

Leslie Alexander Lacy

## AFRICAN RESPONSES TO MALCOLM X

Brother, you think your life is so  
sweet that you would live at any price?  
Does mere existence balance with the  
weight of your great sacrifice?  
Or can it be you fear the grave enough  
to live and die a slave?  
Oh brother! let it be said that when  
you're dead  
And tears are shed that your life was  
a stepping stone, which your children  
crossed upon;  
Look each foeman in the eye—  
Lest you die in vain

THUS SPOKE Malcolm X in the Great Hall at the University of Ghana-Legon, Tuesday, May 12, 1964. These were his final words. They were addressed to a hostile and young American-trained Ghanaian geologist who had accused Malcolm X, at the end of an emotional and lively question period, of bringing to Africa "the gospel of racial violence."

Suddenly, there were more words. A student who sat near the podium from which Malcolm spoke stood and pointed his finger into the area where the geologist sat and shouted passionately, "*Throw—that—useless—man—out!*"

The crowd supported the student's demand with cries and shouts of approval. Then the geologist became the victim of a special kind of violence: Three students (some said his own students) unceremoniously threw him out of the hall.

Before Malcolm X could take his seat and be properly thanked by the unpopular *Marxist Forum* which had presented him, the spirit of criticism which the young intellectual tried to introduce gave way to what can be called the spirit of approval. And what a spirit: It could tolerate nothing short of complete acceptance of Malcolm X. The cheers of approval came first. The students stood and shouted at the top of their voices praises in different Ghanaian languages, which produced a monotonous, steady, balanced and comforting refrain—*Brother Malcolm! Brother Malcolm! Oh! Brother Malcolm!* The cheers gave way to chants of approval and the shedding—and in some cases the destruction—of English-made wool academic gowns, which the students happily wore to such occasions; this practice the ruling Convention People's Party (CPP) had long and adamantly criticized but, due to the propaganda methods which it had employed, had been unable to change.

The cheers and chants of approval were so tremendous that it produced what Lebrette Hesse (Chairman of the *Marxist Forum* and a third-year law student) called the "Ghanaian violent elation." And it was as violent as a tropical storm—sudden, complete, collective—shaking every nail in a Great Hall which had not stood as a symbol of Ghanaian freedom and independence, but rather as a tribute and a reminder of the tradition borrowed from British intellectual history.

I watched Malcolm's face as he stood, again and again trying in his humble and somewhat awkward way to acknowledge his thanks to those who had approved of his message. The heat which the Great Hall generated had already begun to take effect on all of us. Malcolm's face was covered with perspiration, but it mixed well with the tears in his eyes and the smile on his face. I had seen Brother Malcolm's face before in America, many times and in many audiences. I had seen crowds cheer him, extol him and shout to him as

their deliverer. I had seen his faces and many moods; his happy moments in Harlem and Chicago; and I had seen his face filled with depression and outrage because another black brother had sold out or, worse yet, refused to "fight" because he believed that could appeal to the conscience of white America and overcome its racism.

But there was something in his face that evening which I had never seen before. At first glance I thought it was his small beard that made the difference, for I had never seen him with one before. He had always had that clean-cut Muslim look, and somehow the beard didn't fit that image. But the second glance—a deeper look—was more revealing. Malcolm's face was new because it was filled with the youth and excitement of those black students who identified with him. And he was awkward too, like a young father who loves his newly-born son but hasn't quite discovered the correct way to pick up and hold the child; the result is that he becomes debilitated by his own happiness and forgets about his own ineptitude. And what a proud father he could be! Unlike his children of African descent in America, these children would grow up, nay, develop, in a free society. They would be black and beautiful; most would be brave and all would be free. They would create their own standard of beauty and excellence; create their own history and worship their own memories. And one day they would be men and women; have power and greatness, which, as Nkrumah said, "is indestructible because it is built not on fear, envy and suspicion; nor won at the expense of others but founded on hope, trust, friendship and directed to the good of all mankind."

These things Malcolm felt in his heart and the portrait was produced in his face. Indeed, he was a picture of self-containment and, as Julian Mayfield said later, "the white man was off his back."

But the change in Malcolm's face, though important and

heartwarming, was less politically relevant than what appeared to be a radical change in the students' behavior. Indeed, the way in which they had responded to Malcolm and all that he represented was unbelievable.

