



**THE SACRED AGENCY OF OUR PEOPLE:  
RIGHTEOUS RESISTANCE, REPAIRING AND REMAKING THE WORLD**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**I**N THIS MONTH OF REMEMBERING, RAISING up and reflecting on our awesome making and movement through history, it is good to remind our ourselves, society and the world of the sacred agency of our people. For this is central and essential to our identity, purpose and direction as persons and a people. In a word, it is key and compelling to how we understand and assert ourselves in the world. Indeed, it is we, the African people, who at the dawn of history stood up first and brought into being the ever evolving wonder of human life, the ever expanding light of human knowledge, and the ever increasing lessons of human agency in and for the world.

By sacred agency we mean here an active commitment to that ancient and ongoing African moral imperative to do and pursue good in and for the world. Moreover, to talk of our sacred agency in the world is to engage in the critical practice of *sankofa*, a self-conscious reaching back into our minds, memory and history and bringing forth the enduring insights from the oral, written and living practice texts of our honored ancestors. For they offer us a history of enduring instructions to embrace, models to emulate and mirrors by which we measure and assess ourselves in our righteous and relentless strivings and struggles to bring and sustain good in the world.

In the ancient sacred texts and teachings of the *Husia*, we are instructed and urged to bear witness to truth and set the scales of justice in their proper place, especially among the vulnerable and always do what is good. Indeed, Lady Ta Aset encourages us to do good, saying to us “just speaking good is a monument to those who do it” and that “the good we do for others, we are also doing for

ourselves”. For we are building the good community and world we all want and deserve to live in and leave as a storehouse of good from which future generations can draw from and build on unendingly.

The good world we seek here is a Maatian world, i.e., one based on the Seven Cardinal Virtues of *Maat*: truth, justice, propriety, harmony, balance, reciprocity and righteous order. And to achieve it we must not only do good but also resist evil, for the struggle for good and the struggle against evil are inseparably linked. Indeed, Seba Khunanpu says “one who reduces falsehood fosters truth and one who fosters good reduces evil”. Thus, he says, “speak truth and do justice” for “the true-balancing of the world lies in doing justice”. And this justice is not a simple procedural justice, but a real justice, a vital justice, a life-giving, life-enhancing justice. For as Seba Khunanpu asserts, “Doing justice is breath to the nose”.

It is our duty, our honored ancestors tell and teach us in the *Husia*, to engage in the constant practice of *serudj ta*, repairing, renewing and remaking the world, making it more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it, and leaving it as a rich legacy and reciprocal responsibility for those who inherit it and pass it on also. It is a sacred responsibility to raise up what is in ruins; to repair what is damaged; to rejoin what is separated; to replenish what is depleted; to set right what is wrong; to strengthen what is weakened; and to make flourish that which is fragile, insecure and undeveloped.

The ancient sacred text, *Odu Ifa* tells and teaches us that we should enjoy our divinely assigned mission to bring and sustain good in the world. It says, “Let’s do things with joy, for surely humans have been

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chosen to bring good in the world”. And thus, we say this is the fundamental meaning and mission of human life. Clearly, this involves constant struggle, this striving to do and bring good in the world and relentlessly resisting evil, injustice and oppression wherever and whenever we find it, and struggling mightily to reduce and end poverty, oppression, exploitation, degradation and general suffering of people.

And it is important to note that we are chosen not over and against anyone, but chosen with everyone to bring good in the world. Thus, all of humans are equally chosen. In fact, the word for human being is *eniyán* which literally means *chosen one*. And we are divinely chosen without distinction of nation, race, gender, special religious relationship or promise. Surely, as we note with profound appreciation, this poses an ideal which many other world religions are still striving to establish and realize as a central moral doctrine and practice.

Furthermore, the *Odu Ifa* teaches that humans must move beyond moralities of convenience to a morality of sacrifice and struggle, i.e., self-giving in a real, meaningful and sustained way. The sacred teachings tell us that “one who makes a small sacrifice will have a small result” and that we must “be able to suffer without surrendering and persevere in what we do”. For one of the most important, even indispensable requirements to achieve a good world is “the eagerness and struggle to increase good in the world and not let any good be lost”. And in this righteous and relentless struggle for good in and for the world we must stay ever-ready and engaged, for the *Odu Ifa* says in the pursuit of good, “a constant soldier is never unready, not even once”. And this too the sacred teachings say, always let our struggle be a righteous one and

let us go into battle with this commitment: “may the struggles we wage always add to our honor”.

In the midst of the *Maangamizi*, the Holocaust of enslavement, Nana Harriet Tubman tells and teaches us that the struggle for freedom is a costly practice and project and we must be willing to sacrifice when and where necessary. She says “We must go free or die and freedom is not bought with dust”. Indeed, she tells us she constantly “prayed to God to make (her) strong and able to fight. . .” and she would fight for freedom “as long as (her) strength lasts”. And Nana Frederick Douglass told and taught us that there is no substitute for righteous and transformative struggle. He reassures us that “If there is no struggle, there is no progress. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”

Reaffirming the world encompassing character and reach of our liberation struggle and its moral grounding, Nana Anna Julia Cooper taught us “We take our stand on the solidarity of humanity, the oneness of life, and the unnaturalness and injustice of all special favoritism, whether of sex, race, country, or condition.” And this stand is a commitment of struggle to eliminate the unnaturalness and injustice of the various and vicious constraints on human life and development. Likewise, Nana Marcus Garvey reaffirmed in his teaching the vital need for constant and conscientious struggle. He assures us that “Chance has never yet satisfied the hope of a suffering people. Action, self-reliance, the vision of self and the future have been the only means by which the oppressed have seen and realized the light of

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their own freedom”. And he wants Africa as a continent and world community to play a central role in the struggle to bring good in the world. A liberated and uplifted Africa, he says, will offer a new “way to life and peace, achieved not by ignoring the rights of our brother (and sister) but by giving to everyone (their) due”. Indeed, he affirms, “the hand of justice, freedom and liberty shall be extended to all (hu)mankind”.

Nana Mary Mcleod Bethune, reassures and teaches us “we are custodians and heirs of a great legacy”, and this morally obligates us to take this legacy and honor it through the sacred agency of remaking the world. She says, “we must remake the world. The task is nothing less than that”. And Nana Martin Luther King Jr. also reaffirmed the sacred agency and mission of our people in the world. At the beginning of his evolving leadership in the Black Freedom Movement, he defines our people as a moral and social vanguard whose righteous and radically transformative struggle would compel historians

of future generations “to pause and say, ‘there lived a great people - a Black people - who injected new meaning and dignity into the veins of civilization’. This is our challenge and our overwhelming responsibility”.

**|**FINALLY, NANA HAJI MALCOLM TELLS and teach us that we must assert ourselves in the world conscious about our place among the ranks of those who represent the rising tide of history, the oppressed of the world in radical and revolutionary “rebellion against the oppression and colonialism” and imperialism imposed by the oppressors of the world. And Nana Frantz Fanon asked and urges us in our global rebellion in the fulfillment of our sacred mission and agency of bringing good in the world to strive to “reconsider the question of humankind”, imagine a new world and dare to bring them “to triumphant birth”, inaugurating a new history and horizon of possibilities for humankind.▲

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