found that on this scene he was a hick again.

Shorty for everything I could think of when he got the spray going and started soap-lathering my head. "The first time's always worst. You get used to it better. You took it real good, homeboy. You got a good conk."

When Shorty let me stand up and see in the mirror, my scalp still flamed, but this time not as bad; I could bear it. The mirror reflected Shorty behind me. We both were grinning and sweating. After that Vaseline, I had this thick, smooth sheen of shining red hair—real red—and straight as any white man's!

Shorty would take me to groovy, frantic scenes (parties) in different chicks' and cats' pads. With the lights and the jukebox down mellow, we "blew gage" (smoked marijuana) or "juiced back" (drank liquor). The chicks I met were fine as May wine, the cats were hip to all happenings. (That's just to give a taste of the slang that was talked by everyone whom I respected in those days.) I'd acquired the fashionable ghetto adornments, my zoot suits and a conk; I had begun drinking liquor, smoking cigarettes and reefers, and I was absorbing a lot of the "hip" dialogue.

Beacon Hill chick

I had to quit the shoeshine hustle because I liked to be on the Roseland dance floor when the bands were playing, but Ella helped me get a job as a soda jerk in the Townsend Drug Store, two blocks from her house. That was when I met my first white woman. I'm going to call her Sophia, for which I have my own private reasons. I met her at the Roseland Ballroom. When I caught this fine blonde's eyes, I just stopped. Froze! This one I'd *never* seen among the white girls that came to the Roseland black dances. She was giving me that "I-go-for-you" look.

She didn't dance well, at least not by Negro standards. But who cared? I could feel the staring eyes of other couples around us. We talked. I told her she was a good dancer, and asked her where she'd learned. I was trying to find out why she was there. Most white women who came to the black dances, I knew their reasons, but you didn't see *her* kind. She had vague answers for everything. And then I know she asked in that cool Lauren Bacall sound of hers would I like to go for a drive.

I just couldn't believe my luck. *Would* I? It was just *too* much!

For the next five years—into 1946, when I went to prison—Sophia was my main white woman. For two of the years she stayed single; for the other three she was married to a white man, for convenience. I soon found out from her, different parts of it at different times, that she was the oldest of a well-off divorced Boston woman's three daughters. Sophia would pick me up. I took her to the dances, but mostly to the bars around Roxbury. We drove all over. Sometimes it would be nearly daylight when she let me out in front of Ella's.

She was entranced with me. Automatically, I began to see less of Shorty. When I did see him and the gang, he would gibe, "Man, I had to comb the burrs out of homeboy's head; now, looka here, he's got a Beacon Hill chick."

Meanwhile I left the drugstore and soon found me a new job. I was a busboy at the Parker House. After only a few weeks, one Sunday morning I ran in to work expecting to get fired, I was so late. But the whole kitchen crew was too excited and upset to notice. I picked up their talk—Japanese planes had just bombed somewhere called Pearl Harbor.

You wouldn't have believed it was me. "Getcha goooood haaaaaman'cheeeeeese . . . sandwiches! Coffee! Candy! Cake! Ice cream!" Rocking along the tracks every other day for four hours between Boston and New York, in the coach-car aisles of the New Haven line's *Yankee Clipper*. An old Pullman porter, a friend of Ella's, had recommended the railroad job for me. He had told her that the war was snatching away railroad men so fast that if I could pass for 21, he could get me on. I knew that several New Haven trains ran between Boston and New York. Secretly, for years, I had wanted to visit New York City. Right there since I had been in Roxbury, I had heard so much raving about "The Big Apple," as it was called, by various kinds of people who traveled a lot, by musicians, merchant-marine sailors, chauffeurs for white families, salesmen and different hustlers.

Anyway, at the railroad-personnel hiring office down on Dover Street, a tired-acting, graybeaded, old white clerk got down to the crucial point. "Age?" When I told him "Twenty-one," he never lifted his eyes up from his pencil. And I knew I had it made.

The dining-car crew told me before we left Boston that their favorite spot in New York was a place called Small's Paradise. The cooks took me up to Harlem with them, in a cab. White New York passed by like a scenario, then almost abruptly, when we left Central Park at the upper end, at 110th Street, the people's complexion changed to Negroes. It was about five-thirty in the afternoon.

Busy Seventh Avenue ran along in front of Small's Paradise. No Negro place of business had ever impressed me so much. Around the big, luxurious-looking circular bar probably were 30 or 40 men, or mostly men, and several women, drinking and talking.

From then on, every layover night in Harlem, I explored new places. I first got a room at the Harlem YMCA because it was less than a block from Small's Paradise. Then I got a room, cheaper, at a rooming house where most of the railroad men stayed. I hung in Small's and the Braddock bar so much that the bartenders began to pour bourbon, my favorite brand of it, when they saw me. And the steady customers in both places, the hustlers in Small's and the musicians and entertainers in the Braddock, began to call me "Red," the nickname that my red conk made natural, I know.

