



**“KAMALA AND OUR PURSUIT OF JOY AND JUSTICE:
BUILDING RELATIONS OF RECIPROCITY AND RESISTANCE”**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

IT IS GOOD TO SEE THE KAMALA CAMPAIGN centering on joy in the struggle to defeat those who would outlaw love, laughter and learning; arrest and lay waste the world; build segregation walls of steel and stone, hatred and hostility between persons and peoples; deny freedom and justice; and legalize narrow notions of shared and common good, favoring themselves and excluding others. And it is also good, exceedingly good, that we as a people, a Black people, an African people, are standing Malcolm straight and Tubman strong as a key vanguard and central source of resistance to this social madness and moral evil, and posing a compelling path forward to a new future.

We as a people come to this particular battlefield in the ongoing struggle for inclusive and shared good as all-seasons soldiers, steadfastly serving, sacrificing and fighting to secure and expand the realm of freedom and justice since we arrived here. And though we came in chains, we did not hug them, but every day aspired and acted to break them in varied internal and external ways. Moreover, ours is a history of deep thought and righteous and relentless struggle for good in the world. Indeed, we bring to the talking table and battlefield a much discussed and most ancient moral commitment to bring good into the world, an inclusive and shared good. And our honored ancestors teach and tell us we are to do this in joy and justice for everyone.

In the sacred text of our ancestors, *The Odu Ifa*, we are taught we should do things with joy, for humans are chosen to bring, preserve and increase good in the world. The text says, “Let’s do things with joy. . . For surely humans have been divinely chosen to bring good into the world”. And this, we discern and declare, is the fundamental mission and meaning of human life. Moreover, the sacred text says, we must “struggle to increase good in the world and not let any good be lost”. Here we’re reminded of Nana Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune teaching that “We must remake the world. The task is nothing less than that”.

So, this is the beauty of this sacred text and teaching that all humans are chosen, and they are chosen, not over or against anyone, but chosen with everyone to bring, preserve and increase good in the world. And they are to do it with deep, delicious and ongoing joy. *The Odu Ifa* also says that in joyfully doing good in the world, we must “speak truth, do justice, be kind and do not do evil”. Thus, joy must be and is in its most beautiful and satisfying form a shared good and one rooted and reaffirmed in *our current and future relations* with each other. Here our honored ancestors stress that the good world we seek to bring into being requires that we prefigure in our relations with each other, others and the earth, the good world and future we want and work for and clearly deserve. And we are to do this in caring, considerate and non-injurious ways.

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Thus, this world, the new and good world, this future we collaborate, cooperate and commit to build must be *one of not only joy, but also of justice*. And it must be a joy of working and struggling not only for ourselves, but also for all, especially the most vulnerable among us in this country and the world. Surely, there is something vulgarly selfish, sick and seriously wrong with preaching and practicing fake gladness and continuing gloom, doom, domination and destruction of others. But it is also immoral and unconscionable to be happy at the expense of others or in depraved, callous or silent disregard for the death, suffering and oppression of others.

Joy, like justice and all great human goods, are best shared. Indeed, Kawaida philosophy teaches that the greatest goods are shared goods – love and life; our freedom and our future; marriage, family and friendship; health and happiness; and joy and justice, all shared goods. So, let’s do things with joy and work and struggle to make joy rooted in justice, freedom and other goods, a shared good for all peoples of the world.

To speak of building relations of reciprocity emphasizes the ethical obligation of returning the good we are given, responding rightfully to the needs and request of those who give, support and sustain us. Here, I refer to the practice of cherishing and challenging Kamala Harris and Tim Walz to live up to the promises they make, to come to and from the Democratic Convention with a platform that recognizes and responds rightfully

and reciprocally to the support given and promised from our people and others and to commit to principles, policies and practices that reaffirm and justify our joy and hope for the future. And yes, we do need unity to defeat Trump, but it’s not just Trump or his supporters, enablers and sustainers that must be defeated, but the system and way of life and death they peddle and push, represent and reenforce. And we cannot defeat it or radically change it by catering to it to win and thereby betray the trust of the people who rose up and rallied for a new way forward in hopeful, history-making, joyful and justice-seeking ways.

So, we are called not only to build relations of reciprocity with Kamala, cherishing and challenging her to keep the faith and hold the line she declares and promises, we must also practice righteous and relentless resistance internally and externally. This the meaning of Nana Frantz Fanon’s assertion that real freedom from oppression, in this case colonialism, will mean “not only the disappearance of colonialism, but also the disappearance of the colonized person”. In other words, it will not only mean the disappearance of the system of oppression in all its forms, but also the disappearance within us of the sensibilities, thought and practice the system has embedded in us. The principle and practice of resistance speaks to the ethical obligation to continue and intensify the struggle for good in this country and the world from every vantage point we can, and to achieve our own self-transformation in the process of radically

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transforming society. And resistance is not only opposition to our oppressor, but also affirmation of ourselves and our ongoing aspiration for a constantly expanding, inclusive and shared good in the world.

We say we must, in our lives, work and struggle, find ways to pursue the good regardless, to speak truth to the people and to power in the most difficult, dangerous and demanding times. We must, our sacred texts teach us, bear witness to truth and actively set the scales of justice in their proper place, especially among the vulnerable, the silenced and suffering, the poor and disempowered, the devalued and degraded, the dispossessed and downtrodden, and the victims of unfreedom, oppression, injustice and genocide.

And we must not talk of the country as an abstract and self-deluding ideal, “perfect and needing only to be made more perfect” which are phrases made for manipulation in campaign messages rather than the material out of which the

good society and sustainable world can be made. On the contrary, we must see this country, not as a White, finished and perfect product, but as an unfinished, multicultural, imperfect and ongoing project, a community constantly striving to achieve an ever expanding conception of itself through shared freedom, justice, power and peace. *For still and everywhere the oppressed want freedom, the wronged and injured want justice, the people want power over their destiny and daily lives, and the world wants peace.*

THESE ARE DIFFICULT, DEMANDING and dangerous times and urgent in the most existential and ethical sense. But the ethical is always urgent and is more urgent the more serious the threat to and violation of the dignity and human rights of persons and peoples, and we must resist these violations and threats everywhere and all the time. And as we say in Kwaaida philosophy and practice, “If not this, then what, and if we don’t do it who will?”▲

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* and *Introduction to Black Studies*, 4th Edition, www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org; www.MaulanaKarenga.org.