



**ACHIEVING JUSTICE FOR GEORGE FLOYD:
RADICALLY REIMAGINING AND REBUILDING AMERICA**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

PART 1. THE TRANSFORMATIVE FIRES AND formations of revolt and rebellion have reached around the world in rightful resistance to police violence against Black men, women and children and against the system of savage racism which fosters, facilitates and sanctions it at virtually every level of social life. In North America, the Caribbean, Africa, South America, Asia, Western Asia (Middle East), the Islands of the Seas, Australia and Europe, the rallying and battle cries of “Black Lives Matter,” “I Can’t Breathe,” and “No Justice No Peace” are raised and heard in powerful, unavoidable and transformative ways.

In this week of his funeral, we pay homage to George Floyd, honored martyr among countless other martyrs whose brutal murders have brought us to this time of turning in our long and life-honoring struggle against police violence and for racial justice and liberation. And it is *the larger liberation struggle* that must always be kept in mind; otherwise we will assume a battle we win is the end of the struggle and leave the system intact. For make no mistake, killer cops are not acting without assumed and constant approval and regular vindication by the system they serve when they are put on trial for degrading, disabling and murderous violence. Thus, it is the system itself, the system of racism and racist violence that must be dismantled, radically reimagined and rebuilt in dignity-affirming, life-enhancing and world-preserving ways. Therefore, training, civilizing, defunding or even dismantling the police force is but one site of the overall struggle against the various forms of racial and human oppression that need to be overcome and ended.

We pay homage also to the Black people of Minneapolis and their allies who rose up together in a massive multi-racial and intergenerational social force in resistance to the cold-blooded torture-murder of George Floyd by a White police officer in broad daylight with obviously no fear of penalty, since he had been absolved of the use of excessive force many times before. It is

these brave and determined demonstrators, who risking their health, safety and lives in the midst of the pandemic and continuing police violence, rushed in resistance to the battlefield, declaring that George Floyd’s death would not be dismissed, ruled in policy and go uncontested in the public square.

And let us also and always pay rightful homage to the Black people of Ferguson and their allies, who marked a turning point in the recent and long-term struggle against police violence in their resistance to the killing of the teenager, Michael Brown, in 2014 and have continued their struggle ever since. We must remember and study our history so we can learn its lessons; absorb its spirit of struggle and possibility; extract and emulate its models of human excellence and achievement; and practice the morality of remembrance of those sturdy “bridges that carried us over” as Fannie Lou Hamer taught us.

And in this careful study, we also gain an accurate picture of *our struggle evolving* and *ourselves unfolding* in the midst of that struggle. It is in the light of this rich treasure of life lessons, memory and struggle linkage that the ancestors in the sacred text, the *Husnia*, urges us to study history carefully. For, they say, “if those who fight on the battlefield are unaware of the past, success will elude them. For they are unaware of what they should know.”

As we have said earlier, the struggle we wage is against two viruses, the pandemic of COVID-19 and the pathology of oppression. And it is an irony and tragedy of history and humanity that Donald Trump provides us with defining negative images and practices of this period which is one of the most dangerous, difficult and demanding times in our history in this country and in the history of this country. And these symbols are: the bunker as a prelude to the police state; the bible as a political prop; and the condition of the country as a burning house.

Trump’s peacocking, petty, pernicious and crude pretense of being president has helped create a condition of the burning house. It’s

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worthy noting that another way to understand the burning house analogy is the concept of a *failed state*. This means a state that can no longer claim legitimacy and cannot provide the capacity and conditions for its citizens to live a life of dignity and decency. Trump has called African and Latin American countries filthy names which more resemble the content of his mind and mouth, essentially characterizing them as failed states.

But let's look at his failed state of America. It is the world center of the COVID-19 pandemic with 2 million infected and 111,000 dead. Trump had said it was a hoax and would soon pass away. And he wasted at least 2 months lying to himself and the American people about the virus with no preparation and plan at the federal level, reducing governors to bargaining on e-bay for personal protective equipment. The economy is in shambles; unemployment is high especially for us, 16.5%, and 40 million people have applied for unemployment benefits with 24.5 million receiving them. Poverty and homelessness abound and racist healthcare inequities contribute to high Black infections and death rate which are 6 times and 3 times higher than Whites. Even the middle-class is experiencing food insecurity, lining up in luxury cars for bags of food. Now Trump is rushing people back to dangerous places of work and business for election considerations and to quiet their obvious anger, dissatisfaction and anxiety which he has either caused or contributed to greatly. And he regularly fires and muzzles scientists and health professionals to paint imaginary portraits of progress in the midst of a burning house of devastation.

The image of America as a burning house emerges most vividly during the Black Freedom Movement of the 60s, somewhat in its Civil rights phase, but clearly in its Black Power phase with

Black people in righteous and relentless resistance and the cities burning or having been burned. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had said in the last years of his life that he believed we were winning the struggle for "civil rights," as a narrow category of rights, but not the larger struggle for freedom – political freedom and economic justice, especially for the poor and disenfranchised. Thus, he said, "I have come to believe we are integrating into a burning house." He was "afraid that America has lost the moral vision she might have had and that she does not see the need for justice and opportunity for the underclass," the vulnerable, the least among us. And in his ever forgiving and optimistic way, he counselled us saying, "Let us not stand by and let the house burn."

MALCOLM, ON THE OTHER HAND, SAW THE persistent plague of racism and the hypocrisy and savage violence at the heart of it as deeply engrained, endemic and pervasive, indeed, pandemic. He called on the White man to change his evil and diabolical ways or face the righteous wrath of God, Black people and the world. He told the oppressor that his house was dirty and told us that we should tell him verbally and in struggle that "if he doesn't clean up his house, he shouldn't have no house. It should catch fire and burn down." He concluded that White Americans should not condemn him for letting them know, it's already on fire and burning; that it must be radically reimagined and reconstructed; and that we, Black people, must play our historic leading moral and social vanguard role in opening a new horizon for African and human good and the well-being of the world.▲

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