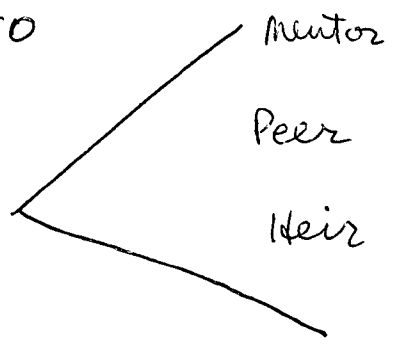


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# D R A F T

## HOW TO READ MALCOLM X: A BLACK STUDIES METHOD TO READ TEXTS IN CONTEXT

### TABLE OF CONTENTS: CONCEPTUAL

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt to clarify the meaning of Malcolm X in relationship to the political culture of Black people in the USA. As such, this study contributes to our understanding of radical Black leadership in the historical development of the American Revolution. The fundamental distinction discussed in the introduction is between \*Malcolm X as Icon\* and \*Malcolm X as Paradigm\*. An Icon is produced and reproduced through a ritualized culture of resistance. But this shared culture is also a market in which goods can be produced and sold. What is true for Jesus is also true for Malcolm. However, a Paradigm is an assumed set of beliefs and practices that predisposed one to practical action. Therefore, in this book the resurgence of interest in Malcolm is taken as a critical basis for a major generational paradigm shift, toward starting a new phase of the Black liberation movement.

#### 2. PARADIGM

Malcolm X is a powerful source of knowledge. Therefore, the study of his life and activities are a necessary aspect of education for liberation. This section on Malcolm X as Paradigm focuses on two key points, our \*collective experience\* and our \*collective memory\*. The Autobiography of Malcolm X is the classic epic for today's youth in that he personally experienced the main contradictions that they face today. He descended into the American hell shared by Black, Latino, and all poor youth. This is his common identity with the masses of Black people. What distinguishes Malcolm is that he ascended into the disciplined life style of an activist for liberation. As a freedom fighter, Malcolm struggled to embrace all of the main tendencies that constitute the fundamentals of the Radical Black Tradition: Black Liberation Theology, PanAfricanism, Nationalism, Feminism, and Socialism. Without always being conscious about it, the collective memory of Black people survives as this radical Black tradition, because its central goal orientation is "Freedom."

#### 3. DISCOURSE

The practical realization of Malcolm as method is best understood in terms of two main historical encounters: with his coconspirators in the movement, and with the agencies of the mainstream, \*his comrades\* and \*his critics\*. Each encounter

became a discourse, an interaction of ideas and behavior. This analysis focuses on how Malcolm interacted with his main comrades: Elijah Muhammad (mentor), Martin Luther King (peer), and the Black Panther Party (heir). This analysis will also take up the way the mainstream took up and continues to deal with Malcolm X, including the media, the government surveillance, and the new scholars who are attempting a biographical reconstruction aimed at destroying Malcolm X as Icon.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This section will clarify the method of historical mapping, by which autobiography is decoded into objective points of reference and read for historical meaning against the broader backdrop of our collective experience. This involves decoding historical periodization to reveal the logic of Malcolm X's life and activities, the dialectic of his multiple transformations in relationship to the collective experiences of Black people. And it involves recoding his views (and the meaning of his experience) within the context of the radical Black ideological tradition, especially as a key player in one of the Great Debates. Finally, the content and process of the critical encounters reveal how specific political struggles reflect and impact upon the collective experiences and collective beliefs of Black people overall. The general utility of this method is for a new re-reading of the history of Black radicalism, and for the production of a new generation of Black radicals conscious of their history and bold enough to fight for a new future.

#### 5. THEORETICAL NOTES

Throughout the text important theoretical issues are referenced but not discussed. This section will be an extended discussion of the most important theoretical issues. These theoretical notes are for the advanced student who is seriously committed to reading or re-reading Malcolm in a revolutionary way.

## INTRODUCTION

Everyone seems to be talking about Malcolm X these days.

How many of the following comments have you heard:

1. "You can see Malcolm X's picture everywhere. You can see it on t-shirts, sweatshirts, coffee cups, watches, buttons -- they're just turning Malcolm X into a fad and trying to make some money."
2. "Most of these youth wearing the 'X' or Malcolm X's image don't even know what it means. They haven't studied the history; they're just following it because it's the in thing to do."
3. "Malcolm? Who is this Malcolm the Tenth? (X equals the number 10 in Roman numerals.)"
4. "Man, Malcolm X wouldn't have been anything without Elijah Muhammad. That's who you all should be honoring."
5. "Malcolm X was a Muslim. If you're not a Muslim you ought to leave him alone."



6."Malcolm X was a black nationalist. And why are these white people out there wearing the 'X'?"

7."Malcolm X was headed toward unity with Martin Luther King. They were gonna end up forming a common front."

8."Malcolm X already became an integrationist in the last years of his life, man, later [?] for him."

9."The Spike Lee movie will make a lot of money, create confusion, and that's exactly what the white ruling-class establishment wants, including these bourgey niggers."

10." " is the real continuation of Malcolm X. (You fill in the blank based on what you've heard in the local area where you live, or on the national scene for that matter.)

Malcolm X, in a relatively short life, became one of the greatest black radicals of all times. It seems inevitable that we would be reclaiming Malcolm and debating his meaning as part of the overall <sup>Process</sup> ~~experience~~ of rebuilding the black-liberation



bring about reforms in American society, and as such it really was the struggle to fulfill democratic aspirations of black people to overcome a legacy of segregation. It was led by the black middle class, and its main thrust was to make the American dream come true, to "cut us in." The 1990s reveals fundamental economic flaws in American society as it has been, and as it is forced to be transformed based upon a revolutionary economics. And therefore the current upsurge has to do with making a radical rupture, and herein is the issue of whether or not Malcolm X himself experienced such a radical rupture, and if so, what were its implications.

More importantly, however, is the emergence of a new generation, the emergence of a generation that was born after the 1960s, a generation that takes the changes brought in by the struggles of the '60s as givens, and takes off on the basis of fighting the racial oppression and class exploitation and sexism

as it exists today. Objectively, this new generation is building upon the advances of the '60s and therefore, at its initial point of departure, is more radical, more assertive, more revolutionary. The problem, however, is that it is less conscious, and therefore the debate around ideology, political understanding and, yes, the debate around the meaning of Malcolm X appear to be an essential aspect of the emergence of this generation as a conscious force.

The consciousness of a political generation is a determining factor in its ability to accomplish what it can. Franz Fanon, the revolutionary psychologist, put it this way in The Wretched of the Earth: "Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it."

So this book is written both for those who came out of the '60s, but more importantly for the new generation that has come forward in the 90's  
~~after the '60s,~~ as a contribution to the debate and the develop-

ment of consciousness, for clarity around the tasks that can be achieved and the means by which we can achieve these tasks to make our historic contribution to the fight for black liberation.

In this text we have to come to grips with Malcolm X in two fundamental ways: Malcolm X as icon and Malcolm X as method. These represent the dialectic between what we've got and what we need. So in this book, I intend to discuss the most obvious aspects of Malcolm, the things we are most familiar with, in order to bring clarity for consensus. In addition, it is necessary to go beyond this and to find in Malcolm the method by which we can advance the struggle in the nineties on the basis of the philosophical and political ~~logic and organization~~ *concepts* principles ~~that~~ that sum up, on a theoretical level, his greatest contribution to the radical black tradition and the ongoing fight for our generation and the generations to come.

# 1. Malcolm X as Icon: What We've Got.

One of the important aspects of modern industrial society, especially as a result of the impact of electronics on communication, is the critical importance of popular culture. The point here is that in all previous society, like feudal society with kings and queens and royalty, it was the culture of the elite that dominated, by virtue of their absolute, dictatorial control of the society; not to say that the masses of people did not have folk ballads and songs which in fact were nevertheless the most important cultural life of the emerging nations of the world. Still, elite culture was the dominant factor because of its relationship to power. With the development of capitalism and of industrial society, the emergence of popular culture became very significant because of the possibility of packaging and selling the culture. And therefore, popular culture became a marketplace, a source of profits. We can see this very clearly in the

United States by looking at the importance of music in terms of record sales (tapes, CDs, etc.) and the emergence of the video market -- not only as an extension of television, but as a vehicle by which popular music has been able to penetrate television and the home-viewing market. Everyone knows that in this context certain personalities emerge.

The personification of popular culture is the mechanism by which icons have emerged that sum up American society, but that have become icons for major parts, if not all, of the world. White people have at least three icons that have dominated the world from the United States. I would include Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley and the Marlboro Man. Each of these is the personification of the supremacy of white people as an expression of the supremacy of the United States. What we've got here is a symbol system that concentrates power, identity and commerce.

These political symbols are also related to political cul-

ture, which is an expression of popular culture. Again, before the democratic right to vote was achieved as part of the emergence of capitalism, the political culture of power had more to do with the intrigue of the palace and of the royal elites. However, with the emergence of mass popular culture, the relevant political culture was pulled closer to, and became function of, mass beliefs and practices. Therefore, we can see how the highest level of this, which involves the virtual domination of political life by television, points to the election of popular-cultural heroes and heroines. The soaring heights of this tendency were realized with the election of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States, a man whose only real claim to fame was his not-so-successful career as a movie star, and therefore must be regarded as "Hollywood Takes the White House."

Black popular culture, and black political culture, have developed in this same context as well. Here we are examining



the emergence of a transformed black community after the migration experienced from the rural South to the urban, especially Northern, industrial context. This transformation led to a series of new cultural developments, new popular-cultural heroes and a transformed political culture as well. It's in this context that Malcolm X emerges as a central icon of black, urban, working-class culture, an extension, perhaps the most legitimate extension in the latter part of the 20th century, of a radical black tradition that goes back to the very early days of the enslavement of African peoples. As an icon, Malcolm X is the personification of essential and fundamental beliefs and values that unite black people. Malcolm X as the central icon of radical black political culture is no more eloquently summed up than in the funeral oration delivered by Ossie Davis. It is this oration that has defined the fundamental parameters of Malcolm X as icon.

Ossie Davis refers to Malcolm as our "brightest hope," "gallant young champion," "bold young captain," "our own black shining prince." These laudatory and respectful descriptions force one, as Davis does, to contrast the contradictions of views held within the black community and those views outside the black community. In a commentary published as a sort of a second epilogue to the Autobiography of Malcolm X, Ossie Davis comments on the many questions that have been raised to him about why he gave the funeral oration. One of the interesting points he makes is that only white people questioned why he gave the oration; no black people did, although black people, almost to a person, disagreed with much of what Malcolm X said. So Davis points to this great contradiction between views from outside the black community and views from inside the black community. The difference, according to Davis, is that outside the black community people looked at Malcolm as a threat, as the oppressed native

emerging to seek revenge for centuries of exploitation and barbarism. And therefore their logical reaction was fear and a perception that Malcolm was responding with hate and violence. Note, the implication here is that they are simply assuming that Malcolm is doing what is rational and logical, returning hate for hate and violence for violence. However, what Ossie Davis points to is that within the black community this same logic is viewed in a positive manner, summed up in the phrase that Malcolm X was "our manhood." He said that ". . . in honoring him, we honor the best in ourselves." What he means by this is that Malcolm embodied that which black people were afraid to manifest in their own lives. Their fear of Malcolm was that they were afraid that white people would think they felt the same way Malcolm did. And the reason they were afraid is because in fact they did. But the response that Davis puts to the external views of Malcolm as hate monger and promoter of violence was Malcolm's persona. He asked,

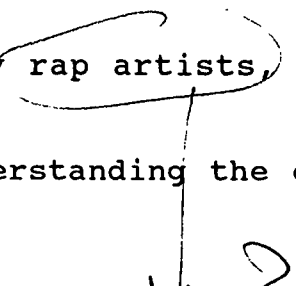
Did you ever talk to Malcolm? Did you listen to Malcolm? Did you touch Malcolm? Did you see Malcolm smile? And of course we all know Malcolm had a wonderful and explosive, genuine smile. Malcolm was truly a leader immersed in his people's culture and daily life. And one of the things that has kept black people healthy in the midst of barbarism is a sense of humor and an ability to embrace the beautiful, even when it is relatively scarce. Malcolm was personable, and in no way did the external characterization of Malcolm fit what black people in Harlem and in many other cities around the United States and world knew Malcolm to be. The fundamental issues that are connected to the manhood question, and therefore help to clarify its generic reference to the black community and not a gender-specific reference, are the following three issues: One, identity. Malcolm proposed an identity with Africa, a re-linking with Africa, and therefore he proposed the term Afro-American as opposed to the

term Negro. Two, political principles. We had for the past century been organized as a civil-rights movement to realize the promise of the Constitution and constitutional amendments. However, Malcolm believed that the only way that our issue could be placed on the world stage is as an issue of human rights, and therefore an issue not limited to the internal politics of the United States but subject to discussion at the United Nations as an issue of international concern. And three, strategy and tactics for black liberation. Malcolm proposed the notion of the united front as a coalition of forces fighting for a common political objective in which the struggle against a common enemy would always be more important than an internal struggle among forces within the black community itself.

In sum, not only did the manhood of which Ossie Davis spoke have to do with his personable anchoring among the masses of people while he upheld these three political principles, but

ultimately it was because he made the sacrifice. As Davis says, he was great because he was one "who didn't hesitate to die, because he loved us so."

