



**BLACK MAN AND WOMAN RISING AND RAISING:  
LIVING OUR LIVES IN LOVE AND STRUGGLE**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**I**F OUR LIVES ARE TO BE GOOD AND BEAUTIFUL in ways that lift us up and give us the strength, courage and creative capacity to free ourselves, be ourselves, and truly flourish, then *we must self-consciously live our lives in love and struggle*. And if we, as Black men and women, are to continue to rise and raise others among us as we rise, it is love that will lift us up and struggle that will strengthen us and ultimately give us the liberating victory we seek and have sacrificed so much for now and throughout history.

Clearly, to love and struggle are in our interests as both persons and a people. Indeed, we must love in order to live good, beautiful and fulfilling lives and to pose a model and righteous way forward for those who come after us. Also, we must struggle to defend and develop ourselves, secure our rights and advance our interests with due consideration for others and the ongoing well-being of the world. And we must do this together in actively committed, caring and courageous ways, whether married, coupled or single and whether as partners, comrades, co-combatants, friends or fellow Africans striving righteously and relentlessly to make it right, do the good and radically transform the conditions and possibilities of our lives.

Surely, in a society which masquerades and hawks hatred and hostility toward us and others who are different as important news and necessary knowledge, we must defiantly reject this social and moral madness. Indeed, to love in the midst of such deeply-rooted racial, religious, cultural and other hatred is a revolutionary act in itself—a counterforce and contribution to righteous resistance against the evil, injustice and oppression this hatred represents.

We speak of a love for another and others that elevates, enriches and expands our

lives and inspires in our loved ones feelings, thoughts and actions of similar measure and meaning. We speak of love rooted in the reality of our natural and social need for each other and grounded in our best values of speaking truth, doing justice and practicing harmony, balance, reciprocity and righteous order.

And we speak here, especially of male/female *relations* and *relatedness* as married or single, intimates, friends or fellow members of our families, community and people. For as our ancestors taught, whether we talk of the continuation of the human species, the moral quality of a society or the right order and functioning of the world, *quality male/female relations are indispensable*.

By love we mean here, ultimate and rightful attentiveness and appreciation that results in *mutual investment in each other's happiness, well-being and development*. Love, then, is not simply a feeling or a principle, but a feeling and principle that, of necessity, expresses itself also as a practice. Indeed, as we say in Kawaiida philosophy, every moral claim or social principle must eventually and ultimately express itself as a practice, if it is to be real and relevant in the life we live, the work we do and the struggle we wage in the world.

We must, then, both feel and practice love—a serious self-giving to secure and sustain each other's happiness, well-being and development. And that is why struggle is so central, indeed, indispensable. Also, key to close and intimate loving relationships is to realize and respond creatively to the fact that we don't love in isolation or only each other in couples. But we love in the context of family, community and our people as a whole.

Therefore, we must love all the people, living and ancestors, whom we rightfully recognize as those who brought us into being,

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nurtured us, protected and provided for us, sustained and sustain us and taught and teach us righteous, valuable and expansive ways of understanding and asserting ourselves in the world. We speak too of love of our people as a whole, Black people, African people, the family of families, the community of communities in small and world encompassing ways, ever striving and struggling to bring good into the world.

And this is how I define struggle here: *a righteous and relentless striving on every level to bring good in our lives and the world*. It is a striving to stand ever worthy of the people, history and culture that called us into being and enjoined us to constantly become the best of what it means to be African and human in the world. And I speak at the same time of a righteous and relentless striving to *create conditions in which we can live and love freely*. In other words, it is a mighty and meaningful striving to create the good community, society and world we all want and deserve to live, love and flourish in and leave as a legacy for those who come afterwards.

As we have said so often, struggle is a good thing. It is vital to life, love and liberation. Indeed, *struggling in love* is the means by which we ground and develop ourselves, achieve our potential and come into the fullness of ourselves. It is the process and practice by which we cultivate our hearts and minds in righteous and expansive ways, pay rightful attention to our physical, mental and spiritual health and build relationships that expand, elevate and enrich us and equally important, give us an *opportunity to do likewise for others*. In the sacred teaching of our ancestors found in the *Odu Ifa*, we are taught that key to our achieving the good world we want and deserve is “the eagerness and struggle to increase good in the world and not let any good be lost”. Moreover, the *Husia* says, in our

striving and struggles we must remember that “every day is a donation to eternity and even one hour is a contribution to the future”.

In spite of the rumors and false reports of our social death, the destruction of our families and our inability to rise to the challenges that confront us, we continue to rise against all odds and to raise as we rise. For we know our freedom is indivisible, our lives interrelated in real and irreplaceable ways, and our future must be conceived and won in righteous and active togetherness. And key to all of this are the two principles and practices of love and struggle.

So, it is in love and struggle that we rise and raise others as we rise, or in the words of our ancestors, “lift as we climb”. And it is in love and struggle that we will overcome our weaknesses, increase and expand our strengths, continue to courageously confront the overwhelming odds against us and eventually end our oppression, opening a new horizon for our people and humanity as a whole.

**W**HEN WE OF US SAY IN OUR CLOSING affirmation that we must have “faith in all that makes us beautiful and strong”, love and struggle are at the top of the list, second only to the people for whom and with whom they are practiced. Love and struggle make us feel and be beautiful and strong. Indeed, as REDIU KHNUM in the *Husia* says, they make us “kind-hearted, dignified, and godly to behold...” It is love that grounds us and lifts us up at the same time. And it is struggle that clears the space and creates the conditions and capacity for us to live and love freely and honor the *ancient African ethical imperative to constantly repair, renew and remake ourselves in the process and practice of repairing, renewing and remaking the world*. And as Dr. Mary M. Bethune says, “the task is nothing less than that”.

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