PART 1. When we remember and recount the sacred narrative of Nat Turner, we must remember also the Kawaida fundamental teaching that our oppressor cannot be our teacher, especially about our heroes and heroines, about what is good or evil or about what counts as real, relevant or righteous. We must remember too Min. Malcolm X’s teaching that the oppressor thru his immoral and amoral mind and his fantasy, fiction and falsehood generating media can and routinely does “turn the victim into the criminal and the criminal into the victim”. And we must remember also the Hon. Marcus Garvey’s teaching that “Our history is too important to leave in alien hands”, especially the hands and history books of our oppressor. And finally, we must remember Harriet Tubman with freedom on her mind and weapon in her hand, courageously breaking her chains and calling on her enslaved people to rise up in rebellion and “go free or die”.

Only in this context of a history of righteous and relentless struggle by our people, awareness of the outright erasure, falsification and devious denial of our history by our oppressor and the fictitious inflation and shameless fabrication of his own can we know and recount the sacred narrative of Nat Turner, Fire Prophet and freedom fighter. And only then can we understand, appreciate and recount the sacred narrative of our people as a whole in their awesome world-shaping and self-making march and struggle thru human history.

Nat Turner judges enslavement as a radical evil in the world. Even before the words and concepts of genocide and the Holocaust of enslavement are developed, he reasons that enslavement is a morally monstrous system of human death, destruction, deformation and diminishment. And he is determined to sacrifice his life to eradicate and end it. His use of the category and image of the serpent, which in biblical language and imagery represents the devil, reaffirms his conception of enslavement as a radical evil in the world. Enslavement is the will and work of the devil and evil, and he believes God wants and wills freedom in the world, freedom from enslavement and oppression.

Like Harriet Tubman later, he will not let his oppressor be his teacher or tutor, his priest or his preacher. He will dare to understand and commune with God in his own way. He will see his own visions, hear the divine voice with his own ears and heart, and he will pray his own prayers of liberation and practice acts of audacious self-determination. Indeed, Tubman informs us that she would not let the enslaver teach her about God or teach her how to pray. Instead, she said “I prayed to God to make me strong and able to fight and that’s what I have prayed for ever since”. Thus, Nat Turner tells us the Divine speaks to him calling him to a “great work”. The recorder does not let him speak the word, but it’s the great work of freedom or liberty as it was often called in those times. Like the Old Testament prophets and the biblical scriptures, he fashions the voices and visions into a freedom call and commitment, and he talks of fire and brimstone, freedom for the captive and oppressed, and the redemptive shedding of blood. To call freedom, liberty or liberation a great and divinely inspired and assigned work invests it with a spiritual and moral authority and urgency that makes him and his fellow freedom fighters fearless and willing to sacrifice their lives to this sacred cause.

Nat Turner sketches in outline some conceptual building blocks for a liberation theology, as it would develop throughout early history and emerge in full form in the 60’s. By theology I mean, as the dean of Black
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