So, to place Malcolm X in black political culture, in light of what Ossie Davis summed up in the funeral oration, is to conceptualize a powerful possibility. The question that has to be raised is whether or not the consciousness of the new generation that is embracing Malcolm as icon is also conscious of the political principles put forward by Ossie Davis. And while this may or may not be something that we can definitively sum up, it is possible to get some indication of what's going on by looking at how Malcolm is dealt with by rap artists, as they are the clearest source we have for understanding the consciousness of black youth today.



## 2. Malcolm X as Method: What We Need.

There have been and there will be many books written on Malcolm X, including the most important of which will be books that will reprint for the first time newly found and transcribed speeches and delivered by Malcolm X. Some of these books will be based on individuals' experiences, people who lived and worked with Malcolm, and as such will contribute primary documentation that we have previously not had public access to. And then there will be new analyses whereby existing and new information will be analyzed on the basis of different theoretical models addressing questions that have previously not been addressed and/or are being addressed again by a new generation with a new set of experiences, and therefore a new need to appropriate its history and understand it for itself and its own mission.

I am writing this book as a guide to Malcolm X and all the other books about him. My focus in this text is on method; that

is to say, I am focussed on answering the question, and/or providing guidelines in response to the question, How should one read Malcolm X? The most important aspect of \_\_\_\_\_ historical knowledge is methodology; that is to say, one finds out how things were done and how change took place in the past not because it's possible ever to repeat the past but because the past is the only source of information that we have on the basis of which we can make new decisions about the new conditions that exist for each new generation. So in reading Malcolm X and the books about Malcolm X for method is to gain the most essential knowledge required if one is mainly concerned about fighting for change today, as opposed to <sup>The necessary but not sufficient task of</sup> respecting and honoring the change <sup>^</sup> that took place in the past.

Dealing with Malcolm X's method is simply one small aspect of dealing with the overall black experience as method, and therefore it's necessary for me to clarify what my philosophical



methodology is in relation to this study. The first is that we have to deal with the black community in terms of it as fact, as form and as formulation. The black community as fact requires that all analysis be based on documented information. Here I am making a distinction between an analysis based upon secrets that are undocumented and/or undocumentable, which ultimately comes down to whether or not you believe what the author is telling you or not, often on the basis of faith. This approach is anti-democratic because it assumes a privileged and informed elite through which we have access to what heretofore had been secrets. Our approach is quite different from this. Our approach is that everybody has access to the facts if they are documented, meaning based on what a certain number of individuals who can be named have said on the basis of their personal experience or on the basis of material documentation found in libraries and archives. All of this is open to verification and replication; in other

words, you can find out whether it's true by going to those people and asking them again and/or going to those libraries or archives and looking up the information in the primary documents yourself.

The black experience as social form really has to do with the social organization of life. Here we're talking about the family, we're talking about institutions that make up the community and we're talking about those institutions that make up the overall society, particularly governmental institutions like the police, prisons, agencies, the schools, etc. So that dealing with the black experience is trying to understand the nature of these specific social organizational forms.

And third, the black community as formulation has to do with the beliefs and opinions held by black people about their experience, about the social organization of life within the black community as well as the society and world overall. Furthermore,

when these beliefs and opinions are highly developed, systematized and often written down, we regard them as ideology; that is to say, a well-developed point of view that attempts to sum up all of the social forms and experiences of the black community and present this in as documented a form as possible.

A second major aspect of methodology has to do with defining history as change, so that the central concept of change has to be dealt with. After establishing that we're talking about the facts, forms and formulations of the black experience, then change has to do with observed differences over time in the forms and formulations, the social organization and the beliefs of the black community in relationship to the organization and belief system of the society and world overall. And of course, all of this, again, faces the methodological necessity of factual documentation. The question of history not only has to do with change but it has to do with the difference between what we can

call bit-by-bit change (incremental change) versus basic change which has to do with the development of the community through stages and the development of all organizational forms of life through stages as well.

The historical stages, or historical periodization, can be viewed as follows. Historically, the black experience in the United States has gone through three fundamental changes: slavery, rural tenancy and urban experience. These changes have not only occurred for most black people in the United States, they reflect similar changes that all societies throughout the world have gone through. However, it is important to point out that all black families and all black individuals have not gone through these three stages at the same time, because there has been a

[PARAGRAPH NOT COMPLETED]

[SIDE TWO]

Within this general understanding of the historical periodization of the society and of the black experience we're also using the concept of historical periodization to deal with the individual experience as well, especially when it comes to Malcolm X as icon. In other words, what we're interested in here is finding the logical character of Malcolm's life as an important aspect of understanding the historical development of Malcolm as icon, and therefore the limitations of the iconization of Malcolm relative to his actual and objective historical experience. Because it seems that since we are ourselves objective, historical experiences, it is to that aspect of Malcolm that we have to turn to learn the most and not the abstractions associated with Malcolm as icon. Therefore, the history as historical change is an important aspect of our methodological approach.

A third aspect of our search for the rational, that is, methodology, in Malcolm is to understand the debate and contro-

versial polemics that surrounded and often mystified any possibility of understanding Malcolm objectively. Here we have an interesting problem: Malcolm X in discourse with not only people in the movement, who he agreed and disagreed with, but also people in the society overall who opposed him with or without control of mechanisms of power to do something about it. Therefore, discourse within and outside of the black community, again referring back to what Ossie Davis captures in his funeral oration as an essential aspect of the methodology that we'll use in trying to understand Malcolm X.

And this is precisely the structure of the book. Essentially this text is divided into two parts. The first part deals with paradigm, that second discourse. Paradigm refers to a framework, a conceptual framework that one uses, even with knowing you're using it, to understand the world and any important phenomena. And therefore we're searching for the paradigm, that

is, the rational, within the icon. What we're trying to do is to take the icon out of the realm of abstractions and worship into the realm of politics and the black-liberation struggle. Our analysis of Malcolm as paradigm has to do with a necessary understanding of the historical periodization of his life through an analysis of his autobiography, and, in that context, rethinking his ideological development toward mapping the ideological options that emerge and therefore link Malcolm to the history of black people in fundamental ways.

This leads to the second aspect of paradigm, and that's the extent to which the historical development of Malcolm is linked to the history and ideological traditions of black radicalism in the United States. In other words, our argument is that Malcolm's autobiography provides an essential and fundamental ideological mapping for the current generations of black people engaged in building and rebuilding the black-liberation movement,

and his life provides an open door to the history and ideological traditions of black radicalism which enable us to not only learn from the past but understand the extent to which the current situation is new and therefore must be created in a new way by those of us who live now.

The second part of the book deals with the general concept of discourse; that is, the interaction and dynamic dialogue that Malcolm carried out with three groups of individuals inside the movement: those whom he learned from (especially <sup>his parents and</sup> Elijah Muhammad <sup>SNCC and</sup> as mentor), peers (especially <sup>^</sup> Martin Luther King, who provides the dialectical opposition in the great debates of the 1960s) and heirs (in this case, especially the Black Panther Party, which <sup>and the League of Rev. Blk Workers.</sup> emerged one year after Malcolm's assassination and embraced many of his most important ideas). It is precisely a grasp of Malcolm as paradigm and the discourse that he engaged in that enables us to grasp as Malcolm as method, and therefore have the basis on



which to read Malcolm and read texts about Malcolm with the greatest possibility of gaining insight that we need.

Therefore, I present this book not as a book not to replace any other book, but as a book to be read in relation to all other books. The study of Malcolm X will be an ongoing aspect of the ideological development of the black-liberation movement and black political culture. It is essential that we understand this distinction between Malcolm X as icon and Malcolm X as method. In some fundamental aspects of black political culture, especially rap, Malcolm X as icon is necessary. However, it is not sufficient. What we need in addition is a full understanding of Malcolm X as method, because then we take Malcolm out of the abstract and place what we can use on the table to be discussed in relation to our contemporary experience and our contemporary necessity for uniting with those who stand in opposition to racism, class exploitation and sexism in order to fight for the

kind of world in which we truly can have freedom, justice and equality. Now is the time for a sober and serious study of Malcolm X as method. I invite you to read this book and criticize it from the standpoint of how does it contribute to what we need to rebuild the black-liberation movement and how does it fall short. But remember this, all of the ways in which this book falls short constitute the challenge for you to take up the task, to continue the intellectual work of designing the map and the methodology for black liberation.

## PARADIGM

Malcolm X is the supreme icon of contemporary Black political culture. This is a great strength and, at the same time, it is a great weakness. The icon is a symbol or image whose concreteness concentrates abstract beliefs, values and commitments. It is a core symbolic objectification within a culture. This phenomenon of Malcolm as icon reflects the extent to which Malcolm was drawn deeply into the bosom and the soul of his people. On the one hand, the plain simplicity of a man who never severed his ties with the day-to-day life of people on the streets of the communities that he lived and worked in -- being personable, prepared to engage in conversation from the details of one's life to the political realities of this society and the world -- to someone embodied the best of the gladiator and the warrior who, in taking on the system in combat -- in his case, verbal combat

Adam Clayton Powell  
Jackie Robinson

-- he represented all of us in the same way that Joe Louis or Jackie Robinson or, for that matter, Muhammad Ali represented Black people in a symbolic fight-back situation. NO

This iconization is tied to the ritual function embedded in the activities to reproduce and sustain radical political culture. It was remembering Malcolm, just as the remembering of Nat Turner and many others, that kept alive the possibility of more radical politics than might exist at any given time. This was not only a collective activity, it was a very personal ritual that was undertaken by people who come out of the '60s and who had had a personal relationship with Malcolm -- and this included both people who were personally connected to Malcolm while he was there as well as people who weren't, and therefore had subsequently felt guilty about not having been, and therefore as converts they became even more committed to Malcolm than those people who had been active while Malcolm was alive. The point is

that the icon is connected to ritual.

On the other hand it is also true that in the context of this advanced capitalist economy, the fact that there was the concrete image and symbol of the icon enabled people to produce and reproduce it for sale. The commodification of Malcolm X as icon dominates the markets of popular culture in America today. This is certainly true for Black people, including everything from the t-shirts to the rap songs and the potato chips. The fact is, is that in the Black community Malcolm X is good for business. We know this to be the ultimate contradiction. Malcolm X, who stood for freedom, justice and equality and the liberation of Black people from the prison of the capitalist marketplace, is now captured and kept alive as a result of becoming a commodity within this very same marketplace. It is this dilemma -- Malcolm X as icon becoming commodity -- that has to be addressed.

The new approach is to deal with Malcolm X as paradigm. The significant difference between dealing with Malcolm as icon versus Malcolm as paradigm is that while Malcolm as icon is tied to the ritual reproduction of political culture, Malcolm X as paradigm is to regard Malcolm's life and work as method for the production of struggle. The main point here is that it is possible to study Malcolm and gain from the study clarity regarding why Malcolm is an icon and, on that basis, being able to better chart the course that his life and beliefs would set one on -- not as a ritual of deference, holding the choices and decisions that Malcolm made in the context of the times in which he lived, but rather, more profoundly, as the basis for discovering the path and line of march for the liberation struggle that we have to wage in the '90s and the 21st century.

Malcolm X as paradigm requires that we regard Malcolm as both text and context. We have to, in other words, see in Mal-

colm not only a connection to beliefs but a connection to the experiences of Black people overall, that unity of the subjective and the objective. Of course, this is a critical approach to summing up the life of a person that is full of controversy and full of conflict. One source of this controversy has to do with the relative uniqueness of his autobiography. His autobiography is the major book of the 1960s. And while his book is such a major work of African-American writing, we nevertheless find most of his life otherwise shrouded in secrecy. Furthermore, most of his life, in his own terms as well as in the terms of everyone else, experiences great dialectical tension between past and future, mostly coming down to a struggle of good versus evil. Malcolm's life embraced both, and as such covered the full spectrum of experience in the Black community in this country and in the world overall. In this sense, his life takes on even biblical proportions. And perhaps, lastly, the reason why, relative

to the point of text and context, Malcolm X as paradigm is so significant is that the part of the Black community that he was most concerned with has now become quantitatively the dominant aspect of the community even more than it had been. And therefore the self-reporting (autobiography) of his struggle (the grand dialectic of good versus evil) his [?] time is now.

The key point about Malcolm X as paradigm is the relationship between biography and history. Biography, especially autobiography, focuses on the individual and, as such, is focused on particularities. However, when we raise the question of the relationship between biography and history we are raising the connection between the particularities of an individual experience and the generalities of the overall collective experience. The key point to make is that while the symbolic power of an icon has great cultural relevance, it is a paradigm that points us to the connections from the individual to the group level that



enable one to read the individual in light of the group, and, as such, to find a connection with oneself. Biography as history, the individual as representative of the collective, involves two things: objective aspects of behavior and subjective aspects of beliefs.

The objective behavior of an individual, while representing the full range of choices and options within an objective context, nevertheless can more or less adequately represent the modal behavior of people living at that time. It is precisely being a part of the modal experience, that is, a shared experience with the majority of people, that makes one's behavior as an individual so significant. The key here then is to read the detailed narrative of a person's life against the collective backdrop in order to determine "goodness of fit." The great heroes of history are often heroic not because they are entirely unique, but rather because of the fundamental aspects of the

shared experience of a modal behavior of the community or nation.

