



**CONTINUING TO MOVE DEFIANTLY FORWARD:
RIGHTEOUSLY RESISTING THE BACKWARD THRUST**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

CONTINUING TO REACH BACK AND REFLECT on the ground on which we stand, the essential and upward lifting work we do and the righteous and relentless struggle we wage, this is a statement I wrote for our 40th anniversary of Us and posted on our Us website. It is no less real or relevant today and merits critical consideration for this our 52nd anniversary of Us as we continue defiantly forward in the midst of the backward yearning, yelping and rightwing madness that surrounds us.

From the beginning, the essential task of our organization Us has been and remains to provide a philosophy, a set of principles and a program which inspires a personal and social practice that not only satisfies human need but transforms people in the process, making them self-conscious agents of their own life and liberation. Such a transformative practice will, of necessity, also lead to the building of moral community and to the constant becoming of the best of what it means to be both African and human in the fullest sense.

We entered this righteous and relentless liberation struggle initiated by our ancestors grounded in a philosophy born, tested and tempered in struggle. The philosophy of which we speak is *Kawaida* which is an ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world. One of its central tenets is that culture is the fundamental source of a people's identity, purpose and direction. Thus, *Kawaida* is, in fact, a continuous dialog with African culture, asking questions and seeking answers to central and enduring concerns of the African and human community. At the heart of this project is the continuing quest to define and become the best of what it means to be both African and human in the fullest sense. This involves an ongoing search for models of excellence and paradigms of possibilities in every area of human life, but especially in the seven core areas of culture: history; spirituality and ethics; social organization; political organization; economic organization; creative production (art, music,

literature, dance, etc.) and ethos. It also involves creating a language and logic of liberation, one of opposition and affirmation, and a corresponding liberational practice to create a just and good society and pose an effective paradigm of mutually beneficial human relations and human possibility.

The set of principles which we put forth is the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles): *Umoja* (Unity), *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination); *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility); *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics); *Nia* (Purpose); *Kuumba* (Creativity) and *Imani* (Faith). These Seven Principles are essential standards of personal and social excellence directed toward building and sustaining moral community, and strengthening and maintaining the community's capacity to define, defend and advance its interests in the most positive and productive sense. In addition to being standards of excellence, the *Nguzo Saba* are also categories of priorities and categories of human possibilities. As categories of priorities, they tell us some of the most important things in our lives, identifying a key set of views, values and practices which we should, even must, put first in our personal and social life. And as categories of possibilities, the *Nguzo Saba*, offer us a set of principles which encourage thought and practice which help define, develop and enhance our humanity in the context of community and the world.

Although our overall project is broad and far-reaching, there are seven fundamental kinds of activities which serve as the hinge and hub on which the project turns. First, we have committed ourselves to continuing the cultural revolution initiated in the 60's. This involves: sustaining and always expanding and deepening the dialog with African culture; recovering, creating, recreating and circulating the best of African culture; and posing models of excellence and paradigms of possibilities from this. Secondly, our thrust is to continue and expand political education process through literature forums and social practice which defines and clarifies issues; reinforces

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community, and teaches and increases political participation and political action.

Thirdly, we work to continue and expand the training of social change agents, concerned with understanding the world, engaging it and changing it so that it constantly moves toward liberation and ever higher levels of human life. At the core of this project is stress on culture, ethical grounding and human possibility. Fourthly, we struggle to continue and expand our efforts to organize and mobilize the people around their own interests, enabling them to become self-conscious agents of their own life and liberation. This includes: building new organizations and institutions and helping to strengthen and expand existing ones; making appropriate coalitions and alliances which increase our capacity to define, defend, develop and advance our interests; and constantly engaging in activities directed towards creating and sustaining a just and good society, a better world and a profound respect for our environment.

Fifthly, we strive to continue and expand participation in cooperative projects. This means: advancing and practicing the Kawaida principle of operational unity, i.e., unity in diversity, unity without uniformity and building local, national and international Black united fronts, economic cooperatives, and all other structures which recognize our common identity, interests, challenges and possibilities as African people. Also, we work to continue and expand our services as a reference and resource center. This means: providing information to the community as requested, i.e., general and specific intellectual data on African culture and community resources; providing resources to the needy and vulnerable and the captive (prisoner); and providing information and services in key cultural practices, i.e., life-cycle rituals of birth (*akika*), rites of passage (*majando*); marriage (*arusi*) and passing (*maziko*) as well as counselling, tutoring and other educational services. Finally, we continue

to help rebuild expand and sustain the liberation movement. This means: honoring our motto 'Anywhere we are Us is;' teaching possibilities in word and deed; stressing mobilization, organization and constant struggle; and always insisting on the culturally rooted and the ethically sound.

This, then, has been the core of our efforts for some 40 years and is summed up in our three principles of service, struggle and institution-building. In all of this we seek to contribute to our people's collective vocation to create a just and good society, speak our own special cultural truth and make our own unique contribution to the forward flow of human history. And through this historic work and struggle, we feel certain that we as a people will define and understand ourselves as a people who speak truth, do justice, respect our ancestors and elders, support and challenge our children, care for the vulnerable, relate rightfully to the environment, struggle for what is right, honor our past, engage our present and plan for and welcome our future.

We stand again at a critical juncture in our history and "the battlefield is everywhere; there is no sheltered rear." We stand again at Memphis and Avaris with Ahmose, at Isandlwana with Cetewayo, at Adua with Menelik, at Kumasi with Yaa Asantewa, at the crossroad of the Holocaust of Enslavement and the promise of freedom with Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, and at the threshold of the reaffirmation of the Sixties with Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer, Messenger Muhammad, Ella Baker and Martin King. And our task remains and cannot be other than to lift up the light in the midst of the night that surrounds us and hurry the dawn, to keep the fires for freedom burning thru constant and conscientious struggle, to love each other in the midst of the hatred directed toward us, to defend and give power to the vulnerable, to bear witness to truth, to love justice, to hate wrongdoing and always do what is good.

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