



**THE GIFT AND GIVING OF NANA LIMBIKO:
SHARING KWANZAA MEMORIES AND OTHER GOOD**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

It is IN THE EARLY MORNING WHEN A BLANKET of quietness covers us and the world and the ocean mist settles softly on our balcony that I begin to offer my *tambiko* to and for you, as December opens and Kwanzaa comes forth to orient, illuminate and lift up our lives. Again, as always, I offer you sacred words and water in loving memory, and profound appreciation, Seba Limbiko Tembo, beloved sister and sacred friend, greatly valued teacher and highly honored ancestor. I, we, greet you as we did each other while you were living on earth and I continue to do so now that you are a living spirit in the Afterlife. We greet you saying “*Subalkheri*, peace in the morning, Limbiko.” Peace in front and back of you. Peace to the right and left of you. Peace above and below you. Peace within and outside of you. All around you, may there be peace. For exceedingly good is the presence and sharing of peace, and it is a blessing and great benefit to possess and practice it. *Hotep. Ase. Heri.*

And this too, Nana Limbiko: Homage to you, beautiful Black and radiant spirit. You shall always be for us, a glorious spirit in heaven and a continuing powerful presence on earth. You are counted and honored among the ancestors. Your name shall endure as a monument, and the good you have done on earth shall never perish or pass away. *Hotep. Ase. Heri.*

It is December and Kwanzaa time again. And again, I have missed writing you, as I customarily do during May, the month of your coming into being. But again, as you remember, we almost never marked our birthdays on the day or even in the month they occurred. Most often we noted them in passing and celebrated them when and where we could, sharing gifts and giving goodness as an ongoing practice and promise of more. Indeed, the real and lasting gift is always goodness. Everything else is a representation, a sign and symbol of this enduring, uplifting and life-giving substance that we need, name and know as goodness.

Heri za Kwanzaa, Happy Kwanzaa to you Nana Limbiko Tembo, giver of goodness, teacher

of the good from a Kawaida perspective. Doer of good, speaker of good and reciprocal recipient of the good on earth and one who continues to give good as an ancestor in the Afterlife. Each Kwanzaa we, I, miss you much and more and take notice of your physical absence in a special way, even though your beautiful spirit is always with and among us. We miss the way you taught the *Nguzo Saba*, conducted the workshops, acted as organizational ambassador welcoming all in your special speaking-gentleness way, but also ready to come from Compton, if you needed to. Missing you too for the way you helped decorate our house and hekalu, practicing *ujima* and *sankofa* to create context and consciousness of our Africanness, and the way you instructed and engaged the future-promising little ones and performed with them and us the candle lighting ceremony, “Lifting up the Light that Lasts”. And we miss, too, your talking and telling narratives, laughing and looking forward to the giving and sharing the good Kwanzaa invites and inspires.

It is good to remember and reflect deeply during Kwanzaa. Indeed, it is one of our five fundamental forms of activities along with ingathering of the people, special reverence practices for Creator and creation, recommitment to our highest values and celebration of the good. We call it “commemoration of the past” which involves not only a rightful remembering and recounting of history and historical narratives, but also remembering and raising up the bridges that carried us over. And this, we teach, involves not only the great heroes and heroines of the history books, but awesome ordinary people that gave extraordinary grounding, meaning and life-molding goodness to our lives, i.e., our parents and life partners, our other relatives, friends, teachers and persons of varied and most valuable kinds. And you, Nana Limbiko, are counted among these in essential and enduring ways.

Since last I wrote you, Nana Limbiko Tembo, two more of our ageless lions and all-season soldiers, Nana Omowale Tambuzi and Nana Robert Tambuzi have made transition, risen in

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radiance in the heavens and now sit in the sacred circle of the ancestors with you, and Nana Sebati and Simba Wasifu Tangelifu, among the doers of good, the righteous and the rightfully rewarded. Like you, they fought a valiant struggle against cancer and by sheer will lived as long as they could and continued to work for our organization Us and for our people until they, like you, were no longer able. I am not sure how things actually work in the Afterlife and if you have seen them, but if you do or have, give them warm greetings of solidarity and continuing struggle. Indeed, may you, they and all our other ancestors continue to guide and guard us in the lives we live, the work we do, and the struggles we wage of which you all are so much a vital part.

Kwanzaa, as I've said, is a good, yes, excellent time to remember you and all our ancestors in a special way. It is a time full of memories of shared good and sharing good. It's about happiness and sharing harvests, both the producing and the enjoying. It's about sharing narratives and knowledge and about celebrating ourselves, dancing and singing ourselves and enjoying, tripping, treasuring, and meditating on the awesome and uplifting meaning of being our African sacred and soulful selves in the world.

It was and remains exceedingly good to design and decorate on Kwanzaa, to transform our apartments and houses into sites of African culture in some of its most beautiful and expressive forms - to make these sites centers of excellence at every level and to experience a world-encompassing unifying celebration of African family, community and culture like no other event, institution or celebration in the world. And you Nana Limbiko and Nana Tangelifu, Nana Robert Tambuzi, Nana Omowale Tambuzi and all those advocates who have risen in radiance and all those who remain on earth have made this possible. For

we are Kwanzaa's inception and central to its world-encompassing expansion. It is an awesome legacy we collectively give, leave and continue to expand. But, as always, rightful praise goes also to our people who embraced Kwanzaa as a living and lived tradition, a fundamental and steadfast way to ground and orient themselves, name their children and themselves, and their organizations, institutions and projects and pursue the good.

As I remember and am reinforced in my remembering, I think of the beauty and good of your giving and the gift of you, Nana Limbiko. Indeed, you were and are a rare precious gift, a *zawadi azizi*, not only for Kwanzaa, but also for life, in this world and the next as ancestor, enabling good to be done, shared and sustained in the world. You were and are a gift to us, to the Movement and to our people. I knew, know and bear witness to the good you brought and the good you shared and the good you continue to give in the legacy you left and which remains greatly valued and beautifully vibrant.

The morning sun is rising again, and as always in my mind and heart's eye and my ever active imagination, I look for and see signs of you in various places – in the thick and melting mist and always in the coming cool and warm rains where I wait to see you resplendent in the heavens, holding your signature kente cloth called rainbow in your hands. Indeed, I am reaffirmed in my faith about the triumph and endless treasure of good in the world. And I am reminded of the teachings our ancestors in the sacred *Husia* which say “How wonderful to witness, how beautiful to behold when you ascend in the heavens with your power with you. Your awesome respect around you and your words of power at your feet. Never will the heavens be void of you or the earth empty of your presence.” *Hotep. Ase. Heri.* ▲

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