

# Malcolm X in Manchester and Sheffield

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## Introduction

I grew up with Malcolm X, so to speak. I was living in Australia till the end of the year in which he was murdered; I doubt that I heard much about him there. But on arrival in Britain, teaching classes with many Black children, I had to educate myself quickly. That's when I found Malcolm. First I read the *Autobiography*, then those of his speeches available in the UK. Fifteen years later, living in Manhattan on the edge of Harlem, I bought more books, a tape of his speeches and showed the film of the Oxford Union debate in the prison in which I was running some classes. It was not just that his ever-developing philosophy made sense to me, but I admired the tremendous intellectual leaps in his life, first from gangster to the Nation of Islam, then from the Nation to the forming of his own Organization of Afro-American Unity. The intellectual strength, the ethical rigour of the man amazed me. What could he have been had he not been murdered?

As I was writing the entry on Malcolm in a book on Pan-Africanists, I had to re-read all the books. It dawned on me that though Malcolm had paid two visits to East and West Africa, and four to the UK, the books hardly mentioned these. Yet, I thought, they must have been crucial to Malcolm's development, to that very thorough re-thinking that he had embarked upon. That Africa was crucial is easy to understand. But why the UK? Was it because it could have been difficult for him to find people in the USA with whom he could discuss the new formulations, understandings and plans for action that he was working on. He was tainted in the USA, labelled. Those labels, which perhaps crossed the Atlantic, were fastened less firmly in the UK.

And, having visited African countries – some already independent, some still colonies – he had gained first hand experience of the meaning of European imperialism. Most of the national leaders he met had been educated and lived part of their lives in Europe. Their links with people in the 'mother countries', with those who had supported the freedom struggles, and with their own staff there, were well maintained. I can imagine that Malcolm was recommended to discuss issues further with these people. These new understandings would have aided his analysis of US imperialism.

Furthermore, as he wanted to internationalise his organisation, he had to make contacts not only in Africa but also in Europe. Paris and London would have been important, if not crucial, to these plans. So he had to learn about these cultures, these peoples, black and white, and their varieties of politics. Without 'intelligence' you cannot build an organisation.

I therefore set about discovering the untold story of Malcolm. As a white woman, I do not feel I can 'interpret' Malcolm. But I can report, and occasionally comment as a historian. Unfortunately there is not nearly enough to comment on! The FBI's papers are available on the Web, but not those of the CIA. Dr Walter Hill of the National Archives in Washington was able to send to me many State Department papers, but none of these refer to Malcolm's visits to the UK. There is nothing in the British Public Record Office, except a note on Malcolm's death. As he would have been under surveillance both in the UK and in

the English-speaking countries in Africa, I can only assume that our secret intelligence services – MI5 and MI6 – have all the papers. This could easily mean that we shall never see them.

It has also proved almost impossible to locate even Malcolm's known contacts, and some of those I could find have not responded to my request for information. Most of his contacts are unknown as naturally he did not mention their names, and requests in the British newspapers have not drawn many responses. However, there is enough material to enhance what we know of Malcolm's last year of life and the evolution of his thinking. There is also enough to suggest that the US government had more than enough evidence to wish to rid itself of this rising star, this "shining prince", as he was called at his funeral. The emerging new Malcolm would have been seen as far more dangerous than the Malcolm the Black Muslim who had little effect or contact with the world outside of the black ghettos.

## Malcolm's Early life

Malcolm Little's birth date is 19th May 1925. He was his parents' fourth child. His mother Louise was from Grenada. Her father was white, which accounts for Malcolm's skin and hair colour. This was Louisa's first but her husband's second marriage; the three children by his first marriage lived in Boston. Malcolm's family lived in Lansing, Michigan in a small house with enough of a garden to raise vegetables and chickens and rabbits. The Reverend Earl Little was a freelance Baptist minister and an organiser of Marcus Garvey's UNIA; Malcolm sometimes attended UNIA meetings with his father. One of Malcolm's earliest memories is of the family house being burnt down by the Lansing version of the Klu Klux Klan; the family were lucky to escape. Mrs Little had to take in washing, ironing and do house-cleaning to supplement the family's meagre income. In 1931 Malcolm's father was murdered, probably by the KKK. The official explanation was that he had fallen under a streetcar.

