



**US' 55 YEARS OF UNBUDGING BLACKNESS:
AFRICA AS OUR MORAL IDEAL**
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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

PART 1. SINCE I FIRST CONCEIVED US AS A vanguard organization and called its founding meeting in the wake of the August Revolt and the martyrdom of Min. Malcolm X, we have been committed to three overarching and interrelated goals: cultural revolution, Black liberation and the radical reconception and reconstruction of American society. I proposed *Kawaida* as our grounding philosophy and the *Nguzo Saba* as the Black value system we need as a people to orient ourselves, rescue and reconstruct our lives, wage our liberation struggle, and build a new society and world. We said world because we were pan-Africanists and identified with the world African community. And we also saw ourselves with Min. Malcolm in world-encompassing ways because we defined ourselves as a part of the Dark World, the Third World, the Third Way forward to the future – neither capitalist nor communist – rather righteous, radical and revolutionary, part of the rising tide of human history. Indeed, we saw ourselves and our primary identity as African; everything else was a secondary identity.

I taught that we had no need to argue our humanity. It was a given and we could only trivialize it by arguing with our morally savage and radically evil oppressors. Our response to them could only be righteous and relentless resistance. And we also argued we must ground ourselves in our own culture as Seba Malcolm, Sekou Touré and Amilcar Cabral taught.

Certainly, there are all kinds of lessons for people who wish and want to read from the long 55-year struggle of our organization Us. For there are lessons of life, work and struggle from an organization that has undergone such severe suppression, political imprisonment of its leaders and members, and were forced underground and in exile by all kinds of state-sanctioned violence and efforts, including the Cointelpro, but did not break and will not

break. There are also lessons to learn about continuing on for 55 years in spite of vicious and continuing character assassination, vindictive exclusion from our rightful place in the history of the Black Freedom Movement and its Black Power period, and remain unembittered, unbowed, undaunted and undeterred.

And there is much to learn also from our two anchoring principles: *unbudging Blackness* and *Africa as our moral and spiritual ideal*. To talk of and practice unbudging Blackness requires a deep rootedness in Black culture. For it is a certain practice that proves our consciousness and commitment in ways worthy of the name and history African. We said early that Black is more than color. It is also culture and consciousness. After all, we reasoned there are dark Whites who can deceive with attitude and appearance as was recently demonstrated. And there are extremely light Blacks whose Black practice reflects their identity in ways lightness and darkness as simple colors don't.

We said color is phenotype, appearance and genotype, genetic root. But culture is views and values and practices that come from and shape those views and values. Thus, the practice is not only informed by those views and values, but also informs them in mutually interactive and expansive ways. By consciousness, we meant not simply awareness, but rather an active knowledge, a knowledge that translated into liberating practice and liberating struggle. Blackness was never a static fact, but an ongoing claim based on our daily demonstration of our commitment to our people, our culture and our liberation struggle. And culture was never simply art, literature, music, dance and symbol, but a comprehensive concept involving every level of life, especially in the areas of history, religion (spirituality and ethics), social organization, economic organization, political organization, creative production (art, music, literature, dance, etc.) and ethos, the collective

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psychology that develops as a result of activity in the other six areas.

We mark September 7, 1965 (6260) as the day of our founding which we call *Siku ya Kuanzisha* or just *Kuanzisha*. And we look back pleased at our 55-year history of work, struggle, service and institution-building. When we stood up, we called ourselves both nationalists and revolutionaries; nationalists, committed first and foremost to our people, and revolutionaries committed to the liberation struggle to free our people. In *The Quotable Karenga*, we said, "We are revolutionaries. We believe in change. We believe in being realistic. But as for reality we have come to change it." Inspired by Min. Malcolm, we also said in *The Quotable*, "We are the last revolutionaries in America. And if we fail to leave a legacy of revolution to our children, we have failed our mission and should be dismissed as unimportant."

Given such a commitment, how could we rest with an unfinished revolution, both the cultural revolution and the political one? Thus, each year and every five years we mark our anniversary. It is, of necessity, a time to rightly celebrate our resilience, resourcefulness, endurance and achievement, but also our unbudging Blackness and profound commitment we have to Africa as our moral ideal. And we rightly pay homage to all those who helped bring us to this point, those in our organization, living and having made transition, those in our families and communities that have supported us, and during the crisis sheltered us and aided us in going underground and in exile. And, of course, praise is due to our people who gave us the color, culture and consciousness, and taught us dignity-affirming, life-enhancing and world-preserving ways to live our lives, do our work and wage our struggle.

Indeed, it's from our people and to our people that our lives belong, that our struggle has meaning and ultimate value. For it's about our very lives, our freedom, our right to be ourselves in the sacred and social ways we love, live, work, struggle and create good out of the beauty of ourselves. We strive here and always to be ourselves and free ourselves and to measure ourselves in the mirror of the best of our culture and ask what is our weight and worth in the scales of our history, culture and struggle? And this again means we of Us embrace and engage Africa as our moral ideal by which we understand, measure, mold and assert ourselves in the world.

WHEN WE SAY AFRICA IS OUR *MORAL IDEAL*, we mean the source and expression of our highest views and values, our best practices and our most moral concepts of right relations with the Transcendent and Divine, with nature and other human beings. We speak here, then, not of present-day Africa with its colonial-left legacy and imperial impositions of dictators, mercenaries, religious and resource-driven wars, outright resource theft, and various other forms of oppression of our people. Rather, we speak of the moral ideal of the sacred texts and teachings of ancient Africa, the best ideas and practices of our people throughout the world African community in ancient, modern and current times. For we sacralized our people, our history and our culture. And we maintain firmly and without hesitation or hemming and hawing: There is no people more chosen, elect or divinely treasured, no lives more sacred or worthy of respect, and no history and culture more worthy of study, more instructive or richer in resources, internal creative capacity, and reaffirmations for life, work and struggle than our own. ▲

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