



**ACHIEVING JUSTICE FOR GEORGE FLOYD:
RADICALLY REIMAGINING AND REBUILDING AMERICA**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

Part II. INDEED, IT IS A CLEAR AND constant given that if we are to achieve real justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks and *all the victims of this racist violent democracy* called America, to paraphrase Min. Malcolm, then we have two interrelated objectives that must be achieved. They are: radically reimagining and rebuilding America; and sustaining the struggle on every level which will make this possible. And key to all of this is holding the ground we've gained, building on what we have and fighting fiercely to move forward, day by day, year by year and battle by battle until victory is clearly won.

Let me note at the outset, that we of Us do not come to the table to talk about this great challenge as if it were about things we have only secondary and intellectual knowledge of. Rather, we speak from the valuable vantage point of over a half century of sustained struggle, deep in the belly of the beast. Thus, we bring the experience of decades and deep reflection on it as well as the critical study of liberation struggles before and during our time. Moreover, we speak here as those who have refused to be broken or bow to pressure to be less Black, less radical and resistant to White domination and oppression in its various savage and subtle forms.

We speak also as targeted victims and defiant survivors of state suppression, vicious character assassination, political imprisonment, exile and disrupted and difficult lives underground. And we speak here as all-seasons Simba soldiers, who have fought wherever we were with whatever means we had, and who remain unbreakable in our commitment to the struggle for liberation of our people and unbudging in our Blackness, regardless of the ongoing faddish invitations to fantasize and be otherwise.

To radically reimagine and rebuild America, or as we usually say, *to radically reconceive and reconstruct America*, we must think in deep, incisive and audacious ways. We must break through the catechism of impossibilities taught by the established order and imagine, not only a new

society, but also new people to embrace and build that society. For no new society is truly possible without a struggle that also changes the people. For as Frantz Fanon taught, "An authentic national liberation exists only to the precise degree to which each person has irreversibly begun their own liberation." Also, we must think structurally, not accept media and established order singular focus on designated disposable bad persons, but focus on society as a whole, with its pathology of oppression, i.e., its systemic racism, capitalism, sexism and other forms of domination, deprivation and degradation.

Moving beyond America's self-congratulatory myths of perfection, freedom and justice for all and manifest destiny as savior of the world, we must find new ways of relating, working and building. Imagine, then, a radically restructured society with a transformed economy which puts people first, not profit, prioritizes satisfying the needs of the poor and vulnerable, and is actively committed to health care, housing and food security for all; dignity affirming, well-paying work for everyone interested and able and equitable income for those who cannot work; free education through college; clean air, water and waterways and unpolluted soil and renewable and clean energy use in the interests of the people and the planet. And imagine a society without some to lord over and oppress others or hate them and make them hate themselves.

This means also moving beyond reform to radically transformative change, from reduction and end of police violence to the end of policing and public safety as we now know it. It means imagining the abolition of prisons as we now conceive them and moving resources to life-preserving and life-enhancing initiatives for the masses of the people. This projects a possibility where everyone is self-consciously involved in practicing *Ujima*, collective work and responsibility, and where they practice *Ujamaa*, cooperative economics - shared work and shared wealth for everyone to live a good life, flourish and come into the fullness of themselves.

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We must also, as Min. Malcolm taught, seek and build linkages – coalitions and alliances on the national and international level, finding common cause with all the oppressed and struggling peoples of the world. For as Mary McLeod Bethune taught, “Our task is to remake the world.” We must continue to join in solidarity with other radical and progressive groups so that *our struggle for racial justice informs and undergirds the collective struggles for economic justice, legal justice, social justice and environmental justice*. It also means, for example, finding common cause in struggle with Native Americans against violations of their lands, identity and sovereignty, with Latino/as against racist immigration policies which involve us as Africans and Afro-Latinos also, and with Asians against racist verbal and physical attacks and demonization.

But, in all of these initiatives, it is imperative that we remain at the center and as the subject of our own history and struggle, remembering and reminding each other repeatedly that we are our own liberators, no matter how numerous or sincere our allies are. Moreover, we must learn and apply the lessons of our history, its best ideas and practices, and its models of human excellence and achievement. Also, we must practice *operational unity*, unity in diversity, both with our organizations and our movements. For just like we have many organizations, we have many movements. Thus, we must engage in full, free and frank discussion over common and shared goals and craft a comprehensive national and international agenda. And at the heart of this agenda must be the overarching and foundational commitment to advancing African liberational interests, human good and the well-being of the world.

One of the greatest challenges of any organization, movement or liberation struggle is to sustain itself in the midst of twists and turns,

setbacks, sabotage, serious threats and constantly offered seductions, waning and aging wills and uncertainties, and goals not achieved as first demanded or as quickly as once imagined. For the oppressors we fight will hold on to their wealth, power and privileged status to the very bitter end and will concede only when they see and have no alternative. And that crucial condition of having no alternative to real and radically transformative change can only be achieved through sustained and unsagging struggle. This is the lesson and ever-instructive meaning of Frederick Douglass’ teaching that “power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will.” Moreover, he tells us that “(people) may not get all they pay for in the world, but they must certainly pay for all they get.” And we do this “by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice,” deep commitment, and righteous and relentless struggle.

THEREFORE, LET US AGAIN AND ALWAYS, SET aside all illusions and deepen our commitment to continue and intensify this long, difficult, dangerous and demanding struggle. Nana Harriet Tubman tells us freedom ain’t free and victory does not come without cost. She tells us we must “Go free or die. And freedom is not bought with dust.” Min. Malcolm tells us that “Wherever Black people are is a battleline.” Likewise, Fannie Lou Hamer tells us if you want victory, “You’ve got to fight every step of the way. You’ve got to fight.” And we are advised and warned by all our ancestors that the road to real freedom and justice is a rough and rocky one, filled with potholes, sharp turns, steep climbs, deceptive detour signs and seductions of all kinds on all sides. But we owe it to ourselves, our ancestors and future generations to continue the struggle, keep the faith and hold the line until real victory is won. ▲

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