Why was their behavior unbelievable? The Legonites, as the students at the university were called, were considered by the CPP to be more conservative than the *Conservatives* and more English than the English. In fact, party newspapers and government propaganda had for years used a wide range of epithets to describe them, but the most common were: "Reactionaries," "Ivory Towerists," "Stupid Conservatives," and "Possessors of Neo-Colonialist Mentalities." The following account, taken from the major CPP news organ, the *Evening News*, was a typical editorial:

The reactionary students at the University of Ghana have failed to comprehend in clear focus the true significance and meaning of political independence and the terminology of the new imperialism. Due to this failure there has not been produced a frame of reference which is able to embrace and understand the objective conditions of Ghana and of Africa. . . . Lacking a political consciousness the Legonite is not willing and able to sacrifice himself for something larger and nobler than his own personal and private interests. . . .

The students, on their part, rejected these types of criticism as unsound and unacceptable. They felt that the CPP practiced little of what it preached; that Nkrumah's politics of the one-party state—because of its limited dimensions and political cultism—was not structurally nor ideologically flexible enough to utilize correctly the constructive and creative skills that Legon was designed to produce. The students felt that the CPP really wanted to control the university as it controlled other social institutions, using revolutionary language to create guilt feelings among the student body, while it perpetuated its true non-revolutionary character—at the expense of the Ghanaian people. Moreover,

since the students were unable and afraid to register their political grievances openly, they showed their contempt for CPP rule by using party newspapers as supplementary toilet tissues, and also by intellectually harassing party or government officials who visited and spoke at the university.

Given, therefore, this political polarization and Malcolm's identification with Nkrumah, most people assumed that Malcolm's words would fall upon closed ears. However, they felt that he would probably be able to deal with the harassment, although most of the students would not understand the complexities of Malcolm's racial experience and those who did would treat them as the "irrational and bitter outburst of a frustrated Afro-American." Hence, when the students did not respond as predicted, shock and disbelief were the only clutches available for those who did not understand the inner dynamics of Party-University dispute.

Suddenly, the political polarization assumed much wider proportions. Were these the same students who had defied Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and cheered a total stranger? Didn't Malcolm X and their own President believe in roughly the same kind of world, extol the same political virtues and share the same spirit of exploration? I don't believe that anyone there that night wanted these questions answered . . . or perhaps no one had any answers . . . or those who did venture to answer were probably confused by their own findings . . . or, at the very least, afraid of what their answers might imply.

Only the students acted quickly and clearly. They liked Malcolm and they were showing it. And believe me, no one could have assassinated him that evening. Not only did they verbally shower him with affection, they also encircled him—to hold his hand, to touch his clothes. One young lady wiped Malcolm's face free of sweat and said to him, "Go, Brother Malcolm and rest, you are safe—you are home."

Aside from the students, another interesting group which

came out to hear Malcolm was the Afro-American community. As I watched their faces and listened to their comments, it was quite obvious that most did not *see* or *care* about the students' reactions. Malcolm had cast a spell over them which expressed itself in the usual non-political idiom: "Malcolm blew!" "He sure was boss!" "He cooked," and so on. Not that there was anything wrong with these expressions. In fact, their very use implies a certain kind of understanding and a certain level of commitment and identification. But Malcolm's words had delivered and *saved* them—because he "told it like it was." Malcolm had not made them *think*, but rather, had mesmerized their world of confusion and put them in a state of tranquility. And this was unfortunate, because they considered themselves revolutionaries.

They were indeed a strange breed of political expatriates. Unable or unwilling to deal with racist and imperialist America from within, these black Americans had come to Ghana to help other black people achieve their revolution. After discovering that they could not lead the revolution and becoming critical of those Ghanaians and leftwing Europeans who did lead, they settled down into a state of psychic self-righteousness and became either overly solicitous or hopelessly mystified.

When they reached that point, the rest was easy, for now they could walk and talk in the corridors of black power. From there, it meant that each Afro-American coming to Ghana had to prove under their inspection and by the rules of their refugee mentalities, that he was not a CIA agent. Further, it meant that they would believe as dogma every executive decree President Nkrumah issued even though they held in contempt the corrupt administrators who carried them out. In short, their personality—that tool for social adjustment—was not well integrated to function smoothly, and the unnecessary emotional friction generated

resulted in unhappiness, unpopularity and spiritual emptiness.

