

forward motion

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March 1990

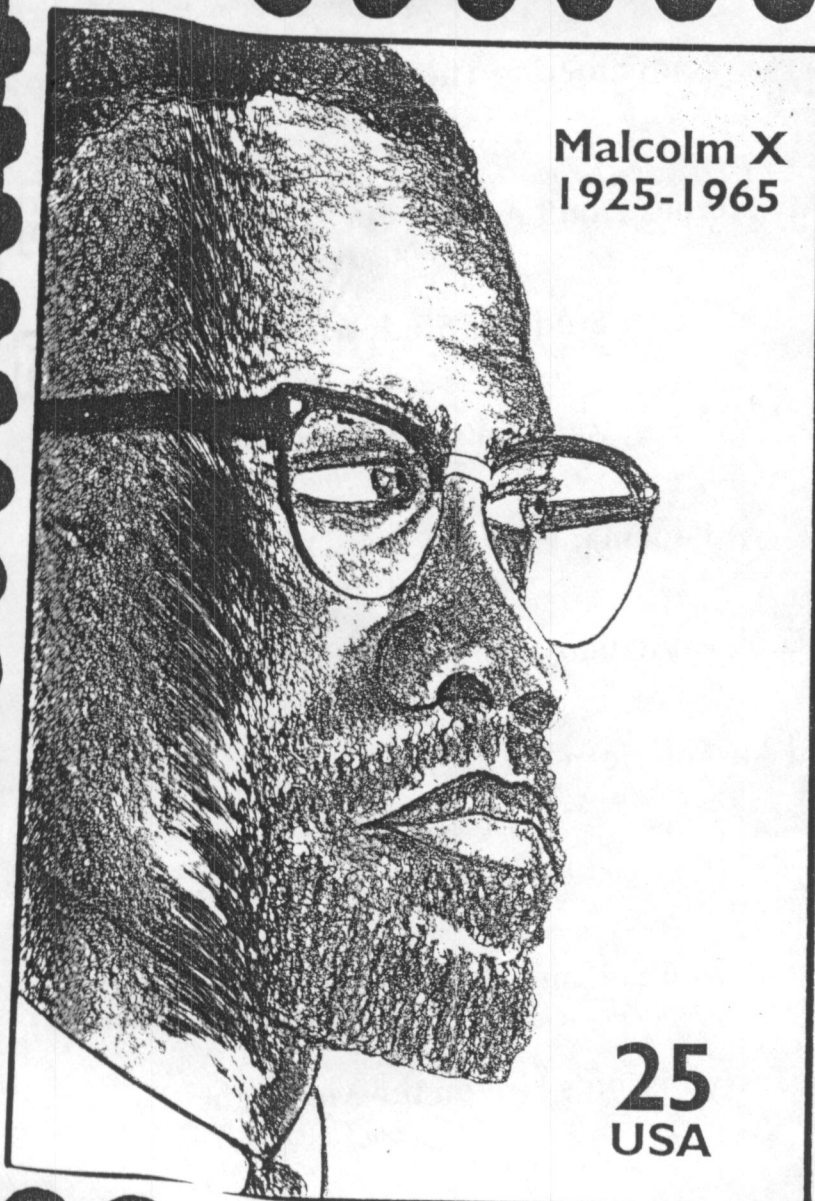
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1990: Commemorate Malcolm X

Abdul Alkalimat,
Vicki Garvin,
Muhammad Ahmad,
and others

**Toward An American
Socialism From Below**
Manning Marable

First Hand Report:
US Invades Panama

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Forward Motion

March, 1990
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...In This Issue

talism, his internationalism, his revolutionary spirit, and his passionate efforts at building a Black united front all need to be understood.

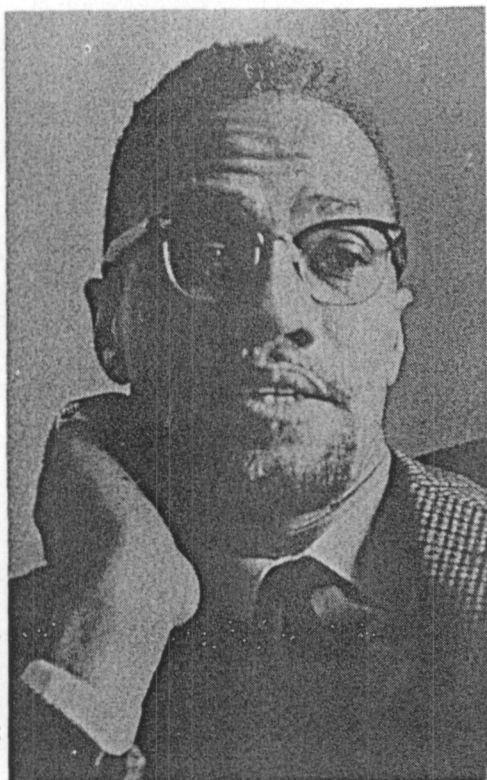
Second, an emphasis on self-reliance. This is both personal, reflecting Malcolm X's own remaking of himself, and it is also political, reflecting the turn in the Black movement toward community-building and national development. In US cities today, conditions are not unlike those of the early 1960s, with deteriorating job opportunities, woefully under-funded social programs, and an indifferent white power structure. After twenty-five years, Malcolm's writings still evoke the collective affirmativeness and militant leadership which many activists today seek to recapture.

