



**LIVING LOCALLY, THINKING GLOBALLY:
A CALL TO CONFERENCE AND COLLABORATION**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

One of the greatest challenges facing us as a community in the context of a crisis-ridden, constantly changing national and global economy is to be continuously aware of things in process, to be able to anticipate critical turns of events and to be able to defend shared interests where they are threatened and pursue promising openings and opportunities whenever and wherever they present themselves. This, of course, requires a leadership that is communally conscious, politically and morally committed and unmistakably capable of performance at the highest level. It also requires a high level of collaboration and cooperation among leaders and an aware, organized and engaged community for which there is no substitute worthy of its name.

And it also requires resistance to and rejection of the dirty laundry list of pathologies used to describe us; the catechism of impossibilities taught to dispirit us and the real racial and social obstacles used to restrict and restrain us in our will to be free, move forward and flourish. And it means establishing the concrete conditions for living good lives locally, while thinking globally and forging a context that expands our sense of our humanity and opens the horizon for a new history and future for humankind.

Even before the current crisis, last year in Los Angeles the African American Knowledge Transfer Summit Committee (KTS), a group of African American leaders, gathered together to discuss the meaning, values and practice of leadership, and to exchange knowledge and explore best and emerging ideas and practices around this moral vocation of service, rightful guidance, and good-doing in the world. The KTS Committee includes the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Los Angeles, Los Angeles Urban League, Brotherhood Crusade, the African American Cultural Center, the NAACP—Beverly Hills/Hollywood, 100 Black Men of Los Angeles, Community Coalition, SEIU United Long Term Care Workers Union and other organizations.

In our meetings, we focused especially on how to establish the context and protocol for

leadership transitions to succeeding generations of leaders thru: (1) transferring valuable knowledge; (2) identifying principles and practices central to leadership as a moral vocation; and (3) linking these emerging leaders to relationships and resources which would enhance their possibilities and promise of success. We also gave due attention to facilitating intergenerational and general collaboration and cooperation among leaders in meeting the challenges and pursuing the promises we encounter as a community on the local, national and international level.

After extensive conversation and cooperative planning, KTS held its inaugural public event on November 16, 2007, a leadership summit designed to discuss a series of issues concerning quality leadership and the problems and possibilities of community life and development in the context of these times. This group of African American organizations has continued to meet and collaborate on a regular basis since this first event. In furtherance of this collaborative initiative, KTS will host the Global Economy Conference (GEC) October 29, 2008 which will focus on positioning and building capacity in the urban community to enhance the ability of residents and business persons to intervene and participate effectively in the global economy.

As part of a continuing KTS conversation, the GEC will address several essential and urgent issues including:

- concern about the current state of the national and international economy and how the existing crisis affects our communities, given their vulnerable status in the national economy, but also in view of valuable resources within the community itself;
- an economic forecast of coming challenges of doing business and suggestions of ways to meet these challenges and opportunities as well as strategies for doing business in overseas markets;

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- positioning South Los Angeles as a viable and promising community for international investment that could lead to revitalization, expanded employment, education and health care and enhanced community life;
- the importance and need of involving urban communities in national and international economic projects and of building new and strengthening existing capacities to become partners and beneficiaries in the global marketplace;
- ways of helping to facilitate the creation of an ongoing public-private initiative aiming at building stronger business partnerships between companies in established and emerging markets around the world and those in the greater Los Angeles region;
- creation of a context for an ongoing educational and informational process to insure our communities gain an effective and useful understanding of the implications of global economic processes and the ongoing opportunities for advancement and investment for community members as well as company investment and growth; and
- the cooperative development of a set principles which guide relations between communities and companies, fostering open communications, transparent behavior, reciprocal and shared benefit, just and dignity-affirming employment, community economic initiatives, respect for values and cultures of involved communities, protection of the environment and creation of sustainable relationships of mutual benefit and growth.

These principles would reflect and find common ground with the UN Global Compact with its stress on upholding of human rights, labor standards and environmental responsibility, and working against corruption in its various forms. But again in the final analysis, there is no alternative to an aware, organized and engaged community that understands and asserts itself as a responsible and resourceful stakeholder, not simply in this or that company or economic enterprise, but in community and society, and indeed, as a self-conscious stakeholder in the welfare and wholeness of the world. Such a people will understand and assert itself in ways that prefigure the good future it is forging, rooting itself in the ancient and ongoing richness of the cultural resources and practices of its own life, and reaching out to exchange with the world in mutually respectful and beneficial ways.

To address these issues, planned GEC activities include informative roundtable business panels and nationally recognized speakers. Featured speakers include: the Honorable Antonio Villaraigosa, Mayor, City of Los Angeles; Dale Bonner, California Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency; Donald Tang, *Asia Society of Southern California*; Rev. Dr. Cedrick Bridgeforth, Crenshaw United Methodist Church; Dr. Anthony Samad, 100 Black Men of Los Angeles; Dr. Denise Fairchild, Community Development Technologies Center; Valerie Shaw, Los Angeles Board of Public Works; and Rev. Alphonso Washington, Africa-USA International Chamber of Commerce and Industry. For further information on the conference, visit: <http://www.ezeventplanner.com/visitor/register.cfm?s=648052498>.

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