

## Malcolm X

November 7 & 9, 2000

### Speeches/interviews covered:

- "God's Judgment of White America" (GJ) (12/4/63). The last speech he gave as a member of the Nol. He was suspended for 90 days for the "chickens come home to roost" comment during the Q&A after that talk.
- The Playboy interview (PI) (April or May 1963): Conducted by Haley while MX was at the height of his power within the Nol, but also internally in turmoil at discovering Muhammad's sexual indiscretions (I think).
- "The Ballot or the Bullet" (BB) (4/3/64): Given after he broke with Nol but before he made his Hajj to Mecca. His thinking is in flux here.
- television interview with Pierre Berton (TV) (1/19/65): One month before his death

### Malcolm X Background: From Satan to the Nation

#### I. Malcolm X (1925-1965)

A. Notice, with MX the **return of religion** in political theory, but now as a **radical force** rather than as an opiate or for a herd. Now it's a means of liberation, emancipation, resistance and struggle.

1. Islam is the basis of the quest for truth, freedom, justice, equality, righteousness and peace. GJ 124

2. He's preaching **good old First Testament fire and brimstone**, justice and vengeance and righteousness. Elijah Muhammad is the heir of Noah, Lot, Moses, Daniel, and David. (Note that MX depicts Moses as a separatist: "Let my people go!" GJ 126)

#### B. Malcolm's style

1. Oratorical, based on the tradition of Black preachers. Clear, folksy, repeats himself. **His audience is different** from any of the other theorists we've read.

C. **Two transformations** in MX's life: **Satan to the Nation**, and **Nol to orthodox Islam**. The two works today are samples from his life after the first transformation.

#### D. Satan

1. In his youth, MX was a hustler: pimping, gambling, drug selling, robbery, setting up white folks who wanted an illicit "night out" in Harlem, drug taking, etc.

2. He eventually got caught breaking into a house, and he served seven years for it. In prison he began his transformation. Several of his siblings had joined the Nation and they began trying to attract MX to it. They encouraged him to write to Elijah Muhammad, leader of Nol, who wrote him back. This encouragement eventually led to his conversion and to his incredible self-education: copying the dictionary, reading history, philosophy, etc.

## II. From Satan to the Nation

A. Malcolm X's family (specifically his brother Reginald) got him interested in the teachings of Elijah Muhammad by telling him something.

1. He told him **God is a man**, and his name is Allah. (183) But this was just warming up MX to the real whammy: **the devil is a man**, too, and it's the white man.

B. **The Lost-Found Nation of Islam** ( from Goldman in Gallen)

1. The Nation of Islam was created when a mysterious Black person named Wallace D. Fard appeared in the Black slums of Detroit, claiming to be "from the East" and selling silks. He began holding meetings in people's homes and teaching his theology. One of his students was Elijah Muhammad, whom he met in 1931.

2. Fard taught that whites were a bleached-out mutant race bred from the black Original Man 6,600 years ago. An evil dissident Black scientist named Yacub created the white race to get back at the Muslim leaders of the day. By telling lies and spreading dissent among Black people, the white race turned a peaceful earth into a hell torn by quarreling and fighting. Black folks figured this out and sent the white man packing, "to the caves of Europe." Then, as per prophecy, the white race eventually came to rule the world and to enslave Black people for 6,000 years—when God would appear on Earth and destroy the devilish culture. (see Auto 190-193; Goldman in Gallen, 216-7)

3. Fard selected and trained Elijah Muhammad (formerly Poole) to be the Supreme Minister of his "Lost-Found Nation of Islam." In 1934, Fard disappeared. Muhammad claimed that Fard was the God sent back to earth that prophecy had promised, and that Elijah Muhammad was God's appointed messenger to lead Black people out of their bondage from their white slavemasters.

4. Muhammad, largely through the work of Malcolm X, built the tiny Nation into a national organization and into a modest business empire worth millions. Also schools, mosques, etc.

5. The NOI during the civil rights struggle didn't participate in it. Muhammad preached abstention from political struggles, even from voting.

6. Muhammad died in 1975 (?), and his son Wallace took over the ministry. Wallace Muhammad had sided with MX in the dispute, remember, and so he disbanded the Nation and he and his followers converted to orthodox Islam. His is still the largest Muslim religious sect in the country. In 1978 Louis Farrakhan, formerly Minister Louis X of Boston, re-established the Nation based on Muhammad's teachings and has led it to this day.

C. Anyway, the revelation that the devil is a man put MX's head in a tailspin, and **he immediately reevaluated his entire life in the light of what his brother told him**. He tried to think of one single white person in his life who could refute this statement, and he couldn't. He couldn't think of one white person who, as nice as they seemed on the surface, wasn't really just a devil underneath. He had to rethink his whole life and evaluate it in an entirely different way. Instead of just seeing his plight as being just a combination of circumstances, he now saw a systematic explanation for his and all Black people's condition in the US: white racism.

1. This revelation didn't just work on MX; it's also how the Nation "fished" for new recruits, too. As provocative and shocking as Muhammad's and Malcolm's teachings were, they struck a chord in many Black people—that's the power of them.

2. Who is this devil white man and what has he done?

### III. The devil white man

A. According to **Nation of Islam doctrine**, Black people are a race of ancient civilizations of wealth and glory. They built great empires while the white man was still living on all fours in caves. However, over history the white man, through his devilish nature, has destroyed Black civilization and culture and pillaged, murdered, raped, and exploited every non-white race. (Auto 187)

1. **Human history's greatest crime was the traffic in Black flesh**, in which the devil white man went to Africa and murdered and kidnapped Africans, bringing them to the West in chains on slave ships. Not only were Africans enslaved, worked to death, beaten, raped, and tortured, they were also completely cut off from their African heritage. Knowledge of their language, their religion, their history, their culture—even their tribe and their own *name*—has been stolen from them. **Example:** in *Roots*, how Kunte Kinte (sp?) was beaten until he answered to Toby, his new name. They were stolen from Africa, and African culture and history were stolen from them.

2. This has been no accident of history. **All white folks have taken part in the subjugation and degradation of Black people.** Furthermore, white people are conscious of what they're doing. **They know that they're devils.**

3. **God is one day going to bring judgment upon white America** unless it atones for its sins.

4. [If time] What proves to MX that the white man is the devil? Books! **History proves to him that all whites are devils**, because the history of the world is the history of white people acting evil in virtually every contact they've ever had with the non-white peoples of the world. Elijah Muhammad and the Nation just planted the idea in him; his own studies proved that idea correct. This is why we need to take MX seriously. If he just accepted what someone told him, then he'd just be worshipping a cult figure. But he didn't, he investigated this himself. By studying history, philosophy, and politics, he proved to himself the truth of what Muhammad taught.

B. **Q:** What is God's solution to the sins committed by the white man and to "the presence of 22 million unwanted ex-slaves here in America?" (GJ 122)

1. God has to destroy "this evil Western world, the white world." GJ 124

2. **Q:** How will God do this? What does MX mean when he advocates the "end of the white world?"

3. **The white world must repent and atone** for its sins—or face complete destruction.

4. **Q:** Does this mean through mass extermination?

5. No. **Read GJ 129-30.** In some ways it's similar to Du Bois: **abolishing the "white world" means abolishing the color line, abolishing the system of white supremacy.**

**C. The era of colonialism, imperialism or “white-ism” is over.**

1. **Read** GJ 130. The “dark world”—which is the vast majority of the world’s population—is about to take over. We are entering a new era in human history, ushered in by the hand of God, and whites better repent.

2. So **“world” = power** for Malcolm X, similar to what “white world” and “Black world” means for Du Bois.

D. But at the same time he talks of “a day of slaughter, a lake of fire,” “Doomsday,” and other such religious language that evokes death and suffering. (e.g. GJ 131)

1. Further, [**Read and compare** PI 114 and PI 118.]

2. **Q:** Is there a contradiction in MX’s thought between his political philosophy and his theology?

E. **The solution to white world supremacy: separation, with reparations.** The white man can atone by letting the Black man separate and providing him with the means to eventually stand on his own two feet. PI 129-30

1. **Segregation is separation without power.** (BB 42). **Integration** is mixing, but also without power for Bf. It’s mixing under white control. The only solution is **separation with power.**

2. This will transform from a demand of separation to a demand for Black self-determination.

**IV. The brainwashed Black man (the Black masses and the Black bourg)**

**A. The Black masses**

1. Through the rape of African women, the white slavemasters created “a homemade, handmade, brainwashed race that was no longer even of its true color” much less its true name or culture. (Auto 188) This mix-raced group was called “The Negro” by the slavemasters. It is the only race of people who have no knowledge of its true identity.