Third, and most significantly following from the first two, an emphasis on Malcolm's relevance and appeal to a new, youthful generation. In this time of crisis for Afro-America; in this time of the destruction of Black youth and the promotion of naked cynicism; in this period of the dramatic growth in poverty and homelessness; and in this time of a resurgence of rabid racist oppression, the search is on for Black Left leadership. Those of us carrying his memory in our hearts are crying for it. The youth carrying Malcolm's picture are demanding it. The contributions from Adjoa de Almeida, Arnetta Shephard and Joe Mingle, part of a new generation of youthful activists, as well as ever-youthful Dennis O'Neill's observations on Malcolm's continuity with the spirit of rap, all reflect this growing interest.

We hope that this issue will help in the re-examination of Malcolm X's teachings and work, and in the efforts to rebuild the Black Left. We hope to continue the discussion in our next issue as well.

Also in this issue, thoughts on a different, but not entirely separate re-examination—of the practical and theoretical premises of socialism. Manning Marable extends the discussion we opened up last summer about China to encompass this fall's sweeping changes in Eastern Europe. We hope to continue this exchange throughout the coming year and invite readers to respond.

There is also a first-hand report from the latest US battle-zone in Panama; a knowledgeable background piece on the upcoming plebiscite on the status of Puerto Rico; a detailed look back at the 1988 Jackson campaign and its lessons for the electoral battles to come; and a review of a most interesting novel, based on asking, "what if John Brown had succeeded at Harpers Ferry way back then?"



Malcolm X Work Group Forms

1990: Why Remember Malcolm X?

by Abdul Alkalimat

Malcolm is a symbol and slogan of the highest order. His name is recognized in virtually every African-American household. Even though Malcolm was assassinated on February 21, 1965, the people haven't forgotten even for one day that he gave his life for us. He continues to be one of our best expressions of manhood, of excellence, and of resistance. In the fall of 1966, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* was published, and through this classic text of social transformation he was reborn for generations to come. The 25th anniversary year of his rebirth is an appropriate time to remember Malcolm by taking some time to utilize his thought and life's work, to analyze where we are today, and to better understand our historical choices as we face the 21st century.

Historical Importance of Malcolm X

There are some individuals whose lives burn deep into the psyche of the people. These are our heroes. Heroes are examples of historically specific excellence based on the lives and struggles of a class/community/society. Each generation rediscovers its heroic past as a form of ideological development, a personalized historical consciousness. Through these individuals the people can relive and relearn vital lessons for survival and achieve higher levels of resistance. Of course, there are always dangers of hero worship and overstating the role of the individual in history. However, the best of every hero or heroine is a seed that can be planted in all of us, especially the youth. The value of learning these historical lessons comes from the courage and creativity required in their contemporary application—not in mimicry.

Malcolm is a model of Black leadership, especially for brothers and sisters from poor, working people who suffer under the system as vic-

Chicago-based activist Abdul Alkalimat is founder of the Malcolm X work group and manager of 21st Century Books. He is currently a visiting professor at SUNY/Stony Brook in Africana Studies.

tims of a brutal beast of prey: the homeless, the underclass, the people on "the lower end," the wretched of the earth. Malcolm is a model of leadership for everyone, especially if you are "a field Nigger." Look for an answer in Malcolm and you will find a way.

Malcolm went through four basic stages of development. He was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska in 1925. His father was murdered when he was six, and his mother was forced into a mental breakdown before he was a teenager. After reform school, he went to the East Coast and became known as Detroit Red, a street-wise criminal dealing in prostitution, drugs, and robbery. He served six years in prison where he got the nickname "Satan." After beginning his religious transformation in prison, he became Malcolm X, the national organizer for the Nation of Islam under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad. Eventually in 1964, Malcolm X broke away and spent his last year building independent organizations: the Muslim Mosque Incorporated, and the Organization of Afro-American Unity.

The road travelled by Malcolm X had all of the obstacles that are supposed to stop us; the ones the sociologists use to explain why we are at the bottom. They suggest that the situation is hopeless. But, we can always REMEMBER MALCOLM! Check this out: Malcolm moved through the murder of his father by white racists; dropping out of school; all forms of juvenile delinquency, a broken home and living in a foster home; being a gang member; and criminal behavior of all types, including dealing drugs. He turned all of this around, including turning prison into school, and ghetto slum into community.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of our people share his experience. But fortunately, through him, you can find an example of how to rebuild your life for struggle, Black liberation and social transformation.

Malcolm X represented the convergence of four radical traditions: First, Black religion: Malcolm embodied a radical morality, honest, militant rhetoric and a vision of the good life based on freedom, justice, and equality; Second, Black nationalism: He was committed to the consolidation of community resources, mobilization of the masses of oppressed and exploited people for empowerment in the interest of self-determination. Third, Panafricanism: Malcolm understood that the struggle was an international struggle in which Black people participated as part of the worldwide linkage of African peoples that extends to all corners of the globe. This linkage is bonded by culture from within and imposed

by racism from outside. Malcolm reestablished Africa as the foundation for Black identity in the consciousness of the Black masses. In this regard his only peer would be Bob Marley. And finally, Socialism: Malcolm was anti-capitalist and open to dialogue and debate within and about the socialist experiments, especially in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. He embraced radical thinking wherever he found it.

