



**RESURRECTION AND RIGHTEOUS RESISTANCE:
TOWARDS A NEW SOCIETY, A NEW EARTH AND A NEW US**
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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

A GAIN, THIS YEAR AS ALWAYS, THE RECURRENCE and celebration of spring and the Christian holiday of Easter, bring with them concepts, expressions and promises of new life, resurrection and righteous renewal and find a welcoming and special space in our hearts, minds and memories. Indeed, the concept of resurrection and its companion concepts of repair and renewal have a long and rich history in the spirituality, ethics and social teachings of African peoples. It is both a spiritual and social-ethical concept in the intellectual genealogy and social history of Black thought. And it offers and reaffirms ideas and inspiration on how we rise up after social or physical death in beautiful transformative ways. For we talk here about transition from one stage of life to another and rising in radiance and renewal at a higher level of social or spiritual life.

At the turn of the century advocates (members) of our organization Us began to greet each other saying “Black man rising” or “Black woman rising” or “Black people rising” or all three at once. We engage in this exchange as an affirmation of our self-raising and rising in the context of community and the collective self-raising and rising of our people, regardless of the obstacles put in our path by an oppressive system and its rulers’ and supporters’ destructive and deadly acts and intentions towards us.

Indeed, we cannot affirm and reaffirm too often the teachings of our honored ancestors that tell us we are those who “ride the storm and remain intact, who “conduct their blooming in the noise and whip of the whirlwind,” and who “specialize in the wholly impossible.” And this too they teach us: that no matter how much they kill and crush us “still we rise,” repair and renew ourselves in the

process and practice of repairing and remaking the good world we all want, deserve and demand in righteous and relentless struggle.

Thus, the concept of resurrection in social terms must deal with how we engage in moral deliberation and social practice to achieve the righteous rising of Black men and women into their own. Such a conception of necessity deals with our self-raising and rising from the social death designed for us in the structural practices of the dominant society including mass incarceration and unemployment, inequities in housing, health care, education and income, and in almost every other social good. And it is about our maintaining our soundness of mind and body in the most brutalizing, devastating, uncertain and insane times, and daring to practice a soulful and sustained hopefulness and happiness. And it’s about the strength and struggle to resist and reaffirm as we argued so often: resist the negative, evil and unjust, and reaffirm the good, the right, the beautiful and possible.

The earliest expression of this concept of resurrection, renewal and rising in radiance in the heavens appears in the *Husia*, the sacred text of ancient Egypt. At the heart of this concept of resurrection is the ancient African’s rejection of death as the end of life and their quest for immortality through living a righteous life on earth and being judged worthy of eternal life after death through that righteousness. This resurrection, rising and living after death is called awakening and arising, lifting oneself up, and “coming forth by day,” i.e., emerging from the sleep, inactiveness and darkness of death and the grave and “repeating life.”

In raising the battle cry “Black people rising” and talk of resurrection as a spiritual

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and social concept, then, we are drawing on this ancient concept that reaches back to the ancient African Kemetic spiritual concept which teaches resurrection and rising in the heavens after death and gaining eternal life through righteousness. A beautiful statement of this deep spiritual understanding is found in the Sacred *Husia* in the affirmation “A glorious spirit in heaven; a continuing powerful presence on earth; resurrection after death; favorable judgement in the Divine domain. These are the gifts of the righteous ones and righteous are those who receive them. They shall be counted among the ancestors. Their names shall endure as a monument. And what they have done on earth shall never perish or pass away.”

And we also were/are extracting from and building on the ethical teachings of Nana Maria Stewart, Nana Marcus Garvey, Nana Elijah Muhammad and Nana Malcolm X about resurrection as a social and collective triumph over the social death the established order imposed on us during the Holocaust of enslavement and continues to practice and attempt in the ongoing savagery of systemic racism. The breaking of the bonds of death and grave find current use and relevance not only through rising and being rightfully rewarded among the righteous, but also in the social and spiritual teachings of our people. Nana Maria Stewart began her work and teaching during the Holocaust of enslavement which was a morally monstrous act of physical and cultural genocide and a crime against humanity. And it was designed to ensure the social death of enslaved Africans, i.e., culturally dead to themselves and dead as humans to their enslavers, reduced to objects of labor, sex and entertainment.

It is in this context that Nana Maria Stewart calls on us to resurrect ourselves saying, “Let us make a mighty effort and arise, ...” And again, “O daughters of Africa, Awake! Awake! Arise! No longer sleep nor

slumber, but distinguish yourself. Show forth to the world that (you) are endowed with noble and exalted faculties.” And she asks African women and all of us to “immortalize your names beyond the grave.” Moreover, she calls on us to lay a “foundation for generations yet unborn” and to be united in life, love and struggle.

In his Easter Sermon, April 16, 1922, the Hon. Marcus Garvey lectured on the spiritual and social meaning of “The Resurrection of the Negro.” And he called on us to emulate Jesus and strive mightily, rise up from the social death designed for us and “triumph over the slavishness of the past, intellectually, physically, morally and even religiously.” He wants us to rise “from the slumber of ages,” rise “in thought to higher ideas, to a loftier purpose and a true conception of life.” For him, resurrection of his people is through the creation of “a risen life, a life of knowing ourselves,” knowing and loving each other and creating an enduring context of freedom and flourishing. And he wants us to practice self-determination, becoming a renewed and strengthened people who are “resurrected not from the will of others to see us rise, but from our own determination to rise irrespective of what the world thinks.”

Messenger Elijah Muhammad, founding father of the Nation of Islam, taught the concept of resurrection as a mental, spiritual and social practice and goal for this world in this our time. He spoke and taught of our rising from “the grave of ignorance,” the deep ditch of fear and self-doubt. “Resurrection of the dead,” he taught, “means resurrection of people who are mentally dead to knowledge of self and truth.” And “the time is ripe that you rise up and accept your own.” He teaches that we should not want the old world we were born in and to live and die unnecessary deaths in this old world. And we should not be “so absorbed or immersed into the world that (we) cannot get out of it to build one of

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(our) own.” Indeed, he says, we must want, work and struggle “to build a new earth and a new us.”

Haji Malcolm, while in the NOI and building on the Messenger’s teaching, reaffirmed that resurrection is essentially about self-raising in the context of community up from the social and psychological grave in which we were/are buried in oppression. It is to self-consciously rise up from three kinds of deadness, i.e., a grave of unconsciousness, internal deterioration and political inactivity imposed by severe oppression. Thus, he calls on us to “wake up, clean up and stand up.” In a word, we are to achieve and practice critical consciousness, moral grounding and transformative struggle. And Min. Malcolm urges us to hold fast to the faith of our forefathers and foremothers, a faith “of life not death, one that teaches us to live, the importance of life and how to live.”

THE CENTRAL TEACHINGS OF THIS SPIRITUAL, psychological and social resurrection remind us and reaffirm the fundamental Kawaida contention that in the context of oppression there is no reliable remedy except righteous and relentless resistance and that our battle cry, as we say in Kawaida, must be “everywhere a battleline; every day a call to struggle.” And at the heart and center of our liberation struggle must be the goal of a new society, a new earth and a new us, a decolonized us, a free and flourishing us, striving mightily to come into the fullness of ourselves. And it will be the new world our ancestors envisioned, one rooted in mutual respect, grounded in freedom, anchored in justice, and based on an ethics of shared human good and the well-being of the world and all in it.▲

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