



**TO UNITE THE NATION WITH JUSTICE:
SECURING MEDICINE, MONEY AND MEANS FOR ALL**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

THE CURRENT CONVERSATIONS CONCERNING the urgency and need to unite the nation must always be undergirded and informed by a parallel recognition of the urgent and unavoidable need of an inclusive and substantive justice. For there can be no real, moral or meaningful unity without justice. As we know from centuries of sustained struggle and reflection, without justice there can be no peace, only an imposed order, a coerced and counterfeit unity. For both unity and peace are the products of the practice and presence of justice, an inclusive and substantive justice. To speak of substantive justice is to speak of a justice that rightfully gives each and all their due, not simply a procedural justice that goes through legal procedures that may not produce a rightful result or process.

Thus, in the sacred texts of our ancestors, it is said of the just and unifying peacemaker, “He has done real justice and has daily made peace for (those) who love it for its own goodness” (*Husia*). Moreover, the sacred teachings assure us that “the true balancing of the land lies in doing justice” and that justice is vital to our very life. Indeed, the sacred texts say, “Doing justice is breath to the nose.” Thus, they teach that we should do and demand justice, “speak truth and set the scales of justice in their proper place, especially among those who have no voice,” the vulnerable, devalued and disempowered.

If we are to do real justice to the African American people and the majority of people in this country suffering in various ways, we need three concrete things immediately and in sufficient quality and quantity. These are *medicine, money and means*. *We need medicine to save our lives, money to sustain our lives, and means to rebuild our lives, advance our interests and participate meaningfully and effectively in the radical reconception and reconstruction of this country in the interest of human good and the well-being of the world.*

Medicine is a metaphor for affordable, accessible, culturally grounded and sensitive healthcare with rightful attention to the most

medically vulnerable among us in this pandemic. And we must strive and struggle for the ultimate achievement of universal healthcare for all. Money means not only cash now, but also continuous income, job creation through Green and infrastructure projects, economic security, adequate support for persons and small businesses, and for economic initiatives to rebuild generational wealth, and ultimately reparations.

To address the issues of means speaks to creating the economic, political, educational and social conditions and capacities for all to rebuild their lives, visit our families and friends again without fear of harm, and return to work, school, university and religious centers, and multiple and meaning-full sites of sharing good. And this requires the mutually respectful and mutually supportive seeking and sharing of common ground and common good in the midst of our diversity and continuing our striving and struggles in the interests of shared human good and the well-being of the world and all in it.

Here it is important to note that we appreciate the call for national unity, but it must not be at our expense or at the expense of an inclusive and substantive racial and social justice. If we read our history as Min. Malcolm X urged us, we can see how America’s quest for unity after the Civil War, ended up at our expense. Indeed, our freedom, rights and very lives were sacrificed on the altar of the call and quest for what was conveniently called “national unity.” But we know the call was not really for national unity, inclusive of all, but for unity among Whites – Southerners and Northerners. And this current call for unity to end, what President Biden calls an “uncivil war” between the red and blue Whites, could lead to compromises damaging to us and to any concept and practice of an inclusive and substantive justice and democracy.

Certainly, we can concede that the administration of President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris has displayed a new social initiative in government formation and executive orders at this early stage. But the night

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is still young and the day is yet to dawn in its fullness. Likewise, the bargaining, bartering, off-line lobbying and backroom deals have not yet begun in the massively corrupt and corrosive ways it will eventually evolve. And we must be vigilant and involved at every level, guarding and advancing a clear agenda and progressive policies generative of African and human good and the well-being of the world.

People from the Biden-Harris team talk of the convergence of four crises that must be addressed: the public health crisis, the economic crisis, the climate (environmental) crisis, and the diversity and racial justice crisis. But here clarifications and rightful emphases are necessary, if we are to solve these interrelated crises in a cooperative, inclusive, equitable and just way.

First, the racial justice crisis must be accepted and engaged as part and parcel of each of the other crises and dealt with in a *particular* as well as general way. For without particular, prioritized, and equitable attention to our particular needs and interests within these crises, we could, as history shows, easily get lost in the mix, and diversity will end up meaning the diversities among Whites or diversity for a single group of color along with Whites. Equity is justice that takes into account differences in conditions, capacities, needs and interests and thus, particular requirements to provide what is rightfully due to each and all.

Second, the Biden and Harris administration must recognize and respond rightfully to the reality that there is actually a fifth crisis. It is a crisis of America's self-conception and its response to the ongoing and now intensified struggle to liberate America from narrow notions of itself and from policies and practices harmful

and lethal to those different and vulnerable. In a word, it is compelling American society to surrender its oppressive self-conception as a finished White product and to radically reconceive and reconstruct itself as an ongoing, open-textured multicultural project which includes, benefits and is developed by all.

To work in the old White supremacist framework is to continue to fail at great cost to Black people, other people of color and all others different and vulnerable. And it will mean missing the opportunity opened up by both the ongoing Black-led struggles against systemic racism intensified since Ferguson, and by the electoral victories in the presidential and vice-presidential election and the Georgia senatorial races, generated especially by an expanded Black political initiative against all odds.

IF AMERICA IS TO TRULY CHANGE ITS wickedly racist ways at home and abroad, we, as a people, must continue in our role as a vital self-conscious moral and social vanguard in the struggle for racial and social justice - inclusive, substantive, and sustained justice. And we must not be diverted or dispirited in this righteous and relentless struggle, no matter how difficult, dangerous, and demanding it becomes. W.E.B. DuBois reminds us that in the midst of their periodic despair, our forefathers and foremothers always regained their hope, deepened their faith and "sang to sunshine." They worked and struggled through the night of oppression to hurry the dawn of a new day, founded in freedom, anchored in justice, and opened to an endless array of options and opportunities to pursue the good. And to honor them and to be ourselves and to free ourselves, we must do no less.▲

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