HOUSE NEGROES ON THE LOOSE
Malcolm X and the Black Bourgeoisie

by Robin D.G. Kelley

> There are two types of Negroes in this country. There's the bourgeois type who blinds himself to the condition of his people, and who is satisfied with token solutions. He's in the minority. He's a handful. He's usually the handpicked Negro who benefits from token integration. But the masses of Black people who really suffer the brunt of brutality and the conditions that exist in this country are represented by the leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad.
>
> —Malcolm X, "Twenty Million Black People in a Political, Economic, and Mental Prison" (1963)[1]

> I gotta represent the real niggas
> The field niggas. . . .
>
> —Black Moon, "I Got Cha Opin," *Enta Da Stage* (Wreck Records, 1993)

The Hip Hop generation and their most revered icon have at least one thing in common besides their distrust of white people: they don't have much love for the black bourgeoisie. Most identify with "field niggas," and the current generation of self-styled nationalists and teen gangstas draw much of their anti-bourgeois rhetoric from Malcolm himself.[2] Indeed, if we could resurrect Malcolm X (circa 1963, let us say) and have him listen to "Black Moon's" lyrics quoted in the epigraph above, he would probably give us one of those flashing wide grins, perhaps even a giggle, and second their emotion that the "field niggas" are indeed the "real niggas."

But that wouldn't be the end of it. Without losing a beat or his smile, the Minister would also give the members of "Black Moon" a gentle tongue-lashing. "My young brothers," he might begin, "if you all want to be *real* revolutionaries rather than just 'real niggas,' if you want to live up to your name 'Black Moon'—which I understand to mean the power unleashed during a solar eclipse, the power to block the Sun and turn the day into night—you all need to clean up your act. Change your clothes, clean up your language, show some respect to the sisters [how that is defined is another essay!], stop glorifying drugs and liquor. The devil sleeps well at night knowing we're caricatures of ourselves. If we want our freedom, we need to be ready to take it. We need to be united. We need our minds and bodies clean and prepared to fight. We're 22 million . . ."

Callaloo 21.2 (1998) 419–435

"Excuse me, brother Malcolm; make that 30 million."

"Well, brother, I've been dead a long time." [*Laughter*]

Knowing these Brooklyn-raised rappers are just kids in bad need of direction, his good-natured rebuke would cease as quickly as it began. He most likely would see their potential and hope they could receive the proper spiritual, cultural, and political guidance in order to realize it.

As often as Malcolm invoked the "house slave/field slave" dichotomy in numerous speeches and debates, his relationship to the black middle class was a complicated matter. He hated and emulated them; he ridiculed and admired them; he was part of a movement that tried to turn the most lumpen Negroes into respectable (by bourgeois standards, at least), well-mannered, "civilized" black men and women. And through it all, Malcolm's critique of the black bourgeoisie floated somewhere between an intuitive hatred born of his past to an insightful analysis of the race/class matrix.[3] However imperfect and contradictory, he did offer a critique of the black bourgeoisie at a time when such a critique was unpopular. His rants against "Uncle Toms" and "house slaves" coincided with the rise of a fairly successful, and by some measures militant, Civil Rights movement led by middle-class blacks. But he was not entirely off the mark, for he struck a deep chord among his working-class and lumpen followers who were sick and tired of being shut out and looked down upon by the "better class Negroes." In some respects, his criticisms found a voice in the urban uprisings and the militant rhetoric of Black Power soon after his death.

The Die Is Caste

Unlike most black leaders prior to the early 1960s, including black working-class heroes such as A. Philip Randolph or Paul Robeson, Malcolm consistently identified with ordinary black working people and those displaced by the economy. He spoke their language and told their jokes. His was not simply another Horatio Alger story of how he rose out of poverty to become a hero. (And despite dozens of opportunities, he never sought wealth, leaving his family virtually penniless.) Rather, he invoked his experiences as an urban kid, former criminal, man of the streets, to show his audience that he knows where they are coming from and never forgot where he came from. In fact, he so depended on this identification with poor black folk—particularly the young—that he exaggerated his criminal exploits, his poverty, and his urban upbringing.[4]

At the same time, Malcolm always had a love/hate relationship with the black bourgeoisie, though like most unconsummated relationships hate eventually became the dominant emotion. Even as a child in Lansing, Michigan, the sons and daughters of the black elite turned their noses up at the skinny red-head from that awful Little family. He was not only poor, but he was practically an orphan; his father was dead, and his mother had been committed to a mental institution. But he soon learned that these Negroes were nothing. He got his first real taste of black bourgeois pretentiousness when he moved to Boston with his half-sister Ella Little in 1941.[5]

In the crazy, mixed-up world of intraracial class relations, World War II marked a critical moment. Of course, class conflict within African-American communities was hardly new. For some middle-class blacks, for example, the black poor had long been regarded as lazy, self-destructive, and prone to criminal behavior. On the other side of the class spectrum, as black sociologist Allison Davis found in his study of a small Mississippi town during the 1930s, "lower class" blacks often "accused upper-class persons (the 'big shots,' the 'Big Negroes') of snobbishness, color preference, extreme selfishness, disloyalty in caste leadership, ('sellin' out to white folks'), and economic exploitation of their patients and customers."[6] But during the 1940s, massive Southern black migration to Northern cities exacerbated cultural tensions between longtime urban residents and the newly arrived rural folk. African Americans born and raised in the North, particularly those who owned property and maintained a steady income, looked down on these newcomers and blamed them for neighborhood deterioration.[7]

Ella owned a house on "the Hill," an elite section of the predominantly black Boston neighborhood of Roxbury. Her neighbors consisted of middle-brow black folks with high-brow pretensions, the most prominent of whom belonged to the so-called "Four Hundred." Massachusetts-born and -raised, the "Hill's" society Negroes fashioned themselves as colored equivalents of Boston Brahmins. They ridiculed Southern migrants and looked down on most working-class blacks despite the fact that some members of the "Four Hundred" were themselves service workers. Those who qualified for membership in the elite represented a wide range of occupations, from teachers, preachers, and nurses to Pullman porters, dining car waiters, and postal workers. From what Malcolm remembers, none were truly "bourgeois" in the classical sense; they did not own estates, factories, multi-million dollar firms, or exercise real power. What little power they enjoyed, as well as their self-proclaimed status, was dependent on white people. Malcolm often heard neighbors announcing, "'He's in banking,' or 'He's in securities.' It sounded as though they were discussing a Rockefeller or a Mellon—and not some gray-headed, dignity posturing bank janitor, or bond-house messenger."[8]