My musical friends were of the caliber of Duke Ellington's great drummer, Sonny Greer, and that great personality with the violin, Ray Nance. Ray's the one who sang that wild "scat" style, that "bloo-blop-ble-blop-bla-bloo-blam-blam—" Remember that? And people like Cootie Williams; a little later on Pearl Bailey sang with Cootie. And Eddie (Mr. Cleanhead) Vinson; in the Braddock he'd kid me about *his* conk—he had nothing up there but skin. He was hitting the heights then with his *Hey, Pretty Mamma, Chunk Me in Your Big Brass Bed.* I knew Cy Oliver; he was married to a kind of red girl, and they lived up on

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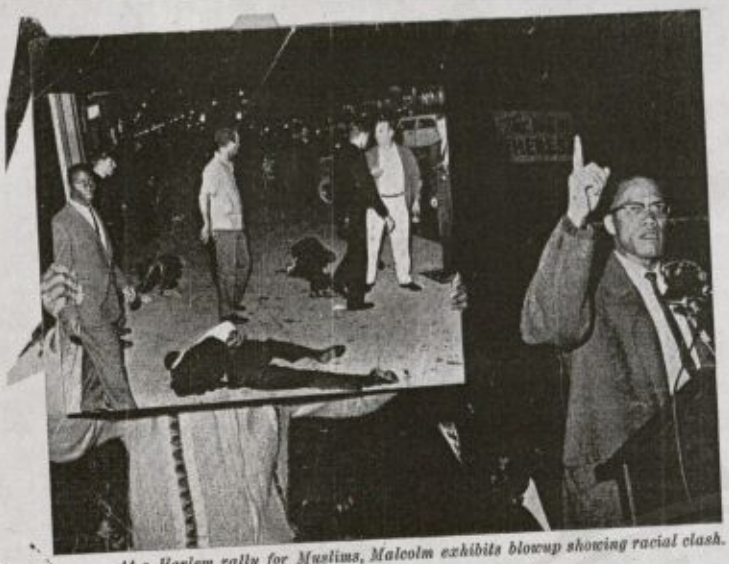

At a Harlem rally for Muslims, Malcolm exhibits blowup showing racial clash.

Death by violence has brushed Malcolm X three times—as a child, as a hustler, as a Muslim.

Fidel Castro met Malcolm when he came to the United Nations, failed to convert him.

Solidarity: tactical talk with the Rev. Galamison (left) and Rep. Adam Clayton Powell.

"Sugar Hill," and he did a lot of arranging for Tommy Dorsey.

By that time, on the *Yankee Clipper*, they had a laughing bet going among the waiters that I wasn't going to last. Because I had so rapidly become such a wild young Negro. I'd come to work, loud and wild and half high off either liquor or reefers, and I'd stay that way, jamming sandwiches at people until we got to New York. Off the train I'd go through that Grand Central Station afternoon rush-hour crowd, and many people simply stopped in their tracks to watch me pass. The drape and the cut of a zoot suit showed to the best advantage if you were tall, remember—and I was over six feet. My conk was fire-red. My knob-toed, orange-colored "kickup" shoes were the Cadillacs of shoes in those days. (They made these ridiculous styles for sale only in the black ghettos where ignorant Negroes like me would pay the big-name price.) And then, between Small's Paradise, the Braddock Hotel, and other places, as much as my $20 or $25 would let me, with my increasing number of friends I drank liquor, smoked marijuana, and got a few hours' sleep before the *Yankee Clipper* rolled again.

What did me in was that when some passenger wrote the New Haven line a mad letter, the conductors backed it up, telling how many verbal complaints they'd had, and how many warnings I'd been given. I didn't care. Me quitting the railroad was in my mind only a matter of time anyway. And I knew that the way the Army was snatching up anybody who was warm and able to walk, all the jobs I could want were going begging.

Back in New York, stony broke, I went over to Small's Paradise. One of the bartenders called me aside and said that if I went downstairs right away to the office, I might be able to replace a day waiter who was about to go into the Army.

Ed Small and his brother, Charlie, had seen me in the place so much that it made it pretty easy. They also knew I was a railroad man, which, for a waiter, was the best kind of recommendation. It was in 1942, just past my 17th birthday.

With Small's practically in the center of everything happening, waiting tables there was Seventh Heaven seven times over! Charlie Small had told me not to be *late!* Why, what was he talking about? I was so anxious to be there, I'd arrive an hour early! Inside of a week I don't know who liked me most, the cooks or the bartenders. And the customers, who had seen me among them around the bar, recognizing me now in the waiter's jacket, were surprised, pleased, and they couldn't have been more friendly. Recognizing that by New York terms I still was just a hick, they began to school me. Every day I listened raptly to one or several of the customers who felt like talking—these seasoned, mature hustlers—and it all added to my "education." Particularly, my ears absorbed like sponges when some of them in a rare burst of confidence, or a little beyond his usual number of drinks, would tell me "inside" things about the particular form of hustling that he pursued.

Plain-clothes detectives were quietly identified to me, by a nod, a wink. Knowing the law people in the area was elementary for the hustlers, and, like them, in time, I would learn to sense almost the presence of any police and agent types. And added to the civilian ones then in 1942, each of the military services had civilian-dressed "eyes" and "ears."

