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Celebrate Black History Month!
See pp. 4 & 5
Malcolm X & Black Perspectives on the Crisis of Socialism

by Abudul Akallnain
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It is a great challenge to speak on the topic "Malcolm X and Black Perspectives on the Crisis of Socialism in American History.

Do we think that the crisis of the country in particular or the world in general is that the system iswhole is rotten. The specter of contradictions produce unprecedented changes, and we continue to see those changes unfold before our eyes. Let us put them together the name of Malcolm, with the theoretical and practical experience of his life, to explore the most severe aspects of the question being debated at the center of this storm: Can society be restructured and its contradictions removed altogether or before, both in terms of race and nationality on the one hand, and politics and economics on the other?

Some would argue that History has ended, some would argue that progress is over, and some would argue that scarcity and greed will destroy morality and reduce all of society, finally, to a cash nexus, the ultimate market. These are the prophets of our doom — who usually hold these beliefs as expressions of their commitment to capitalism as a system, especially their position of privilege within it, and in response to the deepening crisis, these forces are preaching a message that capitalism is eternal and omnipotent — Yes, once again we face the specter of fascism from Mussolini to Moscow, from Louisiana to Latvia.

On the other hand, those of us who would raise the name of Malcolm X as one whose life and politics contain positive lessons for the future, and who believe that socialism remains a viable historical alternative. Social transformation have "the awesome responsibility of revolutionary leadership," the task of historical critical, moral, and tactical analysis. The doom sayers offer barbarism, genocide and war for the masses of people — check it out, look around you, New York, you can see advanced forms of social degeneration everywhere. But we gather to argue the possibility of prosperity, peace, and justice. My hope is that this session contributes to our collective grasp of socialism as a plausible scenario, and that together we can come here and work to link this vision with the practical tasks of the day to day struggle.

In my brief time, I would like to address three main issues.

1. Was Malcolm X a Socialist?
2. What is the crisis of Socialism?
3. What is the relationship between a Black agenda and a Socialist agenda?

1. Was Malcolm X a Socialist?

On one level, this is one of the most controversial and easy to solve problems. NO, there is no evidence that Malcolm X publicly committed himself to the principles of Socialism. But we can't leave it at that, since many say that his commitment to political revolution was limited at best, and usually would have to assume that their context and social practice was irrelevant, while in practice his own remorseless writing and interviews can take independent of their context and practice.

Malcolm was a northern Black working class voice who emerged out of the RADICAL BLACK TRADITION. Our Radical Black Tradition is rooted in the cumulative experiences of Black peoples struggle for survival — lessons paid for, learned, and encoded in a culture of resistance. The ultimate historical significance of Malcolm X is that he reaffirmed the tradition and pushed us forward to open up the debate we are having today.

To some, his family's moves to Chicago and Minneapolis, his father being an organizer and spokesperson, and his mother an administrative official at the local level.

To finish, I would like to explore our context and put under direct "white" supervision where he gave that a single chapter in his book, "The man who didn't get promoted, and success with an open mind. He was negated in this experience by whites in a faster home and acabilitation, which in his case, is less than the existence of outright riots and the problem of internal administrative education of the department. Both were negated — by rejection, by institutionalization, and by murder.

In turn, Malcolm then negated the conventions of society by striving for success in the underworld of the urban black community. He became a self-educated writer of the mainstream as much as if one was in it, and then of course, in place of being killed, he was locked up for burglary.

In this scenario, the main overall contradiction is that we find the Radical Black Tradition of the Little Society liquidated by the racist terror of U.S. capital.

In the depths of his prison experience, Malcolm was "reborn" within the Radical Black Tradition through a process that was the collapse of the mainstream image of radicalism. Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation, became a father figure for Malcolm as he had been for several of Malcolm's sisters and brothers.

