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Malcolm X, the Elegant Warrior: The Leadership Style of El Hajj Malik El Shabazz

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**Malcolm X, the Elegant Warrior:
The Leadership Style of El Hajj Malik El Shabazz**

Vincent Patrick Short

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts in Leadership

AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

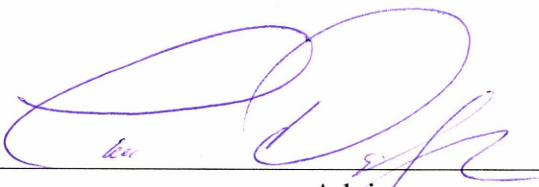
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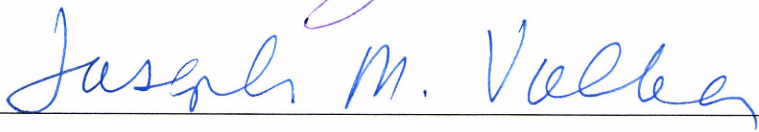
MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP
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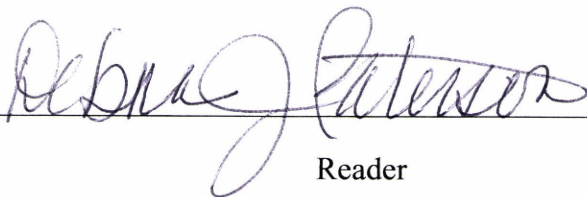
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify the Master's Thesis of Vincent Patrick Short has been approved by the Review Committee for the Thesis requirement for the Master of Arts in Leadership degree.

Date of Oral Defense: May 27, 2009

Committee: 
Adviser


Reader


Reader

DEDICATION

To my grandparents.

And to all who paved the way for civil rights and justice through leadership by example.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This would not have been possible without the help and support of many friends, family and colleagues throughout my life.

I sincerely thank my advisor who spent tons of time helping a non-English major, my readers, especially 'Soaring Eagle Woman', my wife and children for putting up with my research space. Also I am very grateful to my sister in-law Louise for helping to gather sources and reading some first stumbles and my sister in-law Jean for providing some expansion research space. Special thanks go to my friend and co-worker Sara who reminded me that there were enough bitter gripes in the world and that I should stick to a higher purpose. Big thanks to my fellow Master of Arts in Leadership classmates who shared and honored me with their wisdom and intellect. Thank you very much Dr. Noonan and the Master of Arts in Leadership program for letting me in and showing me that I can still learn. Thanks to my taekwondo master and friend Master In Yong Lee, his father Grandmaster Byung Yul Lee and his brother Master Eui Yong Lee. They welcomed me to the martial arts and helped me to understand the true meaning of warriorship from the past to modern times. Thanks to the memory of the St. Olaf Paracollege and Giovanna Fjelstad that helped me to build the idea of higher education learning. Thanks also to my surrogate mothers at St. Olaf, Mrs. Weeks and Mrs. Norberg, without their encouragement I would have fled back to a not so good situation.

ABSTRACT

Malcolm X, the Elegant Warrior:
The Leadership Style of El Hajj Malik El Shabazz

Vincent Patrick Short

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Thesis

Abstract:

Malik El Shabazz, also known as Malcolm X, is as relevant to today's society as he was at the height of the civil rights era. As a leader, Malcolm X possessed and demonstrated the skills of a militarily trained general, motivational speaker, CEO, coach and religious visionary – a person spiritually enlightened with a battle-tested soul. Many have used his name in anger and misinterpreted him when they want to shift away from the civil rights era language of love and brotherhood. He has become the African American equivalent of Che Guevara. It is the goal of this research to point out the unique combination of various leadership principles he adapted and practiced while transforming from Malcolm X into Malik El Shabazz. This research will also show the validity of Malcolm X's leadership style in this day and time – a style that can be called that of the elegant warrior.

**Malcolm X, the Elegant Warrior:
The Leadership Style of El Hajj Malik El Shabazz**

Introduction

Malcolm X had a refined and graceful way of handling people and situations that were not harmonious with his indomitable spirit. He had something to say that was not in line with a “let’s make a deal” rhetoric. Like the tones of a bamboo flute mingling with the traditional sounds of a western orchestra, Malcolm X’s leadership style was one that used controlled chaos to make its inherent dissonance artful. Like a jazz composition built from the African American experience of racism, it is a style that continues to offer a unique message to the open-minded listener today. His memory is so steeped in mythos, however, that it has been solidified as an image of violent dissent and dangerous insurgency.

The popular view of Malcolm X is one of a violent rebel. This study is an attempt to develop a more complete picture of the man born as Malcolm Little, who evolved into Malcolm X and finally transformed into El-Hajji Malik El-Shabazz. His leadership style gave him room to be a visionary, but he is too often dropped from recognition as a figure in the civil rights movement. He deserves a fresh look since his last views were where African American, Pan-African, global and American race relations are heading today. In a culture that romanticizes and glorifies criminal activity, his intellectual and spiritual prowess is buried beneath the image of Malcolm as a radical reactionary.

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The career of a sage is of two kinds:
He is either honored by all in the world,
Like a flower waving its head,
Or else he disappears into the silent forest.

Nagarjuna
(Nagarjuna 8)

A Review of the Literature

The study proposes a vision of the definition of what elegant leadership is and addresses the polemics of Malcolm X as an elegant scholar/warrior in three phases. First, an investigation will be done into how the past concept of traditional patriarchal societies helped shape Malcolm Little and the early Malcolm X. Second, the focus will be on the influence of how the Black Muslim movement empowered the classic Malcolm X, and finally an attempt to frame Malcolm X's final transformation and enlightenment to explore the true meaning of Islam that he describes after his trip to Mecca.

Much of the research literature found for this study focuses on the correlation of Malcolm X's autobiography, his speeches, reflection essays by those who knew him or of him, and warrior studies from both Asian and western European sources. Many studies have focused on reflective essays about the personhood of Malcolm X from a one-dimensional viewpoint to express unfounded claims that served to further political and personal agendum. This study will champion the perspective that his life was deeply rooted in sound and respected principles that helped to form American democracy itself.