Every day, all of my tips—as high as $10 a day—I would gamble on the numbers, and dream of what I would do and buy as soon as I "hit." The straight number chances of hitting were a thousand-to-one, but your chances could be increased by what was called "combinating." For example, six cents would put one penny on each of the six possible combinations of three digits. Take the number 840, say. "Combinated," it would cover 840, 804, 048, 408, 480 and 084.

"Detroit Red"

The daily small army of "runners" each got 10 percent of the money they turned in, along with the bet slips, to their "controllers." (And if you hit, you gave the runner a 10 percent tip.) A controller might have as many as 50 runners working for him, and the controller got 5 percent of what he turned over to the "bankers," who paid off the hits, paid off the police, and, off the balance, got rich.

I should stress that Small's wasn't any haven for criminals. I dwell upon hustlers because it was their world that fascinated me. Actually, for the night-life crowd, most of which the hustlers regarded as "square," Small's was one of the two or three most decorous night spots that Harlem had. It was formally recommended by the New York City Police Department to white people who would ask where was safe to go in Harlem.

From time to time I'd have Sophia come over from Boston to see me. She would come in on a late-afternoon train, and come to Small's and I'd introduce her around until I got off. We would make it to the Braddock Hotel bar, where she would nearly have a fit with meeting some of the "name" musicians who now would greet me like an old friend. "Hey, Red—who have we got here?" And they would make on over her. They wouldn't let me even think about paying for the drinks I ordered.

Once, when I called Sophia in Boston, she sounded funny. She said she couldn't get away until the following weekend. She told me that she had just married some well-to-do Boston white fellow. He was in the service. She went on to say she didn't mean for it to change a thing between us. I told her it made me no difference.

When I had been around Harlem long enough to show signs of permanence, it was inevitable that I was going to get a nickname that would identify me beyond any confusion with two other red conked and well-known "Reds" who were around. I had met them both. One was "St. Louis Red," a professional armed robber. When I was sent to prison, he was doing some time for trying to stick up a dining-car steward on a train between New York and Philadelphia. The other one was "Chicago Red." In a speakeasy where I was a waiter later on, he was the funniest dishwasher on this earth, and we became good buddies. Now he's making his living being funny as a nationally known stage and nightclub comedian. (I don't see any reason why old "Chicago Red" would mind me telling that he is "Redd Foxx.") Anyway, before long, it happened. Different people, knowing I was from Michigan, would ask me what city. Since most New Yorkers never had heard of hick-town Lansing, I would say "Detroit." Gradually, I began being called "Detroit Red"—and it spread, and stuck.

It was class to be recognized as a client of West Indian Archie.

Malcolm X

One afternoon in early 1943, before the regular six-o'clock Small's hustling crowd had gathered, this real Georgia-looking black soldier sat drinking at one of my tables by himself. He looked dumb and pitiful, and it was because of that why I did one of the dumbest things I ever did in those years. The next drink that I served this soldier, I bent over close wiping the table, and asked him if he wanted a woman.

I *knew* better. It wasn't only Small's Paradise law, it was every tavern's law, at least if it wanted to stay in business, not to get involved with anything that could be interpreted as impairing the morals of servicemen, or any kind of hustling off them. Big trouble had been caused by this for dozens of places, some even well-known places had been put off limits by the military, and some even had lost their state or city licenses.

And I had suckered myself right into the hands of one of those military "spies." Why, this black tool of the white man said he sure would like a woman, so gratefully; he even had a dumb Georgia accent! And I gave him the phone number of one of my best friends among the prostitutes at the rooming house where I lived. I gave the fellow a half hour to have gotten there, and then I telephoned. I expected what the woman said to me, that no one like that had been there.

I didn't even go back out to the bar. I just went straight to Charlie Small's office. "I just did something, Charlie," I said, "I don't know why I did it ——" And I told him what I'd done.

Charlie looked at me. "I wish you hadn't done that, Red." We both knew what he meant.

When the West Indian plain-clothes detective, Charlie Barts, came in, I was waiting. When we got to the 135th Street precinct, it was busy with police in uniform. I reflected that two things were in my favor: I'd never given the police any trouble, and when that black spy soldier had tried to tip me, I had waved it away and told him I was just doing him a favor. I saw some other detectives side-mouthing with Charlie Barts, and I think that when these factors were discussed, they sort of agreed that Charlie Barts should just scare me.

Even more bitter to take than the just getting fired, they barred me out of Small's. I could understand. Even if I wasn't actually what was called "hot," I automatically was going to be under surveillance now; the brothers had to protect their business. I wasn't a qualified hustler as yet, but I surely had become schooled in their code. I was broke and on my own again, 18 years old.

Sammy, "Pretty Boy," one of the pimps, proved to be my friend in need. He put word on the "wire" for me to come over to his place. I went; I never had been there. His place seemed to me a small palace; his women really kept him in style. While we talked, about what kind of a hustle should I best get into, Sammy had the best marijuana I'd ever used. Peddling reefers, Sammy and I pretty soon agreed, was the best thing. Both Sammy and I knew some merchant seamen, and others, who could supply me with loose marijuana. And musicians, among whom I had so many good contacts, were the heaviest consistent category market for reefers—and then they also were for the heavier narcotics if I later wanted to graduate to peddling them. I had the advantage that I had been around long enough to either know, or spot on sight, most regular detectives and cops, though not the narcotics people. Sammy staked me, about $20.