Malcolm's peers were no better. When he first settled into Roxbury, they made fun of his clothes, which were a tad too small for him and obviously of bargain-basement quality. "To the teenage female sophisticates of the Hill," writes biographer Bruce Perry, "he looked as if he had just come from some farm." If that wasn't bad enough, Ella secured a job for him as a soda jerk at a neighborhood drugstore where his main clientele were the Hill kids. Serving them, he discovered, was even worse than dealing with them in various social settings. Although his employers were Jewish, in reality his immediate bosses were the black bourgeois patrons who came in by the droves and made incessant demands on him. It was steady work, but with it came all the ridicule and snobbery one could imagine. He vividly remembers having to endure these "penny-ante squares who came in there putting on their millionaires' airs."[9]

As he grew less and less tolerant of the Hill crowd, Malcolm began hanging out in the poorer sections of Roxbury where he "felt more relaxed among Negroes who were being their natural selves and not putting on airs."[10] His newfound friend, Shorty, introduced him to the cool world of the zoot suit, the conk (straightened) hairstyle,

and the lindy hoppers who spent their weekend nights at Boston's Roseland State Ballroom. When Malcolm donned his very first zoot suit, he realized immediately that the wild sky-blue outfit, the baggy punjab pants tapered to the ankles, the matching hat, gold watch chain, and monogrammed belt was more than a suit of clothes. It was a ticket into the "in crowd," a new identity that symbolized an increasingly militant and ultramasculine black street culture. The language and culture of the zoot suiters enabled Malcolm to reject white racism and patriotism, the rural folkways (for many, the "parent culture") that still survived in most black urban households, and the petit bourgeois attitudes of his "snooty" middle-class neighbors on the Hill. He found in the Roseland State Ballroom, and later in Harlem's Savoy, spaces of leisure and pleasure free of the bourgeois pretensions of "better class Negroes." For young Malcolm, his new world embodied the "true" black experience: "I couldn't wait for eight o'clock to get home to eat out of those soul-food pots of Ella's, then get dressed in my zoot and head for some of my friends' places in town, to lindy-hop and get high, or something, for relief from those Hill clowns."[11]

Malcolm and his partners did not seem very "political" at the time, but they dodged the draft so as not to lose their lives over a "white man's war," and they avoided wage work whenever possible. His search for leisure and pleasure took him to Harlem where petty hustling, drug dealing, pimping, gambling, and exploiting women became his primary source of income. In 1946 his luck ran out; he was arrested for burglary and sentenced to ten years in prison.

His downward descent took a U-turn in prison when he began studying the teachings of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam (NOI), the black Muslim group founded by Wallace Fard and led by Elijah Muhammad (Elijah Poole). While he was no Horatio Alger, as I pointed out above, his rise from petty criminal to the NOI's leading spokesman contains all the classic elements of Horatio's story: he worked very hard, transformed himself, cleaned himself up, educated himself, began conducting himself in a respectable and dignified manner. Submitting to the discipline and guidance of the NOI, he became a voracious reader of the Koran and the Bible, and immersed himself in works of literature and history at the prison library. Behind prison walls he quickly emerged as a powerful orator and brilliant rhetorician. Upon his release in 1952, he was renamed Malcolm "X", symbolically repudiating the "white man's name."[12]

As a devoted follower of Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X rose quickly within the NOI ranks, serving as minister of Harlem's Temple No. 7 in 1954, and building up temples in Detroit and Philadelphia. Through national speaking engagements, television appearances, and by establishing *Muhammad Speaks*—the NOI's first nationally distributed newspaper—Malcolm X put the Nation of Islam on the map. But what impressed Malcolm more than high profile speaking engagements was grassroots organizing; he enjoyed "fishing" for converts in the bars and poolrooms where poor and displaced working-class men spent too much of their time.[13]

Given Malcolm's experiences thus far, there could not have been a more appropriate movement than the Nation of Islam. Its leaders deliberately reached out to wayward youth and the "down and out," and they sustained a fairly antagonistic stance toward the rising black middle class. Indeed, as historian C. Eric Lincoln points

out, most of NOI recruits "do not typically identify with the strivers of the black middle class. They tend to live comfortably, but frugally. The Movement continues to emphasize its affiliation with the working class." Although many converts discovered the Nation as prisoners, ex-hustlers, or jobless wanderers, the NOI's highly structured and disciplined environment instilled a strong work ethic into its congregation. Muhammad's followers worked, and worked very hard, but the majority lived in the ghettoes of North America and made barely enough to tithe.[14]

Similarly, another scholarly observer of the NOI, E.U. Essien-Udom, suggested that the Nation came into being when class distinctions within the black community were sharper than they had ever been. He even suggested that the future struggles in the black community "may shift from one between whites and Negroes to a class struggle within the caste, i.e., between a semisatisfied Negro middle class and the Negro masses." Of course, this has not yet happened, but some of his experiences with the NOI gave him good cause for believing it. In one instance, after the NOI in Chicago purchased land in the Chatham-Avalon Community, a recently integrated upper-middle-class neighborhood, whites and middle-class blacks formed a united front to block the Nation's plans to build an Islamic Center. (Ironically, the same black middle-class residents faced opposition from whites when they moved in a few years earlier.) According to Essien-Udom, who attended the meetings, the "Negroes in this community opposed the Muslims' project strictly along class lines. They did not want 'those elements'—lower class persons—in their community."[15]

Varieties of House Negroes

When it came to attacking and ridiculing the black bourgeoisie, Malcolm was perhaps the least charitable of the NOI leadership. He called them "house slaves," "Uncle Toms," "Nincompoops with Ph.D.s," "Quislings," "sell-outs," and, of course, "bourgeois Negroes." And all of these terms did not necessarily mean the same thing. Malcolm essentially spoke of the black middle class in several different contexts and placed them in different categories. First, there was the elite he knew as a teenager: working-class black folk with upper-class pretensions. By trying to adopt the mannerisms of the authentic bourgeoisie, these nouveau riche (without the wealth!) carved out for themselves a whole black elite culture. Second, there were the truly wealthy blacks whose social and cultural lives were inseparable from that of the white elite. He excoriated this class for having little interest or tolerance for the masses of black people. And, finally, there were the self-proclaimed black leaders, the "handkerchief heads" who ran integrationist organizations and begged for Civil Rights.

