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Shifting Images: Film and Historical Legacy of Malcolm X, 1959-2021

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Shifting Images:
Film and Historical Legacy of Malcolm X, 1959-2021

A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of History
University of New Orleans
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By

Kristina Marie Smith

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Abstract

Malcolm X, born Malcolm Little and died el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, left an indelible mark on the American consciousness. Between 1952 and 1964, Malcolm X earned renown as a minister for the Nation of Islam under the guidance of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. The first film appearance of Malcolm X himself was in the 1959 documentary *The Hate That Hate Produced*, a film that sent both Malcolm and the Nation of Islam onto the national, and eventually international, stage. The next attempt to immortalize the man in film would be after his death, in 1972's *Malcolm X*, a documentary based on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. The efforts of that film would bleed directly into 1992's *Malcolm X*, a dramatization of the same autobiography. For nearly thirty years there was a dearth of films about the man until 2020's *One Night in Miami*, a fictionalization of a real night experienced by Malcolm X. By looking at the historical memory of Malcolm X through the framework of film; including what information the filmmakers used to create their works, what messages they portray through cinematic language and critical and audience reviews; this work seeks to trace the shifting film memory of Malcolm X.

Introduction

“You will often hear today a lot of the Negro leaders complaining that what thrust the Muslims into international prominence, was the white man’s press....I have no shred of argument with that. They are absolutely correct.”¹ -Malcolm X

In the summer of 1959, Malcolm X made his first television appearance. In a documentary interview with Louis Lomax, Malcolm X was questioned about being a minister for the Nation of Islam (NOI) and the core beliefs of the religious sect. Throughout the interview, Malcolm was very protective of both this faith and of the sect's founder, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad (HEM). Lomax questioned how HEM and the NOI utilized the biblical story of the snake in the Garden of Eden, as HEM taught that the snake in the garden is representative of the larger battle between good and evil. According to Lomax, HEM referred to Black people as the personification of “good”, and then used the snake as a personification of this evil, using the terms “devils” and “snake” interchangeably. Malcolm responded to this and stated that HEM and the NOI teach that the serpent was not a real serpent, but a symbol used to obscure the real face of the evil in the garden and that the real evil was white men. Lomas then continued by asking what standard teaching was within the NOI. Malcolm answered that what HEM taught him and what he as a minister also taught to his congregation is that Black people are divine. Lomax pushed Malcolm on this and asked “does that mean that the white man by nature is evil?” Malcolm seemed to evade a direct answer, responding that it means the white man is “other than divine.” Lomax, seemingly unsatisfied with what was not really an answer to the question he posed to the minister, pushed back and asked if the white people being “other than divine” made

¹ Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballentine Books, 1999), 242.

them evil? Malcolm then answered directly, saying that “by nature he is evil.” Lomax pushed once more and asked if Malcolm believed white men can do good, and Malcolm deflected that history can better answer that line of questioning than he can.² This dramatic exchange would be the first moment that Malcolm X’s face and religion would gain national acclaim and the first time many in the United States would begin to associate Malcolm X with the NOI and their beliefs on white people.

This made-for-television documentary, created by Mike Wallace and Louis Lomax, before either of their careers had launched their names to the national stage, was *The Hate that Hate Produced (HTHP)*. To say this work is a key moment in the filmic memory of Malcolm X is understating the impact. This documentary was released in five parts on the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) in the summer of 1959.³ In Wallace’s own words, the goal of the documentary was to produce a “...study in the rise of Black racism. Of a call for Black supremacy in a group of small, but growing segment, in the American Negro population.”⁴ Throughout the documentary, the NOI’s supposed hate for "white devils" and pivoted on the NOI's interpretation of Biblical and Quranic scriptures.⁵ This first image of Malcolm X impacted how many viewed and interpreted his beliefs and actions during his life and long afterward.

This first filmic representation of Malcolm X was but the start of pop culture’s effects on the memory of the man. This film, arguably, sets the stage for what future films about Malcolm would be pushing back against. The films succeeding *HTHP*, would, no matter how briefly, juxtapose themselves with footage from this documentary. The goal of this work, then, is to see how films impact the memory of Malcolm X, using *HTHP*, as a throughline to show how all of

² *The Hate that Hate Produced*, directed by Mike Wallace (1959; New York, NY), Youtube.

³ Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Penguin Group, 2011), 161.

⁴ *The Hate that Hate Produced*, dir. Mike Wallace.

⁵ *The Hate that Hate Produced*, dir. Mike Wallace.

these representations build off of one another in public consciousness. The films being used alongside *HHP*, are Spike Lee's *Malcolm X(MX)* and Regina King's *One Night in Miami (ONIM)*. All three offer very different representations of Malcolm, but both Lee's and King's work seem to push back consciously against the narrative presented in *HHP*. While *HHP* would claim to be documenting reality while framing Malcolm as a demagogue, *MX* would seek to change this and place Malcolm as an icon, and *ONIM* would re-assert his agency as a human. This shifting perspective is why, despite these films being in different genres, they are all being utilized in this work. They each stand to do something different to the image of Malcolm X, and in doing so, are all aligned with giving depictions of history, no matter the genre.

There does need to be a discussion on sources. While for the above-listed films, I intend to use critical reviews from both Black and predominately white major publications there is a noted gap in Black publication coverage on *HHP*, a gap not shared by other major publications or by the other films analyzed here. Of the eighteen different Black publications I had access to, most were not archived in the time frame necessary to find critical reception of *HHP*.⁶ Of those eighteen, only three were archived for that time frame; *The Chicago Defender*, *The San Antonio Register*, and *The Louisiana Weekly*. None of them covered the documentary.⁷ The closest found were in *Crisis Magazine*, in October 1959 and February 1962: both discuss Black nationalism and the NOI but neither mentions the documentary.⁸ *Negro Digest* was the next closet with two

⁶ The timeline for critical reception of *HHP* was surveyed from between July 1959 to December 1959. This timeline was set both on the likelihood of coverage, as the documentary released to televisions in July 1959; and as a reflection of when white media had published their critical thoughts on the documentary.

⁷ The other sources assessed were: *Los Angeles Sentinel*, *Michigan Chronicle*, *New Orleans Daily Creole*, *New Orleans Tribune*, *Weekly Louisianan*, *Weekly Pelican*, *Crisis Magazine*, *Jet Magazine*, *Negro Digest/Black World*, *Ebony*, *The Afro-American National*, *Afro American Ledger*, *Baltimore Afro-American*, *Washintgon Afro-American*, and *AFRO News*.

⁸ William McPeak, "Prescription for Harlem," in *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races Volume 66* (New York: Arno Press, 1969) 463; John Morsell, "The Meaning of Black Nationalism," in *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races Volume 69* (New York: Arno Press, 1969) 69.

articles from July 1961 and March 1963, and much like with *Crisis*, these discuss the NOI and Malcolm X but do not discuss the documentary.⁹

The structure of the argument presented in this thesis examines *HHP*, its creators, and their possible motivation with a view to understanding the impacts of the film on reviewers and the impact from Malcolm's perspective as this is the only film that he was alive to see. This thesis explores the long-term impacts this documentary had on subsequent films that helped to shape both popular culture and the memory of Malcolm X. This will then be succeeded by a discussion of Lee's film: its sources, reception, and eventual fallout. This work then closes with an examination of Regina King's *One Night in Miami* as a final reinterpreting of *HHP*.

The goal of this work is to show that representation in film can have an impact on historical understanding. That in our view of historical figures, historians can not afford to discount one of history's most publicly accessible forms: film. That the living and pop culture memory of Malcolm X has been shifted and altered intentionally by these films, but especially *HHP*. By looking at the historic memory of Malcolm X through the framework of film, what information the filmmakers used to create their works, and what messages they portray through cinematic language and critical and audience reviews, this work seeks to show the shifting film memory of Malcolm X.

Historiography

This thesis embodies an interdisciplinary approach to understanding history, film, and memory derived from four distinct categories: Malcolm X, mid-twentieth-century Black American social movements, academic literature on *HHP*, and film memory.

⁹ C. Eric Lincoln, "How Negroes Rediscovered Their Racial Pride," *Negro Digest*, July 1961, 71; C. Eric Lincoln, "The Meaning of the Negro Experience," *Negro Digest*, March 1963, 8.

In a field that is constantly expanding, Black American movements in the twentieth century in this section are expanded through four key works featuring The Civil Rights Movement, Black Nationalism, The NOI, and Black Power. Together these works help build the timeline of these social movements and how these movements are distinct in action but parallel in motivation; the liberation of Black Americans from white supremacy culture.