On the subjective side of things, reading biography as ideology, we have to take one's beliefs and to read backward in time in order to understand not only the social causality but the subsequent intertextuality of the beliefs of an individual with the collective wisdom and traditions of the thought that serve as the backdrop and source for every subsequent generation. In this instance what we're discussing is how Malcolm X becomes, then, a reflection of the historical, ideological traditions as concentrated in his beliefs as they changed over time. Here we're discussing one's conceptual orientation, as well as one's beliefs and assumptions.

In general, it is important to regard this reading of Malcolm X as paradigm as a form of mapping. A map is a picture of how various things are located within a specific space. In other words, a map provides a way of locating oneself in relationship

to other relevant points and enables one to figure out how to get from one place to the next. In reading Malcolm's life and beliefs in terms of mapping, we do so for three reasons: One, to give points of reference relative to the historical origin and contemporary context -- Black political culture and the society overall. Two, it enables us to identify all forces that generally line up in a direction one might regard this as the general parameters as the map, going one way as opposed to the opposite way, going one way as opposed to off to the left or to the right. And lastly, it indicates within this that to get from point A to point B there are frequently more than one way to get there; some might take longer and some may be harder to negotiate, but nevertheless there's more than one way to get from A to B.

In other words, to read biography as history in terms of behavior and beliefs, using the analogy of reading a map is very useful. The danger is that a map is, after all, an artificial

construct, because the location of anything is in constant motion. However, we use maps because, even though change occurs and even though the situation may be totally different than one might expect, a map is a frame of reference. And that, after all, is what the study of history gives us.

The task in this section, Malcolm X as Paradigm, is to do three things: First, to summarize the essential points of reference in his autobiographical narrative; second, to place these points of reference in relationship to the collective experience covering the time that Malcolm as the time in which we now live in order to understand to what extent did his life embody the experience of his generation or subsequent generations in order to understand why it is that Malcolm emerges with such power as an icon and therefore, we suppose, such potential as method; and third, to read backwards the relationship between Malcolm's beliefs and the radical Black ideological tradition from which he

drew his strength and clarified his orientation.

#### Section A: The Autobiographical Narrative

Malcolm X, with the collaboration of Alex Haley, wrote a classic autobiography in the great tradition of the 19th-century slave narratives of Gustavus Vassa and Frederick Douglass, and the 20th-century texts by Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Richard Wright, Ida B. Wells, Zora Neale Hurston and Maya Angelou. In American letters in general, this book was as great as the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin or Henry Adams, and in world literature it must rank with the narratives of St. Augustine's Confessions and Che Guevara's Reminiscences. This is a great adventure story that grabs the imagination, opens up the soul of a people through the authentic language of a pilgrim. This text has been adopted by Black people as their own, as their 20th-century classic. It has also been widely accepted in educational curriculum for general use in the

United States.

There were four stages to Malcolm's life: one, small-town boy from a broken family trying to get ahead; two, a big-city hoodlum dealing in drugs and robbery; three, a proselytizing Black-nationalist minister in the Nation of Islam; and four, a leading spokesperson for the radical Black tradition. Each of these stages is full of a myriad of life's experiences, only some of which are included in the autobiography. And each flows into the other in incomplete ways. But nevertheless, it is important to point out that it is in fact the structural clarity of these four stages that enable us to map Malcolm's life's experiences in relation to our collective history.

Malcolm was born Malcolm Little, May 19, 1925, in Omaha, Nebraska. His parents were Reverend Earl Little and Louise Little. He was a Georgia-born Baptist preacher and an organizer for Marcus Garvey's UNIA, Universal Negro Improvement Associa-

tion. Louise Little was a Grenadian-born outspoken activist in the UNIA as well. Malcolm had seven brothers and sisters (Wilfred, Hilda, Filbert were older and Reginald, Wesley, Yvonne and Robert were younger). In addition, Malcolm's father had three children by a previous marriage and therefore they constituted Malcolm's half-brother and -sisters, including Ella, Earl, Jr. and Mary. Malcolm was his father's stepchild.

During the first six years of Malcolm's life lived in a two-parent family with strong parents. His father was a Baptist preacher and, as such, played an important role in the community. It was on this basis that Malcolm was able to visit many homes and to go to political meetings where both of his parents gave leadership. Malcolm was a favorite of his father, although he does suggest that, comparatively speaking, he was given preferential treatment by his father but singled out for stern discipline by his mother.

In the first two chapters of the autobiography, Malcolm X provides a rich description of his background which, upon reflection, actually constituted the foundation for his entire life. His father and his mother, collectively through their activity and through their beliefs, anchored in him the discipline of political unity and struggle, as well as religious belief and morality, strong parents and self-respect to the extreme.

The actual structure of his early life is set by the incremental destruction of his family life. The first six years of his family he lived with his two parents, father and mother, and the next six years of his life he lived with his widowed mother. The final stage was four years in various foster homes. Malcolm, therefore, experienced a diversity of family life as a child: the two-parent family, the one-parent family and foster care.

When Malcolm was six years old his father was brutally murdered by white racists, and six years later his mother suc-



cumbed to the pressures of the welfare system while trying to raise her children singlehandedly. She was committed to a mental hospital where she stayed from 1937 to 1963. Malcolm was a Black youth alienated from his family through racist violence and forced to turn to the street.

After spending three years in the foster-home/detention-home process, and still not escaping institutional racism and individual prejudices, he moved to Boston with his eldest paternal half-sister, Ella. In Boston he rejected what he perceived to be the hypocritical and imitative lifestyles of Black status seekers of that part of the Black community that Ella was introducing him to. Instead, Malcolm preferred the more common and basic community life and took to the street. First in Boston and then in New York, Malcolm explored the full range of illegal alternatives, everything we know in our community today: drugs, prostitution, robbery. He formed a gang in Boston and ended up in

prison in 1946. In his 21st year he was a school dropout, a drug addict, a loser.

It was while incarcerated that Malcolm came to understand how he had been isolated and rendered powerless, other than as a source of vulgar, naked violence. He had been arrested for burglary, but believed that his sentence, which far exceed the normal sentence for burglary, was actually because he had as accomplices two white women, one of whom was married.

It was at this stage of his life that Malcolm had descended into the very bottom, the very depth of the community. He had spent five years in the street and was about to spend six years in prison. It was while incarcerated that Malcolm came to understand how he had been isolated and rendered powerless, other than as a source of vulgar, naked violence [REPEATED FROM ABOVE]. In this depth he experienced one of the great reversals of the 20th century, the rehabilitation and conversion of a hardened crimi-

nals. He met Bimbi, prison intellectual, and was introduced to Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam. The social organization of a prison frequently provides deference for inmates who, as intellectuals, provide consultation to other prisoners, the general process of education and an alternative source of self-respect for the prisoners independent of the formal prison authorities. Prison house intellectuals are an example of how talented individuals are tossed away by society, usually not rehabilitated. The Nation of Islam, on the other hand is an organization in the society and yet outside of its mainstream social life. This is an organization that imposes on itself the discipline of the segregated existence that initially is imposed on it by the society. And therefore there's a real parallel between the prison house intellectual on the one hand and the Nation of Islam activist on the other. Both are outside of their normative mandate, and both represent an independent source of

positive self-image.

These two men guided Malcolm to self-emancipation, reading and writing his way to intellectual growth and to a reversal of habits to reinforce a new lifestyle and moral code. He went into prison a degenerate criminal and after seven [YOU SAY SIX ABOVE] years as a model of commitment, dedication and discipline, when he was released in 1952, he was now a whole, cleansed man, moving in the path of his father. He was becoming a Black-nationalist organizer, attempting to save Black people from the destruction of a white racist society.

Malcolm had been introduced to the Nation of Islam by his brother, subsequently reinforced by other members of the family who had also joined the Nation of Islam. Malcolm discovered through his interaction with Bimbi that he was a basically uneducated, ignorant person. Through Bimbi he discovered the world of books. And through Elijah Muhammad he discovered the need to

learn how to write. Reading and writing, fundamental tools of an educated person, the basis for self-emancipation. In prison, Malcolm mastered reading and writing.

After being released from prison Malcolm moved to Detroit, got a job and became an activist in the local Muslim mosque. Malcolm began to discover that his skills as a street hustler could be transformed and utilized as an organizer. His promise led Elijah Muhammad to call him to Chicago and educate him while providing living accommodations in his own home. In fact, one might say that Elijah Muhammad accepted Malcolm X as a surrogate son.

For the next 12 years Malcolm X became the main spark for the Nation of Islam to grow from 400 members to 40,000 members, with temples organized in virtually every major city in the United States. After studying with Elijah Muhammad he was then assigned to lead the temple in New York, and eventually became

the national representative of the organization. Inside the Nation of Islam Elijah Muhammad and the older ministers ruled supreme, but outside, in the Black community at large and the emerging Black movement in the 1950s and '60s, increasingly people began to know the Nation through Malcolm and the new recruits.

At first Malcolm X was a devout representative of Elijah Muhammad. When one heard Malcolm speak you heard the words of Elijah Muhammad. He articulated the doctrine of the Nation of Islam for the Black community at large through speeches and articles. Every important aspect of their beliefs was put forward by Malcolm not only as a minister inside the temple, but as a voice that increasingly spoke to larger and larger parts of the Black urban community. As Malcolm began to become a force in Harlem and, after a TV documentary, a recognized force on the national scene, Malcolm began to confront the living ideas of the

Black-liberation movement. This represented a conflict between his dogma and the dynamic discourse of the movement.

Malcolm X was silenced by Elijah Muhammad on December 3, 1963, but for over a year he had been moving away from the strict dogma of the Nation of Islam toward the more dynamic rhetoric of the Black-liberation movement. This, of course, becomes full-blown after the three-month period when, on March 8, 1964, Malcolm declares his independence from the Nation of Islam and he then goes on a virtually unprecedented ideological transformation and journey for the next 11 months until his assassination in February the following year.

There have been many points of view expressed about the rupture by which Malcolm left the Nation of Islam. Malcolm reports most clearly that he failed Elijah Muhammad, but that Elijah Muhammad failed him. Muhammad failed by violating his own moral code by fathering children with two young secretaries out

of wedlock. And Malcolm failed by violating Muhammad's order to remain silent on the assassination of Kennedy, the U.S. president.

[END OF SIDE A]

[BEGINNING OF SIDE B]

Muhammad failed by violating his own moral code by fathering children with two young secretaries out of wedlock. [REPEATED FROM ABOVE] This forced Malcolm into a great dilemma by which he was forced to weigh his loyalty to Muhammad versus the survival of the movement with integrity and ideological purity. He even consulted with other ministers to try to settle the question. But to prevent them from being shot when it would be raised, he thought it was his responsibility to discuss it.

Malcolm failed by violating Muhammad's order to remain silent on the assassination of Kennedy, the U.S. president. [REPEATED FROM ABOVE] Elijah Muhammad believed that the American



people were deeply committed and emotionally connected to their young president, and therefore all Nation of Islam officials should remain silent for fear that there would be public outrage and steps would be taken in some way in retribution if anything were to happen. Of course, the facts are that Malcolm only made the statement after a speech in a response to a specific question, and it was an offhanded statement at that. However, his point simply was that "the assassination of Kennedy represented chickens coming home to roost," by which he meant that the Kennedy Administration had brought murder and violence and therefore it was simply coming back on him.

There are other points of view regarding an underlying tension that had to do with a power struggle in the Nation of Islam between different forces in anticipation of the old leader's death. There was tension between the old conservative ministers and members from before the 1960s and those who joined

in the '60s, an era of more militant and activist struggle. This was also a tension between old ideologues of their particular Afro-American form of Islam and the 1960s members more oriented toward the ideology of Black nationalism.

There was also a tension between the national headquarters bureaucracy, and their need for accumulating the resources generated throughout the country at the individual temples, and the more militant and activist movement rooted in the temples throughout the country. This struggle was a struggle between a more centralized and a more decentralized dynamic. And finally, some interpret this as a struggle between alternative family circles, between the extended family of the old leader, and the emergence of new family dynasty around the Little family, led by Malcolm. All of the alternative explanations seem to have merit, but without more detailed information it seems clear that the external reasons given are sufficient explanation for what hap-

pened, though it's important to remember that the internal organizational dynamics may have been decisive.

Malcolm X had spent 16 years in the Nation of Islam, basically all of his mature adult life. And therefore when he left the Nation of Islam he could not have been more isolated from family, friends and associates. Further, in the last stage of his life, less than one year was all the time he had to attempt to reestablish himself. And, of course, while he was able to open many doors, the amount of progress was limited. After leaving the Nation of Islam, for the next year Malcolm spent nearly six months abroad, and the rest of the time crisscrossing the country for speaking engagements, TV interviews and organizational meetings with the few forces he was able to trust and gather around himself. He led in the formation of Muslim Mosque Incorporated, mainly composed of people who left the Nation of Islam with him and then other people who were not prepared to

join the Nation of Islam but were prepared to follow Malcolm to Islam. And, of course, Muslim Mosque Incorporated was designed more in keeping with the belief and practices of orthodox Sunni Islam. Also, he led in the formation of the Organization for Afro-American Unity. This was an organization that embodied his views concerning the Black united front and named in respect for the Organization of African Unity, which he felt had a critical and strategic role to play in Africa and world affairs. In this last year Malcolm emerged as an international representative of the Black-liberation movement in the United States and a leading symbol of militant anti-imperialism for the entire African world, pressed Third World people, organizations and governments as well. Malcolm turned every progressive form into a classroom, an arena of ideological combat and political mobilization. His last year was epic in its proportions.

