

MOHAMMAD SPEAKS AUGUST 1

# Self-Publicity Motivated Malcolm, Not Devotion.

By Abdul Basit Naem

In my article in last week's issue of MUHAMMAD SPEAKS I had cited a specific example of how the late Malcolm X, in his bid for outside support, had wilfully misrepresented the "Nation of Islam" in America and its undisputed leader, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, to Eastern Muslims. The basis of my statement was a report published in a reliable, Islamic journal printed in Singapore.

I have evidence that Malcolm had sent a variety of signed statements — offering, in the main, his own version of how and why he was "compelled to disassociate himself from the (so-called) Black movement and establish a separate organization" — to scores of newspapers and magazines in Africa and Asia.

One of these, printed (translated from English into Arabic) by a leading Middle East weekly newspaper, implied that Malcolm X had "ceased to think of himself and of his career in terms of race . . . and hence was now a bona fide, Sunni (orthodox) Muslim . . ." The Arabic newspaper attempted to prove its point by quoting from a statement that Malcolm had sent to the New York Times from Mecca — where he had supposedly experienced a "complete change of heart."

I remember reading that statement in the New York Times. I also remember my own initial reaction to that story: "Can you imagine that!" I had murmured to myself, "Our brother has been unable to keep the unholy (white) American press out of his heart and mind even in the Holiest of all cities!"

But then, to me, Malcolm X — or El Hadj Malik El-Shabazz — had always been that way. He loved publicity.



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I think it "tickled" him; he cherished seeing his name in print. I suspect that self-publicity, and not selfless service and devotion, usually inspired him to say or act as he did. (I know of an acquaintance of Malcolm who, whenever, the New York newspapers failed to headline "MR. X" for several days in a row, used to call him up and inquire if he were "sick or out of the country.")

Back in 1956, when I published the magazine MOSLEM WORLD & THE U.S.A. and Malcolm X, as Minister and East Coast representative of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, had charge (on the latter's orders) of distributing it to the various Muhammad's Temples of Islam in the country, he had persuaded me to use his picture (along with the Honorable Messenger's) on the cover of one of its numbers (dated August-September, 1956).

Likewise, in the following year, when the Honorable Elijah Muhammad had called upon me to help prepare the first book of his teachings, THE SUPREME WISDOM, and have it printed for him here in New York, Malcolm X himself had "advised" me that it was to include a Preface written by him.

Perhaps none of this was quite out of the ordinary or out of order, and perhaps it did not actually cause any harm. However, this certainly cannot be so in the case of Malcolm X's book, "When the Word is Given . . ." (published about three years ago). Having learned

a bit ahead of (through my own contacts in the publishing industry) that the publishers were planning to feature his photograph on the book's jacket and that of his leader and teacher on the back of the cover, I cautioned Malcolm of its "possible repercussions" and strongly recommended that he urge them to reverse that order. My humble, fraternal advice to Bro. Malcolm, however, fell on totally deaf ears.

Here I would like to compare, if I may, my own attitude towards the question of publicity, especially in (or on) the white-controlled media. In all these (ten) years, never have I allowed myself to be a party to any planned or spontaneous radio or television program on or about the "Nation of Islam" in America.

Nor have I cooperated, at any time or in any way, with the various writers (Lincoln, Lomax, Essien-Udom, etc.) who have written magazine features or published book-length material on the mission and work of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. As a matter of fact, I had refused to cooperate in this matter even with Malcolm who, while still the Minister of Muhammad's Mosque in New York City and a member in good standing of the "Nation of Islam," had on several occasions invited me to appear with him at his lecture appearances on university campuses and on radio/T.V. interviews.

I cannot say, of course, that I was wholly justified in consistently refusing to "lend moral support" to Minister Malcolm's "press, radio and television crusades" in behalf of the Nation of Islam and its leader, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. But I had my reasons. I shall explain some of these in my next week's article.

(To Be Continued)