



**RECALLING KWANZAA WITH NANA LIMBIKO TEMBO:
REMEMBERING OUR WARM AND WONDERFUL DECEMBERS**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 12-28-23, p.C-1

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

IN THE SACRED TRADITION OF OUR ANCESTORS, I write you again this letter in loving memory and reaffirmation of your enduring meaning to me and all of us, reaching beyond time and space to share and shape together this moment of specialness as a sign and mirror of the goodness of it. For December and Kwanzaa have come again and brought again with them deep thoughts, serious missing and warm memories of you, my beloved sister and sacred friend. Indeed, even before climate change, our Decembers were always warm and wonderful in the way of togetherness we actually lived our lives, did our work and waged our shared struggle for good in the world.

For December is the month of Kwanzaa, of harvesting and sharing good, of celebrating and singing our sacred and soulful selves as a people; of special commitment to repair, renew and remake the earth and all in it, especially ourselves in the process; of *karamu* and feasting on the finest of African foods from everywhere; and of *lifting up the light that lasts*, that is to say, raising and recommitting ourselves to our highest values, dignity-affirming, life-enhancing and world-preserving values, especially the *Nguzo Saba*, the Seven Principles.

And it is a time, the ancestors teach us when “the edges of the years meet” and the old year yields to the new, and on *Siku ya Taamuli*, the Day of Meditation, we are to sit down, meditate on the awesome meaning of being African in the world and then, measure ourselves in the mirror of the best of our history and culture and ask ourselves where and how do we stand. It thus is a special month remembering, reaffirming and recommitment to family, community and culture and to the righteous and relentless struggle to bring and sustain good in the world. And together we always enjoyed and rejoiced in it, making miracles, working wonders, and bringing and increasing good in family, community and the world.

But December is also a time of warm memories and deep meaning because it is the month of our meeting and the beginning unfolding of our

sacred and forever friendship Nana Seba Limbiko Tembo. Thus, there is a special, expansive and enduring happiness here, even in the midst of my/our missing you greatly and still at times grievously. For there is this beautiful goodness we shared and continue to share with you, not only in personal memories and collective rituals of remembrance, but also in the many signs of your presence and meaning you left among and for us as a lasting legacy of good in the world.

Indeed, as we say of our ancestors and loved ones no longer with us physically: “Homage to you, beautiful Black and radiant spirit. You shall always be for us a glorious spirit in heaven and a continuing powerful presence on earth. You are counted and honored among the ancestors. Your name shall endure as a monument. And the good you have done on earth shall never perish or pass away”. *Hotep, Ase. Heri.*

It is early morning as usual when I write you and the sound of the movement of my memory and the world outside is soft. And I, we, greet you as always saying *subalkheri*, peace in the morning, beautiful Black and radiant spirit. I offer you *tambiko*, shared words and water in loving memory, ongoing appreciation and the ever-enduring good we’ve shared and share. As I have told you in letters before, each Kwanzaa I recall you in the midst of the joy and good of celebrating and practicing Kwanzaa in numerous and varied ways and various sites of gathering and sharing: at home and the Hekalu, in the community and travelling, and at public school and our school of African American Culture which now bears your name, the Limbiko Tembo School of African American Culture.

There you are in my mind, smiling and enjoying your life’s work, teaching the little ones African views and values that they will need to aid them in imagining and building the new and good world they deserve to live, grow, develop and flourish in. And you are also in my mind teaching at our Kwanzaa workshops sharing its ancient and modern origins, its rootedness in Kawaida philosophy with its stress on cultural grounding, living a principled life, and the

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necessity of internal and external liberation struggle for the new world we all want and deserve.

Also, I remember you teaching advocacy class, explaining the history, essential principles, protocols, philosophy and practices of our organization, Us. You are now around the table of the circle of advocates or the executive circle and you are laughing or looking serious; silently thoughtful or actively assertive; being firm or flexible as you determined necessary, but as Kawaida teaches, always receptive to consensus. I remember you too active in the community, building relations, attending meetings and participating in our collective demonstrations, advancing the interests of our people.

There are many lifetimes of memories of the things we've done and shared together and again it is the legacy lived by us, that not only opens the way for you to live forever among us as with all our ancestors, but also enriches and expands our lives and models how we ourselves will be remembered, raised up and honored. Since last time we talked when I wrote you, Nana Mpinduzi Khuthaza, another of our Saidi and all-seasons soldiers, has made transition, risen in radiance in the heavens and now sits in the sacred circles of the ancestors with Nana Wasifu Tangulifu, Nana Robert Tambuzi and Nana Omowale Tambuzi and you, among the doers of good, the righteous and rightfully rewarded. Give them all warm greetings from us and tell them we still continue the struggle, keep the faith, hold the line, and maintain the principle and practice of unbudging Blackness.

I am still working on my last chapter on my manuscript on Haji Malcolm in between a myriad and more of interruptions, interventions and

urgencies at the university and in the contemplation and conduct of my daily and detailed life. My sense, however, is that I am, and need and will be, finished in '24. Indeed, the other books I am simultaneously working on are calling and demanding to be engaged and completed also. And I look forward to turning to them, for I do enjoy all I do, my relational, intellectual and practical work and exchanges. Tiamoyo, Chimbuko and I also still have not returned to San Francisco to go to the bookstores and places on the wharf, the four of us enjoyed visiting. It was to be and will be a ritual of remembrance and reaffirmation of the good we shared and share and a kind of *tambiko* to you, inviting and evoking your sacred presence.

THE SUN HAS RISEN, THE MIST HAS LIFTED, and I do not hear the seagulls or see the pretty birds we used to watch from the window. And the world and all in it is currently plagued by unspeakable suffering, massive death and wanton destruction. But still the wind blows gently and plays with the leaves and still the rains come and the rainbow appears which for me is the appearance of your signature kente cloth and a sign of the indestructible good and beauty in the world. Surely, the daily rising of the sun opens up the day and path for continued resistance and reordering of the world, regardless of the Borg-like genocide and ecocide committed by the would-be "holy emperors" of a world gone by. And certainly, we and all the oppressed and struggling peoples of the world will eventually and inevitably be victorious and free through all our world changing work and righteous and relentless struggle for a shared and inclusive good in and for the world.▲

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