This study will gather a larger viewpoint by harnessing the philosophy and identity of warrior cultures particularly of the Japanese samurai. An exploration into the warrior mindset will be used to point out that Malcolm X's thought process was not strictly aggressive posturing but was natural assertiveness for his right, which was denied him from birth, to be viewed as a human being. In addition, a connection will be made with philosophical and religious contexts of Islam that connect directly to the universal vision of brotherhood. To further the connection of universal themes I have included poetry and philosophical quotations in order to show the connection that warrior culture has with all human endeavors. As our world becomes divided, not merely by race, but also along ethnic and economic lines, the study of Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity is critical in helping to bridge differences and communicate on common ground. This is outlined in William Sale's work, From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity (Sales), and would bring a fresh perspective to a world struggling to embrace.

It is not the scope of this study or the goal of this author to delve into politics to justify a personal, political or religious position. This work only seeks to defend the author's theory that Malcolm X was, and still is, an influential leader.

The choice of the term "Elegant Warrior" derives from the juxtaposition of the words themselves. "Elegant" in this context comes from the Japanese term "Yugen." It is often translated as "The subtle and the profound." Yugen is a central theme in Japanese appreciation of art and beauty. It characterizes the power to evoke a feeling without being "in your face." Malcolm X fits this definition. He broadens and expands himself, looking outside his own pain and suffering to experience truth. The concept of an elegant

warrior is not new. Cultures from Native Americans to European knighthood have traditions that provide examples of individuals who embody and embrace this ideal. The Chinese concept of a “scholar warrior” is akin to the “elegant warrior” model. “By balancing their personalities and engaging in daily self-cultivation, Scholar Warriors work to become capable of meeting such [life’s] challenges. Those who have achieved this status would advise us to master a broad spectrum of disciplines, to balance the two sides of everything” (Ming-Dao 18). The focus of this research will identify and prove that Malcolm X personified this same model of warrior elegance. Yet while the idea of elegant warriorship is not new, the term itself lacks official definition. For the context of this study, the term will be defined by splitting the term into separate entities, defining each word on its own and then unifying the two into a working term for this study.

Warriors are classically defined as people of conflict who are habitually tied to warfare. African-Americans have engaged in conflict before and after the American Civil Rights era. Thus, many African-Americans find themselves dragooned into warrior roles due to racism that pervades America. The African-American warrior experience can be likened to and correlated to African tribal warriors as well as to child soldiers who exist today. They are connected not only by genetic classification, but by the common set of circumstances that carry the burden of defending themselves for survival, livelihood and identity.

Warriorship can be found in many examples. The warrior tradition of the “samurai” from Japan has a fitting warrior code that can be applied to Malcolm X. The term “ronin” or “wave man” is the connection between Malcolm X and a warrior model. Ronin are master-less samurai. Samurai traditions held that ronin were to serve their

feudal lord or master from birth. And traditionally they were allowed to be released from service only upon their death. The ronin tradition originally came into play when a samurai would ask for permission to be excused from duty to seek a new skill path or technique from a master swordsman outside his master's domain. Later in Japanese history, when feudal wars changed the social and political landscape of Japan, many samurai from defeated or deposed lords found themselves unintentionally in the role of ronin. Thus, they truly became "wave men" by riding the waves of change with their once stable cultural identity as warriors relegated to the shadows of limbo. Some gave up the samurai path and others became swords for hire.

Malcolm X in his life's transformation from Malcolm Little to Malik El Shabazz struggled with his identity within a racist society where his humanity was automatically stripped from him. It is akin to samurai being left alive without a master so he is forced to do 'ronin' in a world that is hostile to an African-American that does not accept the role picked for them. And consequently, like so many African-Americans, he lived in American cultural limbo as a second-class citizen fighting for scraps of the "American Dream." Malcolm X's well documented journey is filled with trials and struggles where he could have easily fallen into a solid role as a solid criminal or *realistic nigger*. Yet he rose above both internal and external struggles to be a truth seeker and truth teller about his identity and his place in this world. He made a journey through conflicts that were deeply embedded and openly practiced in American culture to find harmony in faith.

Many samurai doing ronin came to the same conclusion and also turned to religious practice in order to make sense of their violent world.

BORDER LINE

I used to wonder

About living and dying--

I think the difference lies

Between tears and crying

I used to wonder

About here and there--

I think the distance

Is nowhere.

Langston Hughes
(Hughes 81)

Elegant Warrior Methodology

He was a human being, endowed with the human affectation of imperfection and, if he were still physically on the planet, he would reject the notion of being romanticized as icon, messiah, or transformational leader.

(Najee E. Muhammad 1)

This qualitative research study employs several methods gathered from the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. This is necessary given the nature of Malcolm X as a subject and the study's focus on interpreting Malcolm X as a leader from a chronological perspective on his life. The study will focus on material directly from the subject in the form of his well-known autobiography and his speeches. Interpretive analysis of this material will be based on methods of *abductive reasoning* (Levin-Rozalis 3-6) and (Miller and Fredericks 3-4), narrative analysis (Moen 61-63) and (Frank 114-115) and the role of *metanarrative* in leadership effectiveness (Irving and Klenke 33). Abductive reasoning is the process of reasoning to arrive at the best explanations and without the opportunity of interviewing a living subject. This is a valuable tool, since both Malcolm X and his wife are dead. Through abduction, facts and observations from his life and speeches will have a better interpretive analysis result. The narrative analysis of Malcolm X's biography alone will answer the issue of authenticity of self and help the abductive process reach its conclusion. The metanarrative will be able to address the global appeal of Malcolm X's story and validate how his story resonates with not only historical figures, but with anyone who reads his autobiography today. Often, Malcolm X is given credit for being a transformational leader just to fit him into a category. This research will use an analysis of transformational leadership, applying the technique developed by Justin Irving and Karin Klenke of Bethel University who use the interpretive frames of Telos, Chronos and Hermeneia. This expands the perspective of Malcolm X's leadership. Telos would address the goal-oriented context, Chronos would take another look at Malcolm X from a historical-narrative context, and Hermeneia would provide another look at the interpretive context. By triangulating these frames of

interpretation, we can focus on and define how Malcolm X is able to transcend the fate of being another false prophet who slips into demagoguery.