He spent six months of that year outside of the United

States. April 4, he left on a trip to Mecca, where he made the hajj, in addition traveling to Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Liberia, Senegal, Algeria. He returned after being in the United States for some three months in July to attend an OAU meeting in Cairo, Egypt, also traveling to Tanzania, England and France. And then Malcolm made a third trip to participate in a debate at Oxford University in December of that year. Finally, in February, Malcolm returns to England, although he was refused admittance into France. So in that last year Malcolm made four trips abroad.

In addition, while he was in the United States during that last year Malcolm traveled the length and breadth of the USA, debating and speaking in Detroit and Cleveland, two of the places where he gave some of his most memorable presentations, continually on the radio in New York, and moving through Chicago and California as well. In addition, of course, increasingly Malcolm

faces death threats, including the actual bombing of his home and the total insecurity of having to move his family into more secure quarters.

In general, Malcolm X led a life that went through four distinct stages. And each of these stages represents a vital experience in the overall life of the Black community. Not that each person goes through the sequence, but that the sequence of Malcolm's life connects with options and alternatives for broad sectors of generations. It is entirely possible for people to read Malcolm and see themselves.

This brief discussion of Malcolm's life leads us to the task of mapping, by which vital features of his life are placed in relation to the broader experience that it connects with, and in this way we can determine whether or not -- or rather, we can determine how -- Malcolm's life, in this particularity, is paradigmatic because of his connection with the broader experience of

the overall collectivity.

1. COMMUNITY. Malcolm X lived and worked in four different kinds of community. As Malcolm Little he lived in small Midwestern towns: Omaha, Milwaukee, Lansing and East Lansing. Each of these represents small Midwestern cities with an industrial base, with relatively small Black populations. This is a critical point, because Malcolm X is an urban phenomenon. He did not migrate from the rural or the urban South. And therefore Malcolm's life, while being born in 1925 after the first great migration, World War I, is really more like the majority of Black people born from the 1950s on, in that the modal experience for the Black community didn't become the urban industrial experience until that time. So it's important to locate Malcolm outside of the context in which the Southern civil-rights movement developed, and also in relation to certain cultural legacies from the past. In the second stage of Malcolm's life, as Detroit Red,

he lived in large East Coast cities with large Black populations: Boston, New York City (Harlem) and Washington, D.C. These were important because it was in these cities that Malcolm became connected to the dialectical opposite of the community dynamic that he had known before. And then Malcolm, after becoming national spokesperson for the Nation of Islam, was more associated with moving throughout the United States, organizing mosques in every major city in the United States. In addition, of course, he was increasingly mentioned and playing a role in the radio, TV and newspaper/magazine media, and therefore he was really a national figure. After all, the 1960s, in which this occurred -- beginning in 1959 there was a national TV documentary -- is really much characteristic of the Black community as a whole becoming much more cosmopolitan in that respect. In the last stage of his life Malcolm, as indicated, spent much of his time in Africa and Europe. This places Malcolm on the world



stage and, as such, gives him a perspective to judge the United States by the experience of other countries.

So from the standpoint of the community, Malcolm experienced the full options for the urban experience: small industrial cities, large East Coast cities, the national picture and the international picture.

2. FAMILY. Each of the four stages of Malcolm's life reflects a transformation of family life. Here family life is taken to mean primary group associations, intimate associations, in which one maintains personal relations, confidants, etc. As Malcolm Little he experienced a full range of options faced by Black youth. First, he lived with two parents, the normative household. He then lived with a single parent and faced juvenile delinquency and, ultimately, the institutionalization of his mother and his separation from his siblings through foster care and detention home.

During the second stage of his life Malcolm X, in becoming Detroit Red, essentially adopted his gang as his family. In fact, he regards his gang as a "family unit," and it's on the basis of this kind of relationship that he figured that he would be safe with them. Of course, this did not turn out to be true, as the two white women in the gang testified against them.

In the third stage of his life, as Malcolm X, it was clear that not only was he rebuilding a relationship with his siblings, most of whom had joined the Nation of Islam, but had adopted Elijah Muhammad (and been adopted by Elijah Muhammad) as a surrogate father figure, one who was quite like his father and who he was then able to relate to in a loyal and disciplined way. This dialectic of the gang versus a religious group with a patriarchal figure playing the role of surrogate parent is a common experience in relationship to the Black church and \_\_\_\_\_ likes [?].

The final stage of Malcolm's life really involved the crea-

tion of his own family, something that had begun in the Nation of Islam but which took full shape as he more and more separated from Elijah Muhammad and had to assume the full and isolated responsibility for his and his family's life in addition to the organization that he was attempting to rebuild. However, Malcolm was not simply attempting to rebuild a similar dynastic, patriarchal family setting, but was also transforming toward more egalitarian ideas and therefore was charting new ground.

3. "COLOR." One of the obvious aspects of Malcolm's life had to do with skin color, and it is also this aspect that ties Malcolm into a fundamental aspect of experience of Black people in the USA. Malcolm X was born into a family with what he describes as being a dark-skinned and a very light-skinned mother. He was a lighter-skinned person, that is, the lightest one of his brothers and sisters, and therefore among other ways of viewing his childhood he interpreted things in terms of color. This is

common in the Black community; it was then and it is now. He reports that he felt his father preferred him and his mother rejected him because of his color. At least, their differential treatment was interpreted on a color basis. Now, the two aspects of color -- one has to do with being Black versus being white; the other has to do with color differences within the Black community. Malcolm deals with both.

On the basis of Black/white differences, it was clear that Malcolm X lives through a common American experience. Because he was lighter skinned, the commonly held view is that his treatment would not be as severe as if he were a darker-skinned Black person. However, the fact that his relationship with his foster-home-care white caretakers was so disastrous that his being an exception to the Black experience overall was definitively ruled out based on his own experience. The folk adage, "If you're Black get back, if you're brown stick around, if you're yella

you're a lucky fella," proved to be wrong in Malcolm's case. Yes, his father was Black and his father's being [?] murdered, his mother was light ("damn near white"), but she was driven to a nervous breakdown and incarcerated in a mental-health institution. Malcolm notes that racist putdown in school, where he was advised not to aspire to being an attorney but a carpenter, and in his foster home, where he overheard conversations that regarded him as something of a mascot or pet, as decisive. As he put it, "It was then that I began to change -- inside."

As Detroit Red, in this regard Malcolm learned that Black people had a distorted, in fact, an inverse, sense of value when it came to color; meaning that they had adopted the white attitude of self-hate toward themselves as Black people and placed a high value on white people, especially Black men valuing white women. It was in this stage that not only was he advised to be careful of white people, but he saw this lustful desire. In

fact, Malcolm gets himself a white woman and consciously uses her color as the basis for attaining prestige and status in the Black community. As Malcolm Little he had consciously stayed away from white women to accept the dominant norm, whereas as Detroit Red he took a white woman and flaunted her in order to gain status.

As Malcolm X he took a very strong position and, as will be explained later, took the allegorical interpretation of Muhammad that white people were created by an evil scientist on the basis of white people, and therefore they represent in some way a biologically deformed race that has flaws leading to evil intentions. This is both a biological as well as a theological explanation.

During the final stage of his life Malcolm X confronted the world revolutionary movement and the world Islamic movement as having all the colors of humanity. This forced Malcolm to reinterpret white people, not as general biology or theology but

rather in terms of history and the sociological meaning of the term color, which he regarded in the U.S. as being translated into boss (I'm white equals I'm boss).

Now, on the other hand, within the Black community Malcolm also dealt with the question of color. The main way that Malcolm dealt with color had to do with two things: First, that he was given the name Red, and, more precisely, Detroit Red, when he was in Chicago, which is a term frequently given by the Black community to light-skinned Blacks. It is a term of endearment, it is simply a way of acknowledging the color diversity in the Black community. In addition, Malcolm consciously acknowledged the history of privilege accorded light-skinned Blacks coming out of slavery and reversed the meaning to one of racism and oppression, likening the existence of lighter-skinned Blacks to the process of institutionalized rape that took place during the slave period. And therefore he often talked about how he hated to feel the

blood of the racist flowing through his veins.

Perhaps the most important point to make about Malcolm X and color is the fact that Malcolm is the modern author of Black consciousness in the United States, and therefore it was Malcolm who advanced the notion that Black people, out of their historic \_\_\_\_\_ whereby the term Black took on the meaning of experience as opposed to skin color. "I'm Black and I'm proud" that was sung by James Brown and adopted by Black people of all colors. And for a moment there was a unifying ideological theme that pushed to the background decades of privilege based upon skin color.

4. WOMEN. At each stage of Malcolm's life women played a critical life. Certainly, in the first years of his life the critical women were his mother and his paternal half-sister Ella. However, it's also true that the Gohannas [?] and the Serlins [?] and the Lyons' each were families in which women were able to



give Malcolm some degree of comfort, although in each instance it proved to be insufficient as a surrogate parent. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that they were there in critical points in his life. All of these women represented what one might call the tradition family life, the traditional role of women in a nurturing context. However, during the second year of the second stage of his life all of this would be reversed, so that the women that he dealt with were potential partners, all of whom he dealt with as objects. In his personal relationships with Laura and Sophia, essentially he dealt with them as sexual objects for his own gain. In fact, in adopting the hustler's mentality Malcolm believed that the only way to maintain a relationship was to do so in a negative, conflictual style: if you beat women and took their money they would remain more loyal than if you spoiled them and were too good to them.

As a member of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm regarded women

as the necessary counterpart, though inferior counterpart, to men. The inferior essentially in this context means without power and independence, and certainly without equality. On the other hand, it is clear that the repudiation of the hustler's mentality was essential because in his context as Malcolm X his views had to do with family life and the ascribed cultural role that the woman was to play in the home in relation to the children and in relationship to the man of the household. And so the very traditional patriarchal views emerged that in no way was a replication of his family origin.

It was in this context, and then for the rest of his life, that Malcolm began his own nuclear family through the marriage with Betty and the ultimate parenting of six daughters. The marriage was a marriage in the Nation of Islam and carried out in a very traditional fashion. However, because it was at a time when Malcolm was the national spokesperson and, of course,

through the last year of his life, Malcolm was constantly out of town. Furthermore, since the marriage was established within the confines of the Nation of Islam, Betty Shabazz had only a marginal relationship with the activities associated with the political development of Malcolm X, and therefore we have to interpret her as a person that was in the limited role as a Muslim wife, who only after Malcolm's assassination began to develop her own independent politics, which clearly are her politics and not the continuation of the politics of Malcolm X.

5. EDUCATION. The educational experiences of Malcolm X include both institutional and non-institutional mechanisms, and, as such, are very similar to the broader experiences of Black youth. Malcolm X's experience in school, for all practical purposes, was quite successful. The problem that he encountered was the problem of racism, both in relationship to the expected social mores as well as in the rejection he experienced from a

teacher upon discussing his future occupational aspirations. Perhaps more important than the schooling was Malcolm's historical apprenticeships by which he learned the details of entry into new occupations and then, essentially, learned while doing. He was educated into the lifestyle of a hustler by serving as apprentices for his friends, Shorty, Sammy and many other Harlem characters. He served an apprenticeship in order to save himself from the prison negation of being a hoodlum by Bimbi and Elijah Muhammad. Even more than he describes in the autobiography, but which comes out in a fuller appraisal of the fact, is the fact that in Harlem in particular and the movement in general Malcolm X was not only a fellow activist but an active student of all the people that he worked with. This is particularly true in Harlem as the nationalist community activists were able to reorient him away from the more dogmatic and limited theological orientation of Elijah Muhammad. Finally, in the last period of his life, he

developed an apprenticeship relationship with an Imam for his reorientation to orthodox Islam and had begun to adopt a collegial relationship and apprenticeship relationships with political leaders throughout the Third World, especially African leaders. This represents a lifelong learning process, one which he clearly establishes in the concluding pages of the autobiography.

[END OF TAPE]

[TAPE TWO, SIDE A]

6. DRUGS. Malcolm X became an intense drug user the second period of his life, as Detroit Red. He was a hustler who not only sold drugs, but used them as well. It is interesting that Malcolm describes the full range of drug use, concentrating on marijuana and cocaine, although also including various chemical forms of uppers and downers as well as alcohol. The use of drugs not only in Malcolm's eyes involved their effect on you, but the lifestyle of dealing and using as well as the economic dimension.

For Malcolm, survival on the street outside of the job involved sex and drugs. And, of course, being a hustler one drifted without normal conventions of morality with regard to both of these things.

7. CULTURE. The cultural dimension of Malcolm's life is one of the most important issues in understanding how he connects as paradigm to the overall Black experience. As indicated, Malcolm is not from the rural South and therefore did not experience a transformation of the culture of origin to one found upon migrating to the city. Rather, he was, in fact, a product of the urban experience. Malcolm was immersed in the cultural life of the Black community as a hustler on the streets, especially as is true in relationship to Black music. His reminiscences involve a virtual all-star collection of musicians and singers, because of their connection to nightlife. The same is not true with regard to writers and artists, who are associated with more "respect-

able" lifestyle. On the other hand, as Malcolm X, for the third and fourth and periods of his life, he becomes much more associated with the literary and intellectual aspects of Black cultural expression, particularly Harlem but also throughout the United States. In addition, of course, as Malcolm X the rediscovery of Africa played an important role. And therefore, people who were recovering African culture and finding ways to present it in the Black community of the United States were very much welcomed by Malcolm X and supported in Harlem and throughout the country as well. So that you had this dialectic of the hustler's connection to music and street culture, and the popular culture of the street -- the zoot suit, the hip language, the life of the hipster, the outsider, the rebel -- on the other hand you had the more intellectual and critical culture of the jazz musician turned intellectual, as opposed to the dance hall, and the writer, the novelist, the critic, the emergence of what became known

as the Black arts movement in Harlem.