I sold reefers like a wild man. Every day I *cleared* at least thirty or forty dollars. I felt, for the first time in my life, that great feeling of *free!* Suddenly, now, I was the peer of other smooth young hustlers around.

The narcotics-squad detectives didn't take long to pick up that I was selling, and different ones of them would tail me once in a while. One morning, though, I came in and found my room ransacked. It was then that I began carrying a little .25 automatic. I carried it stuck right down the center of my back, pressed under my belt. Someone had told me that the cops never hit there when they gave you any routine patting-down. I sold less than I had before because, mainly, being careful consumed so much time. It was on the wire, finally, that the narcotics squad of Harlem had me on its "special list." Now was when, every other day or so, and usually in some public place, some of them would come up, and flash the badge to search me. But I would tell them right off, loud enough for others to hear me, people standing about, that I didn't have anything on me, and I didn't want to get anything "planted" on me, and then they wouldn't, because Harlem already thought little enough of the law, and they did have to be careful that some crowd of Negroes, figuring they had witnessed a "frame," could set off even a race riot.

A Boston draft board, after I didn't respond at Ella's, had contacted her, and then had contacted their New York counterpart, and, in care of Sammy, I received Uncle Sam's "Greetings." I had about 10 days to go before I was to show up at the induction center. And I went right to work. I knew I wasn't even *about* to get hooked into any Army!

The Army "intelligence" soldiers, those black spies in civilian clothes that hung around in different places with their ears open for the white man downtown, oh, yes, I knew right where to start dropping the word! I started dropping it around that I was frantic to join—the Japanese Army. When I sensed, *knew*, that I had the direct ears of some of the "spies" I would talk, and act, high and crazy. I'd snatch out, and read loudly, my Greetings—to make certain they got who I was, and when I'd report downtown.

And the day I went down there—well, I costumed like a model. With my wild zoot suit and the yellow knob-toe shoes, and I frizzled my hair up into a crazy reddish bush of conk.

Let me tell you—when I went in skipping and tipping, and thrust my tattered Greetings at the reception desk's white soldier—"Crazy-O, Daddy-O, get me moving, I can't wait to get in that brown"—why I will bet you that soldier hasn't recovered from me *yet*. They had their wire from uptown on me, all right—I could tell from his expression when his glance at my Greetings confirmed the name to him.

"Kill up crackers"

But they still put me in the line. And I had meanwhile sized up the situation. In that big starting room were maybe 40 or 50 other planned inductees. The room had fallen vacuum-quiet, with me running my mouth a mile a minute, talking nothing but slang. I was going to fight on *all* fronts; I was going to be a *general*, man, before I got done, and such talk as that.

Most of them in there were white, of course. The tender-looking ones appeared ready to run from me. Some others had on that vinegary "here's the worst kind of nigger" look. And a few were amused at the "Harlem jigaboo" archtype.

Also amused were some of the room's maybe 10 or 12 Negroes. But the stony-faced rest of them looked as though if they were about to sign up to go off killing somebody, they would have liked to start killing me right there.

You see, why I made these Negroes really *so* mad was they were these integration-type Negroes. And what I was doing was confirming white people's image of Negroes right there among some of the white people that they were so anxious to get integrated with. And they knew those crackers probably would go to their graves fighting integration, after the show I was putting on.

The line moved along. Pretty soon, stripped to my shorts, I was making my eager-to-join comments in the medical examination rooms—and everybody in the white coats that I saw had 4-F in his eyes. I went all the way, though, which was longer than I had expected, before they siphoned me off. One of the white coats accompanied me around a turning hallway; I knew we were on the way to a "headshrinker."

I must say this for that psychiatrist. He *tried* to be objective and professional in his manner. He sat there and doodled with his blue pencil on a tablet, listening to me spiel to him probably three or four minutes before he got a word in. His tack was quiet questions, to get at why was I so anxious. I kept jerking around, backward, as though somebody could be listening. I *knew* I was going to send him back to the books to figure what kind of a case I was.

Suddenly, I sprang up and peeped under both doors, the one I'd entered and another that probably was a closet. And then I bent and whispered fast in his ear. "Daddy-O, now you and me, we're from up north here, so don't you tell nobody . . . I want to get sent down South. Organize them nigger soldiers, you dig? Steal us some guns, and kill up crackers!"

A 4-F card came in the mail, and I never heard from the Army anymore.

Because of my reputation around it was easy for me to get into the numbers racket—about the only hustle left in Harlem that hadn't fallen off in business. My job now was to ride a bus across the George Washington Bridge, where a fellow who was always waiting would hand me a bag of numbers-betting slips. We didn't speak. I'd cross the street and catch the next bus back to Harlem. I never knew who that fellow was. I never knew who picked up the betting money for the slips that I picked up. In the rackets you don't ask questions. My boss, his wife and their daughter would be waiting in a room when I would arrive, just shortly before the day's first number was announced from downtown.

