

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL POWER OF MECCA IN THE RHETORIC OF  
MALCOLM X

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To Dr. Roseann Mandziuk for her patience and support.

To my family for their constant, unfailing love.

Find out what Language a person speaks, speak their language,  
and you'll get your point across. –Malcolm X

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## Introduction

Malcolm X is a complex and often controversial figure in our recent history. The Civil Rights movement of the 1960's arguably produced some of the greatest leaders the United States has ever known. Only some scholars, however, include Malcolm in this category. Others argue that Malcolm X was racist and spread a message of hate, citing his own statement that he was "the angriest Negro in America" (Epps 1-2). Certainly the media of his day fostered the image of Malcolm X as an embodiment of hate, exemplified by the 1959 documentary entitled "The Hate that Hate Produced" on Malcolm's work with the Nation of Islam, commonly known as the Black Muslim movement (Gallen 16).

In the forty years since his death, historians and biographers have not reached consensus about what the nature of this man's legacy should be<sup>1</sup>. In fact, almost all scholarship on Malcolm was produced in the years just after his death. It seems both academics of the day and friends of Malcolm attempted to come to terms with his place in history as part of dealing with his death. Many of the most prominent works about Malcolm were written by individuals who knew him personally, which is a contributing factor to the wide variety of viewpoints expressed about his life, work, and ideology. Though interest in Malcolm X remains high, little new scholarship has emerged in recent decades. Even in 1992, when the Spike Lee film *Malcolm X* was released, no significant scholarship on Malcolm followed. Thus, it is important to study Malcolm's work from a perspective far removed from his life and era.

Malcolm X has been examined through the lens of history, culture, leadership, civil, and human rights. But few scholars, if any, have examined the man through his rhetoric. Certainly,

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<sup>1</sup> See Works Cited for examples of such authors.

many have cited his rhetoric for other ends, to prove biographical points or some element of his character. But none has used Malcolm's rhetoric as its own means of discovery, to find what Malcolm's rhetoric reveals about his worldview. Archie Epps comes closest to this idea in his book *Malcolm X: Speeches at Harvard*, but again uses an analysis of the rhetoric for his specific purpose: "I want to help those who disagreed with Malcolm X to take him seriously (3)." This paper will be a rhetorical study, allowing Malcolm's rhetoric to guide the research findings. The analysis will not be comprehensive, as an examination of X's rhetoric could fill books, but will focus on a particular period of transformation in his life from his rise to prominence in the Nation of Islam to after his return from a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little on May 19, 1925. He grew up in and around Lansing, Michigan where his father, Earl Little, was a preacher in the "Back to Africa" movement led by Marcus Garvey (Gallen 11-12). Malcolm's mother, Louise Norton, was West Indian and half white; a white man had raped her mother. Louise was very light skinned, and Malcolm was the lightest skinned of his eight siblings (including three half siblings from his father's previous marriage); his hair and skin had a reddish brown tint. In his youth Malcolm was proud of his light coloring, though he eventually came to hate the white part of himself (Haley and X 2-3).

Earl Little's outspoken preaching caused white supremacy groups to target the Little family. Their first home in Lansing was set on fire and burned to the ground. When Malcolm was only six years old, his father was run over by a streetcar. It was widely speculated, and Malcolm believed, that a local white supremacy group murdered Earl Little (Gallen 12). However, the Little's insurance company refused to grant Louise payment on Earl's life

insurance policy, claiming that he had committed suicide. This left her with no financial backing to raise six children under the age of twelve (Haley and X 10-13).

For a while, the family survived, but eventually the stress of finances and state welfare workers constantly coming to the house proved too much for Louise to bear. She suffered a total nervous breakdown and was committed to an institution where she remained for much of her life. The children were sent to foster homes around Lansing. Malcolm lived with a white family and attended an all white school where he was popular enough to be elected class president. However, upon telling his favorite teacher that he wanted to be a lawyer “when he grew up” Malcolm was told that he should be more realistic about his options as an African American (Haley and X 13-36). As Malcolm later wrote: “The more I thought afterwards about what he said, the more uneasy it made me. It just kept treading around in my mind” (Haley and X 36).

In February of 1941, Malcolm moved to Boston to live with his half sister, and eventually took a job with the railroad working the Boston to Harlem train. Malcolm fell in love with Harlem, and moved there in March of 1943. Malcolm became known as “Detroit Red,” a hustler in its streets of Harlem peddling everything from drugs to women. In December 1945, Malcolm returned to Boston where he and friends embarked on a burglary spree that eventually landed Malcolm in prison (Gallen 12-13)<sup>2</sup>.

During his seven years in prison, Malcolm decided to educate himself in the prison libraries; his formal education had ended with the eighth grade. Also, it was during this time that he discovered The Nation of Islam through a fellow inmate and family members who had converted (Gallen 13-14). Followers of true Islam do generally not recognize the Nation of

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<sup>2</sup> Most of the biographical details of Malcolm X’s life can be found in extended form in his Autobiography.

Islam, a Muslim based sect whose beliefs are tailored to fit the specific social situation of African Americans in the United States. Their moral code is strict; as Malcolm would later explain: “We practice the principles of the religion of Islam, which mean prayer, charity, fasting, [and] brotherhood” (Lomax 202). This is not to give a detailed background into the Nation of Islam, but simply to say Malcolm’s life and lifestyle were transformed.

Once Malcolm was released from prison, he became active in the Nation of Islam, earning his “X” through his adherence to the faith. “X” is the unknown variable, representing Malcolm’s unknown African ancestry. Malcolm’s fervor for the Nation earned him the post as Minister of what was then known as Detroit Temple No. 1 in June of 1953. His successes in developing the Detroit congregation lead Malcolm to be appointed in 1954 to the Harlem temple, the largest community of the Nation. In this important post, Malcolm became sought after in the national media for interviews and commentary (Clark xvii). Finally, in 1963 Malcolm was named the Nation of Islam’s first national minister, making him the official spokesperson for the Nation (Time 1990).

This thesis begins to focus on Malcolm as he gains national prominence, especially after the 1959 documentary on the Nation of Islam brought Malcolm into the public eye. The analysis will look specifically at Malcolm’s rhetoric as spokesman for the Nation of Islam and at his rhetoric toward the end of his life, after his split with the Nation on March 8, 1964. After Malcolm left the Nation, he embraced true Islam and completed a pilgrimage to Mecca. Specifically, this paper is interested in Malcolm’s pilgrimage to Mecca as part of a transformation of his life. The central question to be explored is whether and how Malcolm’s rhetoric changed as a result of his pilgrimage.

The analysis will examine two speeches Malcolm gave at the Harvard University Law School Forums of March 24, 1961 and December 16, 1964. The first was given as Malcolm was gaining national prominence as a leader in the Nation; the second was given just two months before his death on February 21, 1965<sup>3</sup>. The speeches at Harvard were chosen to eliminate the confounding variable of audience. The ideal analysis would utilize one speech given to the Nation and a second given to Muslim Mosque, Inc., the temple Malcolm founded after his split with the Nation. However, securing transcripts from sermons or speeches Malcolm gave to the Nation has proven difficult. So, as a second choice, two speeches given to a similar audience at very dissimilar points in Malcolm's life have been used instead.

The analysis for each speech will occur in two parts. First, the rhetorical situation will be analyzed. The rhetorical situation, a concept developed in the late sixties by Lloyd Bitzer, argues that rhetoric is borne out of necessity from a given context—the situation brings discourse into existence. As Bitzer notes in his original essay, “Rhetorical works belong to the class of things which obtain their character from the circumstances of the historic context in which they occur” (3). Thus, to understand a piece of rhetoric, we must first understand the situation that brought it into being.

Bitzer describes each rhetorical situation as consisting of three parts: exigence, audience and constraints. The exigence is an imperfection or obstacle that has the potential to be modified by rhetoric (6). For example, if the pastor of a church discovers that more money is needed for

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<sup>3</sup> The speeches are taken from Archie Epps, *Malcolm X: Speeches at Harvard*. The content of the speeches remains largely in tact, though the format has been altered in some cases. For more information see notes on the speeches included in Epps book.

the building of a new church hall and in response, she gives a sermon addressing this need—then the need for money is the rhetorical exigence, the reason she gives her sermon.

The audience is the second component to a rhetorical situation. An audience is always required because audience members are the ones capable of bringing about change indicated by the discourse. To follow the same example, the congregation hearing the sermon comprises the individuals capable of being persuaded to give money to the building of a new church hall. It is not enough that an audience be present to observe the rhetoric, the audience must be, as Bitzer tells us, “capable of being influenced by discourse and being the mediators of change” (8).

The final component that encompasses each rhetorical situation is the constraints. Constraints are the parts of a situation that have the power to influence the nature of the discourse. Constraints include people, objects, other external situations, relationships, etc. The rhetor may impose the constraints, or the constraints may exist outside of the rhetor (Bitzer 8). If our pastor knows that certain individuals in her audience have already contributed large sums of money to the church hall, she may not refer to the need of the entire congregation to give. This is a constraint that the pastor controls and places on herself. However, if the sound system of the church is broken and only the first ten rows can hear (and thus be influenced by) the pastor, this is a constraint that exists as a part of the situation, which the rhetor cannot control.

The second part of the analysis will be a fantasy theme analysis of the speech texts. Other types of rhetorical analysis focus on the speaker, the audience, or the channels of communication. In fantasy theme analysis the message is of central importance. Discovering the dramas that are taking place within the rhetoric allows the critic to see the rhetor’s interpretation of reality (Foss, Foss & Trapp 253). Observing this reality (as revealed through fantasy themes

and rhetorical vision) allows the critic to discover the motivations of the rhetor. Thus, fantasy theme analysis helps to uncover the intentions and ideas behind the message. Fantasy theme analysis also allows the critic to discover which of the rhetor's ideas become embedded in the audience. In this case, where the message stems from an individual, fantasy theme analysis is useful in providing insight to the intentions and vision of the individual behind the message.

The basis of fantasy theme analysis is that ideas cultivated through communication create social reality (Fantasy 396). The core of Bormann's definition of a fantasy theme is "a recollection of something that happened to the group in the past or a dream of what the group might do in the future" (Fantasy 397). Some of these fantasy themes then chain out through the group leading to identification with and sharing in the social reality of the rhetor. In groups that have little history together, such as Malcolm and the crowd at Harvard, these themes that chain out, or "fantasy chains," help develop a common culture. Bormann tells us, "Those [fantasy themes] that did get the members of the group to...respond emotionally not only reflected the members' common preoccupations but served to make those commonalities public" (Fantasy 397). Discovering fantasy themes in rhetoric can help the critic discover not just the vision of the rhetor, but the vision of the audience based on how the rhetor's message resonates with his or her audience.

Fantasy themes within the message are those that develop the key actors, settings and actions (Foss, Foss & Trapp 253). The themes that are persuasive enough to become fantasy chains can spread beyond the rhetorical situation where they originate. When these fantasy chains engage large groups of people in the same vision of reality, they then become a rhetorical vision. Bormann describes the result of this phenomenon in his first essay on fantasy theme

analysis: “Once a rhetorical vision emerges it contains *dramatis personae* and typical plot lines that can be alluded to in all communication contexts and spark a response reminiscent of the original emotional chain” (Fantasy 398). Since this paper will use rhetoric to discern something about the person behind the message, all the actions, settings and motives that can be discovered within, and the effect they had on the audience, will be integral to the analysis.

To provide a systematic approach to the analysis, the fantasy theme analysis method outlined by Sonja K. Foss in her book, *Rhetorical Criticism, Exploration and Practice* will be utilized. According to Foss, the process includes five steps. The first is finding evidence of the sharing of fantasy themes or a rhetorical vision. This includes discovering allusions to common ground, or frequent use of a theme or an analogy (294). Discovering these elements in the rhetoric helps the critic determine that the sharing of fantasies is taking place. The second step is coding the rhetorical artifact(s) for setting, character, and action themes. Once the critic has determined that the rhetoric contains the potential for a fantasy theme analysis, she must critically examine the entire piece of discourse. In this process, she “codes” or categorizes any possible fantasy themes according to setting, character or action (294-295). The third step in the analysis is the construction of the rhetorical vision(s) based on the fantasy themes. The critic must determine which themes appear to dominate the discourse and use her discoveries as the basis for determining the rhetorical vision (295-296). Once a rhetorical vision is identified, the critic then names the motive for the vision(s). The critic must determine the dominant vision and then assess why participants have chosen to espouse this vision (296).

Finally, the critic will provide an assessment of the group's rhetorical vision<sup>4</sup>. This assessment usually occurs based on what the critic hopes to discover through the analysis (296). In the case of this thesis, the vision will be assessed in terms of discerning how Malcolm X's rhetoric changed as a result of his pilgrimage to Mecca. This part of the analysis will be performed in a concluding chapter using the analysis of both speeches studied.

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<sup>4</sup> Foss's language characterizes the analysis in terms of analyzing the communication for a group. However, it can also be applied to individuals addressing groups to determine the individual rhetor's vision and how that vision influences (or fails to influence) the audience.

## Situation: 1961

By 1961, the Nation of Islam was a part of American consciousness. The 1959 documentary, *The Hate that Hate Produced*, had brought the Nation to the attention of the world because of concern over their militant stance against integration. Malcolm, as the most notable speaker of the Nation and leader of one of its largest followings in Harlem, became a highly sought after speaker on talk shows and college campuses, both black and white, across the nation (Clark xvi). His appearance at the *Harvard Law School Forum* of March 24, 1961 generated great interest within the university (Epps 13).

Malcolm spoke to a packed crowd of white students, faculty and the community as part of a forum where a second speaker was slated in opposition to him. His speech references the forum as bringing “both races face to face,” which seems to indicate that Malcolm was the sole source of the integration (Epps 117). Every audience brings messages to life through their response, and one wonders what the immediate response of this white audience was to Malcolm’s fierce rhetoric. It is likely that many audience members came to see Malcolm speak out of pure curiosity, much as we might take the opportunity to see a controversial figure of our own day. George Breitman, author of *Malcolm X Speaks*, notes: “The printed speeches do not convey adequately [Malcolm’s] qualities as a speaker, their effect on his audiences and the interplay between him and them” (viii). What Breitman describes here is the exuberant response of Malcolm’s traditionally black audience. Though the audience response at this 1961 forum was probably equally as strong, it was likely strongly negative. The actual audience response is difficult to gauge because no record of feedback from the opposition speaker or the audience has been recorded for this speech (Epps 14).

Multiple exigences exist for the speech Malcolm X gave at this forum. The simplest exigence is that he was invited to speak, and even given the topic of “The American Negro: Problems and Solutions” (Epps 115). However, it is important to explore what Malcolm did with this speaking opportunity. In 1961, the Nation was coming into the height of its public prominence (Lomax 12). Thus, one of Malcolm’s tasks was to address many of the misconceptions he thought were held by people outside the movement. The audience had heard reports from news media about the Nation, especially as this speech happened after the production of *The Hate that Hate Produced*. This was a chance for Malcolm to teach his audience the “truth.”