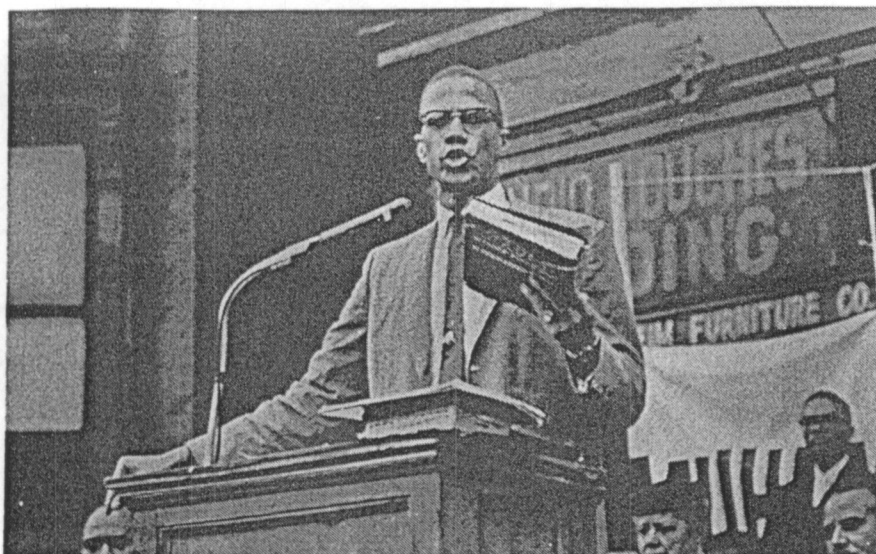
The convergence of these traditions in Malcolm X go beyond legitimating the prevailing dogma of each, and together constitute a dialectical force field of unity. What is created is the new possibility of moving past the past to a new ideological transformation. We are pointed toward a new framework for the simultaneous understanding of race, nationality, and class. Malcolm is exciting for the questions he can help us to raise for ourselves, not just the answers he can give us.

Malcolm X was the inspiration for the advanced forces of the Black liberation movement of the 1960s and his writings continued to influence their political development and their efforts to forge a vanguard in the 1970s and 1980s. This included SNCC, the Black Panther Party, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, the Black Workers Congress, the Congress of African People, the All African Peoples Revolutionary Party, the African Peoples Party, the African Peoples Socialist Party, Malcolm X Liberation University, Student Organization for Black Unity, the National Association of Black Students, Peoples College, and the African Liberation Support Committee. Virtually every radical organization rooted in the fight for Black liberation embraced Malcolm.

A Program For 1990: REMEMBER MALCOLM

In order to deepen our understanding of Malcolm X, a collaborative study group—the Malcolm X Work Group, composed of serious activist/scholars engaged in research and writing projects on the life and activities of Malcolm X was formed. We have been meeting for four years. We are holding a research review meeting in the winter and a public symposium in New York City in the spring. This collective effort is based on the idea that it is important to rebuild Black Studies as an arm of the Black liberation movement.

We are working on a major campaign for 1990: REMEMBER MALCOLM! that will be an international conference to be held at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, November 1-4, 1990. Our approach is



Don Charles

Malcolm is exciting for the questions he can help us to raise for ourselves, not just the answers he can give us.

to combine scholarship with ideological discussion and debate. One day will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of the recent research of the Malcolm X Work Group and other Black studies scholars throughout the country. These scholars will also come from Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe. A second day will feature leading activists from sectors of the overall movement to sum up the legacy of Malcolm X and chart future action. This will include mini-conferences on the struggles of workers, students, women, communities, and the church. The final day will be a cultural celebration of the Black experience, its particularity for Black people, and its universality for the world.

Our program for remembering Malcolm is contained in the following words: DECODE, RECODE, and EXPLODE. We want to DECODE: to study Malcolm's life and interpret its meaning in relation to all other ideas and actions relevant to Black liberation and social transformation. We want to RECODE: to reconstruct Malcolm's life and writings as an ideological, political, and organizational guide to action. We want to EXPLODE: to nurture and network militant activists who can move beyond fear to embrace the Malcolm road. This is a call for revolutionary Reds, Blacks, and Greens. This is a call to remember Malcolm in ideas and actions: not to memorize his words and/or mimic his actions, but to stand on his shoulders so we can see farther, and go where he was kept from going; to maximize our own historical possibilities.

There are several projects by members of the Malcolm X Work Group that are scheduled for completion

by the time of the conference. James Cone, founder of the Black liberation theology school of thought, is doing a major study comparing Malcolm X with Martin Luther King. Cone is a Christian minister who acknowledges that Malcolm X was the major inspiration for applying Black power to theology. His work will clarify the King-Malcolm contradiction as the unity-of-opposites defining the ideological development of Black people in the 1960s.

William Sales, Harlem-based activist and professor of Black studies, has researched the political activities of Malcolm X in the last year of his life, with a focus on the Organization of Afro-American Unity. This study will explore the contradictions of revolutionary Black nationalism within the advanced imperialist state of the USA. The main focus is on Malcolm's thought and practice as a basis for the Black united front.

