



**BABA NANA JOHN WATUSI BRANCH:
A MODEL AND MESSAGE FOR US**
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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

The passing of Baba Nana John Watusi Branch (December 28, 2013/6253) is unquestionably a great loss to all of us—to each of us as a person and all of us as a people. For he brought a great good in the world, not only by the good work he did, but also by the way he lived his life as an excellent model and message of and about being African in the world. Indeed, his was a life of love and loving-kindness, service, work, institution-building, unassuming leadership, and committed struggle rooted in *Kawaida* philosophy and the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles) which he embraced and used to anchor and assert himself in the world.

Surely, we of the House of Karenga, the Organization Us, the African American Cultural Center (Us), and the National Association of Kawaida Organizations, join all others throughout the world African community who feel and share the profound personal loss to his family relatives and loved ones and the great collective loss to our people. And we say, may the joy our Brother Watusi brought and the good he left last forever. And may all his loved ones be blessed with consolation, courage and peace. For surely he has risen in radiance in the heavens and now sits in the sacred circle of the ancestors among the doers of good, the righteous and the rightfully rewarded. Hotep. Ase. Heri.

It is written in the sacred text of our ancestors, the *Husia*, that “to do that which is of value is forever. A person called forth by his work does not die, for his name is raised and remembered because of it”. And so it is and will be with this our brother and friend, son, husband and father, companion in struggle and soldier who would not sit down until the struggle is won, Baba and Nana John Watusi Branch.

So we came together and will continue to gather, as we perform *tambiko* (libation) in remembrance and respect, to raise our hands and bow our heads in rightful homage to this African man; a man among men and a man among women; this pan-Africanist whose life is a rock-strong record and noble representation of decades of dedication, sacrifice and righteous struggle; this tireless teacher of the African way in the world; this institution-builder, organizer and activist; this opener of the way for countless others; this cultural builder and social activist who struggled relentlessly in the name and interest of his people, African people, to bring a new history and world into being.

In his life and in his transition, Baba Watusi called and calls us together in operational unity and active solidarity to continue to do work and wage struggle for the good, constantly urging an end to petty grudges, character assassination, divisive animosities, and all other negative approaches to our relations with each other. And he also urged and urges us, even in transition, to respect and care for each other, to unite in the interests of our people and ourselves, and to dare struggle and build the good world we all want and deserve to live in and leave as a legacy for those who come after us.

From the beginning, Nana Watusi turned East in Movement to Africa, sought and supported Uhuru Sasa in cultural and political education and struggle, and opened artistic space, with like minds and hearts, for us to be creative, celebrate ourselves and speak our own special cultural truth in the International African Arts Festival and the African Poetry Theatre. And he built pan-African links and projects, including leadership, economic, political and cultural initiatives, constantly engaging critical issues and helping to

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construct institutions like the African Trade and Business Association (ATABA) and playing a key leadership role in the World African Diaspora Union (WADU) in the Garveyian quest to liberate, rebuild and redeem Africa as both a continent and world community.

In all the times I met and talked with Baba Watusi and have been with him in numerous meetings and various settings, especially when he emceed at NAKO events or introduced me at my Annual Founder's Kwanzaa lecture for New York NAKO, he has never been less than kind and considerate, and committed in principle and practice to the Nguzo Saba. Indeed, he has always acted as mediator and peacemaker, a seeker of the solution that would keep us together in a principled unity and struggle for the greater good. And I have from the beginning admired in him the Ifa virtue called *iwapele* (gentle character) and his uncompromising commitment to being African and doing good in the world. As we say in Kawaida, we are everywhere and always grateful to him. And in the tradition of our ancestors, we say here, as we do in our *Maziko* (transition ceremony) services, "we thank the trees that shaded him; we thank the heavens that hovered over him; we thank the rain that washed the world clean for him; we thank the roads that opened up for him; we thank the world that welcomed him; we thank the friends that met and embraced him; we thank the ancestors that guided him on earth and now have asked him to join them; and we thank the Creator who gave him to us

and who brought to us in him a good that will never go away". In a word, we say, "Asante, asante nyingi, na baada ya asante, mchanga wa pwani ni haba (Thanks, many times thanks and compared to the many times we say thanks, the grains of sand on the seashore are few)". Hotep, Ase. Heri.

It is written and affirmed in the sacred text of our ancestors, the *Odu Ifa*, that we "humans are divinely chosen to bring good in the world" and this is the fundamental meaning and mission in human life. And surely Baba Watusi did just that; he brought a great good in the world. Given this, we, as African people, are obligated to him, as to all our ancestors, to continuously reread and remember his history, study and reflect on the many lessons of his life, work and struggle and constantly measure ourselves in the mirror of the good and beautiful legacy of African personhood he left us and the world.

A lion of our liberation movement has lain down and a Horus hawk has soared into the heavens. And we shall miss and mourn him, but we also rejoice in his rising and in our having known him. For surely, as it is written in the *Husia*, for the doers of Maat, through the good he has done in the world, he shall be forever "a glorious spirit in heaven and a continuing powerful presence on earth; indeed, he shall be counted and honored among the ancestors; his name shall endure as a monument; and what he has done on earth shall never perish or pass away". Hotep. Ase. Heri.

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