THE RHETORIC OF MALCOLM X

A Thesis

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

History indicates that the struggle for human freedom in America has long been dramatized by the spokesmen of the age who served as rallying points for varying views and visions. As the time demanded, they thundered demands and championed the audacious conception. They agitated, provoked, and fought with more than words, when necessary, for the august claims of human liberty. To this extent, the reformers, agitators, orators, philosophers, and social engineers, of the Black man's struggle for liberation have proved no different. Every phase of the Black Movement, every Black prime mover, and the outpouring of his rhetoric, have, with varying degrees, taken issue with these words of 1776 America: "That all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with natural and inalienable rights no man or government can bestow or take away." The disparity between these words and the subsequent incongruous practices have long tended to gag America. The cries of key Black spokesmen have long tended to make more acute the importance of their role in the struggle for equality and the rhetorical efforts they used to tighten the gag on the American throat to a very uneasy writhing. From Nat Turner in the mid-nineteenth century, through Malcolm X in the mid-twentieth century, the rhetoric of each phase used the Declaration of Independence as a point of leverage to
provide new techniques for demanding human rights. Necessarily, these men were concerned with effectively communicating with their audiences for the strength and progress of the movement. For any student of rhetoric and public address then, the ground of the Black spokesman is fertile for study.

Accordingly, in order to examine formally any one Black speaker, the student is prompted to draw his attention first to select historical contexts in the tradition of that rhetorician within the scope of rhetorical problems and rhetorical strategies dealt with by his earlier counterparts. Then it becomes the student's purpose to isolate, to record, and to analyze the contexts and rhetorical approaches of the speaker he has chosen to investigate.

Indeed, the recent Black Movement has further hinted that the Black spokesman continues to play a crucial role in the Black man's attainment of human freedom and human dignity. So, exploration of this area implies a wealth of resource for understanding the modes and the moods of Black rhetoricians in the future.

Malcolm X, leading spokesman for the Black Muslims, young, and many urban Blacks, became a significant figure in the Black community in early 1959. In the wake of major social and political setbacks for Black people, Malcolm's emergence was timely. The seeds of his emergence were sown after a television program on the Black Muslims called "The Hate That Hate Produced."\(^1\) The program was described by Malcolm X

as "a kaleidoscope of 'shocker' images." So soon after its airing, newspapers and weekly magazines rolled out articles on the Muslims as "black segregationists" and "black supremacists." Then in radio and television debates to defend the Nation of Islam as well as in articles by Look, Life, Newsweek and Reader's Digest, Malcolm X was thrust into national focus.

Malcolm used these media as vehicles not only to respond to accusations on the Muslim sect but also to educate the Black man on his historical roots and the reasons for his oppression in America. His rhetorical skills were put to severe test. Efforts by many panelists to trick him and put him off-guard were checkmated by his skills. Prison debating had taught him the quick maneuvering of his rhetoric. Before long, hundreds of Muslims and curious Black people flocked to his temple to hear the words of Malcolm X.

In these ways then, Malcolm X appeared to reach deep into the masses of Black people and educate them to his ideology of Black nationalism. He sought to provide, in their own language and idioms, a new understanding of themselves and the deficiencies of their lives. Many, by these calculated strokes, were converted to Malcolm's stinging indictments of America.

With keen persuasive techniques and delivery, Malcolm X drew in masses of Black people, claiming their allegiance in open challenge to established Black leaders, and tempering them for open rebellion. His greatest impact lay in that he dared to say and do out-right what many Black people secretly held in their hearts. To the extent that
Malcolm was effective, many Black people took his daring words and deeds and made themselves a composite model to take their "new found truth" into the streets. Malcolm X indeed proved himself a major feature of this period of Black struggle for freedom.

As a social activator, Malcolm X attempted to bring the fragmented factions of Black disenchantment under a common banner and a common thought. In the historical tradition of Henry Highland Garnet and Marcus Garvey, Malcolm sought to bring a new meaning and a new splendour to "blackness." He sought to destroy old beliefs within the mythology of the happy, satisfied Negro. More emphatically, he sought to destroy the "negro" concept. In his speech, "Some Reflections On Negro History Week," he explained why. "As long as you call yourself a Negro, nothing is yours. No languages—you can't lay claim to any language, not even English. You mess it up. You can't lay claim to any name, any type of name, that will identify you as something that you should be. You can't lay claim to any culture as long as you use the word "Negro" to identify yourself. It attaches you to nothing." Malcolm taught a way of life and a way of relating to that life from which, he insisted, a personal risk and thus, a personal freedom ensued. The purpose of that teaching was precisely to live in accordance with the "highest in us," always remembering its origin.

Thus, he inclined himself to bring a new emphasis of Black history in

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terms of a history to be proud of and used as a basis for action in
the struggle for liberation. In his view, the Black man then could
fight for that of which he is proud. He could consistently attack
his inferiority stereotype. On this point, Malcolm remarked sourly:

It's a crime, the lie that has been told to generations
of black men and white men both. Little innocent black
children, born of parents who believed that their race
had no history. .....Innocent black children growing
up, living out their lives, dying of old age—and all of
their lives ashamed of being black. But the truth is
pouring out of the bag now.3

Malcolm seemed to hold tenaciously to the idea that the translation of
historical awareness brought into action the radical solipsistic sys-
tem that broke old, repressive icons. It destroyed illusion and un-
veiled reality. From that point, Black men could progress from the
organized cant of men moving along by the echoed sounds of their own
voices to the "nomo" and the building of a strong Black nation. In-
deed, the future has yet to prove Malcolm X right or wrong.

As a strategist, Malcolm X attempted to change the course of the
Black man's freedom struggle. With a focus on mobilization, power,
and international awareness, he urged Blacks to organize themselves.
Seemingly, not only was his strategy to degrade and to demean white
society, but to urge and to provoke new definitions of society directly
applicable to Black life and Black experience. He was indefatigable
in instructing Blacks on the inconsistencies and injustices of American
society. What this meant in terms of the freedom struggle was what

Malcolm constantly insisted. America is a hypocritical country and integration is impossible unless Blacks organize and build power. By definition, integration was only possible among equals. Within the concept of Black nationalism, Malcolm further structured this proposal. From his speech, "The Ballot or the Bullet," he expanded this idea. "So the economic philosophy of Black nationalism means in every church, in every civic organization, in every fraternal order, it's time now for our people to become conscious of the importance of controlling the economy of our community. .....Once you gain control of the economy of your own community, then you don't have to picket and boycott and beg some cracker downtown for a job in his business."4 When Black people are able to organize to this point, they had more force to attack exploitation and oppression.

Malcolm's keenest strategy, however, seemed to be expressed in the slogan, "freedom by any means necessary". He explained this idea in his message, "To Mississippi Youth":

You get freedom by letting the enemy know that you'll do anything to get your freedom; then you'll get it. It's the only way you'll get it. When you get that kind of attitude, they'll label you as a "crazy Negro," or they'll call you a "crazy nigger"... .....But when you stay radical long enough, and get enough people to be like you, you'll get your freedom....

As a stylist, Malcolm X's rhetoric was sharp, foreboding, caustic, devastating, lashing, sensible, and insightful. His use of the analogy,

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the rhetorical question, the powerful repetitious phrase, the bestial imagery, and the short-forward retort, made Malcolm X seem commanding and dour to his audiences. Within the electric atmosphere of confrontation, both drama and style seemed at once to propel Malcolm X into a remarkable posture as fisher of men—or, more poetically said—a metaphor in the age of a dying hope.

Justification of the Study

This study is an exploration of the rhetoric of Malcolm X within the Nation of Islam and Civil Rights Movement, particularly during the years 1959-1963. There are several reasons that justify this investigation. First, Malcolm X gained a wide popularity during the time of the attack on the Nation of Islam and the rising emotional tensions and increasing racial conflict in the civil rights movement during 1963. Despite his popularity and achievements, however, no in-depth treatment of his persuasion (particularly rhetorical), strategy, and style, has been examined within their historical contexts and their rhetorical designs. Secondly, Malcolm's rhetoric during this period is important for study because he came in as a catalytic agent to the non-violent movement, or more precisely, a polarity to that movement, and created a revolutionary rhetoric—a point of departure both for himself to speak outside the Muslim religion and for the many masses of Black people to speak with him outside the instrument of moderation and gradualism. Thirdly, analysis of Malcolm's speaking is limited,
for the most part, within the 1959-1963 period because during this
time, Malcolm's rhetoric was in its "finest hour."\(^6\) It began to cap-
tivate larger and larger audiences who were becoming acutely aware of
the fragmentation of Black life and were steadily searching for a
vent to their frustrations and consciousness. In addition, consider-
able speeches and resource material are available from this period
during the time of his envelopment within the Nation of Islam.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to analyze Malcolm X's rhetoric
within the Black Muslim Circle and the rising Civil Rights Movement
during 1959-1963 by answering the following questions:

1. What was the historical perspective of the Black liberation
   struggle in which Malcolm X was a part and what select Black
   spokesmen constitute a major part of Malcolm's rhetorical
   legacy?

2. What was the nature of Malcolm X's rhetoric? Why should
   he be considered a social activator?

3. What were the elements of persuasion that might have sug-
   gested that Malcolm's rhetorical skills demanded a more
   militant stance than other spokesmen of his time?

4. What kinds of audiences generally did Malcolm address?

5. What kind of rhetorical strategies did he design and em-
   ploy to reflect the clear perception of his procedures
   and the accomplishment of his goals?

6. How did Malcolm's style of speaking demonstrate his basic
   attitude regarding Black and white societal conflict, his
   ideology, and his audience adaptation?

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\(^6\) George Breitman, *By Any Means Necessary*, (New York: Pathfinder
The second chapter will seek to answer the question: What was the proper historical perspective of the Black liberation struggle in which Malcolm was a part and what select Black spokesmen constitute a major part of Malcolm's rhetorical legacy? Who were the earlier Black rhetoricians who initiated the militant ideas, ideologies, and strategies Malcolm X attempted to bring to fruition? Why were their efforts thwarted? What spokesmen and what strategies replaced them?

The third chapter will seek to answer the question: What was the nature of Malcolm X's rhetoric and why he should be considered a social activator? What were the elements of persuasion that might have suggested that Malcolm's rhetorical skills demanded a more militant stance than other spokesmen of his time? Why was his appeal considered more effective and more applicable to voicing the needs of many of the masses during this time than many of the more established Black leaders? What was the overall attitude that influenced Malcolm's appeal?

The fourth chapter will seek to answer the question: What kind of rhetorical strategies did Malcolm design and employ to reflect the clear perception of his procedures and the accomplishment of his goals? In order to answer this question the study will focus on the four basic strategies outlined by Arthur L. Smith in his book, Rhetoric of Black Revolution. In addition, it should be asked: What were the basic issues presented to his audiences? What was his major purpose in selecting these issues and their subsequent choice of attack as presented to his audiences?
The fifth chapter will seek to answer the question: What kind of audiences did Malcolm address? How did Malcolm's style of speaking demonstrate his basic attitude on race relations between Blacks and whites in America, his ideologies, and his ability to adapt to his audiences? What were the figures of speech that characterized his style? What were the major components of style that Malcolm used effectively?

The sixth chapter will be summary and conclusions.

Research Procedures

Weekly *New York Times* newspaper articles from the period 1959 - 1963 were reviewed as well as monthly periodicals enfolding the career of Malcolm X. Issues of the *Amsterdam News*, a Harlem Black newspaper, as well as issues of *Muhammad Speaks*, a Black Muslim weekly which Malcolm X edited himself, were unavailable for the period during which this study is concerned.

The Martin Luther King Library in Columbus, Ohio provided particularly helpful resource material in the area of Black history. In addition, the Columbus Public Library and The Ohio State University Library served valuably for most of the printed matter on Malcolm X.

The writer obtained copies of key speeches delivered by Malcolm X. These speeches are:


2. "The Ballot or The Bullet" delivered on April 3, 1964 at the Cory Methodist Church in Cleveland, Ohio.


5. "At the Audubon" to be delivered on December 13, 1964 to the Organization of Afro-American Unity in Harlem, New York. (Malcolm X was assassinated before this speech could be delivered.)


7. "To Mississippi Youth" delivered on December 31, 1964 at the Hotel Theresa in New York.


11. "Last Answers and Interviews" (statements made by Malcolm X during the last three months of his life), Malcolm X Speaks. 'Message to The Grass Roots', "The Ballot or The Bullet", "The Black Revolution", "At The Audubon", and "To Mississippi Youth", were given major consideration for the study of important themes, strategies, and styles of Malcolm X. Excerpts are taken from the other speeches for further re-enforcement in examining the vital areas explored in Malcolm's rhetoric. The Autobiography of Malcolm X was used considerably to obtain excerpts from speeches given while Malcolm was yet in the Nation of Islam. Special emphasis was given those speeches from 1959-1963. Recordings were also used for validation of the printed speeches when
available. Finally, The New York Times articles were consulted regarding the speeches but little information was obtained about their content.

Review of Literature

When Malcolm X was alive, there seemed to have been limited research about him or the nature of his speaking abilities within the Nation of Islam or the Civil Rights Movement. There was, however, apart from C. Eric Lincoln's book, The Black Muslims in America, only sporadic newspaper and magazine reporting of Black Muslim activities. Mohammed Speaks, the Muslim newspaper which Malcolm edited, was written and distributed to the public for its propaganda features to aid in the conversion of future Muslims. Yet, the paper did not focus either on Malcolm X or his rhetorical skills (as it properly was not designed to do). Literature dealing with Malcolm X did not seem to emerge until after his death on February 21, 1965. After that time, considerable material, giving a broader view of this man and his convictions, began to be produced. Significant among that literature are the works of George Breitman. He has contributed Malcolm X Speaks which is a compilation of the speeches done by Malcolm X primarily during the last year of his life. Breitman attempted to present, by way of these selections, the major ideas advocated by Malcolm during this time. The Last Year of Malcolm X, was also done by Breitman as a supplement to Malcolm X Speaks and to The Autobiography of Malcolm X, written by Alex Haley. Again, he attempted to augment the subject matter available with additional speeches, interviews, and editorial comments to
further understanding about Malcolm X's developing philosophies. John Henrik Clarke edited an influential work entitled *Malcolm X: The Man and His Times* which served to explore, in the various essays, further autobiographical features of Malcolm's life. The book also provided space for those authors who would appraise Malcolm's leadership, his triumph, and dream for Black people. Hakim A. Jamal expanded the autobiographical notes on Malcolm X in *From The Dead Level* and John Illo in *Language, Communication, and Rhetoric in Black America*, investigated the more poetic features of Malcolm's speaking style. James Golden and Richard Rieke in *The Rhetoric of Black Americans* reviewed the rhetorical campaign of Malcolm X within the nature of separation.

Nonetheless, limited research seemed evident dealing with the rhetoric itself of Malcolm X. Considerable material, however, is presently available with the purpose of properly accounting the exact words of Malcolm's speeches as much as tapes and notes will allow. Indeed, the works of George Breitman are a testament to that emphasis. And, there is also a growing body of works presently being devoted to clarifying Malcolm X's political ideas and contributions. Theodore Draper's, *The Rediscovery of Black Nationalism* and James Golden and Richard Rieke's *The Rhetoric of Black America* serve as examples for this note.

Then, since the literature thus far appears limited with regard to the investigation of Malcolm X's rhetoric and his rhetorical skills, a need exists to cultivate such a study as proposed in this thesis.
CHAPTER II
AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Any genuine attempt to understand the rhetoric of Malcolm X must begin with some understanding of the significant historical components that went into its making. To this extent then, it will be possible to underscore with more clarity the drama and timing of that rhetoric.