A third project is being worked on by Preston Wilcox, founder and director of Afram Associates and the Malcolm X Lovers Network. This project will attempt to describe the legacy by tracing Malcolm through the naming process. Throughout this country, Malcolm's name has been used to remember him, for buildings, organizations, awards, annual events, and even the naming of a new child. This legacy project will reveal a deep love and respect for Malcolm X, coded rituals that affirm a mass-based consciousness for resistance.

In addition to these studies, the Malcolm X Work Group will publish reference tools to encourage and assist others in this campaign to REMEMBER MALCOLM in 1990 through serious study and militant activism.

National Study Program. We have a national study guide prepared by the Malcolm X Work Group for free distribution (although we will accept donations to reprint the guide when necessary). The main study task is to read, think about, and discuss the writings and speeches of Malcolm X. The major text is the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*. The major publication of speeches include *Malcolm X Speaks*, *The Last Speeches*, *By Any Means Necessary*, *Speeches of Malcolm X at Harvard*, *Malcolm X on Afro-American History*, and *Malcolm Speaks to Young People*. Every educational level can utilize these works. Without a doubt, they will excite and motivate students to read, discuss and debate.

We need to explore five major questions:

1. Who are Black people and how should they think about themselves?
2. Who and what is responsible for the suffering of Black people over the last several hundred years?
3. Who are the friends and allies of Black people in this country and throughout the world?
4. What are the goals of the Black liberation movement and how should these goals be attained?
5. What is to be done now? Where to begin? How to start?

The study of Malcolm X is a useful and progressive point of departure in dealing with these questions. It should be possible to form study circles on campus, in the church, in the neighborhood, in youth groups, and in union locals.

Why Now?

Search for New Leadership: There has been a radical shift in the nature of Black leadership since the 1960s. The Civil Rights leadership was independent of the mainstream political parties and therefore, when we talked of the movement, even when dealing with the mainstream Civil Rights organizations, there was some sense of being outside of the "system." However, now the functional national leadership of Black people is the Congressional Black Caucus, a group operating within the ideological/political consensus of the US Congress, i.e., the system. Yet the majority of Black people remain

outside of the system, beaten down and oppressed by it, and they deserve—have the right!—to have their own leadership armed with ideological assumptions that fundamentally challenge the system; leaders who want to bring it down and replace it with something new and better.

Through the prism of Malcolm's thought new criteria of leadership will emerge, and, if implemented, will enable the movement to replace the House Negro, whether as a servant or elected leader (mayor, governor, or even president!) with democratic community-based leadership: of the masses, for the masses, by the masses. When this leadership ceases to be community-based or joins a ruling class party, then, in the spirit of Malcolm, they must be replaced.

Birth of A New Militant Black Movement: We are calling for the social and political reproduction of an informed militancy that can pick up and carry on from where Malcolm took us. This is an ideological statement as it reflects being able to decode, recode and explode on the Malcolm road. The necessary precondition of this is provided virtually every year in these hard times in every community, in the spontaneous fight back against attack and repression. However, a spontaneous action is necessary, but insufficient, as the Malcolm road is a conscious deliberate path of collective study and organized, disciplined action. The rebuilding of the movement must be a conscious process of restructuring relationships and nurturing the previous sparks of revolutionary spirit from the masses. This is a process that requires that intellectuals renounce their privilege and truly strive to serve the people. As Charlie Parker played, NOW IS THE TIME!

The choice of the Malcolm road is to push fear aside and dare to celebrate "the Eye of the Tiger;" to take up the warrior's oath to avenge past wrongs and fight for a new and better day. This is a time when the people of so many countries are unleashing new winds of change, especially the revolutionary winds of the Intifada and of the workers and youth of South Africa. This is a new day, a day Malcolm would have welcomed to live. Indeed, we do live it and as we do, in 1990, we REMEMBER MALCOLM! ■



Eli Finer

Vicki Garvin cofounded the Dunbar Circle at Wadleigh High School, New York City and the Toussaint L'Ouverture Society, Hunter College, NYC, in the 1930s. She joined her first picket line during the campaign led by Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., for jobs for Blacks in Harlem, and participated in electoral campaigns for Vito Marcantonio, Ben Davis, Adam Clayton Powell, Charles Collins, and Dr. W.E.B. DuBois. She worked as Research Director and Co-Chair of the United Office and Professional Workers Union, CIO and served as National Vice-President of the Distributive, Processing, Office Workers of America, CIO. She also served as the Executive Secretary of the N.Y. Negro Labor Council and Vice-President of the National Negro Labor Council during the 1950s. In the subsequent decade, Vicki Garvin worked as an Executive Secretary in Nigeria and as an English teacher in Ghana and the People's Republic of China. Currently, Vicki Garvin is involved in several organizations working against apartheid in South Africa and in support of African-American equality and liberation.

Malcolm X: A Beacon for Young People

by Vicki Garvin

The significance of Malcolm X's life and leadership role in the struggle for African-American liberation has been enhanced with the passage of time. He is by no means an unsung hero. In the twenty-five years since his assassination, we have witnessed proof: not only in the sustained purchase of his speeches and tapes, but even more important, serious discussion of their contents in many settings. In most inner cities African-Americans proudly buy his photographs and wear his image on T-shirts and buttons, and adopt African names. Streets and institutions are named in his honor.

The most salient feature of Malcolm's life was his metamorphosis: from negative, self-destructive behavior and anti-social activities (which he publicly acknowledged and overcame) to self-liberation through self-respect and self-love. This transformation enabled him to pursue a relentless commitment to expose and combat racist oppression and exploitation, and to fight for change in the status of his people.