In Malcolm's view, all three categories of the black bourgeoisie shared a common disdain for the culture of the black masses. Indeed, Malcolm usually identified the black bourgeoisie by its culture rather than its income or occupation. His experience with the "Hill Negroes" demonstrated that wealth wasn't the main factor distinguishing the black bourgeoisie from the rest; it was their attitude, their adoration of European culture, and their distance from anything identified with ghetto blacks that

rendered them elites. "They prided themselves on being incomparably more 'cultured,' 'cultivated,' 'dignified,' and better off than their black brethren down in the ghetto, which was no further away than you could throw a rock. Under the pitiful misapprehension that it would make them 'better,' these Hill Negroes were breaking their backs trying to imitate white people."[16] In a speech before a predominantly white college audience, he characterized the black bourgeoisie by its dress and mannerisms. "Uncle Tom wears a top hat. He's sharp. He dresses just like you do. He speaks the same phraseology, the same language. He tries to speak better than you do." More than anything, the black bourgeoisie are "ashamed of black, and don't want to be identified with black or as being black." Integration and intermarrying enables them to escape their black identity, which is why well-off black men are so anxious to marry white women and move into white neighborhoods.[17]

Worse yet, the black bourgeoisie would not—or could not—express their true "African" selves. Malcolm was convinced that being black meant being uninhibited: "the real bourgeois Black Americans . . . never want to show any sign of emotion. He won't even tap his feet. You can have some of that real soul music, and he'll sit there, you know, like it doesn't move him. . . . And it doesn't move them because they can't feel it, they've got no soul." Integration was the culprit. He even blamed his experiences at a predominantly white school in Mason, Michigan, for his inability to dance—i.e., the "natural" way Negroes dance—when he first arrived in Boston. But once he was pulled onto the dance floor, his ancient heritage took over: "It was as though somebody had clicked on a light. My long-suppressed African instincts broke through, and loose."[18] The racist implications of such claims apparently never occurred to Malcolm, which is surprising given his criticisms of "Tarzan" movies for their portrayal of Africans as uncontrollable savages.

But letting "loose" was hardly what the Nation preached. On the contrary, the ascetic lifestyle NOI members had to live by differed little from the bourgeois values promoted by the very black middle-class uplift organizations Malcolm and his colleagues attacked. Alcohol, drugs, tobacco, gambling, dancing, adultery, premarital sex, profanity, or taking in movies with sex or "coarse speech" was simply not allowed. Even the music was monitored. One of Malcolm's colleagues, Benjamin Karim, recalls that "the jukebox in the temple restaurant played only African or Middle Eastern music, and some jazz, but no blues and no rock-and-roll with its uninspiring music and often downright dirty lyrics." The Nation even impressed black conservative George Schuyler, New York editor of the Pittsburgh *Courier*, who praised them for their values and moral vision. "Mr. Muhammad may be a rogue and a charlatan," wrote Schuyler in 1959, "but when anybody can get tens of thousands of Negroes to practice economic solidarity, respect their women, alter their atrocious diet, give up liquor, stop crime, juvenile delinquency and adultery, he is doing more for the Negro's welfare than any current Negro leader I know."[19]

Malcolm delivered regular speeches emphasizing cleanliness and morality, not so much to condemn wayward sinners but to demand self-transformation. And he remained a staunch devotee of the Nation's strict moral codes and gender conventions: men must lead, women must follow; the man's domain is the world, the woman's is the home.[20] Personally, Malcolm was the epitome of bourgeois respect-

ability when he wasn't standing before a lectern or podium. Always exquisitely dressed, polite, and well-mannered, he could have written a book on etiquette. He never sucked on chicken bones or licked his fingers at the table, and no matter how much of a hurry he was in, he never spoke with his mouth full. "The man had style, grace," recalls Ben Karim. "Amy Vanderbilt would have had to sweat to match him."[21]

It would seem, then, that the Nation shared more in common culturally with the black bourgeoisie than their leaders realized. But we have to be careful before making such a judgment. Historically, notions of respectability, morality, and community responsibility did not originate solely with the black middle class. On the contrary, working-class and mixed-class institutions, such as the Christian church, played a crucial role in determining and instilling modes of behavior, beliefs, expectations, and moral vision. When we begin to look at, say, black churches as places where cultural values were enacted, taught, and policed, we discover that the so-called "lower class" was not always on the receiving end.[22] Working-class women demonstrated as much vigilance as their middle-class counterparts in enforcing the general principle that cleanliness is next to Godliness. Baptist women of all classes distributed small pamphlets published by the National Baptist Convention bearing titles such as "How to Dress," "Anti-Hanging Out Committee," and "Take a Bath First."[23]

And yet, despite the close similarity between the Nation's teachings and Christian tenets of morality, Malcolm's attacks on Christianity struck a powerful chord among his congregations. He constantly argued that Christianity was a white man's religion imposed on black people during slavery. And he pointed to numerous instances in which self-proclaimed Christians—like white Southerners defending segregation and terrorizing black communities—did not practice what they preached. What is perhaps even more striking about the Nation was its willingness to embrace jazz—an aspect of black culture that the African-American church had historically opposed.[24] According to Louis Lomax, it wasn't unusual to hear live jazz combos opening up at Muslim Temples before lectures. And what these musicians played was undeniably "modern": "I have been in temple meetings where a group of brothers set the stage for the service by playing a protracted jazz riff. The music was as complex and as far out as anything you would hear at New York's Five Spot Cafe or any other den of progressive jazz."[25]

