

MALCOLM

FOR BEGINNERS



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Writers and Readers 

WRITERS AND READERS PUBLISHING, INCORPORATED
P.O. Box 461 Village Station
New York, New York 10014

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A Writers and Readers Documentary Comic Book
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ISBN 0-86316-143-X

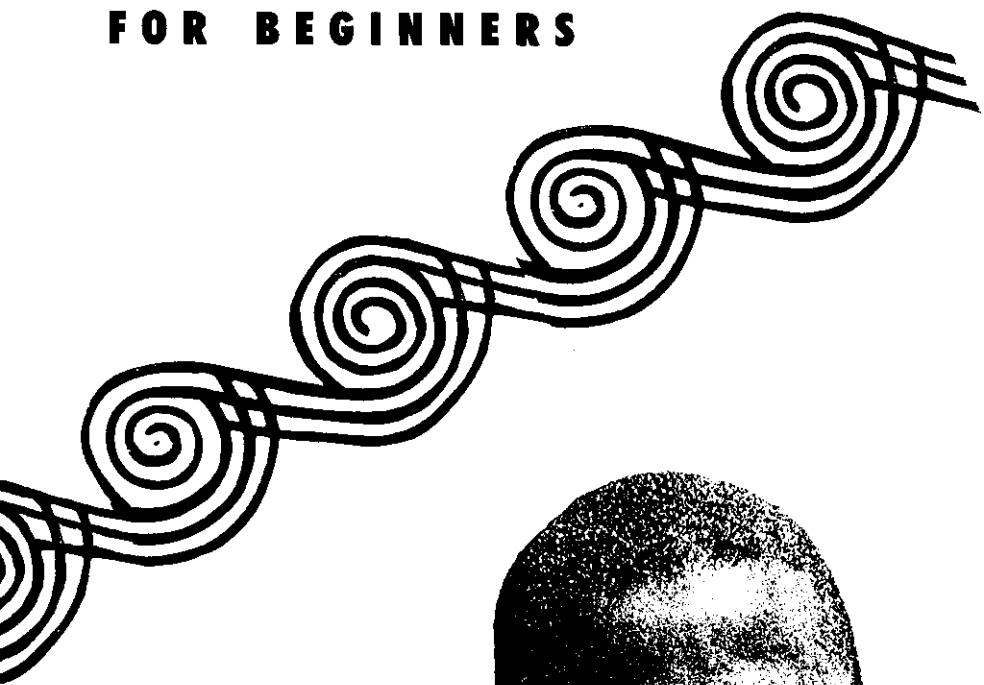
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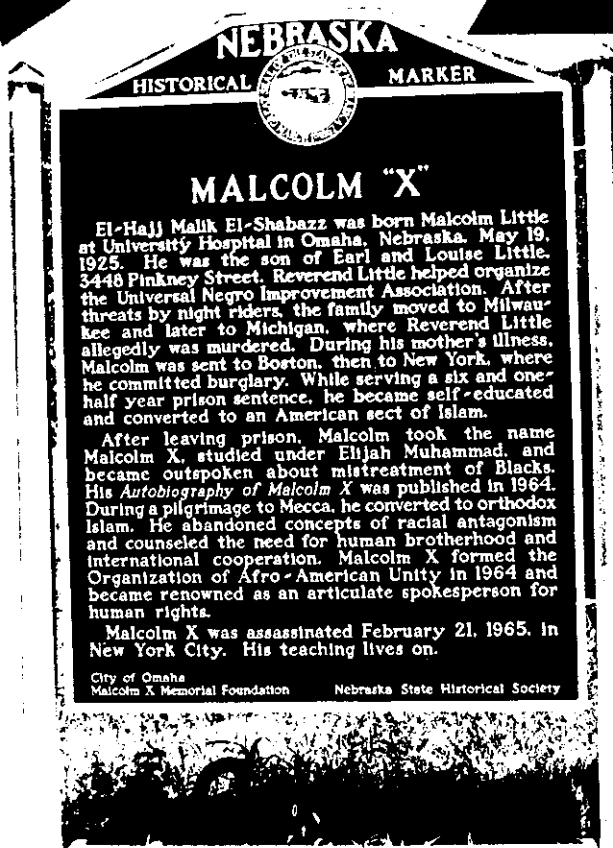
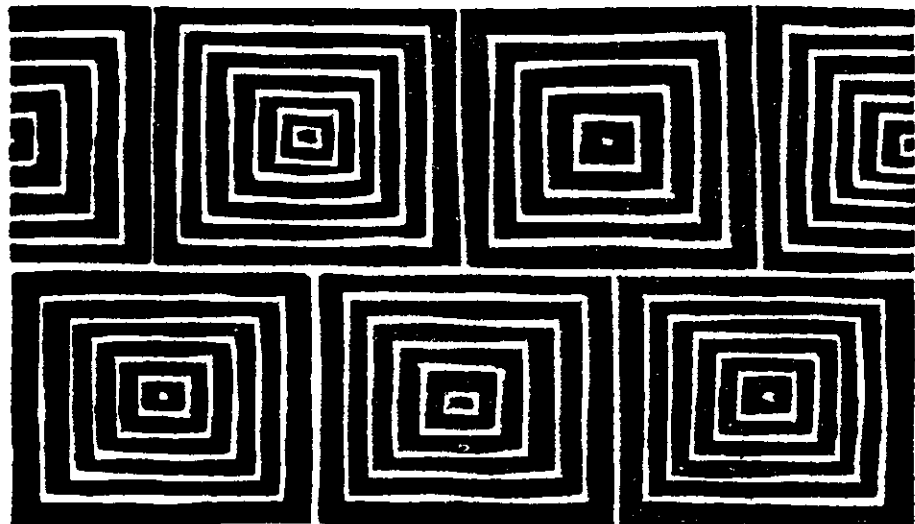




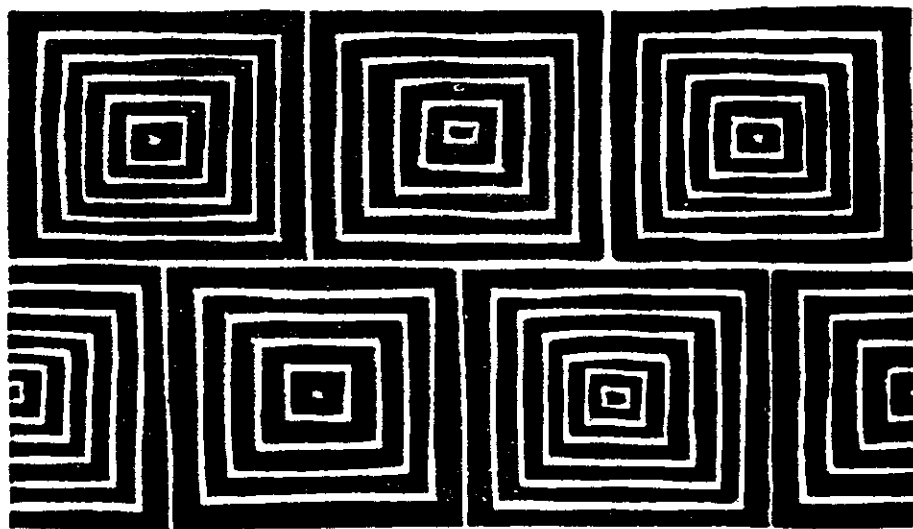
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There is a rising interest in Malcolm X. People are searching for a radical Black perspective, especially young Black people who want a more militant leadership and a *By any means necessary* type of commitment. Dig the problems we face — homeless people living on the street, whole families without jobs or hope, drugs more common than soap and water, racial violence exploding on the campus and in the community, including vicious murders and police cover-ups. If ever we needed what Malcolm X stood for, we need it now!



Introduction

So when you select heroes about which Black people ought to be taught, let them be Black heroes who have died fighting for the benefit of Black people. We never were taught about Christophe of Dessalines. It was the slave revolt in Haiti when slaves, Black slaves, had the soldiers of Napoleon tied down and forced him to sell one half of the American continent to the Americans. They don't teach us that. That is the kind of history we want to learn.



Malcolm X was an important Black nationalist leader in the USA, and he also articulated his views as a universal statement for progressive people of all nationalities. Malcolm was a leader who ran down revolutionary views that became popular themes for everyone in struggle. His speeches are full of analyses and comment, and his impact was to unify progressive forces, first and foremost in the Black liberation movement, then in the broader anti-imperialist movement as well. He clarified the role of religion in struggle and laid the basis for Black liberation theology. Malcolm also put the race/class struggle of Blacks in the USA in a universal world context of the oppressed fighting their oppressors.





Malcolm was a great person because of his bold honesty and sacrifice, his intellectual power and brilliant rap. But not only that — Malcolm X was a living representative of our great radical tradition of struggle created by millions of people whose names we will never know. We study Malcolm to learn how we can keep the tradition alive by making our original contributions to it.

Eurocentrism has snatched Black people out of human history, rewritten world history based on racist lies. Europeans attempted to turn Black people into deaf, dumb, and blind slaves who hated themselves and loved their oppressors by denying them their true history, exploiting them as workers, raping and ravaging their humanity.

The radical Black tradition is about change. It proves that Black people have always fought for progress and a better life. This fight is clarified through militant action and vigorous debate. In the 19th century, the main debate that shaped our radical tradition was the **Emancipation** debate, how to end slavery and institutionalize freedom. In the 20th century, the debate has been about **Self-Determination**, freedom from urban capitalist structures, especially in terms of culture, economic life, and political power.

19th Century: The Emancipation Debates



From 1830 through the Civil War, Black activists and community leaders met in local, state, and national conventions to discuss their views on ending slavery and improving the lives of Black people. These meetings ranged in size from 15 to several hundred people, but they reflected the views of millions. The debates were carried out by such leaders as Samuel Cornish, founder of the first Black newspaper; Richard Allen, founder of the first Black church; James Forten; Martin R. Delaney; David Walker; Harriet Tubman; Sojourner Truth; Frederick Douglass; Henry Highland Garnet; and others.