Their response to Malcolm, therefore, was natural enough. They were not really interested in the details of his speech or its ultimate effects. They had probably heard a version of it before—or thought they had—and besides, they believed in it already. What they needed from Malcolm's speech was something no revolutionary should need or want. They wanted and needed a kind of psychological underpinning to support the understandable inadequacies in their own lives and, at the same time, provide them with a new sense of cultural euphoria which would make life with malaria, inefficiency and corruption that much more bearable.

So given these political eyes, the students were still "reactionaries," in spite of the way in which they had responded to Malcolm. Their reasoning went something like this: *All black people will respond favorably to Malcolm regardless of what they believe.*

Beyond this, they were not overly concerned with student-government disputes. Malcolm X was their real political leader and they had come to Ghana not because they loved Mother Africa, but rather, because they hated Father America. And when Malcolm X and others had achieved the "revolution," they would quickly return to claim their position of leadership in the new black society.

Perhaps Malcolm X understood the socio-psychic needs of the black Americans and what his presence symbolized to them. He especially understood the needs of the women in the Afro-American community. They literally "took" Malcolm away from the students. They wanted their *man* all to themselves. It seemed as though they even resented these "reactionary" students talking to him. Malcolm, with his tremendous compassion and understanding, tried to create a climate in which both sides could express grievances and share feelings, but before long, his American sisters had

led him off the podium, out of the Great Hall and into the garden, down the steps and into the car.

When we finally arrived in Accra we drove directly to the Ghanaian Press Club. Malcolm was to be the guest of honor at a press soiree that had been organized by the Association of Ghanaian Journalists and Writers. We parked our car and then proceeded to squeeze through a long line of chauffeur-driven Mercedes-Benzes and other expensive European automobiles, which were owned by party and government officials. We were greeted by Mr. Kofi Batsa, Secretary General of the Pan-African Union of Journalists and a director of the Ghana Graphic Company, Limited.

"How did you like our reactionary university?" said Kofi Batsa to Malcolm.

Malcolm smiled sympathetically and replied, "I always enjoy talking to my brothers and sisters."

As we moved to the beautifully decorated terrace, Malcolm turned suddenly and remarked, "Was Mr. Batsa serious?"

No one replied.

Malcolm's new bodyguards were very protective. Not many people could get near him, and the few who did were those very important people whom they thought he should meet. But Malcolm wanted to meet everyone, and from time to time he broke through the invisible black wall that surrounded him.

The journalists had been very nice to Malcolm since his arrival. He had been given a press conference the day before and had received excellent coverage in all of the local papers, including the *Daily Graphic*, a somewhat less radical news medium. The press soiree was fabulous. There were excellent Ghanaian dishes supported by excellent imported drinks, and the very excellent domestic palm wine. And since Malcolm never drank, he, unlike the rest of us, had more room for the delicious fried fish and fried plantains.

After a long and pleasant evening, the Malcolm X Committee, which had formed to organize Malcolm's visit, drove him back to the hotel. Our long days of preparation and planning for the arrival of Malcolm X had paid off. The Ghanaians seemed pleased and excited about him and he was pleased and excited about them.

The drive back to the hotel was a quiet one. No one spoke a word. We were all exhausted, elated, and I believe that a few of us were thinking about the students at the university. Malcolm sat in the front seat and looked straight ahead. Once or twice he turned his head to speak, but it seemed as though he could not bring himself to shatter the strange and pleasant quietness which filled our car.

The only sounds came from the roadside. Most of the Ghanaians were asleep, for morning comes very quickly in the tropics and there is always a frantic hurry to beat the noonday heat. But the night people were always there: cooking by the side of the road, bringing their goods to the public market, or praying while watching their black masters'—and sometimes white masters'—houses.

When we finally arrived at the beautiful Ambassador Hotel, a tall and proud Hausa doorman opened the car door on Malcolm's side, stood back, and Malcolm stepped down. Malcolm stretched his long arms and quietly said good night.

By the next morning, the cry of "Malcolm X!" had swept the university. Mensah Sarbah Hall seemed to be the center of excitement. This was no doubt due to the fact that the *Marxist Forum* had its headquarters there; the Chinese-style architecture which formed the three buildings into a kind of medieval courtyard made the excitement that much more real.