The family slowly disintegrated after periods of hunger. Malcolm began to steal; Mrs Little broke down and was incarcerated in a mental hospital, where she was to languish for 28 years. The children were taken into care and separated. Malcolm was soon in a reform school. Though all the schools Malcolm attended were racially integrated, he was inevitably addressed as 'nigger' and [naturally] was not permitted to approach white girls at school dances. He accepted white men "telling [me] how much progress [Negroes] were making [from ] the time they were slaves and usually lazy, dumb and shiftless." Malcolm did well at school: his "grades were among the highest in the [junior high] school."

In his *Autobiography* (p.43) Malcolm says that he believes that what stopped him "accepting his place" was the career interview before he moved on to high school. Asked what he wanted to become, he said a lawyer. The response, he remembered was: "... You've got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer – that's no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you can be ... Why don't you plan on carpentry?" Released from



Malcolm X speaking in the Main Debating Hall, University of Manchester, 3rd December 1964. (Photo courtesy of Mr Hoossain Rajah.)

reform school, Malcolm now moved to Boston to live with his half-sister Ella, who was well established among the city's black middle-class population in Roxbury. However, Malcolm was more attracted to the pool-rooms and to the 'sharp' life of the lower-class black ghetto. This inevitably led to his becoming a fashionably dressed, and 'conked' (i.e. hair-straightened) petty crook, gambler, thief, burglar and drug addict, first in Boston and then in Harlem.

In February 1946, aged 21, Malcolm was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

### The Nation of Islam

His family did not abandon Malcolm. In 1948 brother Philbert wrote Malcolm that he had discovered "the natural religion for the black man – the Nation of Islam." The teachings of the Honourable Elijah Muhammad included a not unfounded notion that history had been 'whitened': "the devil white man, had pillaged, murdered, raped and exploited every race of man not white"; the Christian religion taught that "everything that was good was white ... and the "Negro [had] to always turn the other cheek, and grin, and scrape, and bow, and be humble ... " All whites had to be hated and complete separation from them fought for. Supported and aided by his brothers and sisters, Malcolm embraced the faith of the Nation of Islam and also began to educate himself. He read his way through the prison's not inconsiderable library, from Herodotus to the history of China, from Socrates to 'Oriental thinkers';

worked his way through the dictionary page by page, and participated in prison debates. He accepted and practised the strictures and disciplines imposed on 'Black Muslims'.

In 1952 Malcolm Little was released from prison. He went straight to sit, metaphorically and literally, at Elijah Muhammad's feet, imbibing his fictional account of the religion of Islam and learning "organisational and administrative procedures." The family name of Little was exchanged for the Black Muslim "X". (Family names were held to be remnants of slavery as in fact most had been given by the owners to the enslaved.) In June 1954 Muhammad moved him to become the minister of the Nation of Islam Temple Seven in New York. Soon Malcolm's powers of oratory and argument, which included the analysis of white Christian exploitation/enslavement and the necessity for black men to refute the desire of the "white man for black men to stay immoral, unclean and ignorant", resulted in an ever-growing congregation. Apart from hatred of all "white devils", he preached the need for separation, as opposed to segregation. And for self-respect. Malcolm also travelled to other cities 'fishing' for converts. In 1956 he married Betty X from Temple Seven.