The Emancipation Debates of the National Negro Convention movement clarified a variety of strategies and tactics: united-front cooperation with liberal whites, militant armed struggle, and other forms of collective self-determination including emigration, moral suasion, and electoral participation. The main principle of unity was fighting slavery.

Debate without action is a waste of time, so it is important to understand that Black people did take militant action to fight against slavery. Blacks participated in the abolitionist movement, including the Underground Railroad. Blacks led countless armed slave insurrections (notably by Gabriel Prosser in 1800, Denmark Vesey in 1822, and Nat Turner in 1831) and initiated armed struggle with John Brown at Harper's Ferry in 1859. Even by going to the movies to see the film *Glory* and the earlier *Buck and the Preacher*, it is clear to everyone that Black people fought for their freedom in and after the Civil War.

TO BE SOLD, on board the
 Ship *Bancroft*, on Tuesday the 6th
 of May next, at *Ashley Ferry*; a choice
 cargo of about 150 fine healthy

NEGROES,
 just arrived from the
 Windward & Rice Coast.

—The utmost care has
 already been taken, and
 shall be continued, to keep them free from
 the least danger of being infected with the
SMALL-POX, no boat having been on
 board, and all other communication with
 people from *Charleston* prevented.

Austin, Laurent, & Appleby.

N. B. Full one Half of the above Negroes have had the
 SMALL-POX in their own Country.

The Emancipation
 debate contributed to
 militant Black revolu-
 tionary struggle to
 overthrow slavery.
 We give thanks to
 those who fought.
 We praise radical
 Black tradition.



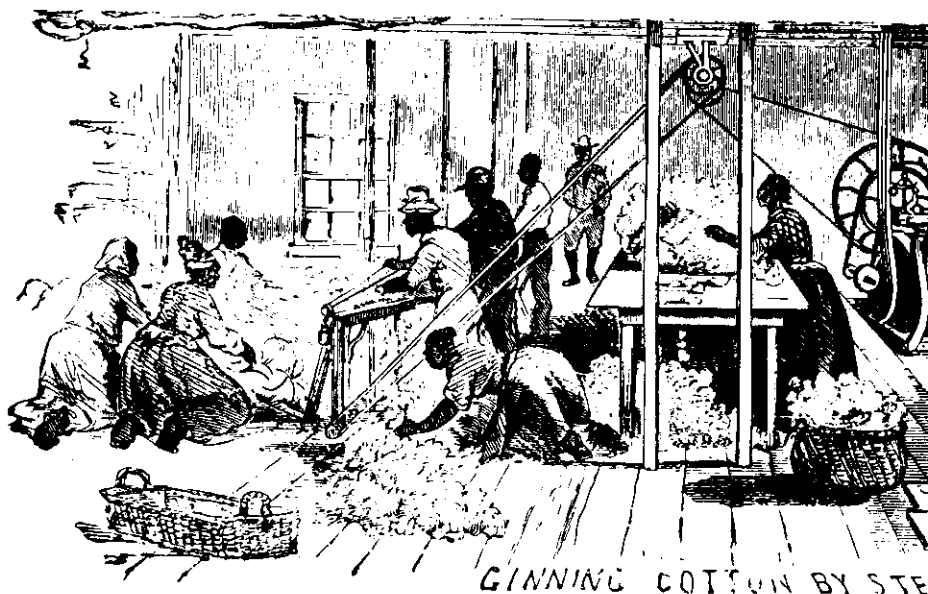
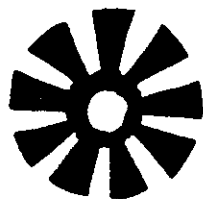
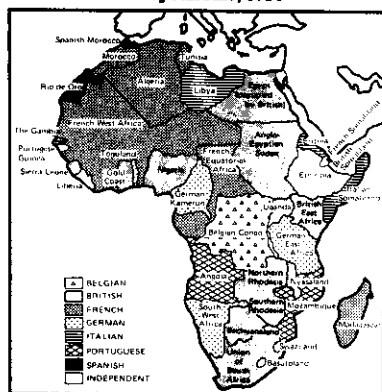
20th Century:

The Self-Determination Debates

World domination by imperialism defines the 20th century. After World War II, the USA became the number one imperialist power because the economic strength of Europe had been destroyed. US political domination was based on an economic relationship, exploiting the people and natural resources of the Third World for its industrial development and control of all international markets.

Modern imperialism herds people into cities like cattle and transforms them into industrial workers. US imperialism did this to Black people in the first half of the 20th century.

Africa under European rule, 1914



GINNING COTTON BY STEAM

This set the stage for the great Self-Determination debate. Part of the debate was over how Blacks who remained in the south could "catch up" with the north. This gave energy to the civil rights movement. Part of the debate was over economic issues of jobs and housing, and involved both Black capitalists and workers. This ignited an ideological show down over capitalism and socialism. And part of the debate united Blacks in the US with Blacks all over the world. This sparked new forms of modern panafricanism.



The moral power of Black religion and the collective strength of Black nationalism held the militant radical tradition together while the leading ideological forces in the self-determination debate became panafricanism and socialism. African Americans were in the belly of the beast of US imperialism and were fighting as part of the *wretched of the earth*: workers of the world and African peoples everywhere. Radical Black traditions have been kept alive because the past could be remembered, but more important than that was the fact that each generation of Black people continued to fight. Through militant struggle, Black activists are always led to rediscover the lessons of the past. In fact, this is a necessary process, summing up a struggle based on the lessons learned from all previous struggles. This is the kind of literature that best contributes to the rich textures of our glorious radical Black tradition.



The Glorious 1960's:

The self-determination debates exploded in the 1960's. The winds of change centered a world wide storm in the Third World. This was kicked off by the high points of struggle against colonialism (e.g., Ghana in 1959) and neo-colonialism (e.g., Cuba in 1959) in the Third World, and the Black-led civil rights movement in the USA. The fight for reform, even when successful, leads to a continuation of oppression in new forms. Everywhere the watchword became revolution, from Paris to Peking, from Mozambique to Mississippi.



Malcolm X reached his greatest level of leadership in the 1960's. He was the ideological leader for Black radicalism: Black religion (*spirituality* and *morality*), Black nationalism (*institution building* and *collective action*), Panafricanism (*identity* and *internationalism*), and Socialism (*freedom, justice, equality* and *anti-imperialism*).

A Golden Age of Struggle

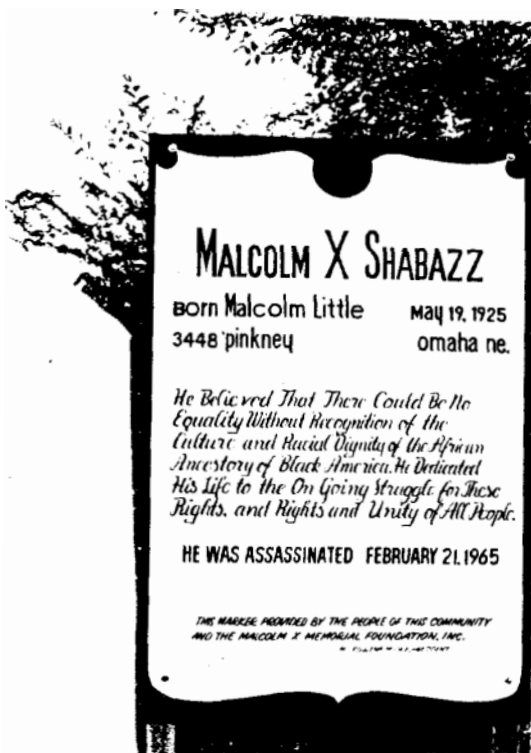
The explosion of struggle released many forces of change. This is especially true in popular culture: white and Latino youth began to absorb Black popular culture and America became more Black in its styles of music, speech, dress, and sexuality. But still Blacks continued to suffer. Of course, the Black middle class began to chill, but for most Blacks, life was all the way raw. This leads us to Malcolm. He talked about the difference between the house Negroes and the field Negroes. Malcolm became the field Negro that the white ruling class had nightmares about. His rap was his weapon, truth was his ammo, and the western imperialist racist system was his target.



Malcolm Little (1925-1941)



Malcolm Little was an average youngster who wanted a good life but was stopped by racism



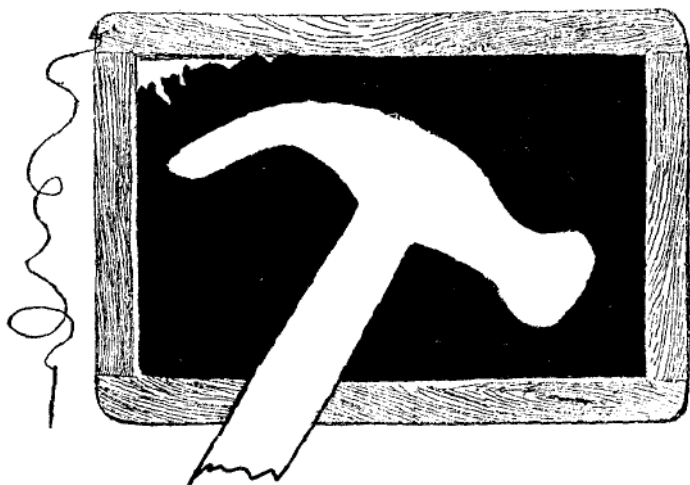
Malcolm **X** **was** born in Omaha, Nebraska, May **19, 1925**. Check it out: Rowena Moore and some of her friends have set up the Malcolm X Foundation in Omaha and are planning to build a major youth center and museum on the site of his birth.

His father, Reverend Earl Little, was a Baptist preacher and **his** mother a housewife from Grenada. Both parents were activists in the Universal Negro Improvement Association led **by** Marcus Gamey. Malcolm **X** **was** born into a cauldron of the radical Black tradition.

After being run out of Omaha by racists, his father **was** killed by other racists in Michigan. (Another name for racist murder is lynching!) This helped to destroy Malcolm's family.