2. Now, this “so-called Negro” was taught that his native Africa was an uncivilized, heathen place where Black people were “savages” who swung from trees like monkeys, and that they were far better off being slaves in civilized America than slaves in the wilderness of Africa.

a. Perhaps the most sinister part of brainwashing was to get the Black man to accept **Christianity**. Slavemasters told them that god was white, blue-eyed, and blond-haired, and the slaves accepted it! They began worshipping this pale-skinned god, even while admitting that he came from the Middle East, where people were dark skinned. Even worse, Black people accepted Christian teachings: turn the other cheek, the meek shall inherit the earth, accept your lot in this world in exchange for a better one in the future, even as the white man was living it up. (Kinda like Nietzsche’s critique.) Christianity supposedly stands for the same things for all men—and yet Black Christians are subjugated and oppressed by white Christians! What a double standard!

b. This “Negro” accepted Christianity and the superiority of white people along with every other teaching of the slavemaster that was designed to make him accept, obey, and even worship the white man. In other words, **the slavemaster brainwashed the slaves to forget about Africa, to accept their conditions, and to worship the white world, and it worked—for many.**

**B. The Black bourgeoisie: Malcolm X's critique of the civil rights establishment**

1. But white men haven't done all this brainwashing themselves. They also handpicked a few Black folks to help them do the job.

2. **The "house" Negroes:** Since slavery, white men have always handpicked a few Black people and treated them much better than the majority of Black folks. In slavery times, this was the "house" or "yard Negroes," those slaves who worked in the home of the master. The slaves who lived in the master's home always lived better than the slaves who worked in the fields: better housing, better food, better medical care. Sometimes even bonds between house slaves and masters were created, though they were always bonds of inequality. But receiving these perks came with a price: "House Negroes" had to stick up for the master and stay on his side, and had to look down on the "field Negroes." They had to identify their interests with the white slavemaster's, and not with their fellow Black brothers and sisters. (Auto 274-5)

3. **Today's Black leadership is just a more sophisticated version of the "house Negro."** Their role is to stick up for and defend the white man from any criticism the Black community makes of them. They say they want to lead the Black masses in order to improve their lives, but really they're doing the white man's bidding. They're advocating integration, turning the other cheek, nonviolent resistance, patience, and reconciliation with the white man—all things that white people want. The timetable and strategies for the social advancement are being set by white people, just like under slavery. How can Black people ever expect to be free if they just follow white people's instructions? It certainly hasn't worked before.

4. Even the main **Black organizations** are led and funded by white people. Black folks are out front, Black folks are doing the dirty work, but whites are pulling the strings, even in supposedly Black organizations. Black leaders and these organizations are **"Black bodies with white heads!"** (Auto 279-80)

5. **The fox and the wolf:** Black folks at least know where they stand with wolves (segregationists); it's the foxes (white liberals) they have to be most careful of, because they claim to be your friend when they are not. But the CR leadership has made "the Negro forget that the wolf and the fox both belong to the same family. Both are canines; and no matter which one of them the Negro places his trust in, he never ends up in the White House, but always in the doghouse." (GJ 137). The foxes control the CR leadership, and as long as they control the leadership, they control the Black freedom struggle. **White liberals are the enemy, too, for they contain the Black struggle rather than aid it.** Black folk have to break that bond.

a. See also PI 126: He prefers the racists to the integrationists because at least he knows where the racist stands.

6. **Black vs. Negro revolutions:** Instead of a "Negro revolt," i.e. a revolt led by the white man and based on the principles of nonviolence, Bf need a "Black revolution."

7. He's flipped Du Bois's talented 10th upside down. **The Black middle class aren't a talented 10th, they're Uncle Toms.** GJ 134-35, PI 115-16

C. **This Black revolution will be led by the Black masses** (under the tutelage of Elijah Muhammad), not the Black elite.

1. Why? Because **the Black prole is like Marx's universal class**: he's so deep in the mud that he has nothing to lose but his chains by revolting. When he emancipates himself, he'll emancipate everyone. **Read PI 122.**

2. MX's critique of the 1963 March on Washington. GJ 141-46

a. It's a classic example of how white liberals control the nonviolent CR movement. They *created* the "Big Six" leaders of the CRM, not Bf themselves.

D. So **MX is harshly critical of whites, but he's just as critical of his fellow Black brothers and sisters** as well, both the masses and the leadership. He once said, "the whole black race in America is mentally dead." (Auto 257) That's a harsh thing to say, but he says it because he loves Black people and he wants them to come back to life, mentally. **It's "tough love."**

## V. Who is Black? What is race?

A. With Malcolm X, then, God and the devil become personified, not in particular individuals, but in races. Black people are gods, and white people are devils. But who or what is "Black" and "white"?

### B. Question: What is racism?

1. As **discrimination**: An individual's prejudice against another person or group on the basis of certain physical characteristics or cultural or religious heritage.

2. As **systematic racism**: A political or social hierarchy in which members of one "race" are systematically subordinated to and discriminated against by a "superior race."

a. A system in which even the most exalted members of the subordinate race are still lower than the lowest member of the superior race.

b. **Racism is not just individual prejudice, it's an entire system that establishes a racial hierarchy** and privileges one "race" (whites) over all others, even without the conscious support or effort by members of the dominant race. **You can have racism without racists**, because peoples' actions operate within a system that systematically favors one race and disadvantages others. (It's similar to what Marx says about the bourgeoisie: You can join animal welfare societies, etc., but you're still exploiting others no matter how "enlightened" your views are.)

### C. Q: How does he define "Black?"

1. For MX, it's everyone who is not white. **Read PI 120**

2. **The one-drop rule** [explain]

3. **Jim crow car** definition.

4. In a sense, **MX is providing a political definition of race**: To be white is to hold power of some sort—even if you are poor, lowly, and uneducated. To be Black is to be denied power—even if you are wealthy, well-educated, and well-mannered. Race isn't about genes or ancestry or skin color but about where a person stands in the social or global hierarchy. **Race is standing.**

D. **Question:** What's the definition of "white," then? Is there a "white culture"? Is there a common experience of whites? If not, and if it's not biological differences, what is it that makes some people "white"?

a. Their position on the social ladder. You're not privileged because you are white, you are white because you are privileged.

E. **Q:** Is MX a racist? Is he an anti-Semite? (see, e.g. PI 117)

1. **It is systematic racism that Malcolm X opposes.** That's why he doesn't think Black people can be racist, or that any of the Nation of Islam's beliefs are racist. He writes, "The American Negro never can be blamed for his racial animosities—he is only reacting to four hundred years of the conscious racism of the American whites." (Auto 392, end of chap. 17; see also TV 186)

2. Initially, he believed that individual whites were conscious of white supremacy and deliberately acted to maintain it by degrading and exploiting Black people (whites are devils). He later changes his conception to believing that **white supremacy is a system, a system that all whites benefit from, but without being necessarily conscious of it.** White supremacy just as much an evil to be fought as it ever was, but now instead of it being a conspiracy of white devil individuals, he now sees it as a system.

3. Thus, **MX doesn't hate white folks, he hates the system of white supremacy,** and he opposes anyone who props up that system.

a. **Read 24-25:** "Now in speaking like this, it doesn't mean that we're anti-white, but it does mean we're anti-exploitation, we're anti-degradation, we're anti-oppression. And if the white man doesn't want us to be anti-him, let him stop oppressing and exploiting and degrading us."

**Q for next class:** What of MX's ideas change after he leaves the Nation and goes on his Hajj? What of his ideas don't change?

**Q for discussion:** MX is for truth, justice, freedom and equality, and for racial separation. How do you get equality out of separation?

#### **Misc.**

x. **The myth of Black progress:** "The Negro is like a man on a luxury commuter train doing ninety miles an hour." ... then he sees that he's a dining-car steward, not a passenger. *That's* "Black progress": it's really American progress that Bf are dragged along with, mostly to serve whites. PI 128-29

## After the Hajj: Malcolm X's later critique of racist America

November 9, 2000

### Announcements:

- Fix Foucault reading pages.
- A warning on Foucault: He's tough to understand at times, but keep in mind that he repeats his main points often. If you get stuck or confused in one part, plow through it and read on. If it's important he'll restate the point later. Don't get frustrated.

### I. The means to freedom: "The Ballot or the Bullet"

A. Q: What does he mean by "the ballot or the bullet?" What's his goal to be achieved via ballot or bullet?

B. The "Negro revolution" has at this point, as he understands it, two options open to it: the ballot or the bullet. The political system seems determined to prevent Black people from using the ballot to gain their freedom. If this is the case, then Bf need to turn to other means to achieve their freedom.