Malcolm's competence as organiser grew along with his oratory and infamy. He was labelled a hate-monger, by both whites and those blacks whom Malcolm described as "handpicked Negroes [whom] the white man had for his special servants. He threw them more crumbs from his rich table ... He knew he could always count on them to keep

'good massa' happy ... [He] always heard just what he wanted to hear from these 'house' blacks ... Slavery time's 'house' Negroes [have] become more sophisticated, that's all." As Malcolm's infamy grew, so did his popularity with the media and with university campuses. Rewards were offered for his death by White Supremacists. Eventually he began to be critical of the teachings of Elijah Mohammad, wanting engagement with aspects of the ongoing Civil Rights struggles. He heard the Nation being criticised for "talking tough but never doing anything." Malcolm also heard rumours that Mohammad was committing adultery with his young secretaries. Further suspicions of Mohammad's non-adherence to the teachings of what he began to understand to be Islam, led to breaking with the Nation. Malcolm began thinking of forming his own organisation "to challenge the American black man to gain his human rights, and to cure his mental, spiritual and economic sickness ... [A]n organization that would differ from the Nation of Islam in that it would embrace all faiths of black men, and it would carry into practice what the Nation had only preached." On 8th March 1964 Malcolm announced that he had broken with the Nation; four days later he announced the formation of the Muslim Mosque Inc., a new religious organisation.

But first Malcolm had to learn about true Islam, so he took lessons and went to Mecca to perform the Hajj. These had a profound influence on him: he rejected racism and tried to develop a new creed that followed Islam. Having met many people from Africa and elsewhere, he set out to discover Africa.

### Malcolm's trips to Britain

While it is easy to understand why Malcolm travelled in Africa and to Paris, given the relatively large African-American expatriate community there, why did he make four trips to Britain? There were very few, if any African Americans while the black population, of African and West Indian and Indian sub-continent descent/origins, was not large. Many had arrived in the previous decade so there were as yet only small black political organisations, though there were some intellectuals and political activists from the old colonial Empire. Had Ras T Makonnen, whom Malcolm had met in Ghana, alerted him to the long history of black struggle in Britain, in which he himself had participated from the 1930s to the 1960s, before he moved to Ghana? Had Mak told Malcolm of other black activists in Manchester and of the 1945 Pan-African Congress he himself had helped organise. Did Malcolm hope to find politicised black people in Britain with whom he could discuss his new learning and thinking? After all, he – Malcolm – was "having all kinds of troubles trying to develop the kind of Black Nationalist organization I wanted to build ... One of the major troubles that I was having ... was that my earlier public image, my old so-called 'Black Muslim' image, kept blocking me." Did Malcolm hope to find that he was not so tainted by this hate-mongering image among people in Britain?

Malcolm first visited Britain in July 1964 when he was on his way to the meeting of the Organisation of African Unity in Cairo in July 1964. He was back for a few days in November. Almost nothing is known of these two visits. Malcolm's next visit was in early December of the same year. On 2nd December he was one of the speakers in the prestigious Oxford Union annual debate. The motion,

that "Extremism in the defence of liberty is no vice; moderation in the pursuit of justice is not virtue", was lost by Malcolm's team: Hugh MacDiarmid the Scottish poet and the Jamaican president of the Union, Eric Abrahams. But Malcolm had received a standing ovation. One person with whom Malcolm spent a lot of time in Oxford was the then student activist Tariq Ali.

### Malcolm in Manchester 3rd December 1964

From Oxford, Malcolm went to Manchester, where he had been invited to address Manchester University students by the Federation of Students' Islamic Societies, an independent organisation. FOSIS had been founded in Britain in 1961; its first officials were Iraqi, Malay and Mauritian students. Having learned of Malcolm's forthcoming visit to Oxford, Hoossain Rajah of Mauritius, who was then a second-year student at Manchester University thought it would be good to have Malcolm speak there. Hoossain, now back in his native Mauritius, wrote me that:

It was done on the spur of the moment ... At that time I was reading American Politics, so I was personally interested ... I approached Dr Said Ramadan through Ebrahimsa Mohamed (a fellow student) when I heard he was coming for the Oxford Union debate. Dr Said, the head of the Islamic Centre of Geneva and the brain behind the formation of the Federation of Students' Islamic Societies of UK and Eire (FOSIS), decided to sponsor his visit. We contacted Malcolm and asked him to give lectures at the universities of Manchester and Sheffield. Mr. Ebrahimsa Mohamed, the secretary of FOSIS, was asked by Dr. Ramadan to accompany Malcolm X during the tour Ebrahimsa and myself organised. We organised lectures in Manchester, Sheffield and London. Dr. Said Ramadan [wanted] to give the opportunity to Malcolm to explain his stand on the question of Racism in the US and also to clear the misconception the media had of the man. To a question asked by Michael Parkinson about the image of him portrayed in the press, Malcolm replied by another question: 'Do I look like the devil and do I have horns on my head?'