Since I was a member of the Malcolm X Committee, I wanted to have an early breakfast in order to take the eight A.M. bus to Accra. But I had come to breakfast early for

another important reason. I wanted to hear what the students would say about Malcolm X the morning afterward. I didn't have to wait long. Students filed in by the dozens—pushing and excited as usual—shouting the slogan which they had chanted the night before: "Malcolm X! Malcolm X! Malcolm X!"

You could have been on 125th Street and Seventh Avenue. The excitement and spirit of the people were the same. And it seemed so strange. The people in Harlem cheered Malcolm because they lived and knew they would die in the world in which they all hate. These students who cheered Malcolm the night before and who kept his name on their beautiful lips the morning after came from villages and towns which Malcolm would never see; where some of their kin had died of malaria; where there was no running water and no electricity. These were children of the Second World War whose mothers and fathers had told them about the first cries of independence. These students had experienced neither the brutal world of British colonialism nor the world of quiet hell which Malcolm X had brought to them. Yet they sounded like the youth in Harlem, Watts, Rochester and Bedford-Stuyvesant; exploding with joy and giving themselves up to the "essence of thing."

Students who had publicly criticized me and debated my political views came over, shook my hands, congratulated me on the success of the *Forum* and told me how much they enjoyed Mr. X. Some said that Mr. X was dynamic; others said he was militant; but they all said, "He is so honest."

I felt very good. It was difficult not to cry. I wanted to hold each one of them because I loved them all. And Malcolm had made it all possible and none of us would ever forget that.

As I got up to leave for the bus, Harold Duggan, the first West Indian student to study at the university and the vice-chairman of the *Forum*, came into the dining hall and stood on the top of one of the center tables. He shouted,

“When a brother is beaten up in the West by a white gang . . .”

“Or East,” one student interrupted.

“Or East,” Duggan continued, “we shall beat one of their white brothers here. And not in gang style but man to man.”

As I left the dining hall, Duggan was being carried shoulder-high. For Duggan had spoken and Duggan had been heard.

Later that day, Malcolm X spoke at the Parliament Building to members of the Ghanaian Legislature. This pleased Malcolm very much because he had never before had the opportunity to address black men who made laws for black people. I remember Malcolm standing on the steps of the Parliament Building just before his scheduled appearance, saying, “If I had grown up in a country where black men made the justice, who knows what my life would have been like.”

After Malcolm spoke these words, we were carried into the main legislative chambers. The Ministers of Parliament clapped politely as Malcolm was introduced. Malcolm spoke on the degrading status of the Afro-American in the United States; repeating and reemphasizing some of the issues he had raised at the university. He described the United States as the “master of imperialism without whose support France, South Africa, Britain and Portugal could not exist.” Malcolm appealed for support from all Africans for their brothers and sisters in the United States. He said, “The struggle for civil rights in the United States should be switched to a struggle for human rights to enable Africans to raise the matter at the United Nations.”

He praised their President Osagyefo and said that as a result of his able, sincere and dedicated leadership, America feared Ghana.

Malcolm attacked the American press and explained how it was used to divide “people who should be united for a

common cause." He further warned the Ministers of Parliament that they should be suspicious of "every American tour in Ghana."

Brother Malcolm ended his talk by saying that for the first time he felt at home; that any "Afro-American who said that he was at home in America was out of his mind." Explaining his name "X," Malcolm said that Afro-Americans bear white names—the names of their slave master—and as such had "lost their language, cultural and social backgrounds."

Although he was not cheered and applauded as enthusiastically as he had been at Legon, his very moving address was followed by a lively discussion, during which the Ministers of Parliament asked questions of topical interest.

That evening, Malcolm met many other important personalities, including Mr. Huang Ha, the Chinese Ambassador, the Nigerian Ambassador, Dr. Makonnen of Guiana, the Algerian Ambassador and Nana Nketsia, the Ghanaian Minister of Culture.

The following morning, an account of Malcolm's speech at Legon appeared in *The Ghanaian Times*. It was entitled, *Negroes Need Your Help—Says Mr. X*. The article was very favorable and stressed most of the main points in Malcolm's talk. A few individuals, however, criticized the reporting, pointing out that it stressed only those points which restated Nkrumah's overall political objectives, and neutralized many of Malcolm's arguments by quoting high American officials who had raised the same argument. There was no mention of the students' reaction to Malcolm nor the subsequent parties to celebrate Malcolm's appearance.