I took the metanarrative or ‘big picture’ approach to the research so that I could use Malcolm X’s autobiography as an anchor, while reviewing and using his speeches to clarify any critical points. A big break for my research came when I was able to utilize not just commentators and other biographers but people who worked and collaborated with him. The biography of his wife Betty and the autobiographical work of Maya Angelou helped to give validity to my inferences made through using abductive reasoning. Thus I was able to take written accounts, both personal and professional, by those close to him and cross reference them with accounts in Malcolm’s autobiography. With my inferences about his leadership validated, I was able to make connections to the ideal of warriorship from other cultures to reveal the idea of Malcolm X as an “elegant leader”. I chose the European tradition of knight, along with the Japanese samurai and ronin. Then I was able to compare the elegant leadership model of Malcolm X to the leadership model of two self-destructive American politicians who some have described as anti-leaders that exercised self-destructive leadership styles. Malcolm X was often depicted as being confrontational so his enemies and the media expected more anti-leadership actions from him but he did not comply. Yet the two noted politicians for the anti-leadership comparison were able to slip under the radar because of their initial mainstream conformity. That Malcolm X was able to avoid the seductive lure of building his own personal empire is a testament to the strength and integrity of his leadership style.

It is important to note that the methodology of this study has been expanded to include some methods used to rely primarily on secondary sources. I discovered this method from an article written by novelist Kevin Baker discussing his research for his book Strivers Row. For as well known as Malcolm X is, primary sources for him are scarce and treading the well-beaten path to the Shabazz and Little families' doors would burden them with yet another "question and answer" session about his life. If Baker could get what he needed from secondary sources for building an historical fiction for Malcolm X, then I could use a similar pattern for this study in order to construct a clearer picture of Malcolm X as a leader. It is the purpose of this study to explore the value of Malcolm X as a relevant leader of today without causing any harm to Malcolm X's surviving relatives.

This research will also make use of a scientific perspective from a thought experiment for black holes to further demonstrate the aspect of how placement in relation to an event or subject effects the perspective of how the event or subject is experienced. Amanda Gefter, writing for the New Scientist magazine, describes the experiment developed by Leonard Susskind that details how to be in two places at once. It runs something like this:

From a safe distance we (a) watch an elephant approach the event horizon of a black hole. The elephant moves slower and slower due to time distortion. Until it seems to stop short never crossing the event horizon while in all actuality the elephant is "thermalised" by radiation predicted by Stephen Hawking and we witness its ashes streaming back out from the black hole. But if we accompany the elephant further past the event horizon (b) we get to see the elephant pass

through the black hole all the way to the thermalization process. It becomes a matter of perspective where each observation is correct and the experiment reaches a conclusion where the elephant does exist in two places at once. (Gefter)

This fits with how Malcolm X is viewed in history. Taken as a popular image (a) he is always perceived as a fiery troublemaker who never moves beyond the rhetoric of conflict, and we hear only the harsh tones of strife. But if we look beyond the event horizon of the civil rights past, (b) we can witness his transformation into the identity of Malik El Shabazz and hear dissonance take form and become a clarion call to which we can all relate. So yes Malcolm X is indeed the rebel but as we follow him further down the path of his life we see his enlightened self emerge. To sit and hold fast to the image of him on the event horizon of his belligerent actions ignores his evolution into an elegant warrior.

Malcolm X's leadership style will be studied from his youth through his life after the pilgrimage to Mecca. The data will be interpreted by way of the processes described above. The topic will then get further refinement through illustrations from other disciplines that help form the basis of elegant leadership. Each illustration will help illuminate a particular facet of the thesis question: What makes Malcolm X an elegant leader? The conclusion of this study will define not only what "elegant leadership" is but explain why Malcolm X's "elegant leadership" remains veiled in history.

American Heartbreak

I am the American heartbreak--

Rock on which Freedom

Stumps its toe--

The great mistake

That Jamestown

Made long ago.

Langston Hughes (9)

There is not a direct translation from Islamic tradition for the word “saint.” Viewing Malcolm X as a leader is easy from a one dimensional standpoint with the focus on his passionate anger, but what gets missed are the multiple layers that combine to make him a modern-day example of a wizard/warrior. Malcolm X is often dismissed as an outdated model, steeped in hatred, separatism and sexism. My effort is to detail Malcolm X as not only a leader in his time, but to demonstrate that he is also a relevant leader today. The elements that are to be dealt with as roadblocks are time and context. This has greatly distorted the view of Malcolm X by his friends and foes alike.

In addition, there is the issue that while Malcolm X is recognized as a leader, he is not seen as one who fits neatly into the usual leadership model. He is not a classic military leader, he held no political office, he rose to prominence while participating in the Nation of Islam, which is not recognized by international organizations of Muslim

authority, and he does not even belong to the latest leadership fad group where he would have been a CEO leader in the world of business. The original title for this study was “An Elegant Dissonance.” But given the conflict that infused Malcolm X’s life, the connection to warrior traditions proved to be a clearer path to explore. Warrior-ship can be easily traced as an appropriate connection to Malcolm X because of the nearly universal and often exploited image of Malcolm’s combative nature. But, the traditional image of the warrior is appropriate because the many facets of a warrior can be applied to Malcolm and they give him the proper perspective as a leader.

