

Continental and Diasporan African Relations in the Context of Struggle:
A Pan-Africanist Perspective

Maulana Karenga
Department of Black Studies
California State University, Long Beach
mkarenga@csulb.edu

I. Introduction

If the question of the meaning and quality of relations between continental and diasporan Africans is to be usefully and fruitfully raised, it must, of necessity, be placed in the context of the historical and ongoing project we call pan-Africanism (Ajala, 1973; Abdul-Raheem, 1996; Walters, 1997). Indeed, the concern about the quality of our relations as African people is diminished in both value and urgency outside this pan-African project which presupposes and requires a recognition and creative response to its shared interest in the liberation, development and flourishing of African people and their united action to achieve these goals. Also, when we approach the issue, we must make sure we are careful not to play into the tendency to problematize the relationships by racializing them. That is to say, we need to avoid discussing the concern about the quality of our relations as a problem reflective of some inherent racial weakness rather than an issue with political and cultural dimensions which is solved through correct thought and practice. The problem that the U.S. currently has with France could be posed as an intra-racial problem among whites whose historical animosities and rivalries have yielded two world wars and threatens a third. But it might be more useful to approach the current problem as essentially a political problem rooted in rival conceptions of national interests and different interpretations on how to assert those interests on an international level. Moreover, a critical reading of European history suggests that the eventual move

to heal the wounds and breach the gap will evolve out of reassessment in a context of perceived mutual interests and the promise of cooperative hegemonic action in the world.

Likewise, the question of relations between African peoples on the Continent and in the Diaspora rises and has most meaning in our reaffirmation of our common interests and need for a certain political commitment and cooperative practice to pursue and achieve those interests (Walters, 1997). Indeed, the overarching interests we share, as oppressed and struggling people, in expanding the realm of human freedom and human flourishing in our societies and the world must and does trump and triumph over any smaller challenges we confront in our relations with each other (Abdul-Raheem, 1996). Without this expansive conception of continental and diasporan African relations with the pan-Africanist project as a concern of the greatest import and urgency, discussions can deteriorate into petty bourgeoisie recriminations rooted at best, in limited experiences and anecdotes of negative personal exchanges and at worst, in the debris of divisiveness still present in the not-yet decolonized mind (wa Thiongo, 1986). The task here for us, then, is not to hold an abstract discussion on the quality of interpersonal or even interethnic relations, but to firmly fix the question within the pan-Africanist project and to raise it as an issue of ongoing political concern and political work. The stress here is on the political rather than the personal, the expansive rather than the narrow notion of the issue. The question, then, of the quality of relations between continental and diasporan Africans raised in a pan-Africanist context relates unavoidably to its meaning for the quality of our exchanges, our living, working and thinking together, and its effect on our ongoing struggle to free ourselves, to live full and meaningful lives, to harness our own energies,

and with other peoples of the world constantly struggle to expand the realm of human freedom and human flourishing in the world.

It is the founders of pan-Africanism, who reminded us of our need to plan, organize and act in the interests of a free, strong and productive Africa (DuBois, 1954; Garvey, 1977; Nkrumah, 1970; Nyerere, 1968; Toure, 1958). Thus, Marcus Garvey (1977:4) calls on us to wake up and stand up in this hard and heroic fight for liberation. He says “Wake Ethiopia. Wake up Africa! Let us work towards one glorious end of a free, redeemed and mighty nation. Let Africa be a bright star among the constellation of nations.” And he pushes us forward saying, “Up you might race. You can accomplish what you will.” What Garvey is doing here is reminding us and reassuring us that self-understanding and self-assertion in the world are dialectically linked and that how we understand ourselves in the world determines how we assert ourselves in the world. Thus, if we have a small ghettoized or even ethnicized view of ourselves and do not see ourselves as members of a world historical community, we cannot conceive and carry out the historical task before us as a people.

It is with this larger conception of our historical tasks that W.E.B. DuBois also reminds us that our freedom, security and future depend on our unity and united action. Indeed, DuBois (1954:403) states that “once the (Africans) of the United States, the West Indians and Africa work and think together, the future of (Black people) in the modern world is safe.” Posing Africa as “a great center of future activity and development,” he calls on diaspora Africans to join with their continental brothers and sisters in the dual project of liberation and of forging a future for ourselves in our own image and interest as African people and in the process to make a definitive and ongoing contribution to the

historic human struggle to expand the realm of human freedom and human flourishing in the world.

II. Self-Understanding

The stress here, then, is placed on the link between self-understanding and self-assertion in the world. Thus, Africans everywhere must understand and assert themselves constantly and consistently in the most expansive of ways. And to do this, they must engage any questions in the context of understanding themselves as members of a world historical community defined at least by three fundamental identities. First, we are the fathers and mothers of human civilization, the people who stood up first, spoke the first human truth, introduced some of the basic disciplines of human knowledge, and taught the world what was good and beautiful, and created the greatest civilization of antiquity in the Nile Valley to which Jew, Gentile, Hittite, Hyksos, Roman, Greek, Persian, Libyan all came to learn (Diop, 1974, 1991; El Nadoury, 1990; Harris, 1991; Freeman, 1997). It is here that we established an unsurpassed model of human excellence and achievement and introduced to human moral and spiritual discourse the concept that humans are bearers of dignity and divinity and initiated the oldest social justice tradition in the world, the Maatian tradition of ancient Egypt (Karenga, 2004). Indeed, it is this social justice tradition that undergirds and informs our historic and ongoing struggle to bring and secure good in the world and to constantly repair and heal the world, making it more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Secondly, we are all—continentals and diasporans—sons and daughters of the Holocaust of enslavement and the imperialism and colonialism that accompanied it (Fanon, 1966; Césaire, 1972; Rodney, 1974; Patterson, 1982; Morton, 1996; Berlin,

1998). By holocaust we mean a morally monstrous act of genocide which is not only against the targeted people, but also a crime against humanity. It expressed itself in three basic ways: the morally monstrous and massive destruction of human life, human culture and human possibility. In this horror and hell fire of history, we deepened our commitment to freedom and struggle, resisted in continuous and varied ways and held on to our humanity under the most inhuman of circumstances.

