



**HAITI AT THE CENTER OF OUR MORAL CONCERN:
ENDING THE SUFFERING, ACHIEVING GENUINE SELF-DETERMINATION**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

IN THE MIDST OF OUR RIGHTFUL CONCERN and support for the many oppressed and struggling peoples of the world, the people of Haiti must also remain at the center of our moral consideration in ongoing active and effective ways. This is said in full recognition and respect of the numerous sites of severe oppression and even genocidal campaigns against the different and vulnerable peoples of the world. We, of necessity, begin with concern for ourselves and our resistance to the systemic racist oppression we, as African Americans, suffer in this country, but also move to support the struggles for liberation and good lives for African peoples in places of war and oppression, whether in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia or anywhere else in the world. And Haiti remains at the center of these struggles requiring our moral concern and active commitment. We certainly also include in these sites of urgent concern the Palestinians under occupation and genocidal attack by Israel, the Rohingya of Myanmar, the Uighurs of China, and the people of Yemen. Indeed, as we continually state, we take seriously the ancient African moral imperative to bear witness to truth and set the scales of justice in their proper place, especially among the voiceless and devalued, the downtrodden, vulnerable and oppressed.

There is thus a need, as Nana Haji Malcolm taught, for a critical linkage of struggles against oppression and for liberation in the world, at home and abroad. For the systems of oppression in the world are linked and interrelated, politically, economically and culturally. This calls for and requires a world encompassing commitment to bring and sustain a shared good in the world, a position and practice central to an African

moral understanding of our responsibility found in the ethical teachings of our earliest sacred texts. It finds a clear modern expression in Nana Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune's audacious assertion that "Our task is to remake the world. It is nothing less than this". And this, of course, of necessity, as we say in Kawaida, is in the interest of African and human good and the well-being of the world and all in it.

Moreover, we know first hand from the library of lessons from our history and daily lives that ultimately there is no secure freedom alone and in isolation, as Nana Harriet Tubman taught in principle and practice. And likewise, there is no injustice anywhere that does not pose an indirect and direct threat to justice everywhere, as Nana Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reassured us. Thus, we say in Us that in the context of oppression in this country and the world, "Everywhere a battle-line, every day a call to struggle."

Here it is important to emphasize that this world-encompassing concern and commitment to struggle is put in practice through our building internal strength and waging and winning our own struggles and that this makes us more effective in linking with others and aiding them in theirs. Indeed, it is equally important to note that it was in freedom and strength that Haiti was able to actually aid the liberation struggles in Latin America, to inspire rebellion in our and other African communities, and to offer sanctuary and a new option in freedom for us and others in the world.

In this month on the 220th anniversary of the world transforming Haitian Revolution, Haiti is now in crisis and at a crossroads in its interrupted and unfinished fight for freedom and needs and deserves the active support of African Americans and other

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Africans everywhere as well as all freedom-loving and progressive persons and peoples of the world. It is now in the crushing grip of overwhelming internal and external disruptive, destructive and oppressive forces imposing pervasive violence of every kind; predatory and commoditized kidnapping; entrenched elite corruption; deep poverty; cumulative centuries of sustained suffering of the masses of the people; and gross and widespread insecurity. And even though we cannot deny that internal factors contribute to this state of things, it is the centuries of external forces of oppression, the denial of self-determination, the manipulation of the elites and other predators, puppets and parasites by the U.S., France, Canada and other members of that racist and capitalist cabal called the Core Group that are the central virulent source of the conditions and problems of Haiti.

But one of the defining features of the history and humanity of the Haitian people and other African peoples is our radical refusal to be defeated, even in the face and force of overwhelming odds. Thus, in the midst of this winter of extreme distress and oppression, there evolved a Commission to Find a Haitian Solution to the Crisis to continue the struggle, keep the faith and unite the people around a document they titled the Montana Accord. The Montana Accord takes its name from the name of the hotel in Port-au-Prince in which the discussions and negotiations were mainly conducted to develop plans to reclaim their self-determination and sovereignty, solve their own problems and assist, enable and join the people in radically transformative struggle. Approximately one thousand community groups, faith-based organizations, professional associations, labor unions, business groups, foundations,

political organizations and leaders have signed this consensus document.

An achievement in itself as a practice and product of unity, the document is to serve as a framework for moving forward toward reappropriating their self-determination and sovereignty. It calls for listening and learning from the people and re-building public safety and security, trust, transparency and governmental institutions. Its leaders propose a two-year transitional government of a collegial presidency and prime minister, priority attention to restoring public safety and social services, rebuilding infrastructure, holding a national conference to develop and offer a larger long-term vision and plan forward, constitutional reform involving the diaspora Haitians, and holding long awaited elections to build the basis for a new democracy.

But its leaders and representatives stress it is a framework for above all, including and involving the people of Haiti in their own repair, renewal and reconstruction. It is to be a process of first and foremost listening to the people, sharing and gaining knowledge from them, and ensuring their inclusion and effective participation at every level. This recalls the history of the Haitian Revolution, unthinkable and unachievable without the whole people, self-consciously rising up in righteous, courageous and committed resistance. It is clear we honor, tell and teach heroic lessons and legends of the Haitian Revolution, but the challenge now is to embrace the Haitian people, themselves, as they live, sacrifice, suffer and struggle now to free themselves and be themselves without penalty, punishment or oppression, as we ourselves struggle. It is in both cases a call and commitment to finish the unfinished fight for freedom, for a new hope and history for our people.

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THIS REQUIRES WORKING WITH HAITIAN and Haitian supporting organizations; offering and donating monies, materials and services; demonstrating; sponsoring Haitians; using independent corporate and social media to educate and advocate for Haiti; holding forums and creating dialog in our community and the country on Haiti; studying and keeping current with events and issues in Haiti; and struggling to shape U.S. policy toward Haiti and Haitians, building on the work done and being done by all of us and

others committed to the liberation, self-determination and sovereignty of Haiti. As the Commission's Declaration of Principles states, this requires that the Haitian people and we and all those committed to a new nation and world "Stand up, all together, against barbarism, for life, for the regeneration of the Nation and for a better life together" in this our time and place and everywhere.▲

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