



**TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR STRUGGLE:
REMEMBRANCE AND REFLECTIONS ON LIBERATION**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 07-23-15, p.A6

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

S econd in a series for the 50th Anniversary Nguzo Saba 2015 Conference (September 24-27), celebrating the founding of our organization *Us* and the introduction of the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles) and *Kawaida* philosophy. The following are excerpts from a 1973 article titled "A Strategy for Struggle: Turning Weakness into Strength" which I published in the *Black Scholar* during my political imprisonment on trumped up charges and subsequently published in my book titled *Essays on Struggle: Position and Analysis* in 1978 by *Kawaida Publications*. A new 50th anniversary edition will be published by the University of Sankore Press and be available at the conference.

Whatever else we intend or decide to alter or overthrow, we will not succeed until we first alter and overthrow our own unawareness of ourselves and acquire a profound knowledge and understanding of the nature of our oppression. Until we achieve a comprehensive consciousness of ourselves, we cannot identify or engage decisively in our historical tasks or achieve the level and extent of unity we need to win in this historic and heroic struggle in which we have sacrificed so much.

In the Sixties we began to define and accept ourselves and to negate the historical monopoly the oppressor had on our minds. And we actually changed reality by this defiantly proud acceptance of ourselves. But that was only a beginning; we must now move from the mere announcement of our existence to building and protecting the basis for it. And that basis must be a political one, one of power; power to defend and develop, to create and expand. In a word, we must come into political existence by becoming a power recognized and respected beyond the confines of the community, a power conscious of its historical tasks and committed to the *revolutionary ethic* and *aspiration* of the comprehensive and continuing transformation of society and ourselves.

What we must do then, is overturn ourselves, reassess and remould ourselves and our relations with each other as a priority and precondition to our moves to alter and restructure our relations in society and the world. Moreover, we must end the systematic suppression of our history by the oppressor and extract from it its *subversive content*, i.e., its heroic and instructive images, events and issues that provide viable and valuable alternatives to the oppressive realities to which our people, unaware of these historical possibilities so often bow.

We as a people have never accepted our enslavement and oppression and have always searched for historical alternatives to this narrow and repressive reality assembled by our oppressor. But sometimes, we choose incorrectly from the historical alternatives open to us, because of the continuing confusion created by the contradictions inherent in the crippling context of our development. In spite of these contradictions and our different approaches to them as a people, freedom has always been our major goal. But freedom or liberation as a historical objective has opened itself to different interpretations and these interpretations reflect the historical alternatives open to us to achieve it.

As a strategic model, liberation is essentially a call and push for Black Power which *Kawaida* defines as the collective struggle to achieve three basic goals: *self-determination*, *self-respect* and *self-defense*. Historically, liberation as a model and movement draws its images and assertions from the full and informative past of our people, recognizing both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King as fundamental to the direction and development of our struggle for human freedom. And this model and movement teach us that we must invest ourselves in larger areas of social purpose including all progressive peoples in revolutionary opposition to the established order. We must link issues and struggles and see that the issue of welfare is connected to imperialist wars and with the

**TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR STRUGGLE:
REMEMBRANCE AND REFLECTIONS ON LIBERATION**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 07-23-15, p.A6

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

struggle at Wounded Knee, and that peace and freedom, Coachella Valley and Vietnam, “Spanish” Harlem and Johannesburg and all the struggles for liberation, independence and revolution in Africa, Asia and Latin America are all interconnected and interrelated, all historical and heroic opposition to the same source of oppression and exploitation.

We struggle here against racial oppression and class exploitation—against racism and capitalism, at home and in its imperialist extension. And because of this dual character of our oppression, our approach must be dual—one of national liberation and social revolution. And in order for us to meet the objective requirements of our struggle, it seems there are certain areas in which we must consciously and constantly apply ourselves. What immediately comes to mind is a list including a revolutionary ideology and system of values, an expanding circle of conscious and committed intellectuals, a National Black party, a genuine nationalist youth movement, an alternative press and media, basic alternative institutions, and the end of character assassination as a substitute for political criticism and ideological struggle.

Especially, must we stop denying our women their full and heroic role in the history and development of our struggle. Black women have always been equal to Black men in oppression and resistance, in production as well as progressive thought and struggle and we are greatly unjust to ourselves to claim otherwise. There can be no real argument against the human equality of man and woman, against the need for liberation and revolution to reach and raise to a higher level of life each and all of us, man, woman and child. To argue otherwise is to undermine and remove the human content and strength from our struggle and deny ourselves as Black men an

abundant and indispensable source of love, inspiration and power.

The struggle ahead is a long one and cannot be posed in terms of months and years. The Vietnamese have been fighting for their freedom for hundreds of years and *so have our own people*. How then can we of this generation talk in terms of five, ten, or fifty years or grow weak and wander from the struggle, abandoning our original aspiration? It is important that we who struggle seriously recognize the long time it takes real revolution to mature and come to fruit. And we must stop looking for the illusive “great leap” and work toward bringing it into being. We struggle here in the U.S. for liberation, a liberation that in its full social and philosophical sense offers and organizes an expanding realm of freedom, freedom from want, toil and domination, freedom to love, grow and create.

We struggle for a new vision and value system summed up in the *Nguzo Saba*, our Seven Principles: *Umoja* (Unity—in love and struggle); *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination), *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility), *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics and its democratic socialist extension), *Nia* (Purpose—the collective vocation of liberation and revolution), *Kuumba* (Creativity) and *Imani* (Faith in ourselves and in the human capacity to overcome and achieve).

Based firmly in the community, we must expand beyond it, beyond local heroes and provincial prophets and link ourselves with issues and struggles of larger social purpose involving all progressive people. Our hope remains in the masses—not manipulated, but in politically conscious and committed movement. They must be mobilized, organized and nationalized and kept in motion, for it is people in motion and blocked in that motion that revolt and ultimately make revolution.

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; www.MaulanaKarenga.org.