



**REMEMBERING MALCOLM AND MARTIN:
LIVING LIVES OF SERVICE AND SACRIFICE | PART 2**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

PART 2. IN THE MIDST OF THE RISING TIDE OF resistance and liberation struggles in this country and the world, Min. Malcolm taught that we must always be ready to make the ultimate sacrifice. Indeed, he said, “if you are not ready to die for freedom, put the word out of your vocabulary”. Moreover, he stated, “anytime you will show that you are willing to die for what you believe in, then, you will get respect and recognition” from foe and friend, enemy and ally. And he praised those militant Muslims committed to Black liberation, stressing their willingness to serve and sacrifice in the earlier years. He said of these dedicated men and women that they were “those who did not mind dying. They did not mind making a sacrifice. All they were interested in was freedom and justice and equality. And they would do anything to see it was brought about”.

Dr. King finds common ground with Malcolm concerning the cost of freedom. He says, “freedom has always been an expensive thing. History is fit testimony to the fact that freedom is rarely gained without sacrifice and self-denial”. And speaking of the centrality of sacrifice and struggle to human progress, Dr. King states that “Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable. Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle”.

Both Malcolm and King gave due credit to the strong women who supported them and who gave service and made sacrifice for the struggle. These men understood that no matter how strong they were themselves, the added strength given to them by conscious, capable and committed wives and women, made them who they were, sustained them and lifted them up when the burdens of history and struggle might have knocked them down and made their lives alone a winter world of constant and crippling cold.

Thus, Malcolm said, “I knew I had in Betty a wife who would sacrifice her life for me if the occasion presented itself”. And recognizing that

his work and own sacrifice for the struggle affected also his children, he noted that he prayed that, as Allah had blessed him with strength and support, “my wife and children will always be blessed for their sacrifice too”. And King pays rightful homage to his wife, Coretta, who stood tall in the struggle with him and sacrificed with him also. He says, “I am indebted to my wife Coretta, without whose love, sacrifices and loyalty, neither life nor work would bring fulfillment”.

It is in the spirit of Malcolm and all our ancestors who dared to wage struggle and dared to win that in 1965 we of Us took up the challenge and commitment to service and sacrifice *in righteous, relentless and revolutionary struggle* which they had assigned and modelled for us as an organization and as a people. And we declared to ourselves and the Movement “We must believe in our cause and be willing to die for it. As we should stop reading (and quoting) other people’s literature and write our own, and *stop pretending revolution and make it*”. And we also said, “If we fight we may be killed, but if we give in, we degrade ourselves and therefore cannot live with ourselves”.

Thus, we have constantly taught and practiced for over 52 years service and sacrifice for our people, our struggle and the advancement and securing of good in the world. And we have done this without backing down or finding some current fad or philosophy to justify abandonment of the struggle. We teach in Kawaida philosophy that sacrifice as a practice involves *self-giving* in at least five basic areas: the giving of heart and mind; time; effort; material goods; and ultimately the wholeness of oneself—whether in love, life or struggle.

There is clearly a need for increased service and sacrifice in these difficult, dangerous and demanding times. And each of us must become more active and engaged in the noble and necessary work to serve our people and be willing to sacrifice more for the advancement

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and victory of our struggle. This sacrifice can be small or great, but as the *Odu* (45:1) teaches, if you make a small sacrifice, you will get a small result. Likewise, if you make a great sacrifice, you will get a great result.

It is clear that making small sacrifices will not radically change the racist, oppressive and death-dealing ways this society treats and thinks of us. Indeed, a small sacrifice will not stop police violence; produce housing for the homeless, healthcare for all or rightful respect and assistance for the aged; or create and secure good jobs for the unemployed. And it will not provide culturally grounded quality education for our children or secure for them and us a future of freedom, justice and flourishing. We live in a society religiously committed to convenience, comfort and self-pleasuring. We have shortcuts and convenience paths to everything—convenient stores, convenient sex and salvation; and technologies of convenience and shortcuts to learning, relating and living. How then do we dare ask, let alone demand, a disciplined, dedicated life, love, work or struggle?

But we must. And in one sense, the sacrifice we talk of here is not completely unknown to us. We sacrifice when we eat less sweets and fat which we crave in order to lower or maintain weight for a healthy life. We sacrifice when we miss a TV program we like in order to study, do needed tasks or talk with friends and to reaffirm and strengthen our relationships. And we sacrifice when we give up buying less needed and greatly wanted items in order to purchase those things less wanted, but more needed. So, the challenge is to build on the experience and knowledge we have on the need and good of sacrifice, expand the practice in building character, honoring obligations, achieving good goals, bonding in relationships,

building family and community, bearing righteous witness and waging and winning struggles.

There is an uplifting beauty and great good in living a committed life of service and sacrifice. Indeed, as the ancestors taught “the good we do for others we are also doing for ourselves”. For we are building the good and caring community we all want and deserve to live in. The overwhelming majority of us will never have to make the life and death decisions about sacrifice Malcolm and Martin did. But we still need to serve and sacrifice, if we are ever to truly free ourselves, be ourselves, and build the good families, community, society and world we want and deserve for ourselves and all those who come after us. So, in the spirit of Min. Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King and of all our honored ancestors, let us dare to serve and sacrifice, doing all we can in the way we can in order to leave our community (and world) more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it as the Sixth Principle, *Kuumba* (Creativity) of the *Nguzo Saba* teaches us.

AND SURELY THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR small and great service and sacrifice in our *strivings* and *struggles* to: wake up every morning with love in our hearts and struggle on our minds; to live a good and righteous life, being caring, compassionate, just and generous; to love life and learning; to honor our obligations to family, community and self; to think continuously and deeply about the goodness we’ve experienced and wish, work and struggle to bring into being and secure; to do well any task we undertake; and to embrace and advance always the sacred charge of our ancestors to constantly and righteously repair, renew and remake ourselves and the world.

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