



**CELEBRATING AFRICAN LIBERATION DAY:
EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE; STRENGTHENING THE STRUGGLE**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 05-29-14, p.A6

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

On this the 51st anniversary of the founding of African Liberation Day, we join Africans on the continent and in the diaspora, as well as other peoples around the world, to remember and pay rightful homage, reflect and recommit ourselves to freeing and empowering the people and continuing and strengthening the struggle to achieve this. And thus, we begin by sending greetings of solidarity and sustained struggle to our African brothers and sisters everywhere, and to all oppressed, struggling, freedom-loving and freedom-seeking peoples of the world. For we understand and appreciate the ethical teachings of our ancestors that African liberation is indivisible and that all real and righteous struggles for human liberation are interrelated and vital to bringing good into the world.

Let us also pay rightful and repeated homage to the men and women who waged the difficult and demanding struggle for African independence, all the heroes, heroines, martyrs and veterans who struggled to free the land and peoples of Africa. And let us also pay rightful and repeated homage to the women and men of similar consciousness, courage and commitment who waged the parallel and interrelated freedom struggles in the diaspora, those who gave their lives and made awesome sacrifices to free our people from oppressions and constraints of various kinds and to advance the cause of African and human freedom in the world.

Also, let us pay a special homage to those who still continue the struggles to truly free and empower African people and who refuse to be seduced or sidetracked by new and disguised forms of oppression, packaged as progress, partnership and the only practical and possible way forward. For there is increasing talk afloat about Africa's writing a

new narrative of itself and of things being improved and progress being made, conducted by those who confuse their presence with progress, their self-serving statistics with the real state of things, and their robbery of resources with an enriching experience for the masses.

And so, we hear claims that seven out of the ten fastest growing economies in the world are in Africa; that Africa is second only to Asia in its rate of economic growth; that extreme poverty is declining; that international investment and agricultural productivity are increasing; and that deadly and devastating diseases are slowly, but surely, being brought under control. Moreover, it is reported that even armed conflict has declined in number and intensity. Let us be positive enough to recognize and show respect for any gains and good achieved by the masses of our people, through their work, sacrifice and struggles on every front. But let us be careful not to declare achievement in its absence or claim more than can be measured in the quality and content of the daily life of everyday people.

Indeed, no matter how happy and hopeful we are and can rightly be, we must always and everywhere ask in every report of success or achievement, what does all this really mean for the people? Second, what does it really do for them or to them in their daily lives? And equally important, as Frantz Fanon tells, we must ask how do the people actually participate in this reported success, i.e., in planning it, creating it and benefitting from it? In political education and political practice, Fanon informs us, we must "make the history of the nation part of the personal experience of each of its citizens". Thus, if success, progress, prosperity, growth, development or whatever name it is called, is to be real and relevant, then, it must be part of the history the

**CELEBRATING AFRICAN LIBERATION DAY:
EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE; STRENGTHENING THE STRUGGLE**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 05-29-14, p.A6

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

people self-consciously conceive, create and experience personally and collectively as a rightful and deserved result and benefit of their own work and struggle.

So, it is not simply a matter of achieving nice sounding statistics of growth and development without talking about whether there is an increase in capacities of the people and whether they receive any benefits from this vaunted statistical PR portrait. For as it turns out, the agricultural productivity is mainly for export for others, not for the people themselves; and the small farmers, predominantly women, are being rapidly driven out of the process. Also, a vast amount of productive land is being gobbled up by foreign corporations and countries, and alienated from its African owners; and the rich resource of mineral wealth of African people is being mercilessly plundered by international corporations, foreign countries, collaborating elites and the proxy thug armies they covertly assemble to advance their predatory interests.

Certainly, we need not be cynical to see the deception and dishonesty in corporate and collaborating elite “progress parades”. But if this long, difficult and demanding struggle for African liberation has taught us anything, it is that we must measure the morality and material progress of any society by what it does for the masses of the people, especially the poor and most vulnerable. And we also know that trickle down theories are bogus and designed for the benefit of the rich, that providing comfortable places in oppression for a collaborating elite is not progress or praiseworthy, and that robbing the people of

their rightful resources and wealth can be in no way construed as justice or good. And so, there is still work to do and struggles to wage and we cannot grow weary, waver or walk away from the battlefield until the struggle is won. Africa is indeed confronted with continuing paradoxes. It is the richest continent in the world and yet home to some of the world’s poorest people; blessed with enriching diversity, yet plagued with disabling division; and the oldest continent with the youngest population, struggling with a legacy of oppression that has constrained its future promise.

But we, as Africans, cannot doubt that we can eventually solve the major problems that confront us: the building and keeping of peace; the security of persons and peoples; food security and sustainable food systems; the strengthening of the respect and defense of the dignity and rights of women; the effective education and protection of youth; relief and reintegration of refugees; rightful engagement of our best minds; halting of the wholesale selling of the continent and degradation of the environment; and the achievement of democracy, continental unity and prosperity for all. This is our continuing task and struggle and our people deserve no less. Only then can Africa play the pivotal and powerful role history assigned it from its earliest days in Kemet as: navel of the world, temple of the world, and light of the world, shining, as Marcus Garvey envisioned it, as “a bright star among the constellation of nations in the world”.

Dr. Maulana Karenga, Professor and Chair of Africana Studies, California State University-Long Beach; Executive Director, African American Cultural Center (Us); Creator of Kwanzaa; and author of *Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture* and *Introduction to Black Studies*, 4th Edition, www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org; www.MaulanaKarenga.org.