Having faith in our future, Malcolm focused on recruiting youth to the movement, down-to-earth persons interested in political science and activism, to promote new ideas and methods and provide militant forces. Malcolm's regeneration encouraged many who were apathetic, confused and on the sidelines to join the ranks of freedom-fighters and give meaning to their lives. Malcolm's transformation remains to this day a profound example of the potential of those youth who are washed out; who have fallen prey to cynicism, alienation, and a sense of powerlessness; who are beguiled by materialism, victims of drug abuse, or overwhelmed by societal ills. For them, Malcolm has become an inspiration to seek a rewarding, constructive life, develop self-pride, confidence in their self-worth and in their capacity to control their own destiny.

Malcolm did not embrace Marxism as his guiding ideology. He was a spiritual man in the Afro-American sense, and saw himself as a radi

cal, militant, black nationalist and revolutionary. He developed his own guidelines through intensive study and experience; through direct involvement in agitation, education and organizing. He made it a point to connect and identify himself with Africa. Malcolm was not an armchair general or an ivory tower theoretician. He developed the ability to resist sectarianism and dogmatism, and exhibited an openness to learning from others—qualities of great value.

Malcolm, above all a working class "race man," an uncompromising fighter against white supremacy, struck a responsive chord among beleaguered African-Americans daily victimized by racism in all forms. Hence his teaching remains appealing to these masses in the face of mounting impoverishment and a drastic deterioration in the quality of their lives. His incisive statement that liberation should be won "by any means necessary" is echoed in the slogan "no justice, no peace."

Malcolm pushed us to see the interrelationship of domestic and foreign policies. For example, the U.S. persists in "big stick" operations—political, economic and armed intervention in "third world" countries, today notably in Grenada, Nicaragua, and Panama. There is also the U.S.' hypocritical "wait and see" stance toward South Africa while continuing to abet apartheid. Foreign policy issues a cause for deep concern and involvement for us on these shores.

Debate continues in some circles on controversial issues on which Malcolm had a strong position: integration, nation-building, race and class, black-white unity, self-defense, the ballot or the bullet. Unfortunately, his assassination robbed Malcolm X of the opportunity to undertake a specific program of action following his extensive travels and based on his new orientation. Against the backdrop of current conditions, however, Malcolm's basic views deserve consideration. His philosophy and teaching (evaluated in the context of change in a dynamic world) are basically sound for today's reality. The U.S. is not on the eve of a socialist revolution.

Over the decades I have found that while most left-wing political organizations acknowledge the importance of the national question in alliance with the working class, too often in practice they relegate the national question to "good and welfare" on the agenda. They generally respond to crises, too many times opportunistically. White cadres frequently assume the role of teacher and infrequently take the role of pupil on issues involving Black liberation. The potential of Black workers to serve as key leaders of the entire working class is too often minimized.

Malcolm had a vision of what he wished for African-Americans. It certainly was not the "American Dream" of individual fulfillment at the expense of the masses or success defined by materialist values; nor was it the myth of assimilation in a decadent society. In fighting for the future, Malcolm kept to the fore the reality of African-American life, described as a nightmare. This served to counter complacency, accommodation and the illusion of meaningful progress. Malcolm represents a continuum of the strength of his forerunners.

Despite multiple setbacks in the past several years, there are many positive signs and developments among African-Americans. They include rising racial, social and political consciousness; interest in learning one's true history; more African-American newspapers, a few radio talk shows and television programs which tell it like it is; a wide variety of excellent cultural presentations; recognition and tribute to the role and vital contributions of African-American women; emergence of new grass roots organizations and leaders mobilizing for street protests; and increased acceptance of African-American identity.

As a veteran with more than fifty years in the ranks for our liberation, I remain appreciative of my brief association with Malcolm in Ghana. I am proud that he remains our celebrated black shining prince, a symbol and beacon. Having fully paid his dues on our behalf, he deserves the accolades he continues to receive twenty-five years after his death. ■

Malcolm X:

Human Rights And Self-Determination

by Muhammad Ahmad (Max Stanford)

We must change the thinking of the Afro-American by liberating our minds through the study of philosophies and psychologies, cultures and languages that did not come from our racist oppressors.

Basic Unity Program, Organization of Afro-American Unity

As we commemorate the 25th year after the assassination of Malcolm X (El Hajj Malik El Shabazz), it is important that we understand some of the theoretical underpinnings of Malcolm's thinking. Just what was Malcolm attempting to do and where was he headed? Did Malcolm have a plan and a program?

Internationalization of the Struggle

Malcolm's main objective was to internationalize the African-American struggle for human rights, national liberation and self-determination, and to win for it worldwide support.

By the time of his untimely death, Malcolm X had moved from Black nationalism to internationalism, and had completely identified himself, as well as the Afro-American struggle, with the revolution of the "wretched of the earth"—the exploited people of the third world. He had become a foe of the international capitalist system and a staunch Pan-Africanist.¹

Malcolm built the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) to isolate U.S. imperialism. Through the OAAU, he appealed to the African heads of state to bring the United States government before the United Nations and charge it with the crime of genocide in violation of the U.N. Human Rights Charter. The State Department became alarmed over Malcolm's efforts be-

cause such an indictment would expose the true nature of U.S. imperialism.

