



**HOLDING GROUND IN THE HURRICANE:  
REMEMBRANCE, REAFFIRMATION AND RIGHTEOUS STRUGGLE**

*Los Angeles Sentinel, 09-07-17, p.A6*

**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**W**E OF THE ORGANIZATION US meet this weekend to mark our 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary like we did our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in the shadow of the shattered lives and battered hopes of our people and others, created by the destructive fury of a hurricane, this time Harvey, then Katrina. And we rightfully pause to pay homage to those who lost their lives, to reaffirm our continuing concern for and commitment to the living, and to renew our revolutionary vow to continue the struggle, keep the faith, hold the line, and not walk away from the battlefield until the struggle is won. Whatever the devastation endured and the lessons learned from the catastrophic effect of Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Katrina remains a metaphor for not only the destructive force and fury of nature, but also natural disaster augmented and aggravated by human callousness and criminal neglect by the established order. And this established order is permeated with race and class considerations that devalue, deprive and degrade the darker, poorer, more vulnerable persons and peoples of society.

It is good, then, that we remember the lessons learned from that great suffering, cold and callous treatment and righteous struggles waged for justice, for rescue, relief and rebuilding for our people as well as others. For now, it seems so easy and natural to be engaged in episodic emergency talk about being American and Americans helping Americans in times of crisis in Houston, and forget that neither this spirit nor conversation were evident in New Orleans. On the contrary, a whole people were indicted, left to fend for itself while police preyed and plundered, FEMA was out to lunch and late in coming, neighboring towns refused entrance and support, and the President flew over up above the suffering masses, surveying the damage and devastation but doing very little to relieve it.

We also had such a rush of various media-pushed Americana after 9/11, but even a cursory review of the record reveals all Americans were not treated equally in relief, disbursements and narratives told and held high.

And Houston relief and rebuilding have just begun and there is the need for special attention to what is called “low income communities” whose problems and prospects are different than the more capable and connected areas and others.

Therefore, whatever happens in Houston, it will not turn out well without real vigilance, active intervention at every level and righteous and relentless struggle for racial and social justice in this crisis and afterwards in Houston. And indeed, the struggle must be waged also simultaneously throughout this country we call America the beautiful and the great, contrary to and covering up all that’s not.

And so, this has been a key role for our organization, Us, in the midst of our educating, mobilizing, organizing, institution-building and confronting the powers that be for 52 years, to speak truth to the people and to the powers that be, no matter how unsettling, inconvenient, dangerous and difficult to digest it might be. And it has been to teach by lecture, lesson and active example love for and commitment to our people and our liberation struggle; neither buying nor selling air sandwiches and being ever ready to wage struggle and to make the hard and ultimate sacrifice in the interest of good in our community and freedom and justice in the world.

For Us, the 60s will always be a model and mirror by which we measure ourselves, a critical context in which we defined ourselves and a source of light and lessons by which we make our way in the world. And it is a fundamental and unforgettable time in which we self-consciously and seriously lived out in a special way the ancestral ethical imperative: to know our past and honor it; to engage our present and improve it; and to imagine a whole new future and forge it in the most ethical, effective and expansive ways. And we have not taken a vacation from struggle since and have never doubted the righteousness of our cause, the victory of our struggle or our peoples’ capacity and will to hold their ground in the midst of the

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hurricanes of history, regardless of the odds against us.

In this fundamental time of tumult, testing and turning, *we marked out the priority field of our struggle, the battlefield of culture, without neglecting or denying the importance of the political and other struggles in which we engaged also*. It was the comprehensive way we defined culture that included all we think, feel and do. As was said in the *Quotable Karenga*, “Everything that we do, think or learn is somehow interpreted as a cultural expression. So, when we discuss politics, economics, (or) community organization, that to Us is a sign of culture”.

Thus, we define culture “as the totality of thought and practice by which a people creates itself, celebrates, sustains and develops itself and introduces itself to history and humanity”. And in the context of struggle, we agree with Toure, Fanon and Cabral that “the national liberation struggle is an act of culture”. As the *Quotable* says, “Culture provides the bases for revolution and recovery”, recovery of the best of our culture and using it in the service of the liberation struggle.

And so, we waged and continue to wage the cultural revolution, seeking a radical transformation of values, from anti-human values of racism, classism, sexism and all the other constraints on human life, human well-being and flourishing, using the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles) as our foundational and framework forward. This meant and means not only waging an *ideological* and *practical* struggle against society in its racist, capitalist, sexist and other forms of oppression by religion, sexuality, age, ability, etc. It means also, as Cabral tells us, struggling against our own weaknesses, turning our weaknesses into strengths in service

to our people and in advancement of the liberation struggle.

Black, we said in Us, is not only beautiful, it’s sacred, infused with the divine, excellent in all things good, possessing dignity and divinity, and as chosen, elect and divinely approved and appointed as any other people. Indeed, our ancestors and sacred texts tell us we are divinely *chosen* to bring good in the world. And we are chosen not over or against any other humans, but chosen *with* all humans to bring and increase good in the world and not let any good be lost (Odu 78:1). So, we are not reluctant or reserved in advancing and advocating Black interests or in saying “We’re on the case for the race”, our people, oppressed, suffering and righteously resisting, and at their best unbowed, unbroken and unbreakable, resilient, resourceful, self-respecting, and with nothing “Blackish” or post-racial about them. And yes, they are and must be self-conscious conceivers and creators of the good world we deserve and demand in and through dedicated and diligent work, and righteous and relentless struggle.

This Sunday, September 10, we will have a *kikoa*, a communal meal and conversation, to celebrate our founding on September 7, 1965 here in Los Angeles. It will be a rightful remembrance, reaffirmation and recommitment to righteous struggle and to honor our ancestors, advocates (members) and supporters who made us possible, sustained us in these five decades of defiant righteous and relentless struggle. The community is always welcome and urged to come and celebrate themselves and our people in this sacred space—the *Hekalu*, the African American Cultural Center, 3018 West 48<sup>th</sup> Street, Los Angeles.

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