



**US, CONTINUING LABORS OF LOVE AND RIGHTEOUS STRUGGLE:
MARKING PERIODS OF FIERCE PASSAGE AND FUNDAMENTAL TURNING**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

THIS YEAR AND MONTH MARKS THE 58TH anniversary of the founding of our organization Us, September 7, 1965, 58 years and 232 seasons of righteous and relentless struggle in the best of summers and the worst of winters, the flourishing of springs and the witherings of autumns. Indeed, we celebrate 58 years and 232 seasons of culturally-rooted and love-driven work, service, institution-building and struggle for and with our people, in this country, on the continent and in the diaspora. And in this turbulent and testing time of battle and building, as our honored ancestors, Nana Howard Thurman, Nana Gwen Brooks and Nana Nannie Burrows, taught respectively, we have “ridden the storm and remained intact”, “conducted our blooming in the noise and whip of the whirlwind” and “specialized in the wholly impossible”.

It has been by any measure a long, difficult, dangerous and demanding, yet uplifting and liberating struggle, what Nana Dr. Martin L. King called “the long and bitter but beautiful struggle for a new world”. And in the faith tradition of our people and the reaffirming lyrics of Nana Rev. James Cleveland, “(We) don't feel no ways tired. (We)'ve come too far from where (we) started from” and got too far to go to stop now. Indeed, the struggle continues and must continue until a decisive and enduring victory is achieved and secured.

As always, we raise up and praise all those who and all that which made us possible, conscious, capable and committed, strengthened and sustained us and took us through these times and various periods of fierce passage and fundamental turning. I, we, speak especially of our honored ancestors all, who, as our sacred texts teach us, are

glorious spirits in heaven and a continuing powerful presence on earth, those whose names and work endure as monuments and whose good done on earth will never perish or pass away. We pay rightful and reverent homage to all those near and far in time and space who constantly speak to us through written, oral and living practice texts, providing us with the moral and social foundations and frameworks for the intellectual and practical work we've done and continue to do in the interest and advancement of African and human good and the well-being of the world.

And we know we honor them most by striving mightily to live and share the legacy they left us through the insights and intellectual production of *Kawaida* philosophy, the creation, practice and promotion of the pan-African holiday *Kwanzaa* and the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles), our organizational initiatives and institution-building and the struggles we wage and join in with others of like concerns and interests in bringing, increasing and sustaining good in the world. Here we pay also rightful homage to all our advocates, departed and living, past and present, those who gave what they could and those who gave and continue to give so much of their lives to our liberation struggle and achieving good in the world, these Simba and all-seasons soldiers, these *Seba Ma'at*, moral teachers, teaching *Kawaida Ma'at*, a good and rightful way in the world. We also are truly grateful to our sustainers and supporters who have added to our strength in this struggle.

And I praise again the advocates whom I call workers of miracles in the world, who with few numbers, bold and expansive minds, little or no budget and big and caring

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hearts have done the work, continued the struggle, kept the faith and held the line while others, even some more favored, funded and popularized, have walked away from the battlefield before the struggle is won. These men and women of Us in their dedication, discipline and sacrifice are emulating the ancestors and thus, are establishing and leaving their own legacy which also can only be honored by living it, building on it and passing it on to future generations. This, of course reflects a foundational Kawaïda teaching which asserts that this is our duty: to know our past and honor it; to engage our present and improve it and to imagine a whole new future and forge it in the most ethical, effective and expansive ways.

The founding and history of Us is rooted in resistance, in righteous and relentless struggle to be ourselves and free ourselves as a people, live good and meaningful lives, flourish and come into the fullness of ourselves. Therefore, we have fought on many battlegrounds and frontlines of struggle, ranging from the supportive, substantive and central roles in building community institutions and the major Movements of our times, from the Black Arts, Black Studies, Black Student Unions, Black Power and Black United Fronts Movement to the Reparations Movement, the Ancient Egyptian Studies Movement, Afrocentricity and the Million Man March/Day of Absence.

As I write this column, over the Labor Day weekend, we recall and raise up our ongoing work in the struggle to defend the dignity and rights of working people since the Sixties supporting strikes and working with unions on political education issues like voter registration and unionization. Also we supported the UFW and the Filipino and Mexican workers who struck, led and built

this critical union for farmworkers, some of which were Black.

And in this time of labor rising and union-building, we are uplifted and further inspired by the fact that the first strike in history was in Africa by workers in ancient Egypt, Kemet, as early as 1170 BCE at a place called *Set Ma'at*. And they said to the officials, "Truly, it was not simply because we were hungry that we made this strike. We have a serious charge to make. Truly, the evil of injustice is being done in this place!" And the demand was for justice, for as the sacred *Husia* says, "Doing justice is breath to the nose".

In the late 1980's our Executive Circle and General Assembly decided that labor was an unfolding critical battleground to which we had to increase our attention. And we began to develop initiatives to do this locally, nationally and internationally, working to co-found the Black Community, Clergy and Labor Alliance (BCCLA) with Rev. Eric Lee of SCLC and Larry Aubry, a seasoned union organizer and community leader, and others later. Composed of social activist organizations and institutions, clergy and labor union leaders and representatives, BCCLA is dedicated to racial and economic justice for our people and all as a guiding principle and practice. BCCLA formed a diversity delegation for negotiations with hotels for hospitality workers of Unite Here represented by Rev. Donald Wilson, played a major role in organizing the first security officers union and continues to work with SEIU on various projects.

THE PAN-AFRICAN AND GLOBAL dimension of Kawaïda philosophy and practice, unavoidably deals with the worldwide impact of race, class and gender on Africa, Haiti and the whole world, as

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imperialist countries plunder and pillage the human and natural resources of Africa and other vulnerable countries and lands, grossly impoverishing the peoples and driving them to leave their homelands looking for a life they were denied in their own. Indeed, we know there is no way to understand, engage or overcome racism and the disruptive and devastating effects it has on our lives and our future and that of the world without putting it

in the context of predatory and racial capitalism which constructs and calls for racism in a myriad of economic and social ways. Thus, on this 58th anniversary of our struggle for good in the world, we reaffirm our commitment to continue and intensify the struggle, keep the faith, hold the line, fight to win, build to strengthen and sacrifice greatly to achieve and secure a shared and inclusive good in and for the world.▲

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