In most leadership studies some credit is given to the childhood environment of the subject. What is often taken for granted, due to lack of resolution in current day America about the subject of racism, is that Malcolm grew up entrenched in racism and its collateral damage effects. Paul Oliver, in his research on Blues music, speaks about the depth and breadth of racism:

But the barbarism of [the Black Code] was ingrained in the soul of the South and could not cease with the stroke of the pen [Emancipation Proclamation]. Catholics and Negroes alike were terrorized by the Ku Klux Klan whose incantations, Kleagles, Grand Wizards, religious hypocrisy and declarations of knightly behavior did not—and do not—hide the underlying horror and brutality of a murder society; the hooded night-shirts echoing the garb of the Inquisition hide individual identities, but they have never concealed the shame of the iniquitous masquerade. (206)

A note should be added here about comparing Malcolm X to other black and African American leaders. The most misused comparison and one the author learned as a

child is to compare Malcolm X to Dr. Martin Luther King. This is misleading because that comparison is made to give a backhanded branding of Malcolm X as a violent anti-American insurgent in contrast to Dr. King's non-violent stance. But Dr. William Green, who is superintendent of the Minneapolis school system at the time of this paper, points out a better perspective of the matter. Dr. Green states that "[While] both Malcolm X and Dr. King approached civil rights from different perspectives, they ultimately hit upon the same truth: that poverty and economic divides were the real demons to defeat. And it is tragic that each was killed as they launched their final campaigns training their sights on the target of economic injustice" (Green).

Also there is often the effort to make a permanent villain out of Malcolm X as an early gang leader model. This is incorrect because while ex-gang leaders like the deceased "Tookie" Williams and the still incarcerated "Monster" Shakur referenced Malcolm X as a role model for reform while behind bars and made changes in their lives, they slipped too far down the criminal path to pull free of the justice system. The difference is that Malcolm had an early start on his sense of self before the time of Williams and Shakur, when the black community still possessed remnants of much more cohesive support for young black men, most notably in African American church congregations. So while a comparison of Malcolm X's life with modern gang leaders will undoubtedly have numerous similarities, this author has determined that such information would not add much to the definition of leadership being addressed in the scope of this study.

A better illustration of Malcolm X's leadership would be to contrast his later life leadership career against the careers of notable politicians like Senator Joseph McCarthy

and Adlai Stevenson. Such an exercise will enlighten readers to one of the main principles of elegant leadership: the avoidance of the politics of self-destruction. Both McCarthy and Stevenson watched their careers crash and burn, while Malcolm X rose as he stepped up to each challenge he faced.

How can each fact mentioned above be addressed in terms of leadership? They can be approached and explained in the four areas in which Malik El Shabazz excelled: warriorhood, organizational development, spiritual intelligence, and vision. These elements are linked by the sense of identity that Malik El Shabazz developed and carried throughout his life.

Warriorhood and Identity

The Battle Birds

(Ojibwa)

The battle-birds swoop from the sky,

They thirst for the warrior's heart;

They look from their circles on high,

And scorn every flesh but the brave.

(Peek and Sanders 76)

The widely acclaimed PBS series [African American Lives 2](#), hosted by Henry Louis Gates Jr., has explored the popular belief that many African Americans claim to have Native American heritage. The series discovered through historical research and DNA testing that many of the subjects, including the host, shared no ancestral connection to any Native American tribe. One of the show's conclusions was that many African

Americans wanted to associate themselves with Native Americans because of the honor of being with a minority group that resisted white oppression with violent opposition. As African Americans felt too distant from African warrior culture traditions, they could take comfort in the possibility of belonging to another. What gets missed is the realization that by trying to attach to a more favorable group identity is that many end up running from one foreign culture to another foreign culture.

While much has been said about Malcolm X's bad attitude in dealing with white people, seldom is it recognized how he got there and what formed his identity of himself. In his autobiography he lays down his card right away on the issue: "Louise Little, my mother, who was born in Grenada, in the British West Indies, looked like a white woman. Her father *was* white" (Malcolm X 2). He does not try to bait the reader or deny his heritage. But his later statement throws a harsh tone into his autobiography that sticks to the ribs of the reader right to the end: "I learned to hate every drop of that white rapist's blood that is in me" (3). It could be argued that Malcolm Little should have enjoyed his status of having a light complexion, but he was born a warrior. Malcolm made the conscious choice to not rely on his skin tone and reddish hair that made him a standout so that he could start to peel back the layers of thought that construct the methodology of racism. Note that before his statement and admittance to having white heritage, he speaks of his father in his autobiography thusly, "He believed, as did Marcus Garvey, that freedom, independence and self-respect could never be achieved by the Negro in America, and that therefore the Negro should leave America to the white man and return to his African land of origin" (2). Malcolm goes on to disclose the reasons for his

father's position were that his father "had seen four of his six brothers die by violence, three of them killed by white men, including one by lynching" (2).

Brought up with such knowledge of his family's history and Garvey's philosophy, Malcolm's die is cast and sets him on a path that is juxtaposed to the racist world he was born into. He is separated from his family and takes many turns that lead to dead ends, but his knowing who he is gives him a warrior's edge that keeps him strong in the face of adversity and racism. While society has learned to address some of the civil rights issues, we can still see echoes of social issues that Malcolm and his family tackled in America. The recent research by Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson, culminating in their valuable work, Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys, offers valuable insight into why Malcolm X's life took a turn toward crime and how he made a later connection to pull out of a "no win" situation. "Sometimes in the archaeology of the life of a violent boy, we uncover extreme conditions, such as years of unspeakable abuse. Other such boys -- whether killers, fighters, or vandals -- will have experienced a breach of trust by someone close; a loss they could not mourn," (220). Even though he lived in an era of serious racial oppression, Malcolm Little was armed with the understanding that comes from having a family tradition that followed the ideals of freedom and had a connection to their true racial identity.

I was born in the Island of Jamaica, British West Indies, on August 17, 1887. My parents were black Negroes. My father was a man of brilliant intellect and dashing courage. He was unafraid of consequences.

(Marcus Garvey 1)

The connection with Kindlon and Thompson's work is that millions of young males are finding themselves in the awkward position that Malcolm X found himself. That is the pressure of being brought up in a single parent family (after the death of his father), being part of a family split by government intervention where he was forced into a foster home and having no place in society to grow his interests and talents. And without a definite place in society, there is no way to express and practice the early stages of manhood. We see today's youth as warped, but the same can be applied to Malcolm's situation and add the fact that it was caused directly by the mechanics of racism in a pre-civil rights era.

