



**US MESSAGE WAITING:  
MAYBE GOT MAIL, BUT STILL GOT MISSION**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**E**ven in the Sixties and summer of our youth, and even though we hoped and wished it would be otherwise: we knew from all our reading, studying and rapidly unfolding experience, that the road to revolution was not an easy one, that there was no fast lane to liberation and that signs along the road saying, “quick solutions ahead on the right or left” were misleading, diversionary and dangerously deceptive. We knew too that our commitment to our people and our struggle could not be short-term, temporary or termed out. And we knew also from the lessons of history and our ancestors that we are our own liberators, and that neither the number nor sincerity of our allies are a substitute for our own will, work and struggle to liberate ourselves and write our own chapter in the constantly unfolding history of humankind.

And so, here we are now, 45 years later, among the last ones standing who thought then and still think now that it is a special blessing to be Black, an incentive for excellence, and an obligation to struggle for good in the world. Indeed, it is a moral obligation and a sign of psychological health to be who we are without reservation, without the need to explain ourselves away, and without the belief we need to alter ourselves in any way to be accepted by our oppressor or embraced by his changeling children. Surely, we are also among the last and faithful few who believe in the sacredness and centrality of our own life for us, that there is no people more holy, no history more sacred and worthy of being told and taught than our own, and that we need not deny or diminish our own existence and worth to show others deserved and rightful respect.

Yebo, we are still here, obviously older, hopefully and humbly wiser; still working and struggling; minds and hearts “still stayed on freedom,” and singularly unimpressed with the post-racial pabulum, placebos and fantasies fed to those who hunger for acceptance under any conditions and at any cost. Indeed, it is no question or confusion for Us about the continuing injustice, inequity, unfreedom, suffering and unrepaired injuries that still exist in this society and the world and thus, the need for continued struggle.

So, we called and came to conference, not only to celebrate 45 years of work, service, struggle and institution-building, but also to remember thoughtfully, think deeply, relate warmly and recommit ourselves without reservation to the continuing struggle set forth by our ancestors in the *Husia*, i.e., the moral obligation “to bear witness to truth and set the scales of justice in their proper place among those who have no voice.” In a word, the *Odu Ifa* teaches, it is to honor our identity and ethical obligation as human beings, “divinely chosen to bring good in the world . . . and not let any good be lost.”

And the people came from cities and sites of work and struggle all over the country, to this 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Nguzo Saba Conference 2010, during the weekend of September 24-26, held every five years to mark the founding of the organization Us and the development of Kawaia philosophy and its core value system, the Nguzo Saba (The Seven Principles). It was an intergenerational gathering and dialog of activists and activist-scholars; educators and institution builders, performing artists, business persons and political leaders, supporters

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and those simply seeking what we used to unashamedly and publicly call a truly Black experience, a no-need-to-explain African way of being human, happy and outrageously hip in the world.

It was too a gathering of those who use Kawaida and the Nguzo Saba to ground and guide their lives, work and struggle and who are truly committed to constantly learning and practicing African ways of understanding and asserting themselves in the world. There was, then, a beautiful and mutually benefitting sharing of best ideas and practices in both intellectual and practical work.

As is our custom, we opened the conference pouring libation and paying rightful homage to the ancestors who lifted up the light that lasts and left for us the legacy that has led us to this place and time, still defiant, undefeated and undeterred. We are humbled having remained resistant and resourceful while so many have surrendered or deserted the struggle and many others have learned to satisfy themselves with simply being invited guests at other people's talks and tables.

On opening night we held a major Town Hall Forum on "Black Politics in the Age of Obama" with special briefings on New Orleans, Haiti and Africa. The combined message was: Serve the people, keep the faith, stay engaged, *raise your voice and vote*, and continue the unfinished struggle for social justice and real social change regardless. Our panels included a wide range of topics: Family and Community; Health and Wholeness of our people and the environment; Education for Life; Kawaida and the Academy; Creative Productions; Saidi/Simba Conversation; and Spirituality and Ethics.

The intergenerational exchange was wide-ranging, engaging and informed, not only by a critical understanding of history and current challenges confronting us as a world-historical people, but also by a clear and victorious conception of things and practices needed to forge a future worthy of the name and history African. As Dr. Freya Rivers, eminent educator and founder and former superintendent of the famed Sankofa Shule Academy reminded us, it was a cooperative striving for *sodayi*—Dogon for clear and depthful vision—excellence in practice and a resilience for which our people are known.

The keynote luncheon address was given by Dr. Molefi Kete Asante, professor of African American Studies, Temple University, founding theorist of Afrocentricity, author of the definitive work on this author, Kawaida and Us, titled *Maulana Karenga: An Intellectual Portrait* and currently working with the African Union on the unification of the continent. He spoke insightfully of the historical, current and future relevance of Kawaida and the Nguzo Saba in laying the foundation for a cultural revolution and the African renaissance. And he called for a continued victorious consciousness and righteous practice in honor of our ancestors and in the urgent interests of ourselves and future generations.

Surely we noted that we're in a new era of technology, but the need for an aware, organized and engaged people remains indispensable. For blogging and e-mailing will not end injustice, and self-focus on facebook will not free us. Thus the message and mission remain the same: cultural revolution, radical social change and *actively* bringing good in the world.

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