Aniko Bodroghkozy's *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement* covers how television depictions were both part of the essential strategy of the Civil Rights Movement at large but also their worst Achilles heel. When reckoning with the memory of *HTHP* and Malcolm X, she notes that consideration needs to be taken for how television (TV) played a vital role in all Black American movements. Bodroghkozy seeks to not only add emphasis to the role mass media played on the messaging of the Civil Rights Movement but to show the role television played in special perceptions of "whiteness" and "Blackness" and how those did and did not work in concert together.¹⁰ What this ultimately led to was a representation of equality pushed through the lens of white values even though those who were fighting for rights and liberty in public spaces were Black. While network broadcasting showed the Civil Rights Movement in a favorable light, this representation sought to make the movement palatable to white audiences. Bodroghkozy describes network TV as seeking to show the struggles against Jim Crow as palatable and thus erasing some of the realities of what Black Americans were facing. This took an inherently violent system and sanitized it to make something consumable.¹¹ This explains in some way why network TV in the late 1950s would treat the Civil Rights Movement in a starkly different way than we see ABC treat Black Nationalism within *HTHP*. Making Black

¹⁰ Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 2.

¹¹ Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time*, 5-6.

Nationalism, a movement that was largely unconcerned with the opinions of white people palatable to a white audience was far harder than painting them negatively.¹²

James Cone's *Martin and Malcolm and America*, both juxtapose and bridge the gap between the broader Civil Rights Movement and Black Nationalism. Through the relationship between two major figures of these movements: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, Cone defines integrationism and nationalism as part of the background context for the relationship between these two figures. Cone states that "integrationist thinkers...believe it is possible to achieve justice in the United States and to create wholesome relations with the white community."¹³ He defines nationalist thinkers as having "...rejected the American side of their identity and affirmed the African side..."¹⁴ Cone lays essential groundwork for understanding the complexities of how Black people in America were grappling with the problems of Segregation and dehumanization. Understanding the differences between these two schools of thought helps to answer some of why *HSTP* caused such a huge rift to form between Malcolm X and the broader Civil Rights Movement.

The NOI has been explored in recent scholarly works. In Ula Y. Taylor's *The Promise of Patriarchy*, she discusses the NOI and how she seeks to fill gaps in the understanding of the NOI, bringing Black women to the forefront of her analysis of a group whose scholarship has revolved around Black men.¹⁵ Taylor defines the NOI as "reversing the racial order. It held up the so-called Negro in America as...superior to the rest of humankind..."¹⁶ and suggests that the NOI's diligence in instilling pride in being Black in a nation that prioritized white superiority

¹² Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time*, 5.

¹³ James H.Cone, *Malcolm and Martin and America* (New York: Orbis Books,1991), 5-6.

¹⁴ Cone, *Malcolm and Martin*, 4.

¹⁵ Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Promise of Patriarchy: Women and the Nation of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 2-3.

¹⁶ Taylor, *Promise of Patriarchy*, 2.

was “an empowering endeavor.”¹⁷ She then clarifies that the NOI firmly believed that racial justice could not be accomplished as long as white and Black people shared space, landing this movement as firmly nationalist when using Cone’s definition.¹⁸ The Nation of Islam, in Taylor’s estimation, was at the forefront of Black Nationalist thought and most openly rejected the Civil Rights Movement integrationist school of thought.¹⁹

Ashley D. Farmer’s *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* details how the Black Power movement was ultimately fueled by both integrationist and nationalist philosophies all being brought together by Black women.²⁰ Farmer details how Malcolm’s ideals, especially after he departed from the NOI, would directly impact the birth of the Black Power movement, through his association with women who later developed Black Power.²¹ She describes how the Black Panther Party saw the memory of Malcolm as an inspiration, placing him firmly in the “Black radical imaginary.”²² Farmer’s scholarship highlights how Malcolm’s memory shifted over time and demonstrates how movements were inspired to greater action by his death.

The literature on Malcolm X himself is rich. When discussing Malcolm X, two major voices stand out: George Breitman and Manning Marable. Both of these works add vital scholarship that helps to both demystify and add essential context to Malcolm.

In Manning Marable’s *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, Marable sets out to create the definitive biography that fills gaps that were left in the wake of Malcolm’s sudden death.²³

Marable notes how films and popular media have played an active role in reshaping popular

¹⁷ Taylor, *The Promise of Patriarchy*, 2.

¹⁸ Taylor, *The Promise of Patriarchy*, 2.

¹⁹ Taylor, *The Promise of Patriarchy*, 5-6.

²⁰ Ashley Farmer, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 13.

²¹ Farmer, *Remaking Black Power*, 50.

²² Farmer, *Remaking Black Power*, 50.

²³ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 12.

understanding and memory of the man. Marable describes the moment when predominantly white media broadcast the rhetoric of the NOI to the broader American public in the 1959 docu-series *HTHP*.²⁴ Marable uses both the terms "firestorm" and "intense" to describe popular reactions to the NOI and even more specifically Malcolm X.²⁵ Of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X (AMBX)*, Marable credits it with much of why the image of Malcolm went from "angry black militant into a multicultural American icon."²⁶ When considering 1992's *Malcolm X*, Marable states that the film brought Malcolm to the attention of a new generation and noted that a 1992 poll showed that "84 percent of African Americans between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four described him as 'a hero for Black Americans today'" following the film's release.²⁷ Marable also credits this film as why historians began to place Malcolm in prominent standing with other historical figures.²⁸

George Breitman's *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Revolutionary*, is one scholarly attempt at conceptualizing the last very tumultuous year in Malcolm's life and the ideological transformation Malcolm was undergoing during 1964 and 1965.²⁹ What is most relevant for this thesis is the description of what Malcolm was going through at the time during his split from the NOI, as this transitional period is heavily discussed in *One Night in Miami* and how that film impacts modern cultural memory. Breitman notes that while Malcolm's openly political comments about John F. Kennedy's assassination were an excuse for the NOI and EM to distance Malcolm from the faith, Malcolm had already begun to distance himself from the NOI.³⁰ Breitman also notes that the fracturing of his religious life was something Malcolm was wholly

²⁴ *The Hate that Hate Produced*, dir. Mike Wallace.

²⁵ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 161-162.

²⁶ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 7.

²⁷ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 8.

²⁸ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 8.

²⁹ George Breitman, *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Revolutionary* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 2.

³⁰ Breitman, *The Last Year*, 10-12.

unprepared for; "...he was not prepared for it psychologically, ideologically, or organizationally."³¹

This documentary, *The Hate that Hate Produced (HTHP)*, has been discussed by multiple scholars for various purposes and the three works being used here reflect scholarly responses to what this film did to shape Malcolm's memory.

Lisa Gill's "Making the Invisible Visible: The Public Persona of Malcolm X," details the image that *HTHP* pushed onto the broader American public and how that shaped public understanding of Malcolm X. She notes that "The angry, violent black nationalist image [of Malcolm X] was often connected with words like 'black supremacist,' 'demagogue,' and 'black nationalist,' - most prominently displayed in *The Hate that Hate Produced*."³² While Gill does note that Malcolm prior to the documentary made sure to connect himself directly with Black Nationalism, this film is what shoved Malcolm to the national stage. Gill notes that the film is also what tied the NOI, Malcolm X, and the ideologies of Black Nationalists, to being considered "violent black supremacists," in the eyes of a broader public.³³ Gill contends that *HTHP* is what not only brought Malcolm X into the national spotlight but what would promote this image of Malcolm's rhetoric is based on hate, an impression that future films would be required to push back against later in this thesis.

Gill is not the only scholar to see *HTHP* as promoting an image that Malcolm X and Black Nationalism were based on hate. In Finbarr Curtis's *The Production of American Religious Freedom*, he notes the documentary was "preoccupied with the subject of hate."³⁴ Curtis asserts

³¹ Breitman, *The Last Year 22*.

³² Lisa Gill, "Making the Invisible Visible: The Public Persona of Malcolm X," in *Pictorial Cultures and Political Iconographies*, ed. Udo Hebel, Christoph Wagner (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 199. Brackets added for clarity.

³³ Gill, "Making the Invisible Visible," 200-201.

³⁴ Finbarr Curtis, *The Production of American Religious Freedom*, (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 113.

that the documentary places “black Muslim hate” as diametrically opposed to “Christian love.”³⁵ This framework the documentary provides, per Curtis, treats the NOI as practicing “reverse racism” and frames racism as a problem that is caused by individuals and not by systems.³⁶ Curtis suggests that *HTHP* painted the NOI and Malcolm by extension as racist towards white people and oversimplifies the dynamics of race and systemic oppression in the United States as a whole.

Rounding out the scholarship on *HTHP* is Nash Petropoulos’s thesis: “The Mediatization of Black Nationalist Malcolm X.” Petropoulos within this thesis argues that media commodification is essential to understanding how Black nationalism and Malcolm X were framed in the 1960s and uses *HTHP* as a throughline. In their analysis, they conclude that the documentary was deliberately inflammatory in its treatment of the NOI and by extension, Malcolm X.³⁷ Petropoulos states that this documentary framed Malcolm as “an anti-American, apostle of hate, of inverted racism.”³⁸ Petropoulos joins the prior three scholars in saying that what *HTHP* did in the historical context of the national understanding of the NOI and Malcolm X was defamatory of Black nationalism on the whole. That what this made-for-tv documentary accomplished was painting Malcolm X as a so-called “Black racist” damaging his memory as a whole. That this one epic of film history and film memory had a lasting impact that the films that follow would be pushing back against in the shifting memory landscape of this iconic man.

