

The Paradigmatic Agency of Malcolm X

Family, Experience, and Thought

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There is something special about a topic of conversation and study that stays current in the flow of academic scholarship and the social movements over many decades. The life and legacy of Malcolm X is such a topic. But, one might ask, why? In this volume we propose a theoretical answer to this question, both in general and in particular relationship to Black Studies.

One model for our task was taken up by Max Weber in his discussion of the transition from charisma to bureaucracy (Weber 1968). The special features of a dynamic individual in a particular context can command loyalty and a mass following, but long-run sustainability relies on the routinization of key aspects of the movement into the routine of institutional functionality. A quite different approach was proposed by Thomas Kuhn (1996). Kuhn studied the history of science and theorized that the stability and coherence of science at any given historical period is because of a dominant paradigm that establishes the rules and assumptions for "normal science." Our study suggests interplay between these two frameworks in the search for an answer to our question: Why after almost fifty years are people still interested in Malcolm X? Is this merely misguided worship, or is it more dynamic and compelling? Our answer probes into Malcolm's life and legacy.

Our approach will be to focus first on Malcolm directly and then on how his

legacy was foundational for the history of Black Studies. On the one hand (à la Weber) we argue that the meaning of charismatic Malcolm X was institutionalized or normed into Black Studies. In addition (à la Kuhn) we argue that Malcolm's ideas and practices personified a Black Power paradigm within which the Black Liberation Movement struggles and the Black Studies programs carry out their research and advocacy (academic excellence and social responsibility).¹ Further, we will demonstrate this in relation to several key historical developments in Black Studies over the last half-century.

The importance of this argument is over whether Black Studies and the Black Liberation Movement have a center of gravity, a common page to be on. Here we have to make a distinction between dogma and a paradigm. A text that is followed to the letter is a dogma, something to be memorized, requiring no thinking, just repetition. A paradigm is a set of assumptions people share, but in that context each acts under their own will and intention. Malcolm X was the great catalyst that sparked a paradigm shift from an integrationist consciousness to Black consciousness, from inside the box to outside the box (Alkalimat 1990). Within this conceptual framework debates raged throughout the world to find direction in each concrete place and condition, and in this way creativity is facilitated and in no way diminished. New work is always required to connect abstract thinking to concrete time, place, and condition. Malcolm X led to a renaissance of intellectual creativity.

The canonical text in Malcolm X studies is *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Our concern here is with the deep logic of Malcolm's experience, basically an unchallenged logic even by his most severe "humanizers." Also important are his speeches, our most direct documentation of Malcolm X, especially when we can combine sight (photos and video) and sound (audio) with text.

The framework we are using looks at Malcolm as a paradigm of the Black experience. Our first focus is on identity, including family influences as related to the radical Black tradition. We will then examine the stages of Malcolm X's life, his archetypal life cycle, from inside the society to outside as a critic and revolutionary activist. Next we take up a critical examination of the thought of Malcolm X by examining his most famous speech given in Detroit (November 10, 1963), "Message to the Grassroots" (Malcolm X 1963). After this examination of Malcolm X as paradigm we examine how Malcolm X impacted Black Studies through its three stages as social movement, as academic profession, and as knowledge network.

The Paradigm of Family

The first paradigmatic factor is about family. Malcolm X was born with parents who represented a major convergence of the five critical elements of the radical Black tradition: Pan-Africanism, nationalism, liberation theology, feminism/womanism, and socialism. This is critical in that Malcolm X is carrying forward a historical tradition and should therefore never be regarded as a decontextualized genius.

Pan-Africanism is the belief that Africa and the African diaspora are linked with a common past and a common future, and therefore every freedom struggle should be linked to the total liberation of the entire African continent (Rodney 1989; Adi and Sherwood 1995). The movements of W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey were about the liberation of the continent from direct colonization, while the movements of Kwame Nkrumah and Nelson Mandela faced neocolonialism. In all cases the actors were committed to knowing about and actively participating directly and indirectly in the African liberation struggles everywhere in the diaspora. This aspect of the Black Power paradigm involves fundamental assumptions:

1. **IDENTITY:** we are African Americans, descendants from Africa;
2. **CULTURE:** African cultural values and practices continue to inform the African American experience;
3. **POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE:** everywhere in the African diaspora that Black people fight for their rights is a common struggle.

