



**AUGUST INSIGHTS: EVERYWHERE A BATTLELINE;  
EVERY DAY A CALL TO STRUGGLE**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**I**T IS FROM THE IMMEASURABLE DEPTH, BREADTH and length of the sacred library of our history that Haji Malcolm X teaches and reminds us we are richly rewarded for all our research. And it is in this, the most ancient of human histories, Nana Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune teaches and advises us that we must “discover the dawn,” this awesome legacy left by our ancestors, and bring it forth not only to enlighten our own people, but also to lift up a light valuable to the world. And that light is our ethically grounded learning, knowledge and teaching and always our sharing it with the world.

Also, Nana Bethune and Nana Malcolm teach us that the light of knowledge is not to be approached as knowledge for knowledge sake, but knowledge for human sake, beginning with, but never ending with ourselves. We must, both of them teach, share this good with our youth and the masses of our people. The shared interest of this great woman and man is that freedom, justice and other sacred goods be enjoyed as a common good and right of our people and other peoples of the world. And they and all other ancestors posed struggle on every level as the way forward and upward on the awesome journey to achieve and secure these common goods.

It is in this context of memory and reflection that we of Us raise the battlecry, “*Everywhere a battleline, every day a call to struggle.*” Now clearly, we conceived and put forth this battlecry; but it is surely based on the living lessons and legacy of those great and ordinary men and women whose teachings, lived experiences, and the heroic and historic deeds and practices are models and mirrors for us. Indeed, it is Haji Malcolm who taught us that “wherever Black people are is a battleline.” It is Nana Paul Robeson who taught us that “the battlefront is everywhere. There is no sheltered rear.” It is Nana Nannie Burroughs that taught that “the struggle and battle to overcome and absolutely defeat every force designed against us is the only way to achieve.”

Moreover, it is Nana Fannie Lou Hamer that taught us that to achieve and secure freedom and justice, “we’ve got to fight every step of the

way.” Likewise, Nana Frederick Douglass taught that “without struggle there’s no progress.” And Nana Ella Baker taught us, “we who want freedom cannot rest until we achieve it.” So, the moral imperative and social centrality of struggle is clear and compelling. And one of the months most representative and reflective of the lessons and legacy of struggle is the month of August.

We are again at the beginning of August, opening up a special month of remembrance, reflection and recommitment, practices central to our traditions of commemoration and celebration of those moments, models and mirrors essential to our self-understanding and self-assertion in the world. August is rightly marked and remembered as *a month of revolution, revolt and resistance*. Indeed, we speak here also of righteous and relentless resistance before, during and after August. For our people in this country and around the world have from the beginning shaped and formed themselves in struggle, on the battlelines and battlefronts for freedom, justice and other goods.

Our arrival in oppression and resistance in what is now the U.S. occurs in the month of August 1619. It is the beginning of a savage and radically evil oppression, first in the crushing crucible of the Holocaust of enslavement. And it has persisted in all its raw and open, disguised and denied racist forms. But, of course, so has our resistance remained a central part of our lives and hope, our history and current will, and ways of defining, defending and advancing our lives in the pursuit of an ever-expanding realm of freedom and justice in the world.

We remember and raise up also the historic world-changing Haitian Revolution beginning in August 1791. And we share the sacred narrative of Nana Hougan Dutty Boukman and Nana Mambo Cecile Fatiman, spiritually grounding the people, assuring them of the rightfulness and victory of their struggle, and calling them to “listen to the voice of freedom which is in all our hearts.” We speak too of their world historical victory, achieving what no other enslaved people had done or has done after, freed themselves, built a

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republic, and expanded the realm of African and human freedom in the world. And today, they struggle and fight every day against the evil assembly of those, internal and external, who have, since their victory, worked, invaded, undermined and slaughtered to reverse this historic achievement. Here we raise up and relate the Declaration of Independence and accompanying oath given by the leader of the Revolution, Jean-Jacques Dessalines. He called on the people to swear an oath of “independence or death,” saying, “we have dared to free ourselves. Therefore, let us be by ourselves and for ourselves.”

Let’s too remember and raise up the sacred narratives of righteous and relentless struggle and revolts of Gabriel and Nana Prosser, August 1800 and of Nat Turner, August 1830, and their defiance of death, outnumbered, outgunned and yet outrageously contemptuous of the small-minded immoral monsters that arrogantly dared to deny them the inalienable rights of life and freedom. We speak here of martyrs for freedom who audaciously wrote their names on the unerasable and irremovable rocks of human history and are worthy of the highest honor.

As we speak today of the abolitionism movement, let us remember and raise up the founding of the Underground Railroad, August 1850, involving Nana Harriet Tubman, Nana Frederick Douglass and others dedicated to abolishing enslavement as a system and accompanying psychology. Nana Harriet taught us that people must develop the mindset of “we must go free or die” and realize that freedom is not free or cheap and “it’s not bought with dust,” but with dedication, discipline and awesome sacrifice. And Nana Frederick taught us the realization of freedom lies in breaking chains, not hugging them, physically or psychologically.

Then, in this sacred history, we must always remember, raise up and reflect on the legacy of

the Hon. Marcus Garvey (August 1887), prophet and promiser of the whirlwind, builder, founder of the UNIA, August 1914, organizer, a blessing of Blackness in the world, teacher of possibility saying, “Up you might race, you can accomplish what you will.” And his will was that we willed, worked and struggled for a free Africa as a liberating, uplifting, and powerful presence in the world. The 60s brought us the August Watts Revolt of 1965, inspiring and bringing into being a flourishing of organizational, philosophical, ideological and institutional initiatives, including the organization Us, Kwanzaa philosophy, Kwanzaa and the Black Power Conferences for which we served as vice-chair of the Planning Committee and the principal theorist. And in 1978, the Black August commemoration was declared and held in San Quentin to raise up and remember and honor martyrs, political prisoners and freedom fighters.

**[F**INALLY, IN AUGUST 2014, FOLLOWING THE murder of Mike Brown, Black people rose up in righteous resistance and carried on a 400-day plus series of action initiatives against police violence and the systemic violence of which police violence is a defining expression. The Ferguson Revolt was not only a major point of rising for the Black Lives Matter Movement, it was also the historical spark that ignited a forest fire of resistance around the country, expanding and intensifying the overall struggle for racial and social justice. Ours is a beautiful though dangerous, difficult and demanding life and history. We struggle constantly to be ourselves and free ourselves. Indeed, we are an unfinished struggle ourselves, struggling not only to free ourselves externally, but also internally from all that restrains and restricts us from flourishing and coming into the fullness of ourselves. ▲

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA, Professor and Chair of Africana Studies, California State University-Long Beach; Executive Director, African American Cultural Center (Us); Creator of *Kwanzaa*; and author of *Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture* and *Essays on Struggle: Position and Analysis*, [www.AfricanAmericanCulturalCenter-LA.org](http://www.AfricanAmericanCulturalCenter-LA.org); [www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org](http://www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org); [www.MaulanaKarenga.org](http://www.MaulanaKarenga.org).