[Malcolm] stayed for one day at my home in 3 Parrswood Road in Withington, South Manchester. The man was very humble – he did not ask to be housed in a hotel. He ate what my wife and myself gave him (we were both students). He prayed the Friday Prayer at the Islamic Cultural Centre in Victoria Park – then an old Victorian House now the Manchester Central Mosque. His shoes got lost among others and he said: "who would pick my shoes?" When we found his shoes – huge ones – we found that they had huge holes in them. What a sense of humour and humbleness. He did not even have a decent pair of shoes. At breakfast, my wife asked him: 'Coffee black or white?' The man replied: 'integrated coffee'. This speaks about the man. The whole thing was to be a small public lecture at the university, but a friend of mine – a Jewish friend, as a matter of fact – contacted the press. That's how the whole thing blew to a big meeting. I was a bit scared at the time that this meeting would not prejudice my studies. The people of the UK at that time were not as broadminded as they are now.

I had a lot of convincing to do to get the Student Union to allow us to organise the lecture. Initially the Union was not prepared to give us permission to organise the lecture. It was the policy of the Union to bar all 'extremists'. I was able to convince the then President of the Union that Malcolm will not be controversial and that he was going to address the Oxford Union. He held an emergency meeting and we were given the permission just two days before Malcolm's arrival. The photo I have sent you of the audience shows how well attended was the meeting which was held after lunch at the Main Debating Hall of Manchester University Union. The posters we had put around the union only said: 'Malcolm X

Speaks'. The door of the Union had to be closed one hour before the meeting as the hall was already packed. That day the university came to a standstill.

Professor Worsley – Prof. of Sociology – requested a meeting with Malcolm and he had lunch with us at a small restaurant just behind the University, the Bombay Restaurant. The owner, Mr. Nazir Uddin, treated us to the lunch. What I can recall of the man was his sense of humour. He spoke about racism in US, about his conversion to Sunni Islam. He spoke about the 'Bullet and the ballot' and the 'Chicken comes home to roost' – to do with the assassination of President Kennedy. These are quotes which are now often quoted. He did not realise that a few months later he would also be assassinated.

I have a small excerpt which somehow is still in my possession. It is what he said about extremism: "My reason for believing in extremism, intelligently directed extremism, extremism in defence of liberty, extremism in quest of liberty, is because I believe in my heart that the day the black man takes an uncompromising step and realises that he is within his rights, when his own freedom is being jeopardised, to use any means necessary to bring about his freedom or put a halt to injustice, I don't think he'll be by himself ... One of the reasons why I'm in no way reluctant or hesitant to do whatever is necessary to see that blacks do something to protect themselves is I honestly believe that the day they do ... there will be more whites on their side ..."

The then Student Union president is now Lord Daniel Brennan, QC. He recalls that there had been a "great to do ... but eventually free speech prevailed." He also remembers the hall being "jam-packed", and Malcolm X as "probably the most influential Black leader at that time." His talk was a "historical survey of slavery and the Black situation. Malcolm promised to lead Blacks to the promised land, by any means necessary. He was a most charismatic speaker, slow, clear and powerful – there was an edge to it. There was tremendous tension about the man; I found him quite a frightening person, because of the undertone of violence. But he did not preach violence ... He certainly made an impression, whether positive or negative."

The session was chaired by the Sudanese Chairman of the Islamic Society, Dr Mudathir Abdul Rahmin, then lecturing in politics at the University. That the hall was crowded is confirmed by Anna Ford, then a student, later President of the Student Union and now Chancellor of the University, who emailed me that she remembered "Malcolm X giving a rousing speech to a packed hall. He was highly intelligent and charismatic and made a lot of sense to students passionate about racial equality."