This thesis marries film theory and popular memory studies in an effort to conceptualize Malcolm X’s film memory. Within this section is a scaffolding of scholarship that builds the

³⁵ Curtis, *American Religious Freedom*, 116.

³⁶ Curtis, *American Religious Freedom*, 116.

³⁷ Nash Petropoulos, “The Mediatization of Black Nationalist Malcolm X,” (masters thesis, University of Melbourne 2010,) 35-36.

³⁸ Petropoulos, “The Mediatization of Malcolm X,” 36.

memory framework, how film ties into popular memory, a framework for film studies understanding, and a piece on how race impacts representation on screen.

The memory framework predominant throughout this analysis is that found in *Living Black History* by Manning Marable. Within this text, Marable details how an interdisciplinary approach using tools from across academia, including film, can help scholars to reconstruct the often fragmented past of Black people in this country.³⁹ He calls this approach a living history and within this work is the use of this understanding to illustrate how film helps restructure an often broken and scattered history. Marable also states within this work that the only way to be true to Black history is to accept all of its parts “in totality.”⁴⁰ He also believes that historians do not benefit from ignoring atypical historical sources, like film, in their attempts to mediate the gaps in Black history.⁴¹

“Memory, history, and digital imagery in contemporary film.” Robert Burgoyne offers that because films turn actual events into a spectacle that plays into an individual's subjectivity, and argues that films that engage with historical topics are both a form of historical documentation and memory-making.⁴² He also states that films about historical topics marry the concepts of memory and history. That because memory “describes an individual relation to the past” and history is often “conceived as impersonal” that film allows these two concepts to work in tandem to create a new film-based memory.⁴³ This understanding is a backbone for the film memory of this work and offers the understanding that films are just as much representations of memory as they are creators of it.

³⁹ Manning Marable, *Living Black History: How Reimagining the African American Past can Remake America's Racial Future*, (New York: Basic Civitas, 2006), xx.

⁴⁰ Marable, *Living Black History*, xviii.

⁴¹ Marable, *Living Black History*, xix.

⁴² Robert Burgoyne, “Memory, history, and digital imagery in contemporary film,” in *Memory and Popular Film*, ed. Paul Grainge (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2003), 224-225.

⁴³ Burgoyne, “Memory,” 225.

In Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener's *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses*, they discuss how the concepts of films as window and frame impact how an audience understands and creates space for themselves in the film.⁴⁴ Most notably, pictures encourage people to look into them while frames encouraged you to look at them, and film does both at the same time. Audiences are given a frame to passively engage without risk while also giving them access to the world of the film.⁴⁵ In the case of Malcolm X, films offer a unique framework to allow the audience to interact with the film without any real consequence being anticipated but also allow them to see into and understand Malcolm differently. This builds off of Burgoyne's work; adding that the very nature of the creation of film impacts how audiences engage with the material, therefore impacting memory retention and creation.

Ed Guererro's *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* discusses all the ways Black people and Blackness have been portrayed in Hollywood until the early 1990s. Within Chapter 2 of this work: "Slaves, Monsters, and Others," he details how in the early 20th century, Black people would often be relegated to the sidelines of the screen and were often dehumanized, metaphorically represented through monsters attacking a white cast.⁴⁶ In Chapter 5, "Black Film in the 1990's" he explains how filmmakers in the 1990s shifted from dehumanization to tokenism. Black stories were only shown if they would keep white audiences comfortable and remain profitable.⁴⁷ Hollywood's own biases impact and control memory around Blackness in general, and this helped to shape these film portrayals of Malcolm X.

⁴⁴ Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses*, (England: Routledge, 2009) 8.

⁴⁵ Elsaesser, *Film Theory*, 14-15.

⁴⁶ Ed Guererro, *Framing Blackness*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993) 41-42.

⁴⁷ Guerrero, *Framing Blackness*, 157-158.

The Hate That Hate Produced: Framing and Documentary

In the spring of 1959, African American reporter Louis Lomax entered Mike Wallace's office, with a nightly news story pitch for Wallace's ABC program, *Newsbeat*. Lomax told Wallace about Black Muslims and how “The Black Muslims are black separatists. They’re a hate group. They hate white people.”⁴⁸ This conversation is what would then be the primary catalyst for the *Hate that Hate Produced*. Wallace referred to this documentary as “...one of the most explosive pieces I’ve ever been involved in.”⁴⁹ Wallace later stated that without Lomax, this documentary would not have existed, as no white reporter was ever going to be allowed within close proximity to the NOI.⁵⁰

HTHP aired across five days in five half-hour-long segments between July 13, 1959, and July 17, 1959; followed by a one-hour-long documentary covering the topic more succinctly the following week.⁵¹ Both Lomax and Wallace saw explosive career growth following the documentary. Wallace gained national exposure that would eventually lead to his joining *60 Minutes*, and Lomax gained enough notoriety to publish his book *The Reluctant African* which enabled his increasing prominence in civil rights discussions across the country.⁵²

Prior to the documentary, the NOI and by extension, Malcolm X, had yet to receive nationwide attention. They were rapidly increasing in size and their message was spreading further with each Mosque established, but it was not until Mike Wallace and Louis Lomax that Malcolm would become a nationally recognized figure. However, if one were to ask the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Malcolm had always been of particular interest. FBI records surrounding Malcolm before the documentary included details of Malcolm's arrest records, his

⁴⁸ Mike Wallace and Gary Paul Gates, *Between You and Me: A Memoir* (New York: Hyperion, 2005), 85.

⁴⁹ Wallace, *Between You and Me*, 86.

⁵⁰ Wallace, *Between You and Me*, 86-87.

⁵¹ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 161.

⁵² Marable, *Malcolm X*, 162.

movements, and his association with what the Bureau would refer to as "The Cult of Islam."⁵³

The FBI believed the NOI and Malcolm were a national security threat, even categorizing Malcolm himself as a possible communist.⁵⁴

At the opening of the documentary, audiences both Black and white are shown a morality play put on by the NOI that condemned white men for crimes against Black people. It then cuts to Wallace who would lead the audience into their first look at Malcolm X in a documentary. Wallace leads into this segment by saying "Do not underestimate the Muslims."⁵⁵ This framing is very telling; showing the NOI indicting the white man, using language that implies that Black Muslims are not to be trifled with, and then jumping right to a shot of Malcolm. In those few moments, Wallace frames Malcolm in a way that would follow him until well after his death; as a proponent of hate.

The predominately white press of 1959 was stunned by what the documentary depicted. *Time Magazine* wrote a piece following Wallace's expose describing the NOI and Elijah Muhammad as "purveyors of cold black hatred."⁵⁶ *New York Times* writer Jack Gould challenged Wallace, claiming he did not have the proper information, not because the documentary villainized the movement, but because Wallace's assertion that there were over a quarter of a million members of the Nation was untrue.⁵⁷ Wallace claimed reporters accused himself and Lomax of "sensationalism and fearmongering."⁵⁸

⁵³ Federal Bureau of Investigations, *Malcolm X Little*, February 7, 1979, 7, <https://vault.fbi.gov/Malcolm%20X/Malcolm%20X%20Part%201%20of%2038/view>; The labeling of the NOI being a cult is very telling. The FBI, which at this time was under the infamous control of J. Edgar Hoover, likely referred to the NOI as a cult as it was a non-standard and non-Christian religion that taught Black people they were not less than white people, and not due to any features the NOI may or may not share with cults.

⁵⁴ Federal Bureau of Investigations, *Malcolm X Little*, February 7, 1979, 7; Cone, *Martin and Malcolm*, 246.

⁵⁵ *The Hate that Hate Produced*, dir. Mike Wallace.

⁵⁶ "The Black Supremacists," *Time*, August 10, 1959, 24-245.

⁵⁷ Jack Gould, "TV: Negro Documentary," *New York Times*, July 23, 1959.

⁵⁸ Wallace, *Between You and Me*, 86.

Malcolm himself compared the public outcry to learning about the NOI as akin to the panicked reaction to Orson Scott Wells's radio program *War of the Worlds*.⁵⁹ Malcolm saw the program as intentionally trying to shock audiences and claimed the fallout in New York, among both Black and white audiences, lived up to that intent.⁶⁰ Newspapers, he specified, characterized the NOI as “violence seekers” and “black racists.”⁶¹ Malcolm reflected back on this media swarm, stating that “I had a receiver against my ear five hours a day,” speaking to news outlets from across the country who wanted to know more about the NOI.⁶² In Wallace’s memoir, it appears some of the media swarming Malcolm at this time was yes because of the documentary but potentially due to a statement Wallace had made with the press questioning him for the validity of the work. Wallace challenged other media outlets to do their own research if they want to question him.⁶³ It appears, according to Malcolm, that they did.

Scholars looking back on *HHP* see Wallace’s framing as problematic. Lisa Gill directly ties the documentary to why black nationalism and the NOI were linked to terms like “Black segregationists” and why Malcolm X was broadly seen as a “demagogue.”⁶⁴ Finbarr Curtis accuses the creators of the piece of being wholly focused on the hateful messaging they could produce and how they could use that messaging to soften the blows of systemic racism to a white audience.⁶⁵ Nash Petropoulos, when talking about the mediatization of Malcolm X, calls out the documentary as being deliberately defamatory in its search for a sensationalist news story.⁶⁶ Petropoulos notes how Wallace framed Malcolm as “an anti-American, apostle of hate, of

⁵⁹ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 242.