8. CLASS. Malcolm X grew up in a family that was poor, but middle-class in its orientation. One of the characteristic features, perhaps the most important characteristic feature, of the working class is the extent to which it sells its labor to work in exchange for wages. In other words, the working class goes to work for someone else who owns the machinery and the plant and the raw materials by which they make commodities; and that is, after all, the purpose of industrial production. However, as a farmer who's self-employed or any workers that are self-employed for the most part are outside of the discipline and the pressures that exist on the working class working at the point of production. Malcolm X grew up in a household where his father was essentially self-employed, and worked also in a political and ideological role in relation to the Black community. So for many reasons he had much greater possibilities of initiative than the



worker at that time would have had. Therefore, he comes out of a certain bold individualism that his family represented, even including their going from place to place, building one's own house, etc.

In fact, this leads to a very interesting manifestation during his time as Detroit Red, where this same individualism and independence and initiative is applied to the life of the hustler, and in this sense the life of an individual hustler is much more like the life of the individual, self-employed middle-class person. One exists within the law and one exists outside of the law, but they both have similar ways of operation. And even though most people who enter into the life of being a hustler come from the working class, nevertheless there is this element that comes from the individualism of the middle class.

On the other hand, it's important to recognize that from prison to his experience as the activist in the Nation of Islam,

his orientation becomes much more working-class. This is particularly true upon leaving prison, whereupon he takes a job as industrial worker in an auto plant and a furniture-manufacturing plant. Now, this is an important transition because it's on his way to becoming a full-time person in the Nation of Islam, whereupon one might argue he moved into the ministerial role, into a more middle-class occupational role. And, of course, there would be troops [?]. It is precisely the ideological aspect of his position which holds him to the masses of people. During the early stages, particularly during the '50s, in the Nation of Islam, the leadership had a decidedly middle-class ideology.

Malcolm X, as he developed from 1962 and '63 on, adopted much more of a mass, working-class orientation; as he put it, he was for the bottom-of-the-pile Negro, and therefore his orientation was an indictment of the system in how it dealt with the masses of people and not simply arguing for more entrepreneurship

in the Black community.

The fundamental point regarding class is that Malcolm X was a radicalized member of the middle class who transformed himself to represent ideas designed to analyze the world from the perspective of the working class and for the benefit of the Black poor.

9. PRISON. Malcolm X was incarcerated in 1946 and released from prison in 1952. This followed four years in foster care and detention care, and life in the streets where he dealt with the police on a daily basis.

Malcolm as a street hustler was intertwined with the police on a daily basis, and therefore saw how the police both protected private property and monitored the flow of drugs, but on the other hand did not intervene in a whole host of other areas, including many aspects of breaking the law.

The prison life was exposed in Malcolm's experience as

opposite from its stated purpose of rehabilitation. In fact, one would have to argue that Malcolm X was rehabilitated in spite of prison, not because of it.

In fact, in the community, one of the interesting experiences is that as Malcolm X, after he's released from prison, continues to be in conflict with the police, now not so much in the questions of breaking the law and private property, but now for explicitly political purposes. Therefore, what we find is that his relation to the police changes from the local police to the FBI and on to the CIA.

10. CHURCH. Malcolm X was born into a very religious household, both because his father was a Baptist preacher and also because his mother passionately held very fundamentalist religious beliefs. But he seemed to respond to that background by moving in an opposite direction, even symbolized by fellow inmates nicknaming him Satan.

Of course, Malcolm goes on to become a minister in the Nation of Islam and, as such, as a minister, lives a life that's totally immersed in religion and the organized life of the Nation of Islam as a church.

In other words, Malcolm X not only was involved in the Black Christian experience, but was also very much a product of what we can call de-Christianized radicalism. His ministry involved the Bible and the Koran. Furthermore, in the latter part of his life we find him separating his politics from his religion, seeking to make religion more of a personal experience, reserving politics to the collective public life of the community.

11. POLITICS. During Malcolm's early life his political experience came as the result of his father's role in the community as a leader representing religion and politics. Furthermore, as a hustler on the street, politics and power represented simply an extension of the corruption that the hustler knew on an

everyday basis. Therefore, the politicians were defined in light of the morality of the hustler.

It is during the last two stages of Malcolm's life that he took on more of an explicitly political character to what we think of as Black politics. As a Black Muslim he took the position of, as a matter of principle, staying outside of institutional politics and movement politics.

It was during his move away from the Nation of Islam into the broader anti-imperialist dynamic of national and world politics that Malcolm began to think in terms of Black politics. He did, in fact, become involved in Black-liberation, social-movement politics, and even suggested from time to time that he was interested in becoming involved in institutional politics. We have to take serious the title of his speech, "The Ballot or the Bullet."

12. VIOLENCE. Perhaps the summary aspect of Malcolm's life

can be discussed here because most of the significant events in his life happened between two murders, the murder of his father and his own murder. This places Malcolm squarely in the context of Black leadership and Third World leadership at the time that he lived, in the middle and end of the 20th century.

Of course, in addition to this is the fact that while being a hustler, living in fear and carrying a gun is the typical cost on a day-to-day basis of what being a hustler's all about.

But perhaps the most important way in which violence was a part of Malcolm's life was in his exposure to violence that had historically been perpetrated against Black people and, particularly, Africa, and how he was in fact committed to a policy of self-defense, that is, defending himself and for Black to defend themselves against violence. This is the most controversial aspect of violence in relation to Malcolm X.

In sum, these few points, whereby Malcolm's life can be

easily connected with the times in which he lived as well as the current times, are the basis for restating our general thesis: Malcolm X constitutes fundamental paradigm for Black people based on the connection between his personal life story and the collective experiences of Black people overall. Basically, this boils down to two clear points: one, shared experience; and two, the dialectic of salvation. When people in the Black community learn the story of Malcolm's life, particularly as he told it, they are brought intimately into a relationship not only with Malcolm but with the overall experience of the Black community. This is a personal connection that enables people to understand Malcolm's life a source of knowledge about themselves. It is a shared experience, Malcolm is a mirror through which one can see oneself and one's people. With regard to salvation, it's important to understand that the first two stages of Malcolm's life have to do with the fall and descent into hell, the fall being based on the



attack of racism, the killing of the father, the institutionalization of the mother, the separating of the siblings, the put [?] under racist institution of the detention home and the foster care, and then off to Boston and the descent into hell, the hell of the hustler street life, the pimps, the prostitutes, drugs and guns. However, after reaching rock bottom in the prison we begin the fightback, the self-emancipation and transformation through moral discipline and political awakening, the rediscovery of literacy, of reading and writing as tools for emancipation, and the fightback based upon the clear understanding of the lies and distortion of history, the ability to articulate the truth against the lies and the desire to identify with the heroes of history who always fought against evil. And it's in these two ways that Malcolm as paradigm, his experience has been most profound.

We have just discussed Malcolm's experiences as paradigm.

Now we want to discuss the next major aspect, which has to do with not the collective experience, but the collective memory of the Black community. The focus of this analysis now takes us from the objective to the subjective, from experience to belief. The fundamental point is that the Black community is not simply a reaction to the white community. This is a belief that has had to be refuted by every generation.

The intellectual history of the Black community is rooted in the fight for freedom. The fight for freedom has produced theories and ideas which together constitute intellectual foci that make up a radical Black ideological tradition.

The Black experience in the United States provided a context for understanding Malcolm X because it is not simply a version of Euro-American experience in blackface, as some analysts would have us believe, but is a distinct experience with its own unique features. This experience cannot be reduced to the aggregated

sum of individual experiences, a collectivity rooted in history and shared by each successive generation. This experience has produced historical traditions, and this is the point.

As with all traditions the main *raison d'être* is survival, specifically in this case the survival of a people who give their very lives to this tradition. Each tradition serves this survival function because it reinforces the ability to remain conscious of past lessons of defense against attack, identifying enemies and friends and consolidating the people in common struggle. Maintaining tradition means reproducing these lessons in the experiences of each succeeding generation. A tradition links the past to the future through the symbolic reproduction of important beliefs and practices. Survival rituals concentrate the power of culture and the social institutions and ideology.

Survival is an important point to make in that for an oppressed people survival translates into resistance. Furthermore,

the tradition is socially produced through the experiences of each succeeding generation inasmuch as the exploitation and oppression out of which the tradition began continues to be experienced in one way or another by each generation, even if in new shapes and forms. In sum, Black traditions are socially produced anew by each generation on an ad hoc basis, and symbolically reproduced as the continuity of cultural legacy in opposition to the oppression which seeks to destroy the independent capacity of the oppressed to maintain a positive identity and have an alternative vision. Indeed, traditions of resistance are even more dangerous than leaders. This is what has always been meant by the notion that one can kill a freedom fighter but not the desire for freedom, nor the social context in which freedom fighters have developed. This desire for freedom is at the heart of the traditions of the oppressed, including the African-American people.

The five main aspects of the radical Black tradition have to do with Black liberation theology, pan-Africanism, nationalism, feminism and socialism. [END OF RECORDING]

## TRADITION

The second major way that Malcolm X can be read methodologically as paradigm has to do with the concept of tradition. A tradition represents historical continuity of historical meaning, that is, the concentration of historical understanding and the meaning of experience concentrated into behavior rituals and beliefs. The point of a tradition is to connect people with the past, not the past in a quantitative sense but rather the past in a qualitative sense. The quality of one's historical existence is grounded in the tradition that one is a part of. The whole meaning of the tradition has to do with being able to appropriate the essential aspects of the past in order to concentrate them in one's beliefs and practices of today.

On the behavioral level, traditions are captured best in rituals. It is frequently the case that historical experiences

are kept alive through ritual behavior. On the other hand, ritual can be maintained but lose their meaning and take on additional meaning, thereby creating a process or setting up the necessity for the rediscovery of the origins of the ritual and attempts to have a renaissance or a rebirth of the initial historical meaning in the ritual. Examples of such rituals, for the slave experience, include the carnival, from Trinidad to Rio to New Orleans. The carnival was historically an event whereby the slaves were able to demonstrate a great deal of freedom of expression to mock their slaveowners, to affirm their humanity. Another historical ritual of great significance is Emancipation Day, again an experience that was replicated throughout the African diaspora whenever slavery was abolished. For example, in the African-American experience Emancipation Day activities often included community events and special meals. Another type of traditional historical ritual is the singing of a special song,

in the case of African Americans the Negro National Anthem. This song was written by James Weldon Johnson and his brother and was adopted by black people in the segregated institutions throughout the rural experience as a song that embodied the national aspirations of black people and therefore was sung ritualistically at all black institutions, especially black high schools and churches. Finally, more contemporary historical rituals are included in the observations of birthdays, for example Martin Luther King's birthday, which, incidentally, is a national holiday, and the birthday of Malcolm X.

The important point about collective rituals is that large numbers of people can be involved in them and they can be institutionalized; that is to say, they can occur on an annual basis. However, because of the tendency of rituals to involve icons and be subjected to the commodification of the capitalist marketplace and thereby face the trivialization of the meaning of the tradi-



tion, there is frequently a loss of meaning at the mass level. However, for a smaller group of people the way in which the ritual is able to maintain its meaning is because the tradition is also sustained through an ideological orientation, that is, the reproduction of the tradition at the ideological level.

The ideological reproduction of a tradition has to do with either the concentration or the ideology in the printed or, at this state, taped form, so that it can be reproduced, and/or an organizational context in which the ideological discussion or the ideological content of the tradition is replicated through forms of education. Therefore, the meaning of a tradition is best captured at the ideological level.

The ideological tradition of black people has always been concentrated in key individuals. The main way in which this concentration of ideological tradition has occurred is through the existence of great debates. The great debates of the radical

black tradition have to do with those fundamental junctures of social change experienced by black people. These junctures have all been part and parcel of the overarched and central theme of black history, which is a fight for freedom. Each of these great debates concentrated all aspects of the radical black tradition as a resource for the freedom struggle.

The first great ideological debate was the emancipation debate. This debate dominated black intellectual life the first half of the 19th century. The main historical example of this debate represents the National Negro Convention movement. From 1830 through the Civil War, black activists and community leaders met in local, state and national conventions to discuss their views on ending slavery and improving the lives of black people. These meetings ranged in size from 15 to several hundred, but they reflected the views of millions. The debates were carried out by such leaders as Samuel Cornish, founder of the first black

newspaper; Richard Allen, founded of the first black church; James Forten; Martin R. Delaney; David Walker; Harriet Tubman; Sojourner Truth; Frederick Douglass; Henry Highland Garnett and others.

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

There are many key theoreticians that contributed to this debate over a 50-to-75-year period. Some of these are: 1) David Walker, 2) Edward Blyden, 3) Martin Delaney and 4) Henry Highland Garnett.

