



**US STILL STEADFAST IN THE STRUGGLE:
228 SEASONS OF RIGHTEOUS RESISTANCE**
Los Angeles Sentinel, 09-01-22, p.C1

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

THIS SEPTEMBER 7TH AND THE WHOLE month, I am honored and uplifted in beautiful and sustaining ways to celebrate in praise and thanks with all our advocates (members), those present and those no longer with us, and with all our sustainers, supporters and well-wishers, this the 57th anniversary of our organization Us and the *Nguzo Saba*, the Seven Principles, this Black value system embraced throughout the world African community. Indeed, the *Nguzo Saba* are not only engaged globally during the celebration of the Pan-African holiday, *Kwanzaa*, but also used to ground ourselves, build organizations, institutions and programs, and to direct our lives toward good and expansive ends.

And we offer *tambiko*, sacred water and words of praise and thanks to our ancestors all, the lifters up of the light that lasts, the way-openers; builders of the unbreakable bridges to cross over; those who rode the storms and remained intact; those who bloomed even in the mist of the whirlwind; those who specialized in the wholly impossible; and those who were not burned by fire or wet by water. And may we honor the legacy they left us by the way we live our own lives, do our work and wage our struggles.

In spite of all the negative things we have encountered and continue to overcome, these 57 years and 228 seasons have been a beautiful, meaningful and deeply transformative journey and struggle for us. We have weathered countless storms of adversity, survived savage police suppression and political imprisonment, endured underground existence and exile, deaths, desertions and decades of character assassination, and have known intimate and painful betrayal, trauma,

tragedy, and battle fatigue. And we've often wondered silently and aloud when will the struggle end in victory and how much more will have to be given and sacrificed before we see and can live a truly liberated life.

But we have never doubted the righteousness and victory of our cause, our struggle for an inclusive, expansive and shared African and human good and the well-being of the world. And we have never doubted the rightness and value of our honor and obligation to serve our people. At the very beginning of our organization, we chose the name "Us" and our motto, "Anywhere we are, Us is" to affirm and reaffirm this enduring and unbreakable commitment to our people.

Embedded and enshrined in our choice of the name "Us" for our organization are both affirmation and evidence of our commitment to our people, to righteous and relentless resistance to our oppressor, and to communitarian African sensitivities, thought and practice. The choice of the name Us first affirms our uncompromisable priority commitment to our people, African people, everywhere, beginning with African Americans. In a word, our central and priority concerns are about Us, us as a people and us as part of the global African community. The name Us also was chosen to draw a clear line of demarcation, difference and distinction between us, the people, and them, the oppressor. Most often, in the beginning, we stressed this aspect of the meaning of Us because we were talking and working in the context of a recent revolt and ongoing righteous and relentless struggle. And constantly drawing a line between us and them, our people and our oppressor was and is important. Indeed, this red, black and green line of demarcation,

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difference and distinction between us and the oppressor is both a measure of the Africanness, rightfulness and radical character of our sensitivities, thought and practice and a clear reminder that the oppressor cannot be our teacher, is not morally capable of self-motivated reform, and must be confronted in struggle and deprived of the structural capacity to oppress and impose on others.

And we named ourselves Us to affirm and reaffirm our commitment to a communitarian way of life, as expressed in the *Nguzo Saba* and interrelated values, views, sensitivities and practices. This communitarian way of understanding and asserting ourselves in the world begins with embracing the principle and practice of *Umoja* (Unity). It calls for a sense of oneness, of being *with* and *for* each other, as family, community, nation (people) and race (our world African community). Moreover, it reminds us we come into being in relationship and that with every relationship comes an obligation of doing reciprocal good. It is knowing in the words of our ancestors in the *Husia* that “the good we do for others we are also doing for ourselves.” For we are building the good and beautiful world we all want and deserve. And *Umoja* teaches us the African ethical concept of the oneness of our people, the common ground of our humanity, and our shared identity and interests with the whole world and all in it. For we are not only Africans and human beings, but also world beings (*walimwengu*) deeply involved in the history, current conditions and the problematic fate or promising future of the world.

In a world where systems of oppression deny the rights of persons and people to rule themselves, to control their very bodies, and to live their conception of the good as they see it without harm to others and the environ-

ment, *Kujichagulia* (Self-determination) affirms and upholds the right and responsibility of every person and people to control their own bodies and their own destinies and daily lives and engage the world in their own culturally grounded way. It understands freedom as a natural right and fosters rightful resistance to all efforts to deny or diminish it. *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility) teaches the principle and practice of building together the good relationships, communities, societies and world we all want and deserve. In a context where corporations monopolize wealth, claim the earth as their own and plunder, pollute and deplete it without conscience, *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics) teaches shared work and wealth, the goods of the earth as a shared good to be protected and preserved, and the right of all to a life of dignity free from domination, deprivation and degradation.

The principle and practice of *Nia* (Purpose) instructs and urges us to embrace the central value of serving, uplifting and liberating our people and doing good in and for the world. *Kuumba* (Creativity) tells and teaches us to practice the ancient African ethical imperative of repairing, renewing and remaking our communities and the world, making them more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited them. And *Imani* (Faith) teaches and inspires us to believe in our people, in the righteousness and victory of our struggle and in the good we do and seek to bring and sustain in the world.

These 57 years and 228 seasons have found us still standing, serving our people, striving to be present everywhere and anywhere we are needed and able, and joining those willing to work and struggle together for the shared goods of life and liberation. And during these 57 years of love,

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work, service, institution building and struggle, we are often asked how we are able to stay steadfast in our original commitment to Black liberation on every level, to maintain a bold and unbudging Blackness and to not be defeated, dispirited or diverted when so many persons and organizations have not been willing or able to do so.

ON ONE HAND, WE SAY IT IS BASED ON the strength gained and sustained in struggle based on the level of our leadership, the anchoring and explanatory power of our philosophy, *Kawaida*, and the resourcefulness and resilience of our organization, Us, rooted in the quality of our relations. On the other hand, we say that our resilience and durability are rooted in three interlocking reasons. First, it is because of our sense of obligation to our ancestors, to

continue their struggle and live their legacy; to our people now, to aid them in their liberation and upliftment; and to future generations, to leave them a world better and more beautiful than we inherited! Secondly, we say, we stay steadfast in our work and struggle also because it is a vital part of our identity, how we understand ourselves as all-seasons soldiers, servants of the people, tradition keepers, builders of a new world, and self-conscious contributors to a new history and hope for Africans and humankind. And finally, we say, we stand and stay steadfast with unbudging Blackness because we enjoy the work we do and the liberating struggles we wage in pursuing the possibility and promise of an inclusive, expansive and shared ongoing good for the whole world and all in it.▲

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