#### C. The ballot

1. Q: What does MX mean when he says that "Politically the American Negro is nothing but a football..."? (GJ 135)

2. Q: What's the biggest obstacle facing Black folk, according to MX?

3. **The problem is the system of white supremacy in the Southern and federal governments.** The Dixiecrats held all the important Senate and House committee positions because of the seniority system. But, he says, they are there illegally and unconstitutionally, because half the population in Southern states are illegally prevented from voting. (BB 28-29) In the North, where there are no Dixiecrats, they use **gerrymandering** to keep Black folks from having political power. BB 30

4. **It's the segregationists that are the lawbreakers, not MX or the civil rights marchers.** BB 33

#### D. The bullet

1. Democrats would lose their majority and control over the Senate committees if they threw out the Dixiecrats. Republicans have no interest in meeting the needs of Black folk and they have almost no Black support. **The political system is rigged against Black folk.**

2. The government, MX argues, is Black people's biggest enemy.

a. **Read BB 30-31**

b. **Compare this attitude with that of many civil rights leaders of the time**, whose strategy was to use the federal government to lean on state and local governments in the South for change.

3. Because of this, there has to be either an intelligent, independent (not Democrat or Republican) use of the ballot, or the bullet. "That's why, in 1964, it's time now for you and me to become more politically mature and realize what the ballot is for; what we're supposed to get when we cast a ballot; and that if we don't cast a ballot, it's going to end up in a situation where we're going to have to cast a bullet. It's either a ballot or a bullet." BB 30



### E. Self-defense by any means necessary

1. MX critiqued the nonviolence philosophy of King and the civil rights movement as degrading and like begging for whites to be good. **It's like the sheep reminding the wolf it's time for dinner, he said.**

2. **Read TV 184.** White people have historically defended themselves using any means they needed; why are Black people held to a different standard? In a racist society, Black people have the right to defend themselves, using violence if necessary, and they shouldn't have to apologize for it.

3. Furthermore, social change is often accompanied by violence, like it or not: revolutions are bloody and destructive. The key is to focus on social change and not the violence, else you'll never see social change. American, French, Chinese, Russian revolutions: all have spilled blood. The only revolution, it seems, that must be nonviolent is the Black revolution. So it's not just that Black people have the right to defend themselves using any means necessary, **they also have to right to make social change**, to bring about their freedom, using any means necessary.

F. "The ballot or the bullet" is the 20th century equivalent of Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death!"

G. **Q:** MX argues that the hate of the NOI can't be classified as the same degree or type of hate that one finds of Black people in American society. (TV 181) Why does he say that, and do you agree?

## II. Freedom and self-determination

A. **Q:** What's his conception of freedom?

### B. Freedom for MX means self-determination

1. **Self-determination:** "black control over black life and destiny." (V.P. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination*, 6-7).

2. Black people must have control of their own destiny, and thus their own political, cultural, and economic organizations.

3. Self-determination will not come through segregation or integration.

**Segregation is separation** (which doesn't bother him) **without power**. BB 42  
Integration is mixing, but also without power for Bf. It's mixing under white control.

**Q:** What political philosophy, then, can achieve it?

### C. Black nationalism

1. Because America's political system is rigged, Bf need to look elsewhere for hope and freedom. They need to look to Black nationalism.

#### 2. Elements of black nationalism:

a. Black people **controlling the politics** of the Black community. BB 38

b. **Black control of the community's economy**, 38-39. "The economic philosophy of black nationalism is pure and simple. It only means that we should control the economy of our community." BB 38

c. Black people setting **higher moral standards** for their community: getting rid of drugs, alcoholism and other vices. BB 39

d. Above all, **nationalism means unity among Bf** in the face of white supremacy. "If we [Black people] have differences, let us differ in the closet; when we come out in front, let us not have anything to argue about until we get finished arguing with the man." (BB 25)

3. **The goal of the ballot or the bullet is self-determination, and the means to self-determination is Black nationalism.**

### **III. After the Hajj: Changes in Malcolm X's political thought (3 main ones)**

A. MX underwent a fundamental transformation after leaving the NOI, and particularly after his **Hajj**, or trip to Mecca. Making his pilgrimage he saw people of all colors, including white, living and worshiping as equals. In Mecca, people interacted as Muslims, not as "Black" or "white" or any other racial category. He saw that it is possible for there to be non-racist whites. (Read Auto 416-7)

B. It's a very common thing to point out how "bad" Malcolm X was before his Hajj and how "good" or "true" his views were after his break with the Nation. There is some truth to this, but how much did MX's views really change?

C. **No more "white devils"**

1. No longer sees white people as devils.

D. **His conversion to orthodox (Sunni) Islam**

1. In Mecca he realized that many of the beliefs and practices of NOI were not in accordance with "true Islam," so after his break with Muhammad and his trip to Mecca he abandoned the Islam practiced by the Nation.

E. **He adopts an internationalist perspective**

1. Black people need to realize that their experience with white racism is not singular. Many other non-white peoples, especially in Africa and Asia, have also experienced oppression and subjugation at the hands of white people, through colonialism. African Americans need to gain a sense of themselves as a part of the non-white peoples of the world.

2. Because their situation is international, Black folks in the US should be fighting for **human rights, not civil rights**. Civil rights makes Black people's plight a domestic problem. It forces Black folks to plead with whites, their oppressor, for equal rights. But by seeing racism in America as a human rights struggle that is part of a much broader struggle for justice, freedom and equality, Black people can "go over the heads" of white America and appeal to the entire world for justice, and the charges against America are so plain and so well-documented that the world is bound to damn it. That's why he constantly preached of the evils of racism in America when he traveled abroad, and that's why he wanted to take his case to the UN and charge the US with violating Black people's rights.

3. In asking for international support for human rights struggles in the U.S., MX also wanted Black people to demonstrate solidarity with Third world anticolonial movements going on worldwide in the 1960s. [Explain a bit.]

4. **The quest for human rights over civil rights also flips the majority-minority distinction on its head.** In the US, whites are a minority and Blacks are a majority. Globally, however, it's wf who are the minority.

5. MX also argues that a special part of this international perspective must be to connect Black Americans with Africa and their African past. He argues for **pan-Africanism**, bringing all Africans in the continent of Africa and in the diaspora together in unity.

**IV. What doesn't change about MX's political thought (5 main ones)**

A. As important as the differences are, many key elements of MX's thought did not change or were reinforced by his second transformation.

B. MX's main job: to **raise Black consciousness**, to make Black people aware of their condition, aware that this condition is not due to any faults or shortcomings on their own part, and to make them proud of being Black. Black people need to nurture and develop their own proud African and African American histories, not ape white people.

C. **Witness for the prosecution:** critique of endemic racism in America

1. MX stopped saying that all whites are devils, but he never altered the fundamental terms of his indictment: that American whites collectively were the enemy of Black Americans collectively until their actions proved them otherwise. He told a Harlem rally after his pilgrimage, "I'm not blanketly condemning all whites. All of them don't oppress. All of them aren't in a position to. But most of them are, and most of them do." (Goldman in Gallen 223; see also Auto 416-17)

2. In fact he becomes even more resolved to fighting racism, in a politically activist sense, after his conversion. It's just that **now he has a political explanation for white supremacy instead of a biological-theological one**. Whites are devils because of what they *do*, not because of the way they are born.

3. **MX does *not* let white people off the hook**, though, not even the minority of whites who act like "human beings." Whites have to accept that white supremacy exists and be willing to fight against it. All he did, really, is concede that whites are human beings, not devils.

D. The legitimacy of **self-defense by any means necessary**

E. **The importance of Islam**

1. Probably the most important influence of MX's life is his religion, and the importance of religion did not change after he converted to orthodox Islam.

2. His critique of Christianity has not changed: It's the white man's religion, and it's the main ideological weapon in justifying white rule and the atrocities committed by the white race. Now, however, he is also critical of certain religious beliefs and practices of the Nation. He is more committed than ever to Islam, though, and he continues to argue that Islam is the true religion of the Black man and that conversion to Islam is a necessary part of achieving social justice in the US. Only religion can bring people together in true brotherhood, and that's what Islam can do for Black people—bring them together.

## F. His critique of integration

1. When he was a member of Nol, MX argued that integration was a fraud perpetuated upon the Black people by whites and the Black leadership. Before WWII, whites did not want integration at all, now they do. Why is that? Because whites just want to keep Black people down, and integration and nonviolence are the ways to do it nowadays. He argued for racial separation, for a separate Black nation within the borders of the present US.

2. After his trip to Mecca he no longer advocated a separate Black state, but he remained a strong critic of integration. Integration still means race mixing without power for Black people.

