



**SUSTAINING AND SUPPORTING FERGUSON:
BUILDING A CULTURE AND COMMUNITY OF STRUGGLE**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

CLEARLY, we have to be impressed and inspired by the sustained and seduction-resistant struggle waged by the people of Ferguson—who have not relented, or listened to the standard hype of “healing” while the oppressor is still inflicting pain, or regrettably renounced their rightful anger at the evil and injustice of police violence and other systemic forms and practices of oppression. Indeed, they rose up in righteous resistance over two months ago and still remain steadfast. The brutal killing of Michael Brown had cut the cord that held together a savage system of racist police violence, unjust taxation called ticketing, inadequate representation, and various other forms of injustice and disadvantage in virtually every area of life. And when the people heard the kill-shot, they took it as a compelling call to rise up in righteous resistance and they have not stopped, half-stepped, turned timidly around or relented since.

But we know that in order to sustain the struggle, strategic planning and constant support of the people are required, and thus, the question rises of how we achieve these objectives. This question finds its first answer in the respectful study of history and critical appreciation of our cultural legacy of struggle. The Seba Amenemhat, speaking to the relationship between history and struggle teaches us that, “Those who fight on the battlefield, unmindful or forgetful of the past will not succeed. For they are unaware of what they should know”. Indeed, history teaches us that in order to sustain and support a particular struggle, we must build a culture and community of struggle, link it to our larger national culture and community of struggle and build on its best ideas and practices and the lessons of history it has taught us.

To talk of a culture of struggle is to speak of a system of views, values and practices which perceive, pose and embrace struggle as a

natural, normal and necessary way of life. Indeed, it is to understand and approach struggle as a *moral imperative* to bring and sustain good in the world as the *Odu Ifa* teaches us. For struggle is not simply against oppressors, but also a natural and indispensable way to move forward, achieve excellence, overcome obstacles, gain victory, create a new history and a new humanity and come into the fullness of ourselves.

Likewise, to talk of a community of struggle is to talk of a kinship also reaffirmed, cultivated and constructed in the process and practice of struggle. It is a solidarity built in the tempering and transformative fire and furnace of daily action, sacrifice, giving of oneself and forging new relationships in the interest of our people and the struggle. Therefore, a new awareness and audacity emerge in the struggle which generate an expansive sense of mission and of oneself as key to it and thus, a community brought into being by the profound commitment, persistent striving and relentless struggle of each of its self-conscious members. This is the meaning of Frantz Fanon’s statement that “Each man and woman brings the nation to life by his or her actions and is committed to ensure its triumph in their locality”.

This *bringing of the nation to life*, offers us several indispensable lessons on sustaining and supporting the struggle. The first is that the bringing of the nation to life is to *liberate* the nation, that is the people, so that they can live, love and create freely, without oppression, alienation, suffering and insecurity—in a word, without domination, deprivation and degradation. This, thus, also means that Ferguson and each and every other struggle in defense, affirmation and liberation of our people must be conceived and carried out as part of and a contribution to the overarching struggle we as an

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African people, a Black people, wage to be ourselves and free ourselves and build the just and good society and ultimately world we want and deserve to live in, beginning where we are.

Now, the building blocks for creating and sustaining a culture and community of struggle are many and varied. But five major areas of thought and practice, at a minimum, must be engaged and put into motion: ideology, structure, program, communications and resources. It is no accident that in the beginning was and is the word, the ideology or philosophy, for it is through the word we establish our identity, purpose and direction, introduce our immediate and overarching objectives and reasons we struggle, and offer our vision of a just and good society, and a dignity-affirming, rights-respecting and life-enhancing conception of the human person and the well-being and future of the world.

Our second need is to build an expansive network of local, national and international structures directed toward sustaining and supporting our initiatives, enriching our exchange, and building and linking our organizations and communities into local and national united fronts, in a word, solidarities born in and of righteous and relentless struggle. The urgency of a concrete program speaks to the need for clear objectives, a methodology of engaging our work and struggle and above all processes and objectives which call forth and cultivate thought and practice which enlighten and empower our people, satisfy their needs, expand their aspirations and enhance their capacity for transformative and victorious struggle.

The struggle requirement of communications is not only a question of the best use of technology. For communications is more than texting, tweeting, Facebooking and posting and

any other forms of transmitting information. It is also and equally about building empathetic relations of solidarity and support. Indeed, what is required is a communicative practice that not only makes *best use* of technology, but also builds in-person relationships of struggle and solidarity in various other ways and prioritizes *in-person participation* in the struggle. For as the freedom fighters of Haiti, Palestine and Egypt and elsewhere demonstrate, there is no substitute for disciplined organizations and relations of solidarity; and no revolution yet has been made without a sustained confrontation *in real space and time*.

Finally, indispensable also is building and sustaining a network of resources: money, material and persons who are skilled, experienced, knowledgeable and highly motivated. And this requires intergenerational cooperation and that of other diverse identity groups within our people. For each person and group comes with its own resources, assets and aspirations, but it is on the common ground of our Blackness, our Africanness, and our righteous struggle that we stand. Indeed, we must always remember and respect the reality that our struggle is for *the whole people*, Black people, and must be waged together by them.

Thus, the life and future of the struggle must be rooted and sustained in supportive space among our people where they live, learn, work, worship, recreate and renew, cut and do their hair, hold events for their children and turn their hearts and minds every day. In this way, we are best able to honor the ancient African moral imperative of life and struggle: to know our past and honor it, to engage the present and improve it; and to imagine a whole new future and forge it in the most ethical, effective and expansive ways.

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