In addition, we are authors and heirs of the Reaffirmation of the 60's. As I (Karenga, 2004:183ff) noted elsewhere, "The 60's was above all a Reaffirmation—a reaffirmation of our *Africanness* and *social justice tradition* which had at its core an uncompromising commitment to struggle." It was a decade of our struggles on the continent and in the diaspora to reaffirm our dignity and identity as African people and to return to our own history, to recover and bring forth the best of what it means to be African and human in the fullest sense. Thus, Toure's (1958) *Toward Full Re-Africanization* becomes both a central reference and a compelling call. Joined to this was the call for decolonization not only politically, but culturally and psychologically. In the U.S., we called for "Back to Black," re-Africanization and the cultural revolution that would win the hearts and minds of the people and prepare them for and strengthen them in the larger struggle for liberation (Karenga, 1997; Van De Burg, 1993).

Likewise, on both the continent and in the diaspora, African people waged a liberation struggle rooted in an ancient social justice tradition that inspires struggles committed to freedom for the oppressed, justice for the wronged and injured, power for the masses of people over their destiny an daily lives and peace in the world (Harding, 1987; Williams, 1987). And we found common cause with other peoples of color of the

world in what was called Third World Liberation Movements. It was a glorious and promising time and we saw ourselves as Malcolm X (1965:233) told us, “living in an era of revolution . . . and part of the rebellion against the oppression and colonialism which has characterized this era.” Indeed, he continued “We are witnessing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter.”

We stand now at a critical juncture in our history in which the tide has turned and the forces of racism, imperialism and militarism have joined under the new name and banner of globalization (Lusane, 1977; Martin and Shumann, 1997). Revolutionary forces, except in scattered places, are in the retreat and mired in paralyzing palaver about what is to be done. This is why a call to recover the best of our history and culture and use it as a foundation and framework for a renewed self-assertion in the world is so critical. But this in turn requires an expansive understanding of ourselves which is so vital to our self-assertion in the world in definitive and effective ways. Thus, building on Fanon, Kawaïda argues that we must constantly ask ourselves—on behalf of ourselves and history—“who am I; am I really who I am; and am I all I ought to be?” It is only in raising and answering these questions in dignity-affirming and life-enhancing ways that we can reaffirm and dare pursue the best of what it means to be African and human in the fullest sense. And this, of necessity, will cause us to remember the modal periods of our history and the legacies and lessons they provided us as fathers and mothers of humanity and human civilization, the sons and daughters of the Holocaust of enslavement, and the authors and heirs of the Reaffirmation of the 60’s. It is in this context of legacies and lessons that pan-Africanism extracts and reaffirms some of its most important ideals: moral and creative excellence and social progress; the love and struggle for freedom and

reaffirmation of our identity and culture as a people and the ongoing struggle for social justice in the world.

III. Pan-Africanism and African Culture

Now the philosophy and practice of pan-Africanism in its most useful and effective form is rooted in the concept of a world African community with a shared history, a shared heritage and common interest in interrelated projects of unity, liberation and development. “As a global project, pan-Africanism can be usefully defined as thought and practice directed toward the unity, cooperative activities and common struggles of African peoples on the continent and in the diaspora to achieve common goals” (Karenga, 1997:29) These goals include efforts by African people: (1) to free themselves from want, toil and domination; (2) to harness and develop their human and material resources; (3) to recover and reconstruct their cultures and to constantly use them to bring forth the best of what it means to be African and human in the fullest sense and to lay the grounds for living full and meaningful lives in their own image and interests; (4) to stand in dignity and strength among the peoples of the world; and (5) to speak their own special cultural truth to the world and make their own unique contribution to the forward flow of human history.

The focus must be, then, on discussing and strengthening our relationships in struggle, not simply in conversation. It must be about efforts to build a new world, to do as Fanon (1966:255) said, start a new history of humankind, to actually imagine and bring into being a new way of being human in the world. And to accomplish this new and dynamic insertion into history, Fanon (Ibid: 252) says, “Let us leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at

the corner of everyone of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe.” The focus here, then, is not on *abstract* man and woman, but on *actual* men and women embedded and active in their own lives and culture, striving to push their lives forward and to forge their futures in their own image and interests.

The need, as Fanon suggests, is for us to reach inside ourselves and in the ancient, rich and varied resource of our cultures, extract paradigms of human possibilities and put forth new ways of being human and relating as humans in the world. For as Fanon (Ibid: 255) states, “If we want humanity to advance a step further, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries.” And again, there are no richer sources for mapping and mining meaningful models of human excellence and human possibilities than the history, lives and cultures of our own peoples.