⁶⁰ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 242-243.

⁶¹ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 243.

⁶² Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 244.

⁶³ Wallace, *Between You and Me*, 86.

⁶⁴ Gill, “Making the Invisible Visible,” 199.

⁶⁵ Curtis, *American Religious Freedom*, 113, 116.

⁶⁶ Petropoulos, “Mediatization of Malcolm X,” 36.

inverted racism.⁶⁷ The retrospective consensus is clear; *HHP* was deliberately inflammatory in its treatment of Black nationalism and of Malcolm X, and served only to solidify Malcolm in public memory as a hateful demagogue removed from the actual nuances of his beliefs and the ideologies of Black nationalism.

HHP represents a notable shift in public awareness and understanding of Malcolm X. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), in response to the framing of the NOI as being violent separatists in the documentary, began taking steps to distance the Civil Rights Movement from Malcolm and the NOI. The NAACP in the August of 1959 called out the message they saw in the documentary, stating that "The so-called Muslims who teach black supremacy and hatred of all white people have gained a following only because America has been so slow in granting equal opportunities and has permitted the abuse and persecution of Negro citizens."⁶⁸ This messaging offers some benefit of the doubt to the NOI, placing the blame of their rhetoric at the feet of a U.S Government not doing nearly enough for their black citizens, though the NAACP makes it clear that they view the NOI as teaching hatred following the documentary. The NAACP, as aware of their image and messaging as they were, could not risk being associated with a movement that much of the predominately white press was calling hate-mongering and violent. Distancing was necessary for their own goals as organizations trying to right the wrongs done to Black Americans in the United States.

The firestorm that greeted *HHP* is reflected in films later discussed within this work. Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*, and Regina King's *One Night in Miami* all make a point to use footage from Wallace and Lomax's documentary as a major turning point for the NOI and Malcolm in the public arena. The impact this film and its echoes had on the remembrance of Malcolm X can not

⁶⁷ Petropoulos, "The Mediatization of Malcolm X," 36.

⁶⁸ Shapiro, *White Violence Black Response*, 465-466.

be overstated. This influential documentary would cement the image of Malcolm X as a hate-monger for an organization that advocated violence and this messaging would haunt his public memory.

Spike and Malcolm X: Rehabilitating a Image

By 1992 Spike Lee had directed three films that had garnered him acclaim: *She's Gotta Have It* (1986), *School Daze* (1988), and *Do the Right Thing* (1989).⁶⁹ The latter film would earn Lee an Oscar nomination that would launch his name into the mainstream.⁷⁰ It would also cement Lee's Image as a Black director who covers Black issues in his films in a way that had not been done before. Yet despite his acclaim, when *Malcolm X (MX)* initially entered pre-production, Spike Lee was not the first choice for director. Norman Jewison, a white director, was initially the first pick for directors.⁷¹ Jewison ultimately stepped down from the project and Lee took control. Within a piece in *The New York Times*, it is indicated that Jewison chose to step down from the project when Spike Lee began to show interest in the project as he was not completely comfortable being a white man trying to tell this history.⁷² Contrast this to an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, where Lee was asked a question that suggested he had intentionally leveraged against Jewison directing, a suggestion Lee did not correct. Instead, Lee clarified that his reasoning for why he felt a white director could not handle Black history was that white people simply do not have the necessary context.⁷³ This was only the first instance of controversy leading into the film.

⁶⁹ "Spike Lee," IMDB. Accessed April 17, 2023, <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000490/>

⁷⁰ "Spike Lee," *Empire Online*. Accessed April 17, 2023, <https://www.empireonline.com/people/spike-lee/>

⁷¹ Bernard Weinraub, "A Movie Producer Remembers the Human Side of Malcolm X," *New York Times*, November 23, 1992.

⁷² Weinraub, "A Movie Producer Remembers."

⁷³ Elaine Rivera "Spike Lee, Speaking to the Point," *Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 1992.

Soon after Lee gained directorial control over the project, Black liberation groups came forward deeply concerned by the potential portrayal of Malcolm on screen.⁷⁴ Among others, poet and activist Amiri Baraka notably warned Lee "not to mess up Malcolm's life."⁷⁵ Ella Collins, the director of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), and half-sister to Malcolm X, expressed her own concerns about Spike Lee and Betty Shabazz's involvement with the film.⁷⁶ About Lee, she asserted that "Spike Lee's after the money, the prestige. He doesn't know any facts."⁷⁷ Such challenges suggest that control of Malcolm X's image was contested among his family. Malcolm's image had come to represent something deeper when it came to Black activism, particularly with regard to Black nationalism in the last year of his life provided the fuel for the engine of the Black Panthers and other Black Power movements.⁷⁸ There is a level of fundamental understanding at play at the core of these concerns from Black activists; that any film told on this scale would impact Malcolm's legacy, and Spike Lee had great influence over whether that memory would be tainted or not.

Such issues of control were exacerbated in the spring of 1992 when *MX* ran headlong into intense financial issues. The exact amount of how much money Spike Lee put into the production over is hotly contested, as it is the question of whether Lee was even the real reason why the budget exceeded expectations. Lee has always adamantly insisted that Warner Brothers refused to go beyond the \$28 million dollar budget for the film and stopped approving additional costs, and this forced him to go ask for help from major Black public figures.⁷⁹ With donations from Bill Cosby, Oprah Winfrey, Michael Jordan, Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Janet Jackson,

⁷⁴ Janice Simpson, "The Battle to Film Malcolm X," *Time*, March 16, 1992.

⁷⁵ Simpson, "The Battle to Film Malcolm X,"; Rickford, *Betty Shabazz*, 458.

⁷⁶ Lucy Burnett, "Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) 1965," Blackpast, June 21, 2009, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/organization-afro-american-unity-aaau-1965/>
On the OAAU: This organization was originally created by Malcolm X prior to his assassination.

⁷⁷ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 471.

⁷⁸ Farmer, *Remaking Black Power*, 50.

⁷⁹ Times-Picayune "Spikes X Needs Support", NYT "Spike Lee says money from Blacks Saved X"

Prince, and Peggy Cooper Cafritz, Spike Lee reached what would be the final budget for the film: \$34 million dollars.⁸⁰ While this amount of money, and even the starting budget seems like an impressive sum, this is a low figure compared to most Hollywood-produced films. Lee pointed out Dan Aykroyd was budgeted \$45 million for his directorial debut while Lee already had two successful films under his belt.⁸¹ Warner Brothers pushed back on Lee's assertion that they had capped his budget, indicating that Lee had promised them he'd keep the budget under \$30 million. Lee adamantly refuted this, stating that "the first budget presented to Warner Bros. was \$40 million...how am I gonna turn around and say I can do it cheap?"⁸²

Two major points emerged from this dispute over the budget. First, Lee had a very specific vision in mind and he was not about to let a budget restriction stop him from doing his work. In interviews leading to the film's release, Spike Lee made it no secret he understood the import of a film about Malcolm X. Lee admitted he changed his normal style of directing because Malcolm X was a real man who deserved Lee being flexible with his style.⁸³ Two: with the help of major Black figures, he went from a \$28 million dollar budget to \$34 million. The amount he received is reflective of just how much people expected Lee to deliver on a film about Malcolm, and how much people did trust him with the project despite his detractors. Anticipation for this film in the public eye was ramping up with every controversy, and there was one more major hurdle before the release: marketing.

Controversially, Spike Lee and WB started a marketing scheme around the "X" in Malcolm's name. This led to major criticism: the literal commodification of Malcolm X. In the weeks prior to the film's release, all across the nation: t-shirts, ball caps, jackets, etc. were

⁸⁰ Rivera, "Speaking to the Point."

⁸¹ Rivera, "Speaking to the Point."

⁸² Rivera, "Speaking to the Point."

⁸³ Rivera, "Speaking to the Point."

emblazoned with Malcolm's "X" for the world to see.⁸⁴ The film's poster would prominently carry the same "X."⁸⁵ This campaign brought much attention to *MX* and the *Los Angeles Times* compared the "X" to Batman's infamous bat symbol when it came to recognizability in the American consciousness.⁸⁶ Critics, though, argued that taking Malcolm X, who prominently was anti-imperialist and felt that America never supported himself or any Black person, and selling his name to Americans through a line of produced souvenirs was a gross objectification of the man.⁸⁷

Lee came under immense criticism for this, with many saying he sold out Malcolm X.⁸⁸ The criticism was much more prominent in Black newspapers. In the *Chicago Defender*, there were three different opinion pieces criticizing the use of this symbol, many highly concerned with the commodification of this Black figure.⁸⁹ Unsurprisingly, Spike Lee pushed back against this, refusing to say whether or not Malcolm would have approved and only that Malcolm fought for the economic development of the Black community and that was exactly what he is doing with his marketing of the film.⁹⁰

The ubiquitousness of "X" in the build-up to this film is now part of the living memory of this piece and the man himself. Commodifying Malcolm to America, an America that had deliberately harmed the Black community, can be viewed as a betrayal of his ideals. On the other hand, this film was treated as the seminal work about Malcolm in the lead-up to release. The

⁸⁴ Marc Lacey, "X Marks to Spot of Controversy over Spike Lees Store," *Los Angeles Times*, November 6, 1992; David Wharton, "What Becomes a Legend Most?" *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 1992.

