



**BUILDING UNITY, SEEKING JUSTICE:
THE MARCH, MOVEMENT AND STRUGGLE**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

LAST Saturday we came together from many backgrounds and beliefs to hold a march and rally with the essential, overarching and interrelated purpose of *building unity and seeking justice* in the midst of a nation-wide struggle to end police violence. And we saw this coming together, in defiant and righteous resistance, as a necessary and self-conscious contribution to the many efforts throughout the country to rebuild the Movement and continue the larger ongoing struggle of our people, Black people, to create the just and good society we all want, work for and deserve to live in.

In our Mission Statement we noted that, “We come together in the midst of a continuously rising tide of heightened moral outrage and righteous resistance against police violence and the general systemic violence and injustices that still shape and limit the conditions and capacity of Black people to live lives of dignity, security, well-being, equal opportunity and deserved promise. Moreover, we come together as a community in a united spirit and collective voice to reaffirm the dignity and rights of Black people, especially our right to life, to security of person and people, and to freedom from unjust and unjustifiable systemic violence in any form—police or otherwise. And we come together in unity and struggle, to resist official and unofficial violence against us, to seek justice for the victims and for our people as a whole, and to build an enduring united front as a wall and way of protection, progress and promise around and for our community, our youth and all our people.

In this regard, we commit ourselves to engage in continuing united efforts to bring about an end to police violence, foster truly transformative change in the criminal justice system, build and strengthen community, and expand our historic and ongoing struggle for racial and social justice. Thus, we stand in ac-

tive solidarity with the wide range of organizations and persons in this struggle for unity, justice and police accountability. And we applaud and support the young people who have joined in the ongoing historic struggle of our people, who have shown praiseworthy initiative, leadership and sustainability, and who recognize and respond positively to the intergenerational and collective nature and demands of a struggle for and by the whole people.

Furthermore, we note and raise the painful questioning of how do we save, make safe and protect our young people and ourselves from such a high level and rate of race-targeted violence from police sworn to protect and serve. And we wonder how do we advise our young men to act in a context in which so many are regularly targeted (profiled), stopped and searched, harassed, humiliated, abused, beaten, tasered, shot or wounded and killed? Certainly, we also are aware that in such a context of terror and apparent reckless and cold disregard for Black life and Black rights, even the best of counsel still leaves an unacceptable amount of apprehension, fear and terror, and thus we are committed to a unity in work and struggle to lessen and end this unconscionable state of things.

We also understand that our struggle is larger than that against police violence and that the unjust criminal justice system as a whole. Indeed, our struggle is also against the systemic violence of injustice in education, employment, economic initiatives, politics, housing, healthcare, and every other area of life in which Black people are denied the capacity and conditions to live lives of dignity and decency, security, self-determination and shared good. And to achieve these rightful and righteous goals, we recognize the need for an active and ongoing unity, operational unity, i.e., unity in diversity, unity without uniformity and unity in purpose, principles and prac-

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tice. In addition, we recognize the related need for sustainability, sacrifice, resilience, resourcefulness, cooperative projects, ongoing collaboration, community building and strengthening, and constant struggle on every level.

Our demands are both short term and long term and reflect both local and national conditions and similar demands. They are: the immediate firing and indictment of the officers who killed Ezell Ford and the bringing to closure the six-month investigation of his killing; body cameras for all law enforcement officers and charges of obstruction of justice for any officer who turns the camera off, alters, damages or tampers with it in any disabling way; and collection of comprehensive data by law enforcement and reporting to the Department of Justice any cases of unjustified use of lethal force, racial targeting, stopping without reasonable cause and other questionable practices. In addition, we demand: the creation of a state task force that engages the community in dialogue on ways to increase and insure police accountability; appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate and prosecute cases where lethal force is used; creation of a Los Angeles County Special Investigation Unit for lethal force cases; and creation of an independent civilian review board to oversee LAPD policies and practices.

Finally, we demand an ongoing law enforcement dialog with the community on issues of concern and urgency; demilitarization of the police in terms of weapons, equipment and practices; strengthening the practice of community policing in hiring, residence requirements and interactions; and review and change of police practices and personnel policies, especially discipline, cultural training

and psychological evaluations to move the department away from its racialized and militarized practices, particularly against Black people and other peoples of color. And we take special notice of and support existing efforts to pass legislation to facilitate changes contributing to achieving any of the goals cited.

Our purpose is clear; our demands are just and the struggle before us is urgent and unavoidable. We realize that the way forward will not be easy or short, and there are many difficulties and dangers ahead, but we are committed to continue the struggle, to fight the good fight, and to bring into being the just and good society our people have longed and fought for through centuries of suffering, sacrifice and relentless resistance. And given this awesome tradition and history of struggle, the urgency of the issues before us and our obligation to future generations, we cannot choose or do otherwise”.

Our march for unity and justice was held on February 21st, the 50th anniversary of the assassination and martyrdom of El Hajj Malik El Shabazz, Min. Malcolm X. On this sacred Day of Sacrifice, we also paid rightful homage to Malcolm, noting that his life and death offer us a model and mirror of excellence by which we can measure and mold our lives around his ethical principles and practice of bearing witness to truth, serving the people, struggling for liberation and making sacrifices necessary to free ourselves, be ourselves and build the good world we all want and deserve. And we remembered and paid homage to Malcolm for teaching us also to always build unity, seek justice, reaffirm our dignity, remember our divinity, do good, struggle hard and walk righteously in the world.

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