Nationalism is the belief that Black people are a nationality and have the right to self-determination. This is an affirmation and is in contradiction with looking toward the mainstream for standards to be guided by while fighting for integration. The critical political and moral mandate is for Black unity. Within the United States, the greatest nationalist movements have been led by Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington, and Elijah Muhammad. Fundamental assumptions include the following:

1. **IDENTITY:** Black people are a distinct nationality in the United States;
2. **CULTURE:** while being impacted by African retentions and European, Latino, and Native American cultural influences, African Americans have reinvented themselves as improvisational blues people;
3. **POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE:** Black unity is the historical mandate for all Black political motion.

Black Liberation theology is the rethinking of Black religious activity as being a manifestation of the desire and struggle for freedom (Wilmore and Cone 1979). Both Christianity and Islam can be interpreted as being stories of people's historical development, against all forms of tyranny and oppression, with a codified set of moral principles and ritual practices that order the life of the community (Wilmore and Cone 1979). Religious leaders have been important guides in the freedom struggles, just as at times they are tools of ruling elites and are used to maintain control to keep exploited people docile and/or living in fear. Fundamental assumptions include the following:

1. **IDENTITY:** we are all children of a god and deserve the honor and glory due to all of god's creation;
2. **CULTURE:** we embrace Black culture, especially music, oratory, and food, and then we use this cultural power to celebrate god's glory;
3. **POLITICS:** racism and class exploitation are violations of all religious beliefs and practices.

Feminism/womanism is the thought and practice of women and men who oppose male supremacy in all its forms (Hull et al. 1982). This is important for Black women as it links them with men in a fight against racism and class exploitation, but with all women in opposing patriarchy and advocating women's rights. In sum, this is a position that focuses on the triple oppression of Black women: racism, class exploitation, and sexism. Fundamental assumptions include the following:

1. **IDENTITY:** women are equal to men;
2. **CULTURE:** transgenerational transmission and reproduction of culture has been a key role of women, including through the rearing of children, as well as gendered forms of cultural creativity;
3. **POLITICS:** women have been a fundamental organizational resource for all political work in the Black community, but a continuing struggle must take place for women to play an equal role in political leadership.

Socialism is the belief that capitalism is an exploitative system that must be replaced by one organized for the maximum social good and not the accumulation of wealth based on profiting off the labor of others. The theoretical magnum opus of the science of political economy concerning capitalism is *Capital* by Karl Marx.

However, independent of this scientific work, the values of a society organized for the benefit of the people have come forth from many places in society. People like Cedric Robinson, in his book *Black Marxism* (1983), have argued that there are cultural and historical reasons why Black people have trended toward sharing values that privilege family and community, that is, their own form and origin of socialism. Some fundamental assumptions include the following:

1. **IDENTITY:** the majority of humanity are workers and farmers, and they create the wealth on which the progress of society is based;
2. **CULTURE:** culture must be evaluated on the basis of which it honors the working people and not the rich and ruling elites;
3. **POLITICS:** state power of the capitalists must be replaced by the power of the workers and farmers, on the basis of class struggle.

Table 1 points to the many ways that the parents and siblings of Malcolm X were themselves extensions of this radical Black tradition to which Malcolm X made such great contributions. The aggregations of these ideological categories into a coherent tradition makes sense at an abstract level, but it must be recognized that in practice there is a great deal of diversity within these categories, and at times critical conflict that impacts the path of the struggle. The transgenerational continuity of these tendencies reaffirms that this is indeed a tradition that is sustained by the realities of Black people's lives. Malcolm's family was a cauldron of this tradition. He was molded as an apostle of this sacred path as his birthright. This is confirmed also by

TABLE 1. The Worldviews of Malcolm X's Family

IDEOLOGICAL TRADITION	FAMILY LEGACY
Pan-Africanism	Mother was born in Grenada, and both parents in the UNIA
Nationalism	Father a major community organizer for the UNIA
Black Liberation Theology	Father a Baptist minister and mother a devout Seventh Day Adventist
Feminism/womanism	Strong mother, sisters, and half-sister
Socialism	Father taught and practiced self-reliance and self-determination, including building one's own house and having a garden for food

the fact that his brothers were equally vested in the tradition. As Sly would say, it was a family affair.²

The Experience Paradigm

The second paradigmatic factor is about experience. The four major stages of Malcolm X's life constitute a mapping of the Black male experience, mainly outside of the mainstream box. Malcolm X was mostly outside the box. This is not an idealist "ideal type" categorization of reality but a summation of the actual path of Malcolm's experience. As is often the case in Black improvisational blues culture, people have a fluid name-identity, combining legal names, with conventional use, with family nicknames, street nicknames, and finally intimate names shared between partners for life. Malcolm was such a person as is demonstrated in Table 2.

