



**“RECOGNIZING AURORA AS AMERICA UNMASKED:
NO EXEMPTION, EVEN FOR OUR CHILDREN”**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

AS THE PANDEMIC OF COVID-19 CONTINUES to ravage our community and the country, the pandemic of the pathology of racist oppression continues to claim its victims among us also. And this is not only because of the inequalities in our life conditions, health access, working needs and circumstances, and other structural disadvantages, but also because Black people and other people of color remain targets of racist violence. One of the latest cases is from Aurora, Colorado, August 2, where the police targeted, stopped, terrorized and humiliated four Black girls and a mother, Brittney Gilliam, out to get their nails done at a salon. Not satisfied with drawing guns on the children, 6, 12, 14 and 17, causing them to fear for their lives and call for their mother and sister, the White officers, men and women, ordered them out of the car, handcuffed them, except the 6-year old, and forced them all to lay face down on the parking lot pavement. The repulsively transparent lie told for this unjustifiable act of targeting and terrorism was that the police mistook the family’s SUV for a stolen motorcycle with the same license plate number but from another state.

What makes this even more sickeningly evil than usual is that it was done against innocent children who cannot begin to understand why Whites would want to hate them, target, terrorize, traumatize and humiliate them and to kill them when they have done nothing to these Whites or anyone like them. And this reminds us that there is a no exemption and no quarter policy for even Black children, as evidenced by the murders of Devin Brown, 13; Aiyana Stanley-Jones, 7; Kimani Gray, 16; Tamir Rice, 12; Cameron Tillman 14; and all the others.

Aurora was the site of an earlier targeting and brutal killing of a gentle and caring young Black man named Elijah M^cClain, who explained to the police his peaceful and sensitive attitude toward all sentient beings. He had pleaded with them asking them not to hurt him, but they killed him anyhow and made a video afterwards reenacting with laughter their brutish choking and

killing of him on his way home and near his house.

The town’s name Aurora means “dawn,” but it resembles a nightmare and an arctic night that lasts 24 hours for us. Thus, there is no new day dawning in Aurora or America for us. For each day we rise, we must fight for our lives, as vigilantes and police target, terrorize and harass and humiliate us under the color and camouflage of law. They have made a wolfish winter of a world for us, and we must recognize how Aurora is America unmasked, as are all the other interrelated sites of cold and conscience-less killing of Black people with no exemption, even for our children. And yet, as our forefathers and foremothers before us, we today refuse to accept it in silence or inactivity and are called each day and hour by our honored ancestor, Henry Highland Garnet, to “Let our motto be resistance, resistance, resistance!”

The perverse and pathological persistence of hidden and videoed police violence against our people demonstrates how deeply rooted it and the racism which informs and sustains it are in American culture. Indeed, racism and its violence are not simply an act of a single or group of police, it is a systemic practice of oppressive imposition, ideological justification and institutional arrangement. But at the heart of all of it is violence, direct and indirect, open and hidden, pervasive and persistent against our bodies, minds and spirits.

It is because of this raw and deadly reality that Min. Malcolm would conclude that we are “living in a war zone” and our oppressor, who is making war on us, “is as vicious and criminal and inhuman as any war making country has ever been.” Also, it is why Rev. Martin Luther King was compelled to concede that America is “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world.” And this is at home and abroad, from the savagery of segregation and the imperialist wars during the era of King to the inhuman and criminal dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, 75 years ago on August 6, although it was known Japan was ready to surrender.

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When Rev. C.T. Vivian was defiantly demanding that Black people who had come to register to vote have access, the sheriff, an immoral mimic of a man, punched him in his face and knocked him down. And Rev. Vivian stood back up and audaciously continued to demand access to registration. Then he asked this monster representative of American racism under the color and camouflage of law and also all racists – open and undercover – this question: “*what kind of people are you?*” Indeed, what kind of people are these whom we deal with every day, who have such a deep rooted desire to dominate us, deprive us of our human rights and of the means to live a life of dignity and decency and of life itself, and who rejoice in racist degradation, humiliation and terrorizing of us?

And what kind of people are those who enable and support them, claim to be religious, moral and even chosen, elect and special in the eyes of their god? And what kind of people are they who turn a deaf ear to truth and a blind eye to the injustice of human suffering and the radical evil of racist violence, enshrined in law and public policy, and socially sanctioned? In such a context of radical evil, no one moral can be neutral or uninvolved in the struggle to end such savagery and to bring a new and expansive good in the world.

And what kind of people must we be and become and demonstrate in sustained and consistent practice? Indeed, it is the sacred teaching of our ancestors that we must bear witness to truth and set the scales of justice in their proper place, especially among those who have no voice, less voice, and who are vulnerable and devalued. We must, our ancestors teachings tell us, also, be the vanguard and rearguard of the people; stand up in

the midst of silence, unawareness, misinformation and disinformation; and speak truth to the people; speak freedom to the people; and speak good and growth, strength, struggle and victory over evil, injustice and oppression.

We must speak to our people and the people of society and the world about the possibilities of a new world and a new history of humankind as Frantz Fanon imagined and urged us to create. Speak to the people telling them, as our ancestors taught, “to speak truth, do justice, be kind and do not do evil.” For righteousness is our strength and it is through righteous and relentless struggle that we can turn this *river of racism* around and make the *waters of life* run clean again. As our poet laureate, Gwen Brooks says, “My people, Black and Black, revile the River. / Say that the River turns, and turn the River.”

INDEED, LET US CONTINUE TO STRIVE FOR THE victory and the announcement of a new day dawning, the deserved and overdue end of the two pandemics, COVID-19 and the pathology of racist oppression and the opening of a new horizon of human history. But this too, tell the people that our sister poet, Gwen Brooks, also tells us “This is the urgency! Live / and have your blooming in the whirlwind.” And remember as Howard Thurman taught, “It is good to know what there is in us that is strong and solidly rooted. It is good to have assurances that can only come from having ridden the storm and remained intact.” And so, it is again on us to continue and intensify the struggle, to ride the storm; bloom in the whirlwind and redirect the river in the interest of a free and unwarped world and a constantly unfolding African and human good and a sustained and enhanced well-being of the world. ▲

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.AfricanAmericanCulturalCenter-LA.org; www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org; www.MaulanaKarenga.org.