The second great debate was a self-determination debate. The end of the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves took

place from the Civil War through the Reconstruction period, ending in the middle 1870s. By the turn of the century, U.S. imperialism had become mature with its escapades in the Philippines and the Caribbean. Into the 20th century, the struggle of imperialism to dominate and divide spheres of influence, especially the Third World, set the tone for politics. Within this context, the fight of black people, parallel with other Third World peoples, was for self-determination. That is to say, the main struggle was not to overthrow imperialism, which it strategically had as its task, but concretely the struggle was to fight for control over the black community. This involved a whole series of questions, especially the development of black institutions and leadership by which black people could be educated but as well maintain economic relations to mutual benefit. This was a time of segregation and barbaric forms of repression. In addition, it was a time when black people were split between a

rural Southern agrarian experience and a Northern, increasingly industrial, experience.

The self-determination debate took place in both the North and the South, involving such important individuals as Booker T. Washington, Ida B. Welles, W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Mosiah Garvey.

The self-determination debate was carried for the first half of the 20th century. And this debate was deeply rooted in the institutions around which the black community was organized.

As a result of the transformation of the black community from a rural agrarian people to a Northern industrial people, following the mechanization of agriculture and the massive migration to the city, new conditions prevailed. The main issue had to do with the fact that the black community could no longer usefully be segregated in the same way as it had been in the rural South. The conditions of living in a city and working in

an industrial environment required more relative levels of integration and higher levels of education and skills acquisition. This led to great, massive movements for integration, which took place under these new conditions. However, the massive integration of the black community, beginning in the industrial workplace and expanding into public education, gave rise to the third great debate.

The third great debate was the debate for black liberation. The critical factor here that distinguishes the black-liberation debate from the black self-determination debate is the fact that because of integration it became clear that the task of the black struggle for freedom was not simply to determine the course of the black community but rather had to address the basic nature of the overall society. Integration had led to a great acknowledgment that America was rotten to the core, and therefore black people had the task, in fighting for their own freedom, of creat-

ing the conditions for the liberation of everyone in society. Therefore, the black-liberation debate was a debate to transform the entire society and that's what made it different from the black self-determination debate.

The ideological tradition inherent in each of these three debates all maintained the orientation toward freedom: freedom from slavery, freedom to determine the internal development of the black community and last, freedom based on a transformation of the overall society.

Included in each of these three great debates regarding the radical black tradition are five essential concerns, or points of focus, around which the black community has struggled and therefore accumulated experience and a point of view. It is these five aspects which have kept the ideological tradition alive, although in times when the debate over the historical motion to freedom has been on the decline, each of these five traditions

has survived as dogma. When an aspect of the tradition is primarily expressed through dogma, it becomes something more antagonistic to the other aspects and their respective dogmatic expressions as well. The key point here is that under the conditions of a great debate each of these elements has made the most vital contribution to the liberation struggle. This is not only because it enriches and enlivens the consciousness of that generation when all of the aspects of the tradition are present, but it's when the objective conditions make change possible that debates occur. Therefore, what we're discussing here is the relationship between what people think about the world and the actual possibility of changing the world based upon what the objective conditions are like.

The first aspect of the tradition has to do with black religion. Black religion is the oldest aspect of the tradition and the one that has the most continuity. It has been clearly



documented that Africans that experienced the slave trade brought with them their religious beliefs and practices, even though there were great attempts made to destroy the rituals and artifacts of African religion, nevertheless it was possible for the slaves, through various mechanisms, to retain this aspect of their traditional life. The full range of religious thought was covered by traditional African religion. This includes a conception of the theory of the origin of the universe and the origin of humanity, it also reflects a conception of God and it also reflects a conception of morality and a historical summation of how all of this fits together. It's very clear that African religion was the greatest source of cohesion among African people and it became a consistent basis of resistance. This is true from the Haitian revolution and the importance of the voodoo priest Bulkman, as well as in slave insurrections such as that carried out by Nat Turner in Virginia.

The essential aspects of the religious radicalism have to do with two fundamental points. The first point has to do with identity, the connection of the oppressed with God, and therefore ultimately placing one not only with a past of righteousness and glory, but with a future of ascendancy back to that position. And ultimately this means freedom is assured. The second aspect has to do with a moral principle that the oppressor is evil and that the community of the oppressed is righteous and therefore morally correct to fight back and destroy their enemies. This can easily be translated into the general principle that "God helps those who fight back."

The second aspect of radical black tradition is pan-Africanism, the link with Africa. This means that consistently black people have reaffirmed their connection to Africa. The contradictions involved in forced separation over decades, generations and, eventually, centuries places a great strain on the

collective memory. However, the conditions in Africa and the conditions throughout the African diaspora remain fundamentally the same, as throughout the world European racism tended to isolate African people wherever they were. Of course, this has to be understood in two main historical experiences: On the one hand, up until the middle of the 19th century the actual importation of African slaves so that people were, in fact, being removed from Africa, and therefore we're discussing up to that point people who were, in fact, transplanted Africans directly. Therefore, the memory had to do with their own consciousness, the memory of their own personal experiences. However, from the middle of the 19th century until today, most of the connection has been a reassertion of identity based upon the retention of ideas and beliefs and practices as well as a more ideological appropriation of Africa as part of one's struggle for freedom; in that sense, it's the identity of people with common problems,

added to the common past history. In other words, pan-Africanism is something that has historically linked black people in the United States to Africa.

In general, then, pan-Africanism represents African unity, both within Africa as well as throughout the African diaspora.

The third aspect of the radical black tradition is nationalism, the belief and practice of unity within the black community of the United States. In dialectical tension with pan-Africanism is the notion that in Africa as well as throughout the African diaspora there have been more particular experiences having to do with the unfolding of history and the organization of oppression on the one hand and the development of a specific set of institutions and community traditions on the other hand. One of the interesting aspects of this is that in Africa the term African nationalism is used almost synonymously with pan-Africanism, although it is also true that, particularly since World War II,

these terms have meant quite different things. In the diaspora, especially the Caribbean and the United States, nationalism has a very specific meaning in that it refers to the unity and organization of struggle of those people within a particular state. So that in the United States black nationalism has to do with the black community within the United States and specifically has had historical reference to either black people in the Black Belt South (mainly those counties in Southern states that had a large percentage of the black population) and the urban black community, especially as it has developed since World War II.

Therefore, black nationalism has represented not only a movement but essentially the ideas inherent in the organization and leadership of black institutions that have had to develop as black institutions because of the practices of segregation and racism in the United States, especially the black church, as well as black business and paternal and social organizations.

Another aspect is black feminism, the beliefs and practices of women and men who fight against male supremacy and advocate the full and equal development of women as leaders and without any gender discrimination. The existence of black feminism has been a little known aspect of black intellectual, political, radical history, but at no point in time has there ever been the absence of black women who have articulated the radical views of the period as well as advocated equality for women. The history of black feminism is a history in dialectical tension with the history of white feminism on the one hand, that is, the fight against racism within the women's movement, and on the other hand it's been in tension with the black-liberation movement, that is, the struggle against male supremacy within the radical black tradition overall. Black feminism is an expression of the contributions that black women have historically made and a reflection on the lack of equality experienced by women today.

The importance of black feminism is that it remains the aspect of the radical black tradition most in need of public support, particularly within the black-liberation movement today.

The final aspect of the radical black tradition has to do with socialism, in this instance meaning the beliefs and practices for social and economic equity and justice. The history of socialism in the world is mainly a history that has to do with the unfolding analysis and critique of capitalism and the organization of the working class and other classes in society to build institutions of equity and to fight for the transformation of the society. This is also an important way to examine socialism as an aspect of the radical black tradition. However, it is also true that in the black community there are deep roots in the traditions and social organization of the people that suggest a spontaneous impulse toward economic, political and social equity through forms of cooperation. Both aspects, both the spontaneous

reorganization by the people as well as by the ideological critique of capitalism, have contributed to the tradition of black socialism.

In sum, we have the five important aspects of the radical black tradition: black religion, pan-Africanism, nationalism, feminism and socialism.

Malcolm X, at the end of his life, in 1965, represented a very high level of synthesis and struggle with regard to the radical black tradition. On the one hand, Malcolm embraced fully the radical black tradition, while at the same time representing one of the major aspects of the debate regarding black liberation in the 1960s. His main dialectical opposition, though it's important to recognize that there was unity within that dialectical opposition, was Martin Luther King. (This will be taken up in the next section, dealing with discourse.) Malcolm represented an important unifying force because his holistic embrace of



the radical black tradition led all segments of black radicalism to unite with some aspect of what he represented.

Malcolm at the end of his life was a Sunni Muslim Imam. This is a position that was bestowed upon Malcolm as a result of his making the Hajj to Mecca. In addition, of course, he had spent the last year of his life in Africa establishing direct connections with the heads of the most progressive African governments and with the leadership of the national-liberation struggles, particularly in Southern Africa. One of his main concerns was to educate people regarding not only the fight against colonialism, but also the fight against neocolonialism.

Malcolm also was a nationalist, a revolutionary nationalist. This is an important distinction to make because he believed that one had to not only grasp the international, and universal, aspects of reality, but also the particular historical manifestations within the local national context within which one operat-

ed. This is the context to understand Malcolm's views on white people. The fact that he had an experience in Mecca having to do with looking at the universal acceptance of people of all colors within that ideological/religious framework changed Malcolm's view, or rather, brought to the fore his view of the universality of humanity, while at the same time clarifying his ideas regarding the historical and political meaning of being white in America. As he put it, In the U.S., saying, I'm white means saying, I'm boss. And in this instance he remained committed against the dominate social forms of white oppression and white racism in the United States. On the other hand, his fundamental basis was not so much in who he was against as in believing that there was some eternal characteristic of white people that he was against, but rather it was the social basis of the struggle that he was a part of. And therefore he had sunk his roots in the black community and was committed to fighting a black-liberation struggle based

upon uniting the people that he grew up with, that he was a part of. The institutions and businesses and movements that he saw uniting were the black community, all of which represented an oppressed community that he saw being in a position to fight for the overall freedom of the black community.

It is also true that within this nationalism Malcolm acknowledged the class struggle. Not only in his historical discussion of the house and the field slave, but also in his constant emphasis on people at the bottom; as he put it, The bottom-of-the-pile Negroes, the ones furthest down, the people who catch all the hell. These were the people in the black community that he saw being in a historical position of creating the basis for the kind of freedom, justice and equality that he was committed to. And implicit in this, of course, is the notion of class struggle and the notion of socialism.

But even more explicit, Malcolm said things about capital-

ism: Show me a capitalist and I'll show you a bloodsucker.

People around the world, universally, that he agreed with seemed to all be against capitalism. And finally, of course, this became very explicit in his discussion of Third World revolution, especially China, Cuba, Vietnam and the aspirations of people in Africa.

Finally, the most difficult aspect of Malcolm's embrace of the radical black tradition has to do with feminism. This is clear because as a Muslim he had historically been part of institutionalized form of subordination of women on the basis of cultural practices and religious beliefs. However, it seems very clear that Malcolm had historically begun to be impacted by the strength of black women in the political and cultural movement.

The two clear examples of how Malcolm had moved to transform his thinking have to do with his relationship and analysis of Fannie Lou Hamer on the one hand, and his own views regarding

leadership, particularly as they related to the Organization of Afro-American Unity.

Each of these aspects of the radical black tradition that we've just seen were alive and active parts of Malcolm's belief and practice at the end of his life have a historical development rooted in his family experience and impacted at every significant stage of his life. And therefore, it is possible to read Malcolm as an open door to understanding the historical development of the radical black tradition overall. This is an essential aspect of Malcolm as paradigm, or Malcolm as method: the grasp of Malcolm as an open door to the radical black tradition that provides the ideological basis for the unity of the black-liberation movement.

Malcolm X was born into a family that was rooted in the radical black tradition. In the first instance, black religion, Malcolm's father was a Baptist preacher. There is a long history

to this form of radicalism, especially if we look at the radical ideas inherent in the history of the church. The general religious context had to do with otherworldly views regarding God, but nevertheless conveyed a strong sense of morality and a strong imperative for religion to be at the center of one's life.

One of the key and influential black religious leaders of the time was Bishop Henry Turner.

These were the views that were concentrated through Malcolm's father for the first six years of his life and to some extent were continued by his mother, although his mother maintained much more of a Pentecostal orientation, and therefore even more so with his mother for the next six years of his life.

[END OF SIDE A]

[SIDE B]

As Detroit Red Malcolm essentially became the antichrist, he turned into the dialectical opposite of the religious training he

had had, but as such seemed to maintain the sense of morality even if via negativa. It's important to mention that his personification of evil was acknowledged by his fellow prisoners when he was nicknamed Satan.

The rediscovery of religion was a political act by which he was able to get on the road to black liberation. His brother introduced him to the thinking of the Nation of Islam by recalling his mother's abhorrence of pork.

The Muslim conversion of Malcolm to the Nation of Islam was an example of the de-Christianization of African-American radicalism in the Northern urban context.

And finally, as indicated above, Malcolm became a Sunni Muslim at the very end of his life and established the Muslim Mosque Incorporated in New York as his basis of operations.

Malcolm X was grounded in a pan-Africanist framework because his mother was born in Grenada. And therefore, even though

Malcolm was born in the Midwest he maintained an active conscious link with the African diaspora, specifically the West Indies. This is something that was more characteristic of black people on the East Coast than in the Midwest, although in Malcolm's instance he had this pan-African linkage from birth.

Of course, the other aspect was the fact that his father was an organizer for the UNIA, and therefore on an ideological basis Malcolm had strong links to the pan-Africanism inherent in the movement led by Marcus Garvey.