One of the important aspects of this categorization is that there is a spatial aspect to it. Today this concentric circles model (from small to world) has been leveled as communication and transportation technology have cut any lingering cultural lag from the major cities to the countryside. The worst of everything gets everywhere really quickly these days. But the dialectic remains. Malcolm Little was in the box and Detroit Red was out of the box, and this is the dialectic we find in every Black community, urban and rural. Malcolm went through four stages of growth as "the little brother," "the Detroit gangster," the grown race man, and the globalist.

Malcolm Little: This little brother was born into a two-parent household with intelligent and politically active parents. This was a Black family with strong cultural norms and a very positive self-image, especially in opposition to the crude racism of the time. Malcolm got good grades, participated in sports, and was even elected class officer in the seventh grade. This brother could have been headed up into the box, but the forces of oppression put Malcolm outside the box—bam! Racism slammed the door of achievement through academics. A racist act of violence stole his father, and a racist state mental health institution stole his mother. "Malcolm, you are out of the box!"

Detroit Red: Many young Black men with no parents bouncing around in foster care end up seeking identity and some kind of love on the street. Plus, with criminal records and no regular job, people organize their lives around some kind of hustle to survive. And lots of this is not legal or legitimate. Malcolm did it all, was a negation of his family and the tradition. He became the avenging angel in the nightmare of the

TABLE 2. Malcolm X's Evolving Identity

NAME	SPACE	INSTITUTION	CRISIS	GENERAL TYPE
Malcolm Little <i>Chaps. 1–2</i>	Small Midwestern towns, small Black community	Family and school	Racism in school, murder of father, hospitalization of mother	Positive youth experiences
Detroit Red <i>Chaps. 3–10</i>	Large East Coast cities, large Black populations	The “street” and prison	Drugs, violence, and arrest	Negative youth experiences
Malcolm X <i>Chaps. 11–16</i>	National minister, travels nationally	Nation of Islam	Contradiction in the NOI	Born again religious convert, nationalist political activist
Omowale <i>Chaps. 17–19</i>	Global activist in Africa, Middle East, and Europe	OAAU and MMI	Conflicts with the NOI and global security forces	Revolutionary political activist and Sunni minister

Note: The chapters are references to *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

guilt-ridden racist who fears facing justice at the hands of those whom he has been oppressing. Thug, dope addict, sexual pervert, almost anything you can imagine. He became “satan.”

Malcolm X: But there is always dark before the dawn. In the joint (prison) he was born again. He rediscovered his intellectual prowess and began to study. His family reconnected and led him to conversion to Islam. Prison was the end of someone created by the system and birth of a revolutionary who was threatening and challenging the system. And when Malcolm became an organizing force in the Nation of Islam (NOI) he was using his knowledge of the street gained from his experience as Detroit Red. This was indeed the negation of the negation (Engels 1940).

Omowale: With the Yoruba name given to him on a visit to Nigeria and other parts of Africa, Malcolm Omowale kept moving. The moral strength and ideological grounding that was reaffirmed within the NOI was transformed further by the historical forces of world revolution and Black liberation throughout the African diaspora. Malcolm left the authoritarian ideological dogma of the NOI and entered a new world of creative thinking and movement building.

Every person travels a path through life, and in most cases can hear another

person's story and find similarities: similar things happen, similar choices have to be made, similar failures and/or successes. Some lives connect with most of us, and that makes them culturally useful. All of us are trying to make sense of our lives, and these special people give us a point of reference, sort of a lighthouse in the storms of living life. Malcolm became a Black everyman, with a transgenerational impact. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* is the fourth great autobiography of Black history along with the autobiographies of Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and W. E. B. Du Bois.

The Thought Paradigm

The third paradigmatic factor is about thought. The most developed political teaching Malcolm X gave us was the speeches he made in Detroit at the height of the struggle in the 1960s. In this chapter we will concentrate on the first November 10, 1963, speech titled "Message to the Grass Roots." This speech is a central text in the collected work of Malcolm X. It can be read on at least four levels: political, historical, sociological, and philosophical:

1. **POLITICAL:** Malcolm X begins the talk by establishing political culture as the basis for Black identity and makes an argument for Black unity based on racist political violence;
2. **HISTORICAL:** Malcolm X grounds his argument in a review of seven cases of revolutionary change from 1776 to 1959, almost two hundred years. He focuses on political economy (land) and revolutionary strategy (bloodshed);
3. **SOCIOLOGICAL:** Malcolm X argues that the difference between the house slave and the field slave was being repeated in the current situation between the civil rights leaders and the militant masses of people (class struggle);
4. **PHILOSOPHICAL:** The logic of this argument is based on what actually happened in history (materialism) as a function of the struggle of opposites, for example, land owners versus the landless (dialectics).

