



**OUTRAGE AND UPRISING IN AMERICA:
RESISTANCE IS GOOD, RIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

WE ARE EVERY DAY AND EVERYWHERE standing at the crossroads with Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass confronted with the questions of acceptance of enslavement or fighting for freedom, being paralyzed by doubt or motivated by an active determination, submitting to hopeless resignation or defiantly engaging in righteous and relentless resistance. Thus, we of Us declared in the 60's, "every day is a good day to struggle." And since then, we have found no reason to retract or retreat and no changes that would justify walking away from the battlefield when the struggle is not yet won.

Those who are war-weary, overstressed by struggle, and anxious to declare a premature and pretended victory over racism, may wish and fantasize otherwise. But the continued rising count of dead and bleeding bodies in the streets, cars, parks, cells, and other places of the cruel and continued taking of Black lives under the camouflage and cover of law, bear awesome witness to the error, illusion and insensitivity of such a position. Indeed, such a morally unacceptable position declares the victimizers innocence, violates the memory of the victims and prolongs the struggle.

And so, here we are once again, a people on the battlelines in Tulsa and Charlotte, understandably morally outraged at the continued killings of our people and rightfully rising up in righteous and relentless resistance to police violence and the system of oppression which engenders and sustains it. And it is good, right and beautiful to see, support and be a part of this moment and movement, this defiant outrage and rising up of our people in city after city and at sites of injustice and oppression all over this country, from Ferguson to Tulsa and Charlotte and all the places in between and beyond. For there are places not yet counted and others yet to come before we

are able to end these deadly and oppressive patterns of practice and live in security and in peace through justice throughout the length and breadth of this land.

It is *good* to see our people morally outraged by the continued police killing of Black men, women and children, refusing to practice the self-betrayal of silence and submission. It is *right* for them to rise up and disrupt not only the business-as-usual occupying-army practices of the police, but also the savage suppression of the system itself which sanctions and supports these practices. And it is *beautiful* to see our young people look up from those *portable windows to the cyber world* of distracting self-reference, constant surveillance and endless advertisement to face the evil, ugly and inhuman *reality of the everyday world*, to call out and confront the system, imagine a new way of living and relating, and begin to build it in the midst of cooperative, audacious, righteous and relentless struggle.

Yes, in the radically evil and ugly face of oppression and injustice, resistance is good; resistance is right; and resistance is beautiful. Indeed, resistance, as a comprehensive emancipatory practice involving heart, mind, speech and conduct directed against any and all forms of oppression, is vital to the health and well-being of our people, others, society and ultimately the world.

In this the month of the marking of the 51st anniversary of our organization Us and of witnessing the latest expression of outrage and uprising by our people against police violence and systemic oppression, my mind turns easily to Hajji Malcolm X, noble witness for our people to the world, tireless teacher of righteous ways to understand and assert ourselves as Africans in the world, honored martyr who gave his life so that we would live freer and fuller ones. And I think about the deep meaning and ever-timely message of his teaching

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that “In this country wherever a Black man is, there is a battleline. Whether it is in the North, South, East and West, you and I are in a country that is a battleline for all of us.”

Here Hajji Malcolm first tells us that every city and site of oppression in America is a battleline for each of us in our daily lives. In other words, as we once used to say, “We might not be at war, but we are in a war.” And this war is clearly directed against us—whether it’s called the “war on drugs,” the need for “law and order” or the pipelines that lead to “mass incarceration”, mass unemployment and structured poverty and miseducation.

Although we see these acts of oppression and terrorizing of the whole people as a shared injury in the political sense, I want also to pose it as a shared injury in a moral, caring and relational sense. It is, as the late President Sekou Toure of Guinea says, about the indivisibility of the freedom and dignity of African people. He says, “We are aware that as long as the whole of Africa is not liberated, Guinea will not be safe. It is exactly as if you take the example of a man who has cut his finger. The finger itself does not alone feel the pain, . . . it is the whole body of that man that feels it. Thus, Guinea feels the pain of the colonized peoples of Africa.” Therefore, we must and do see and experience an injury to one as an injury to all, an injustice to one as an injustice to all and with Harriet Tubman understand freedom as a collective project and practice and an indivisible good and gain. And this holds true regardless of treasured trinkets and material goods for which some people barter, sell and lose their souls.

Let others who may, seek a comfortable place in oppression. But as for us, let us, in the

tradition of the ancestors, be constant soldiers who are never unready not even once and stay up all night on call waiting each night for the day to dawn. And let us practice the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles) in life, love, work and struggle. Let us practice *Umoja*, a *unity* that binds, anchors and enriches us and makes us feel at one with each other and the world; *Kujichagulia*, a *self-determination* that grounds and informs our moral obligation and struggle to be ourselves and free ourselves so that we can speak our special cultural truth to the world; *Ujima*, a *collective work and responsibility* that increases our capacity to conceive and construct the good community, society and world we all want and deserve to live in; *Ujamaa*, a *cooperative economics* which teaches us to share the work and wealth of the world with due consideration for the well-being of the world and all in it.

And let us practice *Nia*, a *purpose* rooted in our ancestral ethical understanding that we are all divinely chosen to bring good into the world and not let any good be lost, beginning with our own selves and spreading outward; *Kuumba*, a *creativity* that instructs us and urges us to do as much as we can in the way we can in order to leave our community and by extension the world more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it by practicing the Maatian imperative of *serudj ta*, i.e., to repair, rebuild and remake the world; and finally, *Imani*, a *faith* in ourselves, our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle to free ourselves, be ourselves and collaborate in freedom with other oppressed, struggling and progressive peoples to initiate and build a new history of humankind.

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