The Nation of Islam was a highly stylized form of nationalism. Elijah Muhammad was a man from Georgia with little formal education, but who was wise and skillful in teaching his own approach to the masses, in evasive and deviant a program. He was in direct lineages, significant liberation movements in the Third World In this Malcolm finally helped to resurrect the fi pitsess of the Radical Black Tradition and virtually silenced since the McCarthure purges and the isculation of figures such as WEB Dubois, Paul Robeson and Charles Hamilton Houston in the 19th century. The crisis of socialism remains capitalist society. Capitalism has been in crisis more or less since the 15th century, and even destroying multinational coalitions in its aim of a realignment based on narrow national interests. Socialism, that is the theoretical outcome of the struggle between the Soviet Union, both Yeltsin and Gorbaevich upheld the need to lesson the burdens on the French and function of his political structure.

While there are internal and external bases for crisis of socialism, some of these bases are not in the last several decades, including our case of African Americans inside of the US. We face interrelated questions. First, the economic conditions that have led to the triumph of that socialism. And two year's worth of material entertainment to understand that their interests were fighting with an issue and not against one another.

The main outlines of U.S. history seem to point to at least three times that workers rose up, twice among the惫ous, one in the breakdown of the New Deal in 1939. The last time was the black-and-white wave of the radical democratic revolution in 1776 and in the 1800's, as our own revolution was being shaped. The third was in the Great Depression that resulted in creation of the U.S. welfare state. The crisis of socialism is not that the conditions of struggle were not met by the particularities of this country, but rather that they were met. We meet this country with vast resources, an imperialiste brawl of workers based on Third World plunder and the distress of trade unions abroad. It is one of the most important problems that has been the racism of white people who were there in the 1960's, but they are gone to unite and find common cause with the masses Black working people.

This leads to our final question:

2. What is the relation of a Black agenda and a Socialist agenda?

First let me indicate that Malcolm X lived at the end of his life in a period when the U.S. economy was expanding. This meant that U.S. imperialism was to continue to benefit white workers and export it to others. Of course this was only relative, as in fact they remained firmly in the grip of black and ethnic majority in the poor sections. They were white, but they remained white workers fighting to defend their rights, and they were not coming to grips with the fact that for the mass people there is no Black agenda separate from the demands of the working class. The independence of the Black community is that Black unity is no longer the key social project.

In the last 100 years or more, the Black middle class has led the Black liberation movement for most part because Black unity was in the process of forming and years and they had the ability and inclinations lead the struggle. How can we change the situation in a sector of this class that becomes an openly right-wing one? Trojan horse with a few people who are major corporate board members, high government officials, and conservative ideologues of this kind. This is the final betrayal of the Black community.

For the majority of Black people, the unity around social progress is a bottom up political motion that turns the fundamental economic policies of a stagnation against the army of oppression.

The agenda for this army is clear. On the one hand it has used the collapse of socialism to create and sustain unprecedented possibilities improvements in the quality of life, by placing the "anti-racism" in the United Nations on a principle.

In sum, the crisis of socialism in the Black community is the crisis of leadership. As long as the Black middle class provides leadership and the illusion of exclusion dominates the Black community, socialism will be repudiated just as Bush, Bush and Bush are repudiated. In our case, the air is cleared by straightforward talk and open debate and the militancy of the Malcolm and the "bottom of the Negroes" will cause the new phase of the Radical Black Tradition to be reborn and the possibility
Malcolm X & Black Perspectives on the Crisis of Socialism

by Abdul Akalimat


It is a great challenge to speak on the topic "Malcolm X and Black Perspectives on the Crisis of Socialism" at this time in our history. This is so whether we think of this country in particular or the world in general. In the last decade we have seen an explosion of contradictions produce unprecedented changes, and we continue to see these changes unfold before our eyes virtually on a daily basis. To put together the name of Malcolm, with the theoretical and practical experience of Socialism, is to place before us the most strategic aspects of the question being debated at the center of this storm: Can society be reorganized to produce a better quality of life than ever before, both in terms of race and nationality on the one hand, and politics and economics on the other?

Some would argue that History has ended, some would argue that progress is over, and some would argue that scarcity and greed will destroy morality and reduce all of society, finally, to a cash nexus, the ultimate market. These are the prophets of doom - who usually hold these beliefs as expressions of their commitment to capitalism as a system, especially their position of privilege within it, and in response to the deepening crisis, these forces are prepared to carry their defense of capitalism to extreme and ominous limits — Yes, once again we face the specter of fascism from Maastricht to Moscow, from Louisiana to Latvia.

