



**CIVILITY NO SOLUTION TO OPPRESSION:  
ONLY RELENTLESS RESISTANCE WILL END IT**

*Los Angeles Sentinel, 07-11-18, p.A6*

**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**I**N THIS “GREAT” AND GROWING MEDICAL center that America is becoming, and where there is passing out pills, placebos and propaganda for almost every illness, illusion and uncomfortableness imaginable, it is only to be expected that the established order would develop and use ideological versions of these in its psychological war against oppressed and struggling peoples. And its recent pushin’ and hard selling of the *sedative of civility* demonstrates that it is such a pill and placebo in its ideological arsenal. It is designed and used to indict and condemn critics of injustice, evil and oppression to divert them from these real issues and deny their right and responsibility to resist. But it is peddled to sedate and seduce the larger public and give them placebo comforting illusions that oppression is not the issue, righteous resistance is; that if those who resist would be less vocal, assertive and insistent, a solution would gradually be found; and that *the past and current uncivil war* waged against our peoples is not to be counted or considered as prior and continuing offenses and assaults against us. And if we do confront them, they want to set the time, place and manner in which it is done.

Moreover, they want us, the country and world, to believe that what they have done and are doing to our people and others similarly situated and vulnerable is no cause for active and assertive concern. In other words, they want to be exempt from confrontation for the hatred, hostility and depraved disregard for the lives and rights of Black people and other people of color that they *impose as public policy and socially sanctioned practice*.

They want us to forget the lessons learned in our long and awesome history of righteous and relentless struggle. But this we know and will not forget: *civility is no solution to oppression and only righteous and relentless struggle will end it*. Indeed, our history of long, difficult and demanding struggle also teaches that we must always set aside the illusions offered us and continue and intensify the struggle. For as Ella Baker taught us,

“We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.” And thus, we cannot restrain ourselves in struggle; cannot be lax or led to believe that civility is a solution or substitute for the radical change we need to end the racist and all other forms of oppression people suffer. As she states, “the system under which we now exist has to be radically changed,” for it is literally killing us and those similarly situated and vulnerable.

Inherent in this deceptive and hypocritical call for civility and condemnation of confrontation of the oppressor and oppression everywhere are attempts to tie it to both irresponsible activity and violence. Min. Malcolm taught us that this is a standard tactic of the oppressor to discredit and deter resistance. He observed how the established order seeks to silence and crush resistance by associating it with violence and criminalizing it. Using lynching as an example, he says that they redefine victim and victimizer “If (we) do anything to stop the man from putting that rope around (our) neck.”

Moreover, he says they don’t want us to scream out against the evil and injustice being committed against us. Instead, according to the oppressor, we are to be “responsible, respectable and polite,” even deferential, i.e., civil. Imagine this he asks us. “You’re supposed to have a rope around your neck and holler politely. You’re supposed to watch your diction, not shout and wake other people up. You’re supposed to be respectable and responsible when you holler against what they are doing to you.”

Thus, he says, “You will always be (a) slave as long as you’re trying to be responsible and respectable in the eyesight of your (oppressor).” Indeed, to be free and to end oppression, we must act outrageously “irresponsible” in the eyes of the oppressor and rightfully responsible in the eyes and interests of the people, the masses, the oppressed and struggling people of our community, this country and the world. There is no dignity and security in silence and acceptance in the midst of oppression and even in the face of discrediting, imprisonment and death, we must

**CIVILITY NO SOLUTION TO OPPRESSION:  
ONLY RELENTLESS RESISTANCE WILL END IT**

*Los Angeles Sentinel, 07-11-18, p.A6*

**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

confront evil, injustice and oppression, regardless. Surely, this is an essential meaning of Queen Mother Moore's classic statement that "those who seek temporary security rather than basic liberty, deserve neither." As Frederick Douglass taught, "power concedes nothing without demand" and liberation is only "born of earnest struggle." And we are reminded of the lessons of life and struggle given us by Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer who taught us that even if we are tired of being tired, we cannot rest or reason ourselves out of struggle, for on the long and rugged road to freedom "every step of the way you've got to fight."

The whole of our history teaches us that we must radically confront evil and injustice everywhere. It teaches us also, Kawaida maintains, that our oppressor cannot be our teacher. They have neither the moral status, the human sensitivity nor the required ethical reasoning to offer us anything, but models and mirrors of what we ought not to be or become. Who are these people that would dare counsel us to be civil in the face of the continued uncivil and savage oppression imposed on us and in the face of their denying civility, sanctuary, asylum, security or similar beneficial and life-sustaining conditions to others?

Who are these people who would dare to counsel us to not confront them everywhere when they kidnap and abuse children, criminalize racial groups and nations, finance and build apartheid walls in the world, legalize racial and religious bans, undermine voting rights and workers' rights and representation, regularly send drones to drop bombs on innocents around the world, brutally occupy Haiti, and actively support and engage in the destructive occupation and overthrow of countries who resist imperial racial and religious domination? And who are these other people called liberals counselling caution, civility and

healing while systemic bloodletting continues, those who Min. Malcolm and Dr. King said are one of our greatest problems, those who helped elect this reprehensible representative of the monster side of America and are now going through morning-after regret after an unprincipled submission to him?

Can there really be peace without justice? Can we in good conscience support security for oppressors who deny it to others? Is there any morality in allowing the disabling and death-dealing business of oppression to proceed as usual without raising our voices and resisting it everywhere it occurs: in the streets; restaurants; radio and tv stations; the internet; schools and universities; worksites; corporate offices; religious institutions; police stations and commissions; legislatures and city halls; athletic stadiums and elsewhere?

**C**learly, it has been from the beginning our battle cry—*no justice, no peace*. It has also been *our moral understanding that we have the right and responsibility to confront and resist evil, injustice and oppression everywhere*. Furthermore, it's clear that as Paul Robeson taught, "The battlefield is everywhere. There is no sheltered rear." And this applies to both the oppressed and the oppressor. Silence and submission will not shelter us and paralyzing fear, funds and favors are not worthy of our dignity and freedom. And the oppressor must also know he has no immunity from criticism and no sheltered place for the doing of evil and injustice and the practice of oppression and will be confronted everywhere. So again, we raise up the battle cry—*No Justice, No Peace!* And this battle cry, we raise also: "*Everywhere a battleline, everyday a call to struggle!*"

---

Dr. Maulana Karenga, Professor and Chair of Africana Studies, California State University-Long Beach; Executive Director, African American Cultural Center (Us); Creator of Kwanzaa; and author of *Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture* | *Essays on Struggle: Position and Analysis*, [www.AfricanAmericanCulturalCenter-LA.org](http://www.AfricanAmericanCulturalCenter-LA.org); [www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org](http://www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org); [www.MaulanaKarenga.org](http://www.MaulanaKarenga.org).