Events which gave rise to the revolutionary rhetoric of Malcolm X were in large part the culmination of many years of racial prejudice and black protest. For centuries, Black people have propagated leaders and spokesmen to verbalize their frustrations, disenchancements, and lack of identity. The aim of these spokesmen: to storm the rigid social, economic, and educational barriers that have prevented Blacks from participating in the core of American life. Long before Malcolm X, in 1852 Frederick Douglass intrepidly struck the chords that Malcolm would play in variations of their common theme: "O! had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, today, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke." There are many distinctions, however, between former Black spokesmen and Malcolm X in their use of black protest.

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rhetoric. The nature of the times imply variations in the types of agitation and protest. Nonetheless, the common antecedents of them all go back well over 100 years.

In early America, the lives of Black people were less than idyllic. The hard distinction of color became a concrete reality and a heavy problem after a series of colonial statutes decreed it into law in the 1660's. Virginia, for example, passed into law a series of statutes that made Black people slaves for life. In 1667, Virginia law stated: "That the conferring of baptism doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedom." The essence of this law negated the former practice that those Blacks who were baptized into Christianity became free men. In 1691, another Virginia law pierced any rising hopes for freedom in America that Blacks may have had. The law stated: "That no negro or mulattoe be after the end of this present session of assembly set free by any person or persons whatsoever, unless, such person or persons...heirs, etc... pay for the transportation of such negro or negroes out of the country within six months after such setting them free." The Black man emerged from these and similar laws passed in other states as inferior and powerless, deprived of legal rights and power in the community. Blacks responded to this hopelessness in terms of slave revolts and uprisings as a means of direct resistance. White vigilante committees responded in terms of violence and murder encasing Black America in

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a circle of fear, disfranchisement, and estrangement. Throughout the 1700's this circle closed tighter and tighter to the point that the Blacks who were to survive had to either give up or pretend to give up their withered hopes, ambitions and wills; their families and claims to property; their loves and hates to open discretion. In turn, their protests had to become subdued. Lerone Bennett, Jr. notes in his book, Confrontation: Black and White, that "(s)laves...used a variety of techniques in undramatic, day-to-day resistance to slavery. On occasions, they staged sit-downs and slow downs in the cotton fields. On impulse sometimes and sometimes on plan, they sat down and refused to move until work loads were lightened. Some groups fled to the forests at the height of the cotton-picking season and sent emissaries to negotiate with 'old master'."  

Slaves seemingly continued this kind of discontent and protest until the Revolutionary War. When the war came and on its heels, the Declaration of Independence, Blacks awakened, stimulated by the loud cries of freedom. Out of the whole complexity, Blacks appeared to create a new conception of their deprivation and a new technique for demanding their rights. The Negro Church emerged as their tool. In the physical manifestation of Richard Allen and the Free African Society, Black people tried to take slavery to task. Allen demanded for Blacks full participation in American institutions. He condemned

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slavery and bigotry in a language that largely could be considered revolutionary for Colonial America. But, Allen was powerless to effect great changes for Black people. Against immense forces of over-whelming control, Allen could do little but honk muted tones of deep despair. Out of the stir of this agitation though, came the abolitionists.

Antebellum

Then all of a sudden somebody hollered, and everybody started singing. Just singing and dancing and clapping. Old people you didn't think could even walk started hopping 'round like game roosters. This what the people was singing:

We free, we free, we free
We free, we free, we free
We free, we free, we free
Oh, Lorly, we free. 11

It is difficult to overstate the importance and the impact of the abolitionist movement on the nature of American society. This courageous group of men attempted to smash the slave system and establish a new social order. Of the abolitionists, many of them were Black, who added their voices and their rhetoric to complement the total aim of all abolitionists—to expose what have constituted the agonies of slavery's deep affront to a rapidly growing Black minority. A sweep of history reveals part of this vanguard to be David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet, and Frederick Douglass, to name a few. The common rhetorical strategy was a harsh indictment of American idealism

and democracy. Each held as his rhetorical basis the fundamental
goodness of man. Each was convinced that America had the moral
courage to correct injustices perpetrated on their people. Each
felt that this country had the redemptive qualities to redress these
grievances if words were marshalled stringently enough to redefine
and reorder national concerns and priorities. Their rhetorical goal,
then, was assimilation of all Americans into American society and
participation in its dream. As a brother abolitionist, Alexander
Crummell voiced:

Let our posterity know that we, their ancestors, un-
cultured and unlearned, were true to themselves, the
age in which they lived, their abject race, and the
cause of man; shrunk not from trial, nor from sufferings
—but conscious of Responsibility,—gave themselves up
to the vindication of the high hopes and the lofty aims
of true Humanity.

The abolitionists revelled in non-violent direction to reach
their goal, remarkably similar to the contemporary Martin Luther
King Freedom Movement. They held mass meetings, sang freedom songs,
staged sit-ins, marched and picketed, much to the nation's dismay.
These people were evidence to the ugly paradox of human freedom.
Many were doctors, teachers, and ministers, who presented all they
had to the struggle—their minds, their hearts, and their bodies.
In spite of this, it became all too clear these words meant nothing:
"We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created
equal...."

12Jerome Bennett, Jr., Before The Mayflower: A History of The
The abolitionists were pressed to unearth the assumptions of the segregationists which were grounded in beliefs of inherent Negro inferiority. The Black man's brain was believed to be smaller and the possibilities of development, therefore, limited. \(^{13}\) The Black man was believed to be lazy and licentious. \(^{14}\) "The Black man is trifling; he lacks application; he has neither continuous purpose nor continuous effort, he is satisfied simply to live and enjoy. And why not?" \(^{15}\)

Since belief, by definition, seems to be the notion that the truth is what one would "lief" or wish it to be, the believer then will open his mind to the truth on the condition that it fits in with his preconceived ideas and wishes. Thus, to the extent that white beliefs defined Black lives in American society, the Black man was believed to be incorrigibly ignorant:

We gave him religion, which he took to greedily. We gave him his freedom, but he did not know what to do with it; and he gained from it no new happiness. We gave him American citizenship, the cheapest thing we had...and with the franchise in his pocket, price of notes from fifty cents to two dollars, he was left to propagate piccaninnies and idle life away in peace and happiness. \(^{16}\)

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15 Bancroft, p. 81.

16 Bancroft, p. 81.
The Black man was believed to be incompetent, unreliable for any use, an unmitigated nuisance. More than that and above all else, slavery was considered to be the best of all possible states for him.

However horrid the crime of human slavery, however repulsive in all its forms and unprofitable in its operations, the fact remains that the Negro was never so well off, so happy and contented as when he was the chattel of the chivalrous south. It was as if God's curse of Canaan was but a covert benediction, for until he found the blessings of bondage in North America his life was truly a piteous one, a savage, and the master of the slave of savages.17

Indeed, this belief, in itself, was thought striking enough to stagger reasonable men. But, the nation seemed to be doing what belief was designed to do; to hang on to life; to grasp and keep it for one's own within the now, within the status quo. For all appearances, what this created then was slavery-status quo; segregationist-abolitionist, gripped in a struggle to the death.

From this powerful interplay of forces in 19th-century America emerged another progeny of racial prejudice and Black protest—a great Black writer and spokesman, David Walker. Walker, born in Wilmington, South Carolina of a slave father and a free mother, Lerone Bennett, Jr. describes him in his Black history memorandum as "the John the Baptist of the anti-slavery crusade."18 Early in his manhood, Walker decided that American slavery was the cruelest form of slavery, so in the 1820's he tried to flee it by fleeing the South. He relocated


18 Bennett, Before The Mayflower, p. 132.
in Boston and by 1827, he was aligned to the abolitionists, striking severe blows with his pen and rending the air with his voice against the oppressed condition of his Black people. In his own words, he expressed his dedication to this cause. "I may be doomed to the stake and the fire, or to the scaffold tree, but it is not in me to falter if I can promote the work of emancipation."\textsuperscript{19} As a fiery journalist for \textit{Freedom Journal}, the abolitionist newspaper in Boston, Walker launched a campaign in 1828 of threats and curses in his now famous Appeal.

\begin{quote}
It is not to be understood here, that I mean for us to wait until God shall take us by the hair of our heads and drag us out of abject wretchedness and slavery, nor do I mean to convey the idea for us to wait until our enemies shall make preparations, and call us to seize those preparations, take it away from them, and put everything before us to death, in order to gain our freedom which God has given us. For you must remember that we are men as well as they. God has been pleased to give us two eyes, two hands, two feet, and some sense in our heads as well as they. They have no more right to hold us in slavery than we have to hold them; .......remember, Americans, that as miserable, wretched, degraded and abject as you have made us in preceding, and this generation, to support you and your families, that some of you (whites) on the continent of America, will yet curse the day that you were born. You want slaves, and want us for your slaves!!! My colour will yet, root some of you out of the very face of the earth!!!!\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

What Walker was attacking was the colonized condition of Black people and their inability to achieve assimilation into American


society. He was incensed at the South's Black Codes harshly imposed to perpetuate slavery. Ostensibly, Walker seemed to view the Black man in the middle of a power struggle between the North and the South. He chose then the Appeal to mitigate their force. His plan of action was not outlined. But, the Appeal endures nonetheless as a triumph in militant writing and as a major asset of lessons in the Black rhetorical dowry.

Reactions to Walker's work were varied. Some viewed Walker's posture favorably, many others condemned it as reactionary. Historian Bennett portrays the event in these terms. "These words, (the Appeal), like a cry of fire in a crowded theater, constricted hearts and made sweat run down men's backs. The governors of Virginia, Georgia, and North Carolina called their legislatures into secret sessions."\(^{21}\) Then when Nat Turner affixed his bloody stamp to this phase of protest, Bennett further notes that "events hurried forward with the portentousness of a Greek drama."\(^{22}\)

Two years later, the American Anti-Slavery Society was organized. They urged agitation through pamphlets, books, and other traditional methods of protest. The Underground Railroad was established and operating to travel hundreds of slaves out of the South. But the fugitive slave laws militated against the efforts of the abolitionists and endangered the security of Black people everywhere in America. The

\(^{21}\)Bennett, *Before The Mayflower*, p. 132.

\(^{22}\)Bennett, p. 132.
Kansas-Nebraska Bill opened the territory to slavery and the Dred-Scott decision denied citizenship to men with black skin. Then when the potato famine in Ireland struck United States' economy, abolitionists appeared more firmly fixed in the wretchedness of conflict that was America's affliction. The abolitionists then spoke to effect a cure.

These speakers swiftly gained popularity. Among them were Frederick Douglass and Henry Highland Garnet. It appeared to be a time when "Black" was fashionable. To have a Black speaker tell his story was in vogue. Ardently, Black speakers responded. After all, who could tell the Black man's story better than himself?

Frederick Douglass emerged as Black spokesman on March 12, 1839. During his first speech for the Abolitionist Society, he made his first formal denunciation of slavery. However, it was not until August 12, 1841, at Nantucket, that Douglass delivered the speech that punctuated him as "orator" and ushered in what appeared to be one of the greatest periods of declamation in the Black man's history.

At Nantucket, he told the story of his servitude in such compelling form and colour that he captivated the audience as he was to captivate so many more during the course of his oratorical career. William Wells Brown said of him that day: "White men and black men had talked against slavery, but none had ever spoken like Frederick Douglass."23 With this speech, his transition appeared complete from

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23 Bennett, Before The Mayflower, p. 138.
village slave to stage spokesman. He was a full-fledged orator now. And, the more he spoke, the more effective appeared his presentation. His expression--his style--seemed to manifest itself to captivate the heart and triumph the will. The chemistry and dynamics of his style were emotional impulse, rhythmical and joyful; intellectual statement, informative and explanatory. Poetic and cerebral, these contrasting modes of expression, rendered into one, seemed to generate for this man, a particular power to reach the nation's ear.

Arna Bontemps in his commentary on Frederick Douglass emphasized that "(Douglass') sole purpose was to stir the hearts of the American people against the system of slavery and color prejudice."24 With this in mind, it is easy to see that first, he fashioned his words to ride conviction as a boat over smooth water. "What, to the American slave, is your Fourth of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty of which he is the constant victim."25 Second, he organized his words to ram emotion as that same boat swerved, full force, hitting headlong into the dark whirlpools of his people's anguish. "To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity."26 He tempered his words.

26 Golden and Rieke, p. 184.
"Your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass-fronted impudence;..." He balanced his sentences. He compared and contrasted in skillful strokes. "...your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity are to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy - a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages."  

Indeed, by all appearances, Douglass spoke the way he did because he believed. He believed in America and all of its people. It says in the Bible: "...Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Frederick Douglass seemed to believe that that place was America. So, he took off his shoes and got comfortable. He and his people intended to stay home.

There was yet another who emerged from the interplay of conflict and agitation. He has often been described by historians as the "Thomas Paine of the abolitionist movement" for his fiery invective and scathing verbal assaults upon slaveocracy in America. Characterized as a "striking figure; tall, commanding, black, broad-nosed with eyes that look through you" there emerged Henry Highland Garnet.

Garnet's conception of the Black man's condition appeared to be similar to Douglass' but his means to deal with it varied distinctively.

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28 Golden and Rieke, p. 185.
30 Bennett, *Before The Mayflower*, p. 147.
He abhorred slavery and its grave implications to Black lives. At a national convention of Black men in New York, in a speech characteristic of his style, Garnet prompted a national slave strike.

"Your condition does not absolve you from moral obligation. The diabolical injustice by which your liberties are cloven down, neither God, nor angels, nor just men, command you to suffer for a single moment. Therefore it is your solemn and imperative duty to use every means, both moral, intellectual, and physical, that promises success. . . . . . .

Brethren, the time has come when you must act for yourselves. It is an old and true saying that 'if hereditary bondsmen would be free, they must themselves strike the blow.'"31

Douglass and Garnet clearly seemed to recognize the dilemma of the Black man caught in the vise of a system which oppressed him on the one hand, and excited his hopes on the other. Their rhetoric, assimilationist and revolutionary in character, respectively, appeared to function as startling sounds heard through the megaphone of their disillusionment. They attempted to communicate to whites that Blacks were disgruntled. But, beyond this point, Black people were neither provided guidelines for communicating this state on their own behalf nor clear instructions on how to survive any other way than "business as usual and whites'ill come around." So, for Black people, their problems, shrouded in slavery dress, remained as problems do until the appropriate procedures and formulas for action are presented. Nonetheless, it does not escape attention that though contrasting in response, Douglass' and Garnet's efforts were seminal

31 Lincoln, Chronicles of Black Protest, p. 92.
to the Black rhetorical legacy. Overall, their efforts seemed to sow the seeds for more insights and more means for other Black men, other Black spokesmen, other Black leaders, to pick up and meet their challenge.

Reconstruction

For a while there looked like everything was go'n be good for us. ...The Republicans said every free man ought to have forty acres and a mule.\textsuperscript{32}

In the period following the Civil War, slaves were freed and were organizing themselves. Historian Bennett says, "...the Negro masses were stirred by an unparalleled ferment of political activity. Negroes flocked to open air meetings, registered and organized political groups. Leaders emerged from the masses and demanded political and civil equality. The white South was stunned."\textsuperscript{33} Then, radicalism seemed to soar and agitation seemed to heighten. The South took on a new strategy. Groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, White Brotherhood, and the Camellias of Louisiana, were organized to keep the Blacks in check. Bennett adds that the South's plan was to "...reduce Negroes to political impotence. How? By the boldest and most ruthless political operation in American history. By stealth and murder, by economic intimidation and political assassinations, by whippings and maimings, cutting and shooting, by the knife, by the rope, by the whip...by Fear."\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32}Gaines, The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, pp. 65-67
\textsuperscript{33}Bennett, Before The Mayflower, p. 196.
\textsuperscript{34}Bennett, p. 197.
Waves of terror hit the Black man in massive doses. One of the major reasons behind this strategy was the passage of the 14th and 15th amendments. With these enactments, the Black man was placed in a unique position. The Southern agrarians needed Black people for reapportionment of seats in the legislature which further meant control of the North. The Northern industrialists needed Black people for the same legislative control to buffer the force of the South. They feared the resurgence of Southern power. So, a Freedman's Bureau was established and federal troops were sent to the South to protect newly freed Black people and maintain law and order. During this period, Frederick Douglass continued to speak boldly for his people and their need for education. But decades later, others, crucial others, added their voices to the dissenting score. Among these men were Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey and Martin Luther King, to name a few. Each carried leadership in succession. Each man in his own time. Each man a product of his own time.

