



**MIDTERM TEA WITHOUT SYMPATHY:  
SHIFTING PLACES IN RACE-BASED SEATS**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**N**O MATTER what else is read into the results of the midterm elections, as I argued in 2010, it does not signal the end of time or the end of the world as we know it. Nor does it justify seasonal-soldier talk of surrender or passive acceptance of the established order or the prophesied fantasy world that Jack and Jill running up the hill imagine they can make. And quiet as it's kept nor will gatherings of comedy, common sense and sanity on the Washington Mall serve as an alternative or prove equal in relevance to real resistance and struggle over issues of wealth, power and status as citizens and humans of equal worth and rights in this country and the world.

Yes, there are lessons to be learned from this election, but they don't begin or end with the election itself. They are rooted in the ongoing struggle we are always engaged in, one that began before elections and continues during and after elections. And thus, it requires recognition that elections are but one battleground and can be deceptive and disarming if not linked to the larger struggle for social justice, environmental soundness, peace and an encompassing good in the world. Indeed, elections become problematic when they inspire unrealistic expectations, become a fan-club for a person rather than a constituency committed to common good, empower only an elite group, and divert energy, attention and action from the larger struggle.

Surely, we must have noticed that whatever other analyses assembled to discuss White anger and anxiety expressed at the polls, it was in the end a simple shifting of places in race-based seats, leaving White folks still in power. Call them blue dogs, red donkeys or red, white and blue cowpokes and tea partiers, they belong to the dominant group and their racial rage was/is essentially directed

against people of color. Even the rage and unreflective ranting against government finds added energy in its imagined, assumed and exaggerated benefits to people of color. And a few Blacks, Latinos, Asians and Native Americans, symbolically inserted in this process, do not alter the reality of the White dominance which is a bitter tea without sympathy or soul.

Moreover and as always, whatever is said about President Obama is shorthand for racial rage against Black people. And the cold fact is that both rightists and liberals routinely deny it and Black leadership and intellectuals too often co-sign this denial. Indeed, they seem afraid to raise the issue of race, having declared a post-racial state of things with no evidence but hope and no proof except a shared promise among themselves to maintain the illusion.

Let's face it, we are our own liberators and there is no substitute for an aware, organized and active people, constantly concerned and engaged with the problems and possibilities of actually living in the world. The seasonal soldier and sometimes warrior or the special-event attendee does not fit well in the crux and crucible of ongoing struggle to achieve gains, hold ground and push the lines of battle and the lives of the people ever forward. Thus, regardless of this election or the next, we must still wage the struggle for a new and 'nother kind of society, a society no longer interested in illusions about itself, lies and fantasies as peddled by Fox News and the know-nothing followers who thrive on them. On the contrary, we must work and struggle for a society which self-consciously seeks and feels morally compelled to create and sustain enhanced conditions and capacities for life and living of the people and is willing to work and struggle tirelessly for the radical, deep-rooted change necessary to achieve this.

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No one but tea partiers, drunk with Disneyland dreams of “saving constitution and country,” believe they can forever racially constrain Blacks, keep Latinos at bay at the border, or even curtail the outsourcing of the corporations who funded and fostered them. Established Republicans, Wall Street journalists and power junkies talk about them like uncouth Appalachian cousins, coming to the big Congressional city woefully unfamiliar with those still regularly running street cars named desire, graft, greed and backroom deals. But they use them.

The tea partiers came to prominence and office pimping White anger and anxiety and promising to tear down, take apart, reverse and reject those and that which they have taught their believers and followers to hate. And so did the current winners. But none of this will repair the country’s infrastructure, create jobs, balance the budget, develop green energy programs, bring peace, save homes, improve education or contribute to building the good society we all want and deserve to live in.

Contrary to the prevailing consensus among the more alert and less-aware bloggers alike, this was not only a political referendum on President Obama but also a racial and social referendum on American society itself and its visionless and spineless Democrats. It was another measure and mirror of this society’s inability to objectively and honestly face its race and class contradictions, i.e., its continuing White racial dominance disguised as democracy and its self-definition as a nation of wealth requiring hypocritical

propaganda which papers-over places and pockets of enduring poverty and suffering.

There is a lesson also to learn in coming to terms with the politics of our brother and President, Barack Obama, and the way, even his chosen advisors, allies and his own party have treated him. Caught in the racial construction of American social reality, Democrats are at best ambivalent and at worst in real Republican style resistance. In the face of savage attacks on Obama by Republicans and rightists of all kinds and capacities for rationality, they sat spineless and speechless, laughed it off, explained it away or interpreted it as a new surge of democratic energy born of an understandable anger and anxiety.

Our President has bent over backwards, shared beer, compromised, conceded and co-signed his opponents’ agenda at the expense of his own and ours, and still they continue to hate, harass, block, reject and wish him ill, and work and pray for his failure. Again, we must accept the limitation of the President and the presidency and the need, he, himself, announced, for a movement that will not let the Republicans, rightwing and collaborating Democrats dictate the course of the country or Pres. Obama join or concede to them. For another election will take place in two years and already someone is advising him to step aside and make way for Hilary Clinton’s “woman interrupted” original claim. Our task, as always, is to build a movement capable of interrupting the collaborationist silence and savagery of the established order, pose an alternative agenda, and wage a righteous and relentless struggle to bring that agenda and the new world it envisions to fruition and flower.

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