



## HAITI AND THE WEAPON OF WILL: CONCEDING NO GROUND GAINED

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

This is the month when our minds and hearts turn toward Haiti in focused homage to the Haitian people, who through their liberation struggle carved out of the rugged rock and horror of the Holocaust of enslavement a special space for African and human freedom in the world. And we pay rightful homage to Haiti, remembering and raising up not only their heroic and revolutionary history, but also their current oppression and ongoing struggle to free themselves, rebuild their lives and secure well-being and a constantly unfolding good for themselves and future generations.

To do this is to remember and raise up an eternal model of a self-authorizing, self-determining and self-liberating people, a people who would not accept enslavement and will not concede to oppression or countenance defeat. It is also to remind the world and ourselves of an African people whose first and foremost weapon was and remains an unbudging and unbreakable will to free themselves, and live decent and dignity-affirming lives. And it is with this indispensable weapon of will that was not confused, compromised or conquerable, that they began their struggle, made other weapons out of anything available, seized more weapons from the very hands, houses and armories of the oppressor, and began to build a country on the battlefield for a new world and way to live in freedom and promise.

Let us always begin by paying homage to the Haitian people, committing ourselves to stand in steadfast solidarity with them against the grey and greedy monsters of the world, the corporate and country vultures that have gathered in gruesome huddles to consume the lives and wealth of the vulnerable. And let us actively join them in their historic and ongoing righteous struggle to live free, good and secure lives, worthy of the sacrifices they've made, the suffering they've endured

and the struggles they've waged without submission or cessation.

And let us in respectful memory and continued struggle pay rightful homage to the 300,000 people killed in the earthquake of January 12, 2010. Let us also pay homage to the people for their heroic efforts of rescue and recovery during that terrible disaster, who lacking the modern machinery of the invading foreigners, lifted loads of concrete and steel with bare hands and bent backs, and cleared away tons of rubble to save lives, retrieve bruised and broken bodies and carry the wounded to safety and medical assistance where available.

Let us also remember and pay rightful homage to all those who have throughout Haitian history died unnecessary and undeserved deaths through foreign invasion, occupation and oppression, and through internal repression by dictators, puppet presidents, hirelings, handmaidens, and lackeys of various kinds. And let us pay rightful homage to all those who sacrificed their lives in struggle to end the suffering of the people, free the people from external and internal oppressors and build and secure their country as it was originally conceived, i.e., as a beacon and bastion of African and human freedom of the world.

Clearly the Haitian people offer us endless and eternal lessons from which we can all learn, about the will to struggle for a free and decent life and the will to hold on to hope and things achieved and *to concede no ground gained*. And above all, this means refusing to be enslaved again in mind, heart or daily life, and to resist in every way and in every area of life, even under siege and occupation and outnumbered, and with no weapons left but the uncompromised and unconquerable will to struggle, win and be free.

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Indeed, in spite of a series of devastating disasters, brutal foreign occupation under the auspices of the UN, the Haitian people continue to resist and rebel, carrying out demonstrations and other actions of resistance throughout the country. They regularly resist, registering their rejection of a puppet and corrupt government; corporate resource robbery in collusion with the collaborating bourgeoisie; NGO's misappropriation of the foreign debt-inducing loans announced with fanfare as donations; UN presence and its role of suppression of the people in the interests of the countries and corporations of the U.S., France and Canada; and the exclusion of the largest party, Lavalas, from rightful participation in the political process. And they resist the taking of their land, the enslaving of their labor, the sex-trafficking of women and children; and the continued denial of the rights and interests of the people.

The U.S. government has played from the beginning of Haiti and continues to play, even under Pres. Obama, a brutally suppressive and exploitative role in Haiti. It cannot justify the unjust, immoral and illegal role it has played in overthrowing the democratically-elected government of Pres. Jean Bertrand Aristide; nor the denial of a democratic election process by excluding the people's major political party, Lavalas; using the UN to suppress the Haitian people; and opening Haiti up to vicious, vulturine and capitalist exploitation.

Yes, Haiti must be reconstructed, but it first must be free and self-determining. Reconstruction cannot take place under military occupation, thru corporate robbery

and exploitation, or thru denial of the democratic process, and the Haitian people's right to rule themselves, plan and carry out their own reconstruction and recovery. Indeed, the future of the Haitian people cannot be built with corporate and others' cave conceptions of humanity and human community or by billions of dollars of added debt disguised and imposed as donations for relief and reconstruction. Nor can it be built by those who capitalize on disasters, stealing and buying resource-rich land for baubles and constructing luxury hotels and "high end" housing for "aid workers" and desensitized and pleasure-and-sex-driven tourists, while the Haitian people eke out a life of grinding and degrading poverty.

Indeed, we can count only as real, right and promising, a future self-consciously conceived, planned and forged in work and struggle by the Haitian people themselves. And it will, of necessity, be a future in which they feel and foresee themselves and their descendants living lives of freedom, dignity and well-being; a future in which they again become midwives of their own history and the unfolding embodiment of the good world they want, deserve and bring into being with their own hearts, minds and radically transformative practice. Our task, President Aristide tells us, is to recognize that "the people will rise up in righteousness and knock the table of privilege (and oppression) over and take what rightfully belongs to them". And "it is our mission to help them stand up and live as human beings" in freedom, in their land and in our time.

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