



**RAISING UP IN RESISTANCE:
CRAFTING A STRATEGY FOR CONTINUING STRUGGLE**

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We are engaged today all over this country in a righteous and relentless struggle against conditions of injustice and oppression that socially sanction and legally allow police and vigilante violence against our children and against us as a people under the thinnest of pretexts and pretensions of feeling an existential threat from just our presence. Certainly, we are focused on the particular case of the brutal killing of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed teen, who was stalked, confronted and shot to death point blank by an armed adult vigilante. And we are rightly rejecting as immoral, unjust and unjustifiable the verdict which “vindicated” his adult killer, and thus validated the vigilante practice of stalking, confronting and killing Black boys and men with impunity.

However, if we are to move beyond periodic anger and episodic engagement with critical issues confronting us, then we must see and approach the struggle for Trayvon as part of the larger struggle for justice for all our children and adults killed by vigilante and police violence under the color and camouflage of law. And we must also see this important struggle as part and parcel of our overall struggle as a people for racial and social justice.

Especially is it important that all our efforts are united in some meaningful way, so that our plans and actions are concentrated, not dispersed; focused, not over-reaching; and deeply rooted in the consciousness and active commitment of our people, not crafted in isolation among leaders without rightful attention to the will of the masses of our people. Indeed, it is our foremother, Mary McLeod Bethune, who reminded us with her characteristic attention

to the ethical aspect of our work and struggle that “the measure of our progress as a race is in precise relation to the depth of faith in our people held by our leaders”.

If we are to be effective and successful, then, it is important that we pay rightful attention to at least five fundamental factors indispensable to every struggle and movement. These are: philosophy, structure, program, communications and resources. To talk about philosophy is to offer a shared and critical overview of the issues involved, the overarching aims and the principles of practice to achieve our aims. It can be summed up in a mission statement, but it must reflect and reaffirm our most cherished values and point not only to solutions for the issues at hand, but also to a shared vision of the good society and world we all want and deserve to live in.

To talk of structure is to build a series of local and national structures based on the Kawaida principle of *operational unity*, i.e., unity in diversity, unity without uniformity, and unity in the interest of common good. These structures will allow for and encourage relations of coordinated decision-making, joint actions, mutual support, enriching exchange, and sharing of resources. And it will contribute to establishing and sustaining an organized, disciplined and dedicated practice for the long difficult and demanding struggle required.

To talk of program is to craft and coordinate plans, tasks, practices and actions directed toward achieving our goals. These will include both short-term and long-term plans and actions; an overarching strategy and specific tactics; and public policy initiatives. But regardless of what we choose to do, there must be sustained activity for

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the reinforcement of our will and the achievement of our goals. For *practice proves and makes possible everything*.

To talk of communications is to talk of ways to create and sustain a national conversation, not only about race and racism, but also about the kind of society and world we want to live in and pass on to future generations. And it is always a dual track conversation, running parallel and intersecting at critical points. This conversation begins within our own community and extends outward to allies and others. In it, we must reaffirm the value of our lives and culture, our identity as African Americans, and our interests derived from this. We must discuss not just our problems, but also our possibilities; not just our weaknesses, but also our strengths; and not just our mistakes, failures and losses, but our resilience, resourcefulness, victories and achievements against all odds.

Technically, in the area of communications we must build a network of institutions and media to speak our own special cultural truth and discuss, debate and decide critical issues. Certainly, we must use the internet and social media in new and creative ways, but we must not overestimate their power to actually create a movement or as a substitute for face-to-face, feet-on-the-ground meetings, demonstrations and other forms of in-person resistance. For one of the most important lessons from our struggle and those around the world is that the struggle cannot be reduced to e-mail, twitter, Facebook, blogs and such.

As Frantz Fanon advises us from the center of a hard fought and successful struggle and revolution, “You may speak about everything under the sun, but when

you decide to speak of that unique thing in a man’s (and woman’s) life that is represented by the fact of opening up new horizons, by bringing light to your own country, and by raising up yourself and your people, then you must collaborate on the physical plane”. In addition, we must create free space in public broadcasting, support and appear on Black talk radio, insert our agenda in established order venues, and also build and expand our own institutions and media.

Finally, to talk of resources is to talk of money, materials, skilled personnel and ultimately the masses themselves. We must find our way back to financially supporting our own causes and struggles. Clearly, regularly seeking and receiving funds and favor from corporations limits one’s ability to boycott or challenge them. We need also an expanded network of skilled persons whose service to our people is part of their self-understanding and sense of moral responsibility.

And always, we need to build on the rich resources our people represent and possess. As Kwame Nkrumah taught us, we must “go to the masses, start with what they know, and build on what they have”. In a word, we must walk, work and struggle with the masses of our people as we together reflect on and discuss the conditions and critical issues of our lives and the world; organize ourselves into structures that house and advance our interests and aspirations; wage the sustained and effective struggle to secure the lives of our sons and daughters and ourselves; and create free space in which all can live in dignity, enjoy well-being and flourish in their own time and place.