This racist element within the State Department realized that if any intelligent, truly militant Afro-American was ever permitted to come before the United Nations to testify on behalf of the 22 million mistreated Afro-Americans, our dark-skinned brothers and sisters would then see America as a "brute beast," even more cruel and vulturous than the colonial powers of Europe and South America combined."²

In this sense, the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) was to serve like the Committees of Correspondence of the American revolution of 1776; these committees won similar support for the thirteen colonies. The OAAU was to serve as the broad African-American National Liberation Front that would set up offices in every country, giving Afro-Americans in exile an organizational vehicle and a political purpose. The OAAU would act as a united people's front against U.S. racism and imperialism.

Malcolm felt it would take the active support of the majority of the world's democratic forces to help African-Americans achieve self-determination—for the African-American struggle to succeed against U.S. imperialism. Malcolm was a staunch anti-imperialist, and he made important statements against U.S. foreign policy. He condemned U.S. counter-revolutionary

murder, bombing, killing and maiming of African women and children in the Congo while U.S. mercenaries crushed the people's revolution of the Congo. At his mass rallies, he would announce and encourage people to attend demonstrations concerning the Congo which were then taking place in New York City. Malcolm also denounced the initial U.S. invasion of Vietnam and was the first African-American leader to condemn the Vietnam war. Unity with Africa in particular, and the Third World in general and developing a spiritual, cultural and philosophical return to Africa was a central part of Malcolm's theme.

Human Rights Program For Political Power

Malcolm did not see this internationalization in isolation from a national and regional strategy for African American liberation. Malcolm's main theoretical problem was how to transform the Civil Rights movement into a progressive, scientific movement to secure national democratic human rights through mass action,

while guiding this forward motion toward a socialist revolution. While Malcolm had a rough outline for liberation, like others at his time, he had not worked a strategy out in detail by the time of his death.

Malcolm broadened the Civil Rights movement when he said the African-American struggle was a movement for securing human rights. In essence, Malcolm knew he was aligning the Black liberation movement with broad anti-imperialist democratic forces of the world.

Malcolm was not only a dialectical thinker, but he had a long-range perspective. Part of Malcolm's thinking focussed on how African Americans could achieve political empowerment prior to a socialist revolution, particularly in the Black Belt South.

There are 915,743 of our people in the state of Mississippi, they're in the majority. That's almost one million. In 125 counties of Mississippi, they're in the majority.



Ninety other counties, they constitute more than 40 percent of the population. Any time you have that number of Black people who are of that numerical majority in that many counties, if they were given the vote, Eastland wouldn't be representing them. They'd be representing themselves. The state of Mississippi would be in the hands of the Black man, and it must be in his hands--by the ballot or the bullet. It must be one or the other. This is why the campaign that they have in Mississippi for voter registration is a good campaign. They're not trying to integrate, they're trying to get our people registered to vote, which is good because it puts them in a position to strike right at the base of all their misery.³

Malcolm saw the importance of voter registration and the securing of national democratic revolution which was set back after the overthrow of Reconstruction. Malcolm saw that, through voting, African-Americans and progressive whites could secure political control of the southern region of the United States through the ballot. If this process was halted, he advocated alternative means of completing the national democratic process or the battle for democracy. By raising the slogan "by any means necessary," Malcolm could not be accused of opposing non-violence in peaceful confrontations. Nor, logically, could he be accused of instigating violence in situations requiring self-defense.

But Malcolm did not limit this battle for democracy only to the South.

Since our people are making such a sacrifice to become registered voters in Mississippi, it's a sin for you and me not to be registered so we can vote in New York City and in

New York State, or throughout the North.⁴

17 point program of the OAAU:

1. A substance (drug) abuse clinic.
2. A place (halfway house) for unwed mothers.
3. A home for the aged of Harlem.
4. A guardian system for youth who get in trouble.
5. A cultural center in Harlem.
6. Non-partisan voter registration drives.
7. Independent political clubs.
8. Housing and self-improvement programs.
9. Rent strikes.
10. Ten percent of the schools not included.
11. African-American principals and teachers for these schools.
12. Textbooks written by African-Americans.
13. OAAU run people for local school boards.
14. School strikes when necessary.
15. African-American primary school.
16. African-American cultural revolution based on African-American history and pride.
17. Adult education and job retraining program.

On the question of self-determination, Malcolm left it open-ended as to just how that was to happen. Malcolm felt that African-Americans were entitled to reparations, and this was the main underpinning to his maneuvering. Malcolm advocated the mass mobilization of the grass roots. He felt the grass roots would develop a consensus on how to proceed to self-determination through struggle. One thing that is clear is that Malcolm felt processes had to exhaust themselves before the masses could proceed to further levels of consciousness.

Malcolm advocated the formation of independent political clubs to begin the process toward African-American political empowerment.

...Once you get the ballot, you know what this means? You don't have to get out in the street any more and risk your health and your life and your limb demonstrating. All you have to do is organize that

political power and direct it against anyone who is against you, or direct it behind anyone who is for you. And in this way, you and I will find that we're always taking constructive, positive action and getting some kind of result.⁵

In the process of building the OAAU, Malcolm developed a 17-point program for New York, and particularly for Harlem. Malcolm had in mind building a base in New York first and then expanding the OAAU into a national organization.