This exigence is evidenced in the opening lines of his speech: “To understand our views, the views of the Muslims, you must first realize that we are a religious group, and you must also know something about our religion, the religion of Islam” (Epps 115). He then goes on to explain and defend the views of the Nation and its leader, Elijah Muhammad, for the first half of his speech. Louis Lomax, the journalist who directed the documentary *The Hate that Hate Produced* later wrote a book on the Nation of Islam in which he describes Malcolm in this speech: “Malcolm is clearly on the defensive in the first half of his long talk; he is responding to criticism rather than spreading his own gospel” (130). Lomax too recognizes that one of X’s exigences was to ensure that this audience was exposed to the views of the Nation from a member of the Nation, rather than the news media.

In the second half of this speech, a different exigence emerges. Malcolm moves into the given topic of “problems and solutions.” Here he explains the Nation’s position and program for African Americans. At this time, the Nation argued for a “separate state” for African Americans.

Malcolm X espouses this view during his speech: “Just give us a portion of this country that we can call our own...Then give us everything we need to start our own civilization” (Epps 126). Thus, the exigence for the second half of the speech is to argue against integration and for a separation of African Americans into a separate state within the US. Malcolm works to convince his audience of what must have been shocking rhetoric. The dual exigences of defense and positioning serve to organize the discourse and move it forward.

One constraint Malcolm faced in this situation was his audience. It simply was not possible for Malcolm to share the same message with a white, possibly hostile, audience that he could with a black audience or an audience of members of the Nation. A black audience might be open to Malcolm’s message, and an audience within the Nation would not need to hear a defense of the beliefs of the Nation. But, since Malcolm was speaking to an audience largely unfamiliar with the work of the Nation and probably harboring negative preconceptions about it, he had to begin with the basics. Malcolm focused on changing the preconceptions of the audience, so that, perhaps, an audience member who came into the situation feeling hostile toward the Nation might leave with a neutral or even positive attitude toward it.

The audience was a constraint that existed as a part of the situation; though, of course, Malcolm chose how to respond to that constraint. A second, more complex, constraint was one that Malcolm placed on himself. At this point in his life, Malcolm was fully committed to the Nation of Islam and spoke only on behalf of the Nation. Archie Epps notes that this speech seems to use the language of Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Nation of Islam (188). During this period, Malcolm consistently took the position that he only spoke for the Messenger, Elijah Muhammad, and that all ideas and policy positions flowed from him. Malcolm was upset when

the media gave him the credit for the direction of the movement. He has been noted as saying: “The Messenger is the Prophet of Allah...and I am but Elijah’s servant” (Lomax 92). This commitment to speaking for the Nation is obvious even from the first line of the speech: “We thank you for inviting us here...to present our views on this timely topic” (Epps 115). The inclusive “we” language continues throughout the speech, and nearly every major point Malcolm makes is prefaced by some reference to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad.

To hear Malcolm at this time reference himself in a speech, unless he was talking about how Elijah Muhammad saved him, or to hear him make any comment that did not follow the official teachings of the Nation of Islam, would have been highly unusual. This is significant because it shows that Malcolm constrained himself from disagreement with Elijah Muhammad. He was very concerned about showing unity within the Nation and was always careful to put the Nation first in all his remarks (Lomax 94-95). This is especially interesting because Malcolm, even at this time, wanted the Nation to become more politically active, which Elijah Muhammad always refused to do. Malcolm discusses this in his *Autobiography*: “If I harbored any personal disappointment whatsoever, it was that privately I was convinced that our Nation of Islam could be an even greater force...if we engaged in more *action*” (289). This desire on the part of X only came fully to light after his split with the Nation. Thus, in this speech, Malcolm’s commitment to the Nation took priority over his own viewpoint to determine what he chose to include in his speech.

Several factors within this situation determined the content of this discourse. The composition of the audience dictated that Malcolm speak in defense of the Nation and of its basic beliefs. Malcolm’s own commitment to the Nation dictated that he speak *only* about the Nation

and its beliefs. Familiarity with these elements of the situation gives important context in analyzing the speech and will provide insight as certain fantasy themes emerge.

## **Analysis: 1961**

Analysis of Malcolm X's speech at the 1961 Harvard Law Forum reveals several central themes. Malcolm repeatedly compares the Nation of Islam to other biblically oppressed people and groups from Moses to Jesus. He also frequently discusses the notion of a separate state, leader of the Nation Elijah Muhammad, the wrongdoing of Christian, Caucasian America, and the evils of token integration. Malcolm's extensive use of themes makes Fantasy Theme Analysis a useful tool for this speech. By looking more closely at the text, it is possible to determine categorically the themes within to provide insight to the worldview of Malcolm. A listing of these fantasy themes follows.

### **Setting Themes:**

- America
- The separate state
- Time of change
- Christian civilization

### **Character Themes:**

- Muslims and the Nation of Islam
- Elijah Muhammad
- Biblical figures
- The Caucasian race
- The "so called" American Negro
- American/Christian government

### **Action Themes:**

- Fulfillment of divine prophesy
- Separation of the races
- New world replacing the old
- Distribution of anti-Muslim propaganda
- Token integration

Malcolm's rhetoric occurs within the setting of Christian civilization. By Christian civilization Malcolm specifically means American civilization. More specifically, he speaks of

the actions of the American government, based in Christian principles, that has been oppressive toward black citizens. This is the foundation and scope of all arguments that flow from the discourse. The basic principle that the listener is to take away from the notion of a Christian civilization run by an American/Christian government is that this government is bad and must either be conquered or be separated from. Malcolm describes Muslims as having already “dented” the power of Christian civilization before making their current move toward separation (119).

America or “Christian civilization” is the physical setting for the metaphorical setting of a “time of great change.” As we will see, this time of great change results in the evolution of the physical setting from Christian civilization itself to “a separate state” for African Americans within Christian Civilization. Malcolm notes that old governments are toppling and worldwide change is occurring. “You should be well aware that we are living in a world where great changes are taking place. New ideas are replacing the old ones. Old governments are collapsing, and new nations are being born (117).” He argues that the prophets have predicted this change; the rise of the Nation of Islam and the coming of the prophet Elijah Muhammad are part of the fulfillment of divine prophesy, one of the action themes of the rhetoric. The bible foretells of the coming of a leader who will initiate the final change before the second coming of Christ. In Malcolm’s vision this leader is Elijah Muhammad (119). The time of great change is compared to Biblical settings of great change: The Pharaoh rising to power in Egypt is described as setting the stage for God to call Moses to lead his fellow slaves from captivity; Jesus was called during a time of great change to lead the “lost sheep” into the development of a Christian world (118).

The setting theme of great change transforms into the action theme of a new world replacing the old. The old world was one in which Caucasians colonized and enslaved African Americans. This old world is toppling as African Americans reject Caucasian (Christian) civilization and move toward a new world, one dominated by African American adherents to the Nation of Islam (120). Malcolm uses the theme of an old world ending to initiate the argument for a separate state: “God is giving America every opportunity to repent and atone for the crime she committed when she enslaved our people” (121). According to Elijah Muhammad, the only thing white America can do to atone for her crime is to give African Americans land within the United States to form a separate state.

The theme of the separate state is also both a physical setting and an action. Malcolm tells the audience that under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad members of the Nation *could* simply leave the United States: “All who accept Islam and follow Mr. Muhammad have been offered a home in the Muslim world” (121). For many reasons, this plan is rejected in favor of the separate state. First, as has been alluded to, the notion exists in the discourse that it is God’s will for the US to repent through forfeit of territory to African Americans. Beyond this argument, Elijah Muhammad wants to ensure justice for every African American, and not just for those who belong to the Nation (123).

African Americans need help from the Nation in finding justice because they have been so divided by the American government. African Americans have been brainwashed to believe that it is the Nation, and not America, that is trying to hurt their progress. This is where the separate state, or more accurately, the separation of the races, becomes an action theme. A conspiracy theory develops in which the US government and white Americans in general are

working against black Americans. In this discourse Caucasian America is telling lies to African Americans. They are accused of spreading propaganda, on one hand dragging the Nation down and on the other hand building up a false integration, in order to divide African American sentiment (123). If African Americans are divided, they cannot effectively engineer any change in their collective lives.

The distribution of anti-Muslim propaganda and token integration both become important action themes throughout the rhetoric. The two themes work in tandem to divide and conquer African Americans:

Pick up any daily newspaper or magazine and examine the anti-Muslim propaganda and the false charges leveled against our beloved religious leader by some of America's leading reporters. This only points up the fact that the Caucasian race is never willing to let any black man who is not their puppet or parrot speak for our people...The Caucasian slave master has opposed all such leaders in the past, and even today he sanctions and supports only those Negro spokesmen who...accept his so called advice on how our people should carry on our struggle against his four hundred years of tyranny (122).

The implied message here, later made explicit, is that Caucasians want African Americans to support integration over separation because integration still allows Caucasians to control society. The puppets are black leaders who foolishly support integration. These individuals are demonized for helping oppress their own people and for cooperating with a government that has continually brutalized them.

Integration is consistently referred to as “token” integration because it is considered a false promise or false hope. Again, in Malcolm’s view integration only amounts to white

America's attempt to pacify African Americans and keep them under the control of Christian America: "There will be no peace for America as long as twenty million so-called Negroes are here begging for the rights which America knows she will never grant us" (129). The Nation's ideology of a separate state is the counter solution to integration, which is touted as a sort of freedom from the evils of integration.

Thus, a separate state is the only real solution, the only just solution. As Malcolm continues just a few lines later: "Almighty God says the only way for America to ever have any future or prosperity is for her twenty million slaves to be separated from her...we must have some land of our own" (129). Malcolm argues that the races can never be equal unless separate, because the Caucasian race will always feel threatened by the advancement of African Americans and will find ways to maintain white dominance. This is the major conclusion of the rhetoric, and it is best stated toward the end of the speech:

No man with an education equal to your own will ever serve you...America has not given us an equal education, but she has given us enough to make us want more and to make us demand equality of opportunity. And since this is causing unrest plus international embarrassment, the only solution is immediate separation (130).

Thus, by the end of the rhetoric, Malcolm has moved from the setting of Christian Civilization, through a time of great change to close with his proposed final setting: the separate state.

Many of the major character themes are apparent in their relationship to the action and setting themes in the discourse. One character, Elijah Muhammad, requires individual attention. Where is Malcolm X in this speech? Of course, he is the rhetor, but he does not appear as a major character in his own rhetoric. This is because he speaks for Elijah Muhammad. As

Malcolm tells the audience: “I am here at this forum tonight to represent Mr. Elijah Muhammad, the spiritual head of the fastest-growing group of Muslims in the Western Hemisphere” (116). Malcolm stays true to this admonition; he never references himself, but continually reminds the audience that his ideas are those of Mr. Muhammad.

As a result, Elijah Muhammad becomes the central character of this discourse. All actions and settings established in the rhetoric center around his teachings. He assumes the role of prophet, leader, teacher, a great man recognized throughout the Muslim world. To give some idea of Elijah Muhammad’s influence on this discourse, when turning to a random page of the printed speech, the reader can find him referenced six times (117). The teachings of Elijah Muhammad are the impetus for the growing movement of the Nation of Islam. Without him there would be no controversy to clear up, no teachings for the white audience, and no notion of the separate state to be espoused. Malcolm X is a powerful figure at this time *because* of the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. So it is natural that Mr. Muhammad should be such a pervasive force in the discourse.

Major themes present in the discourse work together to form Malcolm’s rhetorical vision. The most important themes to the vision are those themes that occur with the greatest frequency and that encompass the major ideas in the rhetoric. Malcolm has a clear rhetorical vision in this speech: Elijah Muhammad is a prophet who has come to inform America that its Christian government has wronged black people in the eyes of God and the only fitting repentance is for Christian civilization to give up some of its land and resources to allow African Americans to form a separate state. This is a straightforward point, but, considering Malcolm’s audience, he must provide extensive groundwork in order to make his vision comprehensible. Remember

from the introduction that Malcolm's audience was largely unfamiliar with the real work of the Nation of Islam. Thus, he first had to explain the Nation and its leader Elijah Muhammad before he could begin to argue the notion of a separate state. And, even then, the separate state concept required a great deal of evidence and argumentation for an audience that would have been confused by the idea and unresponsive to it.

Malcolm leads the audience through his vision very deliberately. He takes the time to explain the Nation in a framework of Christian prophecy that would have been familiar to the audience. For example, when introducing the time of great change, Malcolm notes: "We are living two thousand years from the time of the great change which took place in Jesus' day. If you will but look around you on this earth today, it will be as clear as the five fingers on your hand that we are again living at a time of great change" (120). By using biblical comparisons Malcolm is able to make a rather abstract and foreign prophecy seem familiar to the audience.

Only after Malcolm establishes the purpose of the Nation in preparing for a new world can he move one step further to discuss what this new world should look like, and what the role of white, Christian people will be in that world. First, Malcolm points out that black people in the new world will not be Christian because Christian government has failed them (122). He rejects the entire basis of the rule of Christian civilization under which African Americans live. He then introduces the solution of a separate state. "You and your Christian government...don't want your twenty million ex-slaves to leave you, yet you won't share equal justice with them right here (126)." Thus, he continues, a separate state within the United States is the only means to justice. This accusation would have been shocking to an audience that likely considered themselves liberal and enlightened in the cause of civil rights. Malcolm, of course, would only

continue to shock the audience through his ideas on race relations that were largely outside of the mainstream.

Malcolm cannot simply introduce the idea of a separate state and expect that his audience will accept it. So, he spends the rest of the discourse building up his argument. To do this he must first tear down the idea of integration, a notion many members of his audience would have championed; he does this before expanding his separate state argument. Malcolm's main argument for a separate state, other than its use as means to justice, revolves around education:

The limited education America has granted her ex-slaves has already caused great unrest... If we receive equal education, how long do you expect us to remain your passive servants, or second-class citizens? ...When you teach a man the science of government, he then wants an equal part or position in the government, or else he wants his own government (129-130).

Essentially, Malcolm wants to convince his audience that once black and white people have equal education, they will not be able to live together because black people will desire an equality that white people will never grant. Again, he arrives at the same conclusion: the only way to solve this unrest is to grant African Americans a separate state.

In 1961, the Nation of Islam was a group of great interest to the news media. Thus, the audience had consistently heard about the Nation on the news, but probably without ever learning much about them. The common conception of the Nation and Elijah Muhammad was that they were "hate teachers" (117). It was easy, then and in our own day, for those who knew very little about the two men to juxtapose Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. as representing opposite ends of the civil rights struggle (Epps 4-10). Many of the people who

packed the auditorium for Malcolm's speech probably did so out of sheer curiosity about this controversial figure, rather than out of a desire to listen to his message.

