and to do this without bitterness or “backsliding”, without whining, waiting for miracles or wishful thinking about the awesome demands, high costs and retaliatory consequences of righteous struggle against the established order. When a rightful history is written, it will have to be said that those Black people of Us are serious about their Blackness, grounded in their culture, unalterably committed to their people and are no ways tired or talking trash when they in their oath of struggle say, “We have nothing better, more revolutionary or rewarding to do with our lives than to struggle to bring into being a new world, a world in which we, our children and our people can live, love and create freely and stand and walk in a warmer sun.”

But whatever we see or say about ourselves, we stand in the shadow and on the shoulders of our ancestors. And we know and declare without reservation or restriction that the joyous marking of this moment, is in a larger sense, a

celebration of the work and struggle of our people to which we have, for 50 years, made a humble contribution by the work we've done and the struggle we have waged in their interest and advancement.

For indeed, every lesson of life, love, work and struggle we offer is rooted in and rises from the prior and more powerful lessons of our ancestors. And as it is said in a traditional Zulu greeting in answer to the question “how are you”, we say too, “*sisabelandela*—which means, “We are still following them,” following our ancestors on the “upward paths of our culture,” preserving and practicing our highest values and doing the good work and waging the righteous struggle which define their and our weight and worth in the world.

Indeed, we are ever at the crossroads with Harriet Tubman, vowing to “go free or die,” and choosing to fight for an inclusive freedom of our people rather than pursue the shameful illusion of individual escape. And we are ever standing in the midst of our people with Frederick Douglass, urging them to put aside illusions and to continue and intensify the struggle, for there is no progress or promise without righteous and relentless struggle. And we are ever rising up in the fields, factories and the ice-cold offices of our oppressors with Fannie Lou Hamer, walking off the plantation, freeing our minds and practice, and giving up the ghost of whiteness for the living beauty and sacredness of our own Black selves. And surely, we are ever listening to Malcolm X, moral teacher and prophet of the cleansing fire, predicting Watts and foreseeing Ferguson, and teaching us the morality of sacrifice and to pursue freedom by any means necessary and required of us. For as Kawaida, our ancestors and the hard lessons history remind us, we are our own liberators, who must choose either to hug our chains or to break them.

At this critical juncture in the history of our people, our struggle and our organization Us, it is important to us that we reaffirm our

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commitment to each other and our people, Black people, the people who brought us into being and taught us dignity-affirming, life-enhancing and world-preserving ways to walk in the world. And we must recommit ourselves to the best of our values and practices which are rooted in and rise out of that most ancient, rich and resourceful culture, our culture, African culture—continental and diasporan, ancient and modern.

As we have said so many times before, in the context of struggle, especially in the dangerous, deadly and difficult times we now live, we must hold fast to the best of who we are and what we have achieved and continue to build on it. For this is and remains our fundamental obligation and task: to know our past and honor it; to engage our present and improve it; and to imagine a whole new future and forge it in the most *ethical, effective* and *expansive* ways. Certainly, we do this by prefiguring in our daily lives and relations with each other and others the good world we want and deserve to live in, and by bringing forth from inside ourselves the truth and good within us, the best of what it means to be African and human. And this means for us, constantly renewing, reflecting on, practicing and promoting the *Nguzo Saba* as a moral minimum set of values, we as a people, need in order to rescue and reconstruct our history and humanity, return to our own history and step back on the stage of human history as a free, proud and productive people. These Seven Principles are not only cultural ways of understanding and asserting ourselves as an African people in the world, they are also moral imperatives, morally compelling ways to think and act among ourselves and in the world.

In practicing *Umoja* (Unity), we are at one with each other and are strengthened in life, love and struggle. In practicing *Kujichagulia* (Self-determination), we choose and rightly struggle to free and be ourselves. In practicing *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility), we are responsible for and to each other and together we share the work and responsibility to build the good world we all want and deserve. In practicing *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics), we share work and wealth and enjoy together the abundance and good of the world. In practicing *Nia* (Purpose), we remember the ancestral teaching that we, all humans, are divinely chosen to bring good in the world and act accordingly. In practicing *Kuumba* (Creativity), we commit ourselves to always do all we can in the way we can in order to leave our community and world more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. And in practicing *Imani* (Faith), we find the foundation and motivation to believe in ourselves and our people, in the good, the right and the possible, in all that makes us beautiful and strong, and always in the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

And as we celebrate this 50 years of work, service, struggle and institution-building and continue to go forth to forge the new and good world we all want and deserve, let us remember too this message from the ancestors. They tell us: “Continue the struggle. Keep the faith. Hold the line. Love and respect our people and each other. Seek and speak truth. Do and demand justice. Be constantly concerned with the well-being of the world and all in it. And rebuild the Movement which prefigures and makes possible the good world we all want and deserve, and work and struggle to bring into being.”

Dr. Maulana Karenga, Professor and Chair of Africana Studies, California State University-Long Beach; Executive Director, African American Cultural Center (Us); Creator of Kwanzaa; and author of *Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture* and *Introduction to Black Studies*, 4th Edition, www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org; www.MaulanaKarenga.org.