Thus, we must recover, reconstruct and speak our own special cultural truth to the world and use it to make our own unique contribution to the forward flow of human history. This is a beginning and central thrust of my conversation in the 60’s in the philosophical framework called *Kawaida* (Karenga, 1997). *Kawaida* philosophy defines itself as an ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world. One of the most fundamental contentions of *Kawaida* philosophy is that we, as Africans, must constantly dialogue with African culture, asking it questions and seeking from it answers to the central and enduring issues of humankind. Among these critical questions are: how do we create the just and good society; how do we build strong male/female relations; what does it mean to be human in the world; and how do we build strong brotherhood and sisterhood which is a central question of this

conference? Also, how do we establish a right relationship with the environment? How do we treat strangers? What is our obligation to the vulnerable among us; should we actually, as ancient Egyptian texts teach, give food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked and a boat to those without one? Can we, as it was taught in the sacred text of the *Husia*, be a shelter for the battered, a raft for the drowning and a ladder for those trapped in the pit of despair (Karenga, 1984).

We must ask our culture these questions and our culture must answer them. It's not enough to ask Greece; it's not enough to ask Rome; nor is it enough to ask ancient Israel or ancient Arabia. Also, we must not simply ask the world; we must ask Africa. Ours is the oldest history and culture of humankind and this history and culture have produced enduring, ongoing and instructive models of human excellence and human possibility. We must in fact believe that the legacy and lessons that we have left from that early point to this critical juncture in our history are unlimited in the insights and reflective resources they offer. And we must recover and reconstruct this legacy, and in exchange and cooperation with other peoples of the world, imagine and dare bring into being the good world we all want and deserve to live in.

However, we can't come to the table of communities and nations naked and in need, but must come fully clothed in our own culture. Otherwise, we sit down as inferiors and we will engage in psychological discussions about how we feel rather than what is to be done to heal, repair and reconstruct the world and through this heal, repair and reconstruct our lives and forge a future worthy of the history and name African. The fundamental point being made here is that we must, in fact, achieve the quality relations we seek in the midst of our common struggle to build the world we all want and deserve

to live in. Moreover, we must have principles that are clear and solid and that give us an effective understanding of the task before us. Likewise, we ought to remember always, as we embrace these principles for building these good relationships in struggle and in work that for any principle to be real and relevant, it must eventually become a practice.

IV. The *Nguzo Saba*

I would like to discuss some of our most important tasks in terms of the *Nguzo Saba*, The Seven Principles of *Kawaida* philosophy, which was conceived and crafted in the crucible of the struggles of the 60's (Karenga, 1998: Chapter 3). It is a philosophy, as I said, that seeks to constantly dialog with African culture and to bring forth always the best of what it means to be African and human in the fullest sense and to use this to understand, enrich and expand our lives. These Seven Principles are communitarian principles that stress culture and tradition, encourage reason and seek always to undergird and inspire practices worthy of the history and name African. Again, it is in the process of struggle and practice that we solve not only the question of quality relations, but also create a context of freedom, justice and the cooperative engagement for common good in which these relations can deepen and flourish. As we say in *Kawaida*, "practice proves and makes possible everything."

Umoja (Unity)

The first principle in building and reinforcing our relationship in the interests of the pan-African project is *umoja* (unity) which must be taken seriously as an *ethical* as well as *political* principle and practice. This begins with a profound sense of kinship rooted not only in a common ancient origin, but also in the concept of shared status as Africans and humans in the world. It is we, Africans, who introduced the concept to the

world that humans are bearers of dignity and divinity; and taught that this dignity is inherent, equal, transcendent and inalienable (Karenga, 2004: 317-325). Certainly, Africans themselves must be very attentive to guarding this principle so that their practice reflects the ultimate respect for each other and others. We thus must embrace each other not as junior or senior brother or sister, but as equals. Whether we are born on the continent or born in the diaspora, all of us are equally African. Sometimes people outside the world African community will tend to cultivate the cult of authenticity by geographical location. They imagine that one's being born in Africa somehow makes one more African and that if one is born outside of Africa, one is less so and sometimes not African at all. But these same arbiters of authentic identity make no similar claim of disqualification for Jews who speak no Hebrew or Yiddish, claim no knowledge or belief in Judaism and have no interest or intention of ever going to Israel. Likewise, there is no attempt to challenge or change the name of a Chinese or question his or her identity or authenticity because s/he was not born in China and does not speak Chinese or practice or profess rootedness in Taoism, Confucianism or Buddhism.

There is, of course, an irony in all this current concern about Africans in America rightfully embracing their identity as Africans. For there was a time, i.e., pre-60's, when whites used to call us Africans to indict and shame us, linking the name with charges of savagery, paganism and all the other so-called uncivilized conditions beyond the pale of white paternalistic presence. But once we rejected their Tarzanic interpretation and defiantly re-embraced, celebrated and even exalted our Africanness, they began to argue we were not really Africans. Moreover, they sought and secured agreement from some Africans already dubious and deflated by relentless racist battering and seeking various

forms of relief, reassurance and rewards of compliance from the oppressor. But self-determination of a people cannot be bartered away by persons or groups who, in abandoning their own personal claim, seek to mask personal and class interest as mass interest. A people has the right and responsibility to define and name themselves, and the reality is we do define ourselves as Africans. We remember the history, the struggle, the carving out of the hard rock of reality a place and space to live and understand ourselves as Africans in the most expansive of ways. And we do not yield on this. We accept our differences, but we build on similarities and we constantly seek common ground and common good. That's what unity means, above all, the constant search for common ground and common good.