In this climate, Malcolm's primary motivation is clear. He wanted to teach the audience the "truth" about the Nation of Islam. This theme receives the most attention in the rhetoric. He addresses the ideas of the Nation first, and these are the ideas he spends the most time discussing (Foss 296). This speech was a chance for him to clear up many of the oversimplifications and misinterpretations of the Nation provided by mass media. Once he accomplished this, he then took the opportunity to outline the Nation's plan for the future of black people in America—and certainly, this still fits within the motivation of giving the audience a different picture of the Nation.

Every speaker hopes that his or her rhetorical vision will chain out into the audience and in this way spread beyond those who actually were and eventually become widespread enough to reside in the public consciousness (Bormann 398). Within Malcolm's rhetorical vision, his discussion of the Nation of Islam and Elijah Muhammad would have been the subject matter he most hoped would chain out through his audience. To achieve this type of chaining out was a difficult rhetorical task in this situation because the audience already had an idea of the "truth" about this subject matter and this idea was different from the one Malcolm hoped they would carry away. Thus, to have Malcolm's "truth" chain out among the audience to replace their preconceptions would have been the biggest benchmark of the success of this discourse.

Even if Malcolm could not convince the audience of the wisdom of the separate state, or of the prophecy of Elijah Muhammad, just convincing the audience that the actual practices of the Nation might be different from what they had heard on television or read in a newspaper

would have been a giant step forward. Malcolm had to start from the beginning with this audience; so moving an individual's perception of the Nation from negative to neutral would signify a rhetorical victory. Perhaps all that could be hoped for would be to get audience members to be more open minded to the Nation and not simply write them off as the "hate mongers" they were often portrayed to be.

No evidence exists to suggest that Malcolm's speech at this forum had any great impact on the worldview of the audience. In a single communication, it is rare that any individual's worldview will be dramatically changed. It is possible that this speech was one of many that helped to shift audience perception over time, both about Malcolm and the Nation, but in the rapidly changing climate of the 1960's such a shift is difficult to isolate and identify conclusively. The general United States audience watching the Civil Rights Movement unfold witnessed continual shifts in message and perspective from many leaders, all in conflict with one another. As a result, the views of the audience were likely to be in constant flux as they responded to the continually changing situation around them.

Now that the Fantasy Theme Analysis is complete for Malcolm's 1961 speech, it is important to repeat the process for his December 16, 1964 speech before turning to the research question in the final analysis.

## Situation: 1964

Three years passed between Malcolm's first speech at Harvard and the next speech for analysis, given on December 16, 1964 at the Harvard Law School Forum. Malcolm spoke at least one other time at Harvard between the two speeches utilized in this paper. This middle speech occurred just a week after Malcolm's split with the Nation during the period often referred to as his "transitional period" because Malcolm's ideas were beginning to change but were not yet clearly formed or articulated (*Last Year* 22-25). For this reason, in addition to the fact that Malcolm had not yet visited Mecca during his transitional period, the December 1964 speech is more appropriate for this analysis.

When first considering the context of the 1964 speech, it seems essentially similar to the 1961 speech. Malcolm spoke in the same forum to the same type of audience. Drastically different however, were the speaker himself and the social climate of the time. In 1961, the African American civil rights movement was gaining momentum through the Montgomery Bus Boycotts of 1955, the lunch counter sit-ins of 1961 and the first freedom rides in 1961. By 1964, however, the movement had lost some of its optimism and racial tensions dominated the social climate. The movement was limited in its successes, which were tempered with violent events including bombings and murders. As Malcolm stated in his most famous speech, *The Ballot or the Bullet*: "1964 threatens to be the most explosive year America has ever witnessed" (*Speaks* 25). In the summer of 1964, three civil rights workers were murdered after being stopped for speeding. This tragedy came shortly after the 1964 passage of the Civil Rights Act and weighed heavily on the minds of integration proponents. Malcolm speaks to this in his discourse: "Of

course, the Civil Rights Bill was designed supposedly to solve our problem. As soon as it was passed, however, three civil rights workers were murdered. Nothing has been done about it” (Epps 172).

Malcolm experienced extreme changes in his life in the three years between these speeches. In March of 1964, he announced his split from the Nation of Islam after being “silenced” for comments he made regarding the death of President Kennedy. In the same month he founded Muslim Mosque, Incorporated (MMI), a religious group that espoused “true” or traditional Islam. Malcolm then completed a pilgrimage required of all Muslims to the Islamic holy land of Mecca (Epps 164). While abroad Malcolm also visited many parts of Africa, which was undergoing transformation as states were achieving independence from colonial powers (Epps 168). Upon his return Malcolm founded the organization for Afro-American Unity (OAAU), a political group that touted the oppression of African Americans as a human rights, rather than a civil rights, issue and vowed its support to “the plan of every civil rights group for political action, as long as it doesn’t involve compromise” (Epps 175). Malcolm traveled to Africa again during the summer of 1964 and returned just a few weeks before his Harvard speech (Gallen 19-22).

We turn again to Lloyd Bitzer’s *Rhetorical Situation*, including an analysis of the audience, exigence and constraints surrounding the discourse. The 1964 audience was similar to that of the 1961 speech in composition. They were almost certainly all white, with an intellectually based mix of students, professors, and community members. This group would have been predisposed to favor integration, and their own views would have been tempered by the mixed progress and extreme tension of the times. They might have been more sensitive than

usual to a message Malcolm might convey. During this period Malcolm had made headlines by first breaking with the Nation and then very publicly developing his own organizations and theories based on enlightenment from his travels to Mecca and Africa. As in 1961, many people likely attended the lecture out of fascination over the ever-controversial Malcolm X rather than out of a real desire to hear his message. The moderator who introduced Malcolm on this occasion noted that he was the second most sought after university speaker (Epps 161).

The immediate exigence, or problem that the discourse has the potential to address, for this speech was an invitation to speak on the topic “The African Revolution and its Impact on the American Negro.” As in 1961, this topic mirrored what Malcolm was likely to discuss based on events in his personal life. In the short months since Malcolm’s split with the Nation, he had traveled extensively, developed two new organizations, and was rapidly reevaluating his entire worldview. Thus, the real exigence for this speech was the opportunity to explore his changing views with a new audience.

Malcolm spoke directly to black audiences far more often than he spoke to white audiences. His message was always more accessible to a black audience because of his uncompromising view of American oppression of African Americans. A white audience would have known Malcolm’s message less personally, through the filter of the news media, which Malcolm felt offered only a distorted image of him. He addressed this point at the beginning of his speech: “When you let yourself be influenced by images created by others, you’ll find that oftentimes the one who creates those images can use them to mislead you and misuse you” (162). Malcolm then gave examples of the impact of his media created image on the way white people in particular viewed him. In order to achieve his exigence of bringing his new ideas to a

white audience, Malcolm had to create a different image of himself than the media based one held by the audience. He attempted to do this as well in the first part of his speech.

Many of the external constraints, those constraints beyond Malcolm's control, which Malcolm faced in the 1961 speech remained in 1964. The audience was a constraint because of the image they held of Malcolm and their limited knowledge of his ideas. Thus, Malcolm had to give a more basic message in this speech than he might to a black audience. He also had less time to focus on his central message because he must first convince the audience of the validity of his message. Even though this group was largely composed of students, one of Malcolm's favorite groups to address, the fact that they were white students made them less receptive to Malcolm's message than a black student might be.

A constraint Malcolm imposed on himself was his choice of the subject matter he publicly discussed. His break with the Nation was not an easy one, and tensions remained high. For example, at this time the Nation was attempting to have Malcolm's family evicted from their home because this home belonged to the Nation. They succeeded in doing so just a week before Malcolm's assassination (Gallen 18-23). Furthermore, it is widely speculated that the Nation wanted Malcolm dead and played at least some role in his assassination (Haley, X 437-440). Malcolm felt constant, negative pressure from the group to which he was formerly completely dedicated. Malcolm knew all the intimate details of the Nation and could have caused a scandal if he chose to, but he never did. Both out of fear of retaliation and a lingering respect for the group that had literally saved his life, Malcolm refrained from discussing the Nation in his speech (Last Year 23).

A third constraint existed both as a product of the situation and as a product of changes within Malcolm. At the time of the speech, as has been discussed, Malcolm's ideas were rapidly evolving. It seems that, freed from the constraints of the Nation, Malcolm's worldview was changing with the many new experiences he undertook in a period of months. As one author notes: "When the split came, Malcolm's position began to change. But the change was partial and gradual" (Last Year 59). The gradual changing of Malcolm's viewpoint ultimately means that his views were still developing at the time of his death. In the context of this speech his shifting views work as a constraint because they limit the content of his speech. He could only talk about ideas already formulated and solidified. Or, he could also discuss emerging ideas as he often did in interviews, confusing reporters and the public alike (Last Year 60-63). Regardless, his emerging ideas impacted the speech he ultimately gave.

## **Analysis 1964**

The year 1964 was a turbulent time for the United States and a turbulent time for Malcolm personally. He was undergoing rapid and significant changes to his life while traveling from one side of the globe to the other. This duality of national and private chaos created a setting that prompted forceful rhetoric that could cut through the tense atmosphere and relate to the audience effectively. In the 1964 speech, Malcolm is cognizant of the need for strong rhetoric, and builds the crisis feeling of the times directly into his discourse in order to connect to the events weighing on the minds of the audience. Malcolm includes references to current events in the civil rights struggle as well as references to what he would term the “human rights” struggle occurring in Africa.

The 1964 speech is thematically based and thus Fantasy Theme Analysis is a useful tool in helping uncover Malcolm’s worldview and the message(s) he wanted his audience to intercept and take out into the world beyond the speech itself. The categorically divided setting, character and action themes follow. They are given in roughly the order that they first appear in the discourse.

### **Setting Themes:**

- The Congo
- The United States
- The United Nations
- Africa

### **Character Themes:**

- Afro-Americans
- The Media/images

- Malcolm X
- White Americans
- American Government
- Africans
- Racists
- Victims of racism
- The Organization for Afro-American Unity (OAAU)

**Action Themes:**

- America's international race relations
- Changing relationships between African Americans and White Americans
- Images/Image Making
- Brotherhood
- Situation in the Congo
- Changes in Africa
- History of African American struggle
- Self-Defense/Any Means Necessary
- "Negro Problem" as a world problem/the new plans for achieving civil rights

In this discourse the characters and actions are more important than the settings, which serve as a natural backdrop for the other themes. The most notable character is Malcolm X. Though he does not appear as a character in his own discourse in 1961, in this speech Malcolm is prominent. He references himself in the first word of the speech, and remains the dominant character throughout the discourse: "I would like to thank the Harvard Law School Forum for inviting me to speak here this evening" (161). As the speech continues, Malcolm frequently talks about his experiences: "I can't overlook the fact that I'm an African American in a country that practices racism against black people" (164). He also discusses his thoughts and his plan: "I say let the government get up off its...whatever it's on, and take care of it itself...I think that white people...are doing us an injustice" (173). The Malcolm that appears in this rhetoric seems free to express his ideas, and no longer has any reason to constrain himself behind someone else's doctrine. As a result, his tone is more forceful and open. He is less guarded in his ideas because

they are his own and do not represent an entire group. From his tone, it is evident that Malcolm was comfortable with finally being in a position of taking personal credit and responsibility for all of his statements.

Malcolm's first theme in this speech is images. His discussion of images becomes the overarching premise of his entire speech. Images and image-makers are considered a negative force working in opposition to the positive goals Malcolm is trying to achieve. Images are fiction, cannot be believed whereas Malcolm speaks the truth, and should be believed. This truth versus fiction or good versus evil dichotomy remains throughout the discourse.

Images are an action theme: the media create images and the public, specifically white America, believes and uses these images. Malcolm, as the main character, must refute negative images circulated about him if he is to gain credibility with his audience. In his vision, these images distort who he really is. One example he gives is of a woman whose comment he overheard:

She said—she actually said this—“He doesn't look so wild you know.” Now this is a full grown, so-called “mature” woman. It shows the extent to which the press can create images. People looking for one thing actually miss the boat because they're looking for the wrong thing. They are looking for someone with horns, someone who is a rabble-rouser, an irrational, antisocial extremist (163).

Opponents of the Civil Rights movement had labeled Malcolm (and other leaders) as extremists. Malcolm especially provided the image of anti-white feeling as fostered by the media. The woman he overhears is responding to this image. And, this is exactly the sort of image that Malcolm must refute to allow the audience to grasp his message.

He goes on to warn the audience about the use of images: “Now I have taken the time to discuss images because one of the sciences used and misused today is this science of [image making]” (163). After Malcolm has sufficiently reduced the media’s role to a negative force, he spends the rest of the speech building himself up through a discussion of his experiences. His intention is to be perceived by the audience as a positive force in the hopes of swaying their opinion of him.

The concept of images is also key in the way Malcolm refers to the characters in his rhetoric. He does not use the word “Negro” in this speech. Instead, black people in the United States are referred to as African-Americans. This language shift signifies his changing self-image in response to his journeys. He discusses this awakening to the use of the term Afro-American in his autobiography. He recalls an experience in Ghana: “I remember that in the press conference, I used the word “Negro,” and I was firmly corrected. “The word is not favored here, Mr. Malcolm X. The term Afro-American has greater meaning, and dignity.” I sincerely apologized. I don’t think that I said “Negro” again as long as I was in Africa (354).” This is, of course, only one of Malcolm’s many changing ideas of this time. Malcolm’s self-identification as African American is symbolic of Malcolm’s expanding view to include Africans and African-Americans in the same struggle.

Images are again the focus in Malcolm’s discussion of Africa. During his visits to Africa, during which Malcolm met with many African heads of state, he began to see the African and African American struggle as interconnected. Many African states had gained independence from colonial European powers in the late nineteen fifties. Since that time the United States had been, in Malcolm’s opinion, trying to assume a new pseudo-colonial power in Africa. Malcolm

called for Africans and African Americans to work together to fight the oppressive power of the US government. However, he saw the image of Africa held by Americans as a possible problem in this process: “Europeans created and popularized the image of Africa as a jungle, a wild place where people were cannibals, naked and savage...Such an image of the Africans was so hateful to Afro-Americans that they refused to identify with Africa. We did not realize that in hating Africa...we were hating ourselves (168).” Ultimately, Malcolm expresses his view that African Americans, another force of good in the rhetoric, were overcoming their prejudice against Africa and would eventually come to identify the African struggle with their own.

On the other hand, Malcolm found white America to have an active continuing prejudice against Africa. Through this prejudice, Malcolm sets up white America, along with the American government, as negative forces that have been duped by the media to work in opposition to the good and just struggle of Africa and African Americans: “It was not an image created by Africans or Afro-Americans, but by an enemy” (168). In this discussion, the setting of the Congo becomes key. The Congo is used as the greatest symbol of the connection between the African and African American struggles and as an example of white prejudice.

