



**BLACK INTERESTS IN RESISTING ICE RAIDS:
DEFENDING BLACK IMMIGRANTS, OTHERS AND OURSELVES**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

IN THE MIDST OF OUR COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS and participation in the urgent and ever-widening resistance to the terrorizing, disruptive and devastating ICE raids by the Trump regime, questions have been raised in some quarters about the justice and justification of our moral concern and active involvement. It is always good to ask and remind ourselves as African people, Black people, about the reasons we decide and do things, especially those things that matter and mean most to us. And our involvement in causes and actions of critical importance invite and ultimately require that we are clear and confident about the rightfulness of our active commitment in the struggles we wage and join in this critical moment of history. In our community conversations, we are asking ourselves rightly, how do the ICE raids in particular relate to us and how we should relate to those most affected? And some of us believe that we have no interest in this for several reasons, but we can only hold that position if we think in zero sum terms and have a narrow and self-injuring conception of ourselves and our interests.

There is in this country an emerging fascism, an increased racism and expansion of White supremacy. And the ICE raids, as well as the suppression of free speech and resistance on campuses and in the larger society against genocide, injustice and oppression, cannot be ignored. Nor can we stand to the side or be silent in the midst of the terror, disruption and oppression that immigrant communities are undergoing now and as an ongoing reality, especially given that these immigration communities include Afro-Latinos as well as African people from Haiti, the African continent, the Caribbean and elsewhere. Thus, there's no way we can

say we're acting in our interests in any rightful and meaningful way, if we misinterpret and narrow our conception of our interests and ourselves, refuse to join a critical battlefront in our overall liberation struggle, and act contrary to the moral and spiritual values which have been the ground and guiding force of our struggle, resilience and radical refusal to be defeated, regardless of the odds against us.

There are several reasons we must bring the struggle surrounding the ICE raids and its related issues within the arc of our moral concern and active commitment. First, there is our moral sensitivity and righteous resistance to all human suffering and oppression, not only regarding our people, but any and all other human beings. Indeed, it is how we understand and assert ourselves as a moral and social vanguard in this country and the world. And thus, it is central to our self-understanding to honor the ancient African ethical imperative to bear witness to truth and set the scales of justice in their proper place among the voiceless and devalued, the marginalized and minimized, the taunted and terrorized, the downtrodden, degraded and oppressed. In other words, it's the African, the Black and human thing to do to be morally sensitive and in righteous resistance to evil, injustice, suffering and oppression everywhere.

Secondly, we're morally compelled to join the struggle against the ICE raids and their related issues of evil, injustice and oppression because this issue and the issues of immigration of which it is a part directly involve African people: Afro-Latinos, Haitians, Continental and Caribbean Africans, and Africans from other parts of the world. Therefore, immigration and the

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current focus of the brutal and criminal ICE raids are not only a Latino issue, but also a Black issue for we are definitely and directly involved, not only as Afro-Latinos, but also as Africans from around the world. And even though the media, the academy and other public sources might erase the African from portrayals, depictions and discussions of immigrants and immigration, we Black people are there suffering, hiding and hoping, being taunted and terrorized, being swept up and humiliated. And it is we too who suffer family separation, kidnappings, the worst of treatment and live daily with an ever present sense of terror, vulnerability, insecurity and defenselessness.

Indeed, no immigrants are more oppressed and denied their human rights than our Haitian sisters and brothers, held up only to be falsely charged with all kinds of racistly constructed fantasies to provoke fear and hatred, and manufacture the so-called immigrant threat. The very fact that we don't see in public media and discourse Africans in these concentration camps and suppressive situations and in the struggle to resist this evil injustice and oppression speaks to the ongoing attempts to literally erase them. But it also makes us complicit, if we do not resist these raids and other racist and inhuman treatment of Black immigrants. If we are silent and stay on the sidelines, we not only abandon them, but contribute to their erasure and oppression. And who and how can we justify abandoning our own people by reasoning irrationally that we have no interest in the fight against their oppression?

Thirdly, we must not practice a selective morality in emulation of our oppressor. Here again we must not have a narrow sense of our interests and practice the petty revenge against people of color who we collectively indict and claim all of them don't give us adequate respect or support us or did not vote

for us or some other real or imagined slight. And this especially, if we then turn around and make a public ritual of declaring forgiveness for racist Whites that murder us in our churches, homes, cars, playgrounds and streets, and build personal, social and political relations with Whites who regularly vote and act against us and maintain the system of White supremacy that elected Trump with votes from every segment and sector of White society.

We have no moral obligation to love or support people who hate us and oppress us. But we do have an obligation to our own selves to constantly seek common ground with those with whom we can work on the basis of mutual respect, mutual interests, mutual support and mutual benefit. The question is not only who is against us, but also who is for us or even simply who can we work with on an issue of common ground to advance the liberation struggle. And to do this, we must not practice the generalized condemnation of whole peoples in emulation of our oppressor. Again, our oppressor cannot be our teacher. After all, they are those against whom we are in righteous and relentless resistance.

Fourthly, we know that freedom and justice are indivisible. Indeed, Nana Dr. Martin Luther King reminds us that "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." And as Nana Harriet Tubman taught us, freedom is and must be a shared good or it is a deficient and deceptive idea and practice. Moreover, as our ancestral proverbial wisdom teaches, "if you see birds in your neighbor's corn, drive them away for tomorrow they will be in yours." Also as Nana James Baldwin taught, "if they take you in the morning, they will be coming for us that night." As we of Us have taught since the Sixties, "our defense and victory depends not on the oppressor not coming, but our being able

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to receive them when they do.” And this means, being able to receive them with the strongest most unified force we can muster both within and without.

FINALLY, WE HAVE JOINED AND MUST CONTINUE to join in greater numbers the struggle to resist the ICE raids and the emerging fascism that it reflects and reinforces because it is a part of our overall struggle to expand the realm of freedom in this country and ultimately the world. It is Nana Haji Malcolm who taught us that “wherever a Black (person) is, there is a battle line”. Likewise, Nana Paul Robeson

taught us also that “the battlefield is everywhere; there is no sheltered rear.” And we who have fought for centuries and continue to fight on countless battle fronts must not find ourselves absent on this critical battle front. For again, it is not simply about immigration or ICE raids, but about defending Black immigrants, others and ourselves in the midst of an emerging fascism. And it relates directly to our overall struggle to defeat injustice and oppression in all forms and on all fronts and build the good, just and sustainable world we all want and deserve to live in and leave as a legacy for others who come after us to enjoy and expand. ▲

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