The last day of Malcolm's four-day visit was quite eventful: In the morning, he spoke to the students and staff of the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute, at Winneba; and that afternoon, he met its founder, the ex-President of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.

The Ideological Institute had been established because Kwame Nkrumah felt that Africans had to create their own theories of change and their own concepts about human society. Students would be required to read and debate all existing "progressive and socialist philosophies with the intent of creating something which was *African in content, humanitarian in scope and black in spirit.*" To this end, the Winneba experiment was designed to create a new African, both intellectually and spiritually. Staffed primarily with leftwing Eastern Europeans, students took subjects ranging from Platonic metaphysics to oceanography. And after a two-year exposure, some would go on to advanced studies, while those remaining would be placed into the nation's strategic organizations and institutions.

Malcolm's message was received warmly and the students were alert, intelligent and incisive. During the question period, a young Afro-American teacher disagreed with a part of Malcolm's speech and was almost ejected from the hall. In fact, he was saved by Malcolm, who urged the students to be tolerant with those brothers and sisters who were still seeking the right path to freedom.

On the way back to Accra, someone in the car asked Malcolm, "What do you think about socialism?"

"Is it good for black people?" replied Malcolm.

"It seems to be."

"Then, I'm for it."

When we arrived in Accra, we drove directly to Christainborg Castle, the office of President Nkrumah. Malcolm went in alone, and in no time at all, he returned. Malcolm was very elated. His visit was complete, for he had seen one of the most progressive black men on the planet. And his face had changed again—he was so happy.

Malcolm then said: "Nkrumah, that man understands. He is a real believer in change. I was so impressed."

"What did he say?" Julian Mayfield asked.

Malcolm answered slowly, "He said a lot, but one thing he said which I will never forget, he said, 'Brother, it is now or never the hour of the knife, the break with the past, the major operation.'"

Malcolm left for Monrovia, Liberia, the next day.

#### THE AFTERMATH

Three days after Malcolm's departure, he came under serious attack in the leading government-controlled newspaper, *The Ghanaian Times*. The attack was led by H. M. Basner, a white South African professional Marxist and high-ranking political advisor to President Nkrumah. The article, *Malcolm X and the Martyrdom of Rev. Clayton Hewett*, appeared in Basner's daily column, *Watching the World from Accra*.

Using the Legon speech as the focus for criticism, Basner accused Malcolm X of "ignoring economic motivations and the class function of all racial oppression." Basner further stated:

Malcolm X discussed the Afro-American position as if he hadn't a clue how American society evolved or how it can be changed in the foreseeable future. . . . His blind racialism has made him a political cripple. . . . And if Malcolm X believes what he says, then both Karl Marx and John Brown are excluded because of their racial origins from being regarded as human liberators and must be regarded as white liberators only. . . .

Expanding on this point, Basner said that the Communist Manifesto and the Battle of Harpers Ferry have no significance for the "Colored races except to confuse and deceive them; and makes W. E. B. DuBois—greatly influenced by both—just as big a sucker as Martin Luther King, who is influenced by completely different manifestations of human solidarity."

In classic Marxist style and polemic, Basner went to the heart of Malcolm's speech:

Both human solidarity and class struggle seem to be debarred from Malcolm X's politics and until he admits these, his politics can only be of service to the American imperialists. . . . Racial conflicts are their meat and drink, and if they are extended on a global scale . . . the imperialists will have achieved all they are hoping and planning for to save their system from extinction. . . . In the United States itself, as well as in the world at large, nothing suits the capitalists more than that Governor Wallace and Malcolm X should be at each other's throats because one is white and the other black. . . .

