



**REMEMBERING TROY DAVIS:
RENEWED AND RIGHTEOUS RESISTANCE**

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Even having to weave our way thru the thick fog of post-racial fantasies which society manufactures and sells as comfort-food, and in spite of the repeated and by-now, ragged references to the election of a Black president as the centerpiece and signature event of this imagined miraculous turning in racial relations, the racial profiling, sham trial, wrongful conviction and official killing of Troy Davis offer ample evidence of a brutal, racialized, and racist reality we cannot rationally or morally ignore or avoid. We see it also in the rigid and repeated refusal of those committed to the official killing of Troy to accept the abundant evidence of a tainted conviction or to grant a new trial, a needed stay, or even clemency or commutation. Indeed, it easily brought to mind the racist blood ritual of lynching—the socially sanctioned vigilante version and the legalized lynching that continues under the color and camouflage of law.

The racial and social urge was to kill a Black man to avenge a White victim regardless of doubts of his guilt and evidence of his innocence. For he was *guilty by race not by reason*; by belonging to a racial group of usual suspects, not by physical evidence, or reliable and uncoerced witnesses. Therefore, the national and international outcry against Troy's official killing was to no avail—not the rallies, protests, vigils, over a million petitions and appeals by religious and political leaders and artistic luminaries, the NAACP and Amnesty International, for justice or at least clemency and commutation to spare Troy's life.

But the official killing of Troy Davis did not begin with the pumping of poison in his veins on the night of 2011 September 21. Rather, it has its origins and roots in a racialized and racist system that values White life more than Black life, is more likely to accuse, convict and kill Blacks than Whites, and has made a lucrative industry of the mass imprisonment of Blacks, especially Black males. And it is a system that has racialized crime as Black and criminalized “the race,” making it “easier” to convict and kill them.

Thus, in spite of progressives' and gradualists' tendencies to define Troy's killing as simply a call for abolishing the death penalty, it is broader than this and is rooted in and reflective of systemic sickness in the reputed “more perfect union.” At one point, then, *like now*, we must concede that we need not only legal reforms, but social and systemic change. For a legal system works only as well as the social system that conceives, constructs and sustains it.

Granted this broader struggle will take longer and we must do what we can, where and when we can. But we must always work with an understanding of and commitment to the larger goal of a just and good society. For we can imagine and even know of societies and states with no death penalty and yet Blacks and other people of color still suffer racial domination, deprivation, degradation, disadvantage and early death.

The last and intensely stressful and struggle-filled days of the life of Troy Davis created a multi-faceted mixture of profound emotions. There was the immeasurable sadness at such a senseless, needless and brutal taking and loss of life, especially an

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innocent life. There was also the deep-rooted and righteous anger against the radical evil, injustice and racial implications of it all. There was, in addition, the amazing and unique inspiration Troy offered us in the calm, courageous and death-defying way he dealt with the impending, state-conducted killing of him for a crime he did not commit, defining his struggle as part and parcel of a larger struggle for justice and urging us to continue and intensify the struggle for justice for all. And finally, there was a feeling of a renewed commitment to righteous resistance, a morally-compelling struggle to vindicate Troy, end the death penalty and the racial and social savagery in which this blood-and-vengeance ritual is rooted and regularly feeds on victims of various race and class based vulnerabilities.

Troy wanted us to remember him as strong, resilient, resistant and always in struggle. Thus, he told us and the world thanks for the work done for him and the faith in him, but that we should remember that this struggle did not begin and will not and must not end with him, and that whether he is killed or freed, the fight for justice and good in the world must continue and intensify. He said, "The struggle for justice doesn't end with me. This struggle is for all the Troy Davises who came before me and all the ones who will come after me."

Assuring us of his internal discipline and unwavering commitment to struggle in the face of the unjust process designed and determined to literally erase his life, he says, "I'm in good spirits and I'm prayerful, and at peace. But I will not stop fighting until I've taken my last breath." It is the

disciplined and death-defying stand that the ancestors called for in the sacred texts of the *Odu Ifa* (43:1) saying, "even if we are going to die we must wage a life-and-death struggle. We must still struggle hard." And Martina Correia, Troy's sister who led the struggle for Troy's vindication and freedom while fighting breast cancer for the past 10 years, has said, "We must be the catalyst for change we want to see." And thus, "we are going to keep moving forward."

For what in the end does it mean when we say in reaffirmation of life and justice, "We are all Troy Davis," if we do not remember and embrace in thought and practice his audacious example and essential advice. And it is to live, struggle and die with courage, dignity and determination, even in the worst of circumstances; to maintain a victorious consciousness as Molefi Asante defined it and Troy demonstrated; to always look at the larger picture as Min. Malcolm taught and Troy told us; and as Amilcar Cabral counseled and our history and Troy's struggle have convinced us, to "mask no difficulties, tell no lies and claim no easy victories."

In a word, Troy Davis told us "keep praying, keep working, keep the faith and continue the struggle." And as we always say in *Kawaida*: the best prayer is righteous practice; work works best when it's done not just discussed; faith finds its fulfillment in small and great acts of good, and struggle is the only way to serious self- and social transformation and the creation of the good world we all want for Troy, ourselves and future generations.

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