



**UKUBUYISA FOR SEBA LIMBIKO TEMBO:  
RIGHTEOUS REMEMBRANCE AND RETURNING**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

This June is the anniversary month for marking the end of the traditional period of family mourning and commemorating the passing in peace and rising in radiance, of our beloved sister, seba and sacred friend, Limbiko Tembo: *Seshat* in her love of learning and sharing knowledge; *Maat* in her living a righteous, good and well-ordered life; and *Hathor* in her embodying a beauty grounded in gentle goodness, loving kindness and concealed strength. And this too is the time we celebrate Seba Limbiko's life and legacy, the rare and irreplaceable good she brought in our lives and left us as a model and measure of excellence and possibility, and the lessons in loving each other and our people, lifting others as we climb, and striving each day to bring, increase and sustain good in the world.

Following the customs of our ancestors of ancient Zululand, we gathered on the anniversary of her transition to conduct and participate in the sacred ceremony of *Ukubuyisa*, a "bringing back home" of the beautiful spirit of our beloved ancestor sister, seba and sacred friend, Limbiko Tembo. It is a sacred ceremony of remembrance and returning, of rejoicing and reaffirming, of raising up a special and beautiful soul who in this life, lifted up the light that lasts and passed it on to us, charging us to never let it burn low or be extinguished.

We performed libation, pouring sacred water and reading and reciting sacred words in honor and appreciation of the divine blessing Limbiko was and remains for us. We prepared a feast of her favorite foods and set a plate for her, sharing the meal and meaning with her. We told narratives of our

life-enriching exchanges with her, made and played music she enjoyed, burned incense, ate fruit and placed flowers, as our ancestors, as signs and acts of sharing sweetness, good and beauty. And we praised her and the way she worked and walked as an African and Kawaida woman in the world.

This sacred ceremony of remembrance and returning an ancestor is rich in meaning for both Seba Limbiko and us. It is clearly to come together in love and memory, to welcome her back so that we may pay rightful homage to her as an honored ancestor and reaffirm her rightful place in the loving and listening circle of her family, friends and community as a sacred guardian and guide who cares for us and constantly calls on us to be our best and flourish in all things good and beautiful.

In this sacred ceremony we also reinforce the African communal conception of life which teaches us we are linked forever in this life and the next with those passed, living and yet to come. *Ukubuyisa*, this calling and coming back home, is also a metaphor and reminder of our return to ourselves, to our history, our culture and our unique and equally valid and valuable way of being human in the world, a principle and practice Limbiko embraced, loved and lived. Finally, this sacred ceremony is a practice of the morality of remembrance, raising up and praising the bridges that carried us over and upward and recommitting ourselves to do likewise for others.

To give proper homage to Seba Limbiko Tembo is to speak of her life's work, the choices she made, the challenges she overcame, her loving and listening heart, and the hope for goodness and for the best

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of all she embraced, even to the end of her life in this world. Seba Limbiko was above all a teacher, not only a public school teacher, but also an independent school teacher and principal of the Limbiko Tembo Kawaida School of African American Culture, recently renamed in honor and loving memory of her. But she was also a seba, a moral teacher in the Kawaida tradition, drawing on Kawaida social ethical teachings and the classical African sacred teachings of the *Husia* of ancient Egypt and the *Odu Ifa* of ancient Yorubaland.

In Kawaida philosophy, there are five basic commitments a seba makes in order to fulfill her/his obligation. They are: to be a good person in the world; to be a consistent servant of the people; to be a constant soldier in the struggle; to be a continuous student of the teachings; and to be a tireless teacher of the Good, the Right and the Possible. Clearly, Seba Limbiko was a *good person* who practiced Kawaida and the Nguzo Saba, spoke truth, did justice, honored the elders and ancestors, cared for the vulnerable, related rightly to the environment, and following the upward ways of our ancestors, opposed evil and did good everywhere she walked and worked.

A *consistent servant of the people*, she rooted herself in the social justice tradition of her people and Kawaida, making social service and social action indispensable dimensions and demands of her self-understanding and self-assertion in the world. She was also a *constant soldier*, for her life called forth from her a striving and courage of a rare and deep-rooted kind to

deal with the unfolding demands of her life. This was evidenced in her work in the Movement and called forth in the struggles she waged to become truly a woman in her own right within the context of her own culture, building her family, mastering her profession, mapping out her life in her own terms and living it fully. This done, she was able to say with strength and dignity at the impending end of this life, due to a most debilitating and deadly disease, "I might not live as long as I would have liked, but I've lived and enjoyed a good life and for this I am grateful."

Seba Limbiko Tembo was too a *continuous student* in her field and of the ancient sacred teachings as a foundation for both the grounding and expanding of life and learning. The *Husia* and *Odu Ifa* gave her clarity, courage and confidence in the Good, the Right and the Possible. And she lived her life as a *tireless teacher* of these ethical principles and as the bases for a good and expansive life in this world and an opening door for entrance and honor in eternity.

This is the meaning and promise of the Husitic verse that says of the good and righteous like Seba Limbiko Tembo: "A glorious spirit in heaven, a continuing powerful presence on earth. These are the rewards of the righteous ones and righteous are those who receive them. They shall be counted among the ancestors. Their name shall endure as a monument and what they've done on earth shall never perish or pass away."

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