



**FOR LIMBIKO: LOVE AND MEMORY IN  
TIMES OF TURMOIL AND TENSION**

*Los Angeles Sentinel, 06-21-18, p.A6*

**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**I**N THE TRADITION OF OUR ANCESTORS OF Ancient Egypt, who wrote letters to loved ones who had passed from earth and ascended into the heavens, I again write you Limbiko Tembo, beloved sister and sacred friend. Let it be said countless times, you live in our lives, in the good we share, the work we do and the struggles we wage. Especially in times like these of increased turmoil, tension and oppression, our love and memory of you remind us of the good in the world and our obligation and commitment to increase and sustain it. It brings us peace and joy; lifts us up and reminds and reassures us of the need, righteousness and victory of our struggle. May you and all the ancestors guide and guard us in the work we do and the struggle we wage of which you are so much a part. May you all be pleased with our humble and audacious efforts. May we meet again in the sacred land of our ancestors, Africa. And may we again embrace and exchange goodness in love and joy throughout eternity. *Hotep. Ase. Heri.*

Homage to you, Limbiko Tembo, beautiful, Black and radiant spirit; lady with a rainbow of *kente* cloth in your hand; spirit sunshine, warming our world with the memory of your smile and the decades of good you gave and shared with me and us. Like all our special events of remembering and raising up for you during these two months of May and June, it is again always to celebrate your coming into being on earth in May and to mark your rising in radiance in the heavens in June. It is the way of our honored ancestors, to celebrate life, mark death, and find uplifting, useful and enduring meaning extracted from both of these cycles of life. Thus, sometimes I write in May, but mostly in June, having experienced both sets of emotions, although I, we, feel both sets of emotions in varying degrees at the celebration of your birth and the marking of your transition and ascension.

In May the happiness of knowing and loving you are dominant, but the sadness of your absence inevitably knocks at the door and enters,

even if for only a short while and a soft whisper. And in June, the missing is greater although *Kawaida* and ancestral custom insist on our focusing on the positive, on what was given and shared, not what was lost or left undone. But, I, we, find ourselves not as grounded in the teachings as we might want to be concerning this acquired and disciplined strength. And so, we console ourselves in our recurrent sadness with the comforting truth that the constant pain of missing loved ones is not only evidence of our enduring love, but also a poignant reminder of their value to us and the sense of loss we will always feel, if what we declare and claim is true and real.

Limbiko, I write you this letter from the battlefield, in the belly of the beast of a resurgent White supremacy. Since your transition and ascension, there has been no let up in the oppression of our people, even though it comes with various outwardly changing chameleon colors. And because White supremacy has not changed except in outward colors and forms, we, the oppressed, cannot become lax or walk away from the battlefield until the struggle is won. And as Min. Malcolm taught us, we must not be fooled by outward appearances, media manipulation and other such seductive words and ways of achieving compliance and submission. For Malcolm says, if we face the unadorned and undisguised reality and truth of it, we are not beneficiaries, but rather “victims of (this) democracy” which he asserts is “nothing but disguised hypocrisy”. Indeed, he taught that in spite of our constant search and struggle for freedom, justice, equity, security and peace, we live in a war zone and “wherever a Black person is is a battleline”. Therefore, he concludes, regardless of the city or section of the country we live in, we “are living in a country that is a battleline for all of us”.

So, I greet you each morning, as we have done since the Sixties, saying *subalkheri*, peace in the morning, but realizing always that the work of peace is still unfinished, for it is tied to

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the struggle for freedom, justice and security from systemic violence of every kind. Thus, we also declare each and every day “*It’s a good day to struggle*”. So, Tiamoyo, Chimbuko, the advocates and I send you, Limbiko, warm greetings of solidarity and struggle, then, you the reluctant soldier, who wanted to just teach, share goodness, love, and live a good life. You never saw yourself as fully a Simba of Us, an all-seasons soldier, but you waged the struggle with us anyhow, realizing that education itself is a battle ground and every school or place of learning is a site of struggle over ideas, policies, practices, representation and power. Indeed, it is Us who taught as early as the 60s that the key battle we are fighting is the battle for the hearts and minds of our people, and that if we lose this battle, we can’t hope to win any other.

Clearly, you realized and responded effectively to this lived reality as a public-school teacher and certainly as teacher, vice principal and principal of the school that now bears your name in honor of you, the Limbiko Tembo School of African American Culture. But you, Seba Limiko, also taught advocacy, membership classes, concerning the history, goals and practices of our organization Us, its role in the liberation movement and its philosophy of life and struggle, *Kawaida*. And you participated in many demonstrations and countless meetings for justice; peace in the world; a living wage; equity and excellence in education; and freedom and justice for Africa, Haiti, Palestine and all the struggling peoples of the world. And the struggle continues, and I, we, are missing you in the middle of the raging madness and the righteous movement forward. Your spirit remains here with us, but oh, if we could right now in this surrounded but defiant space, hear your voice, advice and laughter, and embrace you!

You probably know this already, but I tell you just to share with you as we always did, and to be uplifted and reinforced by it. Perhaps, more so than when you were everyday with us, things seem to be spinning out of control. The world is marked by increasing turmoil and tension; and the country is adrift and seemingly drowning in a sea of sordid and senseless ideas and actions, bringing great harm to the oppressed many for the greed and “good” of the favored few. Also, there is an orange-colored pretender on the crumbling throne of the American empire, arming and emulating his client and allied oppressor countries, seeking security behind high walls, the brutal occupation and plunder of other peoples’ lands, and the merciless corralling and killing of adults and children by various technological, bureaucratic and standard bloodletting and life-depriving ways.

**A** GAIN, THERE IS NO LET UP OR RELIEF FROM the sights and sounds of suffering in this country and around the world and therefore, there can be no let up, laxity or loss of heart in our righteous and relentless struggle. It was among the first things I told you when we met about the lessons of history and the obligation and eventual victory of our struggle. But there were also other things we talked about and shared about love and life in the times of turmoil and tension and unrelenting oppression. It was about creating free space in the midst of the war zone, bringing and offering peace to each other and shaping and sharing beauty in spite of the ugliness in other places. It was in the end, we said, all about love, love of each other and our people and about, as our *Kiapo* says, struggling “to bring into being a new world, a world in which we, our children and our people can live, love and create freely and stand and walk in a warmer sun”. And we have not and will not move from this position.

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