



**LIBATION FOR LIMBIKO TEMBO:
PRAISE-SONG FOR AN AFRICAN PRINCESS**
Los Angeles Sentinel, 06-25-09, p. A7

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

This is a libation, sacred words and water, spoken and poured in remembrance and honor, in ever-growing gratitude, ever-enduring love and everlasting appreciation of you, Limbiko Tembo, our sister, special and beloved friend, partner and shareholder in things good and sacred, you who have passed in peace and have risen in radiance in the heavens. And it is also a praise-song for you, an African princess, whose royalty is rooted in her righteousness, and who is regal thru the good she gives and does in the world.

Let us stand up and say it now in the voice and vision of our ancestors. We must not be silent at the setting of this sun, the transformation and transition of this bright star into a special form of energy, light and life we call divine spirit. We must speak of the good she brought and will continue to bring into the world.

In the words of our ancestors: *Bayede*. Homage to you, royal one. *Bayede wena omnyama*. Homage to you beautiful Black one; *Wena waphakhati*, you in the center of our life and love; *Wena wohlanga*, you a descendent of the original ones. *Bayede*. We pay homage to you, royal and righteous one. *Olungileyo akaqedwa*. The good and righteous one is never defeated or undone, even by death.

We pay homage to you, Limbiko Tembo, you Kawaida woman, culturally rooted, ethically grounded and self-defining. You who cherished sisterhood, reinforced family and community, built a worthy man and woman partnership in love and struggle, and made social service and social action indispensable aspects of your self-understanding and self-assertion in the world.

We praise you, Limbiko Tembo, in your self-naming in the context of your culture and the reinforcing embrace of your most precious relationships. Your name is an announcement of your coming-into-consciousness, an uplifting, life-changing awareness of your Africanness, a sign of your commitment to African ways of

understanding and asserting yourself in the world.

African princess, Kawaida woman, with your self-naming, you called yourself into being again, into a new beginning in the world. You followed the advice and urging of the ancestors who say in the sacred teachings of the *Odu Ifa*, "Reconstruct yourself. If we are given birth, we must bring ourselves into being again".

Your name is Limbiko, signifying and affirming your self-understanding as a treasure trove of goodness, a goodness stored up and set aside for a special giving, keeper of a priceless good that promises to constantly increase even as it is shared in personal and collective ways. We praise you for your good, gentle and joy-bringing soul.

Your name Tembo signifies and affirms your membership in the ancient and noble House of Tembo Mkuu, The Great Elephant, Ndumahlezi, Thunder-While-Sitting; an ancient order of teachers of the clear and sacred word; reluctant, but ever-ready soldiers; keepers of the tradition with a long memory; and a quiet strength that stretches out constantly to gently guide, comfort, protect and care for others in the most loving, respectful and resourceful ways. You have honored well this ancient family, this brotherhood and sisterhood and most ancient order. We share the same name and commitment.

Limbiko Tembo, let us now raise up the seven royal and righteous names we your loved ones give you for the good you and we, the *Odu Ifa* tells us, have been divinely chosen to bring, increase and preserve in the world. These are names written in the hearts and minds of the people, virtues and values which will weigh well for you in the divine scales in the Hall of Maat.

We know and honor you first as *Mwalimu*, teacher, speaker of the clear and mind-opening word, instructor in lessons of life and living, careful cultivator of the love for learning; rightfully attentive to the culture, the dignity and

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respect-demands of everyone; daring to give special rank and relevance even to an infant; *Seba*, moral teacher of the sacred word, tireless teacher of the good, the right and the possible and continuous student of the ancient teachings for insight, inspiration and ever-deeper understandings.

Your name is also *Mpaji*, constant giver of the good. The *Odu Ifa* says of you, Mpaji, the constant giver, "Ofun, the giving one, is giving out goodness everywhere. And she does not make noise about it". You are, the ancestors taught, she who in wanting to do wonderful things, observed the ways of heaven, which gives good everywhere and for everyone.

We remember and raise your name as *Simba*, lion-spirited soldier who did not see herself as such, but entered the field of action in the defense and development of our people with a sense of destiny and duty worthy of praise and emulation; and who waged a life and death battle for four years against a deadly disease without complaint or concession. The lioness, *Sekhmet*, protector of the people and the culture which brings them into being and sustains them is your name also. We call you too, *Jamala*, woman of infinite grace, elegance and poise, chooser of the right and refined word, attentive to the gentle, the soft and supple, the delicate and smooth, the tender and "too good to be true" without being weak, artificial or unreal.

Your name too is *Balozi*, honored ambassador, refined representative of our interests, relation-builder, patient listener, speaker of words that reconcile, repair, rejoin and set things right. It is your heart and mind, the sacred *Husia* says, that cause you to advance; it was your character that kept you out front. *Nasiha*, steadfast friend, wise and faithful counselor is how you have also defined yourself; a bringer of joy and a conversation of justice; talking and practicing love and struggle; finding solutions where they are incomplete or absent; wanting and working hard and happily for the good with and for the other always.

Limbiko Tembo, as we slowly lift ourselves up off the ground of our grief and stand up to go forward for and with you in your new and different presence in our lives and the world, we will look and listen for you everywhere and all the time. We will feel you in wind and rain; see your life in the legacy of work and memories you left us; and hear your voice in every value-orientation and conversation on African culture we encounter. Indeed, as I whispered in your ear before you were enveloped in that awesome flash of light and love, "We will always be together in this life and the next and surely we will see each other in the Africa of our ancestors. Tutaonana kwenye Afrika wa babu zetu." Hotep. Ase. Heri.

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