The truth is the Ku Klux Klan enjoyed a revival during the 1920s and incidents of lynching rose in distressing numbers during the 1930s. Billie Holiday's singing of "Strange Fruit" (Allan) touched many Americans for its surreal quality at expressing the horror of racism. Malcolm X grew in that world, but its echoes remain with us today:

The history of slavery is a long and dismal one in which the succession of brandings and burnings, dismembering and flaying is only brought into more stark relief by the all too infrequent contrast of occasional humanitarian treatment. In 1724 the Black Code laid down the punishments that could be meted to offending Negro slaves by their owners. Looking back to medieval times in their brutality, recalling the savagery and the cold-blooded nonchalance of the torturers in a panel by Gheerhardt David, or an oil painting by Peter Breughel of the treatment of the Flemish during the Spanish Domination, they included the slitting of noses,

the severing of limbs and the hamstringing of legs for the most trivial of crimes.
(Oliver 205)

Angel Kyodo Williams, in her introduction to her book, Being Black, describes what many African Americans feel but never can quite pin down and it is the same feeling that emanates throughout the early part of Malcolm X's autobiography. "People of color are especially in need of new ways and new answers to the separation and fear we face each day. It wouldn't be a stretch to say that as black people, more than most groups in this country, we live our daily lives with the distinct taste of fear in our mouths" (6). This serves as context to prove that racism is not only a "past issue" but it continues to bear fruit to this day and remains very much a contemporary issue. In showing the relevance of Malcolm X today, we will not lose the density and gravity of the hidden force of racism which drives the need to explore the solutions that Malcolm X as Malik El Shabazz was approaching. The warrior's edge that Malcolm X has, through the knowledge of his family, helps him to indentify exactly where the taste of fear comes from. Even after a horrifying civil war, the emancipation of slaves and a period of reconstruction, in the United States the practice of racism is still prevalent. As the blatant sources of racial discrimination go underground many young African Americans and other minority groups often sense something is off but do not really know how to deconstruct racial actions and attitudes unless they become blatant, such as the use of lynching effigy that sparked the conflict in Jena, Louisiana.

The underlying truth for many African Americans is that fear is incorporated into our very identities. Malcolm X is seen as brash and reckless by the black leaders of his time because he refuses to give in to the fear that bars not only the African American

right to seek a better life but also the human right to believe in oneself. Angel Kyodo Williams says, “We have lived with it and incorporated it into the fabric of our being, so much so that on the surface we may not even be aware of it anymore. But the fear is there and it permeates every aspect of our lives.” (6). Malcolm’s early openness to Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam movement should never be treated as a complete surprise. African Americans continue their search for ways of life and thought that provide frameworks resonant with their human need to survive. Each example in African American history searches for an answer to counter the racism that poisoned the waters of African American identity. Some answers promote armed struggle, and yet others seek an intellectual solution.

Noted scholar and African American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois tried to attack racism by outmaneuvering it. Du Bois initially defines racial membership as sharing a common group history, but in today’s world that answer does not suffice. It is this *push and pull* tension within the African American experience that W.E.B. Du Bois tried to address with his theory to counteract racism. “Succinctly Du Bois wants to acknowledge that differences between the races exist, no matter if they are biological, social, psychological, even encompassing the realm of the soul. He tries to build a case where, from an African American perspective, to argue that racism could be used to push forward the argument that one’s particular race is superior to the others. Therefore, Dubois’ goal is to separate the conditions of racism from racism itself” (Schwartz). This in theory would give African Americans a level playing field to compete with other races. But this does not work to end African American issues of identity. Anthony Kwame Appiah, in his work *In My Father’s House*, points out that: “A more familiar part of the

consensus is that differences between peoples in language, moral affections, aesthetic attitudes, or political ideology---those differences that most deeply affect us in our dealings with each other---are not to any significant degree biologically determined” (35). Perhaps settling into a life to fit in by associating with other outcasts could work for successful collaborations to survive but it carries a fatal flaw.

Malcolm got his religious start attending churches with his family where his father preached. It was during these religious gatherings that Malcolm would be able to see other African Americans respond openly to his father’s take on Garvey and liberation theology. While the traditional Black church organizations provided resilient support during overt racism, in this post civil rights era many Black churches find themselves caught in the tidal wave of changing demographics where the freedom for African Americans to enjoy once forbidden mainstream lifestyles and activities have depleted their membership ranks. Today once close-knit community ties have been supplanted by materialism. Even the African American criminal culture is up for sale to the mainstream. The fear and the need to belong have given rise to a new way to deal with the alienation of racism. Yet African Americans are no closer to understanding their identity as we find ourselves separated economically and even politically. Black business men now include “rap moguls” who no longer take residence in the ghettos that inspired their music. Politics is no longer a black and white issue. For every Barack Obama supporter, there is an old guard African American who prefers Hillary Clinton and there are many conservative African American admirers of Condoleezza Rice.

Time after time we see the infrastructure of African American racial identity shifting into unfamiliar territory that was never imagined by many racists or anti-racists.

Malcolm X takes this trip long before the rest of world catches up. He rises from tragedy and betrayal that has left many in a racial identity void. From the death of his father, knowing his white ancestry and being disgusted by it, the breakup of his remaining family, being told to seek a career more appropriate for colored people, his overblown jail time and his disillusionment with the Nation of Islam, he picks himself up, dusts himself off and continues his journey to connect to his true self. It is a journey to being human with a focus on rights for all humanity. Malcolm tapped into the core of being and found the thread that connects us all. It is an experience beyond words but often demonstrated by actions. It was and still is hard to believe that the early belligerent and confrontational Malcolm transformed into a peace seeker once he experienced Mecca. Yet when a person is touched by grace, enlightenment or a “strangely warm heart” words are inadequate as their world is turned upside down.

