



HOLOCAUST, HAITI, FERGUSON AND WATTS: HONORING OUR PEOPLE THROUGH STRUGGLE

Los Angeles Sentinel, 08-22-19, p.A6

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

THE MONTH OF AUGUST FOR OUR PEOPLE is a special month, full and overflowing with commemorations of our awesome march and movement through human history in our ongoing quest for freedom, justice, expanded human good and the sustained well-being of the world. This year and month mark the 400th year of our brutal insertion in this country, *enslaved and in resistance*. And so, we must mark it, not simply as the time of our beginning savage oppression, but also as the time of our resistance and forming ourselves into a community of struggle, righteous and relentless struggle *to be ourselves and free ourselves* and build the good society and world we all want and deserve to live in.

The human trafficking which brought us forcibly here and the massive violence and destruction imposed on us on every level and of every kind is rightfully called the *Holocaust of enslavement*. By Holocaust, we mean a morally monstrous act of genocide, not only against the targeted people, but also a crime against humanity. And whatever other factors are raised in the rightful case for reparations, it is this morally monstrous destruction of human life, human culture and human possibility of African people that is the primary injury and source of indictment.

It is here in the Holocaust of enslavement that we were deprived of our freedom, our memories and our lives systematically. We were lifted out of our history, torn from our cultures, cut off from our families and savagely subjected to social death. But in spite of this savagery and oppression by our oppressor, we held on to our humanity in the most inhuman context and resisted on every level possible, including revolt and armed struggle. And we built ourselves into a new people, a new African people, into a community of struggle. And in raising up and waging this righteous and relentless liberation struggle to be ourselves and free ourselves, we became a central moral and social vanguard in this country, referenced and honored

by other oppressed and struggling people in this country and around the world as a model to emulate.

This is also the 288th year and month of the beginning of the Haitian Revolution on August 14th and August 22nd, 1791, a singular awesome and decisively significant achievement in African and human history. They came August 17th to Bwa Kayima (Bois Caïman) to commit themselves to a life-and-death struggle for liberation of themselves and to open a way for African and human freedom to gain ground and flourish in the world. Outnumbered, outgunned, without allies and surrounded by enslavers and their armies, they did not hesitate to fight with what they had, to audaciously appropriate weapons from the bodies and armories of the enemies, and to go forth and defeat the enemies' best and most brutal.

They did not accept the racial and religious catechism of impossibilities of their enslavers, but gathered under the leadership of their own priests, especially Houngon (High Priest) Dutty Boukman and Mambo (High Priestess) Cecil Fatima. And they prayed a prayer of struggle and they turned that prayer into practice, the practice and promise of liberation, beginning the Revolution in righteous and relentless armed struggle, August 22nd. Let us pay homage to them, they who did what no other enslaved people had ever done and never did after, defeat their oppressor and build an independent nation. And they did this in the name and interest of dignity and freedom of the Haitian people, the oppressed of the world and humanity as a whole.

This August is also the month of the 132nd anniversary of the Hon. Marcus Garvey (August 17, 1887), a towering tree in the forest of great men and women in the world African community, pan-Africanist, beloved teacher and builder, pointing and pushing hard toward a new history and new world. He promised to return in the whirlwind and

**HOLOCAUST, HAITI, FERGUSON AND WATTS:
HONORING OUR PEOPLE THROUGH STRUGGLE**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 08-22-19, p.A6

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

storm, a sign for us to see that we must embody and become that whirlwind and storm of unrelenting striving and struggle. Indeed, as Gwen Brooks taught, we must “conduct (our) blooming in the noise and whip of the whirlwind.” There is a world to be won and rebuilt and we must, with Garvey’s victorious consciousness, go forth and win it and rebuild it in the interests of maximum human good and the well-being of the world.

This month also marks the 54th anniversary of the six days of righteous rage, upraised fists and a resistance of fire and fury we know as the August Revolt (August 11-16, 1965). It was not an isolated historical event, but part and parcel of a longer history of revolt and resistance from the Holocaust of enslavement to Ferguson and beyond. Like the period of Black Power in which it evolved and of which it was a definitive expression, it was a collective and open act of resistance to achieve and secure three basic goals: self-determination (control of our lives and future), self-respect (reaffirming dignity and demanding respect), and self-defense (resistance to police and systemic violence). It was a defining event in the Black liberation struggle, a spark that ignited fires of struggle across the country. It was understood and shouted out loud, “Liberation is coming from a Black thing.” For we are our own liberators, and regardless of alliances, coalitions and calls to “heal and hold up,” the struggle must continue and intensify.

And finally, this is the 5th anniversary of the Ferguson revolt which represents a turning point in our struggle against police violence. It is a spark that ignited a forest fire of spreading resistance and brought to the nightly news long term attention to this problem involving a broad cross section of resistance.

It also energized the Black resistance movement and invited people from all over the country to come, join the demonstrations, express outrage in various ways, and demand that those in power and authority to do simple and substantive justice. Ferguson is one of our latest reminders. It is reminder of who we are: a people in oppression and resistance. It is also a reminder of the unfinished fight, not only against police violence, but also against systemic violence as a whole. And it is a reminder and call to continued struggle without compromise or convenient excuses for exiting the battlefield before the war is won.

IN THIS THE YEAR AND MONTH OF OUR people, 6259/2019 August, we look back and wonder and yet *somehow know* how we got over. It is by keeping the faith, holding the line and continuing our righteous and relentless struggle for good in the world. It is by loving our people and each other and by honoring our parents, elders and ancestors and their legacy of striving and struggling for the good, the right and the possible.

It is by caring for and empowering the poor, vulnerable and less powerful among us, by sacrificing, suffering and making do, and doing the wholly impossible against all odds. It is by emulating in our own particular ways models of African excellence in the ways they lived their lives, did their work and waged struggle which define our values, commitments and aspirations as a people. And it is by being audaciously and unrepentantly resilient, resourceful and in relentless resistance, defiantly refusing to surrender to evil and injustice, and daring to bloom in our beautiful Blackness in the whirlwind of liberation we were promised and we, ourselves, must produce.▲

Dr. Maulana Karenga, Professor and Chair of Africana Studies, California State University-Long Beach; Executive Director, African American Cultural Center (Us); Creator of Kwanzaa; and author of *Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture* and *Introduction to Black Studies*, 4th Edition, www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org; www.MaulanaKarenga.org.