

An Interview

The missing Malcolm

Monday 12 January 2009, by [BLACK Simon J.](#), [MARABLE Manning](#) (Date first published: January 2009).

DR. MARABLE, when we speak of W.E.B. Du Bois, A. Phillip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, and Martin Luther King, we are not only speaking of great intellectuals and civil rights leaders, but of democratic socialists. Malcolm also moved to the left in his later life. Much of this has been suppressed or written out of mainstream civil rights history. What effect has that had on how African-Americans relate to the left and how the left, Black and white, relates to the African-American community?

AFRICAN-AMERICANS who identify themselves with socialism or left projects have been drawn to that body of politics based on their realization that racialized injustice is not simply a dynamic of color, but, rather, has something very directly to do with accumulated disadvantage driven by market economics and by the hegemony of capital over labor. Black people in the United States and the Americas who came here were brought here involuntarily due to the demand for labor and the unquenchable thirsts on the part of those who own capital and invested in means of production to find the cheapest way to develop a labor pool to exploit and to extract surplus value that is accrued to them through excess profits.

The engine that drove the trans-Atlantic slave trade was capital, as Eric Williams in *Capitalism and Slavery* pointed out fifty and sixty years ago. Malcolm, on Jan. 15, 1965, a month before he dies, does an interview in Canada, I believe in Toronto, where he says, "All my life, I believed that the fundamental struggle was Black versus white. Now I realize that it is the haves against the have-nots." Malcolm came to the realization, King came to the realization, that the nature of the struggle was between those who have and those who are dispossessed. [Frantz] Fanon came to this same conclusion in *Wretched of the Earth*. So this led to what some scholars have written about as Black Marxism, the tradition of Black radicalism that comes organically from the critical reality of the super exploitation of Black labor worldwide and a response to that politically. That is, that we didn't gravitate toward Marx simply because we liked his beard or we were seduced by his manipulation of prose, even though I loved the 18th *Brumaire*. Rather, we were attracted to Marx because it helped to illuminate and make clear the objective material circumstances of poverty, unemployment, and exploitation in Black people's lives. Which is why we became socialists or Marxists, because we understood that there could not be a path toward Black liberation that was not simultaneously one that challenged the hegemony of capital over labor.

IN YOUR new biography of Malcolm, *Malcolm X: A Life of the Invention*, you discuss three missing chapters from Alex Haley's collaboration with Malcolm, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. What's happened to them? And what's their importance to understanding Malcolm's life?

THEY'RE IN the safe of an attorney named Gregory Reed. He's in Detroit, Michigan. They're in his safe. And, he has them and doesn't show them to people. Now why does he have them? How did that happen? Well, in late 1992, I believe October, there was an auction of the Alex Haley estate and for \$100,000, he bought these chapters that were discarded from the autobiography.

Alex Haley was the ghostwriter and co-author of the book. You have to remember that Haley went on to great fame as the author of *Roots*, one of the largest-selling books in American history and a docudrama on television that had a profound impact on race relations in the late 1970s. Haley was deeply hostile to Malcolm X's politics. He was a Republican, he was opposed to Black nationalism, and he was an integrationist. He had been in the Coast Guard for twenty years. But, he also knew a good thing when he saw it.

