



**NOT YET UHURU, FREEDOM INTERRUPTED:  
AFRICAN LIBERATION DELAYED BUT NOT DEFEATED**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**I**T IS YET ANOTHER YEAR AND STILL THE struggle for the liberation of African people everywhere continues. And it must continue for even at the height of the liberation movement on the continent of Africa, one of our honored freedom fighters, Oginga Odinga of Kenya, reminded us with his book titled *Not Yet Uhuru* (Freedom) and with his own continued struggle – we are not really free yet. And here in the U.S., Min. Malcolm reminded us we cannot have a limited conception of freedom, for sitting at someone else’s table with no food on our plate doesn’t mean we’re dining, and if the oppressor sticks a 9-inch knife in our back and pulls it out 6 inches or all the way, it doesn’t mean he has done us any favor. Indeed, Malcolm taught that in the context of oppression, “the logic of the oppressed cannot be the logic of the oppressor” if they want liberation. So, there is still much work to do and more battlefields on which to fight and win before we can say we are truly free.

And on this day of memory and marking, May 25<sup>th</sup>, set aside in 1963 at Addis Ababa by the Organization of African Unity as African Liberation Day, we remember first and pay rightful homage to our ancestors. For they are the way-openers, the path-finders, the original freedom fighters, the layers of the foundations on which we strive to build in good and righteous ways. It is they who lifted up the light that lasts, the spiritual and moral visions and values by which we understand and assert ourselves at our best in the world. And in rightful homage to them, we in the Maatian ethical tradition, as written in the *Husia*, humbly ask of them every day “Ancestors, give us your hand, for we are bearers of dignity and divinity who came into being through you.”

Since the beginning of the struggle for African liberation on the continent and throughout the world African community, the oppressor has always worked to undermine, divert and misdirect our efforts. And when he knew he was losing and we were winning, he always began to deny us real victory by high jacking the struggle, hoodwinking the people and handpicking leaders

who sought gains and security simply for themselves.

It is these who talk militantly until an opening appears for, not simply a compromise, but a surrender of principle in order to obtain a comfortable place in a repackaged form of oppression. And the new reality might be a law relaxed, a practice halted or an opening to join the rulers at a visible, but a disabling subordinate position of well-financed agreement and accommodation. This is why it is so important to start from the beginning to draw a clear line of demarcation and distance between the oppressed people and the oppressor, between what we fight for and what the oppressor seeks to palm off and present as a gain or gift he granted, rather than a concession wrung from him through righteous and relentless struggle.

For liberation is not letting the oppressor give us what he wants, but our winning in struggle what we determine and demand we need. Our oppressor cannot be our teacher and allies cannot be our tutor on what counts as liberation for us, nor on the ways and means we must use to obtain our goals or achieve our ends. We, ourselves, must choose the decision and act as a principle and practice of *Kujichagulia*, self-determination.

Also, the people, our people, must be involved in every decision that affects and determines their destiny and daily lives. They must choose, dare to struggle and dare to win and we must have ultimate faith in and love for them. For as Mary McLeod Bethune taught, “the measure of our progress as a race is in precise relation to the depth of the faith in our people held by our leaders.” And Frantz Fanon teaches us that we must ask ourselves and other leaders, what are our attitudes towards and aspirations for our people. He says, “the problem is to get to know the place these men (or women) mean to give their people, the kind of social relations that they decide to set up, and the conception they have of the future of humanity.”

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This stress on linking the African future with the future of humanity is also central to the African liberation project. For we are a world African community with world-encompassing tasks and obligations as both Africans and fellow human beings. Moreover, we cannot be free in isolation. There is an indivisibility of freedom and justice and other great goods of the world. Thus, there is an ethics of shared good we must pursue and practice in the world. Clearly, among these shared goods to be pursued are a just peace and the end of the nuclear threat; a good and sustainable world, the end of global warming and the plunder, pollution and depletion of the national environment; and reaffirmation and securing the rights and responsibility of self-determination of the people and the end of the erosion and undermining of democracy.

If we understand and appreciate the indivisibility of great shared goods like freedom, justice, peace, the well-being of persons and peoples, environmental care, etc., then, we must, as we wage our own liberation struggle, also stand in solidarity with other oppressed and struggling peoples of the world. Clearly, the African peoples on the continent and throughout the global African community require and deserve our support in the righteous struggles for liberation from domination, deprivation and degradation. I speak especially of the struggling people of the Congo, Sudan, Western Sahara and the enslaved and resisting people in Morocco, Mauritania and Libya. And certainly, Haiti has a special place in our hearts and history and those of all freedom loving people and we stand in solidarity with them in their 200-year old struggle for liberation, achieved and interrupted, but not defeated.

And we must speak up for and stand in solidarity with the Native peoples of this country and the world; the people of Yemen; the Rohingya of

Burma; the Uighurs of China; and all those devalued and vulnerable whose voices are suppressed and silenced and who struggle to liberate themselves and live good and meaningful lives. And as always, we must not be afraid or hesitate to stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine in their righteous struggle against Israeli occupation and oppression and to build the good, liberated life and future they too want and deserve as all other oppressed and struggling peoples.

Whatever else we can say about the African liberation struggle, we know from our history and the hardship and Holocaust we have suffered and from the similar lives and struggles of others: *the struggle must and does continue*. We know too it is not an easy, quick or convenient practice, nor does it come without costs and casualties. Indeed, it is a constant admonition in our minds from Amilcar Cabral, that we must “mask no difficulties, tell no lies and claim no easy victories.” For liberation is a long, difficult, dangerous and demanding struggle to decolonize, not only the lands and people, but also their hearts and minds held hostage for centuries by the oppressor.

And there is thus the companion need to free the mind and heart from the psychological chains that bind them and recapture and cultivate a spirit of freedom that insists on self-determination, an unrestrained self-realization in the most positive and productive sense. For rightly conceived, the liberation struggle is freedom in the practice and process of being realized, fought for and achieved. In other words, freedom is both a liberated and liberating practice - *liberated* from material, political and psychological restraints and *liberating* in providing the conditions and capacities for an expansive agency, a coming into the fullness of ourselves in the process and practice of bringing and sustaining good in the world.▲

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