



**SUSTAINING FERGUSON AND MOVING FORWARD:
THE ANATOMY AND OBLIGATION OF RESISTANCE**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

PART II. In the midst of this rising tide of resistance, it is important to situate it and understand it in the context of our history of struggle and the culture of struggle that has been built on the battlefield of centuries of righteous and relentless resistance by African people in this country. Indeed, since we landed here in chains, we have fought to defend and secure our right to be free, to have justice, and to live a life of dignity, decency and self-determined good. And the struggle we waged benefitted not only us, but all other oppressed and marginalized groups and peoples and expanded the realm of freedom and justice in this country.

Indeed, it is not an immodest assertion or an exaggerated claim to affirm that no tradition of struggle has been more decisive than that of our people in expanding the realm of freedom and justice in this country. Even given its obviously unfinished and still oppressive form and functioning, we have, with allies and other progressive forces, created through righteous and relentless struggle an America which its White enslaving founders could not imagine, let alone accept.

Thus, let us not naively claim that we can learn nothing or need nothing from our past. Rather let us follow our ancestral teachings that instruct us that our obligation is no less than this: to know our past and honor it; to engage the present and improve it; and to imagine a whole new future and to forge it in the most ethical, effective and expansive ways. Let us learn, then, the lessons of resilience, resourcefulness and sustainment in life and struggle from our own history, our own experience as persons and a people. For as Malcolm X taught us, “of all our studies history is best qualified to reward our research”. And in these studies, let us be mindful that the essential and indispensable

text we must always read is the book of our own lives as persons and a people.

Let us then read the record of struggle of our people as they passed through fire and freezing waters, ate ice for water and leaves for bread, weathered seasons of savage times of oppression and were not dispirited, diverted or defeated. And let us learn then not only from reading library or e-books, but also from exchanging with those living and still standing out front and struggling and whose wisdom, experience and caring and continuing commitment merit and compel it. And let us also learn from those who have stepped to the side, but are still involved; and those who have always been on the side, unannounced and often undercover, but provide a vital source for intelligence, legal support, monies, materials and skilled personnel on behalf of our people and our struggle.

Moreover, in our constant and continuous move forward and the building of our Movement, we must be rightfully attentive to the building of solidarities across lines of class, gender, generation, sexuality, age and other social and biological identities to form a strong united front in our righteous struggle against our oppression as a people. This united front, as we have learned and advocated over the years, must be based on *operational unity*, unity in diversity, unity without uniformity, unity that does not deny or disrespect difference, but builds on commonalities. Indeed, it must be a principled and purposeful unity framed in discussion, forged in struggle and made real in the rich, varied and valuable relationships we build in the midst of common ground interests, work and struggle. In other words, the unity we must seek is one which builds and strengthens community, a community not divided by diversity, but united in diversity, standing together on common

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ground of our peoplehood, shared interests and shared aspirations to be ourselves and free ourselves, not only from police violence, but also from all forms of oppression and constraints on human freedom and flourishing.

Also, we must constantly renew and expand our ranks with new persons—young, middle aged, and elderly, but especially young people. This is necessary not only because they must and will carry on the struggle when those older no longer can or are no longer present. It is also necessary for transmission of the tradition of struggle, concepts and practices of leadership, knowledge, skills, and experience. Moreover, it produces the vital context and consciousness for ongoing inter-generational discussion and intergenerational solidarity; timely transfer of positions of leadership and relational networks built over time by older leaders. But if this inter-generational solidarity is to be built and sustained, it must be based on the principles and practices of: mutual respect; receptivity to each other's interests and concerns; reciprocity; mutual caring for each other; shared discussion and decision-making; relational protocols; and shared commitments to our people and their ongoing struggle to free themselves, be themselves and flourish.

Finally, we must constantly push the battlelines and lives of our people forward. In a word, we must continuously advance the struggle and the interests of our people, always striving to improve, to discover new grounds on which to define, defend and advance their interests. And as Amilcar Cabral taught us, we must build community and build

the people as we fight, turning our weaknesses into strengths and increasing our strength and capacity to struggle and build the good world we all want and deserve. Moreover, as Mary McLeod Bethune taught us, we must keep the faith of our foreparents who are models and mirrors for us in all our struggles and strivings, and who were not dispirited, diverted or defeated. As she says, "our forefathers (and mothers) struggled for liberty in conditions far more onerous than those we now face, but they never lost faith. We must never forget their suffering and their sacrifices, for they were the foundations of the progress of our people".

Again, at the heart and center of all we do must be our active commitment to our people, especially the masses of our people, always with due and rightful consideration of others and the well-being of the world. Still the ancient African ethical imperative applies: serve the people. Thus, our moral instructions and the lessons of history teach us that the struggle rises and flourishes or declines and disappears depending on how well we root ourselves in the masses of our people and aid them in becoming self-conscious agents of their own lives and liberation. Therefore, Kwanzaa teaches, go to the masses, work with them, learn from them, share with them our knowledge and skills, help them develop their own strengths; join them in their daily strivings to improve and push their lives forward, and stand with them in active solidarity on their many battlefields for a dignity-respecting and radically transformed society and world.

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