In fact, Odu Ifa (202:1) says, the sacred text of the Yoruba, "All good comes from gathering together in harmony," that is to say, in unity (Karenga, 1999:362). For harmony is a unity of peaceful and purposeful togetherness in all things good, right and beautiful. We must feel a profound sense of kinship and oneness with each other. We must find and pursue common projects that bring us closer together. It is a people that work together, build together and dream together who cultivate and sustain this sense of togetherness we want and need, not the discussing of our wounds or bewilderment at our being received in a certain way. It is by imagining things we can do to reinforce the bonds between us and diligently putting them into practice that we build the quality relations and world we want and deserve to live and work in.

In fact, I (1998) created Kwanzaa in the context of the Black Liberation Movement of the 60's in the spirit of the pan-Africanist project which is directed toward our unity and common struggle for good in the world. Kwanzaa is an African American

and pan-African holiday that celebrates family, community and culture and thus reinforces our self-understanding and self-assertion in the world as Africans. I created Kwanzaa in the midst and interest of our liberation struggle for three main reasons: 1) to reaffirm our rootedness in African culture; 2) to give us a time when we as African people all over the world could gather together and reaffirm the bonds between us and meditate on the awesome meaning of being African in the world; and 3) to introduce and reinforce the importance of communitarian African values, i.e., values that stress and strengthen family, community and culture. And, of course, the hub and hinge on which the holiday turns are the Seven Principles (Karenga, 1998:23ff). Now more than any other time, during Kwanzaa millions of Africans all over the world stop and think deeply about being African in the world, about our most cherished values, our history, our struggles, our culture and current condition and position in the world.

Furthermore, Kwanzaa is organized around five fundamental activities directed toward deepening and reinforcing our relations and commitment to each other as persons and peoples of African origin and rootedness (Karenga, 1998:15-27). These fundamental activities are: ingathering of the people to reinforce the bonds between them; special reverence for the Creator and creation in appreciation for the bountifulness of the earth and in commitment to protect and preserve it; commemoration of the past, to learn the lessons of our history, and honor the models of human excellence and achievement who stand at the center of this history; recommitment to our highest cultural values, i.e., values such as freedom, justice, truth, harmony, human dignity and rights, care and responsibility for the vulnerable, right relationship with the Divine, nature and each other, sharing the good of the world and, of course, the Seven Principles (*Nguzo Saba*); and

finally, celebration of the Good, the good of family, community and culture, of life, of struggle, our people and the world. It is, then, building foundations and frameworks for our unity and engaging in personal and social practices that reinforce and expand our relations and activities of common ground and common good that answer and solve the real and imagined problematics of our unity.

Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)

Kujichagulia, (self-determination) is the second principle and it requires us “to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.” It urges us to take as a serious moral responsibility the obligation to speak our own special cultural truth and to make our own unique contribution to the forward flow of human history. It is not enough for us to enjoy or discuss other people’s philosophy, we must create our own. It’s not enough to come and visit some place nice that other people have created. We must create for ourselves. We must raise images above the earth that reflect our capacity for human greatness and human good. In this way, we know ourselves and we will know the basis and reality of our unity. For it is a unity in common action. Indeed, that is how we know and build it—through practice. Fanon (1966:255) says, we must imagine a new world and set in motion a new history of humankind. And to do this, he said, we must reject the models that Europe has given us. We can learn from them, but we must absorb without being absorbed. We must dialogue, discuss, and discover new ways of being human in the world. And again, we must recover, reconstruct and bring forth from the rich resource of our own culture the best of what it means to be African and human in the fullest sense; speak that special cultural truth to the world and use it to make our own unique contribution to the forward flow of human history.

The oppressor cannot be our teacher. Often oppressed people borrow from their oppressor or the dominant society. But the oppressor cannot be our teacher. They teach and encourage division; we must teach and cultivate unity. They teach us to question ourselves in the most negative ways; we must teach ourselves to question the world, to question them, and to question ourselves, using our own criteria of questioning. And it must be a criteria that cultivates and encourages a questioning that leads to enlightenment, not to paralyzing self-doubt and self-degradation. We must see ourselves as our own liberators, for indeed, we are our own liberators. As we've said many times, we're our own liberators and a people who can't save itself is lost forever. Indeed, no matter how numerous or sincere our allies are, those who would be free must strike the first and final and decisive blow.

In self-determination, we must maintain the power to define our own reality. One of the greatest powers in the world is the power to define reality and make others accept it even when it's to their disadvantage. And Europe has done that; not only by redefining and misrepresenting who we are, but also through erasure of our historical memory and replacing it with their own memory. So when we try to remember even our names, we don't say Kwaku or Kwasi or Abena or Tosheleza, we say Monique, and Rachel, and John and Jimmy and Rufus. If we are asked to name some earlier works of philosophy, our tendency would be to name Greeks rather than Egyptians, Europeans rather than Africans—in a word, Plato and Aristotle rather than Ptahhotep and Khunanpu or Amenomope and Kheti. Likewise, if we or our children are asked to remember history, it is the history of Europe and Europeans, not of Africa or African people they are taught to remember and for which they are “rewarded.” This calls to mind Sekou Toure's report

that Guinea's history books during colonialism began with the phrase, "Our ancestors the Gauls." This is no different, of course, than U.S. history books' denying tens of thousands of Native American history and the multicultural history of the country and instead beginning with "the white forefathers" or white people. It is this racist arrogance that has produced histories purporting to be African history, but are in, fact, no more than the history of Europeans in Africa.