One of the most prominent Black men in the early 1900's was Booker T. Washington who held leadership for nearly 1/3 of a century. He was a conservative man who urged Black people to work within the system of American ideologies rather than attempt to subvert the system. He encouraged Black people to pursue economic power through vocational training--to start at the bottom and work up. For this strategy, even Historian Bennett seems to ruffle for the moment. He says, "If Washington was not a Thomist (from 'Uncle Tom'), he was the father of thousands. .... By devaluing words and preventing Negroes
and liberal whites from uniting on a common program, he shattered the feeble Negro protest movement. By suborning the Negro press and confusing the Negro masses, he destroyed the Negro's ability to protest himself at an hour when he needed protection most. And to all this must be added the obvious fact that Washington's policy of appeasement did not work. Cast down your buckets, Washington said in his Atlanta speech. Down went millions of buckets, and they came up-filled with blood.  

Washington's advancement of this policy can be seen more clearly from looking at the words themselves in his address to the Cotton States' Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia, September, 1895. In his own words, Washington said:

To those of my race who depend upon bettering their condition in a foreign land, or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man who is their next-door neighbor, I would say: 'Cast down your bucket where you are'-cast it down in making friends, in every manly way, of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded.

Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions. And in this connection it is well to bear in mind that whatever other sins the South may be called to bear, when it comes to business, pure and simple, it is in the South that the Negro is given a man's chance in the commercial world, and in nothing is this Exposition more eloquent than in emphasizing this chance.

To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South, were I permitted, I would repeat what I say to my own race, 'Cast down your bucket where you are.' .....Casting down your bucket among my people, helping and encouraging them as you are doing on these grounds, and with education of head, hand, and heart,

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35 Bennett, *Confrontation: Black and White*, p. 91.
you will find that they will buy your surplus land, make blossom the waste places in your fields, and run your factories. While doing this, you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding and unresentful people the world has seen.  

It would appear then from this view that Bennett's notion could have substantial validity. Seemingly, Washington failed to understand the Southern social caste system and actually appeared to aid whites in establishing disfranchisement and legal segregation. His rhetoric, clear, unembellished, expanded through folkisms, advocated to Black people a policy of accommodation and conciliation. As Black protest grew loud and disenchantment overflowed, Washington's pacifistic rhetoric offered to Black people no effective means to communicate their despair and still survive. In effect, his rhetoric appeared, more than not, to be a liturgical chant drummed out to Blacks saying "stifle your anger. Whites'll come around. Stifle your anger. Whites'll come around. Stifle your anger. Whites'll come around."

Many protested Washington's policies. But, none seemed to storm as did W. E. B. DuBois, the proud Black professor at Atlanta University. A very educated man, DuBois earned a B.A. at Fisk University and another at Harvard University. He continued at Harvard to receive his M.A. then studied at the University of Berlin to receive his Ph.D. He is described by Bennett as a "proud, brown-skinned man of thirty-five, a little below medium height, erect, sharp-eyed and


Mr. Washington's programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races. Again, in our own land, the reaction from the sentiment of war-time has given impetus to race-prejudice against Negroes, and Mr. Washington withdraws many of the high demands of Negroes as men and American citizens. In other periods of intensified prejudice all the Negro's tendency to self-assertion has been called forth; at this period a policy of submission is advocated. In the history of nearly all other races and peoples the doctrine preached at such crises has been that manly self-respect is worth more than lands and houses, and that a people who voluntarily surrender such respect, or cease striving for it, are not worth civilizing.

... His doctrine has tended to make the whites, North and South, shift the burden of the Negro problem to the Negro's shoulders and stand aside as critical and rather pessimistic spectators; when in fact the burden belongs to the nation, and the hands of none of us are clean if we bend not our energies to righting these great wrongs. DuBois insisted that Black people reject Washington's program and the latter's distorted image of their future. It appeared in DuBois' way of thinking that to remain with Washington meant that Blacks would have no future. Instead, he urged that Black people strive for the

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37 Bennett, Before The Mayflower, p. 279.
rights which the world accords to men. Subsequent to this event, DuBois organized the Niagara Movement as a tool to more effectively oppose Washington. 39

A modern analogy of Malcolm X tends to make the meaning of these two men more clear in terms of policy and application. Washington, accepting the alleged inferiority of the Negro races, appeared to be a "house" Negro. His policies and his rhetoric seemed to say, "We got a good house here." DuBois, on the other hand, appeared to be a "field" Negro. Condemning Washington's policies and starting the Niagara Movement, he seemed to say, "Any place is better than here." Despite the fact that their ideologies seemed very similar basically in that they were both assimilationist in character, the essence in which they appeared to differ was that DuBois focused his rhetoric on aggressive action by Blacks in their own behalf. Certainly, this idea was a step toward providing a more functional perspective for Black people as well as a vent for action—decidedly absent in the rhetoric of Washington.

What is critical to understand about these two men, nonetheless, is that they, like so many leaders who followed them, were bound together feet and legs. There could have been no DuBois had there not been a Washington. Historically, each man in himself and his rhetoric appears to manifest a new plateau, for good or for bad, in the strivings of Black people for liberation.

39 Bennett, Before The Mayflower, p. 280.
About 1913 in this new rhetoric of DuBois’, the optimistic mood of Black people was reflected. Seemingly, attacks volleyed by the Niagara Movement onto racial discrimination and segregation were paying off in hope. Before the Mayflower records that they were paying off in Black-owned homes; Black-operated farms; and Black-established businesses. Black churches were springing up like sumac. Black students and teachers were gaining momentum. They were numbering in the thousands. Blacks were on the move. Guided by DuBois, they seemed to be sorting out their tangled emotions and moving on to claim their heritage.

For more effective opposition, DuBois later helped to establish and was an active participant in the National Association For the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Making overt attacks at racism, history records that he led his organization into the courts and legislatures. And, many victories were achieved.

Then a change occurred. It was 1915 and Blacks exploded into a Great Migration. There were jobs in the North. The U. S. was going to war. Wilson was going to “make the world safe for Democracy!” Advertisements for jobs in the North were spread all over the South. So from Georgia, Tennessee, Florida, Mississippi, from every village and hamlet, Blacks seeped from the crevices of the South. Going North! Going North for freedom!

For the next three years, history shows that the white South augmented this mecca in terms of lynchings and burnings. The Ku Klux Klan was on the rise again. Unfortunately, DuBois and the NAACP
appeared to be ineffective as a counterforce. The Ku Klux Klan had the Black South writhing in terror. It was not possible to tell when or where they would strike or with what degree of sadism. For example, in 1918, Mary Turner, a Black woman, was lynched in Valdosta, Georgia. Though pregnant, she was:

hanged to a tree, doused with gasoline and motor oil and burned. As she dangled from the rope, a man stepped forward with a pocketknife and ripped open her abdomen in a crude cesarean operation. Out tumbled the prematurely born child. Two feeble cries it gave—and received for answer the heel of a stalwart man, as life was ground out of the tiny form. 40

Similar attacks came in such a barrage that by 1919 DuBois and his rhetoric as well as his organization seemed helpless. DuBois, himself, appeared to be a man in bleak despair. Everywhere Black people were being killed and driven from their homes. As a counter, DuBois and the NAACP organized a silent parade of some 10,000 Blacks. The protest seemed moving as thousands of Blacks, dressed in white, moved silently along the streets—silently dismal—silently showing their deep discomfort. But the protest seemed to have no effect on the lynchings. Instead, Before the Mayflower records an increase in lynchings. So, in a kaleidoscope of lynchings and burnings in the south and over-crowded housing and impoverished hope in the north, 1919 seemed to thrust Black people into one riot after another as their only means of recourse. Enter Marcus Garvey. Enter a new man with a new rhetoric.

40 Bennett, Before The Mayflower, p. 288.
A product of the Negro Renaissance, this Jamaican-born visionary preached Black pride to a Black people in despair. He preached Black solidarity to a nation of Blacks gripped by isolation, fear, and frustration. Everything Black was given glory. Everything African signified "home". In a speech to the 2nd International Convention of Blacks in New York, August, 1921, Garvey drove this point home:

The more I remember the suffering of my forefathers, the more I remember the lynchings and burnings in the Southern States of America, the more I will fight on even though the battle seems doubtful. Tell me that I must turn back, and I laugh you to scorn. Go on! Go on! Climb ye the heights of liberty and cease not in well doing until you have planted the banner of the Red, the Black and the Green on the hilltop of Africa.41

In his own image, he seemed to have formed himself a new man—a Black man—made holy and sanctified by his gospel and his text. There were to be no more Negroes. For many, by 1921, Garvey appeared to have become Black America's legitimate "holy man." So, when Garvey said, "...we must believe that the Psalmist had great hope of this race of ours when he prophesied Princes shall come out of Egypt and Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God," it is conceivable that Garvey was attempting to take the Black man's fear and change it into faith.42

Then in December 1927 when Garvey was deported to Jamaica, history reveals that he had nonetheless left behind a "Man" who would no longer let the nation sleep. Seemingly he had tried to demonstrate to Black

42. Garvey, p. 81.
men all over the United States that "tis ye, tis your estranged faces, that miss the many splendoured thing." The splendoured thing? A sense of race consciousness. A sense of importance. A sense of "somebodyness". A sense of personal history and continuity that when stands in the light of day, unveils the crimes "that would disgrace a nation of savages." To many, his efforts seemed successful.

Through the Depression of the '30's, the New Deal of the '40's, the Korean War of the '50's, Blacks appeared to mark time with their new sense of self. However, in the second half of the 1950's a new mood change seemed to creep into Black America.

After nearly a quarter of a century, civil rights became a major election issue against the backdrop of the 1954 Brown vs. the Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas. Bennett notes that following this decision, the White Citizens Council of Mississippi and the Ku Klux Klan all over the South rose again in defiance of this law. Their object was to resist integration by every "lawful" means possible. The leader of this resistance movement was the circuit judge of Mississippi, Tom Brady. In his book entitled Black Monday, Brady stated precisely what he thought of the Supreme Court decision. Not only did he state that, in his opinion, the decision promoted miscegenation between Blacks and whites, but also that the signing of that document meant economic, political, and social crippling of Black people in

\[43\] 1954 Brown vs. The Board of Education--Decision by Supreme Court to undermine the Legal Structure of Segregation.
\[44\] Bennett, Before The Mayflower, p. 312.
the South for years. So, Brady advocated an all out fight to oppose this enactment. About this situation, Before the Mayflower further notes that "(s)kirmishes were fought at Sturgis and Clay, Kentucky, where National Guard units were called out to help Black children through the lines of howling mobs. A mob prevented the enrollment of Negro students at Mansfield High School, Mansfield, Texas. The Tennessee National Guard was sent to Clinton to quell mobs demonstrating against integration. A dynamite blast destroyed Nashville's new Hattie Cotton Elementary School which had 388 white students and one Negro student." ⁴⁵ Anthony Lewis, in his book, Portrait of a Decade, also reports that "(p)oliticians swore defiance of the Constitution and passed threadbare statutes in futile efforts to preserve the past. Southern police and even judges misused their power and manipulated the law to repress the Negro. There was mob violence." ⁴⁶

Nonetheless, boycotts were initiated and seemed successful. In this wake, the new Black, the Garvey-Black, appeared to emerge and so did a new sense of power. Perhaps as Eric Hoffer says, "It is not actual suffering but the taste of better things which excites people to revolt." ⁴⁷ For history notes that when Black people had tasted succulent victories in the courts and communities around the country, expectations and frustrations were intensified. Against the backdrop of rising white backlash, more and more non-violent confrontations

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⁴⁵ Bennett, Before the Mayflower, p. 313.
ensued -- boycotts and sit-ins -- 'til 1960 and the Negro Revolt.
Bennett says:

In Montgomery, Alabama, where the Negro had one of the finest hours, Martin Luther King, Jr., moved the struggle from the courtroom to the streets, from law libraries to the pews of the churches, from the mind to the soul.48

It had come. The Black man's time had come.

The Modern Era

People's always looking for somebody to come lead them. To to the Old Testament; go to the New. They did it in slavery; after the war they did it; they did it in the hard times that people want call Reconstruction; they did it in the Depression-another hard times; and they doing it now. They have always done it-and the Lord has always obliged in some way or another.49

A new leader, Martin Luther King, emerged, it seemed, to carry the Black man's protest a little farther. Born on January 15, 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia, Martin Luther King was a well-educated man. He attended Morehouse College, and Boston University where he received his Ph.D. Ordained as a minister at Crozer Seminary, near Philadelphia, King later moved to Atlanta where he organized the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

It must be noted however that operating during this time were a number of civil rights groups. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), an interracial organization with a program of non-violent action, was conducting sit-ins and sending "Freedom Riders" into the South. The

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48 Bennett, Before The Mayflower, p. 313.

National Association for The Advancement of Colored People, also non-violent in ideology and campaign, was yet waging legal confrontations in the courts. The National Urban League was given roots and program by A. Philip Randolph whom Historian Bennett described as "a tall, broad-shouldered man who has long championed non-violent direct action."\textsuperscript{50} This organization seemed to be concentrating on the social problems of urban Blacks using the traditional techniques of persuasion and conciliation. Their primary involvement at this time seemed to be in the organizing and the maneuvering of sit-in demonstrations. One of the most significant groups organized and operating during this period, however, appeared to be the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

This organization was a non-violent direct action group whose influence was wide-spread in the South. Its strategy appeared to be largely traditional: direct non-violent action, legal redress, and economic boycotts. The rhetoric of the movement, assimilationist in nature, flowing, embellished—a euphony to the ear—prodded Blacks and whites alike. In the tradition and quality of Frederick Douglass, the rhetoric of Martin Luther King seemed to ride the conscience and passion of all men. He seemed to be able to pull from the moods and memories of Black people, a statement of purpose and a call to action that when, once voiced, few could prudently choose to ignore. As a man doing what he's got to do with something helping him somehow,

\textsuperscript{50} Bennett, \textit{Before The Mayflower}, p. 304.
King shaped his words to a heady verse that called injustice to a stalemate. Characteristic of this verse is King's "Letter From Birmingham Jail." He says:

Abused and scorched though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's destiny. For more than two centuries our forebears labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; they built the homes of their masters while suffering gross injustice and shameful humiliation—and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our demands.51

Throughout King's movement, through the lives of Black men and women, this style was honed and fashioned to aid him. It was with him in Little Rock, Arkansas when he tried to help desegregate a public school; it was with him through the sit-ins; it was with him through the jail-in movement and the Freedom Ride Movement. It was with him when he provoked his people to move en masse for freedom—to march on Washington.

Prior to this march, history indicates that frustration and disenchantment appeared to be reaching storm proportions. Increased sit-ins were staged in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and St. Louis for increased employment and against de facto segregation in schools. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that was organized on April 15, 1960 seemed to be forging ahead captivating the urges of the young for a more direct confrontation program. Then King proposed a

march on Washington to add more force to Congress' passing the civil rights legislation then pending. This legislation introduced by President Kennedy proposed what seemed to be the most sweeping civil rights legislation in the history of the United States. But, a march on Washington? Anthony Lewis notes that "(t)he idea worried many responsible persons. Could the Negro leaders really persuade as many as one hundred thousand people to come to Washington for such a rally? . . . . Could that many people descend on the capital without disorder of some kind, possibly real rioting? A violent march would do the cause of civil rights permanent harm."  