The conversion to a more traditional version of Islam (Sunni) also exposed Malcolm X to the core of warriorship and religious organization that the Prophet Muhammad established. The Prophet Muhammad’s life provided a blueprint on how to confront great odds and to overcome them. But instead of establishing an earthly power for one race, the Prophet saw himself as just a messenger to save all mankind. Much like Shaka Zulu transformed tribal warfare in South Africa, Muhammad changed the way Arabian warfare was conducted. The calling of Muhammad to faith is a powerful story that demonstrates the transformation of warrior into a spiritual leader. Muhammad’s transformation of faith is one of the ultimate examples of how a person reacts to the call that challenges them to leave their everyday life of familiarity. “What we’re up against in trying to awaken, though, is the power of repression in ourselves. At our core, we know

that pain isn't subtle when anesthesia wears off, so we're tempted to keep slathering on the soothing unction of inattention, especially when the possibility of pain is involved --- whether it's the pain of knowing what we must sacrifice; of what change may demand of us; or of dreams deferred and time rushing by" (Levoy 21). Malcolm X would be able to take great comfort and inspiration in Muhammad's example. And bear witness to the lasting impression it holds on the Muslim world through the Hajj.

It is no surprise then that Malcolm X and other African Americans were often viewed by the Lyndon B. Johnson administration as being unable to either, make up their minds on what they want or to be happy with what they have achieved. Even Dr. Martin Luther King lost popular support before his death because it was felt that he didn't know when to quit or he didn't do enough. The development and needs of African Americans are basic human needs that Robert Kegan outlines in his work The Evolving Self. "The life history I have traced involves a continual moving back and forth between resolving the tension slightly in favor of autonomy, at one stage, in the favor of inclusion, at the next. We move from the over-included, fantasy-embedded impulsive balance to the sealed-up self-sufficiency of the imperial balance to the over-included interpersonalism to the autonomous, self-regulating institutional balance; from the institutional to a new form of openness in the inter-individual" (Kegan 108). According to Kegan, individuals in society have moved and are moving through these evolutionary stages in their growth and development as human beings. I would argue that mainstream America has for the most part gotten the chance to make it through these stages and thus achieve some sense of identity, but that African Americans as a group have not enjoyed the same development. Kegan begins part one of The Evolving Self with a section of the first part of T.S. Eliot's

“Ash Wednesday” which touches potentially on a piece of the African American journey for identity despite racism:

AshWednesday

Because I do not hope to turn again

Because I do not hope

Because I do not hope to turn

Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope

I no longer strive to strive towards such things

(Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?)

Why should I mourn

The vanished power of the usual reign?

Because I do not hope to know

The infirm glory of the positive hour

Because I do not think

Because I know I shall not know

The one veritable transitory power

Because I cannot drink

There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is

nothing again

Because I know that time is always time
And place is always and only place
And what is actual is actual only for one time
And only for one place
I rejoice that things are as they are and
I renounce the blessed face
And renounce the voice
Because I cannot hope to turn again
Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something
Upon which to rejoice

(Eliot, T.S. in Kegan 23)

So it is my assertion that African Americans would naturally be drawn to the path of being a warrior as they grow through the Kegan-type helix of personal identity stages. “Every developmental stage, I said, is an evolutionary truce. It sets terms on the fundamental issue as to how differentiated the organism is from its life-surround and how embedded. It would be as true to say that every evolutionary truce . . . is a temporary solution to the lifelong tension between the yearnings for inclusion and distinctness. Each balance resolves the tension in a different way” (Kegan 108). The push and pull of being in a racist society casts African Americans into a never ending spiral. Somehow African Americans are stuck in between the gears of the never-ending battle with racism that presses them to fight, while longing to be included in mainstream American society. Thus, a doctor, lawyer or any person who happens to be African American is silently

pressured to always go above and beyond, not to attain a higher position to be respected by peers but in order to maintain a place as a respected human being. The undercurrent of racism grips every African American into wrestling against the image of being seen as or seeing themselves as criminals, ignorant children or not quite fully evolved primates. Malcolm X broke free of the mental image of himself forced upon him by a racist society. As a warrior he trusted his inner truth and spirit. Doing so he called racism bluff and challenged the inhumanity practiced against him and other African Americans. When racist practices of his time tried to force him into a post-slave model that was acceptable and non-threatening to white society he rebelled. And that forced him to perform ronin.

African American Warriors and Wizards

A brief note is in order about the use of the word “wizard”. It is not meant to infer that anyone listed in the category is considered a magician and practitioner of magic black or white. It is used to provide contrast to the warrior identity I have discerned from Malcolm X and will use to transform him into a wizard of intellect as he transforms into Malik El Shabazz. The wizard and warrior metaphors are borrowed from the work of Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal “wizards master symbols and warriors command power” (3). Malcolm X possessed both abilities in equal measure and in doing so he is the example of an elegant warrior. “The Knight and the Hermit can be said to represent two states of being, or from the point of view of spiritual development, two stages of becoming, which we could call *engagement* and *detachment* or *action* and *contemplation*” (Jordan-Smith 36). Malcolm was a unique individual with a blend of

strength and intellect, power to stand up against the negative forces of a racist society, yet possessing a reflective side that discerns the true meaning behind events and systems.

From African American history we can see many individuals who would fit in the warrior category. For example, warriors could be Crispus Attucks, Harriet Tubman, Robert F. Williams and Fred Hampton. A sample wizards list could be Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. The warrior list shows people who knew actions spoke louder than words. Attucks was one of the first five people to give his life for America's freedom from Britain. Ms. Tubman brought seventy slaves from the south through the 'underground railroad' to freedom in the north. Robert Williams gathered support from the National Rifle Association to form an armed guard to counter punch the attacks of the Ku Klux Klan. The African American "wizards" listed each took an intellectual approach to the issues of slavery and racism. Fredrick Douglas who developed a friendship with President Lincoln that helped the president to understand that African American Union troops deserved better treatment during the Civil War. And Dr. Du Bois in his quest to validate African American experience and identity was able for the first time to note the true power of African American 'sorrow songs' as a unique key of spiritual power that idles in a sorrowful mode, waiting for the day of freedom. Their thoughts and philosophies echo in discussions on African American identity to this day.