This fact reveals even more about the Nation's ambivalence toward black middle-class culture when we consider the period we are talking about. Unlike the 1920s and 1930s, when jazz was associated with "wild dancing" and seedy dance halls, after World War II jazz carved out a niche for itself in the haughty world of American high culture. Although black jazz musicians insisted on incorporating black vernacular traditions and continued to be underpaid, overworked, and victims of blatant racist discrimination, more and more white critics viewed jazz as "art"—America's classical music. With the opening up of Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, the music became "bourgeoisified." As Karim put it, the Muslims refused to play "uninspiring music" and "downright dirty lyrics" to the sistern and brethren. It was black culture, no doubt, but it was no longer identified with the uncouth masses.[26]

Depending on when you caught him, Malcolm characterized middle-class African Americans as either ignorant of their true selves and thus potentially transformable,

or ineluctably exploitative and hopeless. Although self-transformation was crucial to Malcolm's life and ideology, he frequently implied that the black bourgeoisie was incapable of siding with the masses and giving up their class interests—what African revolutionary Amilcar Cabral described as "committing class suicide."[27] After his English teacher, the infamous Mr. Ostrowski, told Malcolm that his aspiration to become a lawyer was "no realistic goal for a nigger," he pondered what his future might have been like if he had been encouraged to pursue a career in law. He was convinced that if he had joined the black elite he would have been destined to become a turncoat: "I would today probably be among some city's professional black bourgeoisie, sipping cocktails and palming myself off as a community spokesman for and leader of the suffering black masses, while my primary concern would be to grab a few more crumbs from the groaning board of the two-faced whites with whom they're begging to 'integrate.'"[28] By making this statement, however, Malcolm was not only arguing that the bourgeoisie was hopelessly bankrupt; he was making a case for the primacy of experience. "All praise due to Allah that I went to Boston when I did. If I hadn't, I'd probably still be a brainwashed black Christian." While his gratitude to Allah offers a hint of fatalism, he is nonetheless suggesting that his experience with "ordinary Negroes" shaped his outlook and direction. He took a trip to Hell, no doubt, and even looked the devil in the face. But if he hadn't taken that horrible trip, he implies, he might have ended up with a fate worst than death—Malcolm Little, Esq.

I seriously doubt Malcolm believed that a formal education and a career in law would have corrupted him, however. On the contrary, he probably spent most of his adult life regretful for not pursuing his educational goals. Every time he looked into the eyes of his own attorney, black radical Conrad Lynn, perhaps he saw himself. He fashioned himself as an intellectual and spent many mornings at a Harlem coffee shop called 22 West on 135th St. engaged in lively debates with the same "Uncle Toms" he talked about so badly on stage and in the press. In speech after speech, despite his ravings against "nincompoops with Ph.D.s," he strongly suggested that as black folks became more educated, they would inevitably undermine the status quo. In a speech delivered at Harvard Law School in 1960, he argued: "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 even while he is yet in his master's house." He warned Harvard's faculty and administration that "the same Negro students you are turning out today will soon be demanding the same things you now hear being demanded by Mr. Muhammad and the Black Muslims." Thus education, even in the white Ivy League institutions, was seen as potentially emancipatory—that is, as long as it is not limited to the sons and daughters of the elite. Real freedom depends on the poor, downtrodden masses gaining access to the master's knowledge.[29]

It was an incredible speech, for it reveals Malcolm's own envy and appreciation for formal education. Indeed, Malcolm not only showed an enormous amount of respect and admiration for institutions of higher learning, but he suggested that black intellectuals—if properly united—have the capacity to lead African Americans "out of this maze of misery and want." "They possess the academic know-how," he asserted, "great amounts of technical skills . . . but they can't use it for the benefit of

their own kind simply because they themselves are also disunited. If these intellectuals and professional so-called Negroes would unite, not only Harlem would benefit, but it will benefit our people all over the world."[30]

Thus Malcolm offered the black elite a ray of hope, a road to redemption if they made the right choices. What choice did he have? As a black nationalist with hopes of building a black nation, all African Americans had to share a common historical bond. What kind of nationalist would argue that the black bourgeoisie could never be allies of the black masses because their political and economic interests are diametrically opposed? And what kind of self-respecting nationalist promoting black enterprise as an emancipatory strategy could completely shut out successful black business people? Most importantly, how did Malcolm explain these modern class divisions in light of the historical experiences of Africans in the U.S.?

Simple: the Devil made us do it. The black bourgeoisie in America was a creation of the white man and thus has always been dependent on whites for their very existence. He demonstrates this by evoking a romantic image of precolonial Africa in which communalism and collectivism were the natural state of being for black people. Before the white man came, our societies were free of oppression and domination. We lived in the land of milk and honey where there were no slaves and everyone was treated with dignity and respect. Interestingly, Malcolm's ancient Africa was not a classless society. On the contrary, by implication the upper class were the "cream of the crop" whereas the lower class were less desirable. "You and I were produced by kings and queens from the African continent, scientists, the best. They took the best of the African society and sold them as slaves. We brought the highest price. We didn't come here as chumps; we were the cream of the crop on the African continent." On the other hand, the European slave traders and invaders of the so-called New World "were the dregs of society."[31]

In all fairness, by constructing African Americans as the descendants of elites and white Americans as descendants of crooks and vagabonds, Malcolm was consciously creating a counter myth in order to instill ordinary black folks with a sense of pride while enhancing his condemnation of white people. He is essentially saying that the difference between today's black bourgeoisie and the African elite of ancient times was that the latter did not have to depend on white people. They were proud and wealthy, not because they exploited their subordinates but because they had knowledge of self and community. Sure, Malcolm's narrative wrote indigenous slavery out of African history and obscured the kind of class exploitation that made pyramids and cities and higher learning possible, but imagine how it made black people feel—people who spent their lives as second-class citizens, as the butt of racist jokes, as the presumed descendants of savages?