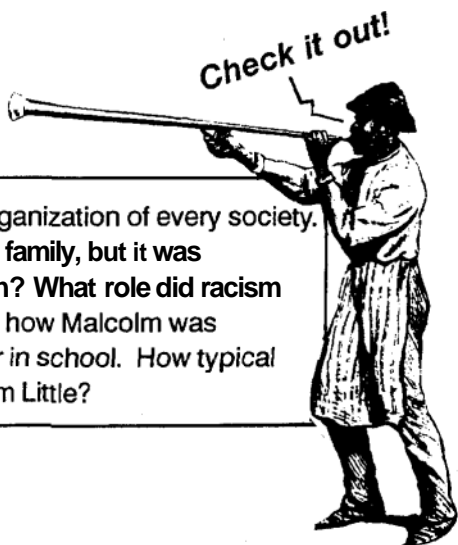
His mother faced great difficulty keeping the family together, suffered emotional problems, and was given little support from the welfare system. **In** fact, the welfare system finally broke **up** the family and Malcolm was forced to live in a foster home separate from his brothers and sisters.

Malcolm was *a* good kid, smart, ambitious, and full of energy. However, the racism that murdered his father and drove his mother into **a** mental institution began to work on him. He was reduced to being a "mascot" in settings with whites. And even his teachers failed to support him.



*Somehow, I happened to be alone in the classroom with ME Ostrowski, my English teacher (in 8th grade) ...I had gotten some **of** my best marks under him, and he had always made me feel that he liked me..He told me, "Malcolm you ought to be thinking about a career: Have you been giving it thought?" The truth is, I hadn't. I never have figured out why I told him, "Well yes, sir; I've been thinking I'd like to be a lawyer: "...He kind **of** half-smiled and said, "Malcolm, one **of** life's first needs ~~is~~ for us to be realistic. Don't misunderstand me now. We all here like you, you know that. But you've got to be realistic about being a nigger: A lawyer --that's no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you can be. You're good with your hands -- making things. Everybody admires your carpentry shop work. Why don't you plan on carpentry? People like you as a person -- you'd get all kinds **of** work. The more I thought afterwards about what he said, the more uneasy it made me...it was then that I began to change -- inside.*

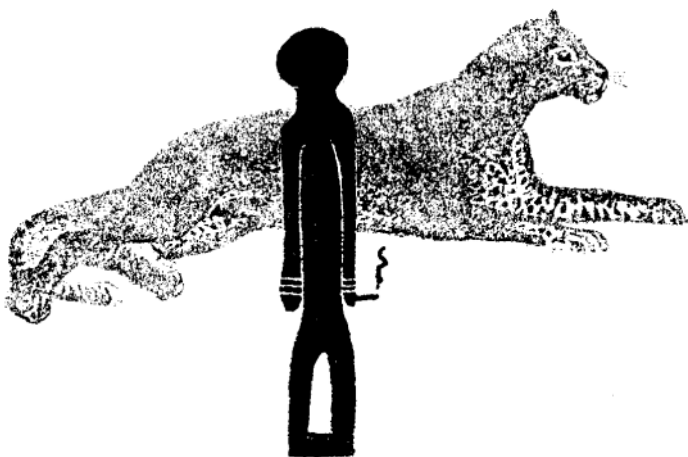
(Autobiography, pp 36-37)



The family is the basic social organization of every society. Malcolm was born into a strong family, but it was destroyed. How did this happen? What role did racism play? Furthermore, think about how Malcolm was discouraged by a racist teacher in school. How typical were the experiences of Malcolm Little?

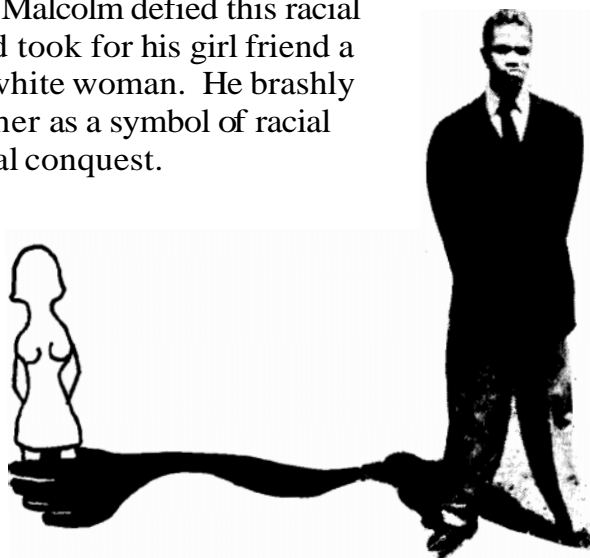
Detroit Red (1941-1952)

Detroit Red was a drug dealing criminal who was a danger to himself and to the Black community



Malcolm moved to Boston to live with his half-sister, Ella Collins. Even during his teenage years Malcolm despised the hypocrisy of the Black middle class. He refused to accommodate himself to the conventions of a "straight" life, and took to the streets. He turned to fast livin' — flashy clothes, easy money, hot dance steps, and plenty of reefer (and any other kind of drugs he could get his hands on).

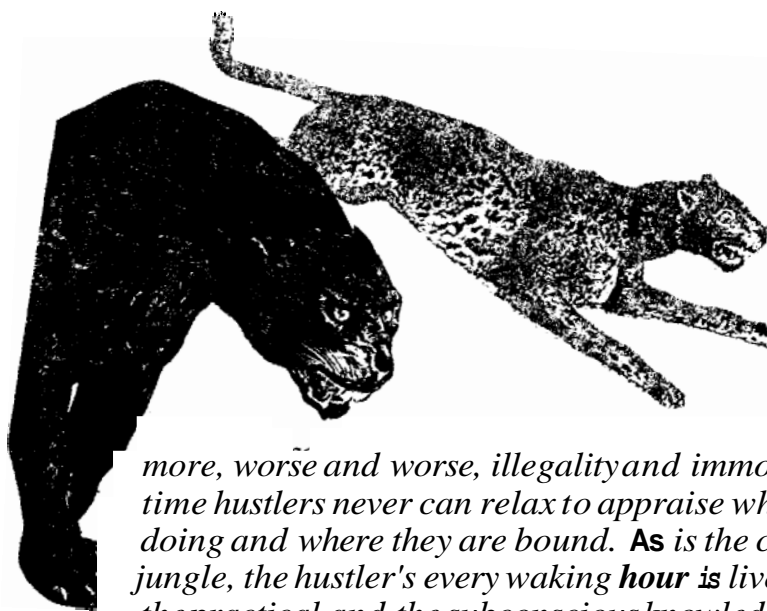
Back in Omaha, Nebraska and Lansing, Michigan, Malcolm had accepted the racial taboo of staying away from white girls. However, as Detroit Red, his name as a young gangster, Malcolm defied this racial taboo and took for his girl friend a married white woman. He brashly flaunted her as a symbol of racial and sexual conquest.



Malcolm had become a criminal, a petty thief, a ghetto hustler. Again, he violated every moral teaching of his father and mother, of his community, of his radical Black tradition.

As you would expect, since he wasn't killed (although the close calls were too frequent for comfort) he ended up in jail. He was so totally a criminal that even the other inmates gave him the nickname "Satan". But it was here in prison that Malcolm began a new journey


*I was a true hustler-- uneducated, unskilled at anything honorable, and I considered myself nervy and cunning enough to live by my wits, exploiting any prey that presented itself I would **risk** just about anything. Right now, in every big city ghetto, tens **of** thousands **of** yesterday's and today's school drop outs are keeping body and soul together by some **form** of hustling in the same way I did. And they inevitably move into more and*




*more, worse and worse, illegality and immorality. Full time hustlers never can relax to appraise what they are doing and where they are bound. **As** is the case in any jungle, the hustler's every waking **hour** is lived with both the practical and the subconscious knowledge that if he ever relaxes, if he ever slows **down**, the other hungry, restless foxes, fewets, wolves, and vultures out there with him won't hesitate to make him their prey.*

(Autobiography, pp 109-110)





Think about this!



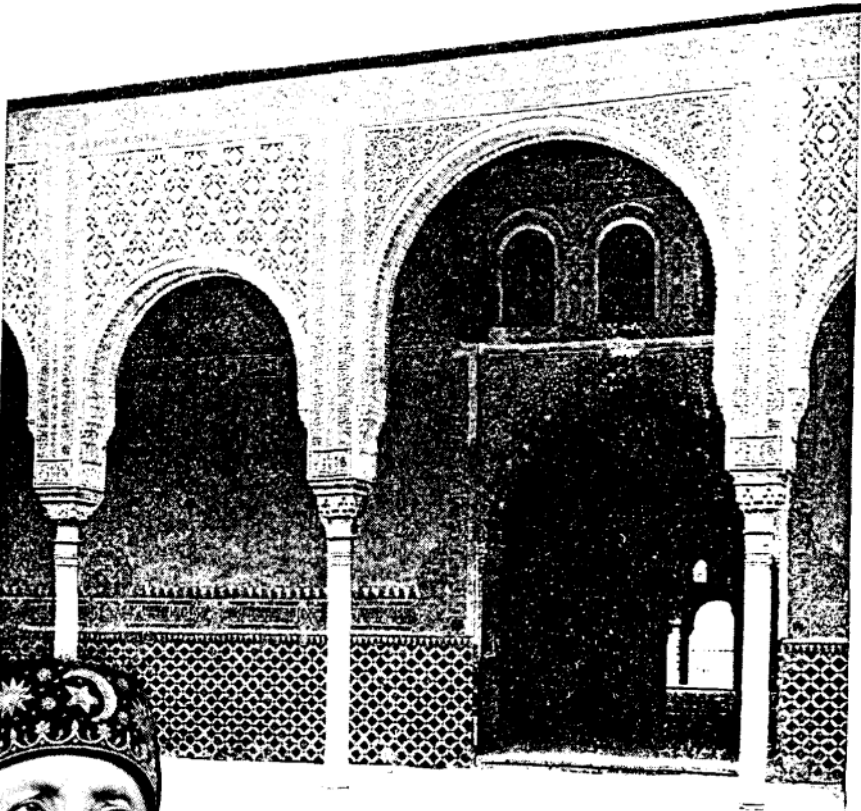
Most of us know people who survive in an underground economy, sometimes through illegal means. Fast money means drugs and guns, including stealing and robbery. Then comes either the cemetery or prison. Why do people use drugs? Who profits? What can be done to stop drugs? In this context, think about Malcolm's description of the hustler.

