



**LEGALLY CULLING AND KILLING BLACK PEOPLE:
RIGHTEOUSLY SEARCHING FOR AN ANSWER AND END**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

WHATEVER ELSE, the continued and recent rash of police killings of our people tell us about the police and the society that shelters and supports them and refuses to restrain and discipline them, it can in no way suggest the practice of justice, the promise of self-correction or the benefit in our dependence on the silent witnesses or episodic allies who join us in conceding our suffering, but not in the audacious actions of resistance and radical reconstruction that would end it.

And so the question becomes how do we discover and craft an answer and end to this brutal, devastating culling and killing in our community by those acting under the cover and camouflage of law and socially sanctioned practice? And parallel and related to this question is how can we endure such barbaric abuse and constant culling and killing without losing faith, abandoning hope, casting aside courage and surrendering the will to resist and without responding in the savage ways of our oppressor?

These are difficult, dangerous and death-dealing times, for in addition to the destructiveness of other problems that plague our community, society and the world, there is an unannounced, yet nevertheless real, war being waged against us in real time and real life with real disruptive and destructive consequences. And it is carried out on several systemic levels, but on none so visible, violent and terrorizing as the constant police killings that plunder and destroy our lives of every age and kind and under various racist, legal and socially sanctioned cover and camouflage. It may be conveniently called a “war on drugs”, “operation safe streets”, “making America safe or great again”, depending on the audience, “protecting our neighborhoods” or “reducing crime”, which turns out to mean reducing our numbers and erasing our presence, especially young Black males.

Regardless of its intention, the results are clearly one of *racial culling*, i.e., targeting and selecting in order to discard or destroy those not deemed worthy of respect, vital resources for life or even their own lives. This racial culling by the Wraith-like soldiers of society, whether in white, blue or brown uniforms, always had a killing aspect to it, but it was often hidden by the larger society thru lethal socio-economic, educational and other processes and achieved in less bloody and more legally disguised ways. Thus, in recent times, the stress was on culling for incarceration and sending to prison rather than school—there to waste away, be killed or return broken, alienated and angry, schooled in the violence and vices prisons are known for. More recently, incarceration-culling and killing continues, but the pipeline now is not simply from school to prison, but also from school to graveyard, i.e., young people killed continuously and coldly under the cover and camouflage of law.

We do not have the means to measure the pain imposed on us, the suffering inflicted on both children and adults by these cullings and killings conducted with such “reckless and depraved disregard” in both the legal and moral sense. And what is so morally outraging and difficult to deal with is not only the reckless and depraved nature of it, but also the *inclusiveness* of the savage assault on the lives and rights of Black people. For there is no exemption because of kind, variation in color, levels of income or education, or other secondary and subsidiary identities within the *primary identity of Black*.

It is Blackness in its varied sacred and secular meanings, its moral and social significance and its human and peoplehood representation and presence that so offends the racist mind and makes it react in such savage ways. Indeed, there is no exemption by sex—male or female; or by age—men, women, children,

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elders; no exemption by ability or disability, physical or mental; none by class—poor and uneducated, middle class and educated; and no exemption by religion—Christian, Muslim, Maatian, Hebrew, Ifan or others. Even the rich and ivy-league educated have discovered the police on their doorstep and in their homes questioning their right of presence and threatening or doing to them a similar violence. For it is the racist and depraved disregard that lumps us all together, *racializes crime and then criminalizes the race*. And thus, it is not our education, our age, our income, our wealth, or even our celebrity status that saves us from such official savagery; it is only our absence. That is to say, absence from the point of contact at which the racist with a gun and under the cover and camouflage of law decides to either run us down with a car and then shoot us in Sacramento, or shoot us sitting in a car outside Tulsa, laying on the ground in Baton Rouge or shoot us in the back running to escape certain death in Charleston.

And it is this constant generalized vulnerability to official violence that terrorizes the community as a whole and makes us fear for our children, feel vulnerable ourselves and revisit the call and spirit of the sacred teachings of Minister Malcolm X. Malcolm argued in the 60s that “We live in a police state” where our community is treated as a rebellious colony and the police act as an occupying army. He spoke constantly about the violation of our human rights, especially the right to freedom and that we had both the *right* and *responsibility* to resist our oppression “by any means necessary”.

Now the phrase “by any means necessary” has been often misread to relieve it of its

moral meaning. But it speaks to our resolve, sacrifice and challenge to the oppressor to concede that he is the source of the initial, greatest and continuous violence. Clearly, Malcolm left on the table the option of armed self-defense, but he constantly said that he hoped that that would not be necessary. Moreover, he, as Nelson Mandela, challenged the established order to face the fact that it is they who are committing violence and therefore, should discuss and cease that and then they would not need to keep appealing to us not to respond in kind. For as both Malcolm and Mandela stated, without oppression we would not need to discuss and pursue resistance of any kind. And thus the issue is not what we would and might do to our oppressor, it is what our oppressor in real time and real life, i.e., culling and killing, is doing to us with repulsive regularity under the color and camouflage of law.

From a Kawaida vantage point Min. Malcolm is speaking especially to our responsibility of doing anything necessary for the struggle. That is to say, being willing to sacrifice, even the ultimate, in order to achieve freedom and to defend our right to live and to be free and to be without insecurity and terror from the dominant society. Whatever else we do to address this pattern and practice of police culling and killing, we must *unite in resistance*, in the practice of work, sacrifice, building and struggle to create the good society and world we all want and deserve to live in. It is work that works. It is struggle that strengthens. And it is righteous and relentless resistance that redraws the map and course of human history and opens it up toward new horizons of possibility and promise.

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