But the march was planned. Its goals: to express the Black man's impatience for waiting, to manifest in numbers the intimate want of Black people to be free, and to urge on Black masses the need for passage of civil rights legislation in America. And, the march came. Bennett says:

The mammoth March on Washington was a visible expression of the new level of Negro militancy and white concern. More than two hundred and fifty thousand Americans—about sixty thousand of them white—participated in the August 28 demonstration. They came from points all over America, and from several overseas. They assembled in Washington on the grassy slopes of the Washington Monument and walked about a mile to the Lincoln Monument where they said with their bodies that the Negro had been waiting 100 years and 240 days and that he was still not free and that 100 years and 240 days were too long to wait.  

52 Anthony Lewis, Portrait Of A Decade, p. 216.
53 Bennett, Before The Mayflower, pp. 346-347.
Then Martin Luther King fired the mood of the people and marked that
day in history. It was August 28, 1963 and for nearly 22 million
Black Americans he gave their dreams voice.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be
exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low.
And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all
flesh shall see it together. This is the faith I go
back to the South with. With this faith we will be
able to transform the jangling discords of our nation
into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this
faith we will be able to work together, to pray to-
gether, to struggle together, to go to jail together,
to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will
be free one day. 54

This rhetoric seemed to be steadfast no matter when he drew for it.

But, against the backdrop of this rhetoric, unemployment was on
the rise and rage seemed to be reaching volcanic proportions. "Free-
dome Now!" became the urgent cry of the masses. When protests were
launched against trade unions and de facto segregation in the North,
and Medgar Evers and four children in a Birmingham Church were mur-
dered in the South, for all appearances, America was sitting on a
time bomb.

In late 1959 and early 1960, another group was emerging called
the Muslims. The group’s leader was Elijah Muhammad. He was a rather
small framed man from Georgia who seemed to respond to the needs of
Black people in terms of a national movement in the Garvey tradition
of the 1920’s, but oriented in the religious ideology of the Islamic
faith. He, like Garvey, glorified “Blackness.” He sought to promote

separation of Blacks from whites in society and encourage Black people to channel their pessimism and their despair into positive action and fiery devotion to the rebuilding of "self." We encouraged them to abandon their slave traditions and their slave think. In this view, the first step to effecting that action was the abandonment of their slave-given names. As Bennett notes, "John Jones and Sam Washington would then become John X and Sam X." As a polar opposite to the non-violent doctrines of the then operating campaigns, the Black Muslims emerged. From their unit emerged an intrepid Black spokesman who would attempt to grapple with the problems of the Black oppressed minority. From their unit emerged a man who would attempt to meet the masses. This man was called Malcolm X. But--for the moment, the time was Martin Luther King's.

He rose to each occasion--and--he spoke. Even toward the end of his career when threats had been made on his life. He rose--and--he spoke. To meet the Black man's problems as best he could--he spoke. He seemed to speak from a vision, a hope, a mood, a faith that, no matter what, enabled him to jostle the conscience of his people and urge them on to their goal. "Well, I don't know what will happen now," King said in his last message shortly before his assassination, April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee.

We've got some difficult days ahead, but it really doesn't matter with me now because I've been to the mountaintop. I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place,

55 Bennett, Before The Mayflower, p. 323.
but I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to
do God's will and He has allowed me to go up to the
mountain and I've looked over and I've seen the Promised
Land. I may not get there with you but I want you to
know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the
Promised Land. So I am happy tonight... I'm not
worried about anything... I'm not fearing any man.
Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the
Lord!  

Yet, even a few years before King's assassination, other concepts
seemed to be developing. Particularly among the youth and urban
Blacks, victory after victory seemed to tantalize a more urgent and
a more desperate call for "Freedom Now!" For many, the new sense of
self-conception seemed to have courted a new mood and a predilection
for a new leader for Black rhetoric and Black action. Enter Malcolm X.

Summary

'People and time bring forth leaders, Jimmy,' I said.
I didn't look at that long head boy, I wasn't talking
to him, I was talking to our Jimmy. 'People and time
bring for leaders,' I said. 'Leaders don't bring forth
people.'

Prior to the death of Martin Luther King, the rhetoric of Black
protest largely seemed to be assimilationist, confined to being a
religious and moral statement directing the Black man's struggle to-
ward integration and brotherhood with everyone in America. Admittedly,
Garnet and Garvey deviated slightly in this pattern. The process for
freedom then seemed to be a movement pursuing the idyllic state when
prejudice and racism would give way to that dreamed of brotherhood.

56 Martin Luther King, Jr., The Mountain Top, Record.
Focus appeared to be geared to an integrated audience, the abolitionists and most of the Black leaders and spokesmen serving as key examples. But, history seems to indicate that at least for many youth and urban Blacks, a few years before King's death that rhetoric seemed to change from the religious statement to a secular demand for human rights "by any means necessary."

As the new sense of self emerged among many Black people, the rhetoric and the process for freedom seemed to change too. Within their metamorphosis, the contours of the movement appeared to require a move for drastic and immediate change in the social, political, and economic structures. At this stage, mostly Black people appeared to have exclusive rights to its audience.

During this phase, it seemed the "people and time" brought forth a new organization and a new leader—the Black Muslims and Elijah Muhammed. Then, in their posture and in their polarity, Black protest rhetoric seemed to become revolutionary, segregationist, and aggressive. By all appearances, no longer was its purpose to motivate Black people to accept, fit, and conform to conditions as they existed. Instead, its purpose was to redefine national concerns, reorder local priorities, and recreate a preclusive efficacy—a new and pervading sense of self. From this revolutionary organ seemed to come a new Black spokesman, Malcolm X, armed with a new Black rhetoric, seeking to become both mortarboard and trowel with which to help construct a new significance for Black community.
CHAPTER III

THE MAN AND HIS RHETORIC

Any examination of the rhetoric of Malcolm X, would of necessity be an examination of one of the most significant elements that perhaps made the famed Black Nationalist both popular and powerful. For, in large measure, the rhetoric chosen and the impacts engendered in his speeches seemed accountable not only to the drama of his life but also to the design and prolifics of his messages. His rhetoric, seemingly chosen for its shock value, agitational emphases and merits, perhaps fits more appropriately than not the definition of rhetoric proposed by Bowers and Ochs. "We define rhetoric," they say, "as the rationale of instrumental, symbolic behavior. A message is instrumental if it contributes to the production of another message or act. For example, an infant's crying is instrumental in persuading its mother that she should change its diaper or relieve its discomfort. ... Behavior is symbolic if it has a referential function—if it stands for something else. .... This definition of rhetoric applies to any situation in which persuasion occurs or is intended to occur." 58 From historical evidence provided by Malcolm's autobiography and his early onslaught of speeches, his strongest desire was to teach Black people about their oppression in

America and persuade them to take action against their degradation. His messages seemed instrumental in this context; his own life, and audacity in its stead, seemed symbolic of success to many Black people in their fight for freedom. To further underscore the fulfillment of that formula, Smith and Robb said of Malcolm X:

Fundamentally, he was a teacher convinced that his pupils were searching in vain for the truth about themselves. It was his mission, then, to bring that truth. Thus his language is the vernacular of his audience; his illustrations the people's illustrations; and his arguments are the elemental lessons of common experience. Using the rhetoric of shame effectively when speaking before Black audiences, Malcolm called them to pride, self respect, and dignity, beginning a consciousness that has spread rapidly across the nation...⁵⁹

Indeed, that such a russet-haired, sharp-tongued street hustler should have emerged as one of Black America's most influential orators and teachers seemed an admirable achievement. That the rhetoric he used should have emerged to discharge ignorance and despair seemed an awesome exponent of dignity and hope to Black people.

**Genesis**

A critical element in the forces Malcolm X used to persuade his people and gain credence for himself was his past. It is generally known that Malcolm's past was stormy. Seldom, however, is it understood how that stormy past tempered him for his role. For, those early years and the scars that they produced appeared to be much of the basis for his compassion with the dispossessed (their compassion with him) and his ability to perceive their moods when verbalizing their cause.

Born Malcolm Little, May 19, 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska, his autobiography tells that his early life was marred by a series of uprootings caused by the Black Legionnaires, a Ku Klux Klan-type organization. The tension arose because of his father, Reverend Little, who insisted on recruiting other Blacks to the Black Nationalist Garvey Association. First, in 1931, when Reverend Little's body was found on the street car tracks cut almost in two, Malcolm seemed to never forgive the racism that produced such an act. Then, when his mother was severely tormented by white social workers which later led to her institutionalization in the Kalamazoo State Hospital, the seeds seemed sown for his later denunciation of the "devil white man."

History records that subsequent to his mother's hospitalization, Malcolm was sent to a reform school for putting a tack in his teacher's chair. There he finished the seventh grade and then went to Roxbury, a suburb of Boston, to live with his sister, Ella. Later years in Boston found him in one hustle after another—shoeshine boy, selling liquor, running reefers, pimping, burglary. Finally caught and sentenced to ten years in prison, he was not yet twenty-one.

Further, his autobiography notes that because of his uncontrolled ranting and his anti-religious attitude, during his first term in the Charlestown State Prison, he earned the name, Satan, and many long stints in solitary confinement. In prison, he met a man the inmates called Bimbi who appeared to have significant influence in prodding
Malcolm toward what he would later term his epiphany. Bimbi was "an old time burglar" and one of the most articulate inmates in the prison. Malcolm seemed to marvel at his command of language and the respect he enjoyed vis his skillful use of words. Bimbi introduced Malcolm to Thoreau, the science of human behavior, and most importantly, to the prison library. He urged him to take the prison correspondence course because of Malcolm's shallow educational background. Malcolm took his advice and enrolled in the correspondence course in English. He says in his Autobiography, "After about a year, I guess, I could write a decent and legible letter. About then, too, influenced by having heard Bimbi often explain word derivations, I quietly started another correspondence course—in Latin." Then, in 1948, he was transferred to Norfolk Prison Colony where he took an avid interest in reading. He began by copying the whole dictionary to learn to improve his handwriting and further understand the meaning of words. He read every moment he could spare. "For the next years," he said, "I was the nearest thing to a hermit in the Norfolk Prison Colony. I never have been more busy in my life. I still marvel at how swiftly my previous life's thinking pattern slid away from me, it was like snow off a roof. It is as though someone else I knew had lived by hustling and crime." Later in his prison term, his readings needed a vent so he debated and thus sharpened his rhetoric. His world was awakening to a different horizon.

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61 Haley, pp. 154-155.
...I will tell you that, right there, in the prison, debating, speaking to a crowd, was as exhilarating to me as the discovery of knowledge through reading had been. Standing up there, the faces looking up at me, the things in my head coming out of my mouth, while my brain searched for the next best thing to follow what I was saying, and if I could sway them to my side by handling it right, then I had won the debate—once my feet got wet, I was gone on debating.  

It was not long after his transfer to Norfolk Colony that his brother, Reginald, introduced him to the Nation of Islam and its denunciation of the white man. His past seemed to have provided much evidence to prove that the white man was inherently evil so the appeal converted Malcolm Little. He said himself, "The very enormity of my previous life's guilt prepared me to accept the truth." He received his epiphany. He became a new man. He became the man whom Louis Lomax was later to refer in these terms:

Malcolm X is the St. Paul of the Black Muslim movement. Not only was he knocked to the ground by the bright light of truth while on an evil journey, but he also rose from the dust stunned, with a new name and a burning zeal to travel in the opposite direction and carry America's 20 million Negroes with him.

He became Malcolm X, teacher and champion of the Black man's cause in America.

Germination

A short time after his release from prison in August, 1952, Malcolm X became assistant minister of the Detroit Mosque and then Harlem's

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64 Haley, p. 163.

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Muslim Mosque Number 7. Through nationalism and radicalism, two major elements of Malcolm's rhetorical approach, he reached out to the Black masses. Old Memories, New Moods notes:

When Malcolm talks...(he) articulates for all the Negro people who hear him, who listen to him. (He) articulates their suffering, the suffering which has been in this country so long. That's Malcolm's great authority over his audiences. He corroborates their reality; he tells them that they really exist.66

He proposed a program of physical withdrawal from American society and the establishment of an all-Black state. He proposed aggressive attacks on racism and attainment of freedom "by any means necessary." It was through his rhetoric, crisp, caustic, and clear, that he sought to arouse self-consciousness in nearly 20 million Negroes.67 It took him practically ten years to become one of Black America's great spokesmen, but then it appeared to happen. Malcolm X manifested in the rhetorical ectoplasm of Garnet, Garvey, and Muhammad.

I want you, when you leave this room, to start to see all this whenever you see this devil white man. Oh yes, he's a devil! I just want you to start watching him, in his places where he doesn't want you around; watch him reveling in his preciousness, and his exclusiveness, and his vanity, while he continues to subjugate you and me.68

Many situations seemed to catapult Malcolm X into national awareness and his rhetoric into public appeal. First was the airing of the film "The Hate That Hate Produced". During this time, Malcolm seemed

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66 Rose, Old Memories, New Moods, p. 370.
thrust into situation after situation that he used to exercise his rhetoric into terseness—smarting his attackers with the short, pointed reproach delivered swiftly and with awful splomb. Black people appeared to respond favorably to his boldness by swelling his temple and adding their numbers to the growing body of Muslims in America. Then, in the early '60's, history records that there was much talk about Washington's checking the movement of Black Muslims. To a large extent, Malcolm's popularity and public position on the racist nature of American society gave certain factions reason to believe that the Muslims were becoming a subversive group and a threat to society. In Los Angeles the crackdown began. Police shot seven unarmed Black Muslims, killing one and crippling another. Sixteen Muslims were arrested on false charges of criminal assault on police. Malcolm X was dispatched to handle the case. Hakim Jamal, a Black Muslim who was in Los Angeles at the time reported that Muslims were incensed and took to the streets, ready for revenge.

...I saw brothers in new clothes and some in rags—they had come from everywhere. They all knew it was time. I never knew there were that many Muslims in America, never mind Los Angeles—we were everywhere. Many brothers had guns in their pockets, others were sharpening knives. Still others were in corners of the mosque limbering up and practicing judo and karate chops on imaginary devils' necks. We were all ready to kill.69

Malcolm arrived, bailed the prisoners out of jail, hired lawyers to defend them, and organized protest meetings. Though no adequate verbatim

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reporting of Malcolm's speech to that infinite sea of angry Black faces that night was found by this writer, it was recorded that he spoke to abate their anger. Newspapers, radio, television, magazines picked up the story and carried Malcolm X and notes on his language skills further into public view.

Then a similar situation occurred in Harlem bringing the Black Muslim sect into wider public focus. The Autobiography of Malcolm X reported that two white police officers, while attempting to break up a street fight, attacked the group with nightsticks. One of the Black Muslim brothers they attacked was Johnson Hinton. To Muslim Hinton, they inflicted injuries to the point that his scalp was split open. Shortly after the incident, Muslims began to gather outside the police station. When Malcolm arrived, he told them "When I saw our Brother Hinton, it was all I could do to contain myself. He was only semi-conscious. Blood had bathed his head and face and shoulders." 70 Meanwhile, the crowd of angry Blacks continued to grow. Again, the writer found no reports of the words Malcolm X exchanged with the crowd to quell the ugly mood that afternoon, but their quiet dispersion admitted to its adequacy, whatever he said. Thus, once more, Malcolm X had responded to the call. His expanding Black followers seemed to have tasted of victory again. Malcolm X and the Black Muslims were in the news again. Malcolm said himself: "...the black man, woman, and child in the streets was discussing 'those Muslims.'" 71

71 Haley, p. 235.
Against the backdrop of Malcolm X's rise in The Nation of Islam were the sit-ins, demonstrations, marches, pickets, boycotts and the constant urgings of the Black masses for more and more means for direct confrontation. To this end, Malcolm's rhetoric and his flair for the realistic, were thrust forward to meet the need, to educate, to agitate, to express their discontent more boldly than in many years before. In short in this posture he appeared to be taking on the mantle of the social activator.

