

The X-man's message

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Do you want your strong black men dead or alive? The X craze suggests dead. X on Newsweek cover. X on Hollywood marquee. X caps. X shirts. X pants. Dead 27 years. The National Enquirer in black. Elvis Lives! in the Clinton White House. Malcolm X Lives! in Macy's aisles. What neXt? A balloon behind Mickey and Minnie in Macy's Thanksgiving Parade?

The living X. Hated by most white people. Loved at night by many African-Americans but disowned at dawn. Killed by black trigger fingers. Body cold, flesh gone, you are an Xeptable black leader. In 1967, you were my seventh-grade book report. I was the only African-American in class. Half the room did not talk to me for a month. Now they tell us. Malcolm X: man of black self-help and interracial cooperation. Time for the eXecutive order. Third Monday in January. MLK-X Day Banquet, sponsored by Pepsi and Bud. Uh-Huh.

I love seeing the X. X beats 8-ball jackets, testament to no hope. Better than Nike and gold chains. Dig this: Gang leader steps on a rival's Air Jor-Daaans. Rival reaches for his you-know-what. Offender points to his X cap and says, "My brother, please accept my most heartfelt, profound and sincere apologies." Handshake. They stay alive. The offender walks home, quoting Malcolm: "The mind is a lethal weapon."

But before X becomes the new racial EX-LaX, as corporate as XeroX, do please remember that Malcolm's X stands for African

names destroyed in slavery. Watch African-American students discuss the lasting effects of the black holocaust. Western Civ deans call them multicultural reverse racists.

Do remember, because X also means that this nation still cannot handle strong black men alive. X atop black noggins still marks the spot. Bulls eye. Ground zero. Target practice. Harvard just honored Malcolm X's widow, Betty Shabazz. But Harvard Law School just got rid of Derrick Bell. Of 15 million African-American women, Harvard Law cannot give one tenure. Bell refused to teach. Harvard says Bell's protest was Xtreme. At Harvard, African-American males are 1.68 percent of the freshmen class. Welcome to Jeopardy! Afrotrivia for \$1,000, US state with the same percentage of African-American males as Harvard. Bzzzzz. Go ahead, Johnny, for \$1,000! "Ahhh ... What is Alaska?" Bzzzzz. Wrong! Sorry, Johnny. Harvard has less.

John Carlos and Tommie Smith. Booted for 1968 Olympic black fists. George Foreman. Loved for waving the flag. After Cassius Clay became Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier was the Great White Hope. When Lew Alcindor became Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, he got hate MALE. The brain-damaged Ali is loved as a teddy. The retired Abdul-Jabbar sells junk potato chips. But if Hank Aaron or National League president Bill White brings up racism in baseball? Impatient. Bitter. Potato chips on their shoulder.

Spike Lee. Great reviews for Dead X. But the street rage in his "Do The Right Thing" was seen by many critics as Irresponsible Xcess. Not Seeking Solutions. As

if DeNiro, Woody or Costner seek the Race Solution. As if Bill Clinton sought the Solution when ripping Sister Souljah. Clinton's Solution is Vernon Jordan. Besides his boardroom view of RJR Nabisco's Death By Cigarette, Jordan sits on the board of Union Carbide. Union Carbide's 1984 gas leak killed 2,000 people in India. In 1989 it had 30 possible Superfund toxic sites. X talked nationalism. Not multinationals.

Brown folks kidnap our oil, white leaders say By Any Means Necessary. Smart bombs kill a suburb's worth of babies. Bad luck. War is hell. Rodney King is pulverized. Cops not guilty. King says don't retaliate. Let's get along. Hero. Black man who says By No Means Necessary. And you wouldn't have believed King's side of the story in the first place without the videotape. Criminal record, you know.

A quarter of African-American men aged 20 to 29 are marked by criminal charges. Alive in flesh but X in the job market. Public school is \$5,000 a year per child. Juvenile jail is \$50,000. Better to chain a black mind late than enrich it early. X was a prisoner. He said his cellmates were "bottom-of-the-pile Negroes, the Negroes who through their entire lives have been kicked about."

X Lives! only if we save those at the bottom of the pile. If we do not, this X craze is not worth a can of conk cream. Do we Xcept the rage of living black men and give them the skills to rebuild our XXXed neighborhoods, self-respect and sense of family? Or do we speed our Xtermination?

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