⁸⁵ "Display Ad 66," *New York Times*, November 15, 1992.

⁸⁶ Bruce Horovitz, "When X Equals \$," *Los Angeles Times*, November 3, 1992.

⁸⁷ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 303.

⁸⁸ Wharton, "What becomes a legend most?"; Lacey, "X Marks to Spot of Controversy."

⁸⁹ Reginold Bundy, "Malcolm Mania may be Little More than Fashion," *Chicago Defender (Daily Edition)*, November 18, 1992.; Marian Moore, "Has Hype Hurt Malcolm's Message?" *Chicago Defender (Daily Edition)*, November 19, 1992.; James Strong, "'X' Marks the Spot," *Chicago Defender (Daily Edition)*, December 29, 1992.

⁹⁰ Lacey, "X Marks to Spot of Controversy."

heavy scrutiny Spike Lee faced is evidence of this, and considering the budget and the importance, marketing was a necessity. Spike Lee and WB did exactly what they set out to do: draw attention to the man and the film. Much like *HHP* forty years prior, all eyes were on Malcolm X once again.

Malcolm X premiered on November 17, 1992, with a run time of nearly three-and-half-hours, a run time Lee insisted was the only way he could give Malcolm the complexity he deserved.⁹¹ Lee suggested his primary source material consisted of interviews with Malcolm's next of kin and a discussion with NOI leader Louis Farrakhan. His other key source was *AMBX*.⁹² The erasure of Malcolm X's siblings and their involvement in his development is a detrimental gap left in the wake of this film. Beyond that, however, Lee's work does follow *AMBX* fairly closely and picks up where *AMBX* leaves off, as Malcolm would be assassinated before the finalization and publication of the book.⁹³ While the interviews are inaccessible, *AMBX* helps to assess how this film altered or maintained Malcolm's memory as this was Spike Lee's key framing for the story of this film. What Lee was also facing was challenging the memory of *HHP*.

This juxtaposing against *HHP* is illustrated in the opening sequence of *MX*. *MX* opens with the American flag being burned into the shape of the now ubiquitous X', interlaced with footage of Rodney King being assaulted by Los Angeles Police while Denzel Washington's voice

⁹¹ "Malcolm X," IMDB, Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0104797/>; Rivera, "Speaking to the Point."

⁹² Rivera, "Speaking to the Point."; The use of *AMBX* could be seen as problematic on its own, as it was dictated by Malcolm X and written by Alex Haley. Marable discusses the inconsistencies in *AMBX* in *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, but does land within that work that *AMBX* was largely collaborative between the two men and does not blame the inconsistencies fully on either author. Marable also revealed how much *AMBX* would have been considered truthful when *MX* was released to screens, and stated that he did not see these inconsistencies present in *AMBX* until 1989, and would not begin digging deeper until the early part of the 1990s. There are modern day concerns with Lee's use of *AMBX* as one of the primary source materials, but this book was considered the seminal manifesto of Malcolm X when the film was being created, and Lee was working from what everyone knew to be as true as possible at the time.

⁹³ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 437-443.

as Malcolm X rings out “Brothers and sisters, I’m here to tell you that I charge the white man. I charge the white man with being the greatest murderer on earth.”⁹⁴ This framing establishes a clear message: the crimes that white supremacy inflicted on Black people during Jim Crow are still being inflicted in 1993. This also tied the “X” to America in a literal sense, having the American flag burning into the shape of his ‘X,’ and this is an interesting choice. Throughout *ABMX*, Malcolm always calls back to the fact that across America the real history of what crimes had been done to Black people by white people was erased and that this failure is what allowed Black people to continue suffering under white supremacy.⁹⁵ To tie himself to America could be seen as almost antithetical to Malcolm's core beliefs, but I would argue it does something more in the American consciousness. This reminds America that this happened here. That "X" is not tied to the American flag because Malcolm was a proud American, but because the crimes committed against Black people by a white America are why he existed at all.

Spike Lee also starts off immediately negotiating with Malcolm X’s filmic memory. When this opening is juxtaposed against the opening of *HHP*, it becomes starkly clear how Spike Lee is intending to push back on the memory that *HHP* supported. *HHP* opens with a morality play also condemning white men for their crimes against Black people, but Wallace frames this as a black supremacist group.⁹⁶ Historians, as noted in the historiography, saw Wallace’s framing as focusing on how hateful the NOI and Black nationalism were. Spike Lee then takes a speech from Malcolm with a very similar theme and instead of calling the NOI hateful, Lee shifts the narrative. He condemns white supremacy and America, instead of condemning Malcolm or the NOI.

⁹⁴ *Malcolm X*, directed by Spike Lee (Burbank: Warner Brothers, 1992), HBO Max.

⁹⁵ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 177-184.

⁹⁶ *The Hate that Hate Produced*, dir. Mike Wallace.

Throughout the rest of the film, there is a very noticeable gap in information. Malcolm's siblings are nowhere to be found. Within *ABMX*, Malcolm is not shy when attributing some level of his transformational journey to his siblings. Take Malcolm's prison sentence and his eventual conversion to Islam. One of the key reasons Malcolm cites for why he began to explore Islam and begins his devout following of HEM was due to his siblings having already converted while he was imprisoned. Malcolm gave his brother, Reginald, heavy credit for being the one who shook him out of his atheism and into being a Black Muslim. "Reginald knew how my street hustler mind operated. That's why his approach was so effective."⁹⁷ Reginald was the one to tell Malcolm that Islam and Allah would guide him to freedom and motivated Malcolm to begin writing to Elijah Muhammad in the first place.⁹⁸ Yet in *MX*, the influence of his siblings is erased. Instead of their inclusion, Lee created a prison inmate who encompasses a few people that influenced Malcolm's journey while in prison, and credits this mostly fictional character with Malcolm's conversion to the NOI.⁹⁹

Critical response to *MX* was incredibly positive. *Los Angeles Times* staff film critic Kenneth Turan commended the film across the board for how Spike Lee, who at the point was known for a very in-your-face style of filmmaker, handled Malcolm X with restraint and care, turning Malcolm into something akin to an American icon.¹⁰⁰ Turan's review was glowing, with barely any negative criticism to be found, elevating Malcolm X in the *LA Times* as a must-see to anyone reading the review. Turan also noted the potential historical impact of the film. He stated that the film is "... consciously aiming at the creation of both a hero and a mythology powerful enough to sustain those whose struggle with racism is still a reality."¹⁰¹ Turan's observation that

⁹⁷ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 161.

⁹⁸ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 158-159.

⁹⁹ *Malcolm X*, dir. Spike Lee.

¹⁰⁰ Kenneth Turan, "Malcolm X: A Hero for Troubled Times" *Los Angeles Times*, November 18, 1992.

¹⁰¹ Turan, "A Hero for Troubled Times."

the film's goal was to impact historic realities, to shape Malcolm as a myth and hero, while also stating the film is a must-see, enforces that this film had historical impacts on the iconization of Malcolm X following his demonization in *HHP*.

Chicago-Sun Times film writer Roger Ebert was in much the same headspace as Turan. Ebert claimed the film was “inspirational and educational” while noting it still maintains its entertainment level as is mandated for feature films.¹⁰² Ebert agreed that the film turned Malcolm into an American icon that a broad audience could connect with. Ebert also noted after giving a brief biography of Malcolm X’s life, that “this is an extraordinary life, and Spike Lee has told it in an extraordinary film.”¹⁰³ Ebert connects this film directly to the historical life of Malcolm X, and in doing so seems to imply that this film is historically accurate in its portrayal of Malcolm. Not all were so positive, however. To columnist Carl Rowan with *The Chicago-Sun Times*, Spike Lee did nothing short of a dehumanizing deification of Malcolm X's rhetoric and sees this deification as incredibly harmful to the memory of Malcolm X and how his rhetoric is used by Black youths.¹⁰⁴

The New York Times Vincent Canby offered some criticism as well. He overall called the film a triumph but argued that the film struggles with tying the different eras of Malcolm's life together. Canby asserted that the film also struggles with showing Malcolm’s pivotal transformation after his relationship with the NOI soured.¹⁰⁵ Canby also noted that the film is “...an ambitious, tough, seriously considered biographical film...” and in doing so gave the film the weight of accuracy, the weight expected by something that is bibliographic in nature.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Roger Ebert, “Gripping ‘Malcolm X’ Captures Complex Life,” *Chicago-Sun Times*, November 18, 1992.

¹⁰³ Ebert, “Gripping ‘Malcolm X’ Captures Complex Life.”

¹⁰⁴ Carl Rowan, “Glorifying Malcolms Rhetoric,” *Chicago-Sun Times*, November 22, 1992.