Malcolm X (1952-1963)

Malcolm X was a Black nationalist Muslim minister who exposed the racist barbarism of American life



Malcolm **was** fortunate because he was saved. He met Bimbi, a prison house intellectual, a man who taught Malcolm X the **power** of language and thought. He **was** steered by Philbert, Reginald, Wilfred, Ella, and Hilda, his brothers and sisters, to Elijah Muhammad and Islam. For the first time, in spite of prison not because of it, Malcolm recovered the radical Black tradition — intellectual study and high moral discipline.



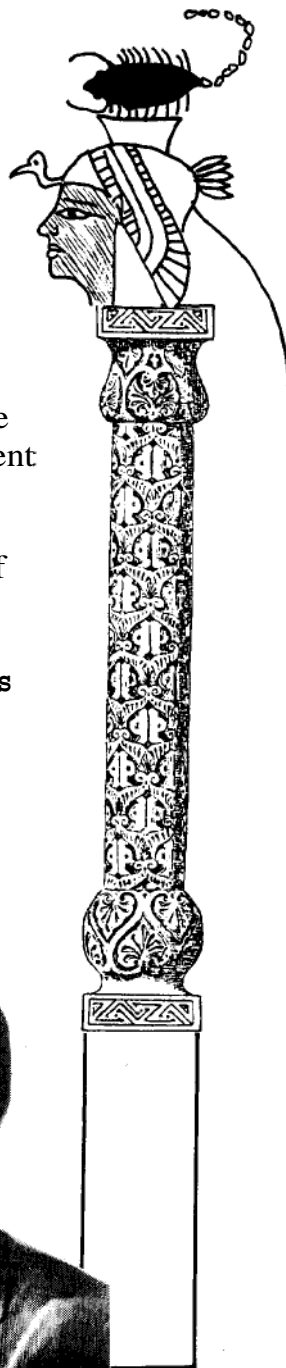
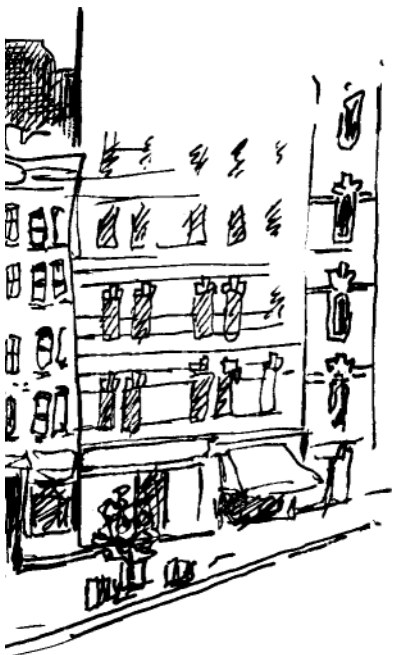
After leaving prison, Malcolm joined the Nation of Islam and was taught by Elijah Muhammad. As all NOI members, Malcolm Little became Malcolm X to refute his "slave name" and reveal a conscious search for his true identity. He soon took the family name Shabazz, but continued to use the X because of its popularity. He rose quickly in the ranks and became the national spokesperson for the Nation of Islam. The NOI was popularized by the organizing efforts of Malcolm X.



Malcolm X established Temples in most major cities, but spent the majority of his time in Harlem, Muslim Mosque #7. He also set up the organization's newspaper *Muhammad Speaks*. This became a major publication for radical Black activists of the 1960's.



His lasting impact is how he represented the radical Black tradition in confronting the white establishment mainstream. He went on radio and TV talk shows and debated journalists (Black and white), he went into every type of academic setting and debated the professors and students, and he debated left wing white radicals as well.

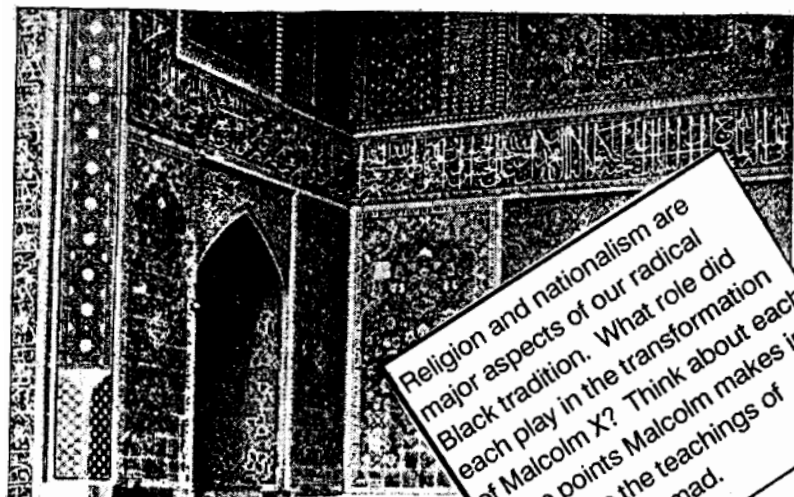




Elijah Muhammad spoke of how in this wilderness of North America, for centuries the "blue-eyed devil white man" had brainwashed the "so-called Negro". He told us how, as one result, the Black man in America was "mentally, morally, and spiritually dead". Elijah Muhammad spoke of how the Black man was the Original Man, who had been kidnapped from his homeland and stripped of his language, his culture, his family structure, his family name, until the Black man in America did not even realize who he was. He told us, and showed us, how his teachings of the true knowledge of

ourselves would lift up the Black man from the bottom of the white man's society and place the Black man back where he had begun, at the top of civilization.

(Autobiography, p. 199)



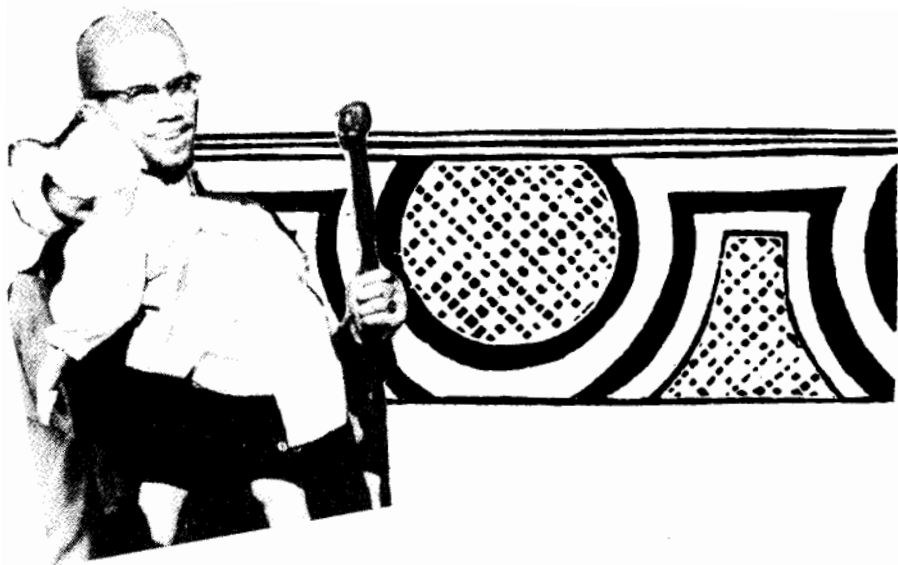
Religion and nationalism are major aspects of our radical Black tradition. What role did each play in the transformation of Malcolm X? Think about each of the points Malcolm makes in relation to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad.

Hmmm!

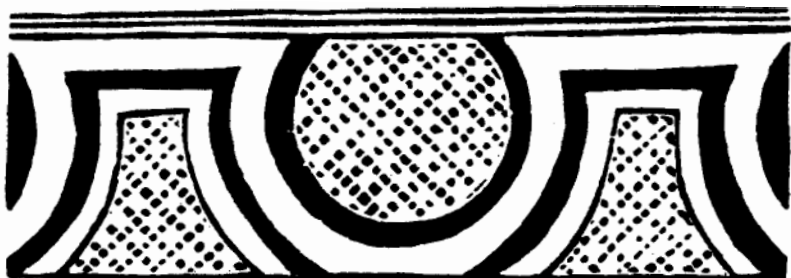


Omowale (1964-1965)

Omowale was an anti-imperialist, panafricanist who expanded his religion and nationalism toward world brotherhood



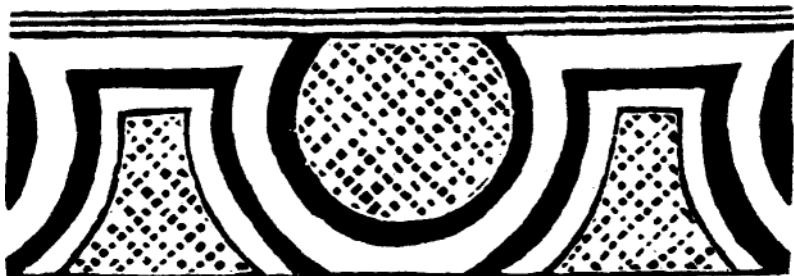
Malcolm X became a major leader in the Black liberation movement as well as the leading spokesperson of the Nation of Islam. But these two roles were soon in conflict. He broke with the NOI and began to strive for greater unity throughout the entire Black liberation movement.



Malcolm formed *two* new organizations: The Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), a political organization, and the Muslim Mosque Incorporated, a religious organization.

During the last year of his life, he traveled outside the United States as much as he traveled within including extensive travel in Africa. In fact, when he was in Nigeria he was given a traditional Yoruba name, Omowale, meaning the son who has returned home.

Malcolm took his message to Europe as well. He lectured in France and England. He had debated at Harvard University in the USA, and then was invited to debate at Oxford University in England as well. He was regarded as a revolutionary spokesperson for Blacks in the USA, for the African diaspora, and for Third World liberation forces in general.



Malcolm was assassinated February 21, 1965. His greatest lasting political message directed our attention to the necessity of militant unity in action. His message was to struggle for unity against a common enemy. His message was important for Black people. His message was important for *all* people. Actually this isn't all that surprising because every time a major leader of Black people in the USA has emerged they have contributed to the expansion of democracy for everyone in the country. Malcolm is no exception in the radical Black tradition. He fought for freedom, justice, and equality for Black people and for everyone!