On Morality And Revolution

Malcolm was clear that revolutionaries must embody a stronger spiritual (humane) morality than that of contemporary western capitalist civilization. He realized that it was the superior spiritual fiber among revolutionaries that enabled the "wretched of the earth" to overcome insurmountable obstacles. In the fight for human rights and self determination, progressives have often underestimated the social question or moral fiber of the movement, which we often neglect or relegate to the realm of culture. This suppressed issue needs serious attention in this period as drugs threaten to overtake all sectors of American society, and may exterminate the majority of the present and forthcoming generations of African-Americans. Many of us need to take Malcolm's lead and focus on "scientific revolutionary morality" as an issue central to human rights and self determination.

Malcolm said:

Since the police can't eliminate organized prostitution and all of the evils that are destroying the moral fiber of our community, it is up to you and me to eliminate these evils ourselves. But in many circumstances, when you unite in this country or in this city to fight organized crime, you'll find yourselves fighting the police department itself because they are involved in

the organized crime. Wherever you have organized crime, that type of crime cannot exist other than with the consent of the police, the knowledge of the police, the cooperation of the police....The police are all right. I say there are some good ones and some bad ones....I tell you brothers and sisters, it is time for you and me to organize and eliminate these evils ourselves, or we'll be out of the world backward before we even know where the world was.⁶

These words ring more true today as African-American communities disintegrate before our eyes, and young Black people engage in "self-destruct" genocide using crack, and dying from AIDS transmitted through dirty needles and illicit [unsafe—ed.] sex.

Malcolm also tried to address the woman question: the equality of the sexes. Malcolm felt women should be treated equally to men, and politically educated just like men, even though he was not entirely clear on this question, just like many of us today. While on the one hand Malcolm advocated political equality of women in the OAAU, Malcolm had instructed Minister Benjamin 2X and others of the Muslim Mosque, Inc., to begin teaching inside the Mosque about polygamy as practiced in Muslim countries. This caused tension among the Muslim sisters at the time. Since that time, African American women revolutionaries have fought the male chauvinist positions and actions of men in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Revolutionary Action Movement, Black Panther Party, Southern Christian Leadership Council, African Liberation Support Committee and many other formations. Having been educated by the women's movement, all male revolutionaries should, by this time, uphold and fight for women's social, economic and political equality and the right to reproductive choice.

Political And Organizational Legacy

Malcolm was a true, sincere, courageous spokesman for the grass roots or working class. Very few African-

American leaders, with the exception of Jesse Jackson, are speaking to the question of race and class; African-Americans' particular issues and working class questions as well. While Malcolm had developed an all-class African-American organization, he began to try to address the particular concerns of the African-American worker. James Boggs has summed up the situation when discussing Malcolm's impact on the political consciousness of Black Americans:

Today, the task of building a disciplined revolutionary organization to carry on the struggle for Black Power has not advanced much beyond where it was at the time of Malcolm's murder. Instead of applying themselves to this essential task, Black leaders have tended to rely upon the spontaneous eruptions of the masses to wrest concessions from the white power structure. Thus the Black movement has not yet done the necessary scientific analysis of the system which has exploited Black people and now threatens them with extermination nor has it clearly defined the enemy and evolved a concrete strategy and tactics to defeat this enemy and

gain power for itself, based upon a careful evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses on both sides.⁷

Malcolm's legacy, as well as that of the Black Panther Party, was clearly defining the enemy, the capitalist class. While the general motion of African-American strategy is concentrated in the electoral arena, the question of independent politics and the possibility of an independent party should be investigated by the masses of African-Americans at the grass roots. What will be the best organizational vehicle to carry this out must be answered. Also, present-day politics calls for a political rainbow coalition. Recognizing the need to do political education and mobilization at the grass roots once again is part of the legacy of Brother Malcolm X.

11/2/89

Muhammad Ahmad is a long-time political activist living in Cleveland, Ohio who is part of the Malcolm X commemoration network.

