



**RIGHTEOUS REFLECTIONS ON US:
LECTURE NOTES FOR OUR 45TH**
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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

On this 45th anniversary of our organization Us, we pause in righteous reflection on the long and difficult road we've travelled, the lessons learned, the losses and gains along the way, and the nature and needs of the unfinished struggle that still must be waged and won. For the struggle and work begun by our elders and ancestors is not over and cannot be compromised or cut short. Too much has been sacrificed, too much is still at stake, and there is too much we owe those before us who saw visions, nurtured hope and struggled for a freedom, justice and peace that envelops and exalts the world.

Thus, our task is not to listen to the misleading and seductive songs of society about freedom and justice already achieved and won nor to be swayed by post-racial rumors and misreadings about the end of race while racism still rules society and runs rampant over our lives. On the contrary, our task is to continue and intensify the struggle and rebuild the Movement in faithful remembrance of those who came before us and in rightful consideration for those who will come after us.

The long, difficult and demanding road of resistance has taken its toll and seen the transition of many men and women who were workers and soldiers of the most committed and courageous kind, those in our ranks and those in the larger Movement. So we pause to pay homage to those of our organization whose work, service, sacrifice and struggle helped bring Us to this our 45th anniversary when so many others have given up or gone another way. Certainly, we pay homage to Seba Limbiko Tembo, sacred and beloved friend, cherished sister, honored

teacher of the good, the right and the possible; brave and unbreakable soldier in spite of her humble self-conception. Indeed, even her death did not defeat her, for she left a legacy of good and promise that will last forever.

Let us pay rightful homage also to Tommy Jacquette-Halifu, steadfast warrior with a righteous attitude against injustice, oppression and all other constraints on human freedom. He stood up at the founding of Us and never sat down, seeing service to our people as a sacred duty. And too we pay homage to the two elders who have passed among us, Mzee Baba Pamoja and Dr. Addie Brown, committed counselors, wise advisors, whose histories are our lessons and whose lives are their legacies.

Certainly, we pay homage also to all those others who have passed since our 40th anniversary. And as always, we pay particular and powerful homage to all our ancestors, the way-openers, lifters-up of the light that lasts, models of human excellence and achievement out of which history is imagined and made. And we do this not only by raising and praising their names and works this day, but again in our commitment to the struggle, for it is this struggle to which they gave their lives. Indeed, this is why we cannot compromise in our commitment to bring good in the world, to seek and speak truth, to do, demand and defend justice, to care for the vulnerable, protect the environment and expand the reality and realms of human freedom and flourishing in the world.

In the Sixties, we stood up and defiantly declared "We are the last revolutionaries in America. If we fail to

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leave a legacy of revolution for our children we have failed in our mission and should be dismissed as unimportant.” And this too, we said, “The battle we must fight first is the battle to win the hearts and minds of our people and if we lose this battle, we can’t hope to win any other.” In a word, we said, “Until we break the monopoly the oppressor has on so many of our minds, liberation is not only impossible; it’s unthinkable. And what you can’t conceive, you can’t achieve.” We called for a cultural revolution which precedes, makes possible and sustains our political struggles. And we taught that we must in our daily lives and relations prefigure the good world we struggle for, want and deserve to live in. We have not moved and will not move from this commitment to cultural revolution, radical social change and bringing good in the world.

Our philosophy, *Kawaida* and the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles) and *Kwanzaa*, which were created out of *Kawaida* and contain its views and values, are rooted in a profound commitment to our culture, to African culture as a whole – ancient and modern, continental and diasporan.

The *Nguzo Saba*, which we celebrate this 45th year of our work, struggle, service and institution building, is an African value system recovered and reconstructed in the midst of revolt and intensified struggle which stretched out and enveloped the country and linked itself with the liberation struggles of the world. The *Nguzo Saba*, like *Kawaida* itself, were developed to give foundation, framework and focus to our work, struggle and indeed our lives as

African people. And thus, millions of Africans on every continent and throughout the world African community embrace and practice these values, not only in the context of celebrating *Kwanzaa*, but also in building and maintaining organizations, institutions and projects, enriching and expanding their lives, and engaging the major issues of our times.

In this critical period of our lives and history, the *Nguzo Saba* teaches us ancient and enduring values in the context of a culture of struggle: *Umoja* (Unity), to practice principled and purposeful togetherness; *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination), to choose freely and boldly for the good; *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility), to share the responsibility for building the good world we all want and deserve; *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics), to share the work and wealth in and of the world; *Nia* (Purpose), to embrace the ancient ethical mission and meaning of human life of bringing good in the world; *Kuumba* (Creativity), to do always as much as we can in the way that we can in order to leave our community and world more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

And finally, *Imani* (Faith), which teaches us to believe in the good we seek to create, to be steadfast in the faith that will not forget New Orleans, Haiti, the Congo or the hungry and homeless, the ill and aged, and the victims of the oppression, injustice, occupation and other evils. Indeed, it teaches a faith that finds its way and life in work, and its strength and victory in the struggle to realize a new humanity and history of the world.

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