We need to also keep in mind that in the early 1960s, the "nationalist" school of historiography had emerged as the dominant trend in Africanist scholarship. With the coming of independence, African historians challenged colonialist interpretations and re-wrote their pasts in very celebratory and romantic terms.[32] More significantly, African-American historians—particularly those oriented toward black nationalism—had been writing this sort of history for some time. Thus Malcolm's oppression-free Africa was not of his own invention but the product of an insurgent scholarship

that emphasized cultural unity, resistance, and the recovery of a glorious pre-colonial past. Ironically, these historians, which included people such as Senegalese historian Cheikh Anta Diop and African-American scholars J.A. Rogers, William Ferris, Willis N. Huggins, and John Jackson, were still constrained by Western bourgeois notions of civilization and progress. Like Malcolm, they relied on the dominant notions of "civilization" "Progress," even "technology," to prove the antiquity and superiority of Africa.[33]

So it is not wealth, per se, that renders the black bourgeoisie useless. It is their station in the Big House and their unwillingness to walk out. Unlike their ancestors, they have failed to live up to their responsibility to assist the downtrodden, to (as one middle-class black women's organization put it) lift as they climb. "The wealthy, educated Black bourgeoisie," Malcolm told a University of California audience in 1963, "those uppity Negroes who do escape, never reach back and pull the rest of our people out with them. The Black masses remain trapped in the slums."[34]

In fact, one of the less talked about reasons why Malcolm left the Nation has to do with the fact that NOI leaders began to look more and more like the greedy, wealthy Negroes he criticized. With disdain and sadness, he watched efforts at self-reliance and economic self-help through the establishment of businesses tragically turn into a private empire for the Messenger and his cronies. By the eve of Malcolm's break, the NOI had become a cross between a black mafia and a legitimate bourgeois enterprise. At one point, the NOI boasted of one of the most successful black-run financial empires in the country, with assets reportedly reaching 45 million dollars. With Elijah and his family riding around in chauffer-driven cadillacs and living in mansions, the Messenger began to resemble the very black bourgeoisie whom Malcolm hated. And Malcolm was well aware of the unscrupulous ways the NOI took its members' money, which included the outright misappropriation of funds. Benjamin Karim remembers one run-in between Malcolm and John Ali over thirty or forty thousand dollars New York's Temple No. 7 had raised to build a new mosque. When Malcolm asked about the money, Ali couldn't exactly account for it; he derisively said it had been invested in some other venture but couldn't say which one. Karim, who had never seen Malcolm so angry, heard him grumble something like, "They probably needed some loose change to dress Ethel [Elijah's daughter who was married to Supreme Captain Raymond Sharrief] up in diamonds and mink for a fancy night on the town."[35]

Ironically, the "house niggas" for whom Malcolm reserved most of his venom turned out to be some of the same people with whom he sought to build an alliance: traditional black political leaders and the Civil Rights establishment. His relationship to other black leaders, in Harlem and elsewhere, was never cut and dried. On the one hand, the Nation of Islam maintained rules against political participation—a policy Malcolm clearly disagreed with. He not only believed that political mobilization was indispensable but occasionally defied the rule by supporting boycotts and other forms of protest. On the other hand, Elijah Muhammad was always open to alliances with traditional black leaders and maintained cordial relations whenever possible. In July 1958, for example, African-American politicians hosted a two-day "Unity Feast" for Elijah Muhammad in Harlem where he was greeted by Manhattan borough president Hulan Jack, City Councilman Earl Brown, and columnist J.A. Rogers, to

name a few. And at a Muslim-sponsored Leadership Conference in Harlem less than two years later, several prominent black leaders showed up, including Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Malcolm even offered his guests bittersweet praise when he thanked black leaders in attendance for "at last catching up with the progressive thinking of the enlightened Negro masses."[36]

Malcolm, therefore, found himself in the unenviable position of monitoring both his political activities as well as his criticisms of black leaders. Muhammad's posture of trying to keep out of politics while making friends with politicians put an enormous strain on Malcolm, who had gained a reputation in Harlem as one of the most militant, outspoken voices in the community. For example, in the summer and fall of 1959, the NAACP stepped up its denunciations of the Nation of Islam, their tenor and tone equalling Malcolm's most unkind remarks. Roy Wilkins called them a "menace" who do nothing for black people but preach "hatred," and Thurgood Marshall dismissed the NOI as an organization "run by a bunch of thugs organized from prisons and jails, and financed, I am sure, by Nasser or some Arab group." Malcolm shot back immediately, calling Marshall a "twentieth century Uncle Tom." It seemed like war had been declared between the NAACP and the NOI, but the Nation's top leaders—those over Malcolm—were not interested in participating. A few months later, Wallace D. Muhammad, Elijah's son and minister of the Philadelphia Temple, announced a fundraising drive on behalf of Daisy Bates, the NAACP regional executive who had led the school integration struggle in Little Rock, Arkansas. He praised Bates for her courage and stated that the Nation "is striving for the same goal as the NAACP in their fight for our people's rights in this country."[37]

Malcolm, who was probably caught off guard by the gesture of unity, was less charitable than Wallace D. While unwilling to make amends, he did show signs of respect for certain local NAACP leaders. After New York branch president L. Joseph Overton was booed at a reception for Guinean President Sekou Toure, allegedly by Muslims in attendance, Malcolm apologized for the incident and praised Overton—though he took the opportunity to fire a few shots at the NAACP's national leader. "Overton is out there in the street with the rest of us. He's got some idea of what the Black Man wants—what he's thinking. It's not so with the others. Every time I've seen Roy Wilkins he's been at the Waldorf, or in the vicinity of the Waldorf. I have never seen him with black people unless they were looking for white people!"[38]

In August of 1960, Malcolm held a "Unity Rally" in Harlem (without the approval of Elijah Muhammad) to debate the key issues affecting black people and invited, among others, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Jackie Robinson, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, and Roy Wilkins. To Malcolm's disappointment, only Hulan Jack showed up. He delivered a scathing attack on black leaders for shunning the event, calling them every name in the book. Yet, despite his invective, it seemed as if Malcolm's real intention was to throw down the gauntlet and see if these leaders accepted the challenge. He told the audience that they did not show up because they were afraid "of irking their white bosses [or] embarrassing their white liberal friends." At the same time, he called on black leaders to follow the lead of the Non-Aligned nations, who had decided to overlook their differences and come together at an historic unity conference in Bandung, Indonesia, five years earlier. Because black

people in the U.S. share a common history of oppression—irrespective of political outlook, religious affiliation, or class differences—we had to find a way to unite. As he put it, "the HOUR is too short today for black people to afford the luxury of 'differences.'"[39]