We have to review this material and think for ourselves about these matters as Malcolm X would have encouraged us to do. The main thing is that we have what he said, and now we have to make sense of it based on our understanding fifty years after Malcolm X gave this speech.

When Malcolm X gave this speech we were facing the illusions and hypocrisy of the Kennedy administration after giving Kennedy 68 percent of the Black vote in 1960. But things have gotten better and worse at the same time. Black people gave Barack Obama, the first Black president, 96 percent of their vote in 2008. This was a blow against racism. Blinded by their hopes and aspirations that Obama was more than he could have in any way been, Black people have been sold a bill of goods that this is as good as it could have been. It's a good deal even if it's a raw deal! Malcolm would have targeted Obama as a house Negro trapped in a "white" house with no chance of any real change. Their message: "Stay for a little while, then get out so we can get back to business." It is important to read Malcolm X's speeches seriously, very carefully, because there are always multiple levels of meaning and ways of using these ideas today some fifty years later. So, what can we learn from Malcolm X's speech "Message to the Grassroots"?

Black Identity and Political Culture

The first seven paragraphs speak to the issues of Black identity and political culture. The argument begins by noting that there are many differences in the Black community, but none is more important than the common experience of being exploited and oppressed by white racist oppression. He uses the phrase "catching hell" to represent racist oppression and states that differences based on religion, political party affiliation, and fraternal group membership do not explain why we catch hell. The main explanation is that there is a racist pattern and all Black people catch hell together. Those who catch hell are contrasted with those that came over on the Mayflower. This is the polarity he creates in his argument—the Pilgrims (of European origin) versus those that catch hell (those of African origin) by their hand.

He then takes us to an international example, an example he regards as a road map suggesting what African Americans should do. He discusses the Bandung Conference in 1955 when twenty-nine countries came together to plot a common strategy for Third World countries. His argument is that they had to deal with a fundamental contradiction that continues to be with us today, the former colonies versus the colonial powers, now the countries dominating global capitalism and those neocolonies that are being subordinated in this new system. He concludes by indicating that Black people in the United States are similar to the countries that met in 1955. Rev. Adam Clayton Powell was at the conference representing the anticommunist interests of the United States, while Richard Wright was there writing

his analysis as an independent Black left critic. Wright subsequently published a book on Bandung called *The Color Curtain* (1956).

In sum, Malcolm X argues that it is the political culture of violence that has forced Black people into a common identity, a survival mode of uniting against a common enemy. Moreover, he argues that just as anticolonial unity was the precondition for the former colonies to shake off colonial rule, so a comparable unity would be necessary for Black people in the United States to get free from this form of exploitation and oppression.

Revolution

Malcolm X wants to make a clear distinction between the Negro and the Black revolution. He begins by indicating that the two fundamental issues are what it is for and how it is done. He says it is for “land,” and it is done through “bloodshed.” What did he mean by these simple answers to very complex questions?

Land is the physical environment for living, and that requires a social organization of people for all kinds of survival and reproduction. In every case what comes out of the land has been the basis for the economy, the production of food, clothing, and shelter. Our reading can be full and accurate only when we understand that he uses the word “land” to represent political economy, the basis for a people’s survival.

There are four ways this happens:

1. Land as agriculture for domestic consumption, to grow the home market.
2. Land as production resource for export to world markets for hard foreign exchange.
3. Land as space for national unity.
4. Land as place for a state, either a national state or a multinational state.

Each way is a test for a revolution:

1. Can the revolution feed its people and provide for a high standard of living?
2. Can the revolution compete in the world market and maintain good trade relations?
3. Can the revolution end national oppression?
4. Can the revolution embrace the politics of democracy and social justice?

Bloodshed is the way Malcolm X refers to armed struggle in this speech. Armed struggle is a strategic weapon in any mass movement to seize political power for the purpose of taking control of a country to redistribute the wealth for the sustainable guarantee to a decent life for all the people and not simply a ruling class of elites. All other means of change must be exhausted and met with violent repression before armed struggle becomes an option. This is discussed by Malcolm X in the second great Detroit speech, "The Ballot or the Bullet." There are other strategic tools that are necessary preconditions to any successful armed struggle:

1. The development of an ideological and political line that defines friends and enemies, problems and solutions, a vision and specific goals;
2. The creation of an organization that can serve as a general staff of workers to keep the mass struggles coordinated and always combining action with study of the ideological and political line;
3. The mobilization of mass based battlefronts in which people fight for reforms to improve their day-to-day lives, while not losing sight of the ultimate goal of making a total revolution.

