

MALCOLM X

FROM "The Black Revolution" Speeches (1964)

Born Malcolm Little in 1925, Malcolm X was the son of a Baptist preacher who promoted black separatism and was murdered by unknown assailants in Michigan. At age six, the fatherless Malcolm was taken to a foster home. He dropped out of school in the eighth grade and embarked on a crime spree that landed him in a federal prison at age twenty-one. There he discovered the writings of Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Black Muslims. Muhammad portrayed whites as servants of the devil; blacks therefore had to separate themselves from the white community. Malcolm became a loyal disciple of Elijah Muhammad. Upon his release from prison, he became minister of a Black Muslim temple in Harlem, a black neighborhood in New York City. Clashes with the Black Muslim leadership over which tactics to use in fighting racism led to his suspension from the organization in late 1963. He then traveled to Mecca, where he adopted the beliefs of orthodox Muslims and founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity. In 1964 he delivered the following address.

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Friends and enemies, tonight I hope that we can have a little fireside chat with as few sparks as possible being tossed around. . . . I hope that this little conversation tonight about the black revolution won't cause many of you to accuse us of ignoring it when you find it at your doorstep. . . .

I'm still a Muslim but I'm also a nationalist, meaning that my political philosophy is black nationalism, my economic philosophy is black nationalism, my social philosophy is black nationalism. And when I say that this philosophy is black nationalism, to me this means that the political philosophy of black nationalism is that which is designed to encourage our people, the black people, to gain complete control over the politics and the politicians of our own community.

Our economic philosophy is that we should gain economic control over the economy of our own community, the businesses and the other things which create employment so that we can provide jobs for our own people instead of having

to picket and boycott and beg someone else for a job.

And, in short, our social philosophy means that we feel that it is time to get together among our own kind and eliminate the evils that are destroying the moral fiber of our society, like drug addiction, drunkenness, adultery that leads to an abundance of bastard children, welfare problems. We believe that we should lift the level or the standard of our own society to a higher level wherein we will be satisfied and then not inclined toward pushing ourselves into other societies where we are not wanted.

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Why is America in a position to bring about a bloodless revolution? Because the Negro in this country holds the balance of power and if the Negro in this country were given what the Constitution says he is supposed to have, the added power of the Negro in this country would sweep all of the

racists and the segregationists out of office. It would change the entire political structure of the country. It would wipe out the Southern segregationism that now controls America's foreign policy, as well as America's domestic policy.

And the only way without bloodshed that this can be brought about is that the black man has to be given full use of the ballot in every one of the 50 states. But if the black man doesn't get the ballot, then you are going to be faced with another man who forgets the ballot and starts using the bullet.

Revolutions are fought to get control of land, to remove the absentee landlord and gain control of the land and the institutions that flow from that land. The black man has been in a very low condition because he has had no control whatsoever over any land. He has been a beggar economically, a beggar politically, a beggar socially, a beggar even when it comes to trying to get some education. So that in the past the type of mentality that was developed in this colonial system among our people, today is being overcome. And as the young ones come up they know what they want. And as they

listen to your beautiful preaching about democracy and all those other flowery words, they know what they're supposed to have.

So you have a people today who not only know what they want, but also know what they are supposed to have. And they themselves are clearing another generation that is coming up that not only will know what it wants and know what it should have, but also will be ready and willing to do whatever is necessary to see that what they should have materializes immediately. Thank you.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were the economic and social philosophies of the Black Muslims?
2. According to Malcolm X, what would help prevent racial bloodshed from occurring? Was he optimistic about this? Explain.
3. Compare the views of Malcolm X and Dr. King. What were the essential differences?