How much of this was Malcolm and how much was Elijah Muhammad (or Wallace D. Muhammad) is hard to say. After all, Malcolm's strategy for unity was still based on the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's ideas of a separate state for black people. Nevertheless, Malcolm continued to cite the Bandung conference as a model for building unity among different constituents until the eve of his assassination, and eventually the separate state argument gave way to a more nuanced, situational approach to black liberation after he broke with the Nation. And yet, the greater his independence from the NOI and the closer he moved toward backing the Civil Rights movement, the harsher his denunciations of mainstream black leadership. During a stormy debate with NAACP Youth Secretary Herbert Wright sponsored by Yale University Law School in 1962, Malcolm dismissed the entire Civil Rights establishment as a bunch of sell-outs and "Uncle Toms." He went even further, suggesting that the next President bypass traditional black leaders and talk directly to ordinary folks, or to the Nation of Islam. "The black masses," he argued, "are tired of following these hand-picked Negro 'leaders' who sound like professional beggars, as they cry year after year for white America to accept us as first-class citizens."[40]

Likewise, in his speech before the Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference in Detroit in 1963, he insisted that the masses had no authentic spokespersons among the "legitimate" black leaders. These men were "handpicked" by white men in power and thus did not represent the wants and needs of ordinary black people. Self-proclaimed Negro leaders were not just misled; their job was to mislead, to keep black folks in check. They were the direct descendants of the "house slave":

> The slavemaster took Tom and dressed him well, fed him well and even gave him a little education—a *little* education; gave him a long coat and a top hat and made all the other slaves look up to him. Then he used Tom to control them. The same strategy that was used in those days is used today, by the same white man. He takes a Negro, a so-called Negro, and makes him prominent, builds him up, publicizes him, makes him a celebrity. And then he becomes a spokesman for Negroes—and a Negro leader.

These Civil Rights leaders, he said, were leading a non-violent *Negro* revolution when what was needed was a *Black* revolution. Whereas the former wants to desegregate, the latter demands land, power, and freedom. Whereas the former adopts a Christian philosophy of "love thy enemy," the latter has no love or respect for the oppressor. Malcolm still advocated unity and pointed to Bandung as the grand example, but the only unity he was interested in was under a revolutionary black nationalist banner.[41]

Left Turn?

Malcolm's critique of the black bourgeoisie and traditional black leaders, and his strong identification with the poorest of black folks, propelled him to Left wing organizations. The attraction was mutual. Just as the Communist Party had been drawn to Garveyism in the 1920s because they saw so many black working people in the movement and believed it could be transformed into a revolutionary organization,[42] Trotskyites and other Leftists noticed the large numbers of black proletarians flocking to the NOI. As early as 1961, Malcolm established working relationships with several left-wing organizations, and in 1962 spoke at an 1199 rally and shared the podium with A. Philip Randolph and several Puerto Rican labor activists. He eventually gained a small following of radical Marxists, mostly Trotskyites in the Socialist Workers Party. Malcolm convinced some SWP members of the revolutionary potential of ordinary black slum dwellers, and he began to speak more critically of capitalism.[43]

He also began developing an independent "Third World" political perspective, although he showed signs of such a perspective at least a decade earlier, when anti-colonial wars and decolonization were pressing public issues. As early as 1954, Malcolm gave a speech comparing the situation in Vietnam with that of the Mau Mau rebellion in colonial Kenya, framing both of these movements as uprisings of the "Darker races" creating a "Tidal Wave" against U.S. and European imperialism. Indeed, Africa remained his primary political interest outside of black America.[44]

Yet, despite his internationalism and flirtation with Marxism, his critique of the black bourgeoisie remained ambivalent, at best. At the very same moment black intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon, C.L.R. James, and Amilcar Cabral were grappling with the role of the national bourgeoisie in African independence struggles, Malcolm's pronouncements on the subject were analytically dull by comparison. And yet, in the States he was way ahead of the game, for unlike his detractors in the "Negro revolution," he at least recognized the importance of class differences among African Americans.

In some respects, Malcolm's dilemma was—and still is—inescapable. To escape it requires a remarkable analytical leap that would undermine the fragile basis upon which his conception of black nationalism was built. Like today's young nationalists weighed down by X caps and red, black and green medallions, Malcolm saw the black bourgeoisie as both enemies and misguided souls, sellouts and brainwashed Negroes who simply need a wake-up call from the Motherland. Few are willing to say, in no uncertain terms, that the black poor and the bourgeoisie have mutually exclusive interests.[45] For to do so would be to call into question the whole basis of nationalism, particularly a nationalism based on racial and cultural affinity. Even more damaging, however, is that it would close off any possibility of achieving individual success. After all, what are these young Soul Rebels striving for anyway? How can anyone expect young people coming up today to completely repudiate the black bourgeoisie, or any bourgeoisie, if contemporary Malcolmites are giving graduation speeches about the importance of getting paid or obtaining that degree "by any means necessary"?