Our numbers-world ethics code was that I should play with a runner of my own outfit. That was how I began placing bets with "West Indian Archie." This was one of Harlem's really *bad* Negroes, one of those former Dutch Schultz strong-arm men who were around. It was status and class just to be known as a client of West Indian Archie.

One afternoon West Indian Archie paid me $300 out of his pocket for a 50-cent-combination bet. I was planning to go out on a date. Later, when I got to the apartment of my friend Sammy, he told me that West Indian Archie had been there, looking for me. I couldn't figure out why. Anyway, Sammy and I sniffed some cocaine to kill the time before I would go out and pick up my date. Then there was the knocking at the door. Sammy, lying on his bed in pajamas and a bathrobe, called "Who?"

When West Indian Archie answered, Sammy slid under the bed that round, two-sided shaving mirror with what little of the cocaine powder—or crystals, actually—was left, and I opened the door.

"Red—I want my money!"

"Man—what's the beef?"

West Indian Archie said he'd thought I was trying something when I'd told him I'd hit a 50-cent-combination number. But he'd gone on and paid me the $300 until he could double-check his actual written betting slips; now he thought I hadn't combinated the number I'd claimed, but another number.

"I'll give you until twelve o'clock tomorrow to get that money back." And that mad, mean West Indian put his hand behind him and pulled open the door. He backed out, and slammed it. It was a classic hustler-code impasse. The $300 wasn't the problem. I had maybe about $200 of it. But once the wire had it, any retreat by either of us was unthinkable. The wire would be awaiting the report of the big showdown. I could see people who knew me finding business elsewhere. I knew nobody wanted to be maybe caught in a crossfire.

I just stayed high for a few days, but I was scared.

Some raw kid hustler in a bar, I had to bust in his mouth. He came back, pulling a blade; I would have shot him, but somebody grabbed him. As I was known, and they feared me, they put him out, cursing that he was going to kill me.

Things were building up, closing in on me. I was trapped in cross turns. West Indian Archie gunning for me. The scared kid hustler I'd hit. The cops.

When I heard the car's horn, I was walking on St. Nicholas Avenue. But my ears were hearing a gun. I didn't dream the horn could possibly be for me.

"Homeboy!"

I jerked around; I came *that* close to shooting. . . .

Shorty—from Boston!

I'd scared him nearly to death.

"*Daddy-O!*"

I couldn't have been happier to see my mother! I knew Shorty had hit his number and that he was playing dates around Boston with his own band.

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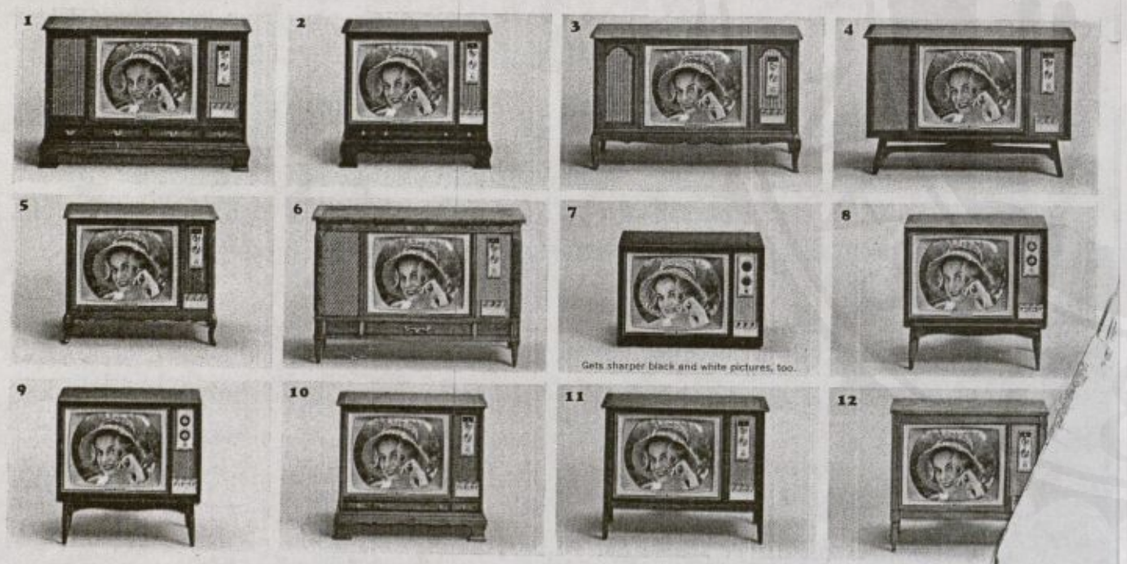

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Mrs. Malcolm X (Betty Shabazz) with son Ilyasah (right), daughters Quiblah (left), Lamumbah and Attilah, named for the celebrated "Scourge of God."

"Most-sought-after," after Barry.

Malcolm X

five minutes it would be surrounded. Speaking publicly, sometimes I'd guess which faces in the audience were FBI or other types of agents. Both the police and the FBI intently and persistently visited and questioned us. Mr. Muhammad said, "I do not fear them, I have all that I need, the truth."