3. **Black self-determination means Black nationalism.** To have Black-white solidarity, you first have to have Black solidarity, and to create Black solidarity, you need to have Black organizations. The purpose of these all-Black organizations, however, would not be to create a totally all-Black society but to create a new society in which there exists honest Black-white unity. Therefore he wanted his new Organization for Afro-American Unity to be an all-Black organization, even though he no longer saw whites as necessarily evil. White folks should do the same: create white groups committed to ending white racism and establishing true Black-white solidarity.

4. Only when Black people have control of their own destiny, which means control over their social, political, and cultural activities and organizations, can they achieve freedom and justice in America. This may not require a new country, but it does require Black power.

## V. Malcolm's effectiveness: MX as gadfly

A. Q: Do you see any similarity between MX and Socrates, in terms of their self-understood role in society?

1. They're both **gadflies**. MX was more an orator and a gadfly like Socrates. than he was an organizer or an activist. (Although he was largely responsible for the growth of the Nol.) He talked with the public, constantly stinging the lazy horse of America. Didn't write books but relied on the spoken word, constantly searching for truth, etc..

~~B.~~ He wasn't so successful as an organizer or an activist. His primary skill was as an orator.

C. His main goal was to **raise Black consciousness** and instill pride in being Black. Black folks need to love their own kind.

1. Collaterally, he also raised white consciousness about the pervasiveness of white supremacy, North and South, and the seriousness of Black people's grievances.

## VI. Questions and criticisms

A. **Q:** Is Malcolm X an "overman"? Did he succeed in sublimating or overcoming his will to power?

1. He's an ascetic, he rejects the morality of the white herd, he's on a never-ending quest for truth,

B. **Q:** Does MX express anything similar to Du Bois's theory of double consciousness? Any similarities to Marx? Mill?

C. Can we have MX's vision of Black self-determination along with MLK's dream of integration? Is it possible for both to coexist, to merge one's double self into a better, truer self?

D. **Q:** What's he mean by this quote (BB 25-26): "If you and I were Americans, there'd be no problem. Those Hunkies that just got off the boat, they're already Americans; Polacks are already Americans; the Italian refugees are already Americans. Everything that came out of Europe, every blue-eyed thing, is already an American. And as long as you and I have been over here, we aren't Americans yet. ... No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism."

E. His views on **women**

1. **Question:** What kind of role does MX give to women? How does he view them?

2. He seems to have a pretty traditional view: leadership and politics is for men, while women's role is in the home. Further, in the home the man is the master and the women is subservient, quiet, feminine, and keeps the home orderly.

3. Bell hooks argues that MX's views were constantly changing and that a whole new set of perspectives had opened up to him especially after his break with Elijah Muhammad. He was, she argues, opening up to, if not yet feminism, then at least to the idea that women are equals to men and that women's subordination to men in this society must be addressed as well. Who knows where his developing politics would have taken him? Hooks argues they may well have gone in a feminist direction. We don't get much sense of that in the Autobiography, however.

F. His **anti-Semitism** (Auto 325-6, 428-9; PI 117)

1. **Question:** What does he criticize Jews for doing? What role have they played in oppressing Black people in America, and is it a "special" role in relation to Gentile whites?

2. He argues that Jews don't mind it that Black people are oppressed in America because it takes the heat off them. If it weren't for Black people, then Jews would probably be subjugated in the States like they are in Europe. That's why Jews' support of the civil rights movement is hypocritical. They've been prominent in the movement, yes, but for strategic reasons: it keeps the attention of racist America off of them. If they really wanted to help Black people gain their rights, they'd put the full weight of their economic power behind them.

3. Furthermore, Jews own most of the businesses in Black neighborhoods, and he doesn't like that. Black people's money flows out of the community, which keeps Black folks poor as they enrich Jews. (Nowadays the same charge is made against Asian shopkeepers in places like LA, etc.)

4. **Question:** Does this sound a bit like the "socialism of fools" explanation for anti-Semitism in Europe that I talked about when we did Marx?
- G. How do you get equality out of separation? MX is for truth, justice, freedom, equality—and racial separation. Can all of these coexist?

## **VII. Summing up Malcolm X's politics**

### **A. MX's core beliefs**

1. Essential beauty and importance of Black people
2. Racism in America is systematic and endemic
3. Self-defense of Black people from attack is legitimate using any means necessary (not just nonviolence)
4. Self-determination is essential for the freedom, equality, and justice of Black people.
5. Self-determination will not come through segregation or integration. Black people must have control of their own destiny, and thus their own political, cultural, and economic organizations. [Figure out for next time: Is the key to self-determination for Black people to accept Islam and create Islamic civilization in the US, as Kly argues (27-30)? Is it African civ? ???]
6. Black people in America must connect with Africa and their African past, as well as with all non-white peoples in the world.

### **B. Influences on his political thought**

1. Islam: No!, then orthodox Sunni Islam
2. Black nationalism: self-determination
3. Internationalism and Pan-Africanism
4. Socialism. This is probably the least influential of the four, and it's tied to his sympathy for Third World anti-colonial movements. Toward the end of his life he did criticize capitalism and capitalists at times ("show me a capitalist and I'll show you a bloodsucker") but Peter Goldman argues that this influence wasn't that strong, and that at the end of his life he was focusing even more on Islam, looking for a mosque the day he died. Socialism became part of his language late in his life, but Islam remained his principle theological and political guide. (Goldman 234-5, Kly 22)

Q's

Marx vs. MX, race vs. class.

# MONTHLY REVIEW

Volume 16, Number 1

## Interview with Malcolm X

by A.B. Spellman

- ▶ [Home](#)
- ▶ [Subscribe](#)

### Books of Interest:

▶ [Discourse on Colonialism](#)  
by Aimé Césaire

▶ [Race: A Study in Social Dynamics](#)  
by Oliver C. Cox

The following interview with Malcolm X, formerly the minister of the New York City and Washington, D.C. mosques of the ~~Lost Found Nation~~ Nation of Islam, headed by The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, was held on March 19, 1964. The interview, conducted by poet and jazz critic A.B. Spellman, appeared simultaneously in *Monthly Review* and *Revolution*.

The Muslims, as the Nation of Islam is called, stress the futility of the integrationist program. They argue that there is no precedent for the absorption of Negroes into the greater white American mainstream in fact or in history, that integrationists are asking for something the American socioeconomic system is inherently unable to give them—mass class mobility, so that at best Negroes can expect from the integrationist program a hopeless entry into the lowest levels of a working class already disenfranchised by automation.

The Muslims tell Negroes to be proud of their African heritage, to make a new identity for themselves by adopting an X or a Muslim surname and dropping their "slave name," thereby severing all ties with a history of subservience to whites. The Muslims have urged Negroes to be polite in their dealings with whites and to be non-violent, even if provoked. But if attacked, the Muslims say, a Negro should defend himself by any means at his disposal. The Muslim solution to the race problem in America is separation of the races, either in the allocation to Negroes of several states in the South or the repatriation of Negroes to Africa. (The separatist solution has been in the programs of several movements varying in size and appeal since the early nineteenth century, culminating in the Garvey movement which, though irreparably fragmented, still has considerable appeal in many major Negro communities.) Estimates of Muslim membership have ranged from 10,000 to 250,000.

There had been rumors for some months to the effect that a split was developing in the upper ranks of Muslim leadership between a conservative and highly religiously-oriented faction led by Mr. Muhammad's family (which controls all the money) and a political activist faction led by Malcolm X. The split came early this March when Malcolm left the Nation of Islam to start an all-black political party. Malcolm is an overwhelming public speaker, particularly in Harlem where his positive demagoguery is unchallengeable in the hearts and eyes of his audience, and in question and answer, or in debating situations where the stark realities of his uncompromising ghetto-eyed point of view can usually embarrass his antagonist, especially if that opponent is a black or white liberal. Malcolm is a product of the ghetto. He is the crystallization of whatever revolutionary impulse exists in the ghetto. He is an organizer and administrator of proven ability. For these reasons, he has the potential of becoming one of the really major revolutionists in America today.

▶ **SPELLMAN:** Please answer these charges that are often raised against you: That you are as racist as Hitler and the Klan, etc. That you are anti-Semitic. That you advocate mob violence.

**MALCOLM X:** No, we're not racists at all. Our brotherhood is based on the fact that we are all black, brown, red, or yellow. We don't call this racism, any more than you could refer to the European Common Market which consists of Europeans, which means that it consists of white-skin people—is not referred to as a racist coalition—it's referred to as the European Common Market, an economic group—while our desire for unity among black, brown, red, and yellow is for brotherhood—has nothing to do with racism, has nothing to do with Hitler, has nothing to do with the Klan—in fact, the Klan in this country was designed to perpetuate an injustice upon Negroes; whereas the Muslims are designed to eliminate the injustice that has been perpetuated upon the so-called Negro.