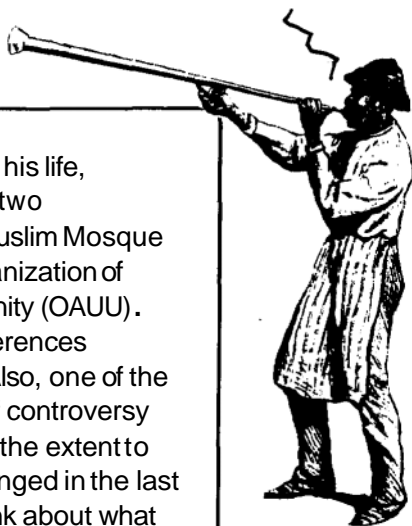
It was a big order -- the organization that I was creating in my mind, one which would help to challenge the American Black man to gain his human rights, and to cure his mental, spiritual, economic, and political

sicknesses. But if you ever intend to do anything worthwhile, you have to start with a worthwhile plan. Substantially, as I saw it, the organization I hoped to build would differ from the Nation of Islam in that it would embrace all faiths of Black men, and it would carry into practice what the Nation of Islam had preached... One of the major troubles that I was having in building the organization that I wanted -- an all-Black organization whose ultimate objective was to help create a society in which there could exist honest white-Black brotherhood -- was that my earlier public image, my so-called "Black Muslim" image, kept blocking me. I was trying to gradually reshape that image. I was trying to turn a corner, into a new regard by the public, especially Negroes; I was no less angry than I had been, but at the same time the true brotherhood I had seen in the Holy World had influenced me to recognize that anger can blind human vision.

(Autobiography, pp 320, 381)

Check it out!

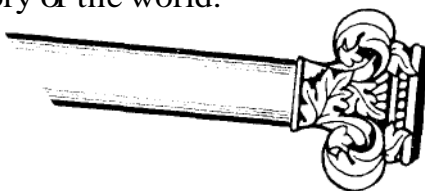
In the last year of his life, Malcolm created two organizations: Muslim Mosque Inc. and the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). What are the differences between them? Also, one of the greatest points of controversy about Malcolm is the extent to which his life changed in the last 2 or 3 years. Think about what changes took place in Malcolm's point of view.



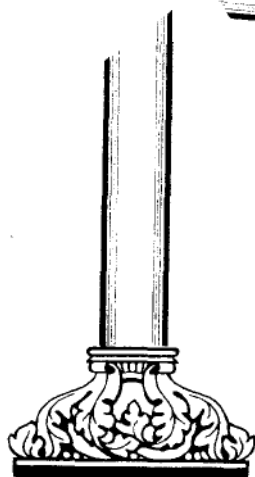
The End of White World Supremacy



One of the greatest strengths of our radical Black tradition is its relentless opposition to Eurocentrism. The Eurocentric viewpoint is that Greece and Rome laid the foundation for the eternal white European dominance of the world. Elijah Muhammad continued the radical Black tradition of exposing this lie and in its place articulated an Afrocentric philosophy of history that links the fall of countries to the extent that their wealth was based on exploitation, "the sin of slavery". Malcolm X stressed this point to liberate our consciousness to consider a post-American history of the world.



The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that as it was the evil sin of slavery that caused the downfall and destruction of ancient Egypt and Babylon, and of ancient Greece, as well as ancient Rome, so it was the evil sin of colonialism (slavery, nineteenth-century



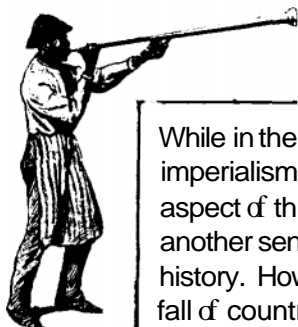


European style) that caused the collapse of the white nations in present-day Europe as world powers. Unbiased scholars and unbiased observers agree that the wealth and power of white Europe has rapidly declined during the nineteen-year period between World War II and today. So we of this present generation are also witnessing how the enslavement of millions of Black people in this country is now bringing White America to her hour of judgment, to her downfall as a respected nation. And even those Americans who are blinded by childlike patriotism can see that it is only a matter of time before White America too will be utterly destroyed by her own sins, and all traces of her former glory will be removed from this planet forever.

What do you think?

December; 1963

(Autobiography, pp 121-122)



While in the Nation of Islam, Malcolm spoke out against US imperialism based on world history and religion. One aspect of this was limited to a Black perspective, while in another sense it suggests a universal understanding of history. How and why does Malcolm explain the rise and fall of countries? What "sins" are being committed against Black people in the USA? Why will the USA fall?

Malcolm on Religion and Resistance



The church played an important role in the civil rights struggle. -After all, Martin Luther King was a Baptist preacher (just like Malcolm's father), church songs were rewritten to focus on the struggle, and church buildings were used for mass meetings and centers of mobilization. But this was the connection between religion and nonviolence, and Malcolm X represented an alternative view to this.

Malcolm X was a Muslim, but when he did focus on the Bible it was more likely to be the Old Testament maxim of moral payback!

There is nothing in our book, the Koran, that teaches us to suffer peacefully. Our religion teaches us to be intelligent. Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone; but if someone puts his hand on you, send him to the cemetery. That's a good religion. In fact, that's that old time religion. That's the one that Ma and Pa used to talk about: an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and a head for a head, and a life for a life. That's a good religion. And nobody resents that kind of religion being taught but a wolf, who intends to make you his meal...No, preserve your life, it's the best thing you've got. And if you've got to give it up, let it be even-steven.

*November, 1963
(Malcolm X Speaks, pp 12-13)*



Economic Exploitation

Black people have been *so* thoroughly exploited and oppressed by their white captors and descendants that it is easy to see the revolutionary implications of moral and political reciprocity

But some would say that slavery ended well over 100 years ago, and we have had important changes since then. They say we have a system of democracy and economically the highest standard of living in the world, especially for Black people. Malcolm was critical of this point of view, especially when Black people believed it!

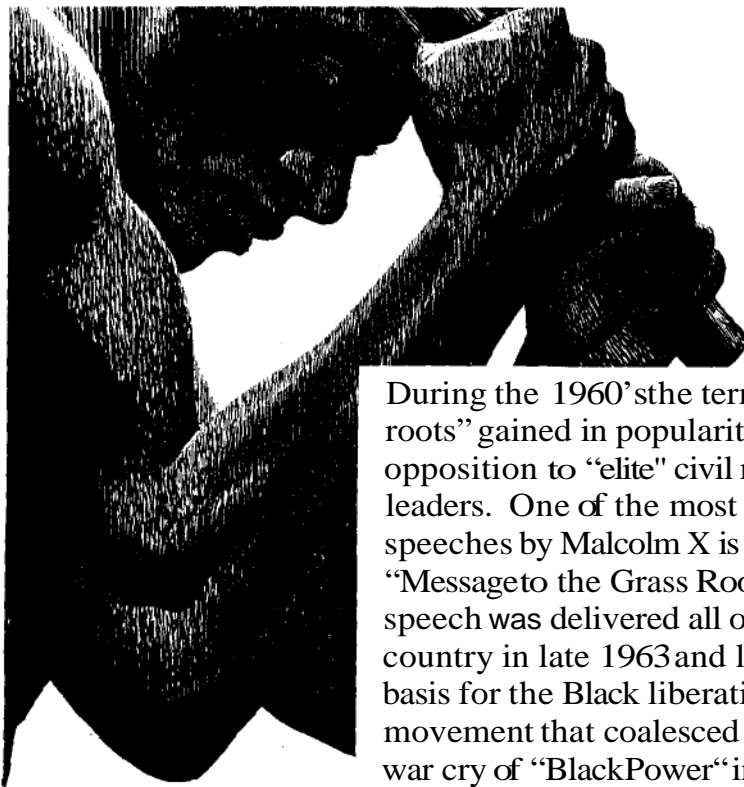




*You tell me what kind **of** country this is. Why should we do the dirtiest jobs for the lowest pay? Why should we do the hardest work **for** the lowest pay? Why should we pay the most money for the worst kind **of** food **and** the most money **for** the worst kind of place to live in? I'm telling you we do it because we live in one **of** the rottenest countries that has ever existed on this earth. It's the system that is rotten...It's a system **of** exploitation, a political and economic system **of** exploitation, **of** outright humiliation, degradation, discrimination -- all **of** the negative things that you can run into..And the things that they practice against you and me are worse than some **of** the things that they practiced **in** Germany against the Jews...And you run around here getting ready to get drafted and go someplace and defend it. Someone needs to crack you up 'side your head.*

(By Any Means Necessary, pp 4748)

Message to the Grass Roots



During the 1960's the term "grass roots" gained in popularity in opposition to "elite" civil rights leaders. One of the most important speeches by Malcolm X is his "Message to the Grass Roots". This speech was delivered all over the country in late 1963 and laid the basis for the Black liberation movement that coalesced with the war cry of "Black Power" in 1966.

Malcolm made (what to many people was) a frightening critique of white racism, and challenged Black people to unite for self defense. He challenged the notion that white liberals were different — a point that focused on their "white-skin privilege" and ability to choose when to be outspoken about their liberal identity

The main impact that Malcolm had was on the masses of Black people, common everyday sort of people in the Black community. They loved Malcolm X because he spoke from their reality, and he dared to violate the conventions of race relations etiquette that had been institutionalized by white liberals and the Black middle class.