Malcolm X's defining warrior tone began with his 1962 speech "Black Man's History." In it, he opens on the attack:

The white man never has separated Christianity from white, nor has he separated the white man from Christianity. When you hear

the white man bragging, "I'm a Christian," he's bragging about being a white man. Then you have the Negro. When he is bragging about being a Christian, he's bragging that he's a white man, or he wants to be white, and usually those Negroes who brag like that, I think you have to agree, in their songs and the things they sing in church, they show that they have a greater desire to be white than anything else. My mother was a Christian and my father was a Christian and I used to hear them when I was a little child sing the song "Wash Me White As Snow." My father was a black man and my mother was a black woman, but yet the songs that they sang in their church were designed to fill their hearts with the desire to be white. So many people, especially our people, get resentful when they hear me say something like this. But rather than get resentful all they have to do is think back on many of the songs and much of the teachings and the doctrines that they were taught while they were going to church and they'll have to agree that it was all designed to make us look down on black and up at white.

(Malcolm X, malcolm-x.org)

Here we have the first public attack not just against white religion but white racist oppression using Christianity. The speech is heavily influenced by Malcolm's close ties to Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam, but his delivery and timing are both passionate and powerful. As any good fighter and general would do, he exploits holes in the fabric of his enemies' façade. He wants to make the oppressor pay by using his own racist

rhetoric against them. The fundamental truth of Christian brotherhood gets the long awaited black-eye like a clown with floppy feet stumbling around in a backyard full of rakes. African Americans, who at the time who suffered oppression and knew the oppression of their family since slavery, could feel validated. A warrior had come in the form of Malcolm X and pointed out the hypocrisy of Christianity that many felt but few if any addressed.

After experiencing true Islam, Malik El Shabazz takes shape and his speech at the Ford Auditorium after the fire-bombing of his house in 1965 shows his mastery of symbols:

So before I get involved in anything nowadays, I have to straighten out my own position, which is clear. I am not a racist in any form whatsoever. I don't believe in any form of racism. I don't believe in any form of discrimination or segregation. I believe in Islam. I am a Muslim. And there's nothing wrong with being a Muslim, nothing wrong with the religion of Islam. It just teaches us to believe in Allah as the God. Those of you who are Christians probably believe in the same God, because I think you believe in the God who created the universe. That's the One we believe in, the one who created the universe, the only difference being you call Him God and I -- we call Him Allah. The Jews call him Jehovah. If you could understand Hebrew, you'd probably call him Jehovah too. If you could understand Arabic, you'd probably call him Allah.”

(Malcolm X, malcolm-x.org).

Malcolm as Malik El Shabazz had made the transition from warrior to wizard that puzzled his enemies. Malcolm seemingly trades places with the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King throwing his enemies for a loop in going from the position of conflict to a more humanitarian stance where Dr. King often depicted as the kindly, non-violent Nobel Peace prize winning wizard to a more assertive warrior for human rights. These are advanced tactics in strategy that only those with the abilities to be both warriors and wizards can understand and execute. Before this passage in Malcolm X's 1965 after the bombing speech at the Ford auditorium, he recounts how much his image had changed as he was flying between Algiers and Geneva. Two other Americans just happen to be sitting next to him:

“And after we had been flying along for about forty minutes, the lady, she says, "Could I ask you a personal question?"

I said, "Yes." She said, "Well--" she had been looking at my briefcase, and she said, "Well, what does that X--" she says, "What kind of last name could you have that begins with X?" So I said, "That's it -- X." And she said, "Well, what does the 'M' stand for?" I said, "Malcolm." So she was quiet for about ten minutes, and she turned to me and she says, "You're not Malcolm X?"

(Malcolm X, malcolm-x.org).

Malcolm goes on to point out that he and the other two Americans had been enjoying the in flight conversation as three fellow travelers on a trip. He notes the lack of hostility and animosity so that they are able to connect as human beings. But once his fellow traveler finds out who he is, she is shocked to see his demeanor isn't adversarial or confrontational. Malcolm goes on to say that the press had gotten out of hand with their demonic portrayal of him. Unfortunately many African Americans today buy into the media stereotypes of who they are.

Warrior History

Conflict has always been linked with human nature. The three major religions (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) each acknowledge the story of "The Garden of Eden" that details the conflict of humanity with God. Recorded history and archeological findings are full of details about the human need to survive more often than not at the expense of others through war, sacrifice and oppression. Racial conflict has been seen as a negative to American society as a whole, which is true, but in the racist heyday of separatist American culture something magical happened. African Americans survived and thrived. They survived slavery, survived post civil war reconstruction betrayal and survived "Jim Crow." African Americans also went on to contribute to American society with advances in science and medicine and defended America vigorously in times of war. Thomas Crum, a noted consultant and Aikido practitioner, describes the effect of conflict thusly when conflict is embraced. "When we do (embrace conflict), it becomes one of the greatest gifts we have for positive growth and change, an empowering and energizing opportunity. There is a truly magical quality about conflict which can call out the best in us, that which is not summoned under ordinary circumstances" (Crum 30). What is

immediately apparent is that racism and segregation are based on a fundamental mistake. As these systems are exposed over time, the fallacy of racial superiority that pits one racial group against another becomes obvious as the practice leads to a social and cultural dead end. And when racism set white Europeans and Americans above all other ethnic groups while leaving the oppressed in a limbo devoid of human rights, it left the “superior” group with a trail of enemies steeped in revenge and victims inflicted with racial injuries that never heal.

With their ability to survive in such a system, African Americans developed creative means to stay alive. Malcolm X saw and exploited the holes of racist America not out of evil intent, but for survival. Had white racists not opted to kill his father, or the white - oriented social system not opted to breakup of his remaining family, or had Malcolm X not been treated as a “mascot” during his foster home and elementary school experience, and if he had been given a jail sentence to justly fit his crime, then things would have turned out much differently for Malcolm Little. Yet Malcolm X took these hurdles and blows as ‘grist for the mill’. Malcolm X picked himself up, dusted himself off and continued his journey to connect to his true self. His is a journey through conflict that he is willing to share that exposes hypocrisy, inspires the oppressed, and serves notice to the powers that be that he is not going to grin and bear it by taking his place in a racist society. Within the warrior context, Malcolm purposely steps out of line.