Gifted

Then, it was 1963. It was a time when Malcolm X seemed to feel that there was intense failure—failure to desegregate after many integration demonstrations; failure to obtain long-sought-after Congressional civil rights legislations; failure, as long as history, to be free. Martin Luther King had led the Montgomery Boycott and the March on Washington—neither, according to Malcolm's view, affected much integration or change. Concurrently, both Northern and Southern violence seemed to have become intense. So, Malcolm X attempted to meet the perceived set-backs head-on. In his persuasive campaign for Black unity, he sought to project through his messages both strength and invincibility. He sought to educate about oppression. It seemed to be clear, that what he sought to provide was suitable soil for other epiphanies. For example this can be noted to some extent in his "Message to The Grass Roots,"--the now classic to many Black historians.
No...the founding fathers...were prostitutes, they were murderers and thieves and liars. And as soon as they got over here, they proved it. They created one of the most criminal societies that has ever existed on the earth since time began. And, if you doubt it, when you go home at night, look in the mirror at yourself, and you'll see the victim of that criminal system that was created by them.  

To the Black audiences who were his converts, for the simple saying of these things, in the face of God and everybody else, his force seemed to be the super-human hero daring that made him a Dan'l Webster who braved to kick the devil in the behind. In addition, when he was painting these pictures for his Black audiences, he expressed his own feelings about his ability:

I got so I could feel my audiences' temperaments. I've talked with other public speakers; they agree that this ability is native to any person who has the "mass appeal" gift, who can get through to and move people. It's a psychic radar. As a doctor with his finger against a pulse is able to feel the heart rate, when I am up there speaking, I can feel the reaction to what I'm saying.

Malcolm's image of the founding fathers appeared to be only one of the many images he painted to educate Black people. He painted a brilliant image of America. "America is cunning like a fox, friendly and smiling, but even more vicious and deadly than the wolf." He appeared to skillfully manipulate this image of white America to impress upon the minds of Black people the urgent need for Blacks to separate themselves from such sinister designs as "all whites are wont to do".

To remain a part of the United States of America, his pictures seemed to say, is to make yourselves lambs to the slaughter. To his Black audiences all around America, he hammered out these images. Of his Black audiences, Malcolm X said:

I think I could be speaking blindfolded and after five minutes, I could tell you if sitting out there before me was an all-Black or an all-white audience. Black audiences and white audiences feel distinguishably different. Black audiences feel warmer, there is almost a musical rhythm, for me, even in their silent response.75

In this context, Malcolm's messages to Black audiences seemed to take on a definite pattern. As soon as he felt he had tapped his audience's pulse, in his educational approach to them, he never failed to try to intensify emotions and arouse wrath by describing the horrors of slavery to those who had never before heard them. For example, from one of his later speeches, Malcolm X said:

I read in one book how the slave maker used to take a pregnant woman, a Black woman, and make her watch as her man would be tortured and put to death. One of those slave makers had trees that he planted in positions where he would bend them and tie them, and then tie the hands of a Black man to one, a hand to the other, and his legs to two more, and he'd cut the rope. And when he'd cut the rope, that tree would snap up and pull the arm of the Black man right out of his socket, pull him up into four different parts.76

By this time, his rhetoric and imagery seemed to have done their best and were successful. His people were bound under a common banner, a common suffering, and a common enemy. He seemed to have done as Eric Hoffer suggests of an effective man of words: "he...brought to a boil

76Malcolm X, Malcolm X On Afro-American History, p. 34.
ideas and passions already simmering in the minds of his hearers. He echoed their inner-most feelings. He made them believe what they already knew."

Such images of white men, founding fathers, and America seemed seldom less graphic or less galvanizing and, filtering down to the white press, according to his autobiography, he was more often than not pictured as a dangerous antagonist. He was labeled "hate teacher", "Black fascist", "anti-Christian", "race supremacist", and "extremist", to name a few.

In his autobiography, Malcolm X retorted of the white press as he did in front of many Black audiences: "If I said 'Mary had a little lamb' what probably would have appeared was 'Malcolm X lampoons Mary.' " "They called me 'the angriest Negro in America! They called me a 'teacher, a formentor of violence.'" ...I'm not for wanton violence, I'm for justice," he defended himself.

Klapp, in his book, The Symbolic Leader, comments that the essence of drama is important for a hero: his people must see him in confrontation in which parties are thrown on their mettle, reveal and expose themselves, drop their defenses, call on their personal resources to meet a crisis. Indeed, such was the essence of drama in the confrontations

77 Heffer, The True Believer, p. 98.
79 Haley, p. 366.
80 Haley, p. 366.
between Malcolm X and the press. When he was attacked, he lobbed his own artillery:

The press. The newspapers make you look wrong. As long as you take a beating, you're all right. As long as you get your head busted, you're all right. As long as you let his dogs fight you, you're all right. Because that's the press. That's the image-making press. That thing is dangerous if you don't guard yourself against it. It'll make you love the criminal, as I say, and make you hate the one who's the victim of the criminal. 82

Many Black people saw him go into these confrontations and come out the victor. His rhetorical skills seemed to make him so. When he painted the press as "human ferrets," "wolves" with the life's blood of Black people running down their jaws like a "bloody-jawed wolf", the pictures seemed clear enough and the electric atmosphere of drama sustained them. So, to many Black people, individuals, and audiences alike, he was the new hope, the new dream, the new man.

From research previously noted, it is believed from 1959 through 1963, within the confines of the Black Muslim organization, Malcolm X's rhetoric and persuasive campaign captured the Grass Roots, the young, the dispossessed, and continually created a new form of protest and struggle. He let the ideas Blacks had of him as hero and leader help to mold them into a new race consciousness and solidification. He used these as persuasion to purge in-house Black problems as well. He had two major problems that he maintained a constant barrage against: the passive resistance civil rights leaders and the "so-called" educated Blacks.

To Black audiences all around the country, he called the civil rights leaders "twentieth century Uncle Toms" who taught Blacks to sit—to sit in and sit down. The images of them lacking will and will power he painted with dazzling chroma. Any one can sit, Malcolm would spit. Old men can sit. Old women can sit. Sick people can sit. People with no will and almost dead can sit. Blacks must stand up! Stand up for freedom! Don't let these handkerchief-head-Knee-groes sap your strength by making you think you don't have any. 83

With proper timing and force, to his audiences, Malcolm likened the civil rights leaders to the deadening effect of novocaine when they taught Black people to suffer peacefully.

That's Tom making you nonviolent. It's like when you go to the dentist and the man's going to take your tooth. You're going to fight him when he starts pulling. So he squirts some stuff in your jaw called novocaine, to make you think they're not doing anything to you. So you sit there and because you've got all of that novocaine in your jaw, you suffer-peacefully. Blood running all down your jaw, and you don't know what's happening. Because someone has taught you to suffer-peacefully. 84

A continuation of this same example shows Golden and Rieke to be correct when they say that Malcolm X's speeches were characterized by a debater's style. 85 His presentation rapid; his sentences generally short and pointed. He seemed to enjoy the attack, they point out, and he was generally at his best when discrediting the white society, the integrationists, or an opponent's arguments.

83 Malcolm X, Malcolm X Speaks Again, Record.
To keep you from fighting back, (the white man) gets these old religious Uncle Toms to teach you and me, just like novocaine, to suffer peacefully. Don't stop suffering - just suffer peacefully. As Reverend Cleage pointed out, they say you should let your blood flow in the streets. This is a shame. You know he's a Christian preacher. If its a shame to him, you know what it is to me.86

He let these images work for him. He was a skillful and a sure speaker. He knew what these images would do to his audiences--and they did.

Blacks, young and old, were turning to the aggressive philosophy of Malcolm X.

Of the "so-called" educated Black, Malcolm X used the same tactic and formed pictures just as vivid, just as revolting to his audiences and just as successful to his persuasive program to win converts to the Muslim religion and Black self-help program.

One particular university's "token-integrated" black Ph.D. associate professor I will never forget. As badly as our 22 millions of educationally deprived Black people need the help of any brains he has, there he was looking like some fly in the buttermilk among white "colleagues"—and he was trying to eat me up! He was ranting about what a "divisive demagogue" and what a reverse racist I was. I was racking my head, to speak to that fool; finally I held up my hand, and he stopped. "Do you know what white racists call Black Ph.D.'s?" He said something like, "I believe that I happen not to be aware of that"—you know, one of these ultra-proper-talking Negroes. And I laid the word down on him, loud: "Nigger!"87

This situation was not unique, he simply tells it more clearly here than in many other times.

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Through these descriptions and others, Malcolm X demonstrated himself, to black individuals and black audiences as well, to be an insightful man and articulate speaker. For these two major qualities, in particular, many black people received him as a champion, a defender, a protector, a social activator—a hero. As Alex Haley, brilliant young writer of Malcolm X's autobiography, says:

There was no question about it: whether he was standing tall beside a street lamp chatting with winos, or whether he was firing his radio and television broadcasts to unseen millions of people; or whether he was titillating small audiences of sophisticated whites with his small-talk such as 'My hobby is stirring up Negroes, that's spelled Knee-grows, the way you liberals pronounce it'—the man had charisma, and he had power.88

March 9, 1964, New York Times headlines read: "Malcolm X Splits With Muhammad." "Malcolm X," the article read, "broke last night with Elijah Muhammad's Chicago-based Black Muslim movement..."89 These headlines may well have heralded the last phase of Malcolm X—that of unfulfillment and tragedy which many sought to consecrate.

The headlines were, for the most part, a disclosure of the announcement by Malcolm X that President Kennedy's death was merely "the chickens coming home to roost." Soon after, the real schism occurred. Elijah Muhammad suspended Malcolm for 90 days and directed him to stop speaking for that duration. After a while, however, Malcolm realized that a number of strategically placed people in the Black Muslim movement were

instructed to kill him. From then on his life seemed to become that of a martyr going to his tragic death.

It has been said that always when one's life is too short to realize his promises, the passing is always tragic. Malcolm X promised his people "freedom," but before they could attain it, he was assassinated on February 21, 1965. Since that time, his people, the "New Negro" of a "New Day"—those molded in his way and in his day—have never stopped learning from this man. The words of Norman Mailer appear to bring Malcolm X into proper focus. He said:

(He) was a hero America needed, a hero central to his time, a man whose personality might suggest contradictions and miseries which could reach into the alienated circuits of the underground, because only a hero can capture the secret imagination of a people, and be so good for the vitality of his nation.90

Throughout his life, the brilliant speaker known as Malcolm X seemed to be the manifestation of the Black man's "coming to be." To many whites, he was an implacable foe. To many Blacks, he was a liberator, a breaker of icons, an uncompromising champion, a social activator—a hero.

Summary

Rising from a past of street hustling, pimping, and burglary, Malcolm X seemed to emerge as an eminent Black spokesman in America. While in prison, he was urged to take correspondence courses and read books from the prison library to broaden his knowledge and gather

together the forces he wielded best. Once this task was begun, Malcolm became an avid reader and later an avid debater. Debate seemed to whet his appetite for further public speaking and provide exercises to aptly train his rhetorical skills.

Also, while in prison, Malcolm's brother Reginald introduced him to the Nation of Islam and the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. This teaching exposed him to a blistering denunciation of white racist society and the need for Black people to understand this society, their plight within it, and their advocacy for redefining it according to their own needs. Once converted to these ideas, Malcolm X, when released from prison shortly after his conversion, armed with his rhetorical skills, became minister of Muslim Temple Number 7 and potential Black spokesman for many discontent in Black America.

After taking on the organ of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X sought to use his rhetorical skills to educate Black people about their past and their terrible need for pride. Thrust into public awareness by a number of conflict situations between the Black Muslims and segments of white society, Malcolm X gained considerable public note and popularity. This popularity was indicated by the numbers of Black people who thronged to his temple to hear more from this bold speaker as well as the clamor by radio, television, newspapers, and magazines to expose Malcolm for public view. To his Black audiences, he sought to bring new meaning to "Blackness." He sought to persuade Black audiences, via his biting rhetorical denunciations of white racist society, toward a movement for Black unity and Black solidarity. To his white audiences, he sought to
bring into clearer focus the Black man's degradation in America. Then taking up the role of social activator to his people, he taught, he educated, he provoked, he prodded. "Freedom by any means necessary" was his chant and his cause. In this way, he sought to wake a sleeping people, and bring them together under a common banner and a common thought in "Blackness."
CHAPTER IV

RHETORICAL STRATEGIES OF MALCOLM X

Malcolm X and the rhetoric he chose to develop seems to have two major foci: to help build a new community of Black thought and action; and, aid in its maintenance by being its ubiquitous bolster and eternal champion. In this conception then, their purpose was to unify internal forces and disturb external authorities. To this end, Malcolm X seemed to function not only as a champion of Black exhortation but also an agitator to white society to effect dramatic situational changes for Black people. Arthur L. Smith seeks to make the agitator and his role more clear when he says, the "...agitator is usually no more than a demeaning stereotype to stigmatize a spokesman for equality, dignity, human respect, and justice."

91 He goes on to note that special rhetorical strategies are a part of their role: vilification, objectification, legitimation, and mythication. He says, "...thus, when the agitator's goal is to accomplish a dramatic situational change in the society, it will follow that (these) devices, contrived or not, will be present within his rhetoric." 92 Smith further defines these strategies more precisely as:

1. Vilification - the use of abrasive language to degrade the opponent's person, actions, or ideas.

2. Objectification - the use of language loaded to irritate a particular group, institution, nation, political party, or race, by the direction of grievances.

3. Mythification - the use of language that implies sanction of the "supranatural" thus granting the movement the essence of the Divine.

4. Legitimation - or vindication to justify any actions taken to secure human rights: that the actions taken were not so much planned as they were provoked by oppressive conditions.93

It is within these boundaries then, that the rhetoric and strategies of Malcolm X, spokesman and strategist, are condensed for study.

Vilification

In a speech given by Malcolm on December 1, 1963, he expertly demonstrated the strategy of vilification. He said:

White America is doomed! Death and devastating destruction hang at this very moment in the skies over America.94

Malcolm X seemed to be in a rage over what appeared to him to be a galloping case of hypocrisy and bigotry run rampant in America. He seemed disconcerted that white America seemingly refused to recognize the legality of human rights for Black people. In this view then, his anger seemed uncompromised. The rhetoric with which he chose to flagellate white racism seemed to be not only challenging, but terrible. With a sort of forbidding intensity, Malcolm denounced and condemned

whites for lies and injustices perpetrated on Black people for centuries. Gravely, as he attacked American acts, he seemed to choose his words as carefully as the Biblical David seemed to choose the five smooth stones with which he attacked Goliath. Trapping them in the projection of a hard rhetorical force, Malcolm let go his stones:

If America can't atone for the crimes she has committed against the 22 million Negroes, if she can't undo the evils she has brutally, mercilessly heaped upon our people these past four hundred years, then America has signed her own death warrant, and our people would be foolish to accept her deceitful offers of integration into her doomed society at this late date.

But Malcolm X did not stop with blanket denunciations. Not only did he attack America generally, but he attacked racism specifically as the means for the Black man's undoing. Seemingly then, his strategy was to place the blame of the Black man's degradation squarely upon the shoulders of white American society. His aim: to influence the will of Black people not to accept "white lies" as the definitions of their lives. What this strategy seemed to insist was a militant stance on the part of Blacks to demand from all white society their social equality and human rights. Then Blacks could be busy about their own reconstruction and development. To this end, Malcolm appeared to shower down some of his most scathing rhetoric. For example, in The Autobiography of Malcolm X, he fired on integration as a deceptive means by many white bigots to demean the social equality and human rights that Black people sought. His thrust seemed to be a warning for Black people to take

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heed; his caution, that integration needed to be redefined in its applicability to their lives.