The degree to which this leads to a total moral denunciation of the status quo, the government, and the dominant corporations, and the extent to which there is a clear line that is backed by an effective revolutionary organization, with masses in action with little hope for reform, being met by violent repression, determines whether armed struggle becomes a necessary and viable alternative.

Malcolm X talks about and therefore calls for a study of the following revolutionary experiences:

1. American Revolution, 1776—capitalism
2. French Revolution, 1789—capitalism
3. Russian Revolution, 1917—socialism
4. Chinese Revolution, 1949—socialism
5. Cuban Revolution, 1959—socialism
6. Algerian Revolution, 1962—national liberation
7. Kenyan Revolution, 1963—national liberation

He guides us to study the issues of both political economy and the strategy and tactics of each of these different revolutionary experiences.

Class Analysis: House Slave versus Field Slave

Then Malcolm X turns to the African American experience and begins by examining the social organization of class forces within the Black community. He focuses on the polarity that existed during slavery, a polarity that places the origin of different class forces in relation to the experiences of the enslaved Africans within the United States. The house slaves identified with the slave master, appropriated the culture and consciousness of the slave owners, and were alienated from the masses of Black people. The field slaves were separated from whites, retained more of their African identity, and consolidated a culture around repudiating the culture and society of the white racist slave owners.

By interrogating this distinction we can open up the discussion and see how vital it is for understanding the full complexity of what we face today. How can we read this?

1. This is the difference between service work (house) and production work (field), blue collar and white collar.
2. This is the distinction between those connected to the mainstream and those who are socially isolated into the Black community, the Black suburbs, and the inner-city projects.
3. This is the distinction between highly educated Black people with high-paying jobs and Blacks with less than a high school education working for minimum wage or unemployed.

Malcolm leads us to study the class differences within the Black community, both the objective differences (house versus field) and the subjective differences (consciousness and identity). He speaks from the vantage point of the field and covers many issues of culture (food), psychology (hatred for “master”), and social organization (housing).

Malcolm X contrasted what he called the Negro revolution versus the Black revolution. He uses the language of land and bloodshed to make the contrast. He attacks the fight for integration of public accommodations as reformist, and the tactic of “suffering peacefully” as a betrayal of the right to self-defense. He makes an analysis of how the Negro leaders were not in the Black revolution but were being used by the white power structure to control the Black community. He begins his analysis by referring to what he considered the failure of the movement in Albany,

Georgia, and Birmingham, Alabama. After that he points to the emergence of militant grassroots leadership. He refers to the internal conflict over fund-raising by the national Negro leadership.

The main example he uses is the March on Washington, 1963. He said Kennedy told the Negro leaders to stop the militant march, but the Negro leaders said, "we can't stop it because we didn't start it." They were then bribed into a plan that removed the militancy out of the march and turned it into a rhetorical exercise without militant action (confrontation). Out of this process came a council for civil rights leadership and fund-raising, leading to a quick \$1.5 million fund. He focuses on the ruling-class tactic of co-opting Black leadership.

In sum, Malcolm X became the personification of a liberated Black man, a paradigmatic ideological force:

1. His family was rooted in the Black radical tradition.
2. His path of life maps a personal journey of transformation.
3. His thoughts linked our struggle to world revolution.

Legacy in Black Studies

Malcolm X became the standard reference for people in Black Studies, as the movement emerged in the heart of a massive Black Power movement that connected intellectual work and activist practice in the movement. This became a force in all phases of Black Studies: social movement, academic profession, and knowledge network.

Black Studies as Social Movement

One of the clearest examples of how Malcolm X was a referent for the movement is when the students at Duke University joined with community activists to create Malcolm X Liberation University (Wilson 1965, 2). They fought for a Black Studies program and in the process seized the administration building, which led to a militant confrontation. The militant students were put off and decided to get out of the box.