¹⁰⁵ Vincent Canby, “‘Malcolm X’, As Complex as Its Subject,” *New York Times*, November 18, 1992.

¹⁰⁶ Canby, “‘Malcolm X’, As Complex as Its Subject.”

In New Orleans *The Times-Picayune's* film critic, David Baron expressed respect for the film, noting the first act was a bit slow, but overall "...does full historical justice to its subject."¹⁰⁷ In stating this, Baron gives this film the praise of being historically accurate. Yet the *Times-Picayune* staff was divided, as staff writer Stephen Casimer found Lee's portrayal of Malcolm as disrespectful and sanitized the meaning of the X for the palatability of white audiences.¹⁰⁸ He stated that "...the film eviscerates the 'X' symbol and deprives it of its urgency..." and in stark contrast to prior reviewers, accused the film of deliberately changing the realities of Jim Crow for the sake of narrative.¹⁰⁹

A look at Black newspapers illuminates additional perspectives. Starting with the *Philadelphia Tribune*, Tony Brown called out Carl Rowan for his attacks against the film and Malcolm X himself. Stating that Rowan was never in line with Malcolm X in the first place when Malcolm was still alive, Brown calls Rowan "out of step" with the Black community at large.¹¹⁰ While Brown did not give his opinion on the film as a whole, his remarks about Rowan shed light on Rowan's review. Rowan, getting called out by the *Philadelphia Tribune* for his frequent habit of criticizing any media that features Malcolm X, indicated that he was already predisposed to not enjoy the film at large.

In the context of reviews for the film from these Black publications, *The Philadelphia Tribune* did feature official reviews of the film. R. P. Murfrey's opinion was glowing, describing *MX* as an instant classic. He stated that "In a nutshell, X was everything the Black community both is and ultimately should be. A contrasting mosaic that, once fully assembled, is one of the most beautiful pictures you'd ever want to see."¹¹¹ He argues the instant classic status of this film

¹⁰⁷ David Baron, "The Many Lives of Malcolm X," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), November 18, 1992.

¹⁰⁸ Stephen Casimer, "Watering Down the X," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), November 20, 1992.

¹⁰⁹ Casimer, "Watering Down the X."

¹¹⁰ Tony Brown, "Tony Brown's Comments: Attacking Black Leaders is Typical for Rowan," *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 15, 1992.

¹¹¹ R. P. Murfrey, "Spike has done Well with Malcolm X," *Philadelphia Tribune*, November 24, 1992.

is because the film's subject is someone the Black community should aspire to be. He also adds that Lee "...kept the script of the movie pretty much to the script of Malcolm X's life..." and in doing so rings in the chorus of prior critics who saw this film as being largely accurate in the historical portrayal of Malcolm X's lived experiences.¹¹²

Earl Calloway with the *Chicago Defender* stated the film "...belongs within the realm of other great masterpieces."¹¹³ He does note that this film, and how it shows the different stages of Malcolm's development, means that generations of Black families can find something to connect with within the film and that it is a great vehicle for discussing African American history at large. He gives the film high praise without much criticism overall and gives it the credibility of historical accuracy.¹¹⁴

In the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, Earl Ofari Hutchinson saw *MX* as just as positive as the prior reviewers, but with a twist. He noted how the African American community at large did not trust Spike Lee with the source material simply because of the nature of the source material. While Hutchinson noted he enjoyed the film, he spent much of this article actively defending Spike Lee as a filmmaker. He also praised Lee for not shying away from the darker parts of Malcolm's life, especially his criminal activities prior to his transformation into a religious man.¹¹⁵

A few perspectives start to become obvious when looking at critical perceptions across the country. White critics within predominantly white spaces including Ebert, Turan, Canby, and Baron, described the film as a true epic that brings light to a revolutionary of Black nationalism. From Black critics writing with predominantly Black publications (Brown, Calloway, Murfrey, and Hutchinson) the praise is even more glowing and is often discussed in reference to what this

¹¹² Murfrey, "Spike has done Well with Malcolm X."

¹¹³ Earl Calloway, "'Malcolm X' Dramatically is Splendid and Convincing," *Weekend Chicago Defender*, November 28, 1992.

¹¹⁴ Calloway, "'Malcolm X' Dramatically is Splendid and Convincing."

¹¹⁵ Earl Ofari Hutchinson, "We should Rescue Malcolm X from Political 'Correctness'," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 19, 1992.

means for the Black community at large. Yet to Black film critics from predominantly white publications, Rowan and Casimer, there is much concern over what this film does to the rhetoric and the living memory of Malcolm X. Overall, the film was seen across the board as deserving of high praise and leaving a positive impact. Most importantly is that most of the critics agreed the film was overall historically sound and gave the film the weight of accuracy.

General audience reviews, while impossible to tell if this same racial disparity seen in critical responses is present unless the audience self-identified, were more complex and largely overshadowed by Spike Lee and the marketing campaign preceding the film. *The Los Angeles Times* ran two columns dedicated to general audience discussion; where the readers of the paper were encouraged to write into the publication about the film. One was "The ABC's of Spike Lee's 'X'" and the other was "COUNTERPUNCH LETTERS: Is Spike Lee's Racial Preference Equality?" In the former, opinions of viewers ranged wildly from insulting Spike Lee to expressing dismay that any critic gave this film a favorable review at all. One viewer painted Malcolm as a "man of hate" while another would call out that commentator for being racist, arguing that the film is required viewing.¹¹⁶

In Black publications, we see even more direct letters to the papers about their feelings about the film. Within the *Chicago Defender*, in sections both dedicated sections for reader-submitted works and pieces from guest columnists, we see many audience members identify their feelings about *X*. Dr. Conrad Worrill, chairperson for the National Black United Front, wrote a column titled "Thank you, Spike Lee." Worrill admitted that he was surprised by this film and appreciated the honest approach Lee took in creating this film. He stated, "We thank you Spike, because there have been so many forces that have attempted to turn the legacy

¹¹⁶ "ABCs of Spike Lees X" *Los Angeles Times*, November 29, 1992.

of Malcolm into everything he was not.”¹¹⁷ The phrasing here was notable, as many from within this same publication worried this is what Spike Lee was doing in his marketing of the film prior to the film's premiere. In the letters to the editor section titled “The People Speak,” Reverend Bill Hogan proclaimed “Spike Lee has presented us with food for the heart and soul,” and encouraged families to save up the money to go see the film.¹¹⁸ On a different day in this same section, reader Hodges Smith gave interesting insight, noting that he’d heard talk of Black youths potentially being incited to violence due to the film, but as of the day following the film's premiere, Smith noted no violence had been reported, something that instilled in him great pride as an African American man. He went on to say directly to the Black community “...we can make change, even if it takes a powerful film by movie director Spike Lee to do it.”¹¹⁹

The *Defender* was not the only publication concerned with how youths would interpret this film. In the *Chicago-Sun Times*, students from Hales Franciscan High School were interviewed after having attended the film in theaters. These students overall enjoyed the film, and the former Mayor and educators who attended with them saw the value in the film, stating that it could act as a history lesson for young people born after the age of Malcolm X.¹²⁰ The *Chicago Defender* came out with an article about this same high school where they received similar opinions to those of their *Sun* colleagues, but added some of the concerns these teenagers had as well. The students noted that the film did break away from *AMBX* a bit, but overall their opinions are that this film is worth seeing.¹²¹

Adults who had been familiar with Malcolm himself when he was still alive, and who experienced the film after, have a very different memory than those of teenagers whose

¹¹⁷ Conrad Worrill, "Thank You, Spike Lee," *Chicago Defender (Daily Edition)*, November 25, 1992.

¹¹⁸ "The People Speak," *Chicago Defender (Daily Edition)*, December 21, 1992.

¹¹⁹ "The People Speak," *Weekend Chicago Defender*, December 05, 1992.

¹²⁰ Lee Bey, "Hales Students Feel the Power of 'Malcolm X,'" *Chicago-Sun Times*, November 19, 1992.

¹²¹ Marian Moore, "Men of Hales Speak on Malcolm X." *Chicago Defender (Daily Edition)*, November 19, 1992.

interactions are limited to *ABMX* and Lee's film. Those teenagers are who will carry memory forward, and Spike Lee's *MX* is pivotal to their understanding; one student even stated that the film was overall "...a good message for African Americans."¹²²

Other publications share a similar slant to how students felt about the film. In the *New York Times*, students are described as "hungry" for the messages of Malcolm.¹²³ The article noted that some students saw reflections of their own families in this film and how important it is that this film exists.¹²⁴ *The Times-Picayune* noted that students of Alcee Fortier High School connected in a similar way in this article, printing pieces written by the students themselves. Two of the students both note the film helps them realize the complexities of Malcolm; that he is not a myth but a real man who made awful mistakes but who loved his people and would do anything for them, a message many of the students connected with.¹²⁵

What is eye-catching in the conversation in Black publications versus predominately white ones is this: while critics across the board see the film as a true masterpiece, Black critics are much more grounded in what this film meant for the Black community. This makes sense; a white critic would not have the knowledge base available to make an assessment of how a film about Malcolm X would impact the community he did all his work for.