A charismatic, handsome, articulate Black leader who had a controversial past as a hustler, a pimp, a drug addict, a numbers runner, "Detroit Red," "Little Gangster," "Little Bugsy Siegel," who supposedly terrorized the Harlem community in the 1940s and went to jail and was given ten years in prison. He goes through a metamorphosis, he becomes a Black Muslim, he comes out, he explodes onto the scene. He creates seventy to eighty new mosques in less than ten years, turns a small sect of 400 people into fifty- to one hundred thousand by 1960-62. Then, he turns more overtly to politics, he breaks from the Nation of Islam (NOI), he builds two new organizations, the Muslim Mosque Incorporated in March 1964 and the Organization of Afro-American Unity in May 1964. He goes to Africa and the Mideast. He is treated as the head of state. He is welcomed at the Fateh by the Saudi royal household. He sits down with Gamal, eats breakfast with Anwar Sadat in Egypt. He caucuses and meets and gets to know Che Guevara while he's in Africa, as he alludes to in a talk in 1964 at the Audubon Ballroom. So Malcolm is this extraordinary figure, dies at the age of thirty-nine. It's a hell of a story. Haley understood that. And so, it was on those terms he agreed to work with Malcolm to write the book. But, what Malcolm didn't know was that Haley already was compromised and had basically been a purveyor of information—a kind of, not informant, but a client of the FBI in this disinformation campaign against the NOI. Haley had collaborated with the FBI. Malcolm never knew that. In the summer of sixty-four when Malcolm was in Egypt, Haley was taking the book manuscript and giving it to an attorney, William O'Dwyer, rewriting passages of the book trying to get it passed as Malcolm's survey. Malcolm's on the run, people are trying to kill him, they're trying to poison him in Egypt. He's not going to have time to look at the book carefully. Then, he dies.

Haley adds a seventy-nine-page appendix to the book where he has his own integrationist and liberal Republican interpretation. And then, they have M.S. Handler of the *New York Times* writing in the front of the book. I mean, you know Malcolm respected Handler. But this is not who you want to lead in to a Black revolutionary's text. So Haley did a variety of things to reframe the book. And, toward the end of the book, there's a lot of language in it that simply doesn't sound like Malcolm. It doesn't sound like him. There's a lot of information that is just wrong in the book. They misspelled "As-Salamu Alaykum" several times. They give the story of Johnson Hinton. They have Hinton Johnson. They put the date of this very tragic beating of this brother who's in the Nation, Brother Johnson, in 1959, rather than the year it actually occurred, which was April 1957. So there are simple mistakes in dates, of names, events that clearly show Malcolm did not have access to the final manuscript. He didn't see it. And it was published nine months after Malcolm's death. Betty Shabazz was in no shape to check and recheck facts. So all that says to me is you have to read the autobiography very, very carefully, very suspiciously. It's a wonderful book. It is a great work of literature. But it is a work of literature. It is not an autobiography. It's a memoir. And it's gone through the prism of Haley who was a Republican, integrationist, and a defender of U.S. power. You should read the anticommunist articles he wrote for the *Reader's Guide* in the mid-fifties on Hungary. This is the man you're dealing with. So we must be very careful. I learned I had to deconstruct the autobiography to write the biography. If you go to www.malcolmxproject.net, you will see my biography, the architecture of that, and how I had to deconstruct the autobiography. That's why we put up the Web site.

WHAT DO you suspect is contained in these missing three chapters?

WELL, I'VE seen them for about fifteen minutes. I met with Gregory. I've written about this in my book, *Living Black History*, which came out last year. *Living Black History* has a whole chapter on this. I couldn't use it in the autobiography, but I had to tell the story to somebody. I talked with Gregory on the phone. He's an attorney. He bought it for \$100,000. He wanted to make money off of the material. So I phone him up, we talk. He says, "Fly out to Detroit. Meet with me. Come to my law office. There, I'll show you the chapters." As honesty suggests, I get to Detroit. He said, "Don't come to my office. Are you downtown?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Meet me at this restaurant in an hour." I go there. He's about a half hour late. He eventually shows up. And he's carrying a briefcase. And then he said, "I'll let you see these for fifteen minutes." I've flown from New York and I have fifteen minutes to read the text. "I'll let you sit here and read them and I'll leave and I'll come back."