The truth is that "integration" is an image, it's a foxy Northern liberal's smoke-screen that confuses the true wants of the American Black man. Here in these fifty racist and neo-racist states of North America, this word "integration" has millions of white people confused, and angry, believing wrongly that the Black masses want to live mixed up with the white man.96

Throughout this passage, he exhorted, admonished, and then redefined "integration" in terms of what he viewed as Black desires:

Human rights! Respect as human beings! That's what America's Black masses want. That's the true problem. The Black masses want not to be shrunk from as though they are plague-ridden. They want not to be walled up in slums, in the ghettos, like animals. They want to live in an open, free society where they can walk with their heads up, like men, and women.97

From viewing these two demonstrations of speech ability on large audiences, Malcolm appeared to wield a powerful rhetorical bludgeon. Within the strategy of vilification, his rhetoric appeared to be terse, cogent, and severe. Thus, it is easy to imagine for many whites who received similar attacks directly, they could not help but walk away from Malcolm X looking as though they had been walking in a storm. In these and other similar situations then, Malcolm X seemed to effectively accomplish what vilification was designed to do--be abrasive, be caustic, and degrade the opposition—in particular, the white racist community.

97 Haley, p. 272.
Objectification

It goes without saying that any man lacking dignity of character and seriousness of conviction cannot hope to persuade others of his cause. Indeed, no amount of emphasis on eloquence, buffoonery, or drama of delivery can seek to compensate for dwarfed conviction. Certainly, it is not enough to appeal to the reason alone. And, certainly, none of these elements seemed to be of serious concern in the exploration of Malcolm's approach to audience in his role of spokesman and strategist. From previous experiences with Muslim audiences (where, in his early days as Muslim minister, he sophisticated his rhetoric and strategies) it seems apparent that Malcolm X was well acquainted with the fact that men are moved to action by their emotions—but in itself, this, too, is not enough. One thing is to arouse feeling; yet, another to move to action. Malcolm sought to arouse feeling particularly within the definition of objectification, by irritating segments of white society by stark confrontation with the "truth" as he saw it. Malcolm discussed this method of disconcerting whites in considerable length in his autobiography. According to his comment, the white liberal was usually the first to observe that there had been numerous advances made by Black people in civil rights. They were quick to point out that "some giant industry had hired ten showpiece Negroes...some Southern university had enrolled a Black freshman without bayonets..."98 Then Malcolm's strategy was to chide with such sardonic humor that the espouser was

reduced to the childlike temporization within which, more probably than not, he would have given anything to call his claims back. For example, to a charge that Black people had made great strides for civil rights, Malcolm smarted them with savage slur:

I can't turn around without hearing about some 'civil rights advance'! White people seem to think the Black man ought to be shouting 'hallelujah'! Four hundred years the white man has had his foot-ong knife in the Black man's back-and now the white man starts to wiggle the knife out, maybe six inches! The Black man's supposed to be grateful? Why, if the white man jerked the knife out, it's still going to leave a scar.99

It seemed to be the substantive fullness and penetration—the naked honesty of Malcolm's reproaches that imparted such sting to his derision and such acid to his technique.

It is now easy to glean from the recorded messages of Malcolm X that it was distressing to him that the countless Black Americans seemed caught in the vortex of accelerating change that juggernauted a rapidly evolving and highly sophisticated industrial society. Not only that, but this inexorable enigma also seemed to render so much of Black human fecundity powerless, while at the same time seemed to offer increased production, highly skilled technology, and larger gains in the gross national product which went mostly to white society. This must have stung Malcolm acutely. The old saw seemed to hold that "them that hases, gets." To Malcolm's view, for those Blacks who were left behind, jobs were diminished by better technology; homes were uprooted by expanding freeways; despair, meaninglessness and nobodyness reduced the quality of

life-rendered the process a certain bombast. With alternatives neutered, response for Blacks often could be nothing less than a vertiginous mecca from rural slums to urban ghettos to other urban ghettos, the quality of which appeared Kafkaesque enough to make response desperate, and disparity, the threshing and thrashing of drowning men. Malcolm X explained this condition of Black men in terms of institutional exploitation, degradation, and oppression. So when he spoke to his Black audiences on these points, he spoke not only from a common experience in this process, but also from a design to strike another blow at white community, institution, and ideology in terms of these Black diminutives. For example, in a speech entitled "The Ballot or the Bullet," he said:

'Whether you're educated or illiterate, whether you live on the boulevard or in the alley, you're going to catch hell just like I am. We're all in the same boat and we all are going to catch the same hell from the same man. He just happens to be a white man. All of us have suffered here, in this country, political oppression at the hands of the white man, economic exploitation at the hands of the white man, and social degradation at the hands of the white man.'

He said further expressing his point:

"The same government that you go abroad to fight for and die for is the government that is in a conspiracy to deprive you of your voting rights, deprive you of your economic opportunities, deprive you of decent housing, deprive you of decent education. . . . . So, where do we go from here? . . . . You let that white man know, if this is a country of freedom, let it be a country of freedom; and if it's not a country of freedom, change it."

For most of Malcolm's career, he appeared to temper his rhetorical skills to strike these and other resounding blows at white oppressive systems. With such acts, he appeared to achieve the task of finding a channel in which to direct the grievances of his people. For example, at the Conference to the African Summit, Malcolm asserted that "America is worse than South Africa, because not only is America racist, but she is also deceitful and hypocritical. South Africa preaches segregation and practices segregation. She, at least, practices what she preaches. America preaches integration and practices segregation. She preaches one thing while deceitfully practicing another." In these and other instances, Malcolm made it his policy to degrade, to demean, and to display for all whites to take note, the acute corrosion of the Black man's grief. Twisted in hopes, his own grief, multiplied by the grief of 22 million Black Americans, objectified on a world-wide marquee, could not help but project for all to see, vignettes of a people playing in a pathetic drama--the script written with no secrets to hide.

Mythication

Eric Hoffer states that the leader is like God on the day of creation; (he) takes (the people's) fears and frustrations, wants and needs, and brings forth a new world. What happens, he explains, is that the image of the leader soon begins to act as a type of self-fulfilling prophecy to the mass. He determines how the mass then perceives itself;

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103 Hoffer, The True Believer, p. 85.

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how it defines its identity; how it channels its behavior. In short, through the leader the movement finds meaning and motivation. "The leader," says Hoffer, "personifies the certitude of the creed and the defiance and grandeur of power. He articulates and justifies the resentment dammed up in the souls of the frustrated." 104

For the most part in this sense, Malcolm X seemed to stake indisputable claim to audacity and intelligence. He seemed adept at mobilizing existing attitudes of Black people. More often than not, he appeared to enjoy mental fisticuffs with power and authority and he seemed to possess unusual verbal dexterity in reflecting the emotional needs of his people. Then, as Hoffer states clearly, when he speaks to them "it is the music of their own souls they hear." 105 In this way, as Gustave LeBon points out, he "renders his people slaves to their dreams." 106

Seemingly then, by uniting intellect and vision, Malcolm X and the essence of the Black man's struggle meshed and took on an essential element—that of the Divine. Through his rhetoric and the intensity of his own beliefs in the Black man's cause, Malcolm seemed to command, in many respects, the faith of many Black people often to the point of taking on the aspect of a legitimate holy man--Marcus Garvey style. His rhetoric became stinging litany against the devils of Black society.

104 Hoffer, The True Believer, p. 105.
105 Hoffer, p. 98.
These devils he made vivid. He made them tangible. He made his people "see." For such proselytizing, his followers appeared as Saul on the Damascus Road:

Ah, up from the ground sprang I
and Hailed the earth with such a cry
As is not heard save from a man
Who has been dead and lives again.107

To this end, early in his career as Black spokesman, Malcolm stressed to Black people that the only alternative to their condition was to separate from the "devil white man." That, their fate was sealed within protracted bouts of blindness with this devil. The only cure—separation. In the style of the early emigrationists, Malcolm spoke of slavery and its cruelties. He spoke of present slavery and its cruelties. He spoke of unchanging and brutal patterns of white society perpetuated daily upon Black people. So the choice was, Malcolm contended, "that since Western society is deteriorating, it has become overrun with immorality, and God is going to judge it, and destroy it. And the only way the Black people caught up in this society can be saved is not to integrate into this corrupt society, but to separate from it, to a land of our own, where we can reform ourselves, lift up our moral standards, and try to be godly."108

Malcolm was quick to point out that from the year 1619 when the first 20 Blacks arrived in Jamestown to the present, the Black man was


entirely governed by the slave system. He added the present date because he was also quick to add that the Black man was "still a slave." Further, his interpretation of Black history seems to emerge this way: The lives of Black people were concentrated under a legal system so structured to maintain their servile positions and keep power in the hands of whites. Blacks were in demand. So huge numbers of African Blacks were uprooted and shifted to America. The raison d'être for such acts was the best of all possible ones—to augment expanding white economy with cheap labor. The effects were disparaging and miasmic. But, the efficacy of American indoctrination at work was a veritable hopping success. Whites provided what was needed for Black America—its language, customs and religion—whatever was necessary for the production of the "happy, satisfied slave." Over time, there emerged within its being a new Black culture. The new culture was a distinctly non-African ship that carried American Blacks for years and years and years. This ship was an American Protestant-oriented type structure with the same type God at its helm. When this happened, Black Americans were indeed little more than stowaways on a ship compassed for their hell. It must be understood, however, that it was only through the exegesis and understanding of Christian doctrine that these means were employed. Certainly such means made the climate no less holy, no less sanctified and no less inviolate. Institutionalized degradation was the theme of that day, and, this one. So for Malcolm X, the only
alternative for Black people was to separate. They must not continue to worship the blond-haired, blue-eyed, "white Jesus" of their past.\textsuperscript{109} They must make a God in their own image, a Black God, in the religion of Black nationalism. He said in his Autobiography:

The Christian religion is incompatible with the Negro's aspirations for dignity and equality in America. ..... It has hindered where it might have helped; it has been evasive when it was morally bound to be forthright; it has separated believers on the basis of color, although it has declared its mission to be a universal brotherhood under Jesus Christ. Christian love is the white man's love for himself and for his race.\textsuperscript{110}

The problem today, Malcolm contended, was to provide the means whereby the Black man could play a part from the deceitful American game as it progressed. So Malcolm's strategy appeared to be that Black people use all the strength that has enabled them to survive as a people and develop the will to effectively reify their potentials fully. His rhetoric, many times fiery, most times scathing, seemed to constantly drum cut this point. After all, to Malcolm's view, this "new" God, this Black God, would be on their side. So, within the determinants of Black rationalism, Black people were to be able to organize and continue to progress forward to organizations more functional to their own purposes. They were to be able to forcefully unify into a tour de force for themselves.

Malcolm certainly seemed to be attempting to unify his people and envelop their efforts within the aura of the supra-natural. In choosing

\textsuperscript{110}Haley, pp. 236-237.
a "new" God, a Black God, a God of themselves, Black people were to be placing tomorrow's success and greatness of their efforts—in the bag.

To their "new" God—their "own" God—they could claim:

Thou shall call, and I will answer thee:
thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.
For now thou numberest my steps: doest thou not watch over my sin? My transgression is sealed up in a bag,
and thou sewest up mine iniquity.

Legitimation

For Malcolm X, the bounds of legitimation seemed to be determined by white attitudes and racist institutions. In short, legitimation seemed to be determined not only by the Black man's condition but also by the lack of alternatives to that condition. By providing for Black Americans a fairly stultified existence, any acts of outrage against that oppression was designed and justified by the nature of the oppression itself. For example, when Malcolm spoke to the Grass Roots Conference, he asked the piercing question of Black people: "How can you justify being non-violent in Mississippi and Alabama, when your churches are being bombed, and your little girls are being murdered..."\(^{112}\) His alternative, as justified by the oppression, was revolution.

You don't have a turn-the-other-cheek revolution. There's no such thing as a nonviolent revolution. ...Revolution is bloody, revolution is hostile, revolution knows no compromise, revolution overthrows and destroys everything that gets in its way. ....Don't lay down a life all by itself.

\(^{111}\) The Holy Bible, King James Version, Jcb 14:15-17.

Malcolm contended that America was a hypocritical country that promised the Black man the same equality as the white man. Equal strivings were to bring equal rewards. The Protestant ethic that the white man applied to himself, his social, economic, and political structures, did not apply to Black people similarly. This ethic was in fact negated by white America's having to legislate enactments for Black equality. Seemingly, to Malcolm X, a country that had to enact laws to desegregate schools, lunch counters, and public toilets, not only derided its own democratic ideology but also provoked Black back-lash, garishly peppered with the anarchy of ancient claims, to deal with the absurdity. As Malcolm said himself at the symposium, "The Negro Revolt—What Comes Next?"

Well, I am one who doesn't believe in deluding myself. ....Being here in America doesn't make you an American. Being born here in America doesn't make you an American. Why, if birth made you American, you wouldn't need any legislation, you wouldn't need any amendments to the Constitution, you wouldn't be faced with civil-rights filibustering in Washington, D.C., right now. They don't have to pass civil-rights legislation to make a Pole an American.

No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million Black people who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million Black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy. ....I'm speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of the victim. I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare. 114

Malcolm took issue then to confirm just who was the enemy of Black America. Many civil rights leaders preached nonviolence and brotherhood to Black people, North and South. Civil rights leaders constantly preached the Booker T. Washington ideology of "hold yourselves in check, the white man will come around." But, Malcolm argued to the contrary. He argued that the white man would never come around and in that strategy, the Black man was signing his own doom. Malcolm asserted that long enough the white man held out false promises, building up hopes for a letdown, with their trickery and their treachery, with their false promises which they had no intentions of keeping. So Malcolm insisted that it was time to see that the white man was the enemy of the Black people. Then, when that was clear, Black assertion and self-determination must be inevitable. He also insisted that self-hate was a major problem of Black people, that this self-hate was deliberately fashioned by the white community to keep Black people subjugated. And, a people honed by self-hate could not possibly throw off the yoke of slavery. He noted that it was a useful form of oppression. Therefore, consistent with this idea, Malcolm noted that to recognize the oppression and to see the enemy as a constant wielder of that oppression is among the first levels of self-awareness and among the first steps to self-healing and self-assertion. In this way then, the very American system provokes the construction and spread of Black nationalism. It is justified on the same basis. Malcolm explained:

...in spreading a gospel such as Black nationalism, it is not designed to make the Black man re-evaluate the white man—you know him already—but to make the Black man
re-evaluate himself. Don't change the white man's mind— you can't change his mind, and that whole thing about appealing to the moral conscience of America—America's conscience is bankrupt. ...So you're wasting your time appealing to the moral conscience of a bankrupt man like Uncle Sam. If he had a conscience, he'd straighten this thing out with no more pressure being put upon him. ....We have to change our own mind. You can't change his mind about us. We've got to change our own minds about each other. We have to see each other with new eyes. We have to see each other as brothers and sisters. We have to come together with warmth so we can develop unity and harmony that's necessary to get this problem solved ourselves.115

Summary

Viewing the rhetoric and strategies of Malcolm X in retrospect, it is possible to see that they seemed to be focused on providing a workable, functional consensus and understanding of Black history and progress; a vehicle which articulates and justifies opinions already held by many of its people concerning white society and American dreams; a strong, viable racial pride and identity; a catharsis for present emptiness in a beatific view of the future; and a fresh impetus toward racial solidarity and activation. Through vilification, objectification, mythicization, and legitimation, Malcolm sought to aid Black America in evolving in itself a new Black pride and sense of relationship. He sought to diminish rapidly the false sense of inferiority propagated by the slave system; and false insecurity condoned by the post-slavery industrial relegation of Blacks to menial and ancillary work and family situations. Crucially, he sought to provoke with fresh impetus a viable

sense of self respect and "somebodyness" that more clearly directed the new Black synthesis and equilibrium. Clearly, he sought to provide a new identity and a new name. If Malcolm had lived longer, speculation suggests even more for these elements in the hands of this Black spokesman and visionary.
CHAPTER V

STYLISTIC FEATURES OF MALCOLM X'S RHETORIC

Throughout Black history, key Black spokesmen and the rhetoric they used seem to be among the most obvious means of understanding the continuity and change in the lives of Black people. These speakers singularly seemed to reflect and provide explanation for the negative and positive aspects of Black life. Usually they were adept men of words who appeared to be able to champion the cause of their culture and act as vehicles for identification and imitation. Through their verbal dexterity and the drama of their lives they seemed to be able to provide for their people a sense of who life's antagonists "really are." In this way they seemed to be able to translate life's miseries into meaning, triumph and motivation for the future.