In the context of the concept of self-determination, we are compelled to ask where does our history start? Does Africa have its own history or does Africa only have a history of Europe in Africa? Moreover, when we write African history, do we discuss it in dignity-affirming or dignity-denying terms and ways? Malcolm X, who reminded us of the centrality of history in the study of any subject, also cautioned us against using the logic of our oppressor to understand and assert ourselves in the world. As he (1968:133) stated in a lecture at Harvard, "the logic of the oppressed cannot be the logic of the oppressor if they seek liberation." Now this call for a liberational logic is at the same time a call for a liberational language which informs and drives it. And a liberational language or logic must be a dignity-affirming and life-enhancing one.

There is, then, a need to remove the host of dignity-denying categories inherited from an imperial anthropology that sought to give a scientific veneer to the racist assignment of various levels of human worth and social status to peoples of color using Europeans as the paradigm. It is in this context that our houses are called "huts" and theirs, no matter how small or unrefined, are called cabins, cottages, chalets and other quaint appellations. And although one does not explain the U.S. in terms of the Ozark communities, but rather through its cities and science, and its wealth and power, Africa is

presented as void of cities, empty of human and material wealth, dying slowly in disease-infested settlements not even worthy of the over-used word “village.” Naturally, there is little discussion of the Holocaust of enslavement and the horrific human and cultural devastation of colonialism and imperialism, the brutal and irreplaceable extraction of the human resources and material wealth of Africa, the structured underdevelopment and undevelopment (Rodney, 1974) nor is there due reference to the monstrous and military regimes propped up and maintained to guard and serve the interest of the imperial powers now reinventing themselves as aid givers and saviors, saving us from ourselves in civil wars with roots in the history they left as a legacy.

There is nowhere in this pathetic and racialized and racist portrait any place or space for depiction and discussion of African agency and thus, it is Eurocentric rather than Afrocentric (Keto, 1994). For as Molefi Asante (1998:1-2), founding theorist of Afrocentricity says, Afrocentric approaches to the study of Africa and Africans must, at a minimum, place Africans at the center of their own history, make them subjects rather than objects, radically critique Eurocentric interpretations of African and human reality, and pose the possibility of new multicultural ways. At the center of this methodological approach is the stress on African agency, Africans as subjects of their own history, and as we say in Kawaiida, as self-conscious agents of their own life and liberation. Thus, when people go or come to Africa to work, they must come to work with and for the people not as supervisors of subordinates or dispensers of *noblesse oblige* for the unfortunate. As Nkrumah (1979) taught, we must go to the people and approach them as an infinite resource for engaging and solving the problems which confront them (Poe, 2000).

We often talk about humanity and our commitment to it. But our commitment, like our conception of humanity, is an abstraction unless we put it in practice. Only in practice do our conception and commitment become real. Look at globalization, there are people in Washington and New York who are under the illusion they are somehow doing a service for the world through globalization and we must challenge this. For what is globalization, stripped of all its mystification, except an expansion of white hegemony in the world with greater technological and military capacity (Karenga, 2003)? By what reasoning do Europeans imagine they have the right to invade a country and pretend to build democracy by establishing a military dictatorship over the people, appropriating their resources and wreaking havoc on their lives? And where do we, as Africans, stand on the right of the Haitian, Palestinian, Iraqi and Afghan peoples to resist occupation and to live in peace and security in their own independent and viable state? And where do we stand on the right of all people to be free, to have justice in society and the world, to control their destinies and daily lives, and live their lives and forge their future in peace and prosperity? How do we build a unity so that we along with other progressive people can imagine and bring into being this whole new world, start a new history of humankind and teach another way of relating to humans in the world? These are our awesome tasks. And we must come forward as equals, among ourselves and among the peoples of the world.

As Fanon says, this does not mean we will not exchange with Europe, even as we exchange with the rest of the world. But we must come to the table of peoples and nations as equals. We must bring our own unique contribution and reject Europe's outrageous and racist claim to have invented everything including air. It is this

deconstruction and dismissal of Europe's outrageous and erroneous claim and the disestablishment of their hegemonic role in our lives and the lives of the peoples of the world that is the key issue here—not simply how continental and diasporan Africans greet or sometimes mistakenly view and approach each other. Indeed in our thrust for self-definition and self-determination, we must know and understand ourselves in more expansive ways. Certainly in this country, we have served the critical role of moral and social vanguard. We have fought and won with our allies struggles that not only made us freer, but also expanded the realm of freedom in this country and the world and inspired other oppressed and struggling people in this country and the world. Indeed, they borrowed from and built on our moral vocabulary and our moral vision, sang our songs of freedom and posed our struggle as a model to emulate. We must remember that. That's how we should approach the world.

Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)

Ujima (collective work and responsibility) is the third principle. It is a principle and practice of shared responsibility for building the world we all want and deserve to live in. Remember *ujima* means *collective* work and responsibility, therefore, we must focus on and give ourselves and our lives to the struggles of Africans and other peoples in the world to bring, increase and sustain good in the world. In spite of the declaration of the end of history, still the motive forces of history are the struggles for freedom, justice, power of the masses, and peace in the world. For still *the oppressed want freedom, the wronged and injured want justice, the people want power over their destiny and daily lives, and the world wants peace*. So let's always join the ranks of those who wage these struggles. This is what our history demands. It does not demand a diversionary

discussion; it demands our engagement on both the subjective and objective level in the historical quest to bring, increase and sustain good in the world.

There are current and urgent problems to be dealt with in this collective work and responsibility—the problem of AIDS, the struggle for health and against homelessness, for peace and against civil war, for freedom and against all forms of oppression and domination on the continent and in the diaspora; the struggle for a quality education, the struggle for lives of dignity and decency; and the struggle to harness and use for good the human and material resources of African people and to secure human rights everywhere. These pressing concerns must be in the forefront of what we dare and do. But in order to wage the struggle, we need, we must include our people in the dialog and all else we do. This is why Harold Cruse, W.E.B. DuBois, Mary McLeod Bethune, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Frantz Fanon, and others, argued that it is an awesome responsibility of educating people, of intellectuals, in fact, to lead the people in a dialogue and a discourse of struggle (Karenga, 1990). For it is in the midst of struggle that both our unity and future are forged.

It's as comrades-in-struggle that we become brothers and sisters in a way we can never be by just relating and referring to me in general and formally as an African, as Cabral (1973:75ff) pointed out in his talk in 1972 in New York on “Connecting the Struggles” of continental and diasporan Africans. You must in the final analysis struggle and sacrifice with me. You must strive to know the world with me as I learn it and struggle with our people for a life of dignity and decency we all deserve. It is in this process that brotherhood and sisterhood are really created and consolidated. Again, as we say in Kawaida philosophy, *practice proves and makes possible everything*. This

vibrant and mutually invigorating unity, then, must come from the practice of liberation, from satisfaction of concrete social and political needs, of joining our people in the projects of healing and hope, of building and doing battle to expand the realm of human freedom and human flourishing in the world.

Again, it is important to stress that a real pan-African consciousness and project which presupposes and requires unity cannot remain an isolated idea among continental and diasporan intellectuals. As Fanon (1968:163) said, “It is only when men and women are included on a vast scale in enlightened and fruitful work that form and body are given to that consciousness.” Indeed, he continues saying, “the living expression of the Nation (i.e., the African people as one) is the moving consciousness of the whole of the people, it is the coherent, enlightened action of men and women” conscious of themselves, their obligation and their historical mission.

In the midst of this urgent and ongoing struggle, we must remember and reaffirm in practice the judicious advice of Frantz Fanon who informs us of the necessity of creating what he calls a “literature of combat.” And this literature might be oral or written, but it must be a literature of combat. It is a dialog and discourse of combat to achieve the *unity of struggle* and *unity in struggle* we need in our larger project of African and human freedom and flourishing. This literature or discourse of combat of necessity takes up and clarifies themes and ideas which are pan-Africanist. It is a literature of combat and struggle, Fanon (1966:193) says, “in the sense that it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation (or people). It is a literature of combat, because it molds the national (or pan-Africanist) consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons; it is a literature of

combat because it assumes responsibility and because it is the will of freedom expressed in terms of time and space.”

Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)

Ujamaa, (cooperative economics) is the next principle. It is a principle *and* practice of shared work and shared wealth. It is important in this age of globalization that we insist on the right to control our human and natural resources. We must stand up and say it's wrong when 20% of the world's population control and use up 80% of the world's wealth. We must take a position that all real good is shared good and that no one people or race has the right to monopolize the good of the world. Indeed, the greatest good is shared good. Freedom, justice, dignity, brotherhood and sisterhood, marriage, family, and friendship are all shared goods. No one has the right to more of these shared goods, material, spiritual or cultural than anyone else. In fact, each of these goods is deformed and degraded when one person, group or people, tries to hoard or monopolize it or benefit from it more than others. Thus, one nation cannot claim self-determination for itself and occupy another. Nor can a nation invade and destabilize another and claim security for itself. We live in a world and web of interdependence and thus there can be no peace without justice, no security for oppressors and no legitimacy for outlaw states who violate international conventions because they have the power to do so. And there can be no law passed, no superpower edict to deny or restrict the right of resistance of an occupied country or an oppressed people.

Nia (Purpose)

The principle of *Nia* (purpose) calls on us to make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their

traditional greatness and thus make African presence both powerful and permanent in the world. For as the *Husia* says, “the wise are known by their wisdom, but the great are known by their good deeds” (Karenga, 1984:48). Moreover, the *Odu Ifa* (78:1), the sacred text of ancient Yorubaland says that “humans are divinely chosen to bring good into the world” and that this is the fundamental mission and meaning in human life. Now, this is an African text which speaks to and for humanity as a whole. Thus, when it says “humans are divinely chosen to bring good in the world,” it includes all of us, all people. It is a rare and ethical contention I find in no other sacred text, the affirmation that “*all people are chosen*”. And they are not chosen over and against any one, but chosen with everyone, to do one thing, i.e., to constantly bring good into the world and not let any good be lost.