Is Malcolm X a warrior? The answer is yes. He is not a mere thug or backstreet brawler. He answered a call to be true to himself and that call has inspired others. From the perspective of traditional martial arts, Michael Rosenbaum mentions the Spartan warriors from ancient Greece. “The warriors of Thermopylae have, for 2,500 years of

western civilization, exemplified the traits a warrior should exhibit, discipline, self-sacrifice to a cause greater than oneself, honor, courage, and martial prowess.” (Rosenbaum 27). Malcolm X exhibited each of these traits in abundance. He was extremely disciplined. His mother valued education and learning, therefore, as his education grew in the Nation of Islam, he gave up drugs and adhered to Islamic dietary law. He educated himself in prison to a point where he soundly took on verbal challenges in debates and lectures in which the average “tough guy” would be lost with no way to utilize physical violence. Malcolm sacrificed himself for the cause of Islam that he found greater than himself. He sincerely believed that embracing Islam was a way for African Americans to be free from American mainstream racial oppression. As part of the Nation of Islam he honored the Honorable Elijah Muhammad every chance he could and when he parted ways with the Nation of Islam, he never forgot the hand that helped him out of prison. His courage was irrefutable towards the end of his life. As he stopped chasing material dreams and embraced the idea of Islam on the road to True Islam, he faced all challenges even without the backing of the Nation of Islam. In adopting the path of the warrior, Malcolm was exposed to the larger picture of life. In practicing discipline, courage, self-sacrifice, honor and martial prowess he realized just how precious humanity is and that pettiness, greed and immoral behavior are poor coping mechanisms when dealing with racism.



(Malcolm-x .org)

He showed martial prowess by out-maneuvering his opponents. In 1965, Malcolm X made an often misinterpreted comment before his death: “We declare our right on this earth to be a man, to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence by any means necessary” (Malcolm X, malcolm-x.org). The phrase became a catchy sound bite for violent confrontation and a battle cry for the oppressed. But, it is often translated in a one dimensional sense. Every martial artist and

experienced combat veteran knows that conflicts and battles cannot be won by fists and brute force alone. Resources aren't limitless in battle. Like Napoleon found out in his attack on Russia, a fighter will run out of energy, and armed units run out of supplies if they are not used wisely. This called for strategic planning and preparation for battle that included sizing up the enemy. Malcolm chose to exploit the weak spots of an enemy while abandoning battle plans that did not work. He did not use direct aggressive tactics that are the traits of criminal gangs and terrorists. Malcolm modified and used the assembly tactics of the civil rights movement to impose the presence of Nation of Islam members as witnesses. With their silent assembly that did not disturb the peace they secured medical assistance for one of their members being held by police. Malcolm also learned to use the legal system to present arguments before courts on behalf of incarcerated African Americans.

The followers of a defeated and dead warrior/hero are often set adrift in a vacuum where they feel left with nothing but devastation. Maya Angelou, who was to work with Malcolm on growing the Organization of Afro-American Unity, details how the death of Malcolm ripped her world apart in her prequel "A Song Flung Up to Heaven." It is often in the honor and memory of a fallen comrade that followers and troops continue on in life. Ms. Angelou describes a conversation she had with a man in a diner on 125th Street, shortly after the assassination of Martin Luther King. As she spoke with the man at the diner she expected "awful despair" at the death of Martin Luther King as they observed the street crowded with people. But she was told that the people were reacting to the death of Malcolm X.

“Malcolm?”

“See, they killed him not far from here, and we didn’t do anything. Lot of people loved Malcolm, but we didn’t show it, and now even people who didn’t agree with Reverend King, they out here, just to show we do know how to care for somebody. Half of this is for Malcolm X, a half for Martin King and a half for a whole lot of others.”

I laid my own head on the counter weighed with new realization.

A man lived. A man loved.

A man tried, and a man died.

And that was not all there was to that. And it never was.

(Angelou 191)

Asian Philosophy and Martial Arts

The path of the knight is martial. Leadership by principle is cultural, leadership by punishment is martial. Management of the ordinary is cultural, management of disturbance is martial.

Hojo Chikuho-Shi 17th Century
(Chikuho-Shi 133)

The martial arts are not solely the province of Asian tradition, and martial arts do not begin and end with the samurai traditions. Warrior traditions found in British history mirror the samurai traditions with lords and knights. And knights-errant can be found in Chinese tradition known as “Yóuxiá.” Such traditions share the ideal of chivalry. The idea may not be the same within each cultural context, but the chivalric ideal no matter what the cultural source, usually has an established code or standard for a warrior to follow. Note “The Ten Commandments of the Code of Chivalry” from Leon Gautier’s work Chivalry:

- I. Thou shalt believe all that the Church teaches, and shalt observe all its directions.
- II. Thou shalt defend the Church.
- III. Thou shalt respect all weaknesses, and shalt constitute thyself the defender of them.
- IV. Thou shalt love the country in the which thou wast born.
- V. Thou shalt not recoil before thine enemy.
- VI. Thou shalt make war against the Infidel without cessation, and without mercy.
- VII. Thou shalt perform scrupulously thy feudal duties, if they be not contrary to the laws of God.
- VIII. Thou shalt never lie, and shall remain faithful to thy pledged word.
- IX. Thou shalt be generous, and give largess to everyone.

X. Thou shalt be everywhere and always the champion of the Right
and the Good against Injustice and Evil.

(Gautier)

Compare the western code of chivalry with the samurai code of “Bushido”,
translated in Japanese as “the code of the warrior”:

- Rectitude
- Courage
- Benevolence
- Respect
- Honesty
- Honor
- Loyalty

(True Bushido Code)

While the lists are not an exact match, several important themes connect between the two. Honor, honesty and courage are readily identifiable. The concept of “Bushido” mentioned here was revived by the work of Inazo Nitobe, Bushido: Samurai Ethics and the Soul of Japan. While the work is not