Suppressing somewhat his Marxist objectivity, Basner brought himself to admit that Malcolm did have passion and "*it is passion which is now missing and making sterile the Negro leadership in the Civil Rights struggle.*" Agreeing with Malcolm, Basner condemned the Civil Rights Bill as a betrayal and a denial of social equality for twenty-two million Afro-Americans and suggested that Rev. Clayton Hewett—the Episcopalian clergyman who went on a hunger strike with a diet of water, vitamin pills and fruit juices—had no place in the Civil Rights movement because he was not prepared to die. What Rev. Hewett was doing, continued Basner, was "reassuring the lords of racialism in the United States that the situation was well under control; that they needn't call on Senator Russell and Governor Wallace or the uniformed thugs or the police dogs because anti-racists were preparing to lie down on the road, to face prison, fire hoses and even savage dogs, but that nobody was preparing to die." And finally, H. M. Basner concluded:

As long as the Revs. Clayton Hewett and Martin Luther King remain brothers in sacrifice, there is nothing for Congress to really worry about, except that the current filibuster may inconvenience electioneering . . . . The Civil Rights Bill can be emasculated at leisure and its passage will leave things exactly as they were. . . . *All this is undeniable and Malcolm X says so with passion and with truth.* But his truth is still only a half truth, even though it

is the most important half. A willingness to die for freedom is the primary necessity, but even that is useless without an understanding that freedom is indivisible—for all individuals or for none; for all races or for none.

The appearance of Basner's article stirred up a lot of controversy and caught the Afro-American community by surprise. Although they knew how Basner felt privately about Malcolm's views, Basner's views had appeared in a black, revolutionary, government-controlled newspaper. And they didn't like it. No criticism, however objective, could have ever appeared attacking Nkrumah—so why should one appear attacking their political leader? Equally outraged about the appearance of the article were the university students, who already hated Basner for his political orthodoxy and now had another reason to want him out of what they considered a confused political culture.

The day the article appeared, I was having lunch with a friend of mine in Accra. Another Afro-American whom we both knew came over to the table where we were sitting. He acted very strangely as he sat quietly shaking his head. Finally he said, "Leslie, this political situation in this country is too much. I went to the university believing what the government said about the university, and the students acted like we act in America when we hear Malcolm. Now, dig it—when the brother leaves, *a white man is allowed to correct his position in a government newspaper*. What do you think about that?"

Before I could answer, my friend sitting next to me said, "In a developing country it's always good to give people something to think about."

We ate quietly and left.

The next day, Julian Mayfield, the unofficial leader of the Afro-American community, wrote a reply to Basner's article in the same newspaper. The editor of the paper prefaced the article with the following remarks:

Malcolm X the militant Afro-American leader has never fought shy of controversy. He believes that it is useful to engage in controversy because it enables him to put the struggle of the black man to the test of scientific analysis. Yesterday, our Columnist stirred a lot of controversy about some of the ideas of Malcolm X. Today, an Afro-American writer who shares the ideas of Malcolm X takes up the issue in a debate.

Mayfield's article—*Basner Misses Malcolm X's Point*—called Basner's article a classical Marxist interpretation of U.S. racial problems. But then, Mayfield said that he agreed with this interpretation in principle, and proceeded to show from Malcolm's speech that he himself also accepted this interpretation. Mayfield stated:

I sat several rows behind Mr. Basner and I heard nothing Mr. X said to contradict this. Mr. Basner's audio reception is as good as mine and he must have heard *Malcolm say that he did not believe that the black man would ever experience full freedom under the American system . . . Is not socialism the only alternative to the system? And did not Malcolm go on to outline a campaign by which the black man in the U.S. would do all he could to destroy the present system . . . ?*

Mayfield then argued that Basner was disturbed because Malcolm's approach left little room for white workers or white progressives. Defending Malcolm's position on this point, Mayfield developed a brief history of the various alliances between blacks and progressive white groups, and showed that the white practitioners of these progressive ideologies were always incapable of throwing off the virus of white supremacy: "They, the whites had to be the leaders. They always knew what was best for the black man. To them five black comrades meeting alone represented a threat to the unity of black and white workers . . ."

To strengthen his point, Julian Mayfield cited the experiences of Cuban and Algerian revolutions, neither of which, he argued, could depend upon their respective Communist

parties until the initial moves had been made by the native revolutionaries:

What we who support Malcolm X have recognized is that there can be no black-white unity until the black man himself is so organized that he cannot become the victim either of his enemies or of those whites who call themselves his friends. By making a passionate appeal to Afro-Americans to unite on the basis of racial self-interest and identify more closely with their African brother, Malcolm X is not being racist, anti-Marxist nor showing disrespect to the memory of John Brown. He is merely using common sense. . . . Black fighters of America have neither the time nor the patience to go around with a magnifying glass searching for genuine white revolutionists . . . the vast majority of the oppressed people of the world are non-white and damn near all of the oppressors are white, and that if the vast majority could be properly channelled, a major and perhaps decisive blow could be struck against the bastion of world imperialism.