On the other hand, those of us who would raise the name of Malcolm as one whose life and politics contain positive lessons for the future, and who believe that socialism remains a viable historical form of social transformation have “the awesome responsibility of revolutionary leadership,” the task of historical criticism, strategic vision, and tactical action. In turn, Malcolm then negated the conventions of society by striving for success in the underworld of street hustlers. This was a gangster hedonism that required the mainstream as much as if one were in it. And then of course in place of being killed, he was locked up for burglary.

In this scenario, the main overall contradiction is that we find the Radical Black Tradition of the Little family liquidated by the racist terror of U.S. capitalism.

In the depths of his prison experience, Malcolm was “reborn” within the Radical Black Tradition through a religious conversion experience by joining the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam, became a father figure for Malcolm as he had been for several of Malcolm’s sisters and brothers.

The Nation of Islam was a highly stylized form of nationalism. Elijah Muhammad was a man from Georgia with little formal education, but who was wise and skillful in training his organizational representatives and devising a program. He was in direct lineage, significant liberation movements in the Third World. In this Malcolm finally helped to resurrect the fifth aspect of the Radical Black Tradition that had been virtually silenced because the McCarthy purges and the isolation of figures such as WEB Du Bois, Paul Robeson, and Claudia Jones, among others.

2. What is the Crisis of Socialism?

In the last 75 years we have been told by the capitalists that the socialist system was dead while the socialists have in turn charged that capitalism was moribund. But now we see the governments that proclaimed socialism in such deep crisis that they are repudiating socialism, disbanding communist parties, and even destroying multinational countries in favor of a realignment based on narrow nationalist principles and the resurrection of the capitalist system. In the Soviet Union, both Yeltsin and Gorbachev uphold the capitalist direction part; they disagree on the form and function of the political structure.

While there are internal and external bases for this crisis, my summation is simple, the main basis of the crisis of socialism remains capitalism. So, if these historical forms of already existing socialism have died, rather than SUICIDE, it was MURDER, or DEATH FOLLOWING A PREMATURE BIRTH...

Both these arguments have merit in explaining the last several decades, including our case of African Americans inside of the USA. We face two interrelated questions. First, the economic conditions: when has the economy polarized society into two warring classes? And, two, when have white workers understood that their interests were fighting in unity with Blacks and not against Blacks.

The main outlines of U.S. history seem to point to at least three times that workers rose up, twice in alliance with the bourgeoisie to carry out the national democratic revolution in 1776 and in the 1860's, the so-called american revolution and the civil war, and once in the Great Depression that resulted in the creation of the U.S. welfare state. The crisis of socialism in the USA is that the conditions of class war have been muted by the particularities of this country, economic expansion across diverse regions in a country with vast resources, an imperialist bribe of the
On the one hand, and politics and economics on the other? Some would argue that History has ended, some would argue that progress is over, and some would argue that scarcity and greed will destroy morality and reduce all of society, finally, to a cash nexus, the ultimate market. These are the prophets of doom — our doom — who usually hold these beliefs as expressions of their commitment to capitalism as a system, especially their position of privilege within it, and in response to the dehumanizing crisis, these forces are prepared to carry their defense of capitalism to extreme and ominous limits — Yes, once again we face the specter of fascism from Maastricht to Moscow, from Louisiana to Latvia.

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The Little family nurtured Malcolm in a cradle of religious conversion experience by joining the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam, became a father figure for Malcolm as he had been for several of Malcolm’s sisters and brothers.

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The Little family nurtured Malcolm in a cradle of Panafrikanism, Nationalism, Religion, and Feminism. Earl Little, Malcolm’s father, was an itinerant Baptist preacher who steered him in the Bible as a historical paradigm of the Black experience and armed him with the Old Testament ethics of revolutionary violence. Louise Little, Malcolm’s mother, was a strong personality in family and politics, while connecting Malcolm to the African diaspora through her Caribbean origin in Grenada. Both of his parents were activists in the UNIA, his father being an organizer and spokesperson, and his mother an administrative official at the local level.

