



CRITICAL CONCERNS ABOUT THE COMING ELECTIONS: ISSUES OF LIFE, RESISTANCE AND GANGSTA GOV'MENT

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

NEXT MONTH WE WILL DECIDEDLY and defiantly go to the polls or find reasons, rationalization and ever-available excuses for not doing so. But this election comes at a critical moment of meaning and challenge in our history and the history of this country, and we cannot stand or sit on the sidelines and allow the plundering, polluting and various oppressions of this gansta gov'ment to go unchallenged and unchecked. Surely, the hard evidence of our history and the raw reality we deal with each day assures us that in the final analysis, practice proves and makes possible everything. Indeed, all the evidence we have assembled and analyzed informs us that we will not achieve the just and good society and world we want and deserve by simple anger at this established order of evil, injustice and oppression. Nor will we achieve the radical changes required to end the rampage, rot and ruin of this gansta gov'ment simply by whining and wolfing about things that require active engagement, confrontation, service and sacrifice.

At this critical moment in our history, I am thinking about Nana Fannie Lou Hamer, her words of sacred wisdom, her example of *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination), walking off the plantation, physically and psychologically. I think of her risking her life, sacrificing her health and safety, and giving the wholeness of herself to the Black Freedom Struggle.

And I remember and raise up her as a model to emulate and a mirror by which we are to measure ourselves.

In this, the month of her coming-into-being and the month before this election of such meaning, concern and consequences, I remember her words about the right and responsibility to vote and struggle for freedom on every level. And the obligation to vote was not reduced to performative civic duty or small-minded patriotism, or bribery promises offered by the president and his corporate crime partners. It was, she said, a matter of life and death, for we risked death and the sacrifice of our own lives to register and vote in the segregated and savage South. Indeed, Nana Fannie Lou Hamer said about one of the critical elections she was engaged in, "There is nothing symbolic about this election . . . we are fighting for our lives." And we offered our lives then she said, so that Black children and Black people as a whole in Mississippi and elsewhere would not have to live and die in unfreedom and oppression.

There are, in our moral and political reasoning and continuing struggle two major overarching categories of responsibility we have as persons and a people in taking part in these coming elections and the continuing struggle afterwards. First, we are morally obligated to engage the current issues of our times, including struggles to end: the severe suffering cruelly imposed on the people, especially on the ill, elderly, infant and immigrant, the

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vulnerable and the different; the denial of affordable and accessible healthcare and housing, and adequately funded quality education; the eroding of workers' rights; police violence; environmental degradation; the savagery of ICE; the unchecked use of AI; the dismantling of democracy; and a destructive, imperial and genocidal foreign policy. And at the center of it all is the priority need to restrain and remove the gansta gov'ment of Donald Trump and his cartel of enablers, allies and foot soldiers.

Thus, this is part of our righteous and relentless struggle to deal effectively with the critical issues before us and to fight on another battleground in our ongoing striving and struggles for African and human good and the well-being of the world and all in it. And we cannot morally choose not to act and to struggle, given there is no neutrality between oppression and freedom, and no moral grounds to stand on for not righteously resisting the willfully brutal immoral policies and practices of this gansta gov'ment.

We vote, then, not for a person or party, but *for the issues involved, for our own vision of the future and for what we see as the most promising conditions to pursue and realize that vision after the election and beyond*. For there is life and struggle before and beyond elections and therefore, our future and way forward do not begin and end with elections. Rather it is the ongoing processes and practices of community education, mobilization, organization and confrontation that lead to transformation of a liberating and up-

lifting kind. Indeed, as we have said, there is no substitute for an aware, organized and engaged people, constantly involved in a multiplicity of activities to define, defend and advance their interests. And elections are one such critical area of interests.

The second overarching category of our moral and social responsibility to vote and be active everywhere in our own interest is to honor and advance our sacred history and ongoing struggle to achieve African and human good and the well-being of the world. Within this foundational moral and social understanding, we must vote first because it is for us, a foundational right and responsibility, a natural right of freedom of expression and representation of ourselves, even though we have had to continuously fight to exercise this right and protect it, and to contribute our voice and values to deliberations and decisions of how this country is governed, reconceived and reconstructed. Secondly, we must vote also, because for us as a people, it is a sacred legacy, achieved and gifted through awesome service, sacrifice, and righteous and relentless struggle of our honored ancestors.

Thirdly, we must also vote because electoral politics and government are critical and contested spaces for policy and resources, and this is made additionally clear by the force, violence, court decisions and legislative efforts to deny us the vote and discourage our voting. Fourthly, we must vote to avoid collaborating or being complicit in our own oppression, giving consent through silence and inaction

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and appearing to approve and facilitate the evil, injustice, unfreedom and oppression that this gansta gov'ment imposes.

FINALLY, WE MUST ENGAGE VOTING, also, as another battlefield and battleline in a struggle for our very lives and the quality of our lives and to achieve an inclusive and shared good for all. As Nana Paul Robeson taught, "The battlefront is everywhere; there is no sheltered rear". And Nana Haji Malcolm reaffirmed

this essential insight saying, "Wherever Black people are is a battleline". Indeed, he taught that regardless of what section of the country we live in, "you and I are living in a country that is a battleline for all of us". And again, in our righteous and relentless struggle on every battlefield we have entered and will enter, our sacred and central goal is for a liberated and uplifted life and future of shared and inclusive good for us and everyone.▲

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