We're anti-exploitation and in this country the Jews have been located in the so-called Negro community as merchants and businessmen for so long that they feel guilty when you mention that the exploiters of Negroes are Jews. This doesn't mean that we are anti-Jews or anti-Semitic—we're anti-exploitation.

No. We have never been involved in any kind of violence whatsoever. We have never initiated any violence against anyone, but we do believe that when violence is practiced against us we should be able to defend ourselves. We don't believe in turning the other cheek.

SPELLMAN: Why did you find it necessary to split with the Nation of Islam?

MALCOLM X: Well, I did encounter opposition within the Nation the of Islam. Many obstacles were placed in my path, not by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, but by others who were around him and since I believe that his analysis of the race problem is the best one and his solution is the only one, I felt that I could best circumvent these obstacles and expedite his program better by remaining out of the Nation of Islam and establishing a Muslim group that is an action group designed to eliminate the same ills that the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad have made so manifest in this country.

SPELLMAN: What is the name of the organization that you have founded?

MALCOLM X: The Muslim Mosque Inc., which means we are still Muslims—we still worship in a mosque and we're incorporated as a religious body.

SPELLMAN: Can other Muslims work with the Muslim Mosque Inc. without leaving the Nation of Islam?

MALCOLM X: Oh yes. Yes anyone who is in the Nation of Islam who wants to work with us and remain in the Nation of Islam, is welcome. I am a follower of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad—I believe in the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. The only reason I am in the Muslim Mosque Inc. is because I feel I can better expedite his program by being free of the restraint and the other obstacles that I encountered in the Nation.

SPELLMAN: Will you have access to *Muhammad Speaks* ?

MALCOLM X: Probably not. No, I very much doubt that the same forces which forced me out would permit me access to the *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper as an organ although I am the founder of the paper, the originator of the paper. Few people realize it—I was the one who originated *Muhammad Speaks* . The initial editions were written entirely by me in my basement.

SPELLMAN: Will you start another publication?

MALCOLM X: Yes. One of the best ways to propagate any idea is with a publication of some sort and if Allah blesses us with success we will have another publication. We'll probably name it the Flaming Crescent because we want to set the world on fire.

SPELLMAN: How religious is the Muslim Mosque Inc.? Will it be more politically oriented?

MALCOLM X: The Muslim Mosque Inc. will have as its religious base the religion of Islam which will be designed to propagate the moral reformation necessary to up the level of the so-called Negro community by eliminating the vices and other evils that destroy the moral fiber of the community—this is the religious base. But the political philosophy of the Muslim Mosque will be black nationalism, the economic philosophy will be black nationalism, and the social philosophy will be black nationalism. And by political philosophy I mean we still believe in the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's solution as complete separation. The 22,000,000 so-called Negroes should be separated completely from America and should be permitted to go back home to our African homeland which is a long-range program; so the short-range program is that we must eat while we're still here, we must have a place to sleep, we have clothes to wear, we must have better jobs, we must have better education; so that although our long-range political philosophy is to migrate back to our African homeland, our short-range program must involve that which is necessary to enable us to live a better life while we are still here. We must be in complete control of the politics of the so-called Negro community; we must gain complete control over the politicians in the so-called Negro community, so that no outsider will have any voice in the so-called Negro community. We'll do it ourselves.

SPELLMAN: Whom do you hope to draw from in organizing this political movement—what kind of people?

MALCOLM X: All—we're flexible—a variety. But our accent will be upon youth. We've already issued a call for the students in the colleges and universities across the country to launch their own independent studies of the race problem in he country and then bring their analyses and their suggestions for a new approach back to us so that we can devise an action program geared to their thinking. The accent is on youth



because the youth have less at stake in this corrupt system and therefore can look at it more objectively, whereas the adults usually have a stake in this corrupt system and they lose their ability to look at it objectively because of their stake in it.

SPELLMAN: Do you expect to draw from the Garveyite groups?

MALCOLM X: All groups—Nationalist, Christians, Muslims, Agnostics, Atheists, anything. Everybody who is interested in solving the problem is given an invitation to become actively involved with either suggestions or ideas or something.

SPELLMAN: Will the organization be national?

MALCOLM X: National? I have gotten already an amazing number of letters from student groups at college campuses across the country expressing a desire to become involved in a united front in this new idea that we have.

ha! | SPELLMAN: What kind of coalition do you plan to make? Can whites join the Muslim Mosque Inc.?

| MALCOLM X: Whites can't join us. Everything that whites join that Negroes have they end up out-joining the Negroes. The whites control all Negro organizations that they can join—they end up in control of those organizations. If whites want to help us financially we will accept their financial help, but we will never let them join us.

SPELLMAN: Then black leadership is necessary?

L MALCOLM X: Absolutely black leadership.

SPELLMAN: Will you work with the so-called "established" civil rights organizations?

L MALCOLM X: Well, we will work with them in any area and on any objective that doesn't conflict with our own political, economic, and social philosophy which is black nationalism. I might add that I was invited to attend a civil rights group meeting where all of the various civil rights organizations were present and I was invited to address them in Chester, Pennsylvania. Gloria Richardson was there; Landrey, the head of the Chicago School Boycott, was there; Dick Gregory was there; many others were there; the Rochdale movement was there. Now my address to them was designed to show them that if they would expand their civil rights movement to a human rights movement it would internationalize it. Now, as a civil rights movement, it remains within the confines of American domestic policy and no African independent nations can open up their mouths on American domestic affairs, whereas if they expanded the civil rights movement to a human rights movement then they would be eligible to take the case of the Negro to the United Nations the same as the case of the Angolans is in the UN and the case of the South Africans is in the UN. Once the civil rights movement is expanded to a human rights movement our African brothers and our Asian brothers and Latin American brothers can place it on the agenda at the General Assembly that is coming up this year and Uncle Sam has no more say-so in it then. And we have friends outside the UN—700,000,000 Chinese who are ready to die for human rights.

| SPELLMAN: Do you intend to collaborate with such other groups as labor unions or socialist groups or any other groups?

L MALCOLM X: We will work with anybody who is sincerely interested in eliminating injustices that Negroes suffer at the hands of Uncle Sam.

SPELLMAN: What is your evaluation of the civil rights movement at this point?

MALCOLM X: It has run its—it's at the end of its leash. *Black is still to come in 63*

SPELLMAN: What groups do you consider most promising? *(63-64)*

MALCOLM X: I know of no group that is promising unless it's radical. If it's not radical it is in no way involved effectively in the present struggle.

SPELLMAN: Some local civil rights leaders have said they'd welcome your support, some national leaders have said they want nothing to do with you, what is your reaction?

MALCOLM X: Well, the local civil rights leaders are usually involved right in the midst of the situation. They see it as it is and they realize that it takes a combination of groups to attack the problem most effectively and, also, most local civil rights leaders have more independence of action and usually they are more in tune and in touch with the people. But the national leaders of the civil rights movement are out of touch with the problem and usually they are paid leaders. The local leaders usually have a job and they lean against the local situation on the side, but the nationally known leaders are paid. They are full-time leaders, they are professional leaders and whoever pays their

he. | salary has a great say—so in what they do and what they don't do, so naturally the ones who pay the salaries of these nationally known Negro leaders are the white liberals and white liberals are shocked and frightened whenever you mention anything about some X's.

SPELLMAN: What is your attitude toward Christian-Gandhian groups?

┐ MALCOLM X: Christian? Gandhian? I don't go for anything that's non-violent and turn-the-other-cheekish. I don't see how any revolution—I've never heard of a non-violent revolution or a revolution that was brought about by turning the other cheek, and so I believe that it is a crime for anyone to teach a person who is being brutalized to continue to accept that brutality without doing something to defend himself. If this is what the Christian-Gandhian philosophy teaches then it is criminal—a criminal philosophy.

SPELLMAN: Does the Muslim Mosque Inc. oppose integration and intermarriage?

MALCOLM X: We don't have to oppose integration because the white integrationists themselves oppose it. Proof of which, it doesn't exist anywhere where white people say they are for it. There's just no such thing as integration anywhere, but we do oppose intermarriage. We are as much against intermarriage as we are against all of the other injustices that our people have encountered.

┐ SPELLMAN: What is the program for achieving your goals of separation?

independent,  
w/ separation

MALCOLM X: A better word to use than separation is independence. This word separation is misused. The 13 colonies separated from England but they called it the Declaration of Independence; they don't call it the Declaration of Separation. They call it the Declaration of Independence. When you're independent of someone you can separate from them. If you can't separate from them it means you're not independent of them. So, your question was what?