Malcolm was snatched out of this context and put under direct “white” supervision where he gave that a shot and grasped the spirit of mainstream achievement and success with an open mind. He was negated in this experience by whites in a foster home and school, just as his parents had been negated by white terrorists and welfare bureaucrats. This was a reflection of the conditions facing Black families who either tried to uphold the Radical Black Tradition (Malcolm’s parents) or Black youth who try and conform to the behavior required for success by the mainstream educational institutions. Both were negated — by rejection, by institutionalization, and by murder.

from Garvey to Noble Drew Ali to farid to Elijah Muhammad. On the one hand, the Nation of Islam was a sectarian dogmatic organization upholding a form of Black capitalism run by an authoritarian leadership, while on the other hand, its newspaper was usually edited by a Black socialist who filled the pages with radical critiques of U.S. capitalism and Western imperial interests throughout the world.

Malcolm X was tormented by great conflicts within the Nation of Islam that pulled him from the dogmatism of Elijah Muhammad into the historical dynamic of the Black liberation movement and world revolution. His leader’s shortcoming was partly the reason, but mostly I think it was Malcolm’s links with the peoples movement. The motion of history drew him into the great debate of the 1960’s, and he began to change and grow within that context free of sectarianism and dogmatism.

The only critical theoretical issue within that debate that sums up Malcolm’s motion for at least the last two years of his life points to socialism. Consider the following:

1. Malcolm took a class position. He consciously argued the case for the “bottom of the pile Negroes” and proudly proclaimed himself “a field Negro” in opposition to the Uncle Tom “house Negroes;”
2. Malcolm declared himself a revolutionary and among others gave particular reference to China and Cuba;
3. Malcolm noted that the only white people who seemed to want what he wanted usually turned out to be socialist;
4. Malcolm finally came to the position that the struggle would not be a race war, but a worldwide struggle of the oppressed of the world, in opposition to “western interests,” or, in other words, imperialism.

In sum, for me, the issue then is not really the question was Malcolm X a socialist, but rather the clear and undeniable fact that Malcolm X guided us to take up the issue of socialism (directly and indirectly) as part of the main debate driving forward the Black liberation movement. Of course, Malcolm was not alone in this, but was joining the ranks of virtually all Black working people.

This leads to our final question:
3. What is the relationship between a Black agenda and a Socialist agenda?

First let me indicate that Malcolm X lived at the end of his life in a period when the U.S. economy was expanding. This meant that U.S. imperialism was able to continue the bribe of white workers and extend to them privileges. Of course this was only relative to Blacks, as in fact they remained firmly in the grips of the exploitative mechanisms of capitalism-class relations. They were white, but they remained colored workers!

A Black perspective on the crisis of socialism has to come to grips with the fact that for the mass of people there is no Black agenda separate from a socialist agenda at this moment in our history. A corollary is that Black unity is no longer the key to social progress.

For the last 100 years or more, the Black middle class has led the Black liberation movement for the most part because Black unity was the key to social progress and they had the ability and inclination to lead the struggle. However, the civil rights movement fought and won gains for a sector of this class that has become an openly right-wing oree Trojan horse within the Black community. These are major corporate board members, high government officials, and conservative ideologues of the right. This is the final betrayal of the “house Negro.”

For the majority of Black people, the unity required for social progress is a bottom up political motion that turns the fundamental economic polarization into an argument for the army of oppressed, the wretched of the earth right here.

The agenda for this army is clear. On the one hand to unleash the scientific and technological forces to create and sustain unprecedented possibilities for improvements in the quality of life, by placing a “serve the people” principle in place of a “private profit” principle.

In sum, the crisis of socialism in the Black community is the crisis of leadership. As long as the Black middle class provides leadership and the illusion of an inclusive Black unity dominates Black political culture, socialism will be repudiated just as Bush, Pat Buchanan, and David Duke want it to be. But when the air is cleared by straight talk and open debate in the spirit of Malcolm and the “bottom of the pile Negroes” everywhere, socialism as a centerpiece of the Radical Black Tradition will be reborn and the possibility