To support Julian Mayfield's position and to correct what she considered to be a criticism of her late husband, Shirley G. DuBois, Director of Television, added under another column (*Mr. X Was Not Wrong*) the following remarks:

I must take issue with Columnist Basner in his criticism of Malcolm X. Mr. Basner seems to ignore the fact that Malcolm X's vigorous protests and denunciations are against the White Government and the White Ruling Class of the United States. The leader of the Black Moslems was presented at Legon by the *Marxist Forum* which would indicate that he does not share the prevailing fear and aversion which dominates America for all things Marxist. I have never heard or read of Malcolm X attacking Marx, Engels, Lenin or Mao-tse-Tung. I know that he has always admired, I might even say revered, the works of W. E. B. DuBois . . . The truths which Malcolm X enunciates are bitter. Many people find them hard to swallow.

The *Marxist Forum* and many of the students at the university read with interest the Basner-Mayfield dispute. They

accepted neither as an explanation of what Malcolm had said. Marxist in spirit but Fanonist in orientation and content, the *Forum* stated that neither had offered a realistic solution to the plight of black America. Moreover, since Basner had never visited America and Mayfield had been away too long, the young Turks in the *Forum* felt that neither was in a position to assess correctly what Malcolm meant by *new black nationalism*. On Wednesday, the day after Julian Mayfield replied to H. M. Basner, the *Marxist Forum* released the following bulletin:

*Reflections on Brother Malcolm*

We believe that very few white Americans and too few black Americans see and appreciate the basic questions raised by an individual like Malcolm X. He is quickly branded a fanatic or quickly worshipped as a God. Nevertheless Malcolm's message is of vital importance not only to our brothers in America whom we completely identify with, but even more to the progressive movements of the world. Malcolm's philosophy, we believe, reduced to its barest essential, is that Black America should reject *the Capitalist* and *the Marxist* rationalizations of race relations and construct a theory of change which is consistent with its racial experience. Terms like integration and separation have become anachronistic because they conceal the real American dilemma. Yet they must use caution because the problem of racial exploitation in America can only finally be settled as a part of the world proletarian struggle for real democracy. Every advance in this struggle will be an actual or potential advance for the Afro-American. Malcolm, we are with you.

But H. M. Basner had the last word. On Friday, May 29, 1964—ten days after his original article appeared—*The Conversion of Malcolm X* appeared. Basing the article on a speech that Malcolm had delivered in Chicago on his return from his African tour, Basner replied sharply to those who had disagreed with his original analysis. Basner stated, "The many people who thought I was wrong about Malcolm X

didn't include Malcolm himself . . . For in Chicago he told an audience of 1,500 that he had experienced a spiritual rebirth which had led him to change his views." Basner quoted Malcolm as saying that he had seen in Africa a spirit of unity and brotherhood between whites and Africans that he had never seen before. Further, Basner said:

Although sudden conversions are seldom wholesome and often dangerous . . . I do not believe that this sudden conversion is revivalist hysteria or a desire to join the winning side. . . . It is possible that after many years of brooding, Malcolm X at last found the key—the class struggle and the struggle of human society—without which all the doors to an understanding of political and social phenomena remain permanently shut. . . . What Malcolm X must have seen in Africa—and this is why I believe in his conversion—is the political leadership of men like Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta; Africans who have slept in white men's prisons, who have felt the lash of white supremacy over their continent and over their people; and who, in those very prisons, reached an understanding that it is the lust for profit and not racial differences which make the white man behave in colonial Africa as he does. . . . All of them, Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta and Nelson Mandela, must have made it clear in one way or another to Malcolm X that no one is oppressed because of his political weakness. . . . Political weakness makes an individual, a community or a nation the prey of exploiting forces which need ideological support for their economic motivation. . . .

And finally, concluded Basner:

In the next few years the effects of automation under capitalism will swell the ranks of those millions already unemployed . . . there is the natural army, with the Afro-American in the vanguard, which can carry on the real fight for civil rights. . . . *I will be told that this army cannot be assembled. I answer, it must be because there is no other army.*

Thus ended the African response to Brother Malcolm on May 28, 1964.