SPELLMAN: What is your program for achieving your goals of independence?

┐ MALCOLM X: When the black man in this country awakens, becomes intellectually mature and able to think for himself, you will then see that the only way he will become independent and recognized as a human being on the basis of equality with all other human beings, he has to have what they have and he has to be doing for himself what others are doing for themselves so the first step is to awaken him to this and that is where the religion of Islam makes him morally more able to rise above the evils and the vices of an immoral society and the political, economic, and social philosophy of black nationalism instills within him the racial dignity and the incentive and the confidence that he needs to stand on his own feet and take a stand for himself.

┐ SPELLMAN: Do you plan to employ any kind of mass action?

MALCOLM X: Oh, yes.

SPELLMAN: What kinds?

┐ MALCOLM X: We'd rather not say at this time, but we definitely plan to employ mass action.

┐ SPELLMAN: How about the vote—will the Muslim Mosque Inc. run its own candidates or support other candidates?

MALCOLM X: Since the political structure is what has been used to exploit the so-called Negroes, we intend to gather together all of the brilliant minds of students, not the adult politicians who are part of the corruption but the students of political science, we intend to gather all of them together and get their findings, get their analyses, get their suggestions, and, out of these suggestions we will devise an approach that will enable us to attack the politicians and the political structure where it hurts the most, in order to get a change.

┐ SPELLMAN: If the Muslim Mosque Inc. joined in a demonstration sponsored by a non-violent organization, and whites countered with violence, how would your organization react?

┐ MALCOLM X: We are non-violent only with non-violent people—I'm non-violent as long as somebody else is non-violent—as soon as they get violent they nullify my non-violence.

┐ SPELLMAN: A lot of leaders of other organizations have said they would welcome your help but they qualify that by saying "if you follow our philosophy." Would you work with them under these circumstances?

[ MALCOLM X: We can work with all groups in anything but at no time will we give up our right to defend ourselves. We'll never become involved in any kind of action that deprives us of our right to defend ourselves if we are attacked.

L SPELLMAN: How would the Muslim Mosque Inc. handle a Birmingham, Danville, or Cambridge—what do you think should have been done?

MALCOLM X: In Birmingham, since the government has proven itself either unable or unwilling to step in and find those who are guilty and bring them to justice, it becomes necessary for the so-called Negro who was the victim to do this himself, and he would be upholding his constitutional rights by so doing, and Article 2 of the constitution—it says concerning the right to bear arms in the Bill of Rights: "A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." Negroes don't realize this, that they are within their constitutional rights to own a rifle, to own a shotgun, and when the bigoted white supremacists realize that they are dealing with Negroes who are ready to give their lives in defense of life and property, then these bigoted whites will change their whole strategy and their whole attitude.

SPELLMAN: You've said this will be the most violent year in the history of race relations in America. Elaborate.

[ MALCOLM X: Yes. Because the Negro has already given up on non-violence. This new-thinking Negro is beginning to realize that when he demonstrates for what the government says are his rights then the law should be on his side. Anyone standing in front of him reclaiming his rights is breaking the law. Now, you're not going to have a law-breaking element inflicting violence upon Negroes who are trying to implement the law, so that when they begin to see this, like this, they are going to strike back. In 1964 you'll find Negroes will strike back, there never will be non-violence anymore, that has run out.

L SPELLMAN: What is your evaluation of Monroe?

MALCOLM X: I'm not too up on the situation in Monroe, N.C. I do know that Robert Williams became an exile from this country simply because he was trying to get our people to defend themselves against the Klu Klux Klan and other white supremacist elements, and also May Mallory was given 20 years or something like that because she was also trying to fight the place of our people down there; so this gives you an idea of what happens in a democracy—in a so-called democracy—when people try to implement that democracy.

[ SPELLMAN: You often use the word revolution, is there a revolution underway in America now?

L MALCOLM X: There hasn't been. Revolution is like a forest fire. It burns everything in its path. The people who are involved in a revolution don't become a part of the system—they destroy the system, they change the system. The genuine word for a revolution is *Umwälzung* which means a complete overturning and a complete change and the Negro Revolution is no revolution because it condemns the system and then asks the system that it has condemned to accept them into their system. That's not a revolution—a revolution changes the system, it destroys the system and replaces it with a better one. It's like a forest fire like I said—it burns everything in its path and the only way to stop a forest fire from burning down your house is to ignite a fire that you control and use it against the fire that is burning out of control. What the white man in America has done, he realizes that there is a Black Revolution all over the world—a non-white revolution all over the world—and he sees it sweeping down upon America and in order to hold it back he ignited an artificial fire which he has named the Negro Revolt and he is using the Negro Revolt against the real Black Revolution that is going on all over this earth.

L SPELLMAN: Can the race problem in America be solved under the existing political-economic system?

MALCOLM X: No.

SPELLMAN: Well then, what is the answer?

MALCOLM X: It answers itself.

[ SPELLMAN: Can there be any revolutionary change in America while the hostility between black and white working classes exists? Can Negroes do it alone?

L MALCOLM X: Yes. They'll never do it with working-class whites. The history of America is that working-class whites have been just as much against not only working-class Negroes, but *all* Negroes, period, because all Negroes are working class within the caste system. The richest Negro is treated like a working-class Negro. There

x Negro vs.  
Black  
rev

(int'g - CRM  
;

containing the  
Black rev

so  
true

never has been any good relationship between the working-class Negro and the working-class whites. I just don't go along with—there can be no worker solidarity until there's first some black solidarity. There can be no white/black solidarity until there's first some black solidarity. We have got to get our problems solved first and then if there's anything left to work on the white man's problems, good, but I think one of the mistakes Negroes make is this worker solidarity thing. There's no such thing—it didn't even work in Russia. Right now it was supposedly solved in Russia but as soon as they got their problems solved they fell out with China.

**SPELLMAN:** Will the Muslim Mosque Inc. identify with non-white revolutionary movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America?

**MALCOLM X:** We are all brothers of oppression and today brothers of oppression are identified with each other all over the world.

**SPELLMAN:** Is there anything else you want to say?

**MALCOLM X:** No. I've said enough—maybe I've said too much.

| [Top](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Order Single Issue](#) | [Back Issues](#) | [MR Index](#) | [MR Press](#) |

All material © copyright 2001 by Monthly Review

— Far Cor —

MALCOLM X,

### III. THE BALLOT OR THE BULLET

FROM MALCOLM X SPEAKS (1965)  
BY GEORGE BREITHMAN

Ten days after Malcolm X's declaration of independence, the Muslim Mosque, Inc., held the first of a series of four Sunday night public rallies in Harlem, at which Malcolm began the job of formulating the ideology and philosophy of a new movement. In the opinion of many who heard these talks, they were the best he ever gave. Unfortunately, taped recordings of these meetings were not available in the preparation of this book. Simultaneously, however, Malcolm began to accept speaking engagements outside of New York—at Chester, Pennsylvania; Boston; Cleveland; Detroit; etc.—and tapes of some of these were available.

In the Cleveland talk, given at Cory Methodist Church on April 3, 1964, Malcolm presented many of the themes he had been developing in the Harlem rallies. The meeting, sponsored by the Cleveland chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality, took the form of a symposium entitled "The Negro Revolt—What Comes Next?" The first speaker was Louis E. Lomax, whose talk was in line with CORE doctrine and was well received by the large, predominantly Negro audience. Malcolm's talk got even more applause, although it differed in fundamental respects from anything ever said at a CORE meeting.

"The Ballot or the Bullet," Malcolm's own title for his speech, was notable, among other things, for its statement that elements of black nationalism were present and growing in such organizations as the NAACP and CORE. For various reasons, the black nationalist convention, which in this talk he projected for August, 1964, was not held.

Mr. Moderator, Brother Lomax, brothers and sisters,



thing. Is already an American. And as long as you and I have been over here, we aren't Americans yet.

Well, I am one who doesn't believe in deluding myself. I'm not going to sit at your table and watch you eat with nothing on my plate, and call myself a diner. Sitting at the table doesn't make you a diner, unless you eat some of what's on that plate. Being here in America doesn't make you an American. Being born here in America doesn't make you an American. Why, if birth made you American, you wouldn't need any legislation, you wouldn't need any amendments to the Constitution, you wouldn't be faced with civil-rights filibustering in Washington, D.C., right now. They don't have to pass civil-rights legislation to make a Polack an American.

No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy. So, I'm not standing here speaking to you as an American, or a patriot, or a flag-saluter, or a flag-waver—no, not I. I'm speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of the victim. I don't see any American dream. I see an American nightmare.

