



**WEATHER WARNING—STORM RISING:
UNOCCUPYING AND DECOLONIZING THE WORLD**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

Our entry into the current conversation about the emerging Occupy Wall Street movement (OWS) is informed by a critical understanding and appreciation of our people's history as a moral and social vanguard in this country and the world and by a continuing commitment to the Black Freedom Movement, which in its most expansive self-understanding, dared not only to radically transform this country, but also to *unoccupy* and *decolonize* the world. Following Malcolm, we saw our struggle as part of a worldwide rebellion against capitalism, colonialism and a "vicious racist system used to degrade, exploit and oppress peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America." And with Fanon, we understood decolonization "not only as the disappearance of colonialism, but also the disappearance of the colonized man and woman;" bringing to being "new men (and women) and with it, a new language and a new humanity."

So, the compelling question for us as a people in evaluating and relating to the OWS is first how do we understand and assert ourselves in the world in view of our history and our own continuing liberation struggle? Here, it is important that we see and assert ourselves as self-conscious, organized and active agents of our own lives and liberation, with a distinct history and often differing interests, but clearly open to common-interest alliances, coalitions and cooperative projects with other progressive forces in the world.

Thus, the key and compelling question for us concerning any progressive group or movement is not whether we join it or not, but how do we relate to it given our own world-encompassing self-understanding and self-assertion in struggle? And the question, then, becomes how does this group or movement relate to and contribute to our own struggle

and our ongoing efforts to rebuild and renew our own Movement and finish the historic tasks made central and sacred by the needs of our people and the awesome examples of struggle and sacrifice by those who preceded us and made us possible? Having answered this, we are able to ask how do we build alliances, coalitions, and cooperative projects with other oppressed peoples and progressive forces in this country and the world to achieve common-interest goals?

Surely, Africans can and do join other movements as individuals to build multicultural initiatives. But they must enter as equals, not as post facto petitioners for space and participation in others' projects, and not as a substitute for self-determined initiatives which emerge from our own community and are rooted in the lived realities of our own lives and struggle. In this regard, the labor movement never imagines that its members joining OWS or its support for OWS as an ally is a substitute for its own agenda or initiative.

Given this understanding, it is important to say we welcome the emergence of OWS as another battlefield opened against the established order of things. This welcoming is, first of all, rooted in our moral commitment to struggle as an indispensable and unavoidable way to achieve radical social change and bring good in the world. Indeed, we take the stand that *it is good to revolt against oppression, right to rebel against evil and injustice, and morally compelling "to bear witness to truth and set the scales of justice in their proper place among those who have no voice,"* i.e., the silenced poor and less powerful, the ill, elderly, infant and oppressed. This is an essential and inescapable reading of millennia of African moral and social teachings, and also the result of a careful and rightful reading

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of the concrete and continuing lessons of our lives and history, as we struggle to expand the space and possibilities for a new world and future for ourselves and humankind.

Moreover, we welcome the emergence of OWS also on the basis of common-ground issues. Surely, their criticism of corporate corruption, greed, death-dealing and disruption of the world parallels and intersects our own. Indeed, in the *Million Man March/Day of Absence Mission Statement*, we criticize corporate plunder, pollution and depletion of the world in its ruthless pursuit of profit, and its insatiable addiction to human domination, deprivation and degradation in order to sustain this. The *Mission Statement* advances a triple challenge to ourselves, the government and corporations, and expresses our concerns and criticism, not only of what is done in and to this country and its people, but also of governmental and corporate collaboration in plundering and oppression of other peoples of the world.

Furthermore, we raise issues of full employment, workers' rights and treatment, health care, housing, the prison industrial complex and prisoners' rights, police brutality, privatization of public wealth and space, reparations, environmental care, mutual respect of all peoples, and numerous other critical issues of particular and universal concern. Also, we reaffirm our "continuing commitment to the best values of our social justice tradition . . . and uncompromising resistance to all social forces and structures which deny and limit these (goods)."

Thus, it is good to see other people of all ages coming-into-consciousness, rightfully

angry and in motion against injustice and oppression, offering new and added energy, insight and combatants to a global struggle waged for centuries by us and other oppressed and progressive peoples of the world against domestic and global capitalism in its colonial, racist, religiously chauvinist and imperial forms. But as Cabral notes, we must "mask no difficulties tell no lies and claim no easy victories." For we know that the hard times and difficult tests are yet to come, and there is an immense set of issues still to engage and tasks to be achieved and fierce and ruthless oppressors to overcome. Indeed, they have shown themselves willing to lay waste the whole world for profit and domination. And in North Africa, they have already outlawed the liberation promise of spring and re-established a killer-cold winter of brutal invasion, resource robbery and imperial imposition thru military and political puppets and proxies. And yet the people continue to struggle and move forward.

In the midst of our liberation struggle of the 60s, King offered this affirmation and hope, saying: "the storm is rising against the privileged minority on earth, from which there is no shelter in isolation or armament. (And) the storm will not abate until a just distribution of the fruits of the earth enable (people) everywhere to live in dignity and human decency." May this ancient and ongoing aspiration be fulfilled; may our work be completed and our struggle won; and may *Maat*—truth, justice, peace, well-being and loving-kindness—become the chosen and cherished way of life and living in the world.

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