

Malcolm X's "Message to the Grass Roots"

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HIST 130 02: Introduction to African American History

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September 30, 2020

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Civil Rights and Human Rights were fought for daily during the Civil Rights Era. Malcolm X, was an influential, widely respected activist of these rights for Blacks in America. Malcolm X's "Message to the Grass Roots" emphasized the common enemy and experience of all black people in America while also bringing light to their subconscious dedication to the white man in comparison of the "house Negro" and the "field Negro".

According to Mamiya L. (2020), Malcolm X's original name was Malcolm Little, and his Muslim name, el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz. He was born in Omaha, Nebraska, May 19, 1925, and died February 21, 1965, in New York, New York. Malcolm X was a prominent figure and American leader within the Nation of Islam. The Nation of Islam focused on black nationalism and race pride in the early 1960s. He organized temples for the Nation of Islam after his release from prison in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. Malcolm X also printed a newspaper from his basement called "Muhammad Speaks," which was sold by male members of the Nation as a fund-raising practice. Malcolm X quickly rose in the Nation of Islam and was named the National Representative of the Nation of Islam by Elijah Muhammad himself.

November 10, 1963, Malcolm X gave a public speech at the Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference in Detroit, Michigan. Malcolm X directed his speech to all Blacks in America, regardless of their political or religious background. He stated, "You don't catch hell 'cause you're a Methodist or Baptist. You don't catch hell because you're a Democrat or a Republican. You don't catch hell because you're a Mason or an Elk, and you sure don't catch hell because you're an American; because if

you were an American, you wouldn't catch hell. You catch hell because you're a Black man. You catch hell, all of us catch hell, for the same reason" (Malcom X, 1963). In this statement, he is making it clear that nothing matters in America when you are Black, except the fact that you are Black. Malcom X is urging his audience to see the importance of this to unite on one accord because they all have a shared experience. He also insisted they shared a common enemy, "white people" (Malcom X, 1963). During this speech, Malcolm X gave an example of how Asians and Africans came together and set aside their differences so they could speak on their common enemy, Europeans, and he urged that Blacks in America needed to do the same in efforts to unite. This speech was his way of starting that conversation for Blacks in America.

Malcolm X elaborated on the term "revolution," and how it is not being taken as seriously as it should. Malcolm X used many different examples to open the eyes of his audience. He went into detail about the "nonviolent revolution" in America, which seems to be a punt against Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his ideologies. Malcom X expressed that the only revolution that is peaceful is the "Negro revolution," but a real revolution involves bloodshed and land. He also stated that a "revolution knows no compromise, revolution overturns and destroys everything that gets in its way. And you, sitting around here like a knot on the wall, saying, "I'm going to love these folks no matter how much they hate me." No, you need a revolution" (Malcom X, 1963). He urges his audience to realize that they should not be calm during their revolution because then it is not a revolution. Malcolm X again denotes Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s methods by emphasizing singing "We Shall Overcome" is not something you do in a revolution, and that by doing so, "These Negroes aren't asking for any nation— they're

trying to crawl back on the plantation" (Malcolm X, 1963). He later referred to the March on Washington as a circus due to the amount of control the Big Six had over the march, as requested by President Kennedy.

The experience in America for Blacks hasn't changed much over time, aging back to slavery. Though his speech was given in 1963, this still applies today. Malcolm X elaborated on the "house Negro" and the "field Negro". The house Negro had better living conditions than the field Negro. He had better clothing and food provided to him. The house Negro also loved his master and often used the word "we" when referring to his master. He used the example, "If the owner got sick, the house Negro would ask, "Are we sick?" (Malcolm X, 1963). He also stated that the house Negro would refuse to run away if asked to. On the other hand, the field Negro hated his master. The field Negro ate pig guts and wore "raggedy" clothing. The field Negro prayed for his slave master's demise and would leave in an instant if asked. In modern times Malcolm X urges that the house Negro and field Negro still exist within the black community. He stated, "The modern house Negro, he said, was always interested in living or working among white people and bragging about being the only African American in his neighborhood or on his job. Malcolm X said the Black masses were modern field Negroes and described himself as a field Negro" (Malcolm X, 1963).

The article provided on the "Message to the Grass Roots" lacked more details of the speech given by Malcolm X. He gave roughly an hour-long speech, which highlighted the majority if not all, the issue with the current Black American and their tainted mindset. The article could have included a little more information on more points

he hit during his speech. This speech was indeed a captivating one, in the way it relates to every Black person in America; This could have been expressed in further detail.

Malcom X was an outspoken activist who was able to influence masses of Black people during his time as a Human Rights and Civil Rights activist. The speech he gave titled "Message to the Grass Roots," was a historical speech that applied during 1963 and today in 2020. Malcolm X stressed the common enemy all Black people in America share. He also expressed in detail the "house Negro" and the "field Negro," in both slave times and modern times. Malcolm X urged that his audience understand the true definition of revolution in its entirety to have a proper one in America for Black people.

References

Malcolm X. 1963. "Message to the Grass Roots"

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