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United States: Demands for new probe into Malcolm X assassination

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Family members of revolutionary Black leader Malcolm X have revealed a letter written by a former undercover New York police officer, Raymond A Wood, that they say shows the New York Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation were behind Macolm's assassination on February 21, 1965.

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In the letter he admits he was part of a conspiracy targeting Malcolm.

The letter was presented at a news conference in New York on February 20, by Malcolm's three daughters and civil rights attorney Ben Crump. Wood's cousin Reggie joined them in revealing the letter's contents.

The announcement was made at the Malcolm and Dr Betty Shabazz Memorial and Educational Center, on the former site of the Audubon Ballroom, where Malcolm was assassinated.



Malcolm X. Image: Pixabay

Posthumous confession

Wood's 2011 letter, which he gave to his cousin for release after his death, said he had been compelled by his supervisors at the NYPD to coax two members of Malcolm's security team into committing crimes, leading to their arrest just a few days before the assassination.

They were thus unable to secure the entry to the ballroom, where Malcolm was speaking at the time he was killed.

Wood was also assigned to be present at the ballroom.

The FBI and NYPD are facing renewed calls to open their records into the assassination of Malcolm.

Reggie Wood told Democracy Now!: “Ray was told by his handlers not to repeat anything that he had seen or heard [during the assassination], or he would join Malcolm.

“He trusted me enough to reveal this information and asked me not to say anything until he passed away, but at the same time not to allow him to take it to his grave.”

Malcolm’s supporters always believed his murder was orchestrated by the NYPD and FBI, even though no solid proof was available.

Malcolm said many times that only government informants and undercover cops inside the Nation of Islam (NOI) could organise his death, as Wood confirmed in his confession. Those charged and convicted with his death were the “fall guys”.

Mujahid Abdul Halim (aka Talmadge Hayer or Thomas Hagan), who confessed to the killing, maintained that the other two NOI members, Khalil Islam (aka Thomas Johnson) and Muhammad Abdul Aziz (aka Norman Butler), were innocent.

“Halim served 45 years in prison before he was paroled in 2010. Islam, paroled in 1987, died in 2009. Aziz, 83, was paroled in 1985. The Innocence Project, along with attorney David B Shanies, are fighting to clear Islam’s and Aziz’s names,” reported Sydney Trent in the Washington Post.

The revelations in the Wood letter underline why the family is calling for a new Malcolm X commission to get to the full truth, including the links between the police and FBI informants who infiltrate Black rights groups and seek to assassinate Black leaders.

The FBI’s targeting of Black leaders and groups continues. They infiltrate the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) and use agents provocateurs to blame BLM for cop violence and white supremacist terrorism.

Remembering Malcolm X

That is why Malcolm’s assassination is important. It exposes how ongoing FBI and police violence continues against Blacks and why Black leaders are special targets.

Malcolm’s speeches and example continue to inspire youth worldwide. The international movement for Black lives looks up to him.

Malcolm was a fighter for the freedom of oppressed peoples worldwide, not just African Americans. After his break with the leadership of the NOI in March 1964, he began building a secular organisation, the Organization of Afro-American Unity, based on revolutionary internationalism.

He left the NOI when he learned that its supreme spiritual leader, Elijah Muhammad, was not practising in his personal life what he taught his followers.

On his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1964, Malcolm converted to Sunni Islam. He also said the NOI was

absent from the real struggles, that it was not part of world Islam.

These fundamental changes in his outlook became a threat to the NOI and the United States government.

The 1960s was the height of the civil rights movement, the anti-colonial revolutions in Africa and the movement against the US war in Vietnam.

Malcolm was more than a revolutionary Black nationalist, as he had been as NOI leader. He was a revolutionary internationalist, who could unite all oppressed and exploited people in the US and the world.

He had to be stopped

The tactics used by the police and government to “neutralise” Malcolm and other Black militants remain relevant today. Informants and provocateurs are sent into anti-cop violence protests. White supremacists dressed in Black camouflage vandalise property at night to blame the protesters.

Not a single cop was killed by demonstrators in marches that took place in all 50 states in 2020. Yet one cop was murdered by white pro-Trump rioters at the Capitol on January 6.

Black men and women continue to be killed. In that context, what happened to the greatest Black revolutionary of the previous century is important to study.

Three years after Malcolm’s murder, the most prominent civil rights leader, Martin Luther King jnr, was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, while supporting striking sanitation workers. The FBI had targeted King for years.

Two years later, Fred Hampton, the leader of the Illinois Black Panther Party, was assassinated by cops in Chicago while sleeping in his bed on December 4, 1969. The film *Judas and the Black Messiah*, shows how a Black undercover informant was central to the FBI’s campaign against Hampton, the Black Panther Party and the militant wing of the civil rights movement.

Black leaders and college students were targeted by cops with informants in the 1970s. Black activist youth were also imprisoned on trumped up drug charges.

Investigate, white extremists not BLM

The rise of a mass multiracial protest movement last year against police, FBI and far-right violence shows the way forward.

Not surprisingly, the Republican Party is seeking to shift the discussion from white supremacy and the organised violence on January 6, to attack the peaceful protests led by Blacks.

A proposal to launch a commission into the violence on January 6 is opposed by Trump loyalists.

Some liberal pundits are voicing support for an independent commission to look at the peaceful protests and the January white supremacist insurrection.

It is a way, they argue, to call the Trump loyalists’ bluff.

However, that would be a mistake. It would allow the far right to use its lie that the BLM protests were just as bad (or more violent) than those organised by armed white insurrectionists.

The likely result of such an “even-handed commission” would smear Black rights leaders and let white extremists like the Proud Boys and other armed militias off the hook.

There must be an investigation into the white extremist groups that carried out the January 6 insurrection. They must be arrested and prosecuted.

The same applies to those cops and white vigilantes behind the murders of Blacks that BLM has exposed, and the disruption of Black rights protests.

These crimes should be the focus of any government-run investigations.

Crump, who is the Shabazz family’s lawyer and represents the families of many unarmed Black men and women killed by police, said it best: “Who more personified the Black liberation movement in America in 1965 than civil rights icon Malcolm X?”

Crump told the news conference the FBI “was trying to stop another Black messiah from uniting African Americans.

“This was orchestrated, and the only way we get to justice ... restorative justice or otherwise, is with the truth.”

The BLM movement begins with the truth, which is the only way to move towards justice.

Malik Miah

California

P.S.

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<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/united-states-demands-new-probe-malcolm-x-assassination>