And so, by 1961, our Nation of Islam flourished. Mr. Muhammad evidenced the depth of his trust in me. In certain areas he told me to make decisions myself. "Brother Malcolm, I want you to become well known," Mr. Muhammad said to me. "But, Brother Malcolm, there is something that you need to know. You will grow to be hated when you become well known. Because usually people will get jealous of public figures." Nearly every day some attack on "the Black Muslims" appeared in newspapers. Increasingly, a focal target was something I had said, or "Malcolm X" as an individual "demagogue."

Because as the Nation of Islam's minister in New York City in 1963, I was trying to cope with the newspaper and television reporters determined to defeat Mr. Muhammad's teachings.

The New York Times reported me to be, according to a poll which the *Times* had made on college and university campuses, "the-second-most-sought-after" speaker at colleges and universities. The speaker ahead of me, "*most*-sought-after," was Sen. Barry Goldwater.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, each time I would go to see him in Chicago, or Phoenix, would *warm* me with his expressions of his approval and confidence in me. He left me in charge of the Nation of Islam's affairs when he made a pilgrimage to the Holy City, Mecca. I would have hurled myself between Mr. Muhammad and an assassin.

Now as far back as 1961, I had heard chance negative remarks concerning me, or veiled negative implications, or I noticed other early evidences of the envy and jealousy which Mr. Muhammad had prophesied. I was trying to "take over" [illegible]ms. I was "taking credit for [illegible]mmad's teaching." I was "try[illegible]n empire" for myself. I loved [illegible]t-to-coast "Mr. Big Shot." [illegible]lieve that any man in the [illegible]n could have gained the [illegible]ominence that Mr. Muhammad's wings had let me gain—plus the freedom that he had granted me to take liberties and do things on my own—and still have remained as faithful and as selfless a servant as I was. Yet I was very hypersensitive to internal critics.

Also, I could not help but hear some of the hints and rumors and vicious gossip that was going around, about the moral behavior of our leader. Just to hear these stories, why, it made me *spooky* with fear! But the stories got worse and even people *outside* the Nation began to hear them. I will only note, to be as brief as possible on this and to indicate my own reactions, that Mr. Muhammad is the defendant in two paternity suits in Los Angeles. I don't know how those suits, from two girls who once were his secretaries, are going to come out, but I do know that at the time I first heard those wicked speculations about his moral life, I could not ignore them.

By late 1962, a number of Muslims were leaving Mosque No. 2 in Chicago. I learned that reliably—and the ugly rumor was spreading swiftly there among non-Muslims, as well. So some months later I sat down and I wrote to Mr. Muhammad what poison was being spread about him. He had me to fly to his new home in Phoenix to see him in April, 1963.

We embraced, as always; and almost immediately he took me outside, where we began to walk by his swimming pool. "Well, son," he said, "what is on your mind?" Plainly, frankly, pulling no punches, I told Mr. Muhammad what was being said. And without waiting for any response from him, mentioned Bible passages about the sins of David, Moses, and Noah and discussed with him about how good deeds outweighed bad, and about the fulfillment of prophecy.

"Son, I'm not surprised," Elijah Muhammad said. "You always have had such a good understanding of prophecy, and of spiritual things. You recognize that's what all of this is—prophecy. You have the kind of understanding that only an old man has.

Submission

"I'm David," he said. "When you read about how David took another man's wife, I'm that David. You read about Noah, who got drunk, that's me. You read about Lot, who went and laid up with his own daughters. I have to fulfill all of those things."

I thought that when an epidemic is about to hit somewhere, you inoculate that community's people against exposure, so that they are prepared to resist the virus. I decided to tell six other selected East Coast Muslim officials. I never dreamed that the Chicago Muslim officials were going to make it appear that I was throwing gasoline on the fire instead of water.

I expected headlines momentarily. But I didn't expect the kind which came.

No one needs to be reminded that on November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Tex. Within hours after the assassination every Muslim minister received a directive from Mr. Muhammad—to make no remarks at all concerning the assassination. I had a previously scheduled speaking engagement in New York at the Manhattan Center. It wasn't canceled, and the question-and-answer period, someone asked me right off the bat, "What do you think about President Kennedy's assassination?"

And I said without a second thought what I honestly felt—that, as I saw it, it was a case of "the chickens coming home to roost." I said that the hate in white men had not stopped with the killing of defenseless black people, but that, allowed to spread unchecked, it had struck this country's Chief of State. BLACK MUSLIMS, MALCOLM X! CHICKENS COME HOME TO ROOST. That was promptly in headlines and on news broadcasts. The next day, I went to Chicago, on my monthly visit to Mr. Muhammad. "That was a very bad statement," he said. "The country loved this man. The whole country is in mourning. That was very ill-timed. A statement like that can make it hard on Muslims in general. I'll have to silence you for the next ninety days—so that the Muslims everywhere can be disassociated from the blunder."

I was numb. But I told Mr. Muhammad, "Sir, I agree with you, and I submit, one-hundred-percent."

When I got back to New York, prepared to tell my Mosque No. 7 assistants that I had been suspended, or, in my case, "silenced," I learned that already they had been informed. Next, an announcement was made that I would be reinstated within 90 days, "if he submits."

