



**STEPPING INTO ANOTHER SPECIAL SPACE:
CONTINUING THE STRUGGLE
FOR AN INCLUSIVE GOOD**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

ON MONDAY OF THIS WEEK, THE DEPARTMENT of Africana Studies and the College of Liberal Arts at CSULB co-sponsored a retirement celebration for me, for I will step into another special space to continue my intellectual and practical work at the end of this semester and year. Colleagues, friends, co-workers and co-combatants came from around the state and country to share praise and memories and the good and reward of our *ujima* in the world. Here below are some of my shared thoughts delivered on this occasion.

Certainly it has been for me a most important and enjoyable experience for me intellectually, relationally and professionally to teach, research, chair our department, collaborate and cooperate with faculty, staff, students, and administrators for a shared and inclusive good in this special space we name and know as California State Long Beach (Puvungna). For me, given the work I do in my community, society and the world as activist scholar, the invitation and opportunity to come here and be a part of this educational project was not only from colleagues. In a larger sense, it was an invitation of history, for the wider arc of my intellectual, ethical and social concern is not only what I do here, but rather my contribution to my people's overarching struggle for African and human good and the well-being of the world and all in it. And it is here for forty years that I have continued, expanded and accomplished so

much of my intellectual and practical work which has been directed towards this awesome and overarching goal and interest.

It has been a journey of joy in teaching and learning, imagining and building, insisting, cooperating and contesting for an ever greater, more expansive and inclusive good. And like all who have shared the goodness and reward of working together for a shared and inclusive good on campus and in community, society and the world, I owe much and am grateful to all who made me and this work and struggle possible and fruitful. I am, as an African, a Black man, grateful to my ancestors who provided this most ancient, rich, varied and ongoing cultural resource from which I draw my sensibilities, thought and practice and which clearly informs and grounds the way I live my life, do my work and wage the struggle for this shared and inclusive good in the world.

Also, I thank my mother and father who brought me into being, nurtured me and taught me the upward and forward ways of our honored ancestors. And likewise, I am grateful to all of my family and community who, as my parents did, offered me models to emulate and mirrors by which I measure myself. Clearly, I am grateful especially to my wife, Tiamoyo, my House, co-combatant and companion in all things good, beautiful and sacred; and to my organization the African American Cultural Center (Us), which provides me with a vital context for collegial

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exchange and support and intellectual and creative challenge.

And I thank my colleagues here for the opportunity and honor to work with them, especially my colleagues in Black Studies on campus and around the country and world, too numerous to name, but with a special thanks to my brother, friend and colleague Professor Emeritus Amen Rahh who brought me here and taught me campus policy and practice and was an unwavering advocate and ally in all our work and struggle for this inclusive and shared good we all cherish. And a special thanks to my colleagues in Ethnic Studies, also too numerous to name, who are so important in continuing the struggle for a quality education which by definition must be a multicultural education with Ethnic Studies, as a whole, playing an indispensable role. It is through our working together that we have from the beginning transformed Californian and American education, culminating in achieving AB 1460 authored by Dr. Shirley Weber. Moreover, I thank my students for the opportunity and reward of teaching them and sharing with them alternative ways to understand and assert themselves in the world in dignity-affirming, life-enhancing and world-preserving ways. And always emphasizing a fundamental principle of my philosophy Kawaida that each person, people and culture is a unique and equally valid and valuable way of being human in the world, worthy of the highest respect.

It is important for me, then, that you do not imagine or mistake this reception

and celebration as a marking of the end of a career. For my work is not a professional career, but a life vocation, part of a collective vocation embodied in our earliest Black Freedom Movement and deeply embedded in my ongoing self-understanding and self-assertion in the world. It is a life vocation outlined in our earliest sacred texts that teach us saying, "let's do things with joy, for surely humans haven't been divinely chosen to bring good in the world". And building on this, I understand that we are chosen by both heaven and history to bring good in the world and this is the fundamental meaning and mission of human life.

Therefore, I will in no way cease the work of my life, but will simply step into another special space which, already exists, and I will simply do more of my work there than here, continuing to teach, write, do community work, mentor, counsel and struggle as always. Already, I am finishing a monumental work of 700+ pages on *The Liberation Ethics of Haji Malcolm X*. And my next writing projects include a work, *Djaer: Deep Thinking in Africana Studies*: a fifth edition of *Introduction to Black Studies*; and a collaborative book with my extraordinary partner in love and struggle, Tiamoyo Tosheleza, translating and providing interpretive essays on selected texts of ancient Egyptian women. And of course, I will continue to teach and do work in our organizations, the African American Cultural Center (Us), the Kawaida Institute of Pan-African Studies and the National Associ-

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ation of Kawaida Organizations. at national and international venues.

FINALLY, OF COURSE, I WILL NOT RADICALLY break from my work here at CSULB. I will still consult and collaborate where invited, continue to write recommendations and references for students and continue to participate in counselling and mentoring programs wherever needed, asked and possible. So, let us close, not by saying “Good-bye” in English, but “*Tutaonana*” in Swahili which means, “we will indeed see each other

again” and hopefully many more times. I close, as I often do, by reminding us that this is our shared duty: to know our past and honor it, to engage our present and improve it, and to imagine a whole new future and forge it in the most ethical, effective and expansive ways. And this too, let us continue the struggle, keep the faith, and hold the line on all that is good, liberating and uplifting and leads to a shared and inclusive good for all the world and all in it. *Hotep. Ase. Heri.* ▲

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