The professional reviews of Malcolm X cement this film into the annals of film history, with overall glowing praise, despite concerns that a few had with the film. Viewer reviews were far more complex, and were heavily concerned with the ethics of the film existing at all. The articles detailing youth reactions demonstrate a vested interest in how this will impact teenage understanding of Malcolm X. Those teenagers grow into adults and this film was fundamental in

¹²² Bey, "Hales Students Feel the Power."

¹²³ Lynda Richardson, "For Youths, 'Malcolm X' is Reflection and Identity," *New York Times*, November 19, 1992.

¹²⁴ Richardson, "For Youths."

¹²⁵ "Fortier Students Critique 'Malcolm X'," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), November 18, 1992.

their understanding of Malcolm X. Film critics anointed the film into filmic memory, and those students carry it with them as living memory.

What is also seen here, across the board, is Lee's film being given the authority of historical accuracy by professional reviewers and by teenagers who both saw the film as a biographical history lesson. Spike Lee in his attempt to correct the film portrayal of Malcolm away from the demagogue he was shown as in *HHP*, seems to have flipped Malcolm X from being a demagogue to being a true icon.

Fiction Based in Reality: Recuperation of Agency

The opening to Regina King's 2020 directorial debut, *One Night in Miami... (ONIM)* indicates to the audience that this story is "inspired by true events."¹²⁶ The story in question is a fictionalization of the after-party celebrating the victory of Cassius Clay (not yet known as Muhammad Ali) over Sonny Liston on February 25, 1964. There is truth behind this story, and those truths led to a question that screenwriter Kemp Powers sought to answer through fiction: What would Malcolm X, Jim Brown, Cassius Clay, and Sam Cooke talk about at that after-party?¹²⁷ This fictionalized narrative again seeks to reshape the image of Malcolm X, this time away from icon status and into reasserting his personhood.

On the evening of February 26, 1964, in Miami, Florida, Malcolm X, Jim Brown (fullback for the Cleveland Browns), Sam Cooke (soul singer and songwriter), and Cassius Clay; (soon-to-be heavyweight champion of the world) went back to Malcolm's hotel room at the Hampton House Inn to have a quiet ice cream celebration for Clay's victory over Sonny Liston.¹²⁸ While the conversation is lost, we do have the context these men were living within

¹²⁶ *One Night in Miami*, directed by Regina King (2021, Seattle, WA), Amazon Prime Video.

¹²⁷ Loren King, "Screenwriter Kemp Powers on Finding Truth & Beauty in 'One Night in Miami,'" *The Credits*. February 2, 2021.

¹²⁸ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 286-287; Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 314.; "Jim Brown," *IMDB*, Accessed April 18,

when they entered this same shared space. This is how African American screenwriter Kemp Powers and Regina King approached filling in this gap in the historic record.¹²⁹

Regina King, in an interview with *The New York Times*, made clear that her goal in telling this story “...was to capture the sides of these men that we don’t get a chance to see. We tend to treat them as though they are gods almost...So often we don’t get the opportunity to see the vulnerability that Black men possess and their humanity.”¹³⁰ King is seeking to humanize the men featured in this film and to bring them down from their deification.

Regina King delved deeply into the historical context of Malcolm in 1964. In the lead-up to February 1964, Malcolm X found himself unmoored from his life of twelve years. Malcolm X, national minister for the NOI, was silenced by HEM both for his comments regarding the assassination of John F. Kennedy and his questioning of HEM’s mistresses.¹³¹ This silencing included being banned from hosting services or being a part of any activities put on by Harlem’s Mosque No. 7, the Mosque Malcolm himself helped found.¹³² In *ABMX*, Malcolm describes this fracturing of his life as though he is suffering head trauma, and in a way he is.¹³³ Emotionally, physically and mentally, he was entirely dedicated to the NOI. He reassured his family that they would always be taken care of by the NOI; that he would not put away money for his family because of this certainty.¹³⁴ In one of the most vulnerable moments of *ABMX*, he reflected back on his unshakable faith in the care his family would receive, he exclaims “I could never have

2023, <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000987/>; Arica Coleman, “What’s in a Name: Meet the Original Cassius Clay,” *Time*, June 10, 2016, <https://time.com/4363225/original-cassius-clay-muhammad-ali/>; Talk of the Nation, *National Public Radio*, January 19, 2006, <https://www.npr.org/2006/01/19/5163408/tracing-the-highs-and-tragic-end-of-sam-cooke>.

¹²⁹ King, “Screenwriter Kemp Powers.”

¹³⁰ Salamishah Tillet, “Regina King: Speaking Truth to Power Through her Art,” *The New York Times*, January 15, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/15/movies/regina-king-one-night-in-miami.html>.

¹³¹ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 294-324.

¹³² Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 309.

¹³³ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 309.

¹³⁴ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 309.

been a bigger fool!”¹³⁵ What Malcolm X would be suffering through during the Clay and Liston fight and the after-party would leave him in a profoundly vulnerable and wholly human place. Who was he if not a minister for the faith, for the prophet, that made him proud to be a Black man, who, in Malcolm’s own words, “raised me from the dead.”?¹³⁶

When Regina King introduces Malcolm X to the audience in *ONIM*, she does so by opening on footage from *HHP*. The footage in question is from Wallace’s opening beats discussing how Black Muslims, and Malcolm by extension preach a “gospel of hate.” The footage, in the context of the scene, is shown on a tv, zooming out slowly onto Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz having a conversation around the tv set about the fracturing of Malcolm from the NOI. What King does here is then juxtaposes that part of Malcolm’s life against the episode shown on the tv in the film; one that leaves him in great inner conflict.¹³⁷ King’s use of the documentary footage against a fiction based on reality can indicate as well that the legacy of that documentary still carries weight in Malcolm’s film memory. King uses it to juxtapose Malcolm’s transformation at this stage in his life because it was such a major part of framing how the public saw him up until now. This also sets up how much Malcolm is tied to the Nation of Islam; Wallace’s opening sequence showed Malcolm briefly but does not name him. By using a section of the documentary where Malcolm is yet to be identified, King draws a clear throughline that those words said in *HHP* were reflective of Malcolm and impacted perceptions of him.

Malcolm in *ABMX* expressed that he was not just aching at his silencing and the betrayal of his mentor, but desperate to find a way to keep helping the Black community at large and use his public speaking skills for political change.¹³⁸ He noted that being Muslim was the true path

¹³⁵ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 297.

¹³⁶ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 303.

¹³⁷ *One Night in Miami*, dir. Regina King.

¹³⁸ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 316.

forward for Black people in the United States, having felt he was saved by the grace of Allah from his imprisonment, he felt Allah would guide Black people out of the violence of a white supremacist country.¹³⁹ As he walked into Cassius Clay's training camp as Clay's spiritual mentor, he had begun to accept that he would never be back in the good graces of the NOI and knew he had to make a decision about his next step.¹⁴⁰ Cassius Clay was, arguably, part of that next step.

This is the context Regina King is working within for *ONIM*. She illustrates how Malcolm was in the middle of a massive personal transition that he never anticipated for himself and getting ready for his next step. Regina King makes it clear from early on that this portrayal of Malcolm X will be less about him as the icon seen in Lee's *MX*, and more about him as a person going through what is an incredibly vulnerable moment in his life. Take, for instance, a phone call Malcolm makes in the film back to his family wherein he has a fairly sweet interaction with his daughter over the phone. He then guides her to a bookcase where he has left a note for her and her sisters while he is away.¹⁴¹ On the surface, this could easily be a choice King makes to give more depth but otherwise could be seen as a fictional addition based on prior knowledge of how Malcolm interacted with his daughters. Yet this part is not necessarily as fictional as it could be; as Regina King got this story from Attallah Shabazz; Malcolm's eldest daughter.¹⁴² While this may not be when an interaction like this took place, it is something that did happen on a regular enough basis for it to be a story Attallah would want a filmmaker to know. Just because we do not know what happened on this night, does not mean King could not find and use truths to create a narrative that embraces history.

¹³⁹ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 220-221.

¹⁴⁰ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 284-286.

¹⁴¹ *One Night in Miami*, dir. Regina King.

¹⁴² King, "Screenwriter Kemp Powers."

King also broaches a much more contentious subject: the relationship between Malcolm X and Cassius Clay. In the film, Malcolm keeps referring to a plan he has to take the next step in his life without the NOI. This plan is later revealed to be his intention to create his own Muslim organization that skews closer to traditional Islam and away from NOI, and he is hoping Clay will join him. King has him voice clear awareness that Clay joining him would be a major boost to this young movement. However, up until this revelation, Malcolm is portrayed as Clay's Muslim spiritual advisor, teaching Clay Muslim tenets based on HEM's teachings, shown in sequences of them sharing a prayer. Once the revelation that Malcolm plans to leave the NOI and is hoping Clay will come along with him, Clay is shown as feeling betrayed. Malcolm implores him that if Clay feels at any point he has used him or was not genuine in their relationship, then Clay should not follow him.¹⁴³

It is important to point out that it would be presumptuous of anyone to assume that Malcolm X's only intent in recruiting Clay and becoming his spiritual advisor was just to gain something from him. George Plimpton in interviewing Malcolm X for *Harper's Magazine* noted that Malcolm was incredibly fond of Clay and saw great potential in him, a sentiment echoed by Malcolm in *ABMX*.¹⁴⁴ In line with Malcolm's own belief that being Muslim is the way forward for Black people, he likely felt leading Clay to Allah was part of that vision. There is evidence to suggest, though, that Malcolm was aware of the incredible boon it would be to be the one seen converting Clay to Islam, especially should he, as the underdog, win his fight against Sonny Liston.¹⁴⁵ While the film paints this as him wanting to bring Clay with him to his young organization, at the start of the night, in reality, Malcolm did attempt to leverage his certainty that

¹⁴³ *One Night in Miami*, dir. Regina King.

