



**MARCHIN' TOWARDS A MOVEMENT:
MOVIN' TOWARD LIBERATION AND JUSTICE**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 10-08-15, p.A6

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

It is a fundamental and timeless teaching in our sacred text, the Husia, that we are obligated “to bear witness to truth and set the scales of justice in their proper place among those who have no voice”, the vulnerable, the devalued and the oppressed. And another of our sacred texts, the Odu Ifa, tells us “Speak truth, do justice. Do justice and speak truth. For those who do righteousness are favored by the Divine”. On this 20th anniversary of the Million Man March/Day of Absence, we are called again by Min. Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam to return to Washington to register righteous resistance to our oppression and to demand justice. And again, the call comes at a critical juncture in our history, defined by the rising wave of resistance to police violence in particular and systemic violence in general. Indeed, we are in the midst of a continuing unfinished struggle. It is an ongoing righteous and relentless struggle to free ourselves and be ourselves without penalty or apology, without self-doubt, self-condemnation or self-disguise—and so we can self-consciously build the new and good world we all want and deserve to live in. Ten years ago, I wrote the essay below to mark the 10th anniversary of the Million Man March. It remains relevant this 20th anniversary and speaks to continuing issues and the unavoidability of increased and continuing struggle.

We are on our way to Washington, marching towards a Movement and moving towards liberation. But we know from the hard and heavy-laden lessons of history, there is no quick and easy walk or way to freedom and no magical or miraculous achievements except those conjured up and called into being by the daily and difficult struggle of the people to improve and expand their lives and take hold of the history that confronts them.

We know also that the meaning of the March will be what we ourselves make of it; that the course of the Movement will be determined by what we do with and for it and thus, that it is on us to wage a relentless struggle to carve out of the hard rock of reality a life worth living, a world and history worth having and a legacy worth leaving for future generations.

But there are rumors among and around us that under the constant and brutal burden of our oppression and the resultant socially-generated and self-inflicted wounds, we have lost our way and our will and no longer understand and assert ourselves in the expansive and dignity-affirming ways that once made us a model moral and social vanguard in the world. But the demands of history and the designs of heaven call on us to be and do otherwise. And thus, we must and do reject this self-serving assessment of our oppressor and of those seduced or enslaved by the constant psychological war he wages against us. *For throughout our history we have chosen to rise up in struggle determined to be free, establish justice and bring good in the world, regardless of the odds and assessments against us.* Indeed, it is written in the sacred teachings of our ancestors, the *Odu Ifa*, that we are divinely chosen to bring good in the world and are morally obligated to develop the wisdom, character, capacity for sacrifice, love of doing good, and willingness to struggle which this awesome responsibility requires. And we know that although we are all chosen by heaven and history, we must choose to be chosen, choose to do good in and for the world and accept seriously this assignment as the fundamental mission and meaning of human life.

It is clearly on us. Our oppressors cannot and will not do it. Indeed, they had a chance to unite and work with the peoples of

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the world, but decided instead to enslave and oppress them. We must draw a clear line of demarcation between us and them. We must clearly distance ourselves from and oppose their White supremacist rampages in the world, their raw-meat racism, their high-tech terrorism, and their perverse peddling of domination as democracy, occupation as liberation, and conquest as legitimate corporate plunder. Again, it falls on us in alliance with other oppressed and progressive peoples and persons of the world, as Fanon says, to dare start a new history of humankind and set afoot a new man and woman in the world. To achieve this, we must prefigure in thought and practice the world we want and deserve to live in. Thus in our daily lives and relations, we must think and care deeply about and put into practice principles that mould us into the new men, women and children, reflective of the new world we struggle to bring into being, especially the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles): *Umoja* (Unity), *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination), *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility), *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics), *Nia* (Purpose), *Kuumba* (Creativity), and *Imani* (Faith).

We must and the *Odu Ifa* teaches, "Speak truth, do justice. Be kind and do not do evil." And we must also as the *Husia* teaches us, constantly heal and repair ourselves and the world making them better, more beneficial and beautiful than before. Indeed, this task and obligation called *serudj ta* calls on us to renew, rebuild and transform the world and also, ourselves in the process. It is to raise up the ruined, repair the damaged, rejoin the severed, replenish the depleted, strengthen the

weakened, set right the wrong, and make flourish the insecure and undeveloped.

Our task, then, is simultaneously personal, communal and world-encompassing, reaching from New Orleans, Native America, and Biloxi to Port au Prince, Haiti, Africa, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other sites of oppression and uncompromising struggle in the world. We must reaffirm our commitment in thought and practice to *freedom for the oppressed; justice for the wronged and injured; power for the masses of people over their destiny and daily lives; and peace in and for the world*. And to do this we must stand up and stand together as Black men and women, rebuild our Movement for liberation, reaffirm our role as a critical moral and social vanguard in this country and the world, and with other progressive forces dare build the world we all want and deserve to live in.

Again, our oppressor cannot be our teacher. As Fanon said, humanity is waiting for something from us other than an imitation or obscene caricature of our oppressor. And this means harnessing our own energies and activism, weathering the hurricanes of history and struggling constantly to bring, sustain and increase good in the world. The March is a site for the message; it will take a Movement of national and international reach and relevance to achieve our goals. And again, the March and Movement will be what we make them. The success we seek will depend on our own sacrifice and efforts, and the liberation we long for will only come from waging a hard-won and decisive struggle. *The time is now; there is no other. The answer is struggle; there is no alternative. And we are the ones; there is no avoiding it.*

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 *Essays on Struggle: Position and Analysis*, www.AfricanAmericanCulturalCenter-LA.org; www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org; www.MaulanaKarenga.org.