Malcolm saw the civil unrest in the Congo as a clear example of the United States (both people and government) complete disregard for the lives and citizenship of black people. Malcolm’s political group, the Organization for Afro-American Unity, came out in strong opposition against US involvement in the Congo where the US was supporting a dictator whom the Congolese people did not support. Malcolm respected the Congolese for fighting against an unjust government, and saw in their rebellion a parallel to the way African Americans should be fighting in the United States. Furthermore, he sees African Americans as naturally looking to

Africa not only as a guide but also for aid: “When our people in this country received a new image of Africa, they automatically united through the new image of themselves” (168). He continues: “It is only natural to expect us today to turn and look in the direction of our homeland and of our motherland and to wonder whether we can make any contact with her” (169). Again, the nature of images is important as African Americans are urged to craft themselves in the image of Africans.

Malcolm sees the Africans as empowered with a voice through the channel of the United Nations. Malcolm’s plan is that African Americans will embark on a “human rights struggle” with the help of the international community in place of the “civil rights” context in which they had formerly framed their struggle for equality. According to Malcolm, the civil rights struggle allowed America to keep her problems internalized and away from the scrutiny of the rest of the world:

The Negro problem has ceased to be a Negro problem. It has ceased to be an American problem and has now become a world problem, a problem for all humanity. Negroes wasted their time confining their struggle to civil rights. In that context, the problem remains only within the jurisdiction of the United States. No allies can help Negroes without violating United States protocol. But today the black man in America has seen his mistake and is correcting it by lifting his struggle from the level of civil rights to the level of human rights (173).

Malcolm demonizes the American government for attempting to sanction other nations for their human rights abuses while justifying America’s own violations. Civil rights has played into

America's ability to keep up her shining image to the world, an image that Malcolm wants Africans and African Americans to break.

Malcolm sees Africa as the chief ally in this human rights struggle because Africa should naturally feel the closest ties to African Americans. Furthermore, the newly formed African republics, in the Congo and elsewhere, were also fighting off the forces of American imperialism. Malcolm makes this connection explicit in his speech:

In the UN at this moment, Africans are using more uncompromising language and are heaping hot fire upon America as the racist and neo-colonial power... These statesmen are beginning to connect the criminal, racist acts practiced in the Congo with similar acts in Mississippi and Alabama. The Africans are pointing out that the white American government... has shown just as much disregard for lives wrapped in black skin in the Congo as it shows for lives wrapped in black skin in Mississippi and in Alabama (167).

The help of worldwide allies is a major theme of Malcolm's rhetoric. He wanted to create the broadest possible force to work against the racist United States government.

This broadening of Malcolm's perspective in this discourse includes the domestic front as well. He knew that securing the help of Africa was only part of the battle: "No matter what the independent African state are doing in the United Nations, it is only a flicker, a glimpse, a ripple of what this country is in for in the future unless a halt is brought to the illegal injustices which our people continue to suffer every day" (174). The Organization for Afro-American Unity is the driving force behind Malcolm's plan to halt injustice in the United States. While committing this new human rights struggle, Malcolm urges African Americans to work together to create change. He claims to be willing to work with any group that refuses to compromise: "The OAAU

supports the plan of every civil rights group for political action, as long as it doesn't involve compromise" (175). This view had advanced greatly from the days in which he refused to acknowledge the value of integration groups. He especially saw value in groups working for voting rights: "We will work with all existing civil rights organizations...The OAAU will become involved in every move to secure maximum opportunity for black people to register as voters" (174). Though he never explicitly mentions participation of sympathetic white Americans in this speech, in other discourse from this time it is evident that he welcomed their participation as well, though he thought whites and blacks should each work in their own communities to create change (Last Year 68).

This uncompromising, global outlook is all part of the strong rhetoric necessary to compete with the tense atmosphere of the times. Malcolm speaks of the OAAU and their new plan as peaceful and based on brotherhood. However, this is not an unconditional peace or brotherhood, but one that must be protected at all costs. He sends a strong message to those who would oppose his cause of justice for African Americans: "I believe you can't have peace until you're ready to protect it. As you will die protecting yours, I will die protecting mine" (174). This message of peace at a cost is the one he chooses to leave the audience with: "The OAAU has come to the conclusion that it is time to take up whatever means necessary to bring these sufferings to a halt" (175). Malcolm's choice to end his speech with these rather harsh words is significant in that it would have shocked his audience and left an impression, though likely not positive, of his entire message. Perhaps intentionally, Malcolm's message of peace is overshadowed by his message of strong protective action.

Ultimately Malcolm's rhetorical vision is that all of the various forces he deems "good" will work together to defeat those he terms "evil." The major themes that comprise this rhetorical vision include image-makers versus victims of images, and racists versus those fighting against racism. The image-makers include the media and white racist America. The victims of their images include Africans, African Americans, and Malcolm personally. Malcolm's vision is of himself and these associated groups as having been harmed by images. He wants to present the audience, who might also hold these harmful images, with new images of how these groups see themselves. He does this, for example, when speaking about African Americans redefining their image of Africa: "When our people in this country received a new image of Africa, they automatically united through a new image of themselves" (168). This image, as discussed previously, was one in direct opposition to the hateful image of Africa as a "savage land" fostered by the American media.

American government and white Americans in general are labeled as racist toward black people both African and African American. Racists blamed for causing the continued problems in Africa and in America. They are also charged with purposefully attempting to distance groups on the two continents: "There are those who wouldn't like us to have the same heart and the same mind for fear that our heart and mind might get together... Their fear was of our sympathy for Africa and for its hopes and aspirations and of this sympathy developing into a form of alliance" (168-169). In Malcolm's vision, the racists will ultimately suffer justice at the hands of the oppressed. He believes that "victims of racism are created in the image of racists" (165). If this is the case, the racists will have the harm they inflicted returned to them. Malcolm's rhetorical vision is that African Americans need to work with other exploited peoples in a

common human rights struggle against the racist, imperial United States. Furthermore, he advocates that African Americans should be willing to fight for their rights together with civil rights advocates and with international, especially African, support.

In the 1964 speech, as in 1961, Malcolm's primary motivation is to get the audience to see the "truth" from his perspective about himself, Africa, and how both relate to the African American struggle in the United States. It is important that Malcolm first attempt to change the audience perception of him. This audience would have only known him from the press, who Malcolm felt made him out to be a social extremist (Epps 163). He considered himself something of a diplomat for African Americans since he had traveled so extensively in the preceding year. As a result, his speech focuses on what he has learned from his visits to Africa. He must convince the audience to accept the image he provides of himself because the speech hinges so heavily on his African experience.

Malcolm also wants the audience to hear about Africa from someone who has seen the development of their republics first hand. Again, he must challenge audience perception and stereotypes of Africa in order to allow his message to chain out. First, Malcolm wants to convince the audience that Africa is becoming independent and gaining a voice on the world stage. Then, Malcolm must accomplish the more difficult task of conveying to the audience his belief that Africa will come to the aid of African Americans. This type of thinking was totally out of line with the civil rights movement of the time and would have been a surprising and probably unfavorable view in the mind of the audience. To think of Africa making America look vulnerable by helping African Americans take their plight to the UN would have been abhorrent to

the average audience who would have seen this as an extreme measure, especially in light of the Civil Rights Act that had been passed earlier that year.

In the case of this speech, simply having the forum to expose the audience to his new ideas signaled a rhetorical success for Malcolm. In a single interaction, it is unlikely that he really changed many audience members' perceptions. Perhaps, however, he began conversations that extended beyond the forum of the speech itself. The success of fantasy themes is judged by the extent to which they expand and become part of public consciousness. Thus, if Malcolm were able to engage the audience in discussion of his ideas with others outside the forum of his speech, even if they disagreed completely, this would have been a significant outcome of his rhetoric.

## Conclusions

Malcolm's life was punctuated by transformation. As a child, his life was transformed by his mother's breakdown and the subsequent breakup of his family. This led him on the path to foster care and a lifelong mistrust of government agencies. His lack of family structure allowed him to drift to Boston at age fourteen where he was transformed by the people he met there and his choice of a railroad job into a hustler on the streets of New York. Malcolm was transformed again by his time in jail where he learned about the Honorable Elijah Muhammad from fellow inmates and his siblings. This transformation led to his fame in the Nation of Islam. The dissolution of Malcolm's relationship with the Nation created yet another transformational period in his life. Through Malcolm's rhetoric, we gain insight into the nature of what would be the final transformation of his short life and the effects of his transformation as evidenced by his rhetoric.

In the summer of 1964, Malcolm embarked on his pilgrimage to Mecca. While there he experienced something completely new and seemingly impossible based on his experiences in the US. He saw Muslims of all ethnicities living and worshipping together. Individuals who would have been labeled "white" in the United States befriended him. Malcolm was compelled to write a letter home (to be published for the public) about what he was experiencing in Mecca. The entire letter is telling of the incredible impact this experience was having on Malcolm's perspective. This excerpt is one of many examples:

There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all

colors, from blue-eyed blonds to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experience in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and the non-white. America needs to understand Islam because this is the one religion that erases from society the race problem. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world, I have met, talked to, and even eaten with people who in America would have been considered 'white'—but the 'white' attitude was removed from their minds by the religion of Islam. I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practiced by all colors together, irrespective of their color (Haley & X 340).

Malcolm, always open to experiencing new truths in his life, embraced what he saw in Mecca. This experience opened him up to new possibilities for the relationship between whites and blacks in the US.

Once Malcolm's pilgrimage was complete, he took the opportunity of being abroad to travel to several newly independent African states. What he experienced during this journey only confirmed the new possibilities that began to emerge in Mecca. While in Africa, an Algerian Ambassador who was considered "white" questioned Malcolm about where the philosophy of Black Nationalism left him and other "white" African revolutionaries. Malcolm, always open to new ideas, later had this to say about the ambassador:

So he showed me where I was alienating people who were true revolutionaries, dedicated to overthrowing the system of exploitation that exists on this earth by any means necessary. So, I had to do a lot of thinking and reappraising of my definition of black nationalism (Last Year 65).

Malcolm's changing thought continued until his death, and resulted in a new "globalized" program for African Americans.

When Malcolm finally returned from Africa, he was greeted with a press conference just after his plane landed. The press had intercepted his letter from Mecca. Furthermore, American reporters had followed him throughout his journeys and reported on his activity. The reports about Malcolm from abroad created fervor for news directly from him on how his "militant" thinking might have changed while he was away from the States. He was prepared to answer questions about his journey:

In the past, yes, I have made sweeping indictments of *all* white people. I never will be guilty of that again—as I know now that some white people are truly sincere, that some truly are capable of being brotherly toward a black man. The true Islam has shown me that a blanket indictment of all white people is as wrong as when whites make blanket indictments against blacks. Yes, I have been convinced that some American whites do want to help cure the rampant racism which is on the path to *destroying* this country!

(Haley & X 362)

Malcolm's theme in this press conference is that his pilgrimage broadened the scope of his thought on the major issues his life. The previous quote is telling of Malcolm's broadening scope on white Americans. At the same press conference, he also discusses how his thoughts changed (largely as a result of his time in Africa) regarding the best way to address the race problem in America.

Six months after this first press conference home and after a second trip to Mecca and Africa Malcolm gave his 1964 speech at the Harvard Law School Forum. This speech is

essentially similar in structure to the 1961 speech, but, as Malcolm's public statements of the time would indicate, the content of the speeches is almost completely dissimilar. Even the language of the speech shifts. The most important language shift is the change of terminology from "Negro" or "so called Negro" in 1961 to "Afro-American" in 1964. Malcolm addresses this change in self-identification directly in the 1964 speech:

I probably won't use the word "American Negro," but substitute "Afro-American." And when I say Afro-American, I mean it in the same context in which you usually use the word Negro. Our people today are increasingly shying away from use of that word. They find that when you're identified as Negro, it tends to make you "catch a whole lot of hell" that people who don't use it don't catch (Epps 162).

Malcolm became aware of the importance of this terminology use during his time abroad, and in this case deliberately incorporates it into his rhetoric. He uses the word "Negro" only to condescend leaders whose opinions he disagrees with (Epps 169). Malcolm made this change consciously because of his pilgrimage. Though at the same time the term "black" had begun to replace "Negro" among other civil rights groups, Malcolm uses the term "Afro" specifically to strengthen the connection of black people in America to Africa.

One major theme that links the two speeches is the evil misdeeds of white America and American government. These groups are targeted in the speeches as the source of the race problem and its innate prevalence in American life. However, the causes and outcomes of this white American perpetuated racism change from the 1961 to the 1964 speech.

Fundamentally, Malcolm's perspective on the problem shifts dramatically. In 1964 this perspective is centered around Malcolm's experiences and, by extension, the experiences of

African Americans and Africans generally. This is a perspective Malcolm gained only after his trip to Mecca, which was precipitated by his conversion to “true” Islam after his split with the Nation. It is the perspective of the Nation that prevails in the earlier speech, as it was given during the height of Malcolm’s immersion in the group. Both of these perspectives place Malcolm on the defensive. In the 1961 speech, Malcolm must explain and justify the actions and position of the Nation, and in 1964, he must do the same for himself.

The perspectives Malcolm defends also both include his positioning of the “truth” in opposition to “images.” In 1961, he must defeat the media created image of the Nation as a hateful fringe sect in order to teach the audience the “truth” about the Nation’s separate state position. In 1964, Malcolm must overcome the media created image of himself as a social extremist in order to present the “truth” of his conversion to true Islam and the subsequent globalization of his perspective.

In 1961, Malcolm uses religious imagery to explain the Nation’s perspective. His arguments include allusions to divine prophecy, with the events of the day as proof of fulfillment. This prophecy also justifies the action that the Nation says is required for proper recompense. In this rhetoric it is not just that white Americans *should* do something for African Americans, more than that, God *requires* it for proper repentance. Characterizing the struggle in religious terms creates a tone of greater intensity in the rhetoric than other arguments might provide because of the overtone of eternal consequences that might ensue if the plan prescribed by the Nation (directly from God) is not followed.

It was Malcolm’s Islamic faith that required his visit to Mecca and Africa that informed his conclusions on the best course of action in 1964. However, he does not use his faith as the

justification for his position. In part this is because Malcolm by this time had founded two separate groups, one specifically religious and the other social and political. Since he was speaking in a political capacity for this speech, the distinction likely affected his rhetoric. Rather than drawing on religious prophecy, Malcolm utilizes his own experiences as an African American and as a person who has traveled abroad as a sort of “ambassador” to African nations as evidence for his position.

Each piece of discourse contains a plan for how African Americans should proceed in the civil rights struggle. The nature and comprehensibility of this plan is affected greatly by the use of religious versus personal stories. In 1961, the message is that: “God is giving to America every opportunity to repent and atone for the crime she committed when she enslaved our people, even as God gave Pharaoh a chance to repent before he finally destroyed that king” (Epps 121). The religious comparison here is rather far fetched and it would have been difficult for the audience to relate their Christian ideas of prophecy to the Nation of Islam extension of this idea.