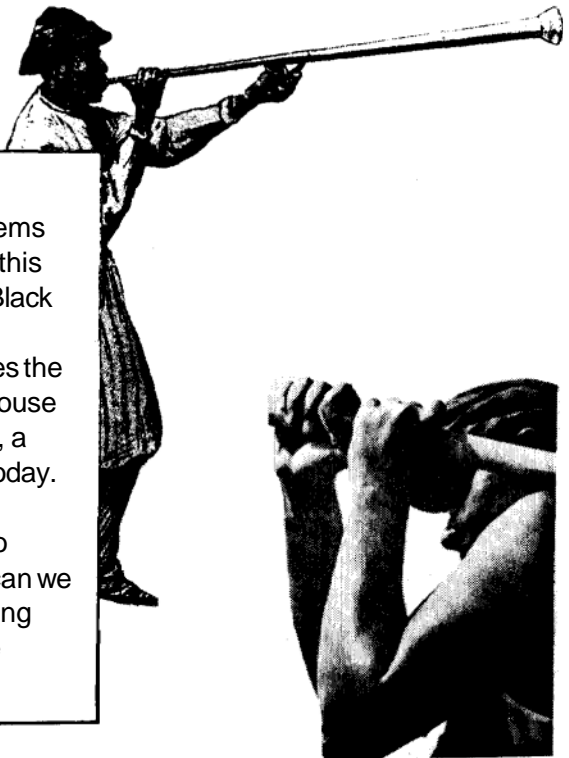
*..America has a very serious problem. Not only does America have a very serious problem, but our people have a very serious problem. America's problem **is** us. We're her problem...Once you face this as a fact, then you can start plotting a course that will make you appear intelligent, instead **of** unintelligent...We have a common enemy. We have this in common: We have a common oppressor; a common exploiter; and a common discriminator. But once we all realize that we have a common enemy, then we unite -- on the basis of what we have in common. And what we have foremost in common is that enemy -- the white man. He's an enemy to all **of** us. I know some **of** you all think that some of them aren't enemies. Time will tell.*

November 1963

(Malcolm X Speaks, pp 4-5)

Think about this!

In this speech Malcolm discusses common problems and Black nationalism. In this way he lays the basis for Black unity in an overall way. However, he also discusses the differences between the house slaves and the field slaves, a difference that still exists today. Both issues should be considered. The issue also involves leadership: how can we develop progressive working class leadership within the Black community?



The Ballot or The Bullet



Malcolm X made a great contribution in helping to clarify the relationship between reform and revolution, between solving problems through electoral action versus solving problems through retaliatory violence. He stressed that Blacks were kept down through the force of racist violence and murder. But Malcolm X did more than this, because he attempted to lay down a program of Black unity, what he called Black nationalism. The issue he raised is the relationship of Black nationalism to reform and revolution. This is an ideological issue of great importance.

At the time of World War II there were about 30 Black elected officials in the entire US! By the time of Malcolm's assassination this number had increased nearly ten-fold, but it remained a fraction of what it would have been in a true democracy.

Malcolm X stressed the philosophy of Black nationalism, the view that Black unity was an essential precondition to the progress of Black people.

*The political philosophy of Black nationalism means that the Black man should control the politics and the politicians in his own community... The economic philosophy of Black nationalism is pure and simple. It only means that we should control the economy of our community... The social philosophy of Black nationalism only means that we have to get together and remove the evils, the vices, alcoholism, drug addiction, and other evils that are destroying the moral fiber of **our** community. **We** ourselves have to lift the level of **our** community, the standard of our community to a higher level, make **our own** society beautiful so that we will be satisfied... We've got*



Dig this!

Over the last 25 years there has been a great practical struggle, mostly dealing with electoral struggle (especially with the election of Black mayors, and campaign on the state and national levels). The electoral experience needs to be thought about and summed up in terms of who benefits and whose life has remained the same or gotten worse. Furthermore, we have to find a way to carry out Malcolm X's program at the grass roots level.

*to change **our** own minds about each other. We have to see each other with new eyes. **We** have to see each other as brothers and sisters. **We** have to come together with warmth so we can develop unity and harmony that's necessary to get this problem solved ourselves... if we see it then to form a Black nationalist party, we'll form a Black nationalist party. If it's necessary to form a Black nationalist army, we'll form a Black nationalist army. It'll be the ballot **or** the bullet. It'll be liberty **or** it'll be death.*

April, 1964.

(Malcolm X Speaks, pp 38-41)

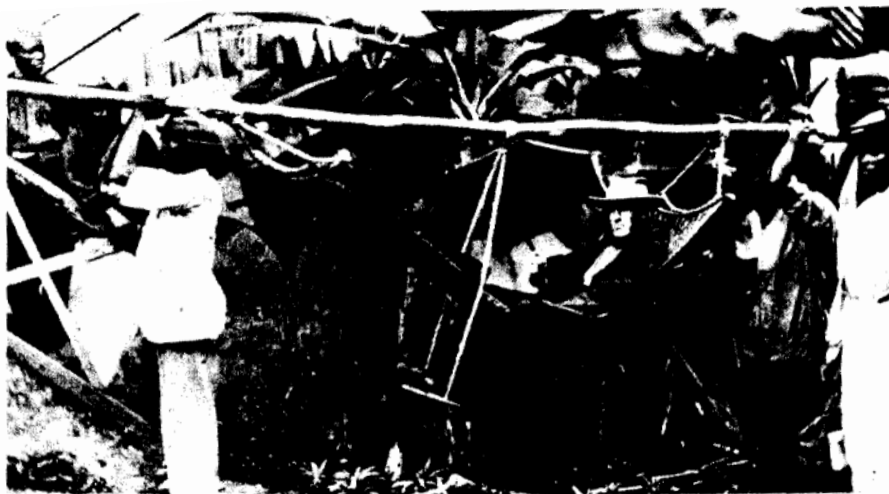
International Power Structure



The slave trade spread Black people all over the world, and in various places they suffered the specific oppression of whichever European power had control over them.

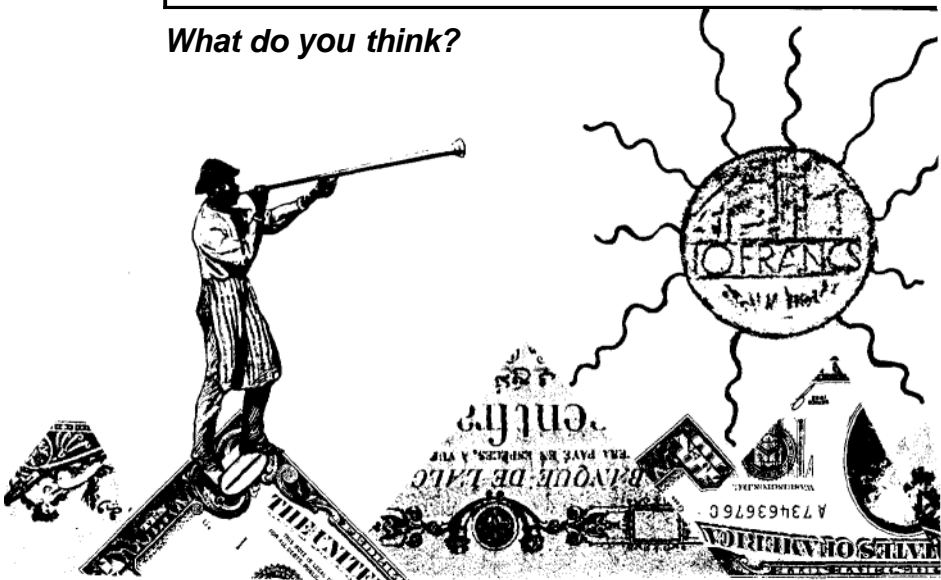
Sometimes this led people to think that the problem was in the domination they experienced — the USA, or France, or England.

Imperialism, especially today in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, is a total system in which all of these countries participate and share in the profits of exploitation. Overall, it is one system!



Think about the "international power structure" today. How will the unity of Europe in 1992 change things; and what kind of OAAU do we need to build today? What rules of struggle should we follow?

What do you think?



There is a worldwide revolution going on...what is it revolting against? The power structure. The American power structure? No. The French power structure? No. The English power structure? No. Then what power structure? An international Western power structure. An international power structure consisting of American interests, French interests, English interests, Belgian interests, European interests. These countries that formerly colonized the dark man formed into a giant international combine. A structure, a house that has ruled the world up until now. And in recent times there has been a revolution taking place in Asia and Africa, whacking away at the strength or at the foundation of the power structure.

(Malcolm X: The Last Speeches, p. 127)

Global Rebellion



The global pattern of exploitation takes advantage of racism and is mystified by the theoretical lies of Eurocentrism, but it is not limited to the "darker" peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. What about Ireland? What about Eastern Europe? Even within Europe itself Everywhere in the world people are rising up to fight against exploitation.



I believe that there will ultimately be a clash between the oppressed and those that do the oppressing. I believe that there will be a clash between those who want freedom, justice and equality for everyone and those who want to continue the systems of exploitation..It is incorrect to classify the revolt of the Negro as simply a racial conflict of Black against white, or as a purely American problem. Rather we are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter:

January, 1965

(Malcolm X Speaks, pp 232-233)





One of the greatest missing links to any progressive movement is the lack of women leaders and the failure to fight for the full emancipation of women from male supremacy. This is generally true of all movements, including the Black liberation movement.

At first Malcolm X upheld the Muslim tradition of excluding women from full participation in leadership and keeping them mainly in the home sharing the responsibilities of family leadership. However, he changed and updated his views, advocating the full democratic transformation of all organizations dedicated to progressive social change.





One of the greatest leaps that Malcolm X achieved was when he changed his views on women. In his last year or so of rapid transformation he rejected the sexism of conservative tradition and moved toward a revolutionary position that insisted on the principle of absolute equality between men and women. He frequently repeated the revolutionary maxim that the progress of a society can best be gauged by the condition of women in that society, therefore a revolutionary society can exist only when women have been liberated from the chains of male supremacy.

Black women have always played essential roles in radical movements, usually doing most of the "shit" work and getting damn little credit for it. In the 1960's, the spirit of Tubman, Truth, Wells, and others was reborn as the sisters spoke out and began to fight against their oppression, both in society as well as in the movement itself. The Black women of SNCC, the Black Panther Party, and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, along with other groups like the National Welfare Rights Organization and the Third World Women's Alliance led to a new Black woman who claimed the radical Black tradition as her own.



OAAU



Malcolm advanced the political strategy of the Black united front. He fought for a unity of inclusion in which every organization and individual dedicated to Black liberation would be involved. He formed the Organization of Afro-American Unity to make this happen.



