



BEYOND SELECTIVE MORALITY AND MOURNING: RADICALLY CONFRONTING EVIL AND INJUSTICE EVERYWHERE

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

CLEARLY, WE AS A PEOPLE AND AN organization, praise, applaud and have certainly joined the worldwide demonstration of rightful and righteous anger and disgust displayed in meetings, media, marches and rallies against the Trump regime's latest act of gross and artic-cold cruelty: that is to say, the separation of children and parents at the U.S./Mexico border. And we are pleased with others to see Trump being *forced through the struggle of the people* to partially reverse this policy. After all, who, with even a modicum of human feeling and moral sensitivity, would not be moved by the scenes and sounds of children suffering and parents pleading for the keeping and the recovery of their children?

And likewise, who humanly and morally sensitive, would not be disgusted and righteously angered by the callous and calculated seizure of these children and using them as pawns in a racist affirmation of power over and against the vulnerable, a shameless pimping and pandering to the "base" (double meaning here), and the playing out of a sick and sordid presidential fantasy of saving the country from becoming, Trump says, "a migrant camp" or a "refugee holding facility".

Surely, we, as African people, are not without historical reference and the lived reality of the separation of our children and their parents. Indeed, we suffered a *more savage and inhuman separation* of children and parents during the Holocaust of enslavement with children and parents being legally captured, caged, raped, tortured, quartered, killed and torn apart on the auction block, on ships and elsewhere to be used as objects of labor, sex and self-degrading entertainment by their tormentors, torturers and oppressors. Also, we have suffered government policies of something contradictorily called "welfare" in which families were/are forced by law to separate mothers and children from fathers in order to get assistance and in some cases in order to get or remain in public housing, if they are ex-prisoners. And our children are more often taken from families for less reasons than others

and put in foster homes, where they are too often abused and neglected.

Certainly, we also have the lived experience and lessons of systemic and systematic mass incarceration and the separation and corrosive effect it has historically had and continues to have on our families and the health and welfare of our children. And we likewise suffer, as a people and community, the trauma and terror of police violence, the continuous killing of our youth under the cover and camouflage of law with the social sanction of an unrepentantly racist society. So as both long-term victims of the system and still active veterans in the struggle against this system that shows reckless, depraved and racist disregard for us and other peoples of color, we are profoundly sensitive and in righteous and relentless resistance to the preying on children and the oppression of people in any form.

It is important here to state also that we are not forgetful or unmindful of the oppression and separation of Native American children and parents also during the genocidal campaign against them at the founding of this country. We remember and raise up, as a matter of *fellow human feeling, moral consistency and shared history of struggle*, this genocidal campaign that killed children as well as adults and sent surviving children to boarding schools to practice cultural genocide against them. This was done under the self-congratulatory and morally twisted slogan of "killing the Indian in order to save the man".

And so, we deeply and rightly feel empathy for the children and parents at the border and righteous anger and moral contempt for those who are traumatizing, terrorizing and abusing them. But at the same time and even if it is not openly and publicly asserted, there is a widespread sense among us that our children and we are being left out of this public display of concern and care for abused children and suffering parents. Try as we might, we are unable to shake the feeling that what we are witnessing is a *selective morality* and *selective mourning* that

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does not extend equally and equitably to us or even others.

This is evident in the way the issue of immigration is framed which leaves out, not only AfroLatinos/as, but also Haitians and other Caribbean Africans and continental Africans. They are not photographed or interviewed caged and crying or even mentioned. And it's the same in terms of issues of equity in education, employment, housing and healthcare, etc. Nor does the massive display of care and concern extend to Black youth, even young children, shot down and killed regularly, separated from their families forever. But it is important to emphasize that the point is not to stop care and concern for others, but rather to extend this, to recognize the particularity of each people's issues and interests as well as common ground and to craft an agenda not focused exclusively on one, but equitably on all.

Too much is at stake for those who should be allies in a righteous struggle for liberation and justice to find themselves struggling against each other instead of the oppressor, jockeying for advantage over each other or disregarding each other's rightful and urgent claims. Our peoples, this country and the world are looking for something different from us who call ourselves progressive, left and even liberal. It is a desire, hope and need for us to radically confront evil and injustice in the country and simultaneously be concerned and stand in solidarity with the oppressed and struggling peoples of the world. But we must begin here. And this means building coalitions and alliances based on at least four basic principles and practices. The first is *mutual respect*, i.e., recognition and treatment as equal regardless of numbers or some other criteria. Secondly, we must practice *mutual support*. We can't continue to support other causes if ours are not raised and supported in an equal and equitable

way. We need also to embrace the principle and practice of appreciation of *mutual interests*, constantly searching for common ground and shared interests, but not feeling or being compelled to support initiatives that are injurious or inadequately considerate of us. Finally, we need to hold to the principle and practice of *mutual benefit*, and ensure that agendas are conceived and pursued so that all things done yield a shared good. And these principles and practices of reciprocity must be embraced and adhered to by leaders, organizations and the peoples themselves.

Let's save the children everywhere, *at the border and in the rest of the country*, in war zones and occupied lands, and at every place and site of oppression, whether in Haiti, Palestine, Yemen or among the Rohingya in Burma or elsewhere. For children are suffering everywhere and in these places and others not mentioned or discussed on the nightly news or in the week reviews, are living lives of starvation, deprivation, trauma, terror and assaults of every kind.

| **A**nd this too: in the final analysis, we must realize to save the children, we must liberate the people—here, there and everywhere. Otherwise, even when separated children at the border are returned to the parents, the children and the parents remain imprisoned in the smaller sites of detention, and in the larger societal prison of oppression. As Sekou Toure taught, freedom and dignity are indivisible. As long as the people are oppressed, no person or persons, children or adults, can be free, free from arbitrary arrest, trauma, torture, caging and killing. Nor will they be free to live good, full and meaningful lives, dream, build and flourish, and be rightfully attentive to the well-being of the world and all in it. So, let's continue, intensify and expand the struggle, keep the faith, hold the line, and advance reciprocity, justice and good in the world.

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