It is not possible to verify Ms Ford's claim regarding the students' passion for racial equality. It is certainly not demonstrated in the Student Union newspaper *Manchester Independent*, which mentions neither the meeting nor Malcolm's death. From January 1964 to March 1965 the paper mentioned racial issues three times. It noted that the 900 'overseas' students at the University found their fellow students disinterested and ignorant of their countries and were not 'integrated' into the main student body (10.3.1964). Dan Brennan, Student Union President, supported the Union's decision not to affiliate with the Anti-Apartheid movement (26.5.1964) though the local AAM, and its student members had been trying to persuade shopkeepers not to stock South African goods (4.9.1964); a student from Thailand was assaulted in the city by someone who said: "Bloody Chinese, why don't you go home?" (5.11.1964). The Union also decided not to repeat previous invitations to Sir Oswald Mosley, the leader of the fascist

party in Britain, to address the students. President Brennan stated that this was "no especial insult to the British Fascists for their beliefs ...". The paper also printed, without comment, an interview with some visiting Americans, one of whom said he would never date a black woman and believed that Martin Luther King was a "radical". A letter in response to this called for "fellow citizens [to] blend and dissolve into their society." (24.11.64)

Professor Peter Worsley, now retired, who with his wife graciously invited me to lunch, recalled that he had first met Malcolm X when they were waiting to be interviewed on the BBC's *24 Hours* programme. Claudia Cardinale, the beautiful Italian actress, was talking with Kenneth Allsop while they awaited their turn. Professor Worsley at first did not realise who the man with the gingerish hair was. Then they chatted and this resulted in Professor Worsley being asked to sit on the platform at the forthcoming lecture at Manchester.

"I arrived late ... the hall was so crowded I had to part the crowd to get to the platform", Peter Worsley recalls. "The atmosphere was expectant, but almost hostile. Generally the students would have been anti-Malcolm. There was not much knowledge or sympathy for blacks. Malcolm was seen as a rabble-rouser. There were a number of Jewish students and Malcolm was a Muslim! ... There was also hostility amongst the non-Jewish students, especially those on the left and the liberals ... who were disturbed about his recently-publicised association with US Nazis. Sensing this, Malcolm's first words were: 'Before I begin, I want to read you a few surat from the Koran'. He went on to wow the students, but slipped once into what was taken to be an anti-semitic remark, which drew a gasp from the audience, which was, in fact, by then pro-Malcolm. But he recovered quickly ..."

Though at a North West Labour History conference in Manchester in April where I spoke on Malcolm's visit a Jewish member of the audience denied that there could have been an anti-Malcolm feeling, the local Jewish newspapers indicate that there certainly was an anti-Muslim atmosphere. The Jewish papers display very strong Zionist politics. This was based on the 'situation' in Palestine. Israel had invaded Egypt in 1956; in September – December 1964 *The Times* reported almost continuous Israeli skirmishes with Jordan and Syria. Israel was planning on using the River Jordan for irrigation, without consultation. The Arab countries considered diverting the tributaries feeding the river; Israel said this would constitute a 'hostile act' (10.9.1964, p.13). In September the formation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation had been approved at a meeting of the Arab heads-of-state (11.9.1964, p.11). At the time of Malcolm's visit, an Arab boycott of Israeli goods – and Arab attempts to persuade other countries to join in this – had been going on for some months.

Hoossain Rajah recalls that there were "always conflicts between the Arab Society and the Jewish Society in the Student Union." An Israeli Embassy official was permitted to give a talk entitled 'Israel Looks to the Future' at the Student Union in February 1965. When the Arab students challenged the speaker, the official refused to enter into a discussion and stated that Arabs had started the war of 1948 and that "Arab belligerency is more apparent than real and a device of a crumbling autocracy to stem the tide of liberalism." This lecture was the preamble to an Israel Week, a week of photo exhibitions, film shows and music.



