



**TAKING STRUGGLE SERIOUSLY:
CONSIDERING THE STATE AND STRENGTH OF OUR PEOPLE**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 11-27-08, p. A-7

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

The conference was called for focused reflection, essential and engaging discussion and an uplifting look into the strengths and possibilities inherent in us as a people. And it included addressing the current and enduring problems which continue to confront us even after an historic election, and also thoughtful consideration of what is to be developed and done at this critical juncture of rightful celebration and sure-to-come hang-over and continuing hardship. Called the State of the Black World Conference II, it was the first national gathering of its kind since the Obama election and included a wide range of senior, middle age, young and emerging activists, educators, institutional builders and religious, cultural and political leaders, as well as students, business persons, parents, and veterans of the Freedom Movement. And there were also those who came anxious for assurance that we had not all left the urgent interests of our people unattended while we watched and waited in overwhelming euphoria for the Inauguration, Obama's next move and whatever else he, Michelle, Malia and Sasha might say or send us as an unannounced sign of recognition and remembrance.

But we who met are among those who take struggle seriously, who know that an election does not mean or mark the end of our people's efforts to transform ourselves and society, achieve social justice, secure civil and human rights, protect and repair the environment, and insure the rightful sharing of the goods of the world for us and everyone. We are among those who know that we have not reached the "promised land" of the Prophet and Revered One, Martin Luther King, where "justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream". And we are among those who know that we have not set sail on the "Lake of Ma'at" of the ancient Egyptian Moral Teacher, Seba

Khunanpu, where everyone sails with a good wind, free from the dangers of the waters and the injustices of the land. For in the land, *Ma'at*, (truth, justice and righteousness) rules; "doing justice is breath to the nose"; and we "come at the voice of the caller", in rightful care and respect.

We know too that hope can only float so long, and sooner or later, a boat must be built to cross over the Jordan, the Mississippi, the Nile, Niger or Zambezi. Indeed, in the final analysis, in the midst of our understandable euphoria we know it cannot last. For it is too high, too anchored in just hope, and too centered on one event and one man, even though many routinely criticize the Sixties for such centering. And it is too committed to hiding from ourselves the realities of race differentials in matters of wealth, power and status; and too willing to overlook, excuse and explain away evidence that already suggests the real and repeating trend of things.

Thus, the historical significance of this meeting lies not simply in the value of its daily deliberation and content, but also that it was held in such a context. For it is a context where talking about anything but Obama and things related can seem irrelevant and somewhat unreal. Thus, a meeting to consider the state of Black people can in some quarters seem needless, for it is clear most seem happy. And likewise, to consider the future of the Movement and the continuing struggle for social justice can seem out of step with the people and out of touch with the times. This is what the media, which thrives on spectacle, entertainment and distraction, constantly tells us, as it offers up endless images, pseudo-intellectual analyses and breaking news announcements to assure us that all wrong, inequalities and injustices have been magically and miraculously swept away.

**TAKING STRUGGLE SERIOUSLY:
CONSIDERING THE STATE AND STRENGTH OF OUR PEOPLE**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 11-27-08, p. A-7

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

2

And so we came to New Orleans sharing the happiness of this moment with our people, willing to give Obama and hope a chance. But in all honesty with ourselves, and in rightful respect for the work, struggle and sacrifice of our ancestors and the future of our children and our people, we could not and cannot equate an election with the end of injustice and inequality or the proper function of hope with the use the established order is trying to make of this moment.

And so, Dr. Ron Daniels, President of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century, issued the urgent call for collaboration, cooperation and agenda development with a four-point theme: "return to the source, reclaiming our families, rebuilding community and renewing the struggle". And from Wednesday, November 19 thru Sunday, November 23, these themes were echoed and emphasized in workshops on every subject of current and compelling interest and urgency, from rebuilding family, community and country to repairing the environment, human rights and the imperative of peace and security in community, society and the world.

Rev. Jeremiah Wright's presence was greeted with great honor and a powerful affirmation by the participants; Sonia Sanchez and Haki Madhubuti read poetry and reaffirmed the essentiality of art to our life and struggle; young leaders offered their understanding of the way forward in a plenary session; Dr. Daniels, Dr. James Turner and I gave plenary presentations discussing the awesome tasks before us; and Minister Louis

Farrakhan closed out the conference with anticipated insight and inspiration.

In addition, Legacy Awards were given for dedication, service, sacrifice and achievement in various fields in the interest of our people and I was honored to have been counted among the recipients. Recipients also included: Rev. Wright, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Danny Glover, Minister Farrakhan, Ambassador Dudley Thompson, Dr. Vincent Harding, Sonia Sanchez, Haki Madhubuti, Congressman John Conyers, Susan Taylor, Dr. Walter Lomax, Dr. Adelaide Sanford, Dr. Josef Ben-Jochannan, President Imari Obadele, Grand Master Mele Mel, Kool Moe Dee, The Neville Brothers and Willie Ricks-Mukasa was recipient of the Pan-African Community Service Award.

It is important to note that many if not most of us will join the 3-5 million who descend on Washington, January 20, in rightful and raucous celebration. But as Dr. Daniels says in the introduction to the Recommended Priority Policy Agenda, "Our history demands that we who have gathered in New Orleans for the Black World Conference pledge to work tirelessly to ensure that the promise of this moment and the aspirations of generations that have preceded us be fulfilled". Indeed, not to do this is betrayal of a sacred trust, but to do this is to imagine and help forge a future worthy of our history, reflective of our humanity and rooted in a rich, necessary and expansive conception of ourselves.

Dr. Maulana Karenga, Professor of Africana Studies, California State University-Long Beach, Chair of The Organization Us, Creator of Kwanzaa, and author of *Kawaida and Questions of Life and Struggle: African American, Pan-African and Global Issues*.

[www.MaulanaKarenga.org; www.Us-Organization.org and www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org].