Of course, after leaving the Midwest as Detroit Red, he became fully familiar with West Indians. There are many examples of this. Perhaps the most colorful is his archrival, West Indian Archie.

The interesting contradiction that emerges in the pan-Africanist framework is when he joins the Nation of Islam and confronts the identity that Elijah Muhammad had inherited from



the teachings of Noble Drew Ali that black people were Asiatic. Malcolm, however, put this forward initially but soon adopted the notion of black people as African. His orientation was rooted in his experiences of debate with Harlem African nationalists and his linkage to the African diplomatic corps at the United Nations.

And of course, in the final year of his life, in the final stages of his life, Malcolm went to Africa on a number of occasions and, in going to Africa, rooted himself further into the African reality. In fact, there's no more significant linkage with African in his political sense than in the formation of his political organization as modeled on the Organization of African Unity when he called it the Organization of Afro-American Unity.

With regard to nationalism, again it's important to point out the influence of Marcus Garvey during his early stages. But in addition to the ideological influence there was the practical

reality of growing up in the racist environment of the Midwest and facing racism in its multiple attacks.

Malcolm affirms the nationalism, via negativa, much in the way that he affirms religion, by becoming the antichrist, during his experience as Detroit Red. A lot of this has to do with the ritual beliefs and ideas that surrounded his relation to white women. As Detroit Red he consciously violated the racial etiquette of Malcolm Little, who had observed the mandate to stay away from white girls, by, as Detroit Red, taking on a white woman and not only flaunting her in relation to white people, demonstrating his masculinity, but using her as a vehicle for social deference and prestige in the black community, as a function of racism was to create lust and desire in the black and white communities for sex relations with people in the other race.

During the period as Malcolm X, minister in the Nation of

Islam, he adopted a decidedly racial understanding of history. This was an attempt to explain the vicious racism that black people encountered. This involved an attempt to use biological, historical and religious reasoning.

The historical development of his thinking led to Malcolm moving away from the biological and religious reasoning to historical and social and economic reasoning to explain racism against black people. Furthermore, rather than rejecting unity on the basis of these metaphysical categories, that is, biology and religion, Malcolm adopted a political approach whereby he specified the conditions for unity across the races -- incidentally, just as he had specified the conditions for unity among black people -- even though he believed that unity of blacks and whites was highly unlikely.

With regard to feminism, Malcolm was fortunate to have been the son of a very strong woman. We now know that his mother was

an activist in the UNIA in her own right and, as such, was the model of a woman who not only had seven kids to care for but also played a role in politics as well. She was the secretary for the UNIA chapter in each of the cases where her husband had been the leader, and she submitted the written reports that were subsequently published in the Negro World newspaper.

During the Detroit Red experience Malcolm adopted a secular version of male supremacy in which women were regarded as sex objects, and certainly not to be trusted nor treated as cultural or political or personal equals.

The development of his thinking during the Muslim period was to completely reverse the value attached to women and to adopt a sort of structural-function model, which nevertheless anchored women into a relatively subordinate role. What is important to recognize, however, is that the very motion from being in the Nation of Islam to leaving and to taking up the views and prac-

tices of the last period of his life had to do with this question with regard to Elijah Muhammad. Malcolm exposed Elijah Muhammad's illicit sex relations with several young secretaries that resulted in children being born that he fathered. The contradictions heightened, and it was this issue that was the spark that led to Malcolm leaving the Nation of Islam.

In the final years of his life, Malcolm moved to deal with women throughout the public and private spheres and began to actively change his life. In fact, in the last years of his life one of the quotes that he kept repeating had to do with the statement by Nkrumah, that "If you want to look at the political development of a nation, look at the political development of its women." Malcolm strongly advocated the political development and leadership roles of black women.

With regard to socialism, there's no evidence that Malcolm X ever was a doctrinaire marxist, but there is all the evidence in

the world to suggest that he would have moved in the direction of socialism. Even though his father had been a minister, Malcolm was born essentially to a life of poverty, and it was an existence that forced his family into cooperative relationships and creative ways to survive, particularly after his father's murder in Michigan. On the other hand, during Detroit Red he became the epitome of the capitalist consumer in that the life of the street emphasized hedonism and high levels of consumption. This, after all, is the life of the hustler.

During the black Muslim period, a new form of collectivism emerged through self-help, although at this instance rooted in a community-based entrepreneurial spirit. The Nation of Islam practiced a form of organization capitalism, but through cooperation and stimulating people to do likewise in their own lives. This had a great deal to do with their understanding of the family and their understanding of how they were going to inter-

nally develop such security that they could, in fact, survive the crisis that was plaguing America.

However, in the final stage of his life, particularly as a result of understanding the U.S. role in the world, Malcolm became an anti-capitalist and a supporter of Third World revolution.

In sum, the argument is that it is important to regard Malcolm X as paradigm, that is, to understand Malcolm X in terms of methodology. In this case we can have Malcolm as an important figure in his own right but at the same be the basis for understanding all other comparable figures as well. The first and most important aspect of this is to examine Malcolm's life in terms of its historical periodization, that is to say, to grasp the logic of how Malcolm developed from stage to stage in which his life was transformed. As it turns out, one of the main reasons why Malcolm is, in fact, such an icon of black radical

culture is that his life embodies so much of the radical black tradition and of lived experiences of black people. More precisely, the historical periodization of Malcolm is read for the ways in which we can use it to grasp our collective experience, and our collective memory. Our collective experience has to do with the overall historical periodization of the black community and specifically the conditions of the lived experience of Malcolm's peers and of the people who directly are linked to him. In terms of collective memory, we are talking about the way in which Malcolm embodied the radical black ideological tradition throughout his life, but particularly as he ended up. In this way we are better able to understand how and why Malcolm played such a role in the great debate of the 1960s.

Malcolm as paradigm is an essential way to read Malcolm X. It is essential to read his life story and to understand his life story in relationship to the story of black people and to the



memory of how it is that black people have historically struggled for freedom.

It is now on the basis of this method we can better understand how Malcolm actually interacted with the political forces of the time in which he lived. So that the next section will deal with Malcolm X as discourse, that is to say, the way in which he interacted with comrades and critics, the friends and people who influenced him as well as those whom he influenced, on the one hand, and on the other hand, those people who monitored and critiqued him in the interest of the mainstream for social control.

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## DISCOURSE

The important aspect of Malcolm as paradigm, to the extent to which he reflected our collective experience and our collective memory, is made even more relevant when we examine the dynamic encounters that he had with, ideologically speaking, his significant ideological others. Here we are concerned with how Malcolm actually interacted with his mentors, his peers and his heirs. This is significant because it's in this context that Malcolm develops as an individual and establishes his identity. As someone who participated in a great debate as a key figure, it's important to recognize that it is in the process of the encounters that Malcolm defines and distinguishes himself. Again, here we are specifically concerned with his peers [sic - mentors?] (those he learned from and developed under as in an apprentice relationship), his peers (those with whom he debated

and thereby defined the ideological parameters for a generation) and his heirs (the extent and the way in which he inspired and guided the youth who were to develop in a later decade).

The discourse we are most concerned with here is the discourse that takes place from the time of his prison conversion to the Nation of Islam until the end of his life; that is to say, from the 1947 to 1965 period. This includes a sequential but oftentimes simultaneous set of three encounters. Each, however, is historically distinct and connects Malcolm to the past, to the present and to the future of his life, before the 1960s, during the 1960s and after the 1960s.

Mentor: Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam. The major transformation of Detroit Red into Malcolm X took place as a result of his being recruited by his brother to a conversion process by which he became a member of the Nation of Islam. This conversion process involved his entire life and put him in touch

with an aspect of the radical black tradition, including reestablishing a direct link to his father.

The story of the Nation of Islam, the historical origins of the Nation of Islam, are rooted in the experiences of the Marcus Garvey movement and the religious nationalist movement of Noble Drew Ali. Marcus Mosiah Garvey was a Jamaican radical who came to the United States in 1916. After having an experience of being a trade-union organizer and a printer, Marcus Garvey became involved in a nationalist organizing experience, eventually developing the pan-Africanist notion that black people throughout the world had a common destiny and a common organizing task.

Garvey was an active organizer in the United States, taking on the Ku Klux Klan and all other forms of racism that he and his organization identified. He developed a very large organization, and organized throughout the world. His efforts eventually placed him in conflict with the U.S. government, leading to his

imprisonment in 1925 and his being deported in 1927.

It is interesting that in the very same year that he was imprisoned, 1925, was the year that Malcolm X was born.

It was Garvey's view that black people had to reassert their identity, not only in politics and culture, but in religion as well. And therefore he advanced a nationalist program that covered all of this.

Noble Drew Ali, born in 1886 in North Carolina, established his organization in Newark in 1913. He believed that black people were Moors from Africa and he developed a version of Islam that he regarded as the -- and in the Moorish temple that he founded.

It is out of the Garvey movement and the movement led by Noble Drew Ali that a whole group of early 20th-century nationalist and de-Christianized radicals were developed in the black community. All of this, however, organizationally ends in the

late 1920s (Garvey is deported in 1927, Noble Drew Ali dies in 1929), setting the stage for new development.

The immediate origins of the Nation of Islam occur when a W. Fard emerges in Detroit in 1930. He was born February 26, 1877 in Egypt. He was trained in Africa as an Islamic scholar and came to the United States in order to save the people who were lost in the West. From 1930 through 1933 he engaged in education and recruitment of people into his organization, while at the same time earning a living by selling silk scarves and other goods on a door-to-door basis. One of his close followers was Elijah Pool, from Georgia, born October 1897. He came to Detroit in the 1920s and, after working in an auto plant and being on welfare, he spent three years studying under Fard's leadership, studying the Nation of Islam.

It's very important to compare Earl Little, Malcolm's father, and Elijah. Both were born in Georgia and both were Bap-

tist preachers. Both were also members of the Garvey organization. These are remarkable similarities, although physically there was great dissimilarity: Earl Little was a large man and very African in features, whereas Elijah Muhammad was a very small and slight man who looked very Asiatic.

The origin and development of the Nation of Islam has to do with both Detroit and Chicago. After 1934 Fard moved to Chicago, following the move by Elijah the previous year to set up the second temple, Temple #2. It's at this time that Fard had experienced several difficulties with the police, especially a rather notorious case of human sacrifice. Elijah Muhammad was committed to supporting Fard and therefore providing safe haven.

This was the time when the Nation of Islam was a very militant organization prepared to physically confront the authorities. A very famous case in 1935, where a whole group of members of the Nation of Islam engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the

police in a courtroom for over one half-hour, during which time a police officer died of a heart attack. This became a well-known incident among the members of the Nation of Islam, even being elevated to divine intervention for the heart attack suffered the white policeman who died.

It's also the case that Elijah Muhammad and his followers were fully prepared to resist the state in other ways as well. For example, during World War II Elijah Muhammad spent four years in prison for refusing to fight in the war, as an objector to fighting against Third World people. This, too, was very important in relation to the membership because it demonstrated a high level of commitment and a willingness to pay the price.

During this period from its origins in the '30s through the '40s, the organization was a small organization rooted in the black community and where the members would meet in each other's homes and/or in rented storefronts, but the main experience was



within the black community with very little visibility to anyone outside of it.

Its main orientation was in the nationalist tradition of self-help and in the religious tradition of moral transformation of its members. In this sense it was a highly disciplined small religious organization.

Part of the power and appeal of the organization had to do with its programmatic aspects of individual and collective community life. First, there was a great emphasis on the family. This was an important aspect in the urban area, as it reinforced the traditions of people who were just moving from the rural South. And it was important for these people who were experiencing tensions to their family solidarity to have such an influence.

An additional aspect was the moral and dietary laws. In a community with single men and women, the Nation of Islam held to

a very stringent moral code, and it held to a very stringent code regarding alcohol, drugs and eating. One of the important aspects of their dietary laws was to stress health and longevity. This, too, provided a real incentive for people to join, including monetary penalties for breaking the rules and/or being overweight.

The theology of Elijah Muhammad is found in seven major books and articles published in Muhammad Speaks, in addition to a series of articles published in the Pittsburgh Courier and interviews granted over time. This theology can be understood in three main categories: the divine, the black man's history and the road to freedom.

With regard to the divine and having to do with God and the message that is being interpreted by Elijah Muhammad directly from God, there are four major parts: one, Allah and Islam; two, the messenger of Allah and the chosen people; three, the Chris-

tians and the white man; four, the judgment.

The second aspect of this theology is the black man's history: one, the origin; two, Yakub; three, slavery; four, the salvation of blackness.

Finally, the third aspect has to do with the road to freedom, the program: one, racial separation; two, the united front; three, the land question; four, economic communalism.

When Malcolm X was recruited into the Nation of Islam we are dealing with one of the most fundamental experiences in the history of world religion: the conversion experience from one type of person and one type of lifestyle to a completely different lifestyle; a radical rupture and transformation after coming into contact with a religious person, dogma, experience.

There are many examples and points of comparison that people have made, including St. Paul and St. Augustine.

As is often the case with converts, Malcolm adopted the

theology and lifestyle dictated by Elijah Muhammad "hook, line and sinker." As Malcolm put it, he became a better follower of Elijah Muhammad's views than Elijah Muhammad himself. There are many examples of this. The important point of the transition after the conversion is that Elijah Muhammad brought Malcolm X from Detroit to Chicago to live with him and study with him personally. So, in a real sense, just as Elijah Muhammad had studied with Master Fard, so Malcolm studied with Elijah, and in that sense there's a direct line of succession based on personal relationship and apprenticeship.