...we set up the Organization of Afro-American Unity in which anybody in the community could participate in an action program designed to bring about complete recognition and respect of Black people as human beings. And the motto of the Organization of Afro-American Unity is By Any Means Necessary. We don't believe in fighting a battle...in which the ground rules are to be laid down by those who suppress us. We don't believe we can win a battle where the ground rules are laid down by those who exploit us. We don't believe we can carry on a struggle trying to win the affection of those who for so long have oppressed and exploited us.

(Malcolm X: The Last Speeches, p.175)



Malcolm X on Afro-American History



Malcolm was not a university graduate, but he a very serious student, especially of history. He demonstrated that being a student is useful, that the study of history, if properly done, would yield lessons to guide the fight for Black liberation.

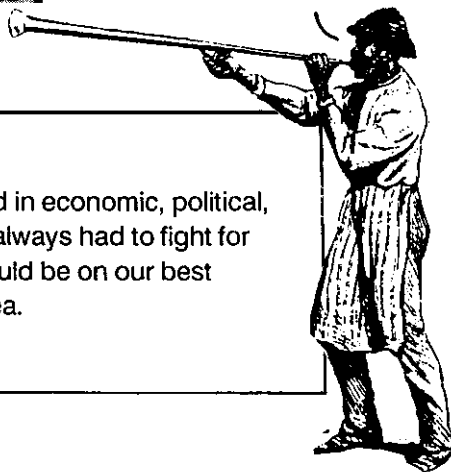
...when you go back into the past and find out where you once were, then you will know that you weren't always at this level, that you once had attained a higher level, had made great achievements, contributions to society, civilization, science and so forth. And you know that if you once did it, you can do it again; you automatically get the incentive, the inspiration and the energy necessary to duplicate what our forefathers formerly did. But by keeping us completely cut off from our past, it is easy for the man who has power over us to make us willing to stay at this level because we feel that we were always at this level, a low level. That's why I say it is so important for you and me to spend time today learning something about the past so that we can better understand the present, analyze it, and then do something about it.

(Malcolm X on Afro-American History, pp 4-5)



Dig this!

Our history can be understood in economic, political, and/or cultural terms. We have always had to fight for progress, so the main focus should be on our best examples of struggle in each area.



The Legacy of Malcolm X is Militant Action



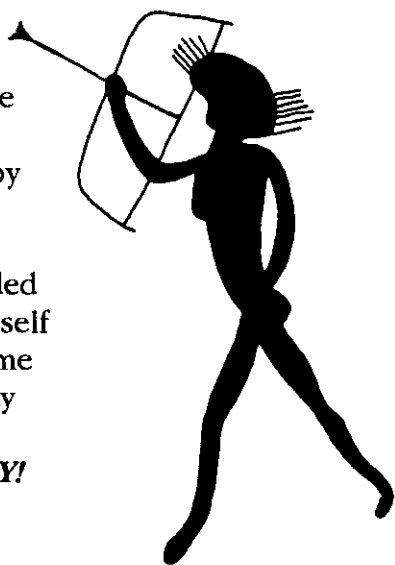
Malcolm X/Malik Shabazz was killed on February 21, 1965, and from that point forward he entered the all time hall of fame of revolutionary fighters. The following year his legacy burst forth when SNCC activists advanced a new slogan—**Black Power**. This slogan expressed the rage and fury of Black people. The legacy of Black radicalism once again was grounded in militant action. The power of the movement was its mass mobilization in local communities and its moral authority over evil. It was not the talents of a single personality. For over a decade, militant action implemented the politics expressed by Malcolm X.



One major aspect of this legacy of struggle is aggressive self defense by any means necessary. Tactics were expanded beyond nonviolence to include armed action if necessary. The critical organizational leap was the formation of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense and Justice and the hundreds of local groups that followed. New organizations are needed today.

Another form of self defense emerged among students who fought for Black Studies in schools and universities in order to protect their minds from the miseducation of white racist lies and distortions. The struggle for Black Studies required militant action such as mass protests and building seizures. These tactics are being used today to defend the right to have Black Studies.

Self defense continues to be at the top of our agenda today as Black youth continue to be victimized by killer cops and white racist lynch mobs, in the cities and on the campus. The drug wars have added a new dimension to the need for self defense, but the answer is the same — violence against the community has to be stopped, as Malcolm X said, **BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY!**

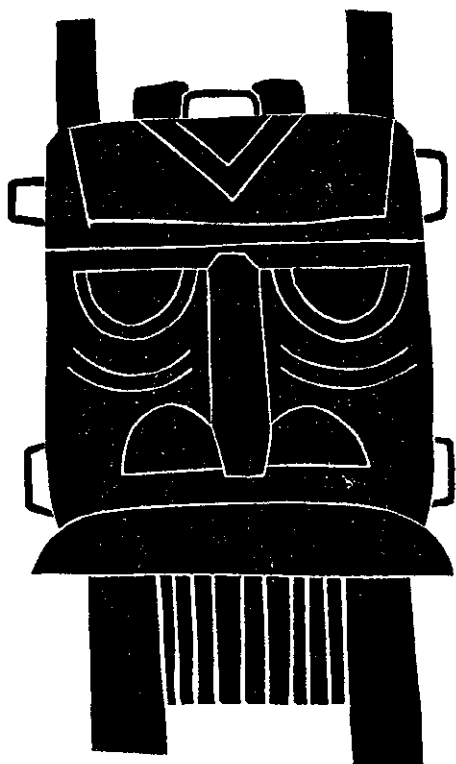




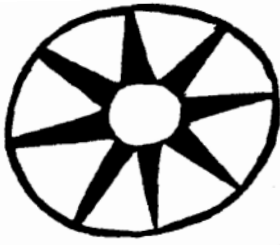
Self defense continues to be at the top of our agenda today as Black youth continue to be victimized by killer cops and white racist lynch mobs, in the cities and on the campus. The drug wars have added a new dimension to the need for self defense, but the answer is the same — violence against the community has to be stopped, as Malcolm X said, ***BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY!***

In many ways, the 1960's was a replay of the self determination debates and struggles that had dominated the 20th century, updated with increased militancy. For the first few years action was centered in the south until national legislation "appeared" to update and democratize the segregationist system. Six months after Malcolm X was murdered, the community of Watts in Los Angeles led inner city ghettos in insurrection, and exposed the racism experienced by urban Black workers in the north. The greatest organization of Black workers was the League of Revolutionary Black Workers formed in Detroit by Black auto workers.

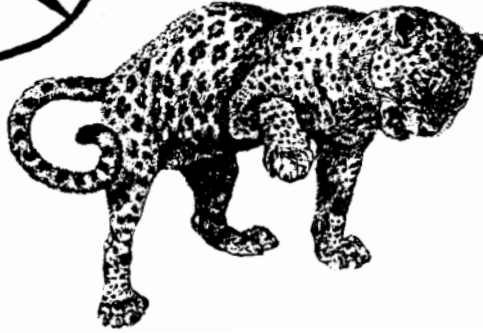
Malcolm X always directed his comments to Black people at the bottom, the people who suffered the most. He was a revolutionary working class Black leader who refused to be seduced into the "chill out" careerism of the Black middle class.



Malcolm X had insisted that Black people in the USA become more internationalist, both in their cultural identity as African Americans, as well as in their political solidarity and support of liberation struggles. Just as people today champion the cause of Nelson Mandela in South Africa, Malcolm X tried to get Black people to support the cause of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo. The legacy of Malcolm X was taken up in 1972 with a massive African Liberation Day demonstration in Washington, DC and other cities, and the subsequent formation of the African Liberation Support Committee. The ALSC convened the highest ideological discussions in the 1970's and from that point forward, Black radicals have been anti-imperialists.



Principles for Action



1. Follow Malcolm X's Example

There are more myths than truth about Malcolm X. The first task is to study what Malcolm actually said and what he did. It is important to follow his entire life and not just one part of the four stages. The challenge for us is to begin where Malcolm X left off, therefore the most important speeches are those he gave in the last six months of his life. There are no easy answers, no ready-made solutions. We have to be serious, disciplined, and we have to study.

2. Spread the Word

In order that others will be able to follow Malcolm X's example, we have to make sure that his books are available to as many people as possible. We have to make sure his books are in every library and bookstore. Every home library should have books by Malcolm X, and toward this end, his books should be given as gifts on birthdays and holidays. Students should do research on Malcolm X in school.

3. Organize Community Self Defense

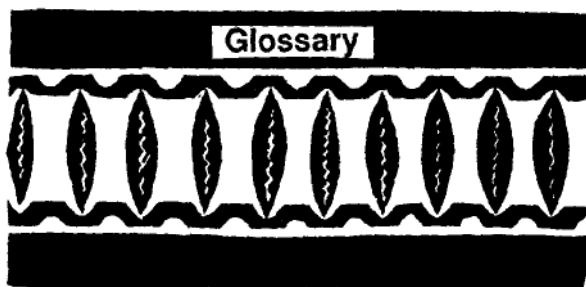
Self respect requires self defense against all forms of attack. Black people are attacked on all fronts: mentally, culturally, socially, politically, and physically. In the USA, racist attacks have always threatened the survival of Black people. What we need is the local organization of militant activist study groups. These groups have to be independent, engage in study, use only community-based resources, develop collective democratic decision making, and stay away from the news media. The main tactic of self defense is to educate and mobilize the community to arm themselves with knowledge, and then to fight their oppressors by any means necessary to gain freedom and justice.

4. Respect and Protect Black Women

Black women have the responsibility to build an independent movement to fight for their special rights and to make a special contribution to building the overall self defense of the community. Special effort should be made to develop women as leaders, mastering the **skills** of public speaking and political analysis.