¹⁴⁴ George Plimpton, "Miami Notebook; Cassius Clay and Malcolm X," *Harpers Magazine*, June 1964; Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 310.

¹⁴⁵ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 313.

Clay would win against Liston, as he felt this is what Allah has written, to try to be reinstated to the NOI.¹⁴⁶ The NOI ultimately refused this offer. This did not stop Malcolm from celebrating Clay's victory, and only a few days later he would announce his complete departure from the NOI and intent to start his own organization.¹⁴⁷ Eventually, Clay and Malcolm would cease communications as Clay would become Muhammad Ali, a name given to him by Elijah Muhammad, and Ali would be expected to follow the word of the NOI.¹⁴⁸ This rift between the two would not close before Malcolm's assassination.¹⁴⁹

Regina King seems to strike a balance, an understanding that Malcolm was aware that Clay was a huge name to have at his side while also loving and respecting him immensely. Is the film version true to the exact letter of what was in Malcolm's mind? We will never know the answer. What this film does in terms of living memory is attempt to fill a gap in the record about Malcolm X. This one night at a pivotal moment in his journey, where the specific details are unknown. What this does for the memory of Malcolm X is fill in a gap, fiction or not, and bring attention to the vulnerability he was experiencing at this point in his life.

The Los Angeles Times Justin Chang gave the film high praise, noting that the "film's most uncompromising voice might also be its most vulnerable," when referring to Malcolm X.¹⁵⁰ Chang also echoes that King's goal of humanizing these historical figures in the public eye, at least to him, was largely successful. He stated that the film "...chips away at any simplistic, monolithic conception of black identity..." and the films "...refusal of easy answers..."¹⁵¹ In

¹⁴⁶ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 286.

¹⁴⁷ M.S Handler, "Malcolm X Splits with Muhammad," *New York Times*, March 9, 1964.

¹⁴⁸ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 292-293.

¹⁴⁹ Randy Roberts and Johnny Smith, *Blood Brothers*, (New York; Basic Books, 2016.), 309.

¹⁵⁰ Justin Chang, "Review: Four Legends Walk into a Motel Room in Regina Kings superbly acted 'One Night in Miami...'," *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 2021.

¹⁵¹ Chang, "Review: Four Legends."

making this assertion, it appears Chang saw King's work as renegotiating the public-facing image of Malcolm X.

Richard Roeper with the *Chicago-Sun Times* agrees with Chang, stating "that Malcolm in the film is one of the most dedicated people to the cause of Black freedom in that room."¹⁵²

Roeper also specifically notes that when it comes to historical depictions that "we don't know the details of that famous meeting of four legends more than half-century ago, but if it was anything like what plays out in 'One Night in Miami,' oh what a night."¹⁵³ Roeper does not give this film the weight of being perfectly accurate but does reflect that if any part of this has historical truth it leaves quite a wake.

From the *Chicago Defender*, Danielle Sanders notes that King's depiction is grounded in Malcolm's emotionality, that Malcolm's "... vulnerability and his deep love for his friends is evident."¹⁵⁴ Historically speaking Sanders asserts that "Regina King captures...the temperature of the times..." and that the film "...offers a glimpse inside the personal thoughts of four black men navigating the world..."¹⁵⁵ In doing so, Sanders affords this fictionalized reality strength in revealing details that we otherwise would not have without this film, accurate or not.

The New York Times published their own review by A.O Scott, relaying that the film paints Malcolm X "less as a confident, charismatic orator than as a smart, anxious man facing a crisis of his own."¹⁵⁶ Scott also relays that the theme of Power's script here is that "history isn't made by icons, but by human beings," and "that there is enough authenticity and coherence ...to

¹⁵² Richard Roeper, "One Night in Miami': Some Thrilling Sparring Between Cassius Clay and other Heavyweights of History," *Chicago-Sun Times*, January 14, 2021.

¹⁵³ Roeper, "One Night in Miami."

¹⁵⁴ Danielle Sanders, "Regina King Scores a Knockout in her Directorial Debut Film, One Night in Miami," *Chicago Defender*, January 14, 2021.

¹⁵⁵ Sanders, "Regina King."

¹⁵⁶ A.O Scott, "'One Night in Miami' Review: After the Big Fight, A War of the Worlds," *New York Times*, January 14, 2021.

make the film a credible representation of the moment.”¹⁵⁷ With both of these statements, Scott outright says that this can act as a stand-in for historical realities, considering we do not know the actualities of this conversation. More so than prior reviewers, Scott stands very firm that this film fills a historical gap.

When taking these critical receptions into account, in both predominantly white and Black publications, a consensus emerges that King gives the audience a much more grounded and human Malcolm than they potentially anticipated. One theme that rings true between these reviewers is the dedication of Malcolm to his goals for Black liberation and his open vulnerability at this point in his life. It is also clear that even though this is a fictionalization, some of these reviewers give this film the credit of being historically true, even if they can not assert the accuracy.

ONIM creates a more human version of Malcolm on the screen than we have contended with in the prior two films. The critics agree that this is a complex portrayal of a man who in *HHP* was seen as a hate monger, and was elevated to icon status through Spike Lee, but is now being brought back to his essential humanness in the 2020s. While it is still quite early in this film's life to assert what it has done to historic memory, it offers the potential for the public to engage with Malcolm X as a person before anything else.

Conclusion

On this journey from 1959 to 2020, we see how the portrayal of representation over time as new directors take the stage to write about Malcolm X's life. While this thesis does not account for how other forms of media impacted memory, through these films we see a clear shift. With *The Hate that Hate Produced*, we see the first time Malcolm is ever put to film, and the

¹⁵⁷ Scott, "One Night in Miami."

result paints him as dangerous and hateful toward white people. Spike Lee then takes this same man's autobiography and puts it to screen, and while critics and adults saw the film as iconifying Malcolm, who treated him and his message as indelible, the teens of the 90s began to see who Malcolm the man is. Those teens grow and they carry this more nuanced understanding with them, and this builds into *One Night in Miami*. While I can not claim this is why Kemp Powers would go on to write the stage play that would lead to Regina King's *One Night in Miami*, Powers was nineteen at the release of *Malcolm X* and if his opinion is the same as his peers, his creation of a much more human Malcolm than we have ever seen put to screen could have been impacted by Lee's work. As we come closer to the present and the end of a long journey through memory and film, Regina King's *One Night in Miami* opens the door for treating our heroes as human and our leaders as being strong because of their vulnerability.

We also have another throughline to consider: *The Hate that Hate Produced* has been given a new chance to impact memory in a way. While no official means of watching this documentary exists, it has been uploaded to Youtube, and a quick look through those comments can indicate what modern audiences think about the film. Just looking at the first page of comments it's clear to see how audiences receive Malcolm now is far different than he was received in 1959. One user, going by the screenname "andy sandy," explains that "It's so ridiculous that they call our resistance to evil hate instead of justice." Another user, screen name "Nathan Johnson" echoes a similar frustration with Walalce's handling of the content: "Malcolm spitting so much truth, they can't just let you hear him all the way through they gotta stop in between and tell you what they want you to believe he's saying."¹⁵⁸ Both of these comments

¹⁵⁸ Reelblack One, "The Hate That Hate Produced (1959) | Malcolm X First TV Appearance," June 29, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsYWD2EqavQ&list=PLpkDeeFVJ0bh_fjBiMPISxOpU_AozP2jl&index=1&t=793s

were posted in the past two years and stand in stark difference to the critical response to the film from 1959. In 1959, white media was especially ready to demonize the NOI and Black nationalism. Modern-day scholars in their reflections on the documentary saw it overall as inflammatory. Modern-day general audiences sit in concert with those scholarly assertions. How general audiences understand Malcolm has shifted clearly over time, as marked by this brief glance into comments on the youtube upload of *HTHP*.

HTHP pushed forward an image of a demagogue; a man preoccupied with hate. *MX* then takes a revisionist approach to Malcolm's public depiction, and in doing so elevated Malcolm X into an untouchable icon. *ONIM* then contents with both images; the demagogue and the deity; and reasserts Malcolm's agency as a person before he is either of those things. The film memory of this figure has evolved dramatically over the course of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries. Malcolm X was once painted as a hate-monger and he is now painted as a justice seeker against the violence of Jim Crow, who is just as vulnerable as everyone else.

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Vita

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