By 1964, the arguments have become far more pragmatic:

The Supreme Court desegregation decision was handed down over ten years ago. It has been implemented less than ten percent in those ten years...nowhere in the country during the past ten years has the black man been treated as a human being in the same context as other human beings. He’s always being patronized in a vary paternalistic way (Epps 170).

In this speech, Malcolm uses examples from the collective experience of the people that the audience can relate to directly. Rather than religious theory that is far removed from the people themselves, the second message becomes much more personal. Malcolm too shared in this

experience and could speak to it. This is something he could not do when subordinating his own goals to those of the Nation. By 1964, Malcolm can share his personal experiences as a way to connect to the audience, drawing them into his struggle and the African American struggle.

The discourse generally shifts from theoretical in 1961 to practical in 1964. This is not to say that the 1964 discourse involves no theory of what is actually taking place in the US and the world, but rather that the solutions express a plan of action. In 1961, the solution comes in the form of a warning of what bad things might happen if the United States does not repent for its sin. God's wrath will be imposed on the wicked white Americans. This would not have been a convincing argument to audience members who did not subscribe to the worldview of the Nation (which most did not). The 1964 speech contains a warning of wrath as well, but again this warning is based in the experiences of the times, which was far more convincing regardless of worldview because the audience had witnessed the events, especially the murder of three civil rights workers shortly after the passage of the Civil Rights Bill.

This type of tragedy that was on Malcolm's mind, as evidenced in his rhetoric, when he expressed the following idea in his 1964 speech:

In order to get any kind of point across our people must speak whatever language the racist speaks. The government can't protect us. The government has not protected us. It is time for us to do whatever is necessary by any means necessary to protect ourselves. If the government doesn't want us running around here wild like that, then I say let the government get up off its...whatever it's on, and take care of it itself (Epps 173).

Malcolm's use of examples from the situation in the United States shows that he possessed an entirely different perspective on the issues by this point in his career. In 1961, Malcolm believed

that Allah and Elijah Muhammad would “fix” the civil rights situation. By 1964, it is apparent he believed that the people themselves need to fix their own situation, and he points to the recent independence of African states as an example of how to accomplish this.

As the use of Africa suggests, Malcolm’s plan for the future of African Americans shifts dramatically between the two speeches. The earlier speech advocates the “separate state” solution. This is consistent with the view that America must be punished through loss of land and capital to African Americans. Malcolm offers evidence for why this is the best plan, but never for how this plan is practical. No steps or model is offered for implementation. By 1964, the notion of a separate state has disappeared entirely. Malcolm advocates a position that African Americans and whites must figure out how to live together. Malcolm is prepared to use any means necessary, be it force, action in the world arena, or domestic political action to bring about equality of opportunity for African Americans and to end white imperialism. He offers the concrete example of Africa taking American human rights violations to the United Nations as part of his plan. He also outlines the plan of his OAAU to work with all other groups, especially for voting rights. Malcolm makes clear his desire to find peaceful resolutions, but his willingness to use force as a part of his plan:

We believe the OAAU should provide defense units in every area of this country where workers are registering or seeking voting rights, in every area where brothers go out to the battlefield (which it actually is). Such self-defense units should have brothers who will not go out and initiate aggression, but brothers who are qualified, equipped to retaliate when anyone imposes brutality on us (Epps 174)

Malcolm's outline of a plan for aggressive action if necessary is representative of the various plans for immediate action he sets forth in the discourse.

There are several interesting changes in the discourse that all relate to this change in the plan for African Americans. First, Malcolm's entire outlook on the problem has changed from domestic to global. He is aware of this change and addresses it directly: "The Negro problem has ceased to be a Negro problem. It has ceased to be an American problem and has now become a world problem, a problem for all humanity" (Epps 173). Malcolm's plan for a separate state is indicative of his domestic mindset in 1961—he provides a solution involving only Americans to an American problem. In 1964, he no longer confines the problem to America, but broadens his vision to include the world stage to provide additional support to the cause of finding African Americans a place in society free from discrimination.

In 1964, the discourse indicates that a role exists for political action as a part of the African American struggle. The 1961 speech leaves no room for this sort of action on the part of African Americans. The government should simply "fix" the problem in the manner prescribed by prophecy. In 1964 Malcolm advocates a much more direct role for domestic political action, especially in getting African Americans to vote: "The OAAU will become involved in every move to secure maximum opportunity for black people to register peacefully as voters" (Epps 174). This commitment to political action at home works alongside the vision for global action against the United States for its human rights failings.

Implicit in this willingness to utilize political action is Malcolm's willingness to collaborate with other groups. In 1961, all groups that support integration and all white people are demonized and their efforts discounted entirely: "Integration is not good for either side. It

will destroy [the white] race, and [white American] government knows it will also destroy ours, and the problem still remains unsolved” (Epps 127). Though Malcolm still sees integration as a “token” solution in 1964, he no longer discounts the sincere efforts of civil rights workers of all races. In fact, he expresses a willingness to work with all civil rights organizations as long as they refuse to compromise (Epps 174-175). As for white people specifically, Malcolm felt that they had a role to play in the movement as well, mobilizing their own communities against racism and segregation (Last Year 68).

From the methods of action Malcolm espouses to the groups he is willing to involve in his vision, Malcolm’s rhetoric changes drastically from 1961 to 1964. Traveling to Mecca gave Malcolm an expanded worldview that included the possibility that having white skin or advocating peaceful solutions did not always make the person possessing these traits wrong or an enemy. Malcolm’s travels showed him the potential for a global outlook; they exposed him to the global support that existed for African Americans. Seeing the firsthand effects of revolution in Africa helped Malcolm to devise plans that are more pragmatic for the future of the African American struggle. His travels also left him with many personal experiences to share in his rhetoric. Traveling to Africa especially helped Malcolm realize that all African Americans and Africans as well were participating in the same struggle against a common enemy. Malcolm’s 1964 speech is more realistic, more practical and more connected to current world events and the feeling of African/African American people in general. These new understandings allowed his rhetoric to become more personal and more connected to the heated civil rights struggle that affected the daily lives of his audience. Even a white audience member who did not feel personally involved in the civil rights struggle saw what was happening on the news.

Malcolm's unnaturally early death ultimately means that we will never know where the changes in his life would have continued to lead him. This final transformation in his life might have been permanent, but given Malcolm's willingness to transform more may have followed. Because of the hectic pace of the last year of Malcolm's life, it is likely that we never really saw the full revelation of Malcolm's final transformation emerge in his life or rhetoric. He was still sorting through everything he had experienced in his two trips to Mecca and Africa at the time of his death. What we do know is that the worldview expressed in Malcolm's rhetoric changed dramatically from 1961 to 1964. Evidence from his speeches strongly suggests that the experience of Mecca and other travels abroad precipitated many of the changes. Even if the audiences for these particular Harvard speeches were not transformed by his rhetoric, these audience members experienced Malcolm's transformation first hand.

# Appendix

# Address of Malcolm X to The Harvard Law School Forum<sup>5</sup>

March 24, 1961

**Roger Fisher, Moderator**

Mr. Malcolm X is a minister of Mosque No. 7, the Nation of Islam, Harlem, New York. Mr. X has agreed to speak to us on *The American Negro: Problems and Solutions*.

**Malcolm X**

We thank you for inviting us here to the Harvard Law School Forum this evening to present our views on this timely topic: *The American Negro: Problems and Solutions*. However, to understand our views, the views of the Muslims, you must first realize that we are a religious group, and you must also know something about our religion, the religion of Islam. The creator of the universe, whom many of you call God or Jehovah, is known to the Muslims by the name Allah. The Muslims believe there is but one God, and that all the prophets came from this one God. We believe also that all prophets taught the same religion, and that they themselves called that religion Islam, an Arabic word that means complete submission and obedience to the will of Allah. One who practices divine obedience is called a Muslim (commonly known, spelled, and referred to here in the West as Moslem). There are over seven hundred twenty-five million Muslims on this earth, predominantly in Africa and Asia, the nonwhite world. We here in America are under the divine leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, and we are an integral part of the vast world of Islam that stretches from the China seas to the sunny shores of West Africa. A unique situation faces the twenty million ex-slaves here in America because of our unique condition. Our acceptance of Islam and conversion to the religion affects us also in a unique way, different from the way in which it affects all other Muslim converts elsewhere on this earth.

Mr. Elijah Muhammad is our divine leader and teacher here in America. Mr. Muhammad believes in and obeys God one hundred percent, and he is even now teaching and working among our people to fulfill God's divine purpose. I am here at this forum tonight to represent Mr. Elijah Muhammad, the spiritual head of the fastest-growing group of Muslims in the Western Hemisphere. We who follow Mr. Muhammad know that he has been divinely taught and sent to us by God Himself. We believe that the miserable plight of the twenty million black people in America is the fulfillment of divine prophecy. We believe that the serious race problem that [the Negro's] presence here poses for America is also the fulfillment of divine prophecy. We also believe that the presence today in America of the Honorable Elijah

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<sup>5</sup> Speech text taken from the Harvard Law School Forum website:  
<http://www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/forum/X61.html>

Muhammad, his teachings among the twenty million so-called Negroes, and his naked warning to America concerning her treatment of these twenty million ex-slaves is also the fulfillment of divine prophecy. Therefore, when Mr. Muhammad declares that the only solution to America's serious race problem is complete separation of the two races, he is reiterating what was already predicted for this time by all the Biblical prophets. Because Mr. Muhammad takes this uncompromising stand, those of you who don't understand Biblical prophecy wrongly label him a racist and hate-teacher and accuse him of being anti-white and teaching black supremacy. But this evening since we are all here at the Harvard Law School Forum; together, both races face to face, we can question and examine for ourselves the wisdom or folly of what Mr. Muhammad is teaching.

Many of you who classify yourselves as white express surprise and shock at the truth that Mr. Muhammad is teaching your twenty million ex-slaves here in America, but you should be neither surprised nor shocked. As students, teachers, professors, and scientists, you should be well aware that we are living in a world where great changes are taking place. New ideas are replacing the old ones. Old governments are collapsing, and new nations are being born. The entire old system which held the old world together has lost its effectiveness, and now that old world is going out. A new system or a new world must replace the old world. Just as the old ideas must be removed to make way for the new, God has declared to Mr. Muhammad that the evil features of this wicked old world must be exposed, faced up to, and removed in order to make way for the new world which God Himself is preparing to establish. The divine mission of Mr. Muhammad here in America today is to prepare us for the new world of righteousness by teaching us a better understanding of the old world's defects. Thus we may come to agree that God must remove this wicked old world.

We see by reports in the daily press that even many of you who are scholars and scientists think that the message of Islam that is being preached here in America among your twenty million ex-slaves is new, or that it is something Mr. Muhammad himself has made up. Mr. Muhammad's religious message is not new. All of the scientists and prophets of old predicted that a man such as he, with such a doctrine or message, would make his appearance among us at a time as that in which we are living today. It is written too in your own scriptures that this prophetic figure would not be raised up from the midst of the educated class, but that God would make His choice from among the lowly, uneducated, downtrodden, oppressed masses, from among the lowest element of America's twenty million ex-slaves. It would be as in the days when God raised up Moses from among the lowly Hebrew slaves and commissioned him to separate his oppressed people from a slave master named Pharaoh. Moses found himself opposed by the scholars and scientists of that day, who are symbolically described in the Bible as "Pharaoh's magicians." Jesus himself, a lowly carpenter, was also missioned by God to find his people, the "lost sheep," and to separate them from their Gentile enemies and restore them to their own nation. Jesus also found himself opposed by the scholars and scientists of his day, who are symbolically described in the Bible as "scribes, priests, and Pharisees." Just as the learned class of those days disagreed with and opposed both Moses and Jesus primarily because of their humble origin, Mr. Elijah Muhammad is today likewise being opposed by the learned, educated

intellectuals of his own kind, because of [his] humble origin. These modern-day "magicians, scribes, and Pharisees" try to ridicule Mr. Muhammad by emphasizing the humble origin of him and his many followers.

Moses was raised up among his enslaved people at a time when God was planning to restore them to a land of their own where they could give birth to a new civilization, completely independent of their former slave masters. Pharaoh opposed God's plan and God's servant, so Pharaoh and his people were destroyed. Jesus was sent among his people at a time when God was planning to bring about another great change. The dispensation preached by Jesus two thousand years ago ushered in a new type of civilization, the Christian civilization, better known as the Christian world. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him!) came six hundred years after Jesus with another dispensation that did not destroy or remove the Christian civilization, but which put a dent in it, a wound that has lasted even until today. Now, today, God has sent Mr. Elijah Muhammad among the downtrodden and oppressed so-called American Negroes to warn that God is again preparing to bring about another great change, only this time it will be a final change. This is the day and the time for a complete change. Mr. Muhammad teaches that the religion of Islam is the only solution to the problems confronting our people here in America. He warns us that it is even more important, however, to know the base or foundation upon which we must build tomorrow. Therefore, although the way in which Mr. Muhammad teaches the religion of Islam and the particular kind of Islam he teaches may appear to be different from the teaching of Islam in the Old World, the basic principles and practices are the same.

You must remember: The condition of America's twenty million ex-slaves is uniquely pitiful. But just as the old religious leaders in the days of Moses and Jesus refused to accept Moses and Jesus as religious reformers, many of the religious leaders in the old Muslim world today may also refute the teachings of Mr. Elijah Muhammad, neither realizing the unique condition of these twenty million ex-slaves nor understanding that Mr. Elijah Muhammad's teachings are divinely prescribed to rectify the miserable condition of our oppressed people here. But as God made Pharaoh's magicians bow before Moses, and the scribes and Pharisees bow before Jesus, He plans today to make all opposition, both at home and abroad, bow before the truth that is now being taught by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad.

We are two thousand years from the time of the great change which took place in Jesus' day. If you will but look around you on this earth today, it will be as clear as the five fingers on your hand that we are again living at a time of great change. God has come to close out the entire old world, the old world where for the past six thousand years most of the earth's population has been deceived, conquered, colonized, ruled, enslaved, oppressed, and exploited by the Caucasian race. At the time when Pharaoh's civilization reached its peak and his period of rule of the slaves was up, God appeared unto Moses and revealed to him that He had something different for his people. Likewise, God told Mr. Muhammad that He has something different for his people, the so-called Negroes here in America today--something that until now has never

before been revealed. Mr. Muhammad teaches us that this old world has seen nothing yet, that the real thing is yet to come.

