



**PURSUING THE SEVEN-FOLD PATH OF BLACKNESS:
PRACTICING PRINCIPLES OF LIFE AND STRUGGLE**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

PART 2. NOW, AT THE HEART OF THE PURSUIT of the Seven-Fold Path of Blackness, i.e., *Think Black, Talk Black, Act Black, Create Black, Buy Black, Vote Black and Live Black* is the overarching goal to bring good in our lives and the world. It is to remind us of the centrality of ourselves in our own lives, our own history and the ongoing ethical imperative to constantly repair, renew and remake ourselves, our communities, our people and the world, making them all more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited and encountered them.

The fifth practice of the Seven-Fold Path of Blackness is to Buy Black. In its simpler form, to buy Black is to use money, means and wealth in ethical and intentional ways to support Black businesses, sustain the Black community, and build the capacity of both in the interest and advancement of our people. However, in a larger sense, “Buy Black” is a metaphor for engaging economic issues of all kinds and engaging in struggle around those issues. It is using both financial and people power in general to help shape and put in place people-focused and environmentally concerned economic policy and practices. It is to act, not simply as customers, but as conscientious sustainers, investors, builders, and activists and advocates for racial, social and economic justice, for they are all related. To buy Black calls for a *disciplined and thoughtful* use of our money, wealth and means, avoiding the mindless consumerism of the dominant society, withholding our purchasing from economic and financial policies and practices that promote open and camouflaged racism. It means refusing to finance or support racist capitalist policies that imprison for profit; wage war and occupy countries for domination, wealth and resource theft; privatize public wealth and space; and deny fair and decent wages and workers’ rights. And we must challenge and resist corporate capitalism and its plunder, pollution and depletion of the world, and its reckless contribution to climate change and environmental

degradation. Likewise, it means raising and pursuing issues of equal pay for women, men and young people; adequate income; expanded economic initiatives and opportunities; the halting of gentrification and community destruction; and reparations as an ethically compelling and economically urgent debt to be paid.

Indeed, we must also vote Black. To vote Black is to choose the good, the right and the possible and to see electoral politics as a critical ground of struggle. It is to choose to love Black people in practice by choosing good for ourselves, our people and the world. It is another expression of love and commitment to our people. It is to define, defend and to advance their interests, not only at the ballot box, but at every level and site of life and struggle. To vote Black is to choose and vote for our own agenda. The candidates as political figures are at best secondary. It is the policies they propose, pursue, support and oppose that make them worthy of our consideration and vote. We must vote our own vision of the good, the right and the possible. It is not a question of liking candidates as personalities or political figures, nor a question of party loyalty or the vulgar transactional politics of trading favors. It is about the good of our people, society and the world.

Vote Black then, vote to bring, increase and sustain good in the world. Choose rightfully, choose life and reject death-dealing policies and practices. Choose food security and clean water, healthcare, housing, adequate income, and quality education, indeed, racial justice, as a shared good for all. Choose peace, self-determination and liberation for all over and against war and warmongering, against occupation and suppression and oppression in all its violent, vicious, visible and camouflaged forms.

Finally, the seventh practice in the Seven-Fold Path of Blackness urges us to live Black, bringing it all together in a dignity-affirming, life-enhancing beautiful whole. We must live Black, live African, live a life of good, beauty,

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right and possibility. Living Black is living in a *culturally grounded, relationally rich, and evolving and flourishing way* – rooted in the best of what it means to be African and human. To live a *culturally grounded* Black life means to live a value grounded life with ethical values at its heart and center, values that affirm, protect and promote African and human life and good and the well-being of the world. Living Black means also recognizing and respecting the reality that we are also a people *in oppression and resistance* and have become by the development and demands of history and our self-conscious commitment to our liberation struggle, a moral and social vanguard in this country and in the struggle for human liberation as a whole. Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune tells us ours is a great and ancient legacy and we must honor it by keeping and caring for it, constantly developing it and posing it rightfully as a *model and mirror of what it means to be beautifully human in the world*.

We speak here also of a Black life as a life which is *relationally rich*, i.e., profoundly respectful and appreciative of the Transcendent and sacred, loving and caring for others, and being rightfully attentive to the well-being of the world and all in it. It means being at one in and with the world in its Transcendent, natural and human dimensions, sensing an underlying continuity and unity of being in the world as the ancestors taught. In a word, it means seeing ourselves and acting as, not only human beings, but world beings, *walimwengu* in Swahili. And thus, we make a commitment to *relate rightfully, act justly and walk gently on the earth*.

Finally, to live Black, to live African, is to feel and keep ourselves constantly evolving and changing for the good. Here we make a distinction between negative change and positive

change. Negative changes are those which deny the inherent dignity and good of being our Black and African selves and seek to negate and erase us as a people. But positive change is an ongoing development and transformation dedicated to constant striving to remain culturally grounded in our core concepts, but open to new ways to understand and assert ourselves and to engage the world.

For we have no double consciousness, no need to doubt, deny, condemn or mutilate ourselves to escape the pain and penalty of being different in a racistly sick society. *We relieve the pain of oppression and lift the penalty for being different by our liberation struggle*. And we are confident, as I've said so often, being African is our unique and equally valid and valuable way of being human in the world. And no people are more chosen, elect or God-guided than our own; no history more hallowed or instructive than our own; and no lives more sacred or worthy of the highest respect and equal access to the common goods and necessities of life and flourishing than our own.

AND ON THIS, THE 55TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR organization, Us, a vanguard in the Black Liberation Movement and which from the beginning posed Blackness, Africanness, as sacred and worthy of the highest respect, it is highly meaningful and mandatory to reaffirm this ancient, essential and enduring truth about our people. And it is we who took a position of unbudging Blackness and have not abandoned the 55-year liberation struggle to be ourselves, free ourselves and bring an awesome and enduring good in the world as our ancestors instructed and urged us. ▲

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