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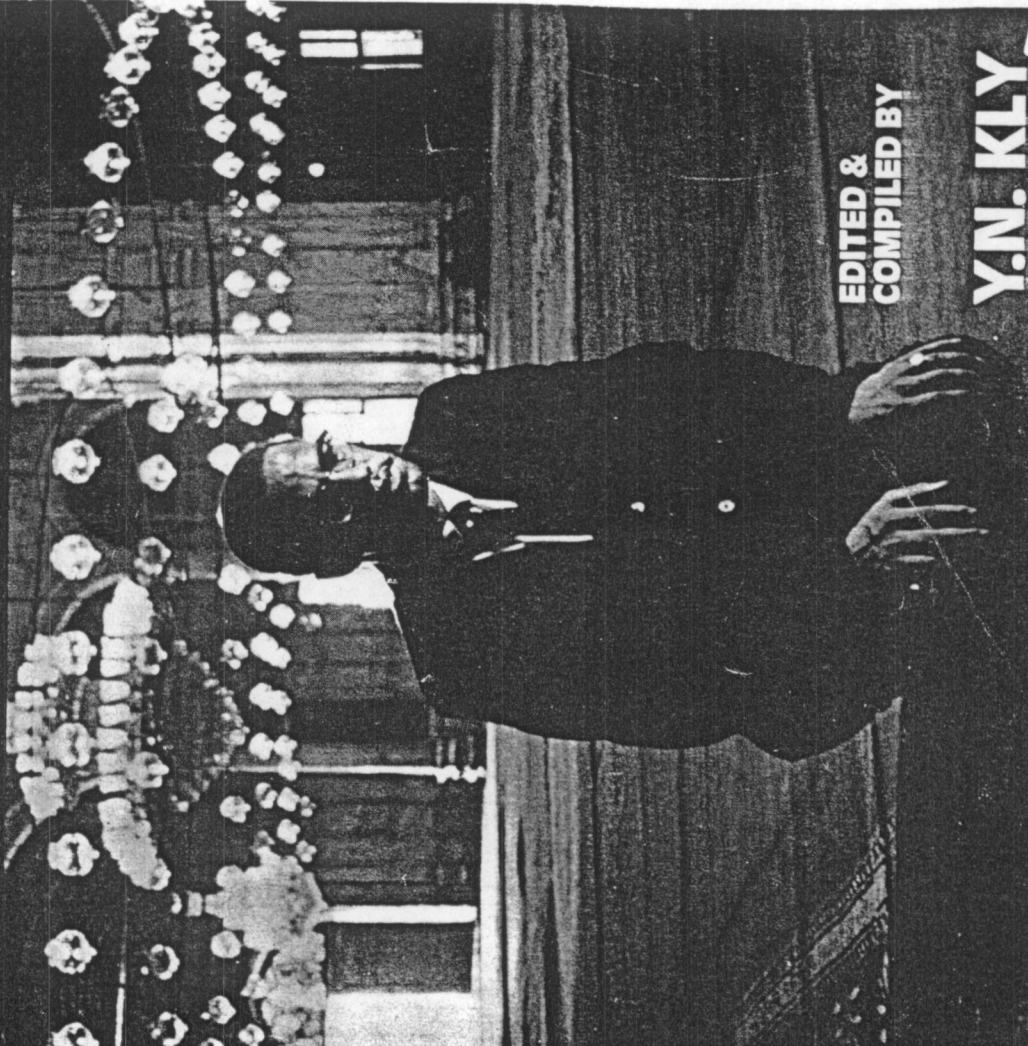
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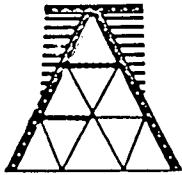
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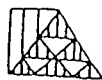
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If you are thinking a year ahead, sow seeds,
If you are thinking ten years ahead, plant a tree,
If you are thinking one hundred years ahead, educate the people.
By sowing seeds once, you will harvest once,
By planting a tree, you will harvest tenfold,
By educating the people, you will harvest one hundredfold

- Anonymous Chinese Poet -

* Found in the Programme of the Harlem Consumer Education Council;
Florence M. Rice, Founder/President, Nov., 17, 1985
April 1, 1990

K N O W L E D G E I S T O P R E C I O U S T O H O A R D !

RACISM is a FACT; it's not an EXCUSE!

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continued from back page...

of Man; rather it desires to enable Harlem to take its place in the sun beside all humankind - without emulating the behavior of those, who, as the descendants of our ancient ancestors, have benefitted from our 'illegal' de jure enslavement, while continuing to refuse to repudiate the privileges of the white skin!

African American history did not begin with slavery; neither did we become slaves - or was our culture destroyed. Culture - all culture - is indestructible. The slaves, themselves, through the exercise of both their brawn and brains, turned slavery into an impossible institution to maintain. That sense of insurgency and compelling need to become free has characterized the African American presence and agenda since our forefathers were dragged off the slave ships seeking the freedom which still eludes us. Hence, African Americans are, indeed the VANGUARD of the world - wide freedom and justice movement.

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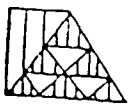
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A great deal of AFRAM's energies are focused on retrieving information relevant to the African American aspiration, condition, experience, heritage, history and inheritance of freedom and justice. It is done from the perspective of the essential humanity and credibility of the African American presence/agenda. It is not an effort to establish our humanity or to prove to whites that we are their EQUAL: AN ISSUE THAT HAS NEVER BEEN QUESTIONED BY AFRAM! AFRAM acknowledges, however, that African Americans are being held hostage as 'second class citizens' without the requirement that we carry the 'green card' as do all 'resident aliens.' Many African Americans 'feel' more American while traveling on foreign soil, only to return home to the place of their births to be made to feel like 'foreigners.' African Americans are the most consistently maligned and debased ethnic group in America - despite its incomparable contributions to the development of this nation. Without those contributions, this nation would still be a 'developing' nation.

An over - allegiance to the white standard, Euro - centric thought and the narcissism emanating from a philosophy which holds whites to be superior to African Americans have combined to produce what W.E.B. DuBois describes as being the 'white blindspot,' paraphrased here as being the inability to perceive African Americans as they really are and, therefore, themselves. To be white in America, more often than not, is to feel that one is the beneficiary of the right to be in charge of African Americans. AFRAM's response to this colonialistic and patronizing need to define us is to move to restore our own architectural obligations to 'define ourselves, name ourselves and to ethnically govern ourselves. It has proceeded to do so by seeking to FILL the MISSING PAGES of American History, by impacting the MEMORY SYSTEM of the nation and by systematically moving Alternative Information from the UNDERGROUND into the MAINSTREAM of American Thought & Perspective.

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