This made me suspicious for the first time. I had completely submitted. But Muslims were deliberately being given the implication that I had rebelled. Three days later the first word came to me that members of Mosque No. 7 were being told, "If you knew what the Minister did, you'd go out and kill him yourself." As a one-time hustler, I sensed that once again I had to leave town fast.

I remembered Cassius Clay. We met first in 1962 at a Detroit rally for Elijah Muhammad. Today he does not share my feelings about Mr. Muhammad. But I must always be grateful to him that just at this time, when he was training in Miami to fight Sonny Liston, he invited me, Betty and the children to come there, as his guests, as a sixth-wedding anniversary present to Betty and me. Miami was Betty's first vacation since we had married. And our girls loved the heavyweight contender who romped and played with them. I was in a state of emotional shock. I made an error, I know now, in not speaking out the full truth when I was first "suspended."

What was I going to do? After the fight I returned to New York City, where I had a large, direct personal following. Each day, more of the militant, "action" brothers who had been with me in Mosque No. 7 announced their automatically irrevocable break from the Nation of Islam to come with me.

The Hotel Theresa is at the corner of 125th Street and 7th Avenue, which might be called one of the fuse boxes of Harlem. I called a press conference and made the announcement: "I am going to organize and lead a new mosque in New York City known as the Muslim Mosque, Incorporated, with temporary headquarters in the Hotel Theresa. It will be the working base for an action program designed to eliminate the political oppression, the economic exploitation, and the social degradation suffered daily by twenty-two million Afro-Americans."

There was one major thing more that I needed to do. I took a plane, to my sister Ella, in Boston. "Ella," I said, "I want to make the pilgrimage to Mecca." Ella said, "How much do you need?"

I couldn't get over what she did then. I obtained a visa to the Holy City and I left New York quietly.

As a Muslim from America, I was the center of attention in Mecca. They asked me what about the Hajj had impressed me the most. I said, "The *brotherhood:* The people of *all* races, colors, from all over the world coming together as *one!* It has proved to me the power of the One God."

I never would have believed possible—it shocked me when I considered it—the impact of the Muslim World's influence on my previous thinking. Many blacks would cynically accuse me of "selling out" the fight, to become an "integrationist." Nearly all whites would scoff and jeer. But I knew that there were a few who would understand, who would accept, that in the land of Muhammad and Abraham, I had been blessed with a new insight into the religion of Islam.

Before I left the Holy City I had an audience with Prince Faisal, who encouraged me to bring the truth of Islam to American Negroes. I visited Nigeria and Ghana, where I talked with cabinet officers, intellectuals, ambassadors from the rest of Africa, and many others. Everywhere the reception for the militant American Muslim Negro was tremendous. In Dakar the Senegalese at the airport stood in line to shake my hand and ask for autographs.

From Dakar, I flew to Algiers. It was Tuesday, May 19, 1964—my birthday. It was 39 years since the scene of this book's beginning, with my mother pregnant with me standing on the porch in Nebraska, as the Ku Klux Klan threatened her.

My next plane, a Pan American jet—it was Flight 115—landed in New York on May 21 at 4:25 in the afternoon. As we left the plane and filed toward Customs, I saw the crowd—probably 50 or 60 reporters and photographers. Before any press queries could be made, I told of the alteration of my attitudes about white men who practiced *true* brotherhood, such as I had seen during my recent pilgrimage experience among Muslims in the Holy Land.

Over a hundred speaking invitations were waiting for me, either at home, or at the Muslim Mosque, Inc. In my busy weeks abroad I had had some chance to think about the basic types of white man in America, and how they affected Negro issues, and especially politics in this election year. I had thought out what I was going to say when I began appearing at some of these speaking engagements.

They call me sometimes "the angriest Negro in America." Well, the Bible says there is a *time* for anger. I feel that if Negroes attack white people, then those white people should defend themselves, with arms, if necessary, if the forces of law are inadequate. And I feel that Negroes, if white people attack them, should do exactly the same thing.

Johnson and Goldwater I feel that as far as the American black man is concerned, are both just about the same. It's just a question of Johnson, the fox, or Goldwater, the wolf. "Conservatism" is only meaning "Let's keep the niggers in their place," and "Liberalism" is meaning "Let's keep the *knee*-grows in their place, but tell them we'll treat them a little better. Let's fool them more, with more promises." Since these are the choices, the black man in America, I think, only needs to pick which one he chooses to be eaten by, because they both will eat him.