Malcolm being interviewed by BBC reporter (photo courtesy of Mr Hoossain Rajah)

The Arab students responded by publishing a 'propaganda pamphlet', which they distributed during the first part of the Week, until they were stopped by the President, Dan Brennan. The *Jewish Gazette* (5.2.1965, pp.5, 11), described the pamphlet as a "counterblow to Israel week, condemning Jews as the sole source of any disturbances in any part of the world." Presumably the second pamphlet the Arab students had already had to be destroyed. Unfortunately Lord Brennan does not recall this incident. I have not been able to locate a copy of the pamphlet.

It seemed to me that Peter Worsley had been a little shocked over an exchange during lunch with Malcolm. Discussing the 'Third World' against the background of the growing friction between the Soviets and the 'First World', Peter had suggested that "it could all blow up into a Third World War." Malcolm replied that "that might be better than what we've got". However, the relationship was not soured by this contretemps: Professor Worsley, then known as the 'Red Professor', received a postcard from Malcolm dated 25th January 1965. The card is of the Statue of Liberty. Malcolm had written on the back: "The statute is here because the real liberty is missing. (sic) They give us the symbol. Malcolm X."

The *Manchester Evening News* gave a somewhat different picture of Malcolm X to its readers. Its 4th December article (p.19) is headed "Black Muslim chief lashes out on Congo", thus immediately misinforming readers. The unidentified reporter wrote that:

At a Press conference before speaking to Manchester University students, he said: "You don't get action until you get mad. All we American Negroes want is to be treated and recognised as human beings and we won't get that until whites

see us thinking like human beings. In other words, no sheep, however loving and non-violent, is left alone by a pack of wolves. Policies of men like Martin Luther King just persuade American Negroes to be a meal. The American Negro must show the white man he has human reactions, which means defending his freedom. Bloodshed would be justified. To let a dog bite you and not protect yourself is sub-human." Asked whether the wave of white killings by Negro youths in New York was inspired by him he said that America always looked for a scapegoat – "usually its me". "America is too bankrupt morally to take the steps its intelligence says it should take to get to the root of the problem. President Johnson sent paratroopers to the Congo to murder innocent Congolese. He supports the leader, Tshombe, who is responsible for the killing of the rightful Congo Premier. The Congolese see hired killers – mercenaries – killing their people indiscriminately and realise there is a state of war. So they take hostages to stop the advance and if they had been half the savages they are made out to be, not one hostage would be alive. The Congolese are only fighting for what they believe in – and the fact that mercenaries had to be brought in by Tshombe is proof of what they Congolese people believe. It was the threat of spreading Mau Mau activity that made most of Africa free", he added "I only believe all men should be free, and I accept any man who will accept me."

We have another account by 'An eye witness', published in *The Islamic Banner* of March 1993, which also mentions the crowded hall, the massing media, and describes Malcolm as being "simple and humble with the believers but tough with the disbelievers ... He was just an ordinary Muslim and he believed in the equality of men ... When he stood in front of the crowd it was as if an electric shock had touched them. All were stunningly silent. He made people laugh, he made them cry and he made them think rationally ... Malcolm's

ability to handle the press was unparalleled.”

The anonymous author of this article also states that “the stereotype image of Malcolm ... in our minds was that of a savage man and a violent and provocative black Socialist leader.” While clearly the media had achieved its aim of alienating people, even Muslims in Britain, from Malcolm, I was curious about the negative attitude towards Socialism by the author. During my long conversation with Mr Ebrahimsa Mohamed I questioned him about this: he believed that the students of that time were confused about the difference between Marxism and Socialism. Muslims, Mr Mohamed told me, have no problems with Socialism.

After the lecture there was another TV interview. Then a rush back to Hoossain Rajah’s home for refreshments before leaving for Sheffield in a Volkswagen Beetle. “Poor Malcolm”, says the anonymous author in the Banner, “he was so tall he had to fold his legs all the way to Sheffield.”

