



**HAJI MALCOLM, RESURRECTION, RESISTANCE
AND SELF-RAISING:
ANCIENT AFRICAN INSIGHTS AND MODERN MEANINGS**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 03-28-24, p. B-1

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

THE EARLIEST DISCOURSE ON RESURRECTION from the dead, judgment after death and reward of eternal life for the righteous comes from Africa, from ancient Egypt, like so many essential ethical concepts and associated conversations, i.e., humans in the image of God and human dignity. This concept of resurrection is beautifully framed in the *Husia*, sacred text of ancient Egypt, by the district governor Satepihu during the reign of Pharaoh Hatshepsut. He says: “A glorious spirit in heaven. A continuing powerful presence on earth. Resurrection after death. Favorable judgment in God’s domain. These are the gifts of the righteous ones, and righteous are those who receive them. They shall be counted and honored among the ancestors. Their name shall endure as a monument. And what they have done on earth shall never perish or pass away” (translation from the original hieroglyphs mine).

This ancestral understanding and teaching is also found in our Kawaiida Maatian message of condolence when we say of the one who makes transition and ascension this: “May the joy they brought and the good they left last forever. May all their family and friends be blessed with consolation, courage and peace. For surely they have risen in radiance in the heavens, and now sit in the sacred circle of the ancestors, among the doers of good, the righteous and the rightfully rewarded. *Hotep. Ase. Heri.*” Although leaders like Nanas Maria Stewart, David Walker, Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X all believed in physical death and spiritual resurrection, they also believed in overcoming social death in oppression and in social resurrection through rising up in resistance. Moreover, Haji Malcolm taught

that we will remain in that grave of ignorance, immorality and oppression, designed and dug by our oppressor until we rise up, resist and “recapture our heritage and our identity” and “liberate ourselves from the bonds of white supremacy” so prevalent in society and in our lives.

There are two critical concepts among the many Haji Malcolm stresses here, but I want to focus on his concepts of being in the grave of ignorance, immorality and oppression, that is to say, lack of liberating knowledge, self-injury and injury of each other, and systemic suppression. For it is here that he offers us a way out by urging us to “wake up, clean up and stand up.” This three-fold demonstration and practice of liberating agency I translate in my forthcoming major work on the *Liberation Ethics of Haji Malcolm X* as coming-into-consciousness, moral grounding and transformative struggle, internally and externally. Haji Malcolm tells us that he is an example of struggling to be himself and free himself through self-teaching, self-discipline and self-raising in resistance in, with and for community. And he never teaches or even suggests a vulgarly individualistic conception of self-raising, but understands the process and practice as carried out in the context, interests and advancement of our community.

Malcolm understood and taught this constant righteous self-raising in community and in resistance, especially in the transition from being what we used to call being an unconscious “negro” to becoming a conscious Black man, Black woman and Black person. He was used to describing the unconscious negro as a dead person, sometimes, the living dead, a person dead to self, unaware,

**HAJI MALCOLM, RESURRECTION, RESISTANCE AND SELF-RAISING:
ANCIENT AFRICAN INSIGHTS AND MODERN MEANINGS**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 03-28-24, p. B-1

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

uninvolved and like all dead people, clearly inactive in the interest of freedom, justice and other good. Using himself constantly as a model and mirror, he taught how he had lifted himself from the grave in which the oppressor had buried him and his people and now stood as a noble witness for his people and living evidence of the resurrecting power of his faith.

Haji Malcolm tells us that he had been lifted out of a life of gross ignorance about self and the oppressor, grievous personal and collective self-injury, and certain destruction. But meditating on how far he had come while waiting to begin a lecture at Harvard, he realized “how deeply the religion of Islam had reached down into the mud to lift me up, to save me from being what I inevitably would have been,” i.e., doubly dead, mentally and physically. But instead of this fate, he says, “Allah had blessed me to learn about the religion of Islam which had enabled me to lift myself up from the muck and mire of this rotting world,” i.e., this house of bondage and breaking, this moral, social and racist wilderness we call North America. It is important to note here that Malcolm speaks not only of the power of Islam, but also of the agency and of the believer, himself, and of a central concept in his liberation ethics, *self-raising*, i.e., as he says, lifting himself up through the blessing of Allah, the teachings of Islam, and the support of and commitment to his community.

Nana Malcolm says, Islam is a “resurrecting power.” It is a resurrecting power in that it raises Black people who hear and embrace it from the grave of ignorance; it wakes them up from a death-like state, an unconsciousness of self and kind and aids them in retrieving and embracing their true historical, cultural, and religious and expansive selves. Islam, Malcolm continues, urges and aids us to think for ourselves and to begin to think in dignity-affirming and life-enhancing ways. But also as an ethical system, it teaches the

good person “to enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong” and strive mightily to do good in the world. Haji Malcolm, as his last conversations reveal, allowed for other faith traditions to also lay the basis for a liberation ethics. But he is clearly critical of any religion, including versions of his own, which do not aid the people in their struggles for liberation and lives of dignity and good in the world.

Thus, he urges us to always think for ourselves, regardless of our faith and ethical tradition, to come into consciousness for an action-oriented purpose, not only to know ourselves, but also to act on that knowledge, i.e., to clean up, morally ground ourselves and to stand up, i.e., engage in transformative struggle to be as we say, to be ourselves and free ourselves, and together build the good world we all want, deserve and struggle for continuously. Again, Haji Malcolm stresses agency which his liberation ethics privileges and promotes, constantly challenging the people to rise from “the grave of ignorance and bondage” and to self-consciously act in self-determined ways, which he poses as central to the practice and promise of liberation. This process and practice leads, he says, to “coming to yourself” which opens up abundant possibilities for what we call in Kawa-ida, *liberated and liberating* sensibilities, thinking and action to transform ourselves and the world.

Haji Malcolm poses this active self-consciousness as *life-giving*, *life-saving* and *life-sustaining* which is rooted in a spiritual and ethical philosophy that restores Black lives, and again, raises them from “the grave of spiritual ignorance (and) mental bondage” and prepares them to help build and participate in the new world of righteousness which will succeed the existing evil and unjust world. Always offering himself as an undeniable example of moral self-raising and rootedness, Haji Malcolm states that having made

**HAJI MALCOLM, RESURRECTION, RESISTANCE AND SELF-RAISING:
ANCIENT AFRICAN INSIGHTS AND MODERN MEANINGS**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 03-28-24, p. B-1

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

the commitment and passage of self-raising, he can and must bear witness to its possibility and promise. For he believes as his teacher and model Nana Marcus Garvey taught that what humans have done, humans can do.

Thus, he asserts, "I myself, being one who was lost and dead, buried here in the rubbish of the West, in the sick darkness of sin and ignorance, hoodwinked completely by the false teachings of the slave master, am able to stand upright today, *perpendicular*, on the square with my God, Allah, and my own

kind..., able for the first time in 400 years to *see and hear*." Here Min. Malcolm declares he has come into critical consciousness, achieved moral grounding and H has stood up in harmony with his God and his people. And he rejoices in no longer being mentally or morally blind or deaf, but is able now to see and hear, after centuries of oppression and after his liberating righteous resistance and self-raising in community, with community and for community.▲

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 *Essays on Struggle: Position and Analysis*, www.MaulanaKarenga.org; www.AfricanAmericanCulturalCenter-LA.org; www.Us-Organization.org.