→ These 22 million victims are waking up. Their eyes are coming open. They're beginning to see what they used to only look at. They're becoming politically mature. They are realizing that there are new political trends from coast to coast. As they see these new political trends, it's possible for them to see that every time there's an election the races are so close that they have to have a recount. They had to recount in Massachusetts to see who was going to be governor, it was so close. It was the same way in Rhode Island, in Minnesota, and in many other parts of the country. And the same with Kennedy and Nixon when they ran for president. It was so close they had to count all over again. Well, what does this mean? It means that when white people are evenly divided, and black people have a bloc of votes of their own, it is left up to them to determine who's going to sit in the White House and who's going to be in the dog house.

It was the black man's vote that put the present

administration in Washington, D.C. Your vote, your dumb vote, your ignorant vote, your wasted vote put in an administration in Washington, D.C., that has seen fit to pass every kind of legislation imaginable, saving you until last, then filibustering on top of that. And your and my leaders have the audacity to run around clapping their hands and talk about how much progress we're making. And what a good president we have. If he wasn't good in Texas, he sure can't be good in Washington, D.C. Because Texas is a lynch state. It is in the same breath as Mississippi, no different; only they lynch you in Texas with a Texas accent and lynch you in Mississippi with a Mississippi accent. And these Negro leaders have the audacity to go and have some coffee in the White House with a Texan, a Southern cracker—that's all he is—and then come out and tell you and me that he's going to be better for us because, since he's from the South, he knows how to deal with the Southerners. What kind of logic is that? Let Eastland be president, he's from the South too. He should be better able to deal with them than Johnson.

In this present administration they have in the House of Representatives 257 Democrats to only 177 Republicans. They control two-thirds of the House vote. Why can't they pass something that will help you and me? In the Senate, there are 67 senators who are of the Democratic Party. Only 33 of them are Republicans. Why, the Democrats have got the government sewed up, and you're the one who sewed it up for them. And what have they given you for it? Four years in office, and just now getting around to some civil-rights legislation. Just now, after everything else is gone, out of the way, they're going to sit down now and play with you all summer long—the same old giant con game that they call filibuster. All those are in cahoots together. Don't you ever think they're not in cahoots together, for the man that is heading the civil-rights filibuster is a man from Georgia named Richard Russell. When Johnson became president, the first man he asked for when he got back to Washington, D.C., was "Dicky"—that's how tight they are. That's his boy, that's his pal, that's his buddy. But they're playing that old con game. One of them makes believe he's for you, and he's got it

Ge: det  
det: rekt  
up on  
indian.  
(sub: det)

(3:513)  
Black  
(orig: det)

still it  
Archived

asc: 114  
p4 114  
it 114  
against  
of

lose its power. It would cease to be powerful as a party. When you see the amount of power that would be lost by the Democratic Party if it were to lose the Dixiecrat wing, or branch, or element, you can see where it's against the interests of the Democrats to give voting rights to Negroes in states where the Democrats have been in complete power and authority ever since the Civil War. You just can't belong to that party without analyzing it.

I say again, I'm not anti-Democrat, I'm not anti-Republican, I'm not anti-anything. I'm just questioning their sincerity, and some of the strategy that they've been using on our people by promising them promises that they don't intend to keep. When you keep the Democrats in power, you're keeping the Dixiecrats in power. I doubt that my good Brother Lomax will deny that. A vote for a Democrat is a vote for a Dixiecrat. That's why, in 1964, it's time now for you and me to become more politically mature and realize what the ballot is for; what we're supposed to get when we cast a ballot; and that if we don't cast a ballot, it's going to end up in a situation where we're going to have to cast a bullet. It's either a ballot or a bullet.

In the North, they do it a different way. They have a system that's known as gerrymandering, whatever that means. It means when Negroes become too heavily concentrated in a certain area, and begin to gain too much political power, the white man comes along and changes the district lines. You may say, "Why do you keep saying white man?" Because it's the white man who does it. I haven't ever seen any Negro changing any lines. They don't let him get near the line. It's the white man who does this. And usually, it's the white man who grins at you the most, and pats you on the back, and is supposed to be your friend. He may be friendly, but he's not your friend.

So, what I'm trying to impress upon you, in essence, is this: You and I in America are faced not with a segregationist conspiracy, we're faced with a government conspiracy. Everyone who's filibustering is a senator — that's the government. Everyone who's finagling in Washington, D.C., is a congressman — that's the government. You don't have anybody putting blocks in your path but people who are a part of the government. The same gov-

- Says: Segregationist - diff tactics, that's gerrymandering  
- Says: effect

- The gov't is the main enemy of B.C., etc

ernment that you go abroad to fight for and die for is the government that is in a conspiracy to deprive you of your voting rights, deprive you of your economic opportunities, deprive you of decent housing, deprive you of decent education. You don't need to go to the employer alone, it is the government itself, the government of America, that is responsible for the oppression and exploitation and degradation of black people in this country. And you should drop it in their lap. This government has failed the Negro. This so-called democracy has failed the Negro. And all these white liberals have definitely failed the Negro.

So, where do we go from here? First, we need some friends. We need some new allies. We need a new strategy, a new approach, a new interpretation, a broader interpretation. We need to look at the civil rights struggle from a new angle — from the inside as well as from the outside. To those of us whose philosophy is "black nationalism," the only way you can get involved in the civil-rights struggle is give it a new interpretation. That old interpretation excluded us. It kept us out. So, we're giving a new interpretation to the civil-rights struggle, an interpretation that will enable us to come into it, take part in it. And these handkerchief-heads who have been dillydallying and pussyfooting and compromising — we don't intend to let them pussyfoot and dillydally and compromise any longer.

How can you thank a man for giving you what's already yours? How then can you thank him for giving you only part of what's already yours? You haven't even made progress, if what's being given to you, you should have had already. That's not progress. And I love my Brother Lomax, the way he pointed out we're right back where we were in 1954. We're not even as far up as we were in 1954. We're behind where we were in 1954. There's more segregation now than there was in 1954. There's more racial animosity, more racial hatred, more racial violence today in 1964, than there was in 1954. Where is the progress?

And now you're facing a situation where the young Negro's coming up. They don't want to hear that "turn-the-other-cheek" stuff, no. In Jacksonville, those were teen-agers, they were throwing Molotov cocktails. Negroes have

- Given the gov't lot, what else do?  
- A: I can't get the gov't to race with the other cheek "naïveté" but Black action



go out and get violent; but at the same time you should never be nonviolent unless you run into some nonviolence. I'm nonviolent with those who are nonviolent with me. But when you drop that violence on me, then you've made me go insane, and I'm not responsible for what I do. And that's the way every Negro should get. Any time you know you're within the law, within your legal rights, within your moral rights, in accord with justice, then die for what you believe in. But don't die alone. Let your dying be reciprocal. This is what is meant by equality. What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

When we begin to get in this area, we need new friends, we need new allies. We need to expand the civil-rights struggle to a higher level—to the level of human rights. Whenever you are in a civil-rights struggle, whether you know it or not, you are confining yourself to the jurisdiction of Uncle Sam. No one from the outside world can speak out in your behalf as long as your struggle is a civil-rights struggle. Civil rights comes within the domestic affairs of this country. All of our African brothers and our Asian brothers and our Latin-American brothers cannot open their mouths and interfere in the domestic affairs of the United States. And as long as it's civil rights, this comes under the jurisdiction of Uncle Sam.

But the United Nations has what's known as the charter of human rights. It has a committee that deals in human rights. You may wonder why all of the atrocities that have been committed in Africa and in Hungary and in Asia and in Latin America are brought before the UN, and the Negro problem is never brought before the UN. This is part of the conspiracy. This old, tricky, blue-eyed liberal who is supposed to be your and my friend, supposed to be in our corner, supposed to be subsidizing our struggle, and supposed to be acting in the capacity of an adviser, never tells you anything about human rights. They keep you wrapped up in civil rights. And you spend so much time barking up the civil-rights tree, you don't even know there's a human-rights tree on the same floor.

When you expand the civil-rights struggle to the level of human rights, you can then take the case of the black man in this country before the nations in the UN. You can

- civil rights vs. human rights: Nixon's interference and silence

take it before the General Assembly. You can take Uncle Sam before a world court. But the only level you can do it on is the level of human rights. Civil rights keeps you under his restrictions, under his jurisdiction. Civil rights keeps you in his pocket. Civil rights means you're asking Uncle Sam to treat you right. Human rights are something you were born with. Human rights are your God-given rights. Human rights are the rights that are recognized by all nations of this earth. And any time any one violates your human rights, you can take them to the world court. Uncle Sam's hands are dripping with blood, dripping with the blood of the black man in this country. He's the earth's number-one hypocrite. He has the audacity—yes, he has—imagine him posing as the leader of the free world. The free world!—and you over here singing "We Shall Overcome." Expand the civil-rights struggle to the level of human rights, take it into the United Nations, where our African brothers can throw their weight on our side, where our Asian brothers can throw their weight on our side, where our Latin-American brothers can throw their weight on our side, and where 800 million Chinamen are sitting there waiting to throw their weight on our side. Let them be the sword!