### Malcolm in Sheffield, 4th December 1964

In Sheffield Malcolm’s FOSIS host was Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, the Secretary of the University’s Islamic Circle. Dr Siddiqui, then a Pakistani doctoral student in chemical engineering, told me that there were many Muslim students at the university; the Islamic society had been formed prior to his arrival. Malcolm was escorted to Sheffield by two engineering students, Salah Shahey, an Egyptian doctoral student and the other from Pakistan. The Student Union had not been very happy about the invitation to Malcolm, but had acquiesced, and the Secretary of the Union chaired the meeting. The meeting for Malcolm was the largest that had ever been organised by the students – about 700 attended. Dr Siddiqui remembers that Malcolm was asked many questions by American students, whose accents Malcolm recognised. He dealt with the questioners partly by reminding them of some snippet of local history! Another memory is of Malcolm saying that “Martin [Luther King] was nobody until we came on the scene”, and asking to be stopped should he “go off the rails” which sometimes happened when he was tired.

After the speech ‘Eye witness’ recalls that “we went to have some dinner at the home of a PhD student from Egypt, who served us macaroni and mince meat, a meal which Malcolm ate for the first time and much enjoyed.” And tired he must have been. According to the ‘eye witness’, who had accompanied Malcolm from Manchester: “When we saw Malcolm departing on the midnight train to London, we realised that Malik Al-Shabazz (a name he preferred) had not slept for at least two days. He hardly had a moment to prepare for any of the speeches he delivered nor for the press and TV interviews. We realised that no one could have had such stamina, such a clarity of mind, such wonderful simple character, be such a friendly brother with so much knowledge about so many topics and attract so much attention from the enemies of Islam, without the blessing of Almighty Allah.”

The local papers stated that Malcolm was now the chair of the OAAU; he had left the Nation of Islam because “they did not practise the true religion of Islam.” When asked whether he included the late President Kennedy among “those in the top seat at the White House who hate coloured people”, over “murmurs of anger” Malcolm replied that it was “better not to speak about the dead.” He stated that “I believe in the brotherhood of the human

race and don’t care to know anybody who is not prepared to be my brother ... Education rather than legislation will solve the problem ... I am in favour of using any means necessary to obtain fundamental rights.”

Malcolm left on the midnight train for London, accompanied by Ebrahimsa Mohamed. The pace of activities did not diminish as he gave a talk to the Malaysian Islamic Study Group at Bryanston Square. Despite having had very little sleep, and undoubtedly exhausted, but perhaps also elated, Malcolm flew out on the 11.15am flight for New York on 6th December 1964.

### Malcolm’s final days

On his return to the USA, Malcolm’s hectic pace continued. There was the establishment of his Organisation of Afro-African Unity (OAAU), and its public meetings at which he spoke, as well as innumerable interviews and speeches. On 6th February 1965 he was back in London to address the inaugural meeting of the Committee of African Organisations, and then the students at the London School of Economics (LSE), where he had been invited by the Africa Society. He then went to speak to students in Birmingham. On 12th February, probably arranged by the Indian Workers’ Association, Malcolm visited Smethwick, where a Tory, who had campaigned under the slogan “if you want a nigger for a neighbour vote Labour” had just been elected to the House of Commons. On 13th February Malcolm left England to return to the USA. On February 21st 1964, Malcolm died in a hail of bullets at a meeting of the OAAU in New York.

Who paid the assassins has never been discovered. The (convenient to the US government) explanation is that the murderers had been hired by the Black Muslims. This is difficult to believe. Malcolm was by now a recognised figure in Africa as well as Europe; his philosophy was rapidly evolving towards an embrace of socialism and his political analysis now included the exploited, whatever the actual means of exploitation. His Organisation of Afro-American Unity embraced Africans and all those of African origins and descent. This at a time when the USA was not only fighting a Cold War against the USSR (supposedly a socialist state) but also attempting to influence the newly independent African countries. And Malcolm, brilliant, charismatic Malcolm, was becoming – if he had not already become – the best recognised (if misquoted) man in the world. More than enough reasons to ensure that he did not live to fulfil his potential. His loss is, I think, symbolic of the death of that old revolutionary drive for Liberty, Fraternity, Equality.