The Black Muslims who follow Mr. Muhammad are only now making their exit from the old world. The door to the new world is yet to be opened, and what is inside that door is yet to be revealed. The teaching of Mr. Muhammad among your twenty million ex-slaves is only to prepare us to walk out of this wicked old world in as intelligent, pleasant, and peaceful a way as possible. The teaching among the so-called American Negroes is designed only to show proof why we should give up this wicked old house. The roof is leaking, the walls are collapsing, and we find it can no longer support the tremendous weight caused by our continued presence in it. The knowledge of the deterioration and eventual collapse of this old building having come to Mr. Muhammad from Almighty God Himself (whose proper name is Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, the Master of Judgment Day), the Honorable Elijah Muhammad is pointing out these dangerous conditions and future results to us as well as to you who have enslaved us. With proper support and guidance our people can get out of this sagging old building before it collapses. But the support and guidance that we need actually consists of instruction in the origin, history, and nature of the Caucasian race as well as of our own black nation. We must have a thorough knowledge of the true origin and history of the white man's Christian religion as well as an understanding of the Islamic religion that prevails primarily among our brothers and sisters in Africa and Asia. You will probably ask us, "Why, if this old house is going to collapse or go up in smoke, are the Black Muslims asking for some states to be set aside in this country? It's like asking for a chance to retain rooms in a house that you claim is doomed for total destruction!"

God is giving to America every opportunity to repent and atone for the crime she committed when she enslaved our people, even as God gave Pharaoh a chance to repent before He finally destroyed that king, too proud to face his slaves and give them complete justice. We are asking you for a territory here only because of the great opposition we receive from this government in our efforts to awaken our people, to unite them and separate them from their oppressors, and to return them to their own land and people. You should never make the mistake of thinking that Mr. Muhammad has no place to take his followers in the World of Islam. No sir! He is not shut out from the world as many of you wish to believe. All who accept Islam and follow Mr. Muhammad have been offered a home in the Muslim world.

Our people have been oppressed and exploited here in America for four hundred years, and now with Mr. Muhammad we can leave this wicked world of bondage. But our former slave master is [continually] opposing Mr. Muhammad's efforts and is unjustly persecuting those who have left the Christian Church and accepted the religion of Islam. This is further proof that our Caucasian slave master does not want or trust us to leave him and live elsewhere on this earth. And yet, if we stay here with him, he continues to keep us at the very lowest level of his society.

Pick up any daily newspaper or magazine and examine the anti-Muslim propaganda and the false charges leveled against our beloved religious leader by some of America's leading

reporters. This only points up the fact that the Caucasian race is never willing to let any black man who is not their puppet or parrot speak for our people or lead our people out of their enslaving clutches without giving him great opposition. The Caucasian slave master has opposed all such leaders in the past, and even today he sanctions and supports only those Negro spokesmen who parrot his doctrines and ideas or who accept his so-called advice on how our people should carry on our struggle against his four hundred years of tyranny.

The Christian world has failed to give the black man justice. The (American) Christian government has failed to give her twenty million ex-slaves (just compensation) for three hundred ten years of free slave labor. Even despite this, we have been better Christians than those who taught us Christianity. We have been America's most faithful servants during peace time, and her bravest soldiers during war time. But still, white Christians have been unwilling to recognize us and to accept us as fellow human beings. Today we can see that the Christian religion of the Caucasian race has failed us. Thus the black masses are turning away from the Church and toward the religion of Islam. Furthermore, the government sends its agents among our people to tell lies. [Those agents] make an all-out effort to harass us in order to frighten those of our people in this country who would accept the religion of Islam and unite under the spiritual guidance and divine leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. Therefore, Mr. Muhammad has demanded that you and your government let us separate ourselves from you right here, into a separate territory that we can call our own and on which we can do something for ourselves and for our own kind; since you don't want these twenty million ex-slaves to leave you and return to their own land and people, and since your actions have proved that the Caucasian race will not receive them as complete equals. Since we cannot live among the Caucasians in peace, and since there is not time enough for us new Negroes to wait for the Caucasian race to be "reeducated" and freed of their racial prejudice, their inbred beliefs and practices of white supremacy, I repeat, "Let our people be separated from you, and give us some territory that we can call our own and where we can live in peace among ourselves."

According to recent news dispatches in daily papers throughout the nation, prison wardens all over this country are unjustly persecuting the inmates who want to change from the Christian religion to the religion of Islam and follow the spiritual guidance of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. Indeed, these prison wardens even admit that when inmates change from Christianity to Islam, they become model prisoners. Yet despite this, the prisoners are being persecuted and prevented from reading the Holy Koran, the same holy book that is read daily by hundreds of millions of our darker brothers and sisters in Africa and Asia. When the true facts about this religious persecution are made known among the seven hundred twenty-five million Muslims in the world of Islam, that strategic area that stretches from the China seas to the shores of West Africa, how do you think the American Caucasians will then look in the eyes of those nonwhite people there? The very fact that there is a concerted effort against Islam by prison wardens in this country is proof that the American government is trying to stamp out the religion of Islam at home, in a frantic effort to keep it from spreading among her twenty million ex-slaves whom she continues to confine to the lowly role of second-class citizenship. Further proof is the fact that these twenty million so-called Negroes have never been taught about the religion of

Islam during the entire four hundred years, since the Caucasians first brought our people here in chains from our African Muslim culture. Yet Islam is, and always has been, the prevailing religion among our people in Africa. Indeed, the American Caucasian, in a last act of desperation, is accusing Mr. Muhammad of not being a true Muslim, and of not teaching true Islam. If the American Caucasian knows so much about true Islam and has suddenly become such an authority on it, why hasn't he taught it to his twenty million ex-slaves before now?

The American Caucasian today also loves to print glaring headlines saying that the orthodox Muslims don't recognize or accept Mr. Muhammad and his Muslims as true Muslims. "Divide and rule" has long been the Caucasian strategy to continue white colonization of dark nations. The American Caucasian actually has settled twenty million black people here in this country by simply dividing us from our African brothers and sisters for four hundred years, converting us to his Christian religion, and by teaching us to call ourselves "Negroes" and telling us that we are no longer African. (I guess he says this because our exposure to this "superior" white culture makes us different, so-called civilized.) Since hundreds of thousands of the ex-slaves here in America today refuse to attend the church of the Caucasians who enslaved us, shun all further use of the word "Negro," and accept Allah as their God, Islam as their religion, and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad as their religious leader and teacher, these American Caucasians are reverting to the old trick of earlier colonialists: divide and rule. They thereby try to separate us from the Muslim world and to alienate us from our people in Africa and Asia who also serve and follow Almighty God, Allah.

There are probably one hundred thousand of what you (whites) call orthodox Muslims in America, who were born in the Muslim world and who willingly migrated here. But despite the fact that Islam is a propagating religion, all of these foreign Muslims combined have not been successful in converting one thousand Americans to Islam. On the other hand, they see that Mr. Muhammad by himself has hundreds of thousands of his fellow ex-slaves turning eastward toward Mecca five times daily giving praises to the great God Allah. No true Muslim in his right mind would denounce or deny this meek and humble little black man, born in Georgia in the very worst part of this country, as a leader, a defender of the faith, and a propagator of the faith, who has rekindled the light of Islam here in the West. His Caucasian opposers have never gotten even one responsible Muslim official to criticize or denounce Mr. Muhammad. They succeed only in getting some jealous, envious little peddler or merchant who migrated here and who wants to be recognized as some sort of leader himself and will therefore accept the Caucasian's bribe of thirty pieces of silver to attack this man of God. How could Mr. Muhammad ever make a trip into the forbidden areas of Arabia, to visit the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and be welcomed and honored by its most respected religious leaders, the great Imams themselves, if he himself were not recognized as a great religious man, a man of God, doing miraculous works by spreading Allah's name here in the West among the twenty million ex-slaves of America? How could Mr. Muhammad visit the capitals of the Muslim world and be received by its respected leaders, if he were not also recognized and respected as a Muslim leader by them? He visited Al-Azhar, the oldest mosque and Muslim university in the world, and had tea with the Chief Imam, the Grand Sheikh Shaltuat, who kissed him on his forehead in true Muslim fashion. Yet

the American Caucasians, hoping to block his success among our people, continue to oppose him and to say that he is not a true Muslim.

Again you will say, "Why don't he and his followers leave this house of bondage right now and go and live in the Muslim world?" All of the Nation of Islam can live in the Muslim world tomorrow, but the Honorable Elijah Muhammad wants justice for the entire twenty million so-called Negroes. You and your Christian government make the problem even more complicated. You don't want your twenty million ex-slaves to leave you, yet you won't share equal justice with them right here. Since you don't want them to leave this country with us, and you won't give them equal justice among your kind, we will agree to stay only if you let us separate ourselves from you right here. Just give us a portion of this country that we can call our own. Put us in it. Then give us everything we need to start our own civilization--that is, support us for twenty to twenty-five years, until we are able to go for ourselves. This is God's plan. This is God's solution. This is justice, and compensation for our three hundred ten years of slave labor. Otherwise America will reap the full fury of God's wrath for her crimes against our people, which are many. As your Bible says, "He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he that kills with the sword shall be killed by the sword." This is the law of justice; this is in your own Christian scriptures.

The black masses are shaking off the drugs, the narcotic effect of token-integration promises. A cup of tea in a white restaurant is not sufficient compensation for three hundred ten years of free slave labor. The black masses as represented by the Black Muslims will never be satisfied until we have some land that we can call our own. Again I repeat: We are not asking for territory here because Mr. Muhammad has no place else to take us. But we ask for the sake of the entire twenty million so-called Negroes, twenty million ex-slaves who, despite the fact that the Emancipation Proclamation was issued one hundred years ago, are still begging their former slave master for recognition as human beings. Mr. Muhammad is asking this government to stop toying with our people, to stop fooling them year in and year out with false promises of token integration. Token integration will not solve our problem. This is a false solution, a "token" solution. It is a hypocritical approach to the problem, a tricky scheme devised by you and propagated by your Negro puppets whom you yourselves have appointed as our leaders and spokesmen.

Integration is not good for either side. It will destroy your race, and your government knows it will also destroy ours, and the problem still remains unsolved. God has declared that these twenty million ex-slaves must have a home of their own. After four hundred years here among the Caucasians, we are absolutely convinced that we can never live together in peace, unless we are willing to remain subservient to our former masters. Therefore, immediate and complete separation is the only solution. NAACP Attorney Thurgood Marshall has admitted publicly that six years since the Supreme Court decision on desegregation of the schools, only six percent desegregation has taken place. This is an example of integration!

A kidnapper, a robber, an enslaver, a lyncher is just another common criminal in the sight of God, and criminal acts as such have been committed by their race on a mass scale for four hundred years against your twenty million so-called Negroes. It is true that today American professes to be sorry for her crimes against our people. She says she wants to repent, but in her desire to atone or make amends, she offers her twenty million ex-slaves flowery promises of token integration. Many of these downtrodden victims want to forgive America. They want to forget the crimes that you have committed against them, and some are even willing to accept the formula of token integration that you yourselves have devised as a solution to the problem created by your own criminal acts against them. In a court of justice the criminal can confess his crimes and throw himself on the mercy of the court if he truly repents, but neither the criminal nor his victim has any say-so in suggesting the sentence that is passed upon the guilty or the price that the confessed criminal must pay. This is left in the hands of the judge. We are living in the Day of Judgment right now. God is the Judge that our American slave master must now answer to. God is striking this country with tornadoes, storms, floods, rain, hail, snow; and terrific earthquakes are yet to come. Your people are being afflicted with increasing epidemics of illness, disease, and plagues, with which God is striking you because of your criminal acts against the twenty million ex-slaves.

Instead of repenting and truly compensating our people for their three hundred ten years of free slave labor that built this country for you, you buy out the Negro leaders with thirty pieces of silver and have them sell our people your token integration. When one uses a token on the bus or streetcar, that token is a substitute for the real money; token means a substitute, that which takes the place of the real thing. Token integration takes the place of the real thing. Two black students at the University of Georgia is token integration. Four black children in New Orleans' white schools is token integration. A handful of black students in the white schools in Little Rock, Arkansas is token integration. None of this is real integration; it is only a pacifier to keep these awakening black babies from crying too loud. According to the above-mentioned rate of desegregation since the decision of the Supreme Court, it will take us another thousand years to get the white man in the South sufficiently "re-educated" to accept our people in their midst as equals. And if the rest of the truth is told, it will take the white man here in the North, West, and East just as long as his brother in the South.

To many of you here at the Harvard Law School Forum this sounds ridiculous; to some it even sounds insane. But these twenty million black people here in America now number a nation in their own right. Do you believe that a nation within another nation can be successful, especially when they both have equal educations? Once the slave has his master's education, the slave wants to be like his master, wants to share his master's property, and even wants to exercise the same privileges as his master while he is yet in his master's house. This is the core of America's troubles today: there will be no peace for America as long as twenty million so-called Negroes are here begging for the rights which America knows she will never grant us. The limited education America has granted her ex-slaves has even already produced great unrest. Almighty God says the only way for America to ever have any future or prosperity is for her twenty million ex-slaves to be separated from her, and it is for this reason that Mr. Muhammad

teaches us that we must have some land of our own. If we receive equal education, how long do you expect us to remain your passive servants, or second-class citizens? There is no such thing as a second-class citizen. We are full citizens, or we are not citizens at all. When you teach a man the science of government, he then wants an equal part or position in that government, or else he wants his own government. He begins to demand equality with his master. No man with education equal to your own will serve you. The only way you can continue to rule us is with superior knowledge, by continuing to withhold equal education from our people. America has not given us equal education, but she has given us enough to make us want more and to make us demand equality of opportunity. And since this is causing unrest plus international embarrassment, the only solution is immediate separation. As your colleges and universities turn out an ever-increasing number of so-called Negro graduates with education equal to yours, they will automatically increase their demands for equality in everything else. Equal education will increase their spirit of equality and make them feel that they should have everything that you have, and their increasing demands will become a perpetual headache for you and continue to cause you international embarrassment. In fact, those Negro students whom you are educating today will soon be demanding the same things you now hear being demanded by Mr. Muhammad and the Muslims.

In concluding, I must remind you that your own Christian Bible states that God is coming in the last days or at the end of the old world, and that God's coming will bring about a great separation. Now since we see all sorts of signs throughout the earth that indicate that the time of God's coming is upon us, why don't you repent while there is yet time? Do justice by your faithful ex-slaves. Give us some land of our own right here, some separate states, so we can separate ourselves from you. Then everyone will be satisfied, and perhaps we will all be able to then live happily ever after and, as your own Christian Bible says, "everyone under his own vine and fig tree." Otherwise all of you who are sitting here, your government, and your entire race will be destroyed and removed from this earth by Almighty God, Allah.

# The African Revolution and Its Impact on the American Negro<sup>6</sup>

December 16, 1964

**Alan Dershowitz, Moderator:**

Our speaker this evening was born Malcolm Little about forty years ago in Omaha, Nebraska. Not much is known about his early life except that in 1948 he joined the Black Muslim Movement and adopted the last name of X, which he maintains today. Although still a Muslim, he has recently broken with the Black Muslim Movement, where he served as Chief Minister. He is now Chairman of an organization known as The Organization of Afro-American Unity -- the description of which I shall leave to him. Now he prefers to be known as Brother Malcolm when he is speaking in a religious capacity, but as Malcolm X when he is speaking in a political capacity. *The New York Times* reported not very long ago that Malcolm X was the second most sought-after speaker on college and university campuses. The first was Barry Goldwater. Mr. Malcolm X.