In the printed speeches of Malcolm X we have at least 12 examples where Malcolm X, as was the practice of ministers in the Nation of Islam, virtually repeats Elijah Muhammad's doctrine verbatim. Ministers in the Nation of Islam were required to speak directly with Elijah Muhammad by telephone once a week, and it was during this time that any questions that had been raised

during the three temple meetings each week could be cleared up.

In fact, that's exactly what people who went to the temple would be told: if they raised a question that could not be given one of the existing answers, then they were told that if they could return after discussing the matter with the Messenger, meaning Elijah Muhammad, they would get an answer.

Malcolm was intelligent and aggressive, with the gift of gab and knowledge of the urban community. These were great assets that enabled Malcolm to play a critical role in the building of the Nation of Islam. However, Malcolm's strength also, in addition to being a contribution to the Nation of Islam, also presented a challenge to it.

On the strength side, Malcolm became the direct representative of Elijah Muhammad in the black community and, as such, was able to contribute to building the organization from some 400 members to 40,000 members. It was Malcolm X who went outside of

the organization, into the community, into the streets, to engage people in direct discourse. The previous practice of the Nation of Islam was to turn inward and to slowly build through incremental gains in the community, but by all means to maintain the internal integrity of the beliefs and practices of the membership. Malcolm, on the other hand, used to go out and challenge people. As he said, it was often outside of Christian churches and other meetings that the membership would recruit.

Perhaps the greatest mechanism of recruitment was the Muhammad Speaks newspaper, which was originally created by Malcolm X and written and produced by Malcolm X in his basement, later to become the main organ and the main organizational tool. Throughout this period it was commonplace to see members of the Nation of Islam standing on street corners in the black community selling the newspaper.

The real leap in public perception of the Nation of Islam

occurred in 1959 when a TV documentary by Mike Wallace was aired nationally, "The Hate that Hate Produced." This documentary alleged that the Nation of Islam was advocating hatred of white people and, as such, became a controversial record. However, this was an open door for Malcolm to begin to articulate his views, that is, the views of Elijah Muhammad. However, what's important is that the process that had been established inside the temple, where a minister would be able to call Elijah and ask a question, was far outdistanced by Malcolm's outreach into the community. It was not possible for Malcolm to discuss every issue in the same way, as these were things developing in the black community.

Elijah Muhammad had great confidence in Malcolm. However, there were others in the Nation of Islam who remained conservative and tied to the original style and method of work and therefore were very skeptical of this person who was interacting with

the non-believers in such an aggressive way.

It's also true that during the earlier years, that is, from the '30s and '40s, relatively speaking, the Nation of Islam was isolated from mass action, in this instance the working-class struggles that occurred during the Depression and World War II, but were not involved in interacting with a major black movement. However, during the 1960s, much of what the Nation of Islam had represented was now emerging in a mass movement. This is particularly true in the Northern cities, and particularly true in the 1960s. This then becomes -- in addition to just the mass struggle that occurred after the Brown decision in 1954. So, Malcolm is interacting not only with the external forces based on new publicity, but is actually interacting with black people who are engaged in struggle, who are, in fact, fighting many of the racist practices that the Nation of Islam had taken a stand against.



In addition, in large part because of Malcolm's personality and leadership ability, Malcolm emerged as a leader in Harlem, and, as such, developed relationships with other nationally known leaders of the black community, based in Harlem and throughout the United States. So that Malcolm X became a well-known figure in the black community; in fact, one could easily argue that Malcolm became more well known than Elijah Muhammad; or, to put it another way, Elijah Muhammad was being introduced to people through Malcolm and it was Malcolm who they remembered.

In fact, it was Elijah Muhammad who had aggressively made sure that this was the case. He was appointed the national spokesperson for the Nation of Islam, and he was the emissary, such as during the 1950s when Malcolm was sent to the Middle East as a representative to establish the basis for a subsequent trip by Elijah Muhammad.

The relationship between these two men was one of

student-to-teacher, leader-to-follower. And even when the times had pressed differences greatly, Malcolm remained loyal -- up to a point. A good example of this had to do with the mosque being attacked in Los Angeles.

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[SIDE B]

The police in Los Angeles invaded the mosque and killed two members of the mosque. This was a supreme violation of the sanctity of their church and it was a direct challenge to the views of Elijah Muhammad, who had always argued that a Muslim should be prepared to give his life. However, something different happened. Malcolm went to Los Angeles. Before going, he told people that he thought he was going to die in Los Angeles, because the implication being that he would in fact organize a retaliatory strike against the Los Angeles Police Department. However, Elijah Muhammad instructed Malcolm to refrain from any

violence and any activity that could even be construed as being violent. When Malcolm returned, after exposing the police in Los Angeles -- when he returned to New York, his speech constantly enraged people with the question: You wanted to do something, didn't you? You wanted to strike back, didn't you? And as he kept repeating these types of statements, people began to get more and more militant in response. He then said, However, you should be glad that you have a leader like Elijah Muhammad who is wise enough to keep us from doing these things. It's my interpretation that Malcolm's own views were being represented by wanting-to-do-something statements, and he was publicly indicating that while he wanted to do something, he was still going to submit to the leadership of Elijah Muhammad on this question.

Another difference is that Malcolm had a great deal of interaction with African and Third World political leadership and revolutionary leadership, whereas Muhammad was more likely to

limit his connections to religious leadership and economic advisers, and those were extremely limited. It is not true that the people in the Nation of Islam were isolated from orthodox Islam, although this, too, became one of the serious questions that emerged as a result of contacts with people who were in other forms of Islam, particularly from the Middle East.

In the origin of the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad had come through the influence of the Garvey movement and the movement of Noble Drew Ali, and then directly from the apprenticeship with Fard. However, since the 1930s Elijah Muhammad had essentially been isolated within a small disciplined and dogmatic group that he was the supreme leader of. On the other hand, Malcolm X had received his training from Elijah Muhammad, hooking back up with his father's original orientation to him as a child in the Garvey movement. However, Malcolm was in constant dialogue, since taking over the leadership of the mosque in New

York, with the full range of nationalists in New York. This Harlem community of political culture not only included the influence of Garvey, but a number of other nationalists who played a critical role in transforming Malcolm's thinking, moving into the both nationalist and pan-Africanist frameworks.

The important point here is that on the one hand Malcolm had become literally a "political son" of Elijah Muhammad. However, tensions had developed. The conflicts that emerged that finally led to the split involved several fundamental issues, tensions that were there. There are basically three main tensions. First, as perceived by people in the Nation of Islam the family of Elijah Muhammad, including five sons and the extended family members, represented in effect a "dynasty"; whereas, on the other hand, the Little family, in which Malcolm X was the leading person, but also included several other ministers in the Nation of Islam, especially in Michigan, represented a potential alter-

native family dynasty within the Nation. This was perceived by some as a potential power threat. Secondly, there was a contradiction between the generation of politically and religious conservatives that were the old-line members of the Nation of Islam versus the members that had joined in the 1960s, in particular, under the leadership of Malcolm X and who represented the generation of the expanding mass struggles of the 1960s, and therefore were much more open to people outside of the Nation, as opposed to being limited to inside of the Nation. The third difference was the contradiction between the expanding mosques in the East Coast cities versus the people associated with the Chicago center of the organization. This was a contradiction that involved the financial aspects of the organization and represented a typical bureaucratic struggle between the outward motion versus the inward motion of the organization.

Another fundamental aspect of the underlying tension had to

do with political line. The Nation of Islam had always been a curious mix of motions to the right and motions to the left. The most controversial aspect of the motions to the right had to do with the association with the Ku Klux Klan and with conservative thinking generally. On the other hand, the motion to the left involved mainly the Muhammad Speaks newspaper, which was, more often than not, edited by a left-wing intellectual. In fact, the paper was often a curious combination of left-wing journalism and the dogma of Elijah Muhammad. Elijah Muhammad used to publish his editorial statements in the centerfold, but throughout the paper there would be articles dealing with Third World politics and the politics of the black liberation struggle more generally. And, as such, the Muhammad Speaks newspaper became one of the great radical newspapers of the 1960s.

Malcolm steadfastly opposed the relation with the Ku Klux Klan, as he indicated in one of the very last speeches that he

gave. His orientation was much more likely to be associated with the left, and this was true in the last period of his activity within the Nation of Islam and certainly became true after the last year of his life.

The actual conflict that emerged that led to the split had to do with two issues. The public issue that was discussed had to do with what happened after President Kennedy was assassinated. Elijah Muhammad had instructed the ministers to not speak about this issue because of the deep feelings that the American people had for Kennedy and what possible repercussions there could be from any negative statements. However, after a speech Malcolm was asked a question and in the question-and-answer period made reference to the assassination as "chickens coming home to roost." This was picked up by the media and presented as one of the main aspects of Malcolm's presentation, when, in fact, it had been an offhanded reference in the question-and-answer



period. This infuriated Elijah Muhammad. He immediately called Malcolm in and decided to silence him and restrict him from making any public statements regarding any issues or giving any interviews to the press. This began a three-month period of silence. However, another issue, which had happened before this issue, which Malcolm regarded as the more serious contradiction between them, had to do with a pattern of sexual indiscretion and irresponsibility on the part of Elijah Muhammad.

One of the clear mandates regarding the moral behavior of the Nation of Islam had to do with their sexual behavior, holding fast to the discipline of the monogamous family. Elijah Muhammad himself was a strong advocate of this position and members of the Nation of Islam had, in fact, been put out of the organization as a result of violating this rule. Malcolm found out that Elijah had been sleeping with his young secretary and, in fact, had fathered several children. Not only had he fathered these chil-

dren, but he had subsequently not provided financial support for these children and had, in effect, disassociated himself from these young women, who were at that point living in Los Angeles while he had taken up residence in Phoenix, Arizona as well as in Chicago. Malcolm confronted Elijah Muhammad with this and Elijah Muhammad attempted to justify his behavior in biblical terms, stating that it was his destiny to live out prophecy that was in the Bible, and therefore he did it for those reasons. Malcolm was, in fact, even prepared to believe this, no matter how unbelievable it sounded.

One of the interesting reinterpretations of the Bible by Fard was concerning the virgin birth, where he believed that, indeed, Joseph had fathered the baby Jesus and that it was not a virgin birth, and that this was an interpretation that misconstrued the meaning of the Bible. And in this instance we have Elijah Muhammad attempting, in the face of what seemed obvious

transgression, to reinterpret his experience theologically to make it okay. Malcolm went to other ministers, particularly his close associates on the East Coast, to seek counsel from them, not to expose Elijah Muhammad but rather to discuss a strategy for damage control if and when this information spread throughout the Nation's membership more generally. However, it was precisely these people that Malcolm had gone to that regrouped and began a counterattack against Malcolm, alleging that he was spreading dangerous rumors that were designed to attack Elijah Muhammad.

Both of these issues led to a subsequent split where, after this three-month period of silence, Malcolm announced that he was formally leaving the Nation of Islam and setting up his own organization in response. As a continuation of what he had learned, but in a transformed sense, Malcolm then went on to form two organizations: on the hand, Muslim Mosque Incorporated, which was an attempt to begin proselytizing on the basis of

orthodox Sunni Islam and an attempt to maintain continuity in that regard; on the other hand, he then subsequently formed the Organization of Afro-American Unity, a political organization designed to more aggressively link up with other aspects of the black-liberation movement and the civil-rights movement in order to advance the political program that he was developing.

Elijah Muhammad had saved Satan, that is, Malcolm X, in prison, and it was Malcolm X who had to save himself from Elijah.

Elijah had become a father to Malcolm X. And while white racism had destroyed Malcolm's biological father, Elijah's own limitations, in effect, were destroying himself, so that Malcolm had to leave the Nation of Islam and leave the leadership of Elijah Muhammad in order to grow and develop his contribution to the black-liberation struggle overall.

It seems clear that Malcolm X could not have developed without joining the Nation of Islam. However, it seems also

clear that Malcolm X would not be regarded as the icon and as the paradigm of the black-liberation movement today if he had not left Elijah Muhammad.

The fundamental question, therefore, is whether or not today, in the 1990s, Malcolm leads us to go back to the Nation of Islam or whether the mandate is to go forward and to chart new territory.

This is a significant issue because what we have are both alternatives.

The Nation of Islam and the followers of Elijah Muhammad are engaged in several efforts to keep what he represented alive. The Crowe organization in Chicago is designed as a research-reference center. There are several small organizations, but the major organization is being led by Mr. Louis Farrakhan, who has purchased the old buildings and is putting out a newspaper similar to Muhammad Speaks, called The Final Call. He is attempting

to keep the thinking of Elijah Muhammad alive and represents the view that Malcolm was wrong to leave, that Malcolm was wrong in his conflict with Elijah Muhammad, and that Elijah Muhammad was and remains the significant leader of the black community.

On the other hand, the notion of going forward forces us to deal with the following questions: First, the question of religion. And in this instance the question is, What is Islam?

Another important question has to do with the politics of black liberation, especially the development of revolutionary politics.

Finally, we have the issue of international politics and the contradiction of supporting revolutionary forces in the world versus supporting neocolonial forces in the world. Here, one of the issues, of course, today is the question of Ghana.

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