



**REMEMBERING THE MILLION MAN MARCH:
REAFFIRMING ITS MISSION AND MEANING**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

Sixteen years ago, October 16, 1995, we stood together two million strong in Washington, D.C., declaring our commitment to assume a new and expanded responsibility in life, love and struggle. Called to action by Min. Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, Black men, with critical support from Black women, dared stand up and step forward at a critical juncture in our history. For as our *Mission Statement* stressed, we knew that “until Black men *stand up*, Black men and women cannot *stand together* and accomplish the awesome task before us.” Thus, on this 16th anniversary of this awesome event, it is important that we remember the March by remembering and reaffirming our commitment to fulfill its mission.

Also, as the *Million Man March/Day of Absence Mission Statement* said, the Million Man March and the joint project and companion activity, the Day of Absence, was “a reaffirmation of our self-understanding as a people that we are our own liberators, that no matter how numerous or sincere our allies are, the greatest burdens to be borne and the most severe sacrifices to be made for liberation are essentially our own.” Thus, again, we must in our commemoration of the 16th anniversary of the Million Man March/Day of Absence reaffirm policy and practice commitments we made then, and commit ourselves to laying the basis for rebuilding our Movement for fundamental and far-reaching social change. Indeed, there is no greater homage we can pay to the MMM/DOA than to translate its social policy statements into social practice and the March itself into a Movement to achieve this. And we now, as then, must reaffirm the best values and practices of our social justice tradition, which requires at a minimum, respect for the dignity and rights of the human person and all peoples, economic justice, shared power,

cultural integrity, and relentless struggle to secure and sustain these.

Thus, we must rebuild the Movement not only to honor the March, but to liberate our people, fulfilling the essential mission and meaning of the March. By *movement* is meant *an ongoing collective struggle with a shared vision and shared values, interlocking structures, coordinated agendas and common goals, a far-reaching web of communications and interactions, and an interrelated common pool of resources from which to draw*. But the *Movement, like our future, must be forged in the furnace and field of relentless struggle*, the ongoing struggle to bring, sustain and increase good in the world.

In our *Mission Statement*, accepted by consensus, we put forth key areas of focus for our struggle which remain unfinished and ongoing tasks which the Movement must address. First, we committed ourselves to build and practice an independent politics which is directed toward creating a free and empowered community, a just and good society, and a good and sustainable world. This means a liberational politics, self-consciously crafted in the interest of our people and linked, of necessity, to the larger and common interests of humankind.

Next, we committed ourselves to build a Black economic initiative “to enhance economic development, cultivate economic discipline and cooperative practices and achieve economic self-determination.” Moreover, we committed ourselves to reaffirm and strengthen the Black family through quality male/female relations based on principles of equality, complementarity, mutual respect and shared responsibility in love, life and struggle.

Furthermore, we committed ourselves to continue the struggle for reparations in the fullest sense, that is to say a comprehensive initiative involving: public dialogue, public

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admission, public apology, public recognition of the Holocaust of African enslavement, appropriate compensation by the government, and corrective measures and structures to prevent its reoccurrence. Important also is the continuation of the “struggle against police abuse, government suppression, violations of civil and human rights and the industrialization of prisons; and in support of the freedom of all political prisoners, prisoners' rights . . .”

The *Mission Statement* also urges us to continue to struggle in the critical task of “organizing the community as a solid wall in the struggle against drugs, crime and violence in the community which we see as interrelated and which must be joined with the struggle to reduce and end poverty, increase employment, strengthen fatherhood, motherhood and family, support parents, provide education and prevention programs and expose and reject those who deal in death for the community.” Moreover, we must intensify the struggle against homelessness and inadequate health care and the scourge of HIV/AIDS, seeking health and wholeness for our people.

We must also continue to support African-centered independent schools and intensify and broaden the struggle for quality public education, as well as continue and reinforce our efforts to reduce and eliminate negative media approaches to and portrayals of Black life and culture. As a people in struggle, we must also be about “strengthening and supporting organizations and institutions of the Black community concerned with the uplifting and liberation of our people.” In addition, we must stand in solidarity with other African peoples and other Third World peoples in their struggles

for liberation and ever higher levels of human life, and build appropriate alliances with other people of color and progressive people on the bases of mutual respect, common good and mutual benefit.

Finally, we committed ourselves to reaffirm the indispensability of the spiritual and ethical grounding of our people in accomplishing the historical tasks confronting us. And thus, we embraced and promised to practice a common set of principles that reaffirm and strengthen family, community and culture, the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles): *Umoja* (Unity); *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination); *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility); *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics); *Nia* (Purpose); *Kuumba* (Creativity) and *Imani* (Faith).

So, as we go forth to rebuild our Movement and intensify our struggle for good in the world, let us remember the closing paragraph of the *Mission Statement* which calls on us to stand up and stand together as Black men and women in love, life and struggle for the good. For in doing this, it rightfully reminds us: “we honor our ancestors, enrich our lives and give promise to our descendants. Moreover, through this historic work and struggle we strive to always know and introduce ourselves to history and humanity as a people who are spiritually and ethically grounded; who speak truth, do justice, respect our ancestors and elders, cherish, support and challenge our children, care for the vulnerable, relate rightfully to the environment, struggle for what is right and resist what is wrong, honor our past, willingly engage our present and self-consciously plan for and welcome our future.”

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.MaulanaKarenga.org.