**Malcolm X:**

I first want to thank the Harvard Law School Forum for the invitation to speak here this evening, more especially to speak on a very timely topic--*The African Revolution and Its Impact on the American Negro*. I probably won't use the word "American Negro," but substitute "Afro-American." And when I say Afro-American, I mean it in the same context in which you usually use the word Negro. Our people today are increasingly shying away from use of that word. They find that when you're identified as Negro, it tends to make you "catch a whole lot of hell" that people who don't use it don't catch.

In the present debate over the Congo, you are probably aware that a new tone and a new tempo, almost a new temper, are being reflected among African statesmen toward the United States. And I think we should be interested in and concerned with what impact this will have upon Afro-Americans and how it will affect America's international race relations. We know that it will have an effect at the international level. It's already having such an effect. But I am primarily concerned with what effect it will have on the internal race relations of this country--that is to say, between the Afro-American and the white American.

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<sup>6</sup> Speech text taken from the Harvard Law School Forum website:  
<http://www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/forum/X64.html>

When you let yourself be influenced by images created by others, you'll find that oftentimes the one who creates those images can use them to mislead you and misuse you. A good example: A couple of weeks ago I was on a plane with a couple of Americans, a male and a female sitting to my right. We were in the same row and had a nice conversation for about thirty-five to forty minutes. Finally the lady looked at my briefcase and said, "I would like to ask you a personal question," and I knew what was coming. She said, "What kind of last name could you have that begins with X?" I said, "Malcolm." Ten minutes went by, and she turned to me and said, "You're not Malcolm X?" You see, we had a nice conversation going, just three human beings, but she was soon looking at the image created by the press. She said so: "I just wouldn't believe that you were that man," she said.

I had a similar experience last week at Oxford. The Oxford Union had arranged a debate. Before the debate I had dinner with four students. A girl student looked kind of cross-eyed, goggle-eyed and otherwise, and finally just told me she wanted to ask me a question. (I found out she was a conservative, by the way, whatever that is.) She said, "I just can't get over your not being as I had expected." I told her it was a case of the press carefully creating images.

Again I had a similar experience last night. At the United Nations a friend from Africa came in with a white woman who is involved with a philanthropic foundation over there. He and I were engaged in conversation for several minutes, and she was in and out of the conversation. Finally I heard her whisper to someone off to the side. She didn't think I was listening. She said--she actually said this--"He doesn't look so wild, you know." Now this is a full-grown, so-called "mature" woman. It shows the extent to which the press can create images. People looking for one thing actually miss the boat because they're looking for the wrong thing. They are looking for someone with horns, someone who is a rabble-rouser, an irrational, antisocial extremist. They expect to hear me say [that Negroes] should kill all the white people--as if you could kill all the white people! In fact, if I had believed what they said about the people in Britain, I never would have gone to Oxford. I would have let it slide. When I got there I didn't go by what I had read about them. I found out they were quite human and likable. Some weren't what I had expected.

Now I have taken time to discuss images because one of the sciences used and misused today is this science of [image making]. The power structure uses it at the local level, at the national level, at the international level. And oftentimes when you and I feel we've come to a conclusion on our own, the conclusion is something that someone has invented for us through the images he has created.

I'm a Muslim. Now if something is wrong with being Muslim, we can argue, we can "get with it." I'm a Muslim, which means that I believe in the religion of Islam. I believe in Allah, the same God that many of you would probably believe in if you knew more about Him. I believe in all of the prophets: Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad. Most of you are Jewish, and you believe in Moses; you might not pick Jesus. If you're Christians, you believe in Moses and

Jesus. Well, I'm Muslim, and I believe in Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. I believe in all of them. So I think I'm "way up on you."

In Islam we practice prayer, charity, fasting. These should be practiced in all religions. The Muslim religion also requires one to make the pilgrimage to the Holy City of Mecca. I was fortunate enough to make it in April, and I went back again in September. Insofar as being a Muslim is concerned, I have done what one is supposed to do to be a Muslim.

Despite being a Muslim, I can't overlook the fact that I'm an Afro-American in a country which practices racism against black people. There is no religion under the sun that would make me forget the suffering that Negro people have undergone in this country. Negroes have suffered for no reason other than that their skins happen to be black. So whether I'm Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist or agnostic, I would still be in the front lines with Negro people fighting against the racism, segregation, and discrimination practiced in this country at all levels in the North, South, East, and West.

I believe in the brotherhood of all men, but I don't believe in wasting brotherhood on anyone who doesn't want to, practice it with me. Brotherhood is a two-way street. I don't think brotherhood should be practiced with a man just because his skin is white. Brotherhood should hinge upon the deeds and attitudes of a man. I couldn't practice brotherhood, for example, with some of those Eastlands or crackers in the South who are responsible for the condition of our people.

I don't think anyone would deny either that if you send chickens out of your barnyard in the morning, at nightfall those chickens will come home to roost in your barnyard. Chickens that you send out always come back home. It is a law of nature. I was an old farm boy myself, and I got in trouble saying this once [about President Kennedy's assassination], but it didn't stop me from being a farm boy. Other people's chickens don't come to roost on your doorstep, and yours don't go to roost on theirs. The chickens that this country is responsible for sending out, whether the country likes it or not (and if you're mature, you look at it "like it is"), someday, and someday soon, have got to come back home to roost.

Victims of racism are created in the image of racists. When the victims struggle vigorously to protect themselves from violence of others, they are made to appear in the image of criminals; as the criminal image-is projected onto the victim. The recent situation in the Congo is one of the best examples of this. The headlines were used to mislead the public, [to create] wrong images. In the Congo, planes were bombing Congolese villages, yet Americans read that (How do they say it?) American-trained anti-Castro Cuban pilots were bombing rebel strongholds. These pilots were actually dropping bombs on villages with women and children. But because the tags "American-trained" and "anti-Castro Cubans" were applied, the bombing was legal. Anyone against Castro is all right. The press gave them a "holier than thou" image. And you let them get away with it because of the labels. The victim is made the criminal. It is really mass murder-murder of women, children, and babies. And mass murder is disguised as a humanitarian

project. They fool nobody but the people of America. They don't fool the people of the world, who see beyond the images.

Their man in the Congo is Tshombe, the murderer of the rightful Prime Minister of the Congo. No matter what kind of language you use, he's purely and simply a murderer. The real Prime Minister of the Congo was Patrice Lumumba. The American government--your and my government--took this murderer and hired him to run the Congo. He became their hired killer. And to show what a hired killer he is, his first act was to go to South Africa and to hire more killers, paying them with American dollars. But he is glorified because he is given the image of the only one who could bring stability to the Congo. Whether he can bring stability or not, he's still a murderer. The headlines spoke of white hostages, not simply hostages, but white hostages, and of white nuns and priests, not simply nuns and priests, but white nuns and priests. Why? To gain the sympathy of the white public of America. The press had to shake up your mind in order to get your sympathy and support for criminal actions. They tricked you. Americans consider forty white lives more valuable than four thousand black lives. Thousands of Congolese were losing their lives. Mercenaries were paid with American dollars. The American press made the murderers look like saints and the victims like criminals. They made criminals look like victims and indeed the devil look like an angel and angels like the devil.

A friend of mine from Africa, who is in a good position to know, said he believed the United States government is being advised by her worst enemy in the Congo, because an American citizen could not suggest such insane action--especially identifying with Tshombe, who is the worst African on earth. You cannot find an African on earth who is more hated than Tshombe. It's a justifiable hatred they have toward him. He has won no victory himself. His Congolese troops have never won a victory for him. Every victory has been won by white mercenaries, who are hired to kill for him. The African soldiers in the Congo are fighting for the Stanleyville government. Here Tshombe is a curse. He's an insult to anyone who means to do right, black or white. When Tshombe visited Cairo, he caused trouble. When he visited Rome last week, he caused trouble, and the same happened in Germany. Wherever Tshombe goes, trouble erupts. And if Tshombe comes to America, you'll see the worst rioting, bloodshed, and violence this country has ever seen. Nobody wants this kind of man in his country.

What effect does all this have on Afro-Americans? What effect will it have on race relations in this country? In the U.N. at this moment, Africans are using more uncompromising language and are heaping hot fire upon America as the racist and neo-colonial power par excellence. African statesmen have never used this language before. These statesmen are beginning to connect the criminal, racist acts practiced in the Congo with similar acts in Mississippi and Alabama. The Africans are pointing out that the white American government--not all white people--has shown just as much disregard for lives wrapped in black skin in the Congo as it shows for lives wrapped in black skin in Mississippi and in Alabama. When Africans, therefore, as well as we begin to think of Negro problems as interrelated, what will be the effect of such thinking on programs for improved race relations in this country? Many people will tell you that the black man in this country doesn't identify with Africa. Before 1959, many Negroes didn't.

But before 1959, the image of Africa was created by an enemy of Africa, because Africans weren't in a position to create and project their own images. The image was created by the imperial powers of Europe.

Europeans created and popularized the image of Africa as a jungle, a wild place where people were cannibals, naked and savage in a countryside overrun with dangerous animals. Such an image of the Africans was so hateful to Afro-Americans that they refused to identify with Africa. We did not realize that in hating Africa and the Africans we were hating ourselves. You cannot hate the roots of a tree and not hate the tree itself. Negroes certainly cannot at the same time hate Africa and love themselves. We Negroes hated the American features: the African nose, the shape of our lips, the color of our skin, the texture of our hair. We could only end up hating ourselves. Our skin became a trap, a prison; we felt inferior, inadequate, helpless. It was not an image created by Africans or by Afro-Americans, but by an enemy.

Since 1959 the image has changed. The African states have emerged and achieved independence. Black people in this country are crying out for their independence and show a desire to make a fighting stand for it. The attitude of the Afro-American cannot be disconnected from the attitude of the African. The pulse beat, the voice, the very life-drive that is reflected in the African is reflected today here among the Afro-Americans. The only way you can really understand the black man in America and the changes in his heart and mind is to fully understand the heart and mind of the black man on the African continent; because it is the same heart and the same mind, although separated by four hundred years and by the Atlantic Ocean. There are those who wouldn't like us to have the same heart and the same mind for fear that that heart and mind might get together. Because when our people in this country received a new image of Africa, they automatically united through the new image of themselves. Fear left them completely. There was fear, however, among the racist elements and the State Department. Their fear was of our sympathy for Africa and for its hopes and aspirations and of this sympathy developing into a form of alliance. It is only natural to expect us today to turn and look in the direction of our homeland and of our motherland and to wonder whether we can make any contact with her.

I grew up in Lansing, Michigan, a typical American city. In those days, a black man could have a job shining shoes or waiting tables. The best job was waiting tables at the country club, as is still the case in most cities. In those days, if a fellow worked at the State House shining shoes, he was considered a big shot in the town. Only when Hitler went on the rampage in 1939, and this country suffered a manpower shortage, did the black man get a shot at better jobs. He was permitted a step forward only when Uncle Sam had his back to the wall and needed him. In 1939, '40, and '41, a black man couldn't even join the Army or Navy, and when they began drafting, they weren't drafting black soldiers but only white. I think it was well agreed upon and understood: If you let the black man get in the Army, get hold of a gun, and learn to shoot it, you wouldn't have to tell him what the target was. It was not until the Negro leaders (and in this sense I use the word Negro purposely) began to cry out and complain--"If white boys are gonna die on the battlefields, our black boys must die on the battlefields too"--that they started drafting

us. If it hadn't been for that type of leadership, we never would have been drafted. The Negro leaders just wanted to show that we were good enough to die too, although we hadn't been good enough to join the Army or Navy prior to that time.

During the time that Hitler and Tojo were on the rampage, the black man was needed in the plants, and for the first time in the history of America, we were given an opportunity on a large scale to get skills in areas that were closed previously to us. When we got these skills, we were put in a position to get more money. We made more money. We moved to a better neighborhood. When we moved to a better neighborhood, we were able to go to a better school and to get a better education, and this put us into a position to know what we hadn't been receiving up to that time. Then we began to cry a little louder than we had ever cried before. But this advancement never was out of Uncle Sam's goodwill. We never made one step forward until world pressure put Uncle Sam on the spot. And it was when he was on the spot that he allowed us to take a couple of steps forward. It has never been out of any internal sense of morality or legality or humanism that we were allowed to advance. *You have been as cold as an icicle whenever it came to the rights of the black man in this country.* (Excuse me for raising my voice, but I think it's time. As long as my voice is the only thing I raise, I don't think you should become upset!)

Because we began to cry a little louder, a new strategy was used to handle us. The strategy evolved with the Supreme Court desegregation decision, which was written in such tricky language that every crook in the country could sidestep it. The Supreme Court desegregation decision was handed down over ten years ago. It has been implemented less than ten percent in those ten years. It was a token advancement, even as we've been the recipients of "tokenism" in education, housing, employment, everything. But nowhere in the country during the past ten years has the black man been treated as a human being in the same context as other human beings. He's always being patronized in a very paternalistic way, but never has he been given an opportunity to function as a human being. Actually, in one sense, it's our own fault, but I'll get to that later on. We have never gotten the real thing. (Heck, I'll get to it right now.) The reason we never received the real thing is that we have not displayed any tendency to do the same for ourselves which other human beings do: to protect our humanity and project our humanity.

I'll clarify what I mean. Not a single white person in America would sit idly by and let someone do to him what we black men have been letting others do to us. The white person would not remain passive, peaceful, and nonviolent. The day the black man in this country shows others that we are just as human as they in reaction to injustice, that we are willing to die just as quickly to protect our lives and property as whites have shown, only then will our people be recognized as human beings. It is inhuman, absolutely subhuman, for a man to let a dog bite him and not fight back. Let someone club him and let him not fight back, or let someone put water hoses on his women, his mother and daughter and babies and let him not fight back . . . then he's subhuman. The day he becomes a human being he will react as other human beings have reacted, and nobody (in humanity) will hold it against him.

In 1959, we saw the emergence of the Negro revolt and the collapse of European colonialism on the African continent. Our struggle, our initiative, and our militancy were in tune with the struggle and initiative and militancy of our brothers in Africa. When the colonial powers saw they couldn't remain in Africa, they behaved as somebody playing basketball. He gets the basketball and must pass it to a teammate in the clear. The colonial powers were boxed in on the African continent. They didn't intend to give up the ball. They just passed it to the one that was in the clear, and the one that was in the clear was the United States. The ball was passed to her, and she picked it up and has been running like mad ever since. Her presence on the African continent has replaced the imperialism and the colonialism of Europeans. But it's still imperialism and colonialism. Americans fooled many of the Africans into thinking that they weren't an imperialist power or colonial power until their intentions were revealed, until they hired Tshombe and put him back to kill in the Congo. Nothing America could have done would have ever awakened the Africans to her true intentions as did her dealings with this murderer named Tshombe.

