



**WELCOMING AUGUST, HONORING OUR ANCESTORS:
CONTINUING, INTENSIFYING AND EXPANDING THE STRUGGLE**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

SINCE THE TRANSFORMING STRUGGLES of the Sixties, it has been for us in the organization Us, both a reaffirmation of our commitment and a reenforcing reminder to begin our day with the centering thought and declaration: *"it is a good day to struggle."* Now, we enter August, a month defined by abundant initiatives and images of Black struggle world-wide, from the Haitian Revolution to the Watts Revolt and the Ferguson Rebellion, and all the acts of resistance of August in our history of struggle in between and afterwards. And so, we welcome August, honoring our ancestors by our commitment to continuing, intensifying and expanding the struggle on every level and in every way righteous and required. For as Haji Malcolm taught, "Wherever a Black person is, there is a battleline. Whether in the North, South, East or West, you and I are living in a country that is a battleline for all of us." Thus, we of Us raise the battle cry, *"Everywhere a battleline; every day a call to struggle!"*

Even saying this and having been on the frontline of struggle for over a half-century, celebrating our organization's 57th anniversary, September 7th this year, we know it is not easy to commit oneself to the discipline and demands of struggle. And it is even more difficult to sustain the fervor, keep the faith and hold the line, especially in the midst of loss, setbacks, delays, desertions, overwhelming opposition, and the sustained savagery of this system of oppression which is so corruptive, corrosive and devastating to human life and development as well as to the world itself. People get weary and worn; seductive and corruptive offers are made by the established order to prevent, divert and defeat; and other peoples' agen-

das are put on the table and ours is pushed aside, diminished or dismissed in the media and in meetings of policy and proposals. And in its place, insidious images of Black/White integration in commercials and movies are offered up as a substitute for a more substantive discussion, demand and achievement of an equitable redistribution of wealth and power, and the recognition in practice of equal dignity and rights of all and shared common goods of society and the world. Also, if we are not careful and steadfast in our commitment, we will find ourselves advocating and more fervent about other peoples' agendas than our own, tragically tangled in the compromising web of funds and favors from the oppressor and wealthier allies.

These last few difficult, dangerous, deadly and demanding years have taken a terrible toll on us. There is the devastating, disruptive and persistent pandemic and the ongoing acute denial of the anti-vaxxers and anti-mask wearers ready to wage war in parking lots, stores and other sites of battle to reaffirm a non-existent right to observe their health interests without due regard for the rights of others, especially those whom they might infect. There is also the continuing problem of a mad and viciously mean crime boss who posed as president for four years, still sowing seeds and digging sewers of hatred and trying to undermine the already problematic democracy we have been constantly trying to transform and make real.

There is also a deadly increase and spread of violence of all kinds, reflecting both a historical and resurgent commitment to violence as an especially American way of life, and of solving problems. And for the

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vulnerable communities like ours, there is too often imitation of our oppressor by some, caused in great part by severe deprivation, degradation, loss of hope and erosion of community, communities of care and counsel, and the effective capacity to rebuild and develop, defend the people, and ground our youth in a culture of struggle and striving for the good, their good and that of our people.

Also, there is the continued nastiness and nightmarish rise of the right-wing in politics, media, education and the courts, imposing their life-diminishing and life-destroying racist and religious views and values on the country while claiming to be pro-life, pro-democracy and pro a Christianity that Jesus, himself, would not recognize and respect with its deep disregard for the least among us, the most suffering and most vulnerable. There is also the loss and disabling lack of adequate income, healthcare, education, housing, with a continuing and expanding Europeanization of Black neighborhoods called gentrification which represents dispossession, dislocation and the devastation of communities and centers of Black culture.

And then the world, itself, is at risk with fields and forests burning; glaciers melting, seas rising and islands sinking; country sides and cities flooding; and seasons losing their distinctions. But the corporations and their crime partners in high and low places are not moved, and they callously continue to violate, plunder, pollute and deplete the earth and convince the bought and true believers there is no climate change and all is right with the world except their nettlesome opponents. And we have experienced both high points and low points. From the thick of fight and fervor at Ferguson and the George Floyd resistance, to the thinning of crowds, the early battle fatigue of frontline activists, and the continuing failure of na-

tional groups to build the national Black united front indispensable to rebuilding the overarching Movement vital to our liberation struggle.

In times like these, there's a tendency to believe that all is lost and one can only despair, give it up and to seek and settle for a comfortable place in oppression, but such a position goes against the whole of our history. For we have lived through worst times, the Holocaust of enslavement and the savagery of legal and social segregation with all its barbaric violence on every level. And yet we did not break or back down or cry surrender, but rather continued the struggle, kept the faith and held the line. And we did this, not simply for ourselves, but also in honor of our ancestors, to secure and sustain freedom, justice and equity for our people and to ensure a future and world of inclusive and expansive good for those who will come after us.

Against all odds, we took Nana Howard Thurman's advice and rode the storms and remained intact, learned the lessons of Nana Gwen Brooks and constantly conducted our blooming in the noise and whip of the whirlwind. And by the way we lived our lives, did our work and waged our struggles, we reaffirmed Nana Nanny Burroughs description of us as a people who specialize in the wholly impossible. Thus, we turn to our history and honored ancestors and seek to delve deep into the legacies and libraries of lessons they have left us in written texts, spoken texts and living practice texts.

We are ever at the crossroads of freedom and unfreedom with Nana Harriet Tubman and Nana Frederick Douglass. And we must decide whether to define freedom as individual escape or the collective practice of self-determination in and for community. We must decide whether freedom, justice and all great goods are indivisible or simply personal. We must decide whether

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we will define the good, the right and possible for ourselves or whether we will find ourselves constantly deferring to others in dependent, degrading and deforming ways. And then we must decide how much we are ready to do and give in the struggle for freedom, justice and a shared and inclusive good in the world.

| AS AFRICAN AMERICANS, WE HAVE AN unavoidable and compelling obligation to remain a critical moral and social vanguard in the struggle to expand the realm of freedom, justice and other human good and to ensure the well-being of the world. We cannot withdraw from the battlefield until the struggle is won. Our obligation is

not to escape, but to engage; not to flee, but to fight; and not to surrender, but to dare and achieve victory. We must defend and free the people and protect and preserve the environment. There is too much at stake for us to despair and withdraw. Thus, as we said so often in the Sixties, if we are worn down or wounded, we must still stand up, bind and bandage our wounds, regain our strength, and return to the battlefield. For it is our sacred obligation to continue, intensify and expand the struggle in order to truly transform the oppressive conditions of life in this country and contribute meaningfully and decisively to the radical remaking of the world.▲

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