Let the world know how bloody his hands are. Let the world know the hypocrisy that's practiced over here. Let it be the ballot or the bullet. Let him know that it must be the ballot or the bullet.

When you take your case to Washington, D.C., you're taking it to the criminal who's responsible; it's like running from the wolf to the fox. They're all in cahoots together. They all work political chicanery and make you look like a chump before the eyes of the world. Here you are walking around in America, getting ready to be drafted and sent abroad, like a tin soldier, and when you get over there, people ask you what are you fighting for, and you have to stick your tongue in your cheek. No, take Uncle Sam to court, take him before the world.

By ballot I only mean freedom. Don't you know—I disagree with Lomax on this issue—that the ballot is more important than the dollar? Can I prove it? Yes. Look in the UN. There are poor nations in the UN; yet those poor

Nixon speaks  
ph. power are  
economic power



not his speed. Just as guerrilla warfare is prevailing in Asia and in parts of Africa and in parts of Latin America, you've got to be mighty naive, or you've got to play the black man cheap, if you don't think some day he's going to wake up and find that it's got to be the ballot or the bullet.

I would like to say, in closing, a few things concerning the Muslim Mosque, Inc., which we established recently in New York City. It's true we're Muslims and our religion is Islam, but we don't mix our religion with our politics and our economics and our social and civil activities—not any more. We keep our religion in our mosque. After our religious services are over, then as Muslims we become involved in political action, economic action and social and civic action. We become involved with anybody, anywhere, any time and in any manner that's designed to eliminate the evils, the political, economic and social evils that are afflicting the people of our community.

The political philosophy of black nationalism means that the black man should control the politics and the politicians in his own community; no more. The black man in the black community has to be re-educated into the science of politics so he will know what politics is supposed to bring him in return. Don't be throwing out any ballots. A ballot is like a bullet. You don't throw your ballots until you see a target, and if that target is not within your reach, keep your ballot in your pocket. The political philosophy of black nationalism is being taught in the Christian church. It's being taught in the NAACP. It's being taught in CORE meetings. It's being taught in SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) meetings. It's being taught in Muslim meetings. It's being taught where nothing but atheists and agnostics come together. It's being taught everywhere. Black people are fed up with the dillydallying, pussyfooting, compromising approach that we've been using toward getting our freedom. We want freedom now, but we're not going to get it saying "We Shall Overcome." We've got to fight until we overcome. The economic philosophy of black nationalism is pure and simple. It only means that we should control the economy of our community. Why should white people

It's ballot or the bullet, but a ballot is like a bullet

be running all the stores in our community? Why should white people be running the banks of our community? Why should the economy of our community be in the hands of the white man? Why? If a black man can't move his store into a white community, you tell me why a white man should move his store into a black community. The philosophy of black nationalism involves a re-education program in the black community in regards to economics. Our people have to be made to see that any time you take your dollar out of your community and spend it in a community where you don't live, the community where you live will get poorer and poorer, and the community where you spend your money will get richer and richer. Then you wonder why where you live is always a ghetto or a slum area. And where you and I are concerned, not only do we lose it when we spend it out of the community, but the white man has got all our stores in the community tied up, so that though we spend it in the community, at sundown the man who runs the store takes it over across town somewhere. He's got us in a vise.

So the economic philosophy of black nationalism means in every church, in every civic organization, in every fraternal order, it's time now for our people to be come conscious of the importance of controlling the economy of our community. If we own the stores, if we operate the businesses, if we try and establish some industry in our own community, then we're developing to the position where we are creating employment for our own kind. Once you gain control of the economy of your own community, then you don't have to picket and boycott and beg some cracker downtown for a job in his business.

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 in our own social circles and won't be running around here trying to knock our way into a social circle where we're not wanted.

So I say, in spreading a gospel such as black nationalism, it is not designed to make the black man re-evaluate

- MX of a modern Petrick Henry

(Ballot or the bullet, like a bullet)

(42) freedom, let it be a country of freedom; and if it's not a country of freedom, change it.

We will work with anybody, anywhere, at any time, who is genuinely interested in tackling the problem head-on, nonviolently as long as the enemy is nonviolent, but violent when the enemy gets violent. We'll work with you on the voter-registration drive, we'll work with you on rent strikes, we'll work with you on school boycotts—I don't believe in any kind of integration; I'm not even worried about it because I know you're not going to get it anyway; you're not going to get it because you're afraid to die; you've got to be ready to die if you try and force yourself on the white man, because he'll get just as violent as those crackers in Mississippi, right here in Cleveland. But we will still work with you on the school boycotts because we're against a segregated school system. A segregated school system produces children who, when they graduate, graduate with crippled minds. But this does not mean that a school is segregated because it's all black. A segregated school means a school that is controlled by people who have no real interest in it whatsoever.

Let me explain what I mean. A segregated district or community is a community in which people live, but outsiders control the politics and the economy of that community. They never refer to the white section as a segregated community. It's the all-Negro section that's a segregated community. Why? The white man controls his own school, his own bank, his own economy, his own politics, his own everything, his own community—but he also controls yours. When you're under someone else's control, you're segregated. They'll always give you the lowest or the worst that there is to offer, but it doesn't mean you're segregated just because you have your own. You've got to control your own. Just like the white man has control of his, you need to control yours.

You know the best way to get rid of segregation? The white man is more afraid of separation than he is of integration. Segregation means that he puts you away from him, but not far enough for you to be out of his jurisdiction; separation means you're gone. And the white man will integrate faster than he'll let you separate. So

we will work with you against the segregated school system because it's criminal, because it is absolutely destructive, in every way imaginable, to the minds of the children who have to be exposed to that type of crippling education.

Last but not least, I must say this concerning the great controversy over rifles and shotguns. The only thing that I've ever said is that in areas where the government has proven itself either unwilling or unable to defend the lives and the property of Negroes, it's time for Negroes to defend themselves. Article number two of the constitutional amendments provides you and me the right to own a rifle or a shotgun. It is constitutionally legal to own a shotgun or a rifle. This doesn't mean you're going to get a rifle and form battalions and go out looking for white folks, although you'd be within your rights—I mean, you'd be justified; but that would be illegal and we don't do anything illegal. If the white man doesn't want the black man buying rifles and shotguns, then let the government do its job. That's all. And don't let the white man come to you and ask you what you think about what Malcolm says—why, you old Uncle Tom. He would never ask you if he thought you were going to say, "Amen!" No, he is making a Tom out of you.

So, this doesn't mean forming rifle clubs and going out looking for people, but it is time, in 1964, if you are a man, to let that man know. If he's not going to do his job in running the government and providing you and me with the protection that our taxes are supposed to be for, since he spends all those billions for his defense budget, he certainly can't begrudge you and me spending \$12 or \$15 for a single-shot, or double-action. I hope you understand. Don't go out shooting people, but any time, brothers and sisters, and especially the men in this audience—some of you wearing Congressional Medals of Honor, with shoulders this wide, chests this big, muscles that big—any time you and I sit around and read where they bomb a church and murder in cold blood, not some grownups, but four little girls while they were praying to the same god the white man taught them to pray to, and you and I see the government go down and can't find who did it.



- "stand up for <sup>time to</sup> ourselves". What's that mean?
- the orator returns - a la Socrates.  
Plain, straightforward style. Oratory, not writing
- The return of religion, but as a radical force.
- MX flip the cloth on its head: he crits the "Black being" & enters the colluding w/ w.f. ~~from~~ the future lies w/ the Black vesters, for MX.
- Attack on the hypocrisy of gat.
  - Rikael + Cars: faces + values
  - the Gat: ~~is~~ ~~Protect~~ Protects white sup + seg. ("Babel")
- Black nation: central politics, economic, & moral of Black community
- "Integration of the Black man" is his concern. MX + gender: U his notion of Blackness a male one.
- "Any new rec." - what's that mean?
- "Laurel County Freedom Organization" - 1st name of the Laurels Co. Party.
- MX's influence on SNCC: 1) pt. of Black nat'lism, 2) crit of nonviolence & crit of integration
- Meredith: "March against fear"
- "Freedom got a shotgun"
  - 3) "Black power" - (Amirichad W. King, youth vs. elders)
- Texas for Defense & Justice
- From "Freedom Now" to "Black Power" → signifies a change in CRM