I'm sitting here frantically reading these pages. But it only takes me a few minutes to recognize what they are. They were obviously written sometime between August 1963 to December 1963. There's a presumption in the text that Malcolm is still in the Nation of Islam. So he hasn't broken with the Nation yet. What they call for is the construction of an unprecedented Black united front, uniting all Black organizations, led by, get this, the Nation of Islam. So Malcolm is envisioning the Nation actively participating in antiracist struggles and building various types of capacities: economic strategies, housing strategies, health-care strategies with the NAACP, with the Urban League, with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). So he wanted to push this religious kind of semi-Islamic organization into Black civil society in an aggressive way. He wanted to open up the Nation. And, I strongly suspect that Malcolm's drive and push to reach out to the civil rights community and SNCC and CORE is what got him into trouble inside of the NOI, because the bulk of the NOI had been thoroughly against Malcolm's proselytization efforts that brought in tens of thousands of new members. The old guard felt threatened by that. Then on top of that, since April 1962, the turning point in Malcolm's career was the murder of Ronald Stokes in the Nation of Islam's mosque in Los Angeles. Malcolm flies out to LA and spends over a week there and he calls for a grand coalition, very much like the coalition he talked about in the deleted chapters, with CORE, the NAACP, with SNCC that would be anti-police violence against Black people. And, he was talking about the Nation of Islam participating in that coalition. Elijah Muhammad said "time out," called Malcolm down and said "you better chill that out and get the hell out of Los Angeles." Malcolm was deeply embarrassed and humiliated that they had to end the mobilization after they had a member murdered by the LAPD. Other men in the Nation in the mosque were dragged outside, strip-searched naked to humiliate them. And Malcolm had mobilized people and he had to back down.

Malcolm came back to New York and by July 1962 is speaking at a Local 1199 union protest. I have a photo of him speaking at a protest rally in July for the labor union, King's favorite union, 1199, the largest union today in New York City. In Christmas time in 1962, two members of the Nation, who were selling *Muhammad Speaks* in Times Square, get arrested by the police. How does Malcolm respond? He puts 140 to 150 Fruit of Islam members—the paramilitary organization, the men in the NOI—demonstrating in Times Square on New Year's Day. Elijah Muhammad called for no demonstrations, no overt political activity. That's not what Malcolm's doing. That's exactly what he's doing. And he starts doing that a year and a half before the silencing, before the break.

So you know what happens? The Nation of Islam's newspaper *Muhammad Speaks* in late 1962 stops covering Malcolm X. If you go through methodically the last year from December 1962 through December 1963, guess what? You see Malcolm once in his own newspaper. And he's the national spokesman. You see him more often in the *New York Times*. And this is like a year before the break. So you can already see where he's going. It doesn't take a mind reader to see that Elijah Muhammad only used the "chickens coming home to roost" statement [by Malcolm X, in response to John F. Kennedy's November 1963 assassination] as an excuse to do what they wanted to do, which was to

eliminate Malcolm's influence, curb his politics. I think that they believed he would submit. Most of Malcolm's closest followers within the Nation thought he would also submit. They weren't prepared for a break. Malcolm contemplated a break. I think maybe he wasn't prepared either. But he did anticipate a possibility of it.

He began, in early 1964, talking with a number of people outside of the Nation of Islam to develop the OAAU, the Organization of Afro-American Unity. When he left the Nation, very few members of the NOI went with him, perhaps maybe 100. The mosque in Harlem had as many as 7,000 members. Only 100-150 left. They became the Muslim Mosque Incorporated (MMI), and Sunni Muslims. But the OAAU was the secular organization with largely working-class and middle-class Blacks and many professionals, writers like Huey and Mayfield, historians like John Henrik Clark. The key organizer was Lynn Shifflet of NBC News, a producer, a young Black woman in her late twenties. There were real tensions between the OAAU and the MMI over ideology and their relationship to Malcolm, because Malcolm increasingly was moving toward the politics of the OAAU, away from the MMI, even though these were people who had put their lives on the line to leave the NOI out of personal loyalty to him. So there were tremendous tensions between these two groups, which I will document in the biography.

SO THE Organization of Afro-American Unity really is the culmination of, or the product of, the development of Malcolm's thought that was written about by Haley in these last three chapters?