To many Black people, Malcolm X was just such a spokesman. His rhetoric appeared to be an uncompromising resistance to white power and authority. Seemingly, through his picturesque rhetorical skills in the Black man's freedom struggle, the residue that was left appeared to be that of strength and invincibility which many Blacks sought to emulate. The rhetoric of Malcolm X seemed to keenly reflect his perception of Black oppression and white racist domination in America. Through the execution of a low-keyed unornamented speech that rose to a crescendo of the sharp, deliberate pulsations of a vibratto, Malcolm's
language and stylistic devices seemed to rise and fall appropriate to his audience and to his dismay. It seemed apparent that never far from Malcolm's heed was the predicament and the paradox of the Black man's plight.

To white audiences, primarily composed of white news reporters, television hosts and panelists particularly during his early days, he appeared to speak abstractly, unhurried, and unemotional in the purest and tightest grammatical structure. His speeches seemed composed in a remarkable analytic fashion. Deliberately suited to project a detachment from the experiences of his people's pain, they seemed organized as exercises in the most sagacious and rational didactic. Devised seemingly through a thoughtful prowess, the speeches proceeded to interlock the astuteness of Malcolm's theories with the orderly exposure of their development. Nonetheless, they appeared to be designed for their bite and sting. The Autobiography of Malcolm X gives this example. White reporters were given an audience with Malcolm X to interview him and probe answers from him on various issues regarding the Nation of Islam and the civil rights question. Malcolm X reported: "Let some civil rights 'leader' make some statement, displeasing to the white public power structure, and the reporters, in an effort to whip him back in line, would try to use me. ...I'd get a question like this: 'Mr. Malcolm X, you've often gone on record as disapproving of the sit-ins and similar Negro protest actions—what is your opinion of the Montgomery boycott that Dr. King is leading?'"¹¹⁶ The opponent's

guard down, then Malcolm led with grim rhetorical jabs:

When I was asked about the Montgomery boycott, I'd carefully review what led up to it. Mrs. Rosa Parks was riding home on a bus and at some bus stop the white cracker bus driver ordered Mrs. Parks to get up and give her seat to some white passenger who had just got on the bus. I'd say, 'Now, just imagine that! This good, hard-working, Christian-believing black woman, she's paid her money, she's in her seat. Just because she's black, she's asked to get up! I mean, sometimes even for me it's hard to believe the white man's arrogance!'\(^{117}\)

To Black audiences, Malcolm seemed to speak as a teacher as well as an orator, feeling the rhythm, range of pitch, and movement of his people's passions. He spoke in the specifics of their needs, using for those specifics, examples appropriate to their common experience. He spoke briefly in his introduction. More often than not, he chose a familiar greeting. For example, when he spoke to the Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference, he said: "We want to have just an off-the-cuff chat between you and me, us. We want to talk right down to earth in a language that everybody here can easily understand."\(^{118}\) Or, again, when he gave a speech on "The Black Revolution" at a meeting sponsored by the Militant Labor Forum in New York, he began: "Friends and enemies: Tonight I hope that we can have a little fireside chat with as few sparks as possible being tossed around."\(^{119}\) After such a brief opening, he quickly presented the major theses. "Message to the Grass Roots" serves as a classic example.


"We all agree tonight, all of the speakers have agreed, that America has a very serious problem. Not only does America have a very serious problem. America's problem is us." His next step seemed to be to present his proofs as clearly, as swiftly, and as succinctly as possible. His procedure densely analytical; his words absorbed in the realistic:

Many of us want to be nonviolent and we talk very loudly, you know, about being nonviolent. ....I myself would go for nonviolence if it was consistent, if everybody was going to be nonviolent all the time.....

If the leaders of the nonviolent movement can go into the white community and teach nonviolence, good. I'd go along with that. But as long as I see them teaching nonviolence only in the Black community, we can't go along with that. We believe in equality, and equality means that you have to put the same thing over here that you put over there. And if Black people alone are going to be the ones who are nonviolent, then it's not fair. We throw ourselves off guard. In fact, we disarm ourselves and make ourselves defenseless...."121

Such an example served not only to demonstrate Malcolm's realism but his audacity in speaking that seemed to mark him for popularity among those Black people who theretofore had been either unable or unwilling to speak in such a way for themselves.

**Analogy**

Since Malcolm X seemed to perceive his function as much a teacher to Black people as social activator, one particularly interesting outgrowth of this view was his development and application of the analogy.

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121 Malcolm X, "To Mississippi Youth," in *Malcolm X Speaks*, p. 139.
He appeared to use the analogy not only to present significant subject matter in a colorful way, but also to speak as an "insider--a fellow sufferer"--to achieve more penetration and fuller impact. Indeed the function of the analogy is to provide support for the message. Defined by Makay and Brown in their book, *The Rhetorical Dialogue*, the analogy is explained this way. "An analogy points out the similarities between something which is already known, understood, or believed, and something which is not. It helps the source to generate an image in the mind of the receiver through a comparison of the unknown with the known."\textsuperscript{122} So, when Malcolm used this device, he used it to instrument greater understanding of his ideas. For example, at the Grass Roots Conference in 1963, Malcolm was attempting to make clear the position that many Black civil rights leaders had taken within the freedom struggle to deflect Black people's employ of direct confrontation to obtain their freedom. Seemingly, his analogy reinforced his argument aptly.

That's Tom making you nonviolent. It's like when you go to the dentist, and the man's going to take your tooth. You're going to fight him when he starts pulling. So he squirts some stuff in your jaw called novocaine, to make you think they're not doing anything to you. So you sit there and because you've got all of that novocaine in your jaw, you suffer—peacefully. Blood running all down your jaw, and you don't know what's happening. Because someone has taught you to suffer—peacefully.\textsuperscript{123}

With a different improvisation on the analogy, Malcolm attempted to show his adeptness at the analogy's quick but proper manufacture in the


rapid repartee with Roy Wilkins. In this instance, the analogy seemed like a double-edged sword. Wilkins was insisting that the Black man was very much a part of the American dream even though he was considered a second-class citizen. Malcolm X retorted:

I'm not going to sit at your table and watch you eat, with nothing on my plate, and call myself a diner. Sitting at the table doesn't make you a diner, unless you eat some of what's on that plate. Being here in America doesn't make you an American.\textsuperscript{124}

The image was vivid. The reality was stark. The symbol was revealed. The enemy was manifest. And, like the classical Sythian Executioner, Malcolm cut them down with his rhetorical sword.

\textbf{Repetition}

Repetition is another characteristic peculiar to Malcolm's style. Functioning as a powerful vivifier and reinforcer of ideas and themes, Malcolm seemed to use it to tap the pulse of his audience, to quicken it by the use of explosives, and to race it with a new beat to the fullness and completeness of a volatile emotion. From the proper construction of this device, Malcolm seemed to effect the desired emotional appeal. In his speech "With Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer," Malcolm demonstrated its powerful aplomb.

\ldots But we will never communicate talking one language while he's talking another language. He's talking the language of violence while you and I are running around with this little chicken-picking type of language—and think that he's going to understand... Let's learn his language. If his language is with a shotgun, get a shotgun. Yes, I said if he only understands the language of a rifle, get a rifle. If he

only understands the language of a rope, get a rope. But don't waste time talking the wrong language to a man if you want to really communicate with him. Speak his language—there's nothing wrong with that. If something was wrong with that language, the federal government would have stopped the cracker from speaking it to you and me.\textsuperscript{125}

Typical of Malcolm's use of this form, he seemed to develop its keen execution by repeating a reality that he fashioned into a giant snowball effect seemingly to overwhelm, captivate, and climax the emotions of his audience bound in web-like manner within the symbol and the imagery. Seemingly, within this force, his audience was often left without any means of extrication—nothing to do but roll with it. For example, in the "Message to the Grass Roots," Malcolm hammered out this message:

As long as the white man sent you to Korea, you bled. He sent you to Germany, you bled. He sent you to the South Pacific to fight the Japanese, you bled. You bleed for white people, but when it comes to seeing your won churches being bombed and little black girls murdered, you haven't got any blood. You bleed when the white man says bleed; you bite when the white man says bite; and you bark when the white man says bark. I hate to say this about us, but it's true.\textsuperscript{126}

Malcolm's repeating the word "bled" seemed designed to spill its meaning into negative connotations for its shame and shock value. In addition, his using the explosive sound of the letter "b" seemed to provide adequate means to build tensions to a mounting crescendo—also, apparently fashioned for just that effect.


Perspicuity

Characteristically, Malcolm's rhetoric seemed terse and offensive in approach. His sentences took no florid flights of fancy. Seemingly, he felt that his people needed no further oratory filled with vacuous abstractions. The rhetorical sweeps of the Black preacher capitalized on that device to saturation. His style seemed designed to dissipate rather than advance the Baroque-type embellishment. Thus, he seemed to choose his sentences for directness, clarity, straightforwardness, commanded by the vigor of the short simple statement about Black oppression. In The Autobiography of Malcolm X, he notes the reason for his choice. "I had learned early one important thing and that was to always teach in terms that people could understand." He was talking to the Black common man of America. He was talking to the laborer, the day worker, the hustler, the pimp, the prostitute, the ghetto dweller, the young, the disenchanted common man. So the style with which he taught, as well as the message he taught, were both simple. He taught about the continual oppression and subjugation of the Black man in America. Moreover, his purpose seemed to express that fact as often and in as many varied ways of saying it as possible. Then with the effect of a blinking neon sign, he constructed his presentation with vivid historical facts of slavery on the one hand, and the implications of its present perpetuations on the other. What this seemed to lend him was an awesome credibility and power over his audience.

Not even in the Bible is there such a crime! God in His wrath struck down with fire the perpetrators of lesser crimes! One hundred million of us black people! Your grandparents! Mine! Murdered by this white man....I wish it was possible for me to show you the sea bottom in those days—the black bodies, the blood, the bones broken by boots and clubs! ...Everytime you see a white man, think about the devil you're seeing! Think of how it was your slave foreparents' bloody, sweaty backs that he built this empire that's today the riches of all nations—where his evil and greed cause him to be hated around the world.128

Malcolm would further the development of this device by direct attacks of outrage upon Christianity. It seemed to be his contention that Black oppression increased exponentially to the rate of Black envelopment within this doctrine. So then following his attacks, he would strike a blow to reduce it to the absurd. Waging a war on this institutional reality, his language appeared torrid and intense. His goal: to snatch the blinders off the eyes of Black people and so to irritate their pupils by the strongest light possible—truth. In that would come their epiphany.

Christianity is the white man's religion. The Holy Bible in the white man's hands and his interpretations of it have been the greatest single ideological weapon for enslaving millions of non-white human beings. Every country the white man has conquered with his guns, he has always paved the way, salved his conscience, by carrying the Bible and interpreting it to call the people 'heathens' and 'pagans'; then he sends his guns, then his missionaries behind the guns to mop up.129

When whites called on the moderate Black ministers of the day to discuss Malcolm's anti-Christian espousals, Malcolm's grand stroke, to reduce them to the ludicrous, was pronounced. "Right Reverends


Bishop T. Chickenwing", he called them, who first, didn't know what they were talking about; and second, didn't know the difference between Christianity and human decency, particularly if the white man didn't tell them about it first. These men were the ones to whom the whites were going for comfort during a difficult time. And, these Black men were not disappointing them. But to Malcolm, these Black men's acts were criminal and the white man deserved no comfort. So he smacked them to the absurd. He called them "token-integrated Negroes" who were more white-minded than white men. Then Malcolm smacked the whites for asking the ridiculous comfort. "For the white man to ask the black man if he hates him is just like the rapist asking the raped, or the wolf asking the sheep, 'Do you hate me?'" 130

Rhetorical Questions

The rhetorical questions were another device of Malcolm's mastery. These questions were not only to punctuate Malcolm's clear perception of the Black man's problems, but to untangle the components of the problems for others for their own explicit judgment. Calculated to unravel the confusion for his audience in an economical didactic, the total sum imparted a single, sober force for his oratory.

What will they give us in 1965? I just read where they planned to make a black cabinet member. Yes, they have a new gimmick every year. They're going to take one of their boys, black boys, and put him in the cabinet, so he can walk around Washington with a cigar-fire on the end and fool on the other. .....But will it work? Can that one, whom

they are going to put down there, step into the fire and put it out when the flames begin to leap up? When people take to the streets in their explosive mood, will that one, that they're going to put in the cabinet, be able to go among those people? Why, they'll burn him faster than they burn the ones who sent him.131

Seemingly because Malcolm wanted to instruct in his rhetoric, redefining and reshaping of words and concepts lent themselves admirably to this function. His concern was that Black people get themselves to "new think", that is, "Black think" and apply words and concepts appropriately to their lives and experiences. His oratory points out repeated attempts at this restructuring process. Sometimes this approach required a remolding of terms, other times it required a turning of ideas and themes upside down to gear them more precisely to a new Black identification of self, unity, aggressiveness, and crucially, to Black survival. In his "Message to the Grass Roots," Malcolm aptly applies this device to redefining the word "revolution".

First, what is a revolution? There is no such thing as a nonviolent revolution. The only kind of revolution that is nonviolent is the Negro revolution. The only revolution in which the goal is loving your enemy is the Negro revolution. ... That's no revolution. ... Revolution is bloody, revolution is hostile, revolution knows no compromise, revolution overturns and destroys everything that gets in its way. ...... Whoever heard of a revolution where they lock arms.... singing "We Shall Overcome"? You don't do that in a revolution. You don't do any singing, you're too busy swinging.132

To Black audiences who were Malcolm's hearers, they found themselves an impassioned speaker, deeply involved in their grievances

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and their exultations; their blues and their joys; their emotional and their rational emphases. Compelling a verbal wield full of figu-
uration, humor, and "telling it like it is", Malcolm seemed to enjoin in their feeling a speaking dynamic that was intricately a part of them.

Seldom deficient, his figuration conferred a philosophic wisdom and ethnic familiarity that called upon the greatness of Black people. "This is our contribution-our blood. ...We died on every battlefield the white man had. .....Civil rights, for those of us whose philosophy is black nationalism, means: Give it to us now. Don't wait for next year. Give it to us yesterday, and that's not fast enough."[133]

**Humor**

Malcolm's wry humor can be seen in one of his many classical put-downs in his address to the Grass Roots Conference:

This modern house Negro loves his master. He wants to live near him. He'll pay three times as much as the house is worth just to live near his master, and then brag about "I'm the only Negro out here." You're nothing but a house Negro.[134]

Malcolm was also skillful at "telling it like it is". He said himself in his autobiography, "You never have to worry about me biting my tongue if something I know as truth is on my mind. Naw, naked truth exchanged between the black man and the white man is what a whole lot more of is needed in this country-to clear the air of the racial mirages,

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cliches, and lies that this country's very atmosphere has been filled with for four hundred years."\textsuperscript{135}

**Bestial Imagery**

Bestial imagery was another device that Malcolm employed. This device seemed to reflect considerably both Malcolm's conception of Black life in white America, and his skillful ability to turn the right phrase with uncustomary precision. For example, in a speech on Afro-American History, Malcolm demonstrated this use.

