



**“HONORING BLACK RESISTANCE IN AUGUST:  
PURSUING LIBERATION THRU LOVE AND STRUGGLE”**

*Los Angeles Sentinel, 08-06-20, p.A6*

**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**W**E COME INTO THIS AUGUST CONSCIOUS OF its meaning as an honored month and central site of 400 years of righteous and relentless resistance. It is both a month and a monument to a series of significant events in our history: our arrival and beginning resistance in the U.S. (1619); the history-changing Haiti Revolution (1791); the audacious revolts of enslaved Africans led by Gabriel and Nana Prosser (1800) and Nat Turner (1830); and the critical founding of the Underground Railroad (1850) involving Nana Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass and numerous other freedom fighters dedicated to increased resistance to the Holocaust of enslavement and the liberation of our people.

August is also the month of the birth of the pan-Africanist leader and teacher, the Hon. Marcus Garvey (1887); his founding of the UNIA (1914); the March on Washington (1963); the Watts Revolt (1965) out of which our organization Us was born, and a new consciousness and historical initiative around being and freeing Black took root, leading to the Black Power Movement and Black Power Conferences (1966, 1967 and 1968) in which Us played a leadership role. And August is also the honored and upraised month of the bombing and resistance of MOVE in Philadelphia (1978); the founding of the Black August observance in San Quentin (1978) in honor of martyrs in the struggle, political prisoners and freedom fighters; and finally the Ferguson Revolt (2014) which continued the tradition of revolt and ignited a forest fire of increased and expanded resistance against police violence and systemic racism.

Thus, we usher in this August in the midst of heightened levels of resistance and in the midst of a pandemic virus, COVID-19, aggravated in its deadly and destructive impact by the pre-existing conditions of the pathology of oppression. And as always, we know that in the midst of the pathology of oppression and the grief, sickness, suffering and death it causes, *there is no reliable remedy except resistance; no meaningful testing*

*except in struggle and no effective vaccine except the decisive victory that ends our oppression.*

If we are to wage and win our righteous and relentless struggle for liberation, we must love our people, ourselves and each other. And we must see love and struggle as interrelated and inseparable principles and practices. So, when I talk of love of our people, ourselves and each other, I'm talking, not simply about a declaration of caring, but a practice of caring, not about an announced commitment to struggle, but evidence of the practice of struggle. In times and conditions like these when we are most vulnerable and disadvantaged, hated, harassed, hunted and killed without cause, the practice of love in concrete and caring ways for real people who need it is worth and requires more than lofty pronouncements and unfulfilled promises, and is ultimately a radical, even revolutionary act.

Love as a practice is ultimate attentiveness and appreciation that results in mutual investment in each other's happiness, well-being and development. It is a constant struggle and striving to return the goodness given, the thoughtfulness shown, and the beauty experienced from the hand and heart, speech and mind of the beloved and loving other. And we must not only love each other, but also make ourselves worthy of the love we are given and of the love we want. To be worthy of each other's love is not a burden, but a blessing. It is not an unfair asking, but a righteous and rightful challenge to each of us to constantly strive to bring forth the best of who we are and thereby encourage and enjoy deservedly the best our loved ones share with us also. It is not a questioning of one's human worth, but an affirmation of their value to us in terms of the love and life we want and deserve. Obviously, you will have to and do choose. Indeed, we learn to love ourselves in relations that reaffirm us, not those that disaffirm and degrade us. Indeed, the stronger we are in love, the stronger we will be in struggle.

We move now to the second focus of pursuing liberation in love and struggle. Struggle is a necessary life-affirming, life-sustaining and

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life-enhancing practice. It is righteous striving achieved to live a good, meaningful and fulfilling life. And this requires a life of freedom in the fullest sense. It requires liberation and a liberated life, a free mind, a free body, and a free spirit. Thus, liberation is a freeing action, a process and practice of freeing persons and a people. It is freeing ourselves from conditions of domination, deprivation and degradation and cultivating within ourselves capacities which enable us to pursue the good as we see and want it, and to come into the fullness of ourselves.

Here, it is important that we strive mightily to make ourselves and to aid others in becoming self-conscious agents of their own lives and liberation. Indeed, we are back to Frantz Fanon's definition of national liberation which makes each person responsible for the self-conscious irreversible freeing of themselves in the context and contribution to the collective struggle to free the people, our people. Thus, again and as always, the number and sincerity of our allies notwithstanding, a people must liberate itself. We do not deny the need for allies, but we are opposed to being and becoming dependents, satellites or something more disempowering and degrading. This is why a central battlecry for our struggle since the Sixties is "Liberation is coming from a Black thing," i.e., a Black liberated and liberating initiative and struggle.

The central process and practice of struggle I want to stress is *self-raising*: raising ourselves as a personal and collective practice of liberation. It is raising ourselves in three basic ways, ways that recall Min. Malcolm's three-point program of wake up, clean up and stand up. And all I've said depends on our unity in love and struggle. If we are to pursue liberation thru love and struggle,

we, each of us, must raise ourselves *in and for* community. This must, I repeat, be done in the context of and contribution to the raising of our community, our people. First, as Seba Malcolm taught, we must raise our consciousness, clear our minds of the fog, falsification and outright lies our oppressor has taught and tells us about us and himself. And whenever we call out and say, "stay woke," let's remember that we have to be awake before we can "stay woke." And remember too, becoming awake or coming-into-consciousness is a difficult and demanding discipline of heart and mind.

**O**UR SECOND PROCESS AND PRACTICE OF raising ourselves is raising ourselves from imprisonment in any negative thoughts, relations and practices shaped by our conditions of oppression. Min. Malcolm X calls this cleaning up and we call it moral grounding and the first principle in this process is *respect*, but love is our ultimate goal, a principled and purposeful togetherness in life, work and struggle. Finally, as Min. Malcolm said, if we have knowledge, understanding of each other and love each other and are patient with each other, we can achieve a unity in radical and revolutionary love and struggle that increases our capacity for liberation. This means *standing up*, raising ourselves in and through righteous and relentless struggle, out of the depths of oppression, to achieve a liberated, good and meaningful life. And so positioned, we can, then, increase our contributions to the common ground and shared efforts for expansive human good and the inseparable ongoing project of the well-being of the world and all in it. ▲

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