Now, this means that regardless of what field we choose and wherever we find ourselves in the world, we are chosen to bring good into the world. So whether we are teachers, doctors, lawyers, nurses, farmers, pharmacists, fishermen or congresswomen, students studying or writers writing, we are chosen to bring good into the world and this is the fundamental mission and meaning of our lives. But even as we are chosen we must also choose. We must choose the good, embrace and pursue it. And this is especially true of those who are educated and have much to offer in the struggle for good in the world. It is in this spirit that Mary McLeod Bethune (1938:10), the great educator and human rights activist, stated that “knowledge is the prime need of the hour” and that we who are educated must “discover the dawn” and share it with the masses and our children who need it most.

Kuumba (Creativity)

Kuumba, (creativity), is the sixth principle and it urges us to do always as much as we can in the way we can in order to leave our community and world more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. Thus, it is a creative practice which shuns, discourages and defends against destructiveness towards all life and conditions of life and good in the world. It is also the practice of healing and repairing the world which is called *serudj ta* in ancient Egyptian. In fact, this concept speaks to the current demand of African people for reparations (Robinson, 2000). For it is a broad and expansive concept beyond the demand for monies in compensation. The struggle for reparations in its most expansive sense is the struggle to repair ourselves and the world. Indeed, *serudj ta* means to raise up that which is in ruins; to repair that which is damaged; to replenish that which is depleted; to rejoin that which is severed; to set right that which is wrong; to strengthen that which is weakened; and to make flourish that which is fragile and undeveloped (Karenga, 2004:397-402). And in doing this, we repair and heal ourselves and the world, making it more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. Clearly, no one can pay us for the gross, grievous and horrendous injury of the Holocaust of enslavement and its ongoing effects. Therefore, real reparations will not come from compensation from others, but from the struggle we wage to repair our own selves and the world. And we can only repair ourselves in our historic and ongoing struggle for justice and to create a just and good society and a good and sustainable world.

There are clearly basic steps to be taken for repair, but in the final analysis, there must be a struggle to initiate, sustain and complete the process. Indeed, it is the struggle for justice and the social change it will bring that makes reparations both meaningful and possible. First, there must be a *public dialog* to clarify the issues surrounding the injury

of Holocaust and the compelling need to repair it. Secondly, there must be a *public admission* that the injury is indeed one of *holocaust* not simply “slave trade,” i.e., business gone bad with collateral damage. By holocaust I mean a morally monstrous act of genocide that is not only the people themselves, but also against humanity. In Swahili, this Holocaust is called *Maangamizi*, sometimes people also call it *Maafa*, but *Maangamizi* is better because it shows intentionality. Thirdly, there must be a *public apology* by the state in the name of the people, for it is the state that endorsed and defended the Holocaust of enslavement with law, gun and ideology. Moreover, there must be *public recognition* through the building of monuments and teaching in the media and education the horror and meaning of this Holocaust, not only to African people, but also to this country and the world.

After public dialogue, public admission, public apology, public recognition, there must also be some form of *compensation*. It could be money, but also it could be free education, free health care, land return, and other forms of compensation. The final requirement of reparations is the development of *preventive structures* that insure that these things do not happen again. But there is no way to insure this except by creating a just and good society and a good and sustainable world. And again this requires, in turn, struggle, the struggle to heal and repair the world and to heal and repair ourselves in the process.

Imani (Faith)

The seventh principle is *Imani* (faith) which urges us “to believe with all our hearts in our people, our parents, our leaders, our teachers and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.” It is a clear and compelling call to believe that through hard

work, long struggle and a whole lot of love and understanding, we can again self-consciously step back on the stage of human history as a free, proud and productive people, speak our own special cultural truth to the world, make our own unique contribution to the forward flow of human history and with other progressive peoples, struggle to create a whole new history of humankind.

In a lecture on pan-Africanism at the inauguration of the University of Zambia in 1966, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania, spoke eloquently and cogently to the problematic and promise of pan-African unity.. He noted that there are two paths pan-Africanists must avoid in our quest for unity. First, he told us we must never dismiss African unity as a realistic goal. For there are those who say that, it's too much to achieve; the people are too different. Secondly, he said we must not be unmindful of the difficulties in doing it, and therefore, embrace the unrealistic idea of an African unity which is total and immediate. In fact, he argued for what our organization, Us, argued for in the 60's, an "*operational unity*, a unity in diversity, a unity without uniformity, a unity in principle and in practice" (Karenga, 1995:8). He (1968:216) says,

We must undertake a new and hard way forward and upward. We must avoid the road which goes round the mountain range and leads into the swamp lands; we must avoid also the excitement of the climb up the rock face, for that cannot be negotiated with the load we must carry. Instead, our task is to cut a road up the side of the mountains to the highlands and cut it gently enough for all our people to travel, even if with difficulty and help over steep parts.

In other words, he says, "we must keep in front of us at all times the goal of unity; we must recognize the danger that without positive action, we shall be diverted from it; and we must take that positive action at every possible point." Indeed, he concludes,

“African unity does not have to be a dream; it can be a vision which inspires us. Whether that is so depends on us.”

Let us go forward now together then, committed to the hard and patient work necessary to expand and sustain our unity and united action, reaffirm our rightful claims and assume our rightful place in the world as a free, proud and productive people, and with other progressive peoples of the world dare start a new history of humankind. Let me close as I did in the *Million Man March/Day of Absence Mission Statement*. Let us work and struggle as African people in such a way that

we may always understand and introduce ourselves, as a people who speak truth, do justice, respect our ancestors and our elders, cherish, support and challenge our children, care for the vulnerable, relate rightfully to the environment, struggle for what is right and resist what is wrong, honor our past, willingly engage our present and self-consciously plan for and welcome our future.

