



**REMEMBERING, RECLAIMING AND RESISTING:
A CARING SOLIDARITY IN COMMUNITY AND STRUGGLE**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

AS WE MOVE INTO THE NEW YEAR 6257 (2017) with the heavy white hammer of winter storms hanging menacingly over our heads, we must not despair, be dispirited or contemplate defeat. For the ancestors we honor, the history we've made, the struggles we've waged, and the promising future of freedom and justice we are obligated to achieve will not righteously let us. Indeed, regardless of the awesome effort, focus and sacrifice required, we must not settle for less than who we are, less than what we deserve, or less than what is worthy to leave as a legacy for those who come after us.

Surely, we must remember that we are in *no ways* new to the various forms and faces of oppression that have afflicted us and humanity and continue to do so. We have known, witnessed and experienced so many kinds of oppression—from conquest, occupation and racial and religious apartheid and domination to cultural and physical genocide as evidenced most graphically in the Holocaust of enslavement. We have known the human hunting grounds, the enslavers auction block, the execution square for rebels, the torture chambers and killing fields. And we have known body, mind and spirit rape, used as weapons of war, terrorism and domination and ongoing processes and practices of emasculation, defeminization, deculturalization and dehumanization.

And yet through it all, we have not only survived, but also prevailed and resisted, regardless of the odds against us or the consequences promised by the oppressor and savagely imposed. Indeed, even outnumbered and outgunned and with weakened and battered bodies and constantly bombarded minds, we stood up, moved forward to remember and resist and build a caring solidarity in community and struggle. So we must not in this historical moment of crisis and transition embrace fear, lose faith, abandon hope and find ourselves with no more plans than developing “new” self-demeaning ways to genuflect and adjust to

things as they are and will unfold, if we don't resist.

Surely, this is the time for remembrance, reclaiming and resistance: remembering who we are and what we've done at our best; reclaiming the legacy and spirit of excellence, achievement, caring, service, sacrifice, striving and struggle; and resisting by whatever means we find necessary, morally compelling and essential to our sense of dignity and the demands of our right to freedom and justice. I speak here to a people who are Holocaust survivors, survivors of a planned and imposed social death, survivors of a massive burial in the physical, mental and spiritual grave of enslavement. And yet we rose up, stood up in our own coffins and refused to die. Instead, we boldly and defiantly declared our existence and our dignity and rights, and began to wage a righteous and relentless struggle to secure these goods and to open up new pages and possibilities in African and human history.

In times like this of apprehension, anxiety and fear of the worst, some of us are prone to look for answers and assurance outside ourselves, outside the ancient and world-embracing circle of our own history and culture. If we are not vigilant and centered, grounded and thoughtful, we might forget the teachings of our ancestors who instruct us to turn inward in both a personal and collective sense. Indeed, the *Husia* tells us “It is wrong to walk upside down in darkness, therefore, I will come forth and bring forth the truth within me, for truly it is within me.” That truth we must bring forth is the memory and accumulated wisdom of our best ideas and practices, our best thinking and our most elevated moral sensitivities to each other and the issues we address among ourselves and with others. Likewise, the *Odu Ifa* teach us that “Often the very thing we are looking for is near us. It is our lack of knowledge that prevents our seeing it.” So let us turn to each other, reinforce the bonds between us, together dialog and think deeply about what is to be done and then, do it together in the spirit of *Ujima*.

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Moreover, if we are to meet the menace hovering above the horizon, then we must not forget but remember and reclaim our history and culture and the “victorious consciousness” that informs it. Clearly the term, introduced by Molefi Asante, founding theorist of Afrocentricity, is best summed up in the words of our foremother and educator, Nannie Burroughs, who established as a motto for her school, “We specialize in the wholly impossible.” Such a consciousness admits no alternative to achievement, victory and excellence. Even if it takes a thousand years, we are to work, struggle, sacrifice and serve until the project is achieved, the obstacles overcome and the way is opened to the full measure of goodness we seek.

This, then, is likewise a call to recapture that radical, revolutionary conception of ourselves that causes us to see ourselves as the world has known us, especially since the Sixties as *a moral and social vanguard* that not only expanded the realm of freedom in this country and by extension in the world, but also serves as a model of the human liberation struggle to study and emulate. Virtually every movement for freedom and justice in this country has borrowed from and built on our moral vocabulary and moral vision, used our rightful claims as a basis for their own, and referenced us in various other instructive and inspirational ways. Likewise, across the world peoples in struggle have referenced our struggle, sung its freedom songs, borrowed its struggle chants and posed it as a model to learn from and emulate.

We know ourselves and introduce ourselves to history and humanity by the work we do and the struggles we wage. And our defining work has been for liberation, freedom, justice, equity, peace, and shared good in the world in both a material and non-material sense. And so,

how will we know ourselves if we don’t return in massive number to the battlefields of this country and the world in some meaningful and substantive way? Clearly, we must give focus to our own struggles, but we must, as Malcolm, Bethune, Cooper, King and others taught, link our struggles to the righteous struggles of others in this country and the world.

So we must be in continuous resistance to evil and injustice everywhere and equally everywhere and always in pursuit of the good, the right, and the possible. This means continuing to struggle for: rebuilding and strengthening family and community; adequate healthcare and housing; reparations; economic security; income and wealth equity; free college and university education; environmental care; equitable inclusion in all major initiatives; and an end of police targeting and violence, mass incarceration, unfair sentencing, voter suppression and a host of other injustices. And we must also stand in solidarity with the struggles for liberation, justice and the good of the peoples of Haiti, Western Sahara, Palestine, Native America, especially at Standing Rock, Southern Sudan, Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, and everywhere else people defend their dignity, rights, lands and resources, and raise the banner for a new history of humankind. Likewise, we must stand in solidarity with the people of Cuba as they recover from the loss of their legendary leader, Fidel, and move forward, preserving their revolutionary gains and spirit. It is in this way of continuous uncompromising resistance and caring solidarity with the oppressed and struggling peoples of the world that we not only know ourselves, but also honor the history and struggles that brought us into being and keep us moving forward on the upward paths of our ancestors and culture.

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