



**RECONCEIVING OUR NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS:
REMEMBERING OUR WORK IN THE WORLD**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

This New Year will be the year 6256 on our oldest calendar, the ancient Egyptian calendar, the oldest calendar in the world. And we are the oldest people in the world, the elders of humanity. Indeed, we are builders of a Nile Valley civilization named Kemet that was once called the Light of the World, the Navel of the World and the Temple of the world. Therefore, before we lose ourselves in the established order ritual of new-year-lite resolution-making on everything from loss of weight to giving less to the lotto, we might want to pause, remember and think deeply, and then make resolutions worthy of our weight and work in the history of the world. And this requires that in the midst of the diminished and distorted portrait of ourselves painted by the dominant society, we remember and rightly conceive of ourselves in more truthful, dignity-affirming and expansive ways. Having done this we can then recommit ourselves to a vision and values that evolve from the ancient and ever-present richness of our culture and thus self-consciously recommit and assert ourselves as Africans in the world.

Indeed, each year on the last day of Kwanzaa, January 1, called *Siku ya Taamuli*, the Day of Meditation, we are to sit down and meditate on the meaning, motion and direction of our lives and the awesome responsibility of being African in the world. And we do this by remembering and measuring ourselves in the mirror of the best of our culture and history, and determining where we stand in terms of our own principles and practice and the models of human excellence and achievement left by our ancestors. It is within this process that we ask ourselves and answer three questions: who am I; am I really who I am; and am I all I ought to be? And it is then that we are to make commitments which reaffirm our identity as Africans, our central purpose of bringing good in the world, and our time-tested practice of

knowing our past and honoring it, engaging our present and improving it, and imagining our future and forging it in the most ethical, effective and expansive ways. And this we do in the interest of our people and the well-being of the world.

So in answering these questions, let's remember and teach our children the good, beauty, meaning and the responsibility of being African in the world. And one of the ways we can do this is by focusing on three fundamental and overarching identities drawn from three defining periods in our history: fathers and mothers of humanity and human civilization; sons and daughters of the Holocaust of enslavement; and authors and heirs of the Reaffirmation of the Sixties. We are, I repeat, elders of humanity, the ones who stood up first, most likely in Ethiopia, spoke the first human truth, imagined the infinite and the possible, began to form families and communities and put forth principles that shaped the dawn of human consciousness and human conscience. And we are the fathers and mothers of human civilization, the ones who introduced some of the basic disciplines of human knowledge in the Nile Valley and who first taught some of humanity's most essential spiritual and ethical principles: the oneness of being, the sacredness of life, the dignity and divinity of human beings, and profound respect for the awesome wonder and web of interdependence we call the world. And we taught the principle and practice of *serudj ta*, the moral obligation to constantly repair, renew and transform the world, making it more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

We taught first also that the moral measure of any society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. And thus the *Husia* teaches we must give bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked and a boat to crossover for those without one. Moreover, we

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are to be a servant of the needy, a sustainer of the poor, a parent for the orphan, a shelter for the battered, a caretaker of the ill, a supporter of the aged, an ally of the oppressed, a raft for the drowning, a ladder for those in trapped in the pit of despair, and an outreached hand for those on the road to ruin.

We are also the sons and daughters of the Holocaust of enslavement. It is in this white-hot human-made hell that we demonstrated a human durability, adaptive vitality and resistance to genocidal destruction unsurpassed in the annals of human history. We held on to our humanity in the most inhuman of situations, refashioned our faith so we could retain its spiritual and ethical essence while appearing not to threaten the established order. And we did this so well, we tended to forget the ancient rich culture we had before we came here. We also formed families in our hearts in spite of the devastating effect of the auction block and the raptors that raided our lives and ravished our loved ones. And after the Holocaust, we went to find the lost, the sold and the traded ones and dared to rejoin and rebuild our lives and the relationships that grounded our lives and caused us to flourish in spite of the hell, horror and high water we had to walk, wade and fight through.

Also even in the face of laws that prohibited it and the promise of mutilation if we were caught, we struggled in secret to learn to read and write and master knowledge of the world. And we waged a long, hard and heroic struggle for freedom, resisting in numerous ways, from day-to-day and cultural resistance to armed resistance in revolt and alliances with Native Americans and Mexicans. And when the Civil War came, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman and other leaders called us to

arms, teaching us that we are our own liberators, and that no matter how numerous or supportive allies are, those who want freedom must achieve it through their own efforts in the heat and hardship of struggle.

And finally, we are the authors and heirs of the Reaffirmation of the Sixties, a time when we were determined to reaffirm our Africanness and our social justice tradition in and through our liberation struggle. As Amilcar Cabral taught, the liberation struggle is in fact a struggle to return to our own history, to determine our destiny and daily lives, and open pathways onward and upward in the interest of freedom, justice, peace and other good in the world. Thus, we fought and won with our allies struggles that challenged the claims and changed the course of this country, expanded the realm of human freedom, and inspired the liberation movements of other oppressed and struggling peoples of the world.

Given this ancient and ongoing commitment of our people to human excellence and achievement and to the constant struggle to bring good in the world, then, be it therefore resolved in this coming year 6256 that whatever else we commit ourselves to, we will uphold and advance this awesome legacy. And this legacy reaffirms this central call and commitment. 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 so hard and diligently to bring into being.

Heri za Mwaka Mpya! (Happy New Year!)

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