



**SUPERFICIAL ANGER AT RACISM:  
CONDEMNING LANGUAGE, OVERLOOKING OPPRESSION**

*Los Angeles Sentinel, 05-01-14, p. A-6*

**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

There is a wealth of lessons to be learned from this latest eruption and exposure of racist rage and rantin' by Don (Tokowitz) Sterling, declaring his deeply felt hatred and hostility toward Black people, his beleaguered Black players and his falsely claimed Black friends. The first and most obvious lesson is that racism is still vulgarly and viciously alive and arrogantly insistent on declaring and imposing its diseased and deforming views on the ways we think, relate and live our lives. Indeed, in spite of talk about the integrity of the game, the reward of effort and excellence, and respect based on merit and mutuality, racism restricts, if not erases, the possibilities promised by these spoken niceties and similar claims. For what history and harsh winters of White racism have taught both exceptional and ordinary athletes is that they want our bodies without our minds, our skilled performance without our troubling presence and our assistance in making them rich without recognition of it or the rightful claims we make for due respect and just reward.

Also, this latest incident of racism recorded and unveiled offers America another opportunity to hear and see itself without air brushes and artificial enemies to blame and indict. And it demonstrates again the wilfully illusionary assumptions of a post-racial society, ironically symbolized by a besieged and embattled Black President racially resented and attacked since the first day he declared his candidacy. I say ironically because it is he, our beloved President, who from the beginning has peddled the fantasy food of a post-racial society to a people hungry for signs of White humanity and acceptance and ready to forgive the gross and grievous injuries inflicted on them, and even forget their identity, if Whites would only recognize and respect Black humanity and show them and other people of

color even a small, but significant part of their own.

We also see again emerging from this swamp of human stench and stain, evidence that racism is not simply a disease and affliction of the poor and uninformed, booze drinking, bible thumping and so-called "trailer trash" Whites, but also is deeply rooted among the rich and famous, whose wealth, power and status enable them to build and maintain plantations of oppression, exploitation and degradation that poor racists can only imagine, pretend and pray for in perverse and pathetic ways. It is these, the rich and powerful racists, who with law, gun and blatant lies about God, enslaved and segregated us, allowed and often provoked our lynchings, and designed and imposed on us a diabolical social death and disability that insured our lives would be a living hell.

Thus, it is not a lesson well-learned, if we think the problem is some sexually and racially insecure racist, paying millions to live illusions of sexual prowess, similar to that he imagines is possessed by the Black men he reportedly brings his commoditized female companions to admire naked in the showers. Nor is it just about who associates with whom or hating and envying the men who create so much of his wealth; confessing hatred for Blacks to a Black Latina; and claiming from a paternalistic position in his racialized and disoriented mind that he shows his care for his infantile-imagined players by giving them "food, clothes, houses and cars".

So, even though the NBA has determined it is bad business to keep him and good business to impose on him a lifetime ban from the NBA and a \$2.5 million dollar fine, this does not solve the larger question of racism in the NBA and society. Nor are we saved by self-congratulatory statements about how the system works, the process proved itself, and

**SUPERFICIAL ANGER AT RACISM:  
CONDEMNING LANGUAGE, OVERLOOKING OPPRESSION**

*Los Angeles Sentinel, 05-01-14, p. A6*

**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

justice was done. For racism is not simply hatred and hostility of a man, but turning that hatred and hostility into public policy and socially sanctioned practice. And this occurs not only in language but in life, not only in the way the NBA and the owners function, but also how society understands and conducts itself in systemic and ongoing impositional, ideological and institutional ways.

It is thus, also, a lesson about moving beyond superficial anger to active anger against injustice, exploitation, degradation and oppression; beyond the easy condemnation of racist language and overlooking oppression to righteous resistance against all constraints on human freedom and flourishing. And it requires that we, Black people, African Americans, stop self-erasing and being afraid to even mention our name, and dare define, defend and promote our interests. Indeed, there is no justification for the NAACP and the Urban League to issue statements of condemnation without mentioning that this racist rage and rantin' was directed against Black people and that the Black community should be given an apology. In fact, the NAACP's statement said, Sterling should apologize to Californians. And of course, there's no way they would fail to mention the people injured if it were Jews, Gentiles or even other peoples of color. Only we, Black people, are urged not to identify ourselves or to define and demand our rights or insist on respect as a people and community with the right and responsibility to exist, be self-determining and flourish.

But if and when we are able to stand up and identify ourselves, we will remember our history and commitment to righteous struggle against all forms of oppression, exploitation and degradation as Malcolm teaches. And we won't find ourselves wedded to funds and favors from slumlords; violators of human and civil rights; exploiters of workers, especially people of color, women and immigrants; abusers of the environment; peddlers of racist stereotypes of others, and of self-congratulatory images of themselves. Thus, we must not find ourselves satisfied with demanding only better language in sports, but struggling for just treatment in sports as well as in the larger society. And we must not indulge in episodic engagement with issues of racial and social justice, but must honor with righteous and relentless struggle the ancient African ethical obligation "to bear witness to truth and to set the scales of justice in their proper place among those who have no voice". Likewise, we must accept Paul Robeson's assertion that "the battlefield is everywhere; there is no sheltered rear". It is in the areas of employment, ownership, education, health care, housing, the courtroom, prison and jail, in the armed forces and universities, corporate structures, sports, and in every other area of life and concern for the well-being of the world. And with Amilcar Cabral, as always, in our ongoing struggles and strivings, we must "mask no difficulties, tell no lies and claim no easy victories".

---

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.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org](http://www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org); [www.MaulanaKarenga.org](http://www.MaulanaKarenga.org).