5. Build International Solidarity

Malcolm X directed us to a global analysis and he stressed unity with friends. It is critical now to unite through concrete acts of solidarity with our friends in South Africa, Eritrea, Palestine, Cuba, El Salvador, and Haiti. Moreover, we must prepare for the overall world struggle against new forms of imperialism and the neocolonial state in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

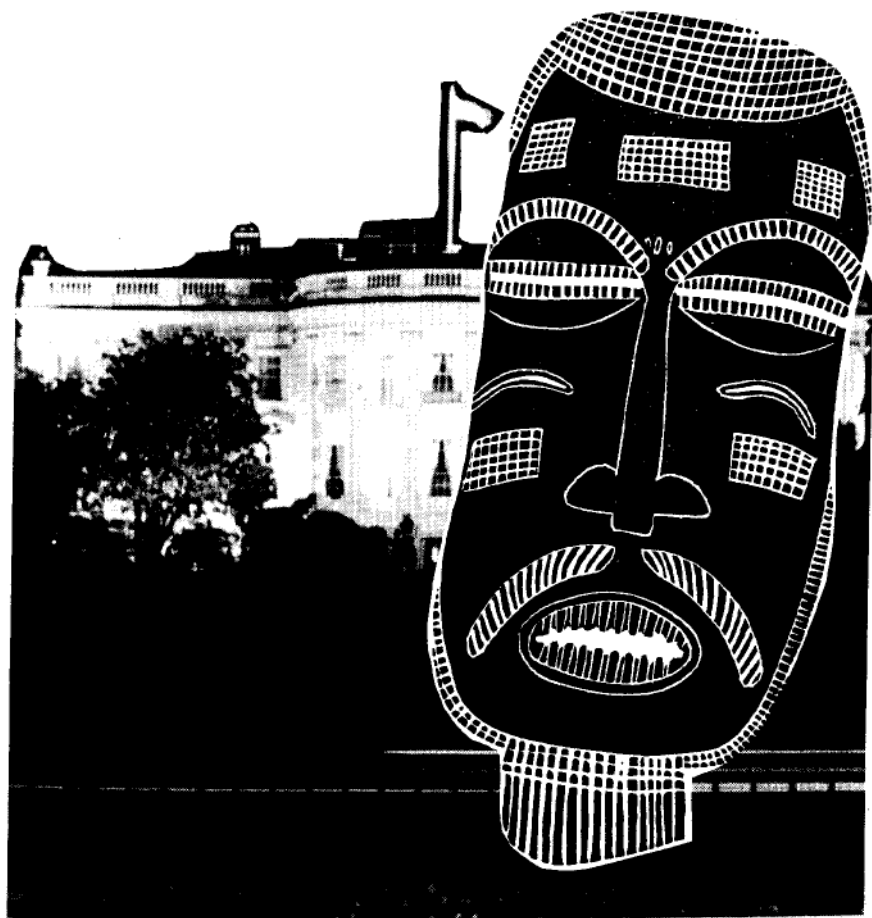


1. **Eurocentrism:** This is an ideological framework that argues that Europe is superior to all other areas of the world. Actually, it is a rationalization for European military conquest and domination of other countries by force. In general, this begins with the Renaissance and the voyages of Christopher Columbus in 1492. Check Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism* (NY: Monthly Review, 1989)

2. **Imperialism:** This is an economic system of world domination whereby the banks and corporations in powerful countries control the natural resources, labor and markets in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The main development of imperialism as a stage of capitalism took place early in the 20th century. Since World War II, the USA has been the leading imperialist country in the world, and while today its economic dominance is over, it remains the main imperialist military power.

3. **Racism:** This is the theory that some people are superior to others based on biological or cultural traits. The main form of racism is white racism that functions as part of Eurocentrism. Racism involves prejudice (attitudes of negative prejudgment) and discrimination (exclusionary behavior). This is expressed through individual acts, institutional patterns, and the structures and norms of the overall society.

4. **Black Liberation:** This is the general objective of the struggle for justice, peace, and freedom by Black people everywhere in the world. In every case it is the defeat of white racism, Eurocentrism, and imperialism. It is the final goal of a process of social transformation through which a society is redefined to be based on equality and cooperation. The fight for Black liberation is a global struggle yet to be won anywhere, but it is being carried out everywhere.



TheAutobiography ofMalcolm X

The Text and the Tradition

This is the most important book published in the **1960s**. It is a classic of 20th century autobiography and has been cherished by progressive people everywhere in the world. It ranks with the best: St. Augustine (the African Catholic saint), Frederick Douglas (great African American abolitionist), and Kwame Nkrumah (father of independent Africa). The autobiographical text, beginning with the innovative slave narratives, is the foundation of Black literary tradition.

TheAutobiography ofMalcolm X is required reading to understand the contemporary black experience. This book covers life as lived by the masses of people, what Malcolm called "bottom of the pile Negroes." Here are the problems of family life, street life, drugs and violence, crime and prison. But we can also find religious transformation and moral discipline, consciousness and commitment, study and struggle.

Malcolm X dictated this book to Alex Haley who provided him with editorial support. He finished it shortly before he died, but it was published after he was murdered.

MALCOLM X
as told to
ALEX HALEY
Author of "Roots" B-144
age



Reading List

General

1. Abdul Alkalimat, et. al., *Introduction to Afro-American Studies: A Peoples College Primer* (available from 21st Century Books, P.O. Box 803351, Chicago, Illinois, 60680)

Works by Malcolm X

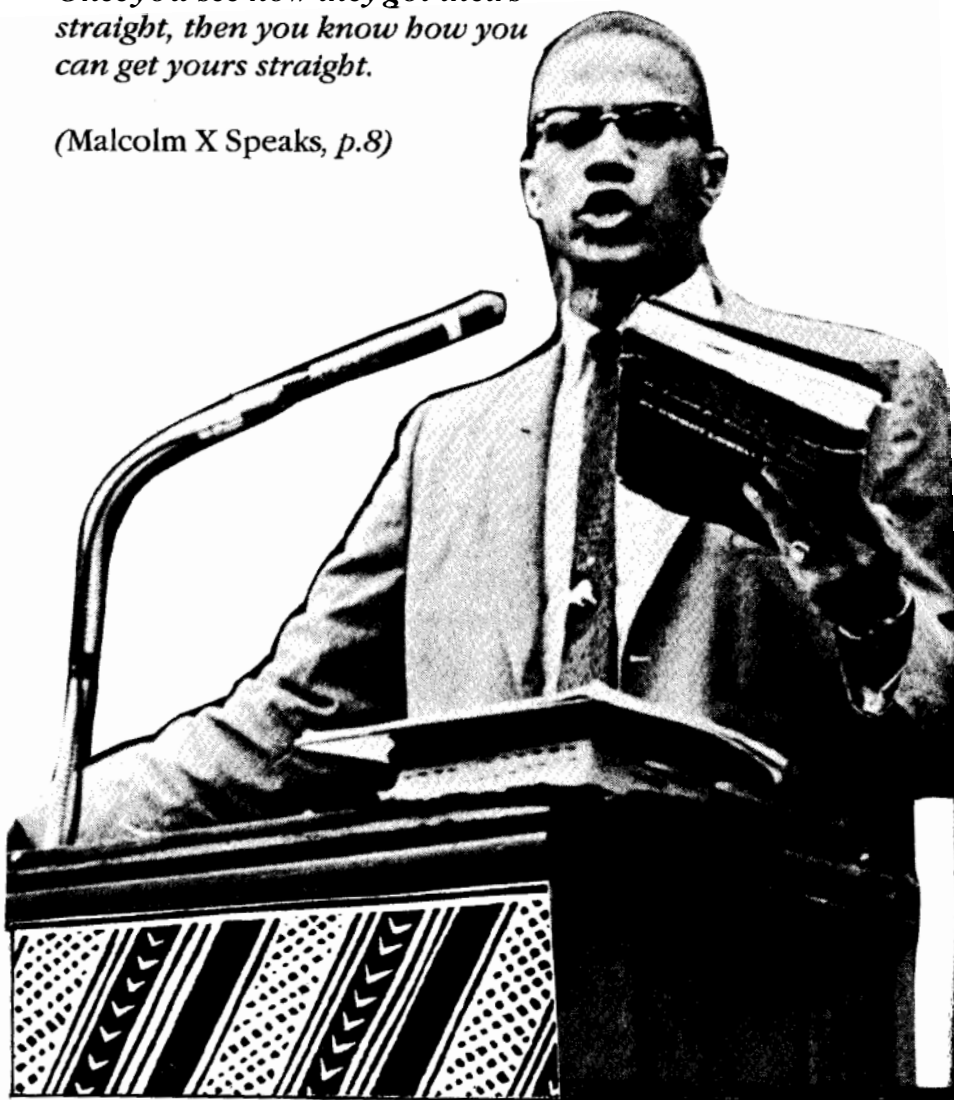
1. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965)
2. *Malcolm X Speaks* (1965)
3. *Malcolm X on Afro-American History* (1967)
4. *Malcolm X Talks to Young People* (1967)
5. *Speeches of Malcolm X at Harvard* (1968)
6. *By Any Means Necessary* (1970)
7. *The End of White World Supremacy* (1971)
8. *The Last Speeches* (1989)

Works on Malcolm X

1. George Breitman, *Last Year of Malcolm X* (1967)
2. John Henry Clark, *Malcolm X: The Man and His Times* (1969)
3. Peter Goldman, *Death and Life of Malcolm X* (1979)
4. Oba T'Shaka, *The Political Legacy of Malcolm X* (1983)
5. Tim Johnson, *Malcolm X: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography* (1986)
6. Abdul Alkalimat and Preston Wilcox, *The Legacy of Malcolm X: A Living Tradition* (1990)
7. James Cone, *Martin and Malcolm: A Dream or a Nightmare?* (1991, Forthcoming)
8. Manning Marable, *A Political Biography of Malcolm X* (1991, Forthcoming)
9. William Sales, *Malcolm X: Revolutionary Nationalism and Panafican Internationalism* (1991, Forthcoming)
10. Abdul Alkalimat, *An Introduction to Malcolm X: A Peoples College Primer* (1991, Forthcoming)

Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research. And when you see that you've got problems, all you have to do is examine the historic methods used all over the world by others who have problems similar to yours. Once you see how they got theirs straight, then you know how you can get yours straight.

(Malcolm X Speaks, p.8)




MALCOLM X

FOR BEGINNERS



In his lifetime, many denounced Malcolm as the angry voice of violence. To millions of others he was the righteous prophet of Black Power and Pride. History will show that he was a complicated individual whose personal changes mirrored the changing identity of his people. Who was this brave and brilliant man?



A Writing and Reading 

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