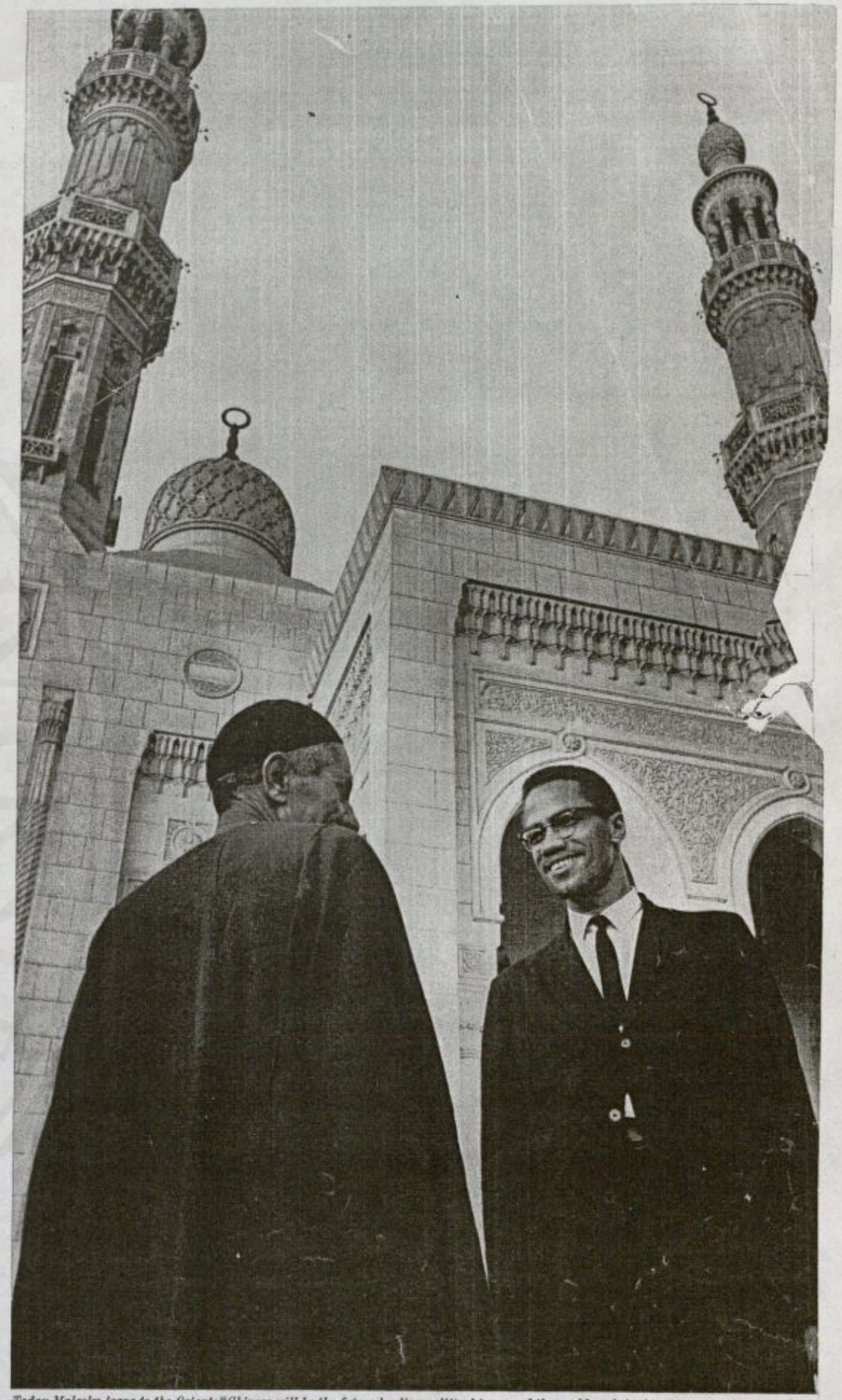
Goldwater, I respect, as a man, because he speaks out his *convictions*. True convictions spoken out are rarely heard today in high-level politics. I think he's too intelligent to have risked his unpopular stand without conviction. He isn't another liberal just trying to please both racists and integrationists, smiling at one, and whispering to the other. Goldwater flatly tells the black man he's not for the black man. His policies make the black-white issue more clear-cut for the black man. So he makes the black man recognize what *he* has to do. The black man, if Goldwater would win, would realize that he had to fight harder; the black man would be more positive in his demands, more aggressive in his protests. The issue would be more quickly enjoined. While the black man under the liberal "fox" could keep on sitting around, begging and passive-resisting for another 100 years, waiting for "time" and for "good-will" to solve his problem.

The black man in America, when he awakens, when he becomes intellectually mature, when he becomes able to *think* for himself, then he will be able to make more independent choices.

I wouldn't put myself in the position of voting for either one, or of recommending to any black man to do so. I'm just talking about if America's white voters *do* install Goldwater, the black people will at least know what they are dealing with. They would at least know they were fighting an honestly growling wolf, rather than a fox who could have them in his stomach and half-digested before they even know what is happening.

They have called Goldwater a racist and me a racist. Once I was a racist—yes. But now I have turned my direction away from anything that's racist. So, some of the followers of Elijah Muhammad would still consider it a first-rank honor to kill me. Also I know that any day, any night, I could die at the hands of some white devil racists. At the same time, however, I can't think of any subject involving human beings today that you can divorce from the race issue. I will even go so far as to say that I dream that one day history will look upon me as having been one of the voices that perhaps helped to save America from a grave, even possibly fatal catastrophe. If the reader can understand me, if then he can multiply me by the tens of thousands, he will put down this life story with at least a better picture than he had of America's black ghettoes.

More and worse riots will erupt. The black man has seen the white man's underbelly of guilty fear. But, if through telling this story of my life, I have brought any light, if I have spread any truth then all of the credit is due to Allah. Only the mistakes have been mine. THE END



Today Malcolm leans to the Orient: "Chinese will be the future leading political tongue of the world, and Arabic the spiritual."