Yet, Malcolm's reputation as a militant is partly built on his denunciation of the "house nigga." His current resurrection has a lot to do with growing class tensions between a successful, suburban, and increasingly disinterested black middle class and the so-called "underclass" left to rot in the slums. The word "bourgeois" has even become common lingo among Hip Hop artists and their fans to refer to black-owned radio stations and, more generally, middle-class African Americans who exhibit disgust or indifference toward young, working-class blacks. For Ice T, living in the lap of luxury is not what renders the black bourgeoisie bankrupt, but rather their inability to understand the world of the ghetto. In an interview a few years back he explained, "I don't think the negative propaganda about rap comes from the true black community—it comes from the bourgeois black community, which I hate. Those are the blacks who have an attitude that because I wear a hat and a gold chain, I'm a nigger and they're better than me." Similarly, the former rap group W.C. and the MAAD Circle levelled an even more sustained attack on those they call "bourgeois Negroes." Proclaiming that the Circle's sympathies lie with "poor folks in the slums," lead rapper W.C. derisively wrote off suburban middle-class African Americans as turncoats and cowards.[46]

Even if we are unwilling to call this "class struggle," there is no denying that these young voices are well aware that not all black folks are equally powerless and oppressed. Now that so many urban African Americans are growing up under black mayors and black police officers, they are slowly coming to the conclusion that black politicians and authority figures are as much to blame for the state of the ghetto as their white counterparts. Unlike the "house niggas" of Malcolm's generation, today's black political elite don't need to beg or plead; some of them run the big house. And as long as the status of the "field niggas" remains unchanged, Malcolm's metaphor will continue to articulate the latent class anger that lies muffled beneath a racial blanket.

NOTES

1. From *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, ed. Bruce Perry (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1989), 27. Malcolm frequently gave the house slave/field slave speech, especially in the early 1960s. For different versions, see also *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches* (28–30); "Message to the Grassroots," *Malcolm X Speaks*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990, new ed.), 10–12; Speech in Selma, Alabama, February 4, 1965, *By Any Means Necessary* (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), 183–84.
2. For an extended discussion of Hip Hop's critique of the black bourgeoisie, see my book *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994), chapter 8; and Tricia Rose's *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994).
3. Patricia Hill Collins takes Malcolm X to task for failing to develop an "analysis of social class that addresses those features of capitalist political economies." There is no doubt that Malcolm's conception of class is highly problematic and, as Collins demonstrates, simply wrong on several counts. [See Patricia Hill Collins, "Learning to Think For Ourselves: Malcolm X's Black Nationalism Reconsidered," *Malcolm X: In Our Own Image*, ed. Joe Wood (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 67–74.] But I'm not interested in whether Malcolm was right or wrong, or whether we could apply his "analysis" (which consists of portions of speeches delivered before a variety of different audiences and thus never intended to be a manifesto) to contemporary realities. Rather, I am trying to understand how Malcolm understands class distinctions

and the roots of his hostility to the black bourgeoisie. Moreover, I want to determine why his critique of the black bourgeoisie is so compelling to young African Americans today.

4. Bruce Perry, *Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1991), 182.
5. Malcolm X, with Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, 1964), 17–42; Perry, *Malcolm*, 40.
6. Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner, *Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), 230. In addition to classic sociological texts such as E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957), and St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962, 2nd ed.), several historians have recently explored the issue of class conflict within African-American communities. See especially Kelley, *Race Rebels;* Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Joe William Trotter, *Coal, Class, and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915–1932* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Peter J. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865–1890* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Kenneth Marvin Hamilton, *Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1877–1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).
7. See Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945–1990* (Jackson and London: University Press of Mississippi, 1991, 2nd ed.), 14–17; Daniel R. Fusfeld and Timothy Bates, *The Political Economy of the Urban Ghetto* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 48–50; Douglas Henry Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 171–75; and Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, who writes about this phenomenon in Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s in *"Or Does it Explode?": Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 16–17. Eugene Victor Wolfenstein makes a similar observation about the intensification of intraracial class divisions, although we disagree significantly as to the meaning of these divisions for the emergence of black working-class opposition. Besides, I am insisting on the simultaneity of heightened intraracial class struggle and racist oppression. *The Victims of Democracy: Malcolm X and the Black Revolution* (London: Free Association Books, 1989, orig. 1981), 175–76.
8. Perry, *Malcolm*, 49; quote from Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 40.
9. Perry, *Malcolm*, 49, 54; Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 59.
10. Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 43.
11. Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 59–60. I discuss Malcolm's relationship to the zoot suit culture extensively in "The Riddle of the Zoot: Malcolm Little and Black Cultural Politics During World War II," *Malcolm X: In Our Own Image*, ed. Joe Wood (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 155–67.
12. On this period in Malcolm's life, see Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 126–235; Perry, *Malcolm*, 104–66; Wolfenstein, *Victims of Democracy*, 184–269; Ferruccio Gambino, "The Transgression of a Laborer: Malcolm X in the Wilderness of America," *Radical History Review* 55 (Winter 1993): 7–31.
13. Perry, *Malcolm*, 145; Benjamin Karim, with Peter Skutches and David Gallen, *Remembering Malcolm* (New York: Caroll & Graf Publishers, 1992), 70–75.
14. C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973, 2nd ed.), 26.
15. E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for Identity in America* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1964), 329–35.
16. Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 40.
17. "Twenty Million Black People . . . " in *Malcolm X: Last Speeches*, 30; Louis Lomax, *When the Word is Given . . . A Report on Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and the Black Muslim World* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co., 1963), 191.
18. Malcolm X, *Malcolm X on Afro-American History* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1990, new ed.), 21; Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 57. According to Bruce Perry, this story was apocryphal. He had distinguished himself as an outstanding dancer in Mason. [Perry, *Malcolm*, 38.]
19. Karim, *Remembering Malcolm*, 75; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims*, 142.
20. Lomax, *When the Word is Given*, 27; Perry, *Malcolm*, 148, 171–73; Collins, "Learning to Think for

Ourselves," 77–78; Kibbi V. Mack-Williams, "Malcolm X and the Woman Question: A Metamorphosis of Ideas and Attitudes," *Abafazi* 1.1 (Spring 1991): 9–13.

