



**REMEMBERING THE PAST, ENGAGING THE PRESENT,  
IMAGINING THE FUTURE**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**A**s others visit the President, hold news conferences, send e-mail, and request recognition and action on their demands as supporters in the recent re-election, no one has greater claim and urgency than we do. For although it will be taken for granted and not counted and discussed in the calculation of victory by others, no constituency was as supportive and protective of President Obama as African Americans throughout his first term and during his campaign for re-election. It is thus, important for Black people to advance an agenda also which remembers the past, engages the present, and imagines a whole new future. And the inclusive agenda put forth in the Million Man March/Day of Absence Mission Statement (1995) offers a foundational framework for remembrance, discussion and development during this 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this historic occasion. It is inclusive of demands on the government, corporations and ourselves concerning racial and social justice, the environment and the world.

However, the stress is always on the rights, will and struggle of our people” and on their “creating and sustaining a progressive independent political movement” to achieve our aims and hold all accountable. For we know in the final analysis, we are our own liberators. Yes, the oppressor is responsible for our oppression, but we are responsible for our liberation. And part of our responsibility is to hold him responsible for his oppression of us. This requires a liberation movement that sees, seeks and struggles for freedom, justice and power of the people over their destiny and daily lives as indispensable goals. And this, in turn, requires an internal strength and constant building.

Thus, we also called for “the building and strengthening of Black united fronts and collective leadership structures . . . to practice and benefit from operational unity, and the establishment of a Black Economic Development Fund to enhance economic development, cultivate economic discipline and cooperative practices and achieve economic self-determination.”

Deeply concerned about our relationships, families and future, we called for “the reaffirmation and strengthening of family through quality male/female relations based on principles of equality, complementarity, mutual respect and shared responsibility in love, life and struggle; and through loving and responsible parenthood that insists on discipline and achievement, provides spiritual, moral and cultural grounding and through expanding rites of passage programs, mentorships and increasing adoptions.” In addition, we listed as key “the ongoing struggle for reparations in the fullest sense;” “support for the Conyers Reparations Bill” and “the continuing struggle against police abuse, government suppression, violations of civil and human rights and the industrialization of prisons; and in support of the freedom of all political prisoners, prisoners' rights and their efforts to transform themselves into worthy members of the community.”

We recognized and recommitted ourselves to “the critical task of organizing the community as a solid wall in the struggle against drugs, crime and violence in the community which we see as interrelated and which must be joined with the struggle to reduce and end poverty, increase employment, strengthen fatherhood, motherhood

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and family, support parents, provide education and prevention programs; and expose and reject those who deal in death for the community.”

Reaffirming the centrality of quality education, we called for “continuing and expanding our support for African-centered independent schools through joining their boards, enrolling our children, being concerned and active parents, donating time, services and monies to them and working in various other ways to insure that they provide the highest level of culturally-rooted education.” Likewise, we stressed “intensifying and broadening the struggle for quality public education through heightened parental concern and involvement and social activism which insist on a responsible administration, professional and committed teachers, continuing faculty and staff development; safe, pleasant, encouraging and fully-equipped campuses and an inclusive and culture-respecting curriculum which stresses mastery of knowledge as well as critical thinking, academic excellence, social responsibility and an expanded sense of human possibility.”

Moreover, we committed to “continuing and reinforced efforts to reduce and eliminate negative media approaches to and portrayals of Black life and culture; to organize a sustained and effective support for positive models, messages and works; and to expand support for and development of an independent media.” We stressed too the need for “strengthening and supporting organizations and institutions of the Black community concerned with the uplifting and liberation of our people by joining as families and persons, volunteering service, giv-

ing donations and providing and insisting on the best leadership possible.” Furthermore, we called for “building appropriate alliances with other peoples of color, supporting their liberation struggles and just demands and engaging in mutually supportive and mutually beneficial activities to create and sustain a just and good society.” Likewise, emphasis was placed on “standing in solidarity with other African peoples and other Third World peoples in their struggles to free themselves, harness their human and material resources and live full and meaningful lives.”

We cited as important also our “reaffirming in the most positive ways the value and indispensability of the spiritual and ethical grounding of our people in accomplishing the historical tasks confronting us. . . living the best of our traditions ourselves and challenging other members and the leadership to do likewise and constantly insisting that our faith communities give the best of what we have to offer to build the moral community and just society we struggle for as a people”

Finally, we called for “embracing and practicing a common set of principles that reaffirm and strengthen family, community and culture, The *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles): *Umoja* (Unity); *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination); *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility); *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics); *Nia* (Purpose); *Kuumba* (Creativity) and *Imani* (Faith).” This, we reasoned, serves as a core commitment in our struggle to radically transform society and ourselves in the process, and to forge a new history and future for humankind worthy of the name and history African.

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