



**MEDITATIONS ON THE MOVEMENT:
US' 48 YEARS OF RELENTLESS STRUGGLE—PART I**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 09-26-13, pp. A6-7

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

We were/are both products and co-producers of the Black Freedom Movement, members of a defiant and determined generation and organization, Us, which self-consciously responded to Frantz Fanon's challenging insight and insistence that "each generation must . . . discover its mission and having discovered it, fulfill or betray it". Of necessity, we began, as our ancestor advised us, with "a courageous questioning" of ourselves and society, and the way the world was and ought to be. There was no exemption or immunity from criticism—no idea, belief or practice, no institution or organization, no religion or relation, no person, party or president not called into question in some searching, sanctioning, and problematizing way. It was an honest and earnest quest to understand and eliminate the sources of our oppression—both psychic and social—and to build on the basis of the best of our culture a new conception and practice of being African and human in the world.

The 60's was a time of overturning, overturning ourselves, and the system of oppression posed by the established order as sacred and enshrined in law, rooted in religion and reason, forever embedded in the way we lived and thought, and thus, unchallengeable and unchangeable. We would not, indeed, could not, and did not accept this self-congratulatory and yet self-deluding White supremacist conception of society. It was, we reasoned, consoling and comforting things White people told themselves and their children, but there was no moral, rational and real grounds for us, as persons and a people, to accept our own domination, deprivation and degradation by others. Indeed, we reasoned with Min. Malcolm X that we must rethink the world and in doing so remember that "What is

logical to the oppressor isn't logical to the oppressed. And what is reason to the oppressor, isn't reason to the oppressed". Thus, "There just has to be a new system of reason and logic devised by us who are at the bottom, if we want to get some results in this struggle called the (Black) Revolution".

Building on this essential and enduring insight, Kawaida, our philosophy of life and struggle, conceived this insight as a call and commitment to the development and practice of a logic and language of liberation. For if we carry into our thinking dignity-denying and narrow notions and imprisoning concepts of ourselves and the world, we could neither achieve nor even imagine liberation or ever higher levels of human life. So we developed new categories and concepts of life and struggle and corresponding structures and practices to break the monopoly the oppressor had on so many of our minds, and to provide new liberated and liberating ways to understand and assert ourselves in the world. Thus, we used African terms with their expansive and enriching notions of human life, human relations and the world and built a vanguard organization, Us, to teach and implement in practice these new African ways of engaging each other and the world.

When we first began, we had no finished social picture or completed human portrait of the good world we wanted to bring into being. But we knew that the existing order of things, especially the society in which we lived and struggled, was long overdue for and demanded radical change. And we also believed that we could, by our defiant, determined and decisive actions, set in motion ideas, events and social forces which would aid in

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altering the course of history in some meaningful way and push it further along the road to revolution and liberation in the tradition of our ancestors who struggled before us.

“Liberation is coming from a Black thing” we boldly asserted, meditated on it, and made it a basic battle cry and central theme in our thought and practice. It would, we repeatedly reaffirmed, come from a Black and beautiful thing, from a people, our people, rising up in righteous revolt, a people engaged in a reality-and-world-changing struggle, and a people self-conscious, self-determining and culturally rooted.

Thus, we began 48 years ago our five-point process and practice of education, mobilization, organization, confrontation, and transformation. These initiatives, central to the process and practice of liberation, were designed and directed toward reaffirming, reviving and expanding our *culture of struggle*, a culture in which struggle is both necessary and natural and which comprehends liberation as both a living practice and a practice of life. And at the center of this effort was the thrust to expand and deepen the self-conscious agency and historical action of Black people. It was to aid our people in coming into a culturally-rooted, radical consciousness of themselves and in organizing themselves into an engaged and self-liberating social force, clearly aware of their historic duty to themselves and humanity as a whole. For as we have said so many times, there is no substitute for an aware, organized and engaged people, constantly involved in a multiplicity of

actions to define, defend and promote their interests. And those interests must always, as our ancestors taught, be about bringing good in the world, not simply for ourselves, but also for the wholeness and well-being of the world and all in it.

Now, the lesson here is that we cannot be for the whole world, if we do not include ourselves; and we cannot be for ourselves in the expansive ethical understanding of our ancestors, if we do not include the world in our concept of who we are and how this informs our understanding of the concentric circles of our immediate and extended interests and obligations. There was and is no doubt in our minds that Black people, African people, were and are our first and foundational concern. But we were and are also clear that the arc of our concerns have to include the rest of the world.

And following Malcolm, our most revered teacher of our time, we understood ourselves as part of the rising and liberating tide of human history, part of the world-wide liberation struggles of oppressed and progressive peoples, daring as Fanon phrased it, “to start a new history of humankind and set afoot a new man and woman” to achieve and secure a new world and way of being African and human. We reasoned also that if we are to do justice to ourselves and to those whose lives, work and struggle are the essential source of our progress and promise, and leave a worthy legacy for those who come after us, then, we must commit ourselves to a culture of relentless struggle and constant striving for excellence in all we do.

Dr. Maulana Karenga, Professor and Chair of Africana Studies, California State University-Long Beach; Executive Director, African American Cultural Center (US); Creator of Kwanzaa; and author of *Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture* and *Introduction to Black Studies*, 4th Edition, www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org; www.MaulanaKarenga.org.