Just like a dog who runs out of the woods and grabs a rabbit. No matter how hungry the dog is, does he eat it? No, he takes it back and lays it at the boss's feet. The boss skins it, takes the meat, and gives the dog the bones. And the dog is going right on, hungry again. But he could have gotten the rabbit and eaten it for himself. And the boss couldn't have caught him until later, because he can outrun the boss. It's the same way with you and me. Every contribution we make, we don't make it for our people, we make it for the man, we make it for our master. He gets the benefit from it. We die, not for our people, we die for him. ....A lot of you all were fools on the front lines, were you not? Yes, you were. You put on the uniform and went right up on the front lines like a roaring hound dog barking for master. And when you come back here-you've had to bark since you came back.\textsuperscript{136}

Malcolm viewed the Black man's struggle in America to have reached a plateau shortly after the March on Washington led by Dr. Martin Luther King. Black people could no longer accept a passive neutrality and hope to survive. Therefore, he urged a different view and a different strategy. He insisted that Black people adopt violence as a strategy


because America had proved itself a violent society. He asserted, "America is cunning like a fox, friendly and smiling, but even more vicious and deadly than the wolf. The wolf and the fox are both enemies of humanity, both are canine, both humiliate and mutilate their victims. Both have the same objectives, but differ only in methods."\textsuperscript{137} Thus, the Black man has no recourse but to see himself and whites as enemies, beasts in conflict--each being prey to the other. The strongest would survive.

In his speeches, Malcolm sought to clearly define the white man. In his "Message to the Grass Roots," Malcolm depicted the white man. "This is the way it is with the white man in America. He's a wolf--and you're a sheep."\textsuperscript{138} He then sought to identify the role of white institutions and their implications on black lives in his speech, "Racism: The Cancer That Is Destroying America."

The present American 'system' can never produce Freedom for the black man. A chicken cannot lay a duck egg because the chicken's "system" is not designed or equipped to produce a duck egg. ...The American "system" (political, economic, and social) was produced from the enslavement of the black man, and this present "system" is capable only of perpetuating that enslavement. In order for a chicken to produce a duck egg its system would have to undergo a drastic and painful revolutionary change... or REVOLUTION. So be it with America's enslaving system.\textsuperscript{139}

Next, he sought to explore, by example, the means whereby the Black man should wage his war against the white man's perpetrations. In an OAAU

meeting in Harlem, 1965, Malcolm described what the Black man must do. "We've got to give the man a chance. He probably won't take it, the snake." But, he said finally, we must "get the ape off our backs." With his use of animal imagery, Malcolm essentially called up sides; divided the struggle and the issues into right and wrong; and, the solution, "to do or die."

The effectiveness of Malcolm's employ of this device seemed to be assured by his insight into its proper proportion and application as he wove it intricately and often dramatically into the logic, grammar, and psychology of his presentations. Repeatedly reflecting his perception of the cruelty and violence of Black and white societal conflict in America, his language of the pursued animal advanced the Black man's consciousness that not to accept this fate meant to redefine his own reality. He must become the pursuer, full of passion and power.

Malcolm asserted that he wanted Black people to throw off the white man's definition of him as beast of burden. And, each thread he sewed of the Black man's continued history of biting when the white man said bite and barking when the white man said bark, seemed to function first, to overwhelm the listener with the element of his own character within this unnatural design; and, second, to infuriate him with the ugliness and powerlessness of the total fabric. Degrees of success of this device demonstrated the Black man as aggressively ripping apart this fabric and patterning a new material.

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The technique of bestial imagery appeared to substantiate Malcolm's quest to prick the conscience of every Black man. Each picture he painted for his Black audiences appeared marked by sophistication and artistry, graphically outlined in Bauhaus simplicity and fine strokes to assure the Black segment that what they saw were the colors of their own misfortune resulting from the improper mixture of white value and Black hue. For many, Malcolm's bestial portrayals expressed their own views of whites and white society accurately. There was war. Blacks vs. whites. Revolution was the exigency. "Like the flood in Noah's day, revolution drowns all opposition," Malcolm urged, "...or like the fires in Lot's day, the Black Revolution burns everything that gets in its path."141 The strongest would survive.

Indeed, it is possible to suggest that Malcolm X was an orator of the grand style. His range of emphasis, force, and clarity were of the genre that the ancient Greeks called "techne"--the excellent performance of an art. Undetached from the human suffering of his Black brothers and sisters in America, he seemed to perform his art with a majesty and dignity that lays claim to human greatness. Seemingly these same forces also combined to make him heroic in the eyes of many of his people. He made his stylistic devices usable tools for the Black man. He appeared to carry his oratorical accomplishments to a perfection, demonstrating in himself that every act of genuine creativity and achievement meant higher and higher levels of self-awareness,

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personal freedom, and thus, continued progress in the Black man's struggle for liberation. Indeed, his apparent genius as a stylist and a hero is impressive. So, as Black people are still "creating the uncreated features of their face" and their crumpled voices belching:

Look at us!
Not a shack to pray in
Nor an alley to sing the blues!

Malcolm's contributions of style and heroism stand as ready didactic:

(1) Black people must claim a view of themselves and a posture of courage that is the natural accompaniment of a full relationship in which they experience the "inner identity" and "inner unity" between themselves and their own people, or, (2) to try grimly to face the fact that life is "a tale told by an idiot" and make of it what they can letting hate and racism lead them in their journey from slavery to slavery.

Perhaps what Malcolm taught stylistically is what he saw keenly—that the very state of Black people implies the task ahead. The courage "to be" is implicit in that knowing and in that task. And, the "features of their face" will record the struggle to their goal in the gifts of its people who See. O! This courage is strong stuff.

Malcolm seemed to make the directive clear. Black people must draw from that reservoir that he and so many others in their history left as their heritage. They must see the world as it is. They must make of it what they think it ought to be. Work hard at it. Care
about it. Tell their story in their deeds. Malcolm taught that the Black legacy is something glorious to draw upon. If Black people fail to see that and don't, Aeschylus makes Malcolm's point unequivocably clear:

The rest I leave to silence;
for an ox stands huge upon my tongue.
The house itself, could it take voice,
might speak aloud and plain.
I speak to those who understand, but if they fail
I have forgotten everything. 142

Summary

The rhetorical style of Malcolm X seemed to provide a prism to expand and explore the myriad colors in the ideas and thoughts of this man. His conception of American society appeared to be that of a jungle in which Black men and white men were enemies struggling for survival. In his speeches, Malcolm seemed to use the devices of analogy and repetition to support and re-enforce these notions to his audiences. Seemingly, though, not only did these devices truss Malcolm's arguments, but spoken in the language experiences of his people, they also bolstered his credence to his people. Further, he employed the rhetorical question perhaps to provoke his Black audiences and shame them, in many respects, toward action. From all indications, his wry humor and his method of "telling it like it is" functioned to bridge the gap between himself as speaker and Black people as audience. In addition, he appeared to use bestial imagery to demonstrate the

most ludicrous in the paradox of Black life. Seemingly, Malcolm was a formidable speaker -- explosive and fiery -- who let simplicity of style and plainness of language be useful tools to help mold Black minds to build a strong, Black nation--for themselves.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

He led us into knowing we are Black and into pride in being Black; he would have led us much further if he had lived; and his ideas, his power, are still moving in our heads. When we see new leaders come, they will bring with them messages and formulas which started in the head of Malcolm X. I don't know where we'll get to, but I do know the start of our way has been lit, and well lit by Malcolm X.¹⁴³

Malcolm X emerged as a distinctive Black spokesman for the Nation of Islam, to gain national attention. He seemed to emerge shortly after the airing of a problem called "The Hate That Hate Produced." From Malcolm's view, the program was a thriller for public consumption deliberately designed to mislead conception about the Black Muslim sect. To this extent, the Muslims were branded as "Black segregationists"; Malcolm X, as "hate teacher." Thus, when Malcolm was called upon by television producers and magazine publishers to defend these charges, he was thrust into the national spotlight.

Well-trained as a speaker by debating in prison, and Muslim lecturing, Malcolm used the media as vehicles not only to defend The Nation of Islam, but also as an attempt to reach into the consciences of thousands of Black people to educate them regarding the sickness of white racism in America and its consequences--past and present--on Black

¹⁴³ Hakim A. Jamal, From The Dead Level: Malcolm X and Me, p. 272.
lives. He received frequent exposure on radio and television as well as consistent examination in the nation's press. From this thrust and impact, many Black people thronged to hear this defiant young man. His rhetorical skills put to test. To many Black people, Malcolm X emerged victorious, his credence made manifest.

However, despite Malcolm X's popularity and achievements, no in-depth analysis of his rhetorical styles, strategies, and other persuasive appeals have been examined within their historical contexts and rhetorical designs. Particularly during his early exposure and his participation in the Nation of Islam and later the Civil Rights Movement, Malcolm's rhetorical skill and impact are important for study. During these times Malcolm came in as a spokesman for the Muslims and as a catalytic agent to the non-violent movement. His rhetoric emerged as revolutionary and agitational to white racist society.

This thesis was designed to analyze Malcolm's rhetoric in its phase in the Black Muslims and in the rhetorical campaign of the civil rights movement, 1955-1963, in particular. The thesis was to answer these questions:

1. What was the historical perspective of the Black liberation struggle in which Malcolm X was a part and what select Black spokesmen constitute a major part of Malcolm's rhetorical legacy?

2. What was the nature of Malcolm X's rhetoric and why should he be considered a social activator?

3. What were the elements of persuasion that might have suggested that Malcolm's rhetorical skills demanded a more militant stance than other spokesmen of his time?

4. What kinds of audiences did Malcolm address?
5. What kind of rhetorical strategies did he design and employ to reflect the clear perception of his procedures and the accomplishment of his goals?

6. How did Malcolm's style of speaking demonstrate his basic attitude regarding Black and white societal conflict, his ideology, and his audience adaptation?

What was the historical perspective of the Black liberation struggle in which Malcolm X was a major part and what select Black spokesmen constitute a major part of Malcolm's rhetorical legacy? For the most part, the condition of slavery and its negation of human rights, commanded the attention and rhetorical outpourings of early Black spokesmen. They spoke with rage over their people's disfranchisement in America. Believing that Black people could be assimilated into American society, and, crucially, that they wanted to be assimilated, their approach more often than not was to sting the conscience of the nation and shame its efforts at Black degradation. They provoked, in their audiences primarily integrated in nature, dreams of brotherhood for all in America. Henry Highland Garnet, Marcus Garvey, and Elijah Muhammad deviated slightly however in approach and set a marked precedent for the rhetoric and approaches of Malcolm X. Their call was for separation not assimilation; their dream—manhood in an all-Black nation. Their rhetoric was segregationist and aggressive directed primarily to Black people. Their goal was Black solidarity and its ensuing Black power.

Within the historical and rhetorical traditions of Garnet, Garvey, and Muhammad, Malcolm X sought to persuade Black people of their past and their need for pride. To primarily all-Black audiences, he spoke from
the intensity of that belief himself and, for many, that appeal was nothing less than contagious. So, wrapping the image of pride in their own rhetoric and idioms, Malcolm X sought to bring a new meaning and a new spendour to "Blackness." To Black pride he attached Black solidarity and the movement for Black nationhood. Malcolm felt that the Black man in America had been undermined far too long. The condition tempered the rhetoric. A more militant stance than the Black man had seen in a long time was chosen by Malcolm X to wake the Black man's social and political stupor. "Freedom Now!--by any means necessary" was the alarm to wake their sleeping. In this way, bringing the fragmented factions of Black disenchantment under a common banner and a common thought, for many, Malcolm X was prized as a social activator--timely and badly needed by the Black people of America.

Examined within the confines of vilification, objectification, mythicization, and legitimation, Malcolm X attempted to change the directions and methods of the Black man's freedom struggle. His aim: Black mobilization, power, and international awareness in organization. Malcolm believed throughout his speaking career that America was a hypocritical country. So his blanket strategy on this point was to degrade and to demean white racist systems of oppression. Encompassed within this strategy was the provoking of Blacks toward formulating new definitions of society directly applicable to Black life and Black experience. He urged the economic realization of Black nationalism as a means for Blacks to gain economic control of their own communities. For he
taught, if Blacks were able to organize to this point, they had more force to attack exploitation and oppression in their own behalf.

The style of Malcolm X was quick, forceful, explosive, and halting. Unembellished by florid prose, Malcolm resorted to the use of analogy, repetition, and the short straight-forward retort. He also used the rhetorical question and bestial imagery to a considerable extent. Through these devices, he exposed his own attitudes regarding societal conflict in America, his ideology in response to it, and his ability to drive these ideas home to his people. He saw societal conflict between Blacks and whites as a war between natural enemies. "The white man in America, (he)s a wolf and you're a sheep," he said many times to his people. And the best method to deal with this condition is to fight back. "Don't lay down your life all by itself. No, preserve your life, it's the best thing you've got. And if you've got to give it up, let it be even-steven." To his various audiences, he differed his speech in idiom and delivery to effect his goal: to stir his sleeping people and move them to action.

Conclusion

After completing the research and analyzing Malcolm X's rhetoric in The Nation of Islam and the Civil Rights Movement, the writer has arrived at the general conclusion that Malcolm's speaking was a dynamic design of systematic retorts and alternative approaches to the Black man's oppression in America. In addition, his rhetorical approaches re-enforced his political ideologies by appealing to many Black Muslims,
youth, and urban ghetto dwellers who were keenly disenchanted and disillusioned over the political, social, and economic setbacks on previous civil rights maneuvers.

Other conclusions can also be drawn from this study. First, as a rhetor, Malcolm X was a natural extension of despair and need for direct confrontation in the movement for human rights in America. Throughout history, when there was a time for leaders, they seemed to have emerged. The ferment of moods and tensions, first in The Nation of Islam, later in the oppressed condition of the Black man in America, and then in the continued but unsuccessful strivings for equality, burst forth in a cry for a new rhetoric, a new course of attack, and a new man to lead. The emergence of Malcolm X was natural and timely; his aggressiveness and defiance, suitable for the need he faced. Had it not been Malcolm X, the writer contends, it would have been another. As Jane Pittman says in her autobiography, "People always looking for somebody to come lead them. Go to the Old Testament; go to the New. ..... They have always done it - and the Lord has always obliged in some way or another." Indeed, the need was intense and Malcolm X rose to meet it. Throughout the years from 1959 through 1963, Malcolm had armed himself for the growing protest. He complemented his people's grief and articulated their apprehension. He was an agitator for their freedom "by any means necessary" and changed his rhetorical recipes toward that advancement. As awareness changed, Malcolm's rhetorical approaches changed. "My whole life (was) been a chronology of changes," he said in his autobiography. The expression of his people give this proof.
As far as Malcolm's rhetoric and strategies are concerned, another conclusion seems apparent to this writer. He tapped the pulse of many Black people and spoke to the beat of their hearts. He spoke to pimps, prostitutes, dope-addicts, and hustlers in the classic language of the street. Though opposed to Christianity, he spoke to the Christian in the language of the Baptist minister using the parables of Jesus Christ. He spoke to the educated in the logic and critical development of the scholar, always stamped, nonetheless, with the metaphor and the imagery of racial conflict as he perceived it. At best, Malcolm X can be described as an angry man--his rhetoric captured by that anger and driven by the bravado of his style and the clarity of his goal--Freedom by any means necessary.

Thus the data have been analyzed and the questions for the study answered. Malcolm X is dead now. He was killed on February 21, 1965. He is history. Part of the tragedy of history seems to be that it repeats itself. In another few years, that generation can probably expect a new leader to take up the Black rhetorical dowry of which Malcolm X is now a part and urge for the freedom of Black people that is yet unpossessed. In the wake of that need and the wealth of that dowry, Black people may inherit a new direction.
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