THE CHAPTERS that are missing are written prior to the split. Haley says that Malcolm changed his mind after he went to Mecca and decided to deep-six the chapters. Maybe that's true. We'll never know. What is true is that it would be nice to print the things that were deleted, put an addendum and appendix on the autobiography. It would be nice to see it. Well I'm not sure. Don't hold your breath. I saw it for fifteen minutes. Maybe I'm the lucky one. But eventually they will appear. We will see them.

There has been an active suppression of Malcolm's work and his intellectual legacy for more than forty years. And the suppression has been deliberate and for various reasons. First, many of the key people in his entourage in the Nation and in the OAAU had to go underground. I just interviewed this week James 67X Shabazz (Abdullah Razzaq) who went underground and lived in Guyana for nineteen years, because he was threatened with murder and also threatened by the FBI. So it's only now in his mid-seventies that he's returned to the United States several months a year. He lives in Brooklyn with his son. James 67X was Malcolm's chief-of-staff and his secretary for many years. The others who were closest to Malcolm are now dead. There is Herman Ferguson who is the best eyewitness to the murder. I've interviewed him several times and I'm interviewing him once more next week, which will be fun. His eyewitness to the murder, his recount to me, which has partially been published in my journal Souls, is absolutely stunning and it raises many questions about the assassination.

We have, over the last seven years, worked very hard to develop a forensic accounting of the murder. And, we believe we have figured out how the murder took place. That is, the forensics of it. We think we know how that happened. We don't know who gave the order. But I can tell you what our theory is. The murder took place on February 21, 1965, as a result of the culmination of three separate groups. There was no classic conspiracy, no direct collusion, but, rather, a convergence. Three things had to happen for the murder to take place, and they all did. Law enforcement, the FBI and the NYPD, and its Bureau of Special Services (BOSS), which was its red squad, actively wanted to do surveillance disruption of Malcolm X and possibly eliminate him; certainly the FBI, because their nightmare was seeing King and Malcolm embrace. That was their nightmare. And they realized much to their horror that they were far better off with Malcolm in the Nation of Islam than outside

of it, because then he was being treated like a head of state in Africa. They had never anticipated that he would be a houseguest of a Saudi royal family, or that he would be speaking to parliaments from Kenya to Ghana to French Guinea. Malcolm goes to Alabama, three weeks before he's murdered and reaches out to Dr. King. King is in prison after leading demonstrations. Malcolm goes to Coretta Scott King and he says, "I want you to convey to your husband my deepest respect for him and that I am not trying to undermine Dr. King's work. My goal is to be to the left of Dr. King, to challenge institutional racism so that those in power can negotiate with King. That's my role." So Malcolm understood what his role was. This was the FBI's nightmare. And so they actively wanted to curtail his influence, if not silence him permanently.

Then you have the Nation of Islam. But what people need to understand is that there were different points of view in the NOI about Malcolm. Some of the leadership, especially in Chicago, the national secretary John Ali, the national head of the Fruit of Islam Raymond Shareef, Elijah Muhammad's son-in-law Herbert Muhammad, the sons of Elijah Muhammad, Jr., and several others wanted to silence Malcolm permanently. Joseph X, who was a captain of the Fruit of Islam and the Northeast regional security director at Mosque No. 7, formerly Malcolm's associate and friend, as was John Ali—they actively sought to eliminate him, to blow him up with bombs, to kill him, or firebomb his home or whatever. But other members of the Nation of Islam were against the murder and it is questionable if Elijah Muhammad ever gave the order. It could have been a situation very much like Henry II and Thomas Becket where somebody's ridding him of his priest. So he doesn't have to give the order, but the deed is done. It's understood what needs to be done. But he doesn't technically give the order.