In February 1969, fifty Duke University students occupied the Allen Administration Building and renamed it Malcolm X Liberation University. Among their list of

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twelve demands were the establishment of an Afro-American studies program, an increase in the enrollment of Black undergraduate students, and the reinstatement of Black students who had left the university because of poor treatment they had previously received. Instead of continuing their education at Duke, many of these students decided to establish a new, all Black, university, which was open until 1973. They did this because they realized that, "The existing system of education does not respond to the needs of the Black community; it does not provide an ideological or practical methodology for meeting the physical, social, psychological, economic and cultural needs of Black people. Malcolm X Liberation University is a direct response to this vacuum" (Wilson 1965, 2).

They pulled out of Duke and established an independent institution that lasted from 1969 to 1973. The movement carries forward an identity with Malcolm through annual events in February (death) and May (birth), as well as in course assignments and lectures. One outstanding example of his continued connection to the Black Liberation Movement is the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement that has organizational presence in many large cities, especially in the Black Belt South.

Black Studies as Academic Profession

Every organization and journal founded in the modern Black Studies movement used Malcolm X as a reference. This is especially true of the *Black Scholar*, and the National Council for Black Studies. Other examples include the naming of Black Studies academic institutions after Malcolm X such as Malcolm X College in Chicago (1969), Malcolm X Institute at Wabash College (1970), and the Malcolm X Academy in Detroit (1991).

Black Studies as Knowledge Network

Movements are dense social networks. Malcolm X planted seeds while alive so his memory and legacy has been kept alive by grassroots networks based in the Black Liberation Movement. The master of this is the founder of the Malcolm X Lovers Network, Preston Wilcox.³ Brother Wilcox was the master of using the copying machine to make copies and send them out to over two hundred people on a regular basis. This kind of networking continued with a listserv created by F. Leon Wilson (1997–2001).⁴ In addition there have been many web pages about Malcolm X and that included Malcolm X in related sites on the civil rights movement and issues

dealing with Black liberation. The main site that has been carrying on in the spirit of Preston Wilcox is BrotherMalcolm.net.

So for all of the three stages of Black Studies there has been a connection to Malcolm X, with networks of people carrying on to expand the depth of the activists working in the Malcolm X-inspired Black Power paradigm.

Conclusion: Icon versus Paradigm

We are now in a position to summarize our answer to the question, Why Malcolm X? Of course the setting is the broad movement for Black liberation, the freedom movement. In this movement there have been many different kinds of leaders, but only very few are the revered martyrs. Probably the two most celebrated have been Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, but only Malcolm became the personification of Black Power and the fight for Black self-determination. So, when the Black Power slogan emerged in 1966 it was to Malcolm X that the movement turned for identity, and by so doing created an icon. Now while iconic images of Malcolm X have been prostituted in the pop culture market (i.e., turned into a commodity for pleasure and fun), there is a deeper issue here. So, why do we need Malcolm X as an icon?

The impact of racism turns Black people against themselves in favor of those who get approval from the very racists themselves, mainstream “white” America. When Black Power hit there was a need for Black he/roes and she/roes as demonstrated by such cultural actions as the mural movement we started in Chicago. A group of Chicago artists were organized by the Organization of Black American Culture in 1967 to paint a large wall with images of key people in all walks of life. It was called the Wall of Respect. The largest image was of Malcolm X. This was the visualization of historical memory and, yes, hero worship. This kind of cultural intervention was hoped to have great utility for mass education and cultural pride.

What’s the difference between an icon and a paradigm? One is a static reference, while the other is a generalized intellectual and ideological framework within which one thinks and acts. Iconic reference can lead to dogmatism, but never with a paradigm. A paradigm is a framework within which you have to do something. A paradigm is shared diversity; iconic worship leads to conformity.

We began this essay with the question, why Malcolm X? Our basic answer is that he became both icon and paradigm for the Black Liberation Movement. Therefore the question one needs to ask is what do we mean by paradigmatic agency? This

is when a movement for social change operates within a paradigm, and after the Black Power moment following Malcolm X's assassination this is what happened, and it continues today. This paradigmatic agency represents a broad diversity of actions by different actors that have a focused impact because they share a common paradigm. Our basic answer to the question, why Malcolm X? is that Malcolm X is the personification of the paradigmatic agency of Black Power, its theory and practice.

NOTES

1. This phrase was first used in a conference at the University of California–Santa Barbara and subsequently adopted as the motto of the National Council of Black Studies.
2. See this video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNQpYz1ztx8>, and read the lyrics: www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/slythefamilystone/familyaffair.html.
3. We have posted a website to document his work: <http://www.brothermalcolm.net/>.
4. The site has been archived: <http://web.archive.org/web/20011124200413/http://maelstrom.stjohns.edu/archives/malcolm-x.html>.

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