America knew that Africa was waking in '59. Africa was developing a higher degree of intelligence than she reflected in the past. America, for her part, knew she had to use a more intelligent approach. She used the friendly approach: the Peace Corps, Crossroads. Such philanthropic acts disguised American imperialism and colonialism with dollar-ism. America was not honest with what she was doing. I don't mean that those in the Peace Corps weren't honest. But the Corps was being used more for political purposes than for moral purposes. I met many white Peace Corps workers while on the African continent. Many of them were properly motivated and were making a great contribution. But the Peace Corps will never work over there until the idea has been applied over here.

Of course the Civil Rights Bill was designed supposedly to solve our problem. As soon as it was passed, however, three civil rights workers were murdered. Nothing has been done about it, and I think nothing will be done about it until the people themselves do something about it. I, for one, think the best way to stop the Ku Klux Klan is to talk to the Ku Klux Klan in the only language it understands, for you can't talk French to someone who speaks German and communicate. Find out what language a person speaks, speak their language, and you'll get your point across. Racists know only one language, and it is doing the black man in this country an injustice to expect him to talk the language of peace to people who don't know peaceful language. In order to get any kind of point across our people must speak whatever language the racist speaks. The government can't protect us. The government has not protected us. It is time for us to do whatever is necessary by any means necessary to protect ourselves. If the government doesn't want us running around here wild like that, then I say let the government get up off its . . . whatever it's on, and take care of it itself. After the passage of the Civil Rights Bill, they killed the Negro educator Pitt in Georgia. The killers were brought to court and then set free. This is the pattern in this country, and I think that white people (I use the word white people because it's cut short; it gets right to the point) are doing us an injustice. If you expect us to be nonviolent, you yourselves aren't. If someone came knocking on your door with a rifle,

you'd walk out of the door with your rifle. Now the black man in this country is getting ready to do the same thing.

I say in conclusion that the Negro problem has ceased to be a Negro problem. It has ceased to be an American problem and has now become a world problem, a problem for all humanity. Negroes waste 'their time confining their struggle to civil rights: In that context the problem remains only within the jurisdiction of the United States. No allies can help Negroes without violating United States protocol. But today the black man in America has seen his mistake and is correcting it by lifting his struggle from the level of civil rights to the level of human rights. No longer does the United States government sit in an ivory tower where it can point at South Africa, point at the Portuguese, British, French, and other European colonial powers. No longer can the United States hold twenty million black people in second-class citizenship and think that the world will keep a silent mouth. No matter what the independent African states are doing in the United Nations, it is only a flicker, a glimpse, a ripple of what this country is in for in the future, unless a halt is brought to the illegal injustices which our people continue to suffer every day.

The Organization of Afro-American Unity (to which I belong) is a peaceful organization based on brotherhood. Oh yes, it is peaceful. But I believe you can't have peace until you're ready to protect it. As you will die protecting yours, I will die protecting mine. The OAAU is trying to get our problem before the United Nations. This is one of its immediate projects on the domestic front. We will work with all existing civil rights organizations. Since there has been talk of minimizing demonstrations and of becoming involved in political action, we want to see if civil rights organizations mean it. The OAAU will become involved in every move to secure maximum opportunity for black people to register peacefully as voters. We believe that along with voter registration, Afro-Americans need voter education. Our people should receive education in the science of politics so that the crooked politician cannot exploit us: We must put ourselves in a position to become active politically. We believe that the OAAU should provide defense units in every area of this country where workers are registering or are seeking voting rights, in every area where young students go out on the battlefield (which it actually is). Such self-defense units should have brothers who will not go out and initiate aggression, but brothers who are qualified, equipped to retaliate when anyone imposes brutally on us, whether it be in Mississippi, Massachusetts, California, or New York City. The OAAU doesn't believe it should permit civil rights workers to be murdered. When a government can't protect civil rights workers, we believe we should do it. Even in the Christian Bible it says that he who kills with the sword shall be killed by the sword, and I'm not against it. I'm for peace, yet I believe that any man facing death should be able to go to any length to assure that whoever is trying to kill him doesn't have a chance. The OAAU supports the plan of every civil rights group for political action, as long as it doesn't involve compromise. We don't believe Afro-Americans should be victims any longer. We believe we should let the world know, the Ku Klux Klan know, that bloodshed is a two-way street, that dying is a two-way street, that killing is a two-way street. Now I say all this in as peaceful a language as I know.

There was another man back in history whom I read about once, an old friend of mine whose name was Hamlet, who confronted, in a sense, the same thing our people are confronting here in America. Hamlet was debating whether "To be or not to be"--that was the question. He was trying to decide whether it was "nobler in the mind to suffer (peacefully) the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune " or whether it was nobler "to take up arms" and oppose them. I think his little soliloquy answers itself. As long as you sit around suffering the slings and arrows and are afraid to use some slings and arrows yourself, you'll continue to suffer. The OAAU has come to the conclusion that it is time to take up whatever means necessary to bring these sufferings to a halt.

**Alan Dershowitz:** Our next speaker is Mr. Archie Epps; Mr. Epps has been active in civil rights work in the Boston area.

**Archie Epps:** I am told that Negro boys have invented a little game they play in the streets of Harlem, New York. One boy will stand at one end of the street and yell Lumumba. Another boy at the other end of the street will yell Kasavubu. Both will then rush toward each other, improvising an African dance. A mock duel will then be fought, expressing both their pride at playing the role of African heroes and their awareness of a conflict between rival political leaders on another continent. At this level of awareness, Africa has surely had an impact on American Negroes.

The successful evolution of African independent states, however, bears only indirectly on the American Negro revolution. A racial theory of revolution has been used by Malcolm X this evening to describe the Negro revolutions in Africa and America. On one side, he drew an analogy between European colonization and American slavery and segregation. It was argued that since the white man established these systems of exploitation, he was the common enemy of the American Negro and the Africans. The accuracy of this theory of revolution is questionable, especially since it assumes that a worldwide conspiracy of white men will be overthrown by a conspiracy of black man. This conspiracy theory perpetuates false images. One such image is the ostensible desire by Negro leaders to free their people in America and Africa.

Furthermore, this argument takes one away from historical reality. Negroes have (and have had) a hand in the oppression of their own people. Explanation of the slave trade by a white conspiracy theory is, therefore, full of hypocrisy and provides an insufficient premise for the justification of self-righteous Negro revolutions.

A major obstruction to Negro advancement in America is this ostensible radicalism of Negro leaders which really masks a political conservatism. These Negro leaders live by an essentially undemocratic notion of their role. They believe that Negro communities should delegate all decision making to them. The most conservative imply that the Negro masses are culturally inferior and politically inept. Where a religious elite holds sway, as in the Black Muslim Movement, the masses are thought to be in need of total moral reconstruction. Negro elite of this sort have perpetuated (and perpetuate) an authoritarian and explicitly undemocratic tradition of

political rule in the whole array of American Negro religious and political organizations. By and large, this single ideological tradition has left Negro groups, middle class and otherwise, to fend for themselves in the modern World without progressive political institutions.

Actually, these elite leaders use an ideology of common racial origin to perpetuate themselves in office. Accordingly, Negroes should not criticize one another since "blood brothers" should stick together at all costs. I have time only to deal with one American example of this. At the Democratic National Convention of 1964, Negro Democrats failed to help the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to gain recognition. One hundred twenty-six official Negro delegates of the convention decided in caucus not to give public support to that party. The predominantly Negro MFDP had claimed that it was the rightful representative of Mississippi Democrats. It had asked the Convention to seat its delegates instead of the regular all-white Democratic Party delegates. The MFDP charged that Negroes had been systematically excluded from Democratic Party meetings in Mississippi. It accused the regular Democratic Party of Mississippi of full-fledged discrimination. The MFDP claimed, furthermore, that less than seven percent of eligible Negroes in the state were registered to vote because of a combination of poll tax assessment, harassment, and discriminatory voting tests. Confronted with tales of Negro persecution, with which they were surely familiar, a large majority of the one hundred twenty-six Negro delegates turned a deaf ear to the MFDP.

However, these Negro leaders were not through. Another caucus was held an hour later at which it was rumored that a Negro Congressman would take up the problem of the MFDP. MFDP supporters thought that the Congressman would surely throw his support their way and criticize Negro delegation inaction and lack of courage. He was, after all, the leader of a predominantly Negro political machine. Instead, the Negro leader elaborated a theory of the need for total delegation of decision on the MFDP question to him. He argued 'that the MFDP Convention challenge was a repudiation of his mandate as chief political leader of the Negro delegates. He lectured the group on the need for proper respect of his authority. He said that as a Negro and as a Democrat he could promise that something would be done about the exclusion of Negro Democrats from party membership in Mississippi, but at some other time. He continually repeated, "We are your leaders." The MFDP delegates and civil rights workers went away disappointed, abandoning their appeal to Negro leaders. They chose instead a strategy of protest. The following evening, MFDP delegates executed a "sit in" at the Convention in seats reserved for the white Mississippi delegation.

Negro conservatism in America takes forms besides the explicitly political. Negro prophet churches and sects propose other-worldly solutions to what are really political problems. Daddy Grace and Prophet Jones have thrown up separatist religio-political organizations which siphon off the already meager financial resources of poor Negroes. These prophet movements dispense Puritan righteousness to the Negro proletariat, each generation of Negroes seeing these prophetic movements as solutions to problems of poverty and segregation. In fact, Malcolm X has emerged out of this same cycle of hope and disappointment. Negro religious conservatism actually works hand-in-hand with political conservatism to maintain the status quo, rendering the

energy of the Negro masses irrelevant to the modernization of the Negro minority. The relevant issue for debate here then is the nature of the political reality with which a Negro leader must deal.

Social reform of the sort we are discussing is very seldom initiated by an elite. It will surely not be initiated by incumbent Negro political leaders. Actually, the Negro masses of Africa and America will likely express themselves in a crazy-quilt pattern of political assertion. They will believe they are helping to win a "place in the sun" by threatening the rich. Those who would be leaders of masses, therefore, had best figure out what form this mass political expression will take and try to render it more rational. Malcolm X's immediate problem, then, is to see why other leaders of his type have failed and try to avoid their mistakes. The Garvey Movement failed because of its great emphasis on a glorious Africa, which, in reality, was only a dream in Garvey's head. Garvey had the Negro masses searching for the end of a rainbow, while he huffed and puffed about what he could do to the white man if given the chance. The poor Negro folk of the South and North contributed two million dollars to his United Negro Improvement Association to give him that chance. He did nothing for them but continue to talk of his dream of uniting black men around the world. Malcolm X's hands-across-the-water strategy with Africa seems to be based on the same irrelevant dream.

American Negro cooperation with Africa will come about someday. Hopefully the purpose of this cooperation will be not to fashion a black chauvinistic alliance in order to contend for world-wide power, but to advance civility and humane government, to remove violence and hatred from the political relationships of nations and races.

I was disappointed to hear Malcolm X refer again, without real qualification and rather gleefully, to the Kennedy assassination as "chickens coming home to roost." I assume that Malcolm X uses the saying to explain the violent tradition in American history, which he would describe as the inevitable drift of history toward retribution. I believe, on the contrary, that men are not the servants of history, whatever the tradition, but at least aspiring free agents. The Negro is not a member of the race of Sisyphus--required by divine decree to push a rock up a mountain only to have it roll down again. Malcolm X's view of history is inherently pessimistic. This view does not allow that Negroes are no longer slaves, but are, in part, free agents. Negro efforts at reform in America, and in Africa, for that matter, must seek an honest appraisal of what use Negroes have made of the opportunities to lead. Where these opportunities were misused, based on archaic political philosophies, or were inhumane, then the Negro must bear a portion of the responsibility for his oppression.

The real work of the day for the Negro American, as Malcolm X's honesty has helped us begin to realize, is to confront the hypocrisy of both white and Negro institutions, to criticize undemocratic policies wherever they are found, and to oppose the injustice of discrimination and segregation.

Malcolm X's Hamlet was more correctly represented by the Negro boys playing that same game in the Harlem street, dancing to the names of Lumumba and Kasavubu, already aware of human folly. They were caught at the crosscurrent of children's play and an adult world. Malcolm X oversimplified Hamlet's soliloquy to threaten whites with violence. To me, Hamlet's soliloquy represents man at the height of indecision, of his confusion over the contemplation of hatred and love. Hamlet was no model of violent political action. He was rather a model of the human condition, of man trapped between the wretchedness of life and belief in human goodness.

**Alan Dershowitz:** The floor will be open for questions.

**Student Question:** Mr. X, do you feel that the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Dr. Martin Luther King has in any way helped the Negro cause in the United States?

**Malcolm X:** Black people in this country have no peace and have not made the strides forward that would in any way justify receiving a reward by any of us. The war is not won nor has any battle been won. But I have no comment to make about my good friend, Dr. King.

**Student Question:** Sir, I would like to know the difference between a white racist and a black racist, besides the fact that they are white and black.

**Malcolm X:** Usually the black racist has been produced by the white racist. And in most cases, black racism is in reaction to white racism. If you analyze it very closely, you will find that it is not black racism. Black people have shown fewer tendencies toward racism than any people since the beginning of history. I cannot agree with my brother here who says that Negroes are immoral; that's what I get out of what he said. It is the whites who have committed violence against us.

**Student Question:** I am one of the whites who agrees with you one hundred percent. You pointed out that the majority of Negro people voted for Johnson, and then he invaded the Congo, something which Goldwater did not even advocate. What do you propose that black people should do in future elections?

**Malcolm X:** First our people should become registered voters. But they should not become actively involved in politics until we have also gotten a much better understanding of the game of politics in this country. We go into politics in a sort of gullible way, where politics in this country is cold-blooded and heartless. We need a better understanding of the science of politics as well as becoming registered voters. And then we should not take sides either way. We should reserve political action for the situation at hand, in no way identifying with either political party (the Democrats or the Republicans) or selling ourselves to either party. We should take political action for the good of human beings; that will eliminate the injustices.

I for one do not think that the man presently in the White House is morally capable of taking the kind of action necessary to eliminate these things.

**Student Question:** Mr. X, your idea of an Afro-American is a very hard lump to swallow. James Baldwin, in describing a conference of African writers and politicians which took place in Paris in 1956, reported that the conference had difficulty in defining an African personality common to all countries in Africa and to the American Negroes. The members of the conference, including James Baldwin, began to realize that there was a big rift between American Negroes and the people from Africa. The American Negro has a totally different set of values and ideas from that of the African. Therefore, if you still talk about the Afro-American in which the only connection is the color of the skin, this is a racist concept. Why emphasize Afro-American, which is a racist concept and a reactionary concept, instead of something more positive?

**Malcolm X:** I do not think that anything is more positive than accepting what you are. The Negro in America tries to be more American than anyone else. The [attempt] has created a person who is actually negative in almost everything he reflects. We are just as much African today as we were in Africa four hundred years ago, only we are a modern counterpart of it. When you hear a black man playing music, whether it is jazz or Bach, you still hear African music. The soul of Africa is still reflected in the music played by black men. In everything else we do we still are African in color, feeling, everything. And we will always be that whether we like it or not.

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