References

- Abdul-Raheem, Tajudeen. (1996) *Pan-Africanism: Politics, Economy and Social Change in the 21st Century*, New York: New York University Press.
- Asante, Molefi. (1998) *The Afrocentric Idea*, Philadelphia, PA; Temple University Press.
- Berlin, Ira. (1998) *Many Thousand Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- Bethune, Mary McLeod. (1938) “The Adaptation of the History of the Negro to the Capacity of the Child,” *Journal of Negro History*, 24:9-13.
- Cabral, Amilcar. (1973) *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Césaire, Aimé. (1972) *Discourse on Colonialism*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Diop, Cheikh Anta. (1974) *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill and Co.
- Diop, Cheikh Anta. (1991) *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*, New York: Lawrence Hill Books.

- DuBois, W.E.B. (1954) "Africa and the American Negro Intelligentsia," in Meyer Weinberg,(ed.), *W.E.B. DuBois: A Reader*, New York: Harper & row Publishers, pp. 384-403.
- El Nadoury, R. (1990) "The Legacy of Pharonic Egypt," in G. Mokhtar (ed.) *General History of Africa, Vol. II, Ancient Civilizations of Africa*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Fanon, Frantz. (1966) *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press.
- Freeman, Charles. ;(1997) *The Legacy of Ancient Egypt*, New York: Facts on File.
- Garvey, Marcus. (1977) *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, Vol. I & II*, Amy Jacques Garvey (ed.), New York: Atheneum.
- Harding, Vincent. (1987) *Hope and History: Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Harris, J. R. (ed.) (1971) *The Legacy of Egypt*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Karenga, Maulana. (1990) "The African Intellectual and the Problem of Class Suicide: Ideological and Political Dimensions," in Molefi Kete Asante and Karamu Welsh Asante, (eds.), *African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity*, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, pp. 91-106.
- Karenga, Maulana. (2003) "DuBois and the Question of the Colorline: Race and class in the Age of Globalization," *socialism and Democracy*, 17, 2 (Winter-Spring) 141-160.
- Karenga, Maulana. (1997) *Kawaida: A Communitarian African Philosophy*, Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press.
- Karenga, Maulana. (1998) *Kwanzaa, A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture*, Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press.
- Karenga, Maulana. (2004) *Maat, The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics*, New York: Routledge.
- Karenga, Maulana. (1995) *The Million Man March/Day of Absence Mission Statement*, Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press.
- Keto, C. Tsehlone. (1994) *an Introduction to the African-centered Perspective of History*, London/Chicago: Research Associates School Times.

- Lusane, Clarence. (1997) *Race in the Global Era: African Americans at the Millennium*, Boston: South End Press.
- Malcolm X. (1968) *The Speeches of Malcolm X at Harvard*, New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc.
- Malcolm X. (1965) *Malcolm X Speaks*, New York: Merit Publishers.
- Martin, Hans-Peter and Harold Schumann. (1997) *The Global Trap: Globalization and the Assault on Prosperity and Democracy*, New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Morton, Patricia, (ed.) (1996) *Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipatory Perspectives on the American Past*, Athena, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Nkrumah, Kwame. (1970) *Africa Must Unite*, New York: International Publishers.
- Nyerere, Julius. (1968) *Freedom and Socialism/Uhuru na Ujamaa*, London: Oxford University Press.
- Patterson, Orland. (1982) *Slavery and Social Death*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Poe, Daryl Zizwe. (2000) *Kwame Nkrumah's Contribution to Pan-African Agency: An Afrocentric Analysis*, New York: Routledge.
- Robinson, Randall. (2000) *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks*, New York: Dutton.
- Rodney, Walter. (1974) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press.
- Toure, Sékou. (1958) *Toward Full Reafrikanization*, Paris: Présence Africaine.
- Walters, Ronald W. (1997) *Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements*, Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- wa Thiongo, Ngugi. (1986) *Decolonizing the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, Portsmouth, NJ: Heineman.
- Williams, Juan. (1987) *Eyes on the Prize*, New York: Viking Press.

Dr. Maulana Karenga is professor of Black Studies at California State University, Long Beach. An activist-scholar, he is chair of The Organization Us, National Association of Kawaida Organizations and executive director of the Kawaida Institute of Pan-African

Studies. He is also creator of the pan-African holiday Kwanzaa and author of numerous scholarly articles and books, including *Introduction to Black Studies*, *Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture*; *Kawaida: A Communitarian African Philosophy*; *Odu Ifa: The Ethical Teachings*; *Selections From The Husia: Sacred Wisdom of Ancient Egypt*; and *Maat, The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics*. His fields of teaching and research within Black Studies are: Black Studies theory and history, Africana (continental and diasporan) philosophy; ancient Egyptian (Maatian) ethics; ancient Yoruba (Ifa) ethics; African American intellectual history; ethnic relations and the socio-ethical thought of Malcolm X. He is currently writing a book on *Malcolm X and the Critique of Domination: An Ethics of Liberation*. For further information visit: www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org and www.Us-Organization.org.

Prepared for: The Center for African Peace & Conflict Resolution and Pan African Studies Program, The 13 th Annual Africa/Diaspora Conference, California State University, Sacramento, April 30, 2004
