



**UPLIFTING HAJI MALCOLM ON AFRICAN LIBERATION DAY:
IMAGINING AND ACHIEVING AN INCLUSIVE LIBERATION**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

THE MARKING OF AFRICAN LIBERATION Day (May 26) and the continuing celebration and commemoration of Haji Malcolm's 100th Birthday Anniversary, offers us yet another invitation and opportunity to remember him in his instructive wholeness and reflect on some of his essential teachings on pan-Africanism and African liberation. And using a Kawaida framework, I want to pose and pursue the contention that at the heart of these teachings is *the fundamental pan-African vision of African peoples all over the world united in work and struggle to imagine and achieve an inclusive liberation*. This active unity in work and struggle for an inclusive liberation means, as we have called for since the 1960s, the liberation of African persons and peoples everywhere, everywhere from domination, deprivation and degradation in all their forms.

This means the liberation of Africans throughout the world African community in whatever country and on whatever continent they are: from Harlem to Haiti and Harare, Sudan and Congo; from Africa, North and South America and the Caribbean Nations to Africans in Europe, Asia, Western Asia and Palestine. Thus, Haji Malcolm reaffirms this shared vision and world-encompassing task in the OAAU Unity Pledge which makes a commitment "to join hands and hearts with all peoples of African origin in a grand alliance," a grand alliance of striving and struggle for the liberation and upliftment of African peoples everywhere. It is, he states, a vision of the unity and struggle of Africans in the diaspora who will likewise "rejoin our brothers and sisters on the African continent, culturally, psychologically, economically and share with them the sweet fruits of freedom

from oppression and independence of racist governments."

The collaborative imagining and achieving this pan-African unity and struggle and the shared victory it yields, as I read, understand and interpret Haji Malcolm, involves a series of interrelated and interlocking tasks. These include: 1) reflective remembrance; 2) return to our roots; 3) reinforcement of the bonds between us; and 4) righteous and relentless resistance. The process and practice of *reflective remembrance* is central to Haji Malcolm's moral imperative and programmatic initiative: "wake up, clean up and stand up." For him remembering rightly precedes and makes possible our rightful thinking, especially about ourselves. "History is a people's memory," he states, and thus to retrieve this memory is to recover the material we need to think with and to begin to break the chains of White supremacy and begin the return journey to the best of ourselves, our best views and values, and our best practices. Acquiring critical historical consciousness is important, not only to learn the lessons of history, he teaches, but also to free our minds and lay the basis for Africans to think and act in liberated and liberating ways.

Here is located Haji Malcolm's call for all Africans to *return to our roots*. "We must recapture our heritage (read history) and our identity, if we are to liberate ourselves from the bonds of white supremacy," he tells us. He speaks here of the cultural revolution to unbrainwash and decolonize the minds and hearts of our people. As I have argued in my forthcoming book, *The Liberation Ethics of Haji Malcolm X*, "at the heart of the cultural revolution is not only a firm and steadfast

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rejection of the life-negating and dignity-denying views, values and practices of the dominant society, but also a self-conscious reappropriation and reaffirming of the life-positive and dignity-affirming views, values and practices of our own culture.” And this, Haji Malcolm states, requires a self-conscious effort “to migrate back to Africa culturally,” or otherwise stated, “culturally and philosophically and psychologically.” And in stressing these three essential areas of culture, psychology and philosophy suggests his “concern with the whole of who we are (culture); with the health and wholeness of our mind and spirit, especially our self-conception and will to resist (psychology); and with our self-conscious serious reflection on our lives and struggle in liberating and life-enhancing ways (philosophy)”

Haji Malcolm wants us also to engage in concrete actions that *reinforce the bonds between us* as African peoples. And he maintains a *sankofa* return to Africa is essential, even indispensable to this relation-building and institutional building process and project in the interest of our inclusive liberation. The return, he states, is to give us spiritual strength in the service of our social goals of liberation and a decent, dignity-affirming and good life. Haji Malcolm, here, using Nana Marcus Garvey’s language, calls the initiative “a spiritual Back-to-Africa” migration. He contends that this return to the source “means restoring our common bond” which “will give us the spiritual strength and the incentive to strengthen our political and social and economic position right here in America and to fight for things that are ours by right here on this continent.” But again, the need is to reach back and retrieve models of excellence, achievement and liberational possibilities. And at the heart of this process

is the stress on strengthening the bonds between us in life and love of ourselves and our people in good, beautiful and strengthening ways. It is, he teaches, not only our origins, history, culture and struggle that unites us, but also in the process of remembrance, retrieval of our best views and values, an overarching African “spiritual bond that is created” between African Americans and continental Africans which “makes us inseparable.” And again, he stresses that everything including the return be directed toward liberating and uplifting the people in both a spiritual and ethical sense, as well as a social sense.

Also, Haji Malcolm teaches that only through our *righteous and relentless struggle* to be ourselves and free ourselves can we build the good life and future we want and deserve. It is his stress on standing up here that is central. And it is in Islamic terms *jihad*, a struggle that is internal as well as external, a struggle, as we say in Kawaïda teachings, not only against the oppressor but also against that in us which is in contradiction to our best views and values and the choice we’ve made to free ourselves and be ourselves in dignity-affirming, life-enhancing and world preserving ways. Here, Haji Malcolm reaffirms his belief in the capacity of the people to be themselves and free themselves saying in the OAAU program that “We believe that our communities must be sources of their own strength politically, economically, intellectually and culturally in the struggle for human rights and human dignity.”

In conclusion Haji Malcolm teaches that we have both the right and responsibility of righteous struggle in each of his three focal areas of liberation ethics, i.e., “wake up, clean up and stand up.” This means that we have

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the right and responsibility to learn and to know, to know ourselves, society and the world in their historical and current unfolding and the major issues in the world; to live a dignity-affirming good life, free from self-injury, and impositions of an evil, unjust and oppressive society; and to resist any and every system or practice of oppression.

FINALLY, HAJI MALCOLM TELLS AND teaches us that we must understand our issues and struggles in both particular and global ways. We unavoidably struggle for a new world, and therefore, he says, the Black Liberation Struggle “is international in nature and scope.” Likewise, our struggle for human rights of freedom and justice are international issues; “racism is a human prob-

lem and crime; and capitalism, colonialism and imperialism are part of an international system of oppression.” Moreover, Haji Malcolm teaches, we are part of a rising tide of resistance in the world and “what we do here in regaining our self-respect, our manhood (and womanhood), our dignity and freedom helps all people everywhere who are also fighting against oppression.” Our task, then, is to continue the struggle, keep the faith, and hold the line until the good world we imagine is achieved and shared as an inclusive liberation and fully lived good.▲

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