21. Karim, *Remembering Malcolm*, 65.
22. Although my general remarks apply to most black denominations, we must remain cognizant of the fact that the "black church" is not a monolithic institution. Not only are there different rituals, modes of worship, and biblical interpretations, but they often differ in terms of class membership. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, for example, has had a much larger middle-class congregation than the Baptist and Pentecostal churches. The Pentecostal churches have had a strong working-class following, especially in the urban North. For more on black churches, see C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990); Hans Baer, *The Black Spiritual Movement: A Religious Response to Racism* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1984); Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer, eds., *African-American Religion in the Twentieth Century: Varieties of Protest and Accommodation* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944); William E. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865–1900* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); Gayraud Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983, 2nd ed.).
23. Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 195; Gloria Wade-Gayles, *Pushed Back to Strength: A Black Woman's Journey Home* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 13.
24. Through newspaper columns and leaflets, male and female activists in the church railed against a range of improprieties, such as "gum chewing, loud talking, gaudy colors, the nickelodeon, jazz," to name but a few. A leader of the Baptist church warned that "The sure way to ruin is by way of the public dance hall." Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 199, 201; Trotter, *Coal, Class, and Color*, 184.
25. Lomax, *When the Word is Given*, 22, 28.
26. On the shift from "low" to "high" art during the postwar period, see Scott DeVeaux's "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum* 25 (Fall 1991): 525–60, and "The Emergence of the Jazz Concert, 1935–1945," *American Music* 7 (Spring 1989): 6–29; on the perpetuation of racist structures in the jazz industry, see Frank Kofsky, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music* (New York: Pathfinder, 1970); Paul Chevigny, *Gigs: Jazz and the Cabaret Laws in New York City* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991); quote from Karim, *Remembering Malcolm*, 75. It should also be pointed out that the NOI attracted a fairly substantial number of jazz musicians during this period, including alto saxophonist Sahib Shihab, trumpeter Idris Sulieman, pianist Sadik Hakim, and drummer Kenny Clarke (Liaquat Ali Salaam).
27. For a brilliant discussion of the importance of self-transformation, see Cornel West, "Malcolm X and Black Rage," *Malcolm X: In Our Own Image*, ed. Joe Wood (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 48–58; and on Cabral, see Amilcar Cabral's *Revolution in Guinea* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969), 110, and *National Liberation and Culture*, trans. Maureen Webster (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970); Jack McCulloch, *In the Twilight of Revolution: The Political Theory of Amilcar Cabral* (London: Zed Books, 1983), 72–74.
28. Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 36, 38.
29. Karim, *Remembering Malcolm*, 68; Lomax, *When the Word is Given*, 146–47.
30. Lomax, *When the Word is Given*, 155.
31. Malcolm X, *Malcolm X on Afro-American History* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1990, new ed.), 27–31, 49; also see "Twenty Million Black People in a Political, Economic, and Mental Prison," delivered at Michigan State University, January 23, 1963, *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, 37.
32. See Arnold Temu and Bonaventure Swai, *Historians and Africanist History: A Critique* (London: Zed Press, 1983); Henry Slater, "The Dar es Salaam Contribution to the Post-Nationalist Historiography of Africa: Towards Methodology and Practice of Proletarian Socialist Historiography," paper presented to the 13th Annual Conference of the Canadian Association of African Studies, Laval University, 1983.
33. Cheikh Anta Diop, *Nations Negres et Culture* (Paris: Editions Africaines, 1955), later published in English as *African Origins of Civilization* (Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill, 1974); Willis Huggins and John Jackson's *A Guide to Studies in African History* (New York: Federation of History Clubs, 1934) and *Introduction to African Civilization* (New York: University Books, 1970, orig, 1937); Carter G. Woodson, *African Heroes and Heroines* (Washington D.C., Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1939); J.A. Rogers, *World's Great Men of Color*, 2 vols., (New York,

1947); Valerie Sandoval, "The Brand of History: A Historiographic Account of the Work of J.A. Rogers," *Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture Journal* (Spring 1978): 11–17; George E.M. James, *Stolen Legacy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1976, orig. 1954). Later proponents of this approach to the African past include Ivan Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus* (New York: Random House, 1976); Yosef ben-Jochannon, *Africa: Mother of Civilization* (New York: Alkeb-lan, 1971); John Henrik Clarke, "African-American Historians and the Reclaiming of African History," *African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity*, ed. Molefi Kete Asante and Kariamu Welsh Asante (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985); Chancellor Williams, *The Destruction of African Civilization: Great Issues of Race From 4500 B.C. to 2000 A.D.* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1974); Molefi Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

34. "America's Gravest Crisis Since the Civil War," *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, 64.
35. Perry, *Malcolm*, 221; Lomax, *When the Word is Given*, 79; Karim, *Remembering Malcolm*, 151.
36. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims*, 138–39.
37. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims*, 147–48, 150.
38. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims*, 150–51.
39. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims*, 138–39; Perry, *Malcolm*, 212; Lomax, *When the Word is Given*, 151.
40. Lomax, *When the Word is Given*, 180, 191. The claim that black leaders were "handpicked" was not entirely new. In a speech delivered at Harvard Law School in 1960, he called them "Negro puppets whom you yourself have appointed as our 'leaders' and 'spokesmen'" (Lomax 144).
41. "Message to the Grassroots," *Malcolm X Speaks*, 5–10 (quote from p. 13).
42. On the CP and Garveyism, see *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, ed. Robert Hill (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), vol. III, 675–81; James Jackson [Lovett Fort-Whiteman], "The Negro in America," *Communist International* (February 1925): 52; Robert Minor, "After Garvey-What?" *Workers Monthly* 5 (June 1926): 362–65.
43. Perry, *Malcolm*, 212; Wolfenstein, *Victims of Democracy*, 300–28; George Breitman's *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Revolutionary* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1967) and *Malcolm X: The Man and His Ideas* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1965).
44. Gambino, "The Transgression of a Laborer," 23.
45. One scholar, at least, believes Malcolm was on the verge of seeing the black bourgeoisie's interests as diametrically opposed to that of the black working class. I'm still skeptical, however. See Kevin Ovenden, *Malcolm X: Socialism and Black Nationalism* (London: Bookmarks, 1992), 44.
46. Ice T quoted in Michael Eric Dyson, "The Culture of Hip Hop," *Zeta* (June 1989): 46; Ice T, *The Iceberg/Freedom of Speech . . . Just Watch What You Say* (Sire Records, 1989); see also Ice T, "Radio Suckers," *Power* (Sire Records, 1988) and "This One's For Me," *The Iceberg/Freedom of Speech . . . Just Watch What You Say*; Ice Cube, "Turn off the Radio," *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted* (Priority Records, 1991); W.C. and the MAAD Circle, *Ain't A Damn Thang Changed* (Priority Records, 1991).