



**ANOTHER SENSELESS MURDER AND MAIMING OF OUR CHILDREN:
RESISTING THE UNMITIGATED EVIL
AND INJUSTICE OF IT ALL**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

THE RACIST AND RUTHLESS MURDER of 14-year-old Cyrus Carmack-Belton and the legal exoneration of his killer, and the wrongful and racist conviction and court imposed maiming of 17-year-old Karmelo Anthony with a cruel, unjust and life-shattering sentence of 35 years, clearly caused brutal blunt force trauma to both our heads and hearts. This double-tap bombing coldly contradicted our concepts of how we see and treat children and what is just and fair by any humane and moral measure. Even after centuries of resisting varied forms of savage oppression, we still cannot get use to the unmitigated evil and injustice of it all, especially when it involves and violates our children.

And it made many of us remember and relive the pervasive sense of vulnerability, anxiety, anguish and grief about the loss of life and innocence and the safety of our children that we felt after the murder of Latasha Harlins and Trayvon Martin. Thus, we mourn with righteous anger the devilish taking and devastating loss of every life, and resolve to continue to resist the police and vigilante violence that plagues our community and consumes our children and our peoples. Indeed, this wanton murdering and maiming of our children and people is a systemic evil and injustice we are morally compelled to resist and eliminate.

We call the killing of Cyrus “murder” because it was unjustifiable, inten-

tional, immoral and even unlawful, even though the jury without Black representation decided to make a racist exception concerning him. Thus, they used the law to sanction his murder rather than punish it and to exonerate his murderer rather than to convict and punish him. Indeed, they dared to decide that an adult falsely accusing and chasing a child down the street more than 130 yards, shooting him in the back and killing him was not murder. And this, even though the child was running for his life away from two aggressive men and one with a gun viciously intent on killing him.

And we call the wrongful conviction and cruel sentencing of Karmelo *psychological and social maiming* as it inflicts severe injury of lasting hurt and harm, damage and disability on him. Here, we are linking maiming to mayhem which has the same historical roots, meaning to damage, disfigure and disable in lasting ways. Indeed, its early meaning was to wound someone to such a degree they could no longer defend themselves. Karmelo, tried and convicted as an adult and sentenced to be imprisoned for 35 years, joins other Black boys who are socially and psychologically maimed by the system and cannot defend themselves adequately in a racist and hostile society.

Although Cyrus posed no threat to Chikei Chow, his murderer, and did not steal anything and was running away from a perceived and real threat, he was

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chased down and shot in the back. And yet racist reasoning costumed in contortionist interpretations of law offered him no defense of his right to life and security from adult violence. Emphasizing that this is a right reserved for Whites and evidence of malicious violence and certain guilt for Black people, it again also reaffirmed the death-dealing depraved disregard for Black life. Karmelo and his legal team argued he had acted in self-defense in the stabbing death of Austin Metcalf at a track meet after he was physically confronted and threatened, but to no avail.

Clearly, the age of innocence and empathetic understanding for our children is radically reduced by a racist society. They are under a different concept and practice of American justice and they are redefined as adults and are not allowed the latitude of early-life mistakes and adjustments of life and law to accommodate their developmental stages. With White teens, we hear about adolescent development science, about the still developing areas of decision-making, impulse control and emotional regulation, and the need to understand and respond empathetically and not ruin their future, but not for Black adolescents. They are to be judged and tried in court and society as fully grown adults with the intolerable urges of their perpetually indicted parents and needing restraint, punishment, imprisonment or death, justifiably meted out by police, courts, convenient store owners or other vigilantes of various colors and kinds.

In our honoring the moral imperative of righteous and relentless resistance to evil, injustice and oppression on every level, there is understandably apprehension about how to move forward. After all, we live in a country and context in which children and adults and activists on campus and community are penalized and punished for discussing and resisting something as serious as genocide. Moreover, we have a history of being frontline targets for various racial fictions and fantasies shared by the uncritical and racialized minds of Americans of all communities. And we understand it as a result of a history of anti-Black racism in this country from its founding. It is the history of oppression and resistance which the oppressors and perpetrators want to erase, rewrite and peddle artificial versions of on various digital and institutional platforms.

We can never and must never become used to the demonization, abuse, imprisonment and killing of our children. Such normalization would be unnatural, immoral and inhumane and an imitation of our oppressor, and our oppressor cannot be our teacher. We live in dangerous, difficult and demanding times and must rise to every occasion that our history and humanity requires of us regardless of the threats and the costs as Nana Haji Malcolm taught us. We cannot deny the problems we have with other ethnic groups and in this case, Asians caught up in and committed to the anti-Black racism of the dominant society. But we cannot in good faith and in the framework of our

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moral tradition indict whole communities. Indeed, we must work together not only to end the abuse and violence against us, but also to achieve this goal as well as to uproot and end White supremacist systems, policies and practices that do radical harm to all our racialized and oppressed communities.

IN THINKING IN SERIOUS AND SUSTAINED ways about our ongoing strategy and struggle for justice for our children and our people similarly targeted, maimed and murdered, we must rebuild an overarching movement that links our organizations and

initiatives and unites our energies and efforts. And as Nana Ella Baker reminds and reassures us “until the killing of Black men, Black mothers’ sons, becomes as important to the rest of the country as the killing of a white mother’s sons, we who believe in freedom cannot rest.” And we know she speaks also of our women and daughters and of achieving an inclusive, shared and pervasive freedom, a freedom to live, be secure in our personhood and peoplehood, and to build a future full of existing and unfolding good.▲

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