Then there's a third group and that's Malcolm's own entourage. There were police informants in the group. Gene Roberts who tries to resuscitate Malcolm after he's shot is an NYPD police officer. He's a police officer who walks right directly out of the line of fire only seconds before the fuselage goes off—maybe by accident, maybe by design. What is true is that whenever Malcolm spoke, there were at least two dozen cops. There were only two police officers in the Audubon that day and they were assigned as far away in the distance as possible in the building. They were in the rows, in very small-rows in a ballroom adjacent to the large grand ballroom, but separated by a wall and then a vestibule. It was impossible for them to protect Malcolm. There was one police officer in a small park directly across the street from the entrance of the Audubon. No other police officers. They'd been pulled back to the Columbia Presbyterian Hospital four blocks away. No captain, and the guard is usually sitting in the second floor in a booth where they collect money that directly faces the ballroom. You have to walk right past it to get out of the building. No police in the building. Why?

Malcolm gets shot. The hospital, they try to get the ambulance. They can't get an ambulance. It's only four blocks away. So men run to the hospital's emergency room, grab a gurney, and carry his body in a gurney in the street. Seems odd, doesn't it? His own men, no one checks for weapons at the door. None of the guards are armed. I've gone through New York's Municipal Archives, the police reports of all the guards that day, of every guard. We've gone through all that. We know who they were and their names and the changes of the guards. There were three changes of the guards. One around 2:00, one around 2:30, and one about 2:55. We know that several people who were guarding Malcolm that day were not generally part of the OAAU and were assigned to sensitive positions. Guards like William George, who normally guarded Malcolm on the roster were assigned to be as far away from him as possible that day at the front of the building, not next to Malcolm on the rush. The guards who were there rolled out of the way. And Malcolm was naked and alone on the stage.

There's only one man who could have placed the guards there that way and that was Malcolm's head of security, Reuben Francis. Francis is the one who does shoot Hayer, who did indeed shoot Malcolm. But Hayer is interviewed very briefly by the NYPD, he's arrested briefly. They let him go on bond. Then he disappears off planet Earth. And the FBI said, "We can't find him. We believe he's

in Mexico.” But prior to his disappearance, he’s not even called to the grand jury, even though he’s the only one who shot anybody who was an assassin.

The NYPD doesn’t even interview Capt. Joseph, the head of the Fruit of Islam, at Mosque No. 7, even though, to a room of over 120 people, he cold orders Malcolm’s death. There are witnesses to this. And the FBI doesn’t interview him? We found a folder that said Joseph X and it was empty. There were six men who killed Malcolm, not three. Two of the men who were incarcerated and given life sentences were innocent, Norman Butler and Thomas 15X Johnson. They were innocent. They were sent to prison for life. Why? They weren’t even physically there. Johnson used to be Malcolm’s chauffeur. He used to stand out in the rain in front of Mosque No. 7 or in the snow, holding and reserving a parking space for Malcolm when he drove up. He used to phone him and tell him that he was coming before he arrived. Once a month, he went to go grocery shopping for Betty, Malcolm’s wife. You would know this guy if he came to kill you. Everybody would’ve known him if he had walked into the Audubon that day. He wasn’t there that day. Butler was an enforcer for Capt. Joseph. He was a notorious thug in the Nation. They would have known if they walked into the Audubon that day. The two men weren’t there that day and yet they were convicted of murdering Malcolm X. Why?

I believe the district attorney was protecting informants within Malcolm’s group and within the NOI. And perhaps some of those informants were collaborators and committed the crime. So they convicted the wrong people to cover and protect the anonymity of their own agents. That’s a theory. I can’t prove it, but I think we ought to explore it and we should reopen this case. And, hopefully my book will help reopen it. William Kunstler tried to reopen it back in 1977-78 and he failed because he didn’t have the evidence I have. Hopefully, we can reopen it again.

THE DOMINANT understanding of Malcolm’s life and meaning in mainstream American popular culture really comes from two sources: Haley and Spike Lee’s film. Spike Lee’s interpretation of the assassination shows a Malcolm, who seems to be prepared for his own martyrdom and orders his guards not to be armed on that day, in a way that King with his mountaintop speech also appears to be prepared for what he seems to think is his inevitable fate. Is that a damaging interpretation?

NO, IT’S not and it may be true. Malcolm clearly knew he was going to die. He didn’t know when and I strongly suspect that Malcolm was not going to run away from death and he had the courage to face death. Not that he wanted to die, he didn’t have a death wish. But he had the courage to face death. There is a story, a very influential legend within Shia Islam, about Ali and his grandson Husayn, both of whom perished in a kind of murder in the cathedral, in the case of Ali in the mosque, and in his grandson’s case at Karbala where he was killed in, I believe, 682 in common era. About four years later, women came to Karbala, in today’s Iraq, and began to beat themselves and lament that they had not protected the grandson of Ali. In Shia, Ali is the Shia that we have today. They still gather every year at Karbala. Now hundreds of thousands and maybe a million people lament the events of Karbala. There is nothing greater in Shia Islam than martyrdom, the embrace of death for a higher belief. And to some extent, I think that Malcolm embodied that at that moment. Not that he sought death, but that he did not fear it. That he saw in his martyrdom a way to transcend death that there would be a life after death. I’m sure he was familiar with the legend. Who knows? Perhaps that influenced his actions.

WHAT WILL your biography broadly do to assert a new Malcolm X, itself a reinvention of Malcolm X, as your book is titled, because he reinvented himself many times? What will it do to displace Haley and Spike Lee as the dominant understanding of Malcolm X’s life and meaning?

THERE ARE three core things in the book. The first is what I call a kind of a life of reinvention.

Malcolm's tale is a hero's tale that's not unlike Odysseus—a story of travel, of learning, of experience, of ordeals and tests, a classic kind of hero story. It's a classic Greek story, which frequently or usually ends in death. But at the end, there's a broader, richer, deeper, critical consciousness that's achieved. The thing about that story is that Malcolm's growth comes through a series of artful creative reinventions. He reinvents himself even to the point these reinventions have different names. He was "Jack Carlton" in the summer of 1944. When he was nineteen years old, he wanted to break into show biz and he was at Lobster Pond bar on Forty-Second Street in Midtown Manhattan working as a drummer and professional dancer for about three or four months. He doesn't write about that in the autobiography. You just have to find out about that. He worked in a bar and grill in Harlem, Jimmy's Chicken Shack, alongside of the funniest dishwasher and server in Harlem, a guy who had red hair. Malcolm had red hair. So they called Malcolm "Detroit Red" cause nobody had ever heard of Lansing, Michigan, and they called the brother from Chicago "Chicago Red." His last name was Sanford. We know him today better as Red Foxx, the comedian. So Malcolm and Red Foxx worked in the same restaurant in 1943 and early 1944. He does mention something of this in the autobiography. Malcolm in prison called himself at times Malachi Shabazz. He was Malcolm X. He was El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. He had many, many different names: "Detroit Red," "Homeboy," "Mascot," "Satan" when he was in prison. Yet, through these transformations, he was able to navigate brilliantly a life of reinvention.

What makes Malcolm different from every signature Black figure in American history is that he combines the two central characters of Black folk culture. He is both the trickster and the minister. He's both. That's "Detroit Red"—the hustler, the gambler, the outlaw. And, he is also the minister who saves souls, who redeems lives, who heals the sick, who raises the dead. He's both. King is one. Jesse Jackson is one. Malcolm's both and he understood the streets and the lumpen proletariat. I hate that phrase, but it comes from Marx. As well as, he saw himself as a minister and an Amun, a cleric. He was always this. And he embodied the cultural spirit of Black folk better than anyone else. When I asked one student about a decade ago, "What was the fundamental difference between Malcolm and Martin?" He said, "Dr. Marable, that's easy. Martin Luther King, Jr., belongs to the entire world. Malcolm X belongs to us." There is a tremendous degree of identification on the part of people of African descent, and globally on the part of Muslims, invested in the figure of Malcolm. The very first postage stamp honoring Malcolm X was issued not by the United States but by the Ayatollah Khomeini government of Iran, in 1982, by the Shia Muslims. Perhaps they knew something that everybody else didn't know.

The second theme in the book is a spiritual journey and Malcolm's growth in a spiritual sojourn from the periphery of Islam represented by the Nation of Islam to Sunni Islam. There was a price in the journey because he also had to embrace Nasser's definition of what Islam was in the Pan Arab world. So we have some excellent very interesting articles and speeches Malcolm gave in Cairo. The writings that he did, very critical of the state of Israel in the summer and September 1964, cast Malcolm in a very interesting kind of light as it relates to the Arab struggle and the Palestinian struggle, that heretofore, in the United States, we have rarely seen.

The third theme is betrayal. Malcolm had a capacity ethnographically to read an audience better than any public speaker of his generation. He knew people. He could walk into an audience, read it and give a brilliant address. He could debate at Harvard and Oxford, as well as on 125th Street and Lenox Avenue/Seventh Avenue. He was just a remarkable public speaker. But where his failure came was his consistent inability to make critical accurate judgments of the people closest to him who would betray him. And those included his two brothers Philbert and Wilfred Little who sided with Elijah Muhammad against Malcolm; his chief protégé Louis X/Louis Farrakhan who proclaimed Malcolm to be a man worthy of death, who led the jackal's course leading to his murder. How do we explain Farrakhan? I sat down with Louis for nine hours in an interview a year and a half ago. We

had a fascinating conversation about it. The question I ruminate over is, how much of it is true? Then we have Joseph X, the leader of the Fruit of Islam at Mosque No. 7, who Malcolm had promoted, pulled out of the gutter in Detroit in 1952-53, raised him up to be his chief right-hand person, who then would be betray and try to murder him. John Ali, who had been Malcolm's secretary at Mosque No. 7, who he promoted to the national leadership, who then conspired to murder him. A variety of people. His closest personal friend Charles Kenyatta had been turned out by the police and was probably a police agent, Malcolm's best friend, which I've only just discovered last week because I just got the file. We have some interesting info. So I think between this data and the other things, a big chunk of the book is about the forensic discussion of the murder and our theory of the murder. I think people will have more than enough information.

LET'S BRING this full circle. We're now sitting in your office in 2007 in Bloomberg's New York. We've gone through a period of social cleansing that was Giuliani's New York, characterized by police brutality, intense gentrification, privatization of public housing. And I was today at Friday Juma at the Malcolm Shabazz Mosque in Harlem and the message today was one about homosexuality, as an abnormal and immoral practice. The other message was about self-help and the idea of the community needing to raise itself up and take care of its own problems. What does the Malcolm X of your book say to this current political economic conjuncture?

WELL, AN honest representation of Malcolm should show the whole person and his trajectory and his evolution. The trajectory of Malcolm was increasingly anti-corporate capitalist. He talked about the need not to appeal to the United States to redress grievances, but to take the criminal to court, that is, the court of world opinion at the United Nations. He called for what is today known as a South-South dialogue, that is, between the Caribbean, Blacks in Latin America, Africa, and South Asia that would span across continents that would be in part Arab and Muslim, and part Black and Brown. And, he envisioned a global kind of jihad of worlds against Western imperialism and a need for people who had experienced colonialism to take back the power through international bodies that built broad-based unity transnationally. That was what Malcolm's politics were. It was not bootstrap capitalism, nor was it gentrification. Nevertheless, once you're dead, your image is up for grabs. By 1972, Richard Nixon had invited, and Betty Shabazz had agreed to be on the dais of the re-elect Richard M. Nixon for president dinner party in Washington, D.C. This was only six or seven years after Malcolm X's assassination. So once you're murdered, you can't control what people who had some sort of relationship to you—whether they're married to you, or they're political affiliates or associates—what choices they make. Sad but true. It is particularly sad that from the masjid or mosque, one hears a kind of message that's more appropriate to Booker T. Washington than Malcolm X. But, nevertheless, the struggle continues.

P.S.

* From International Socialist Review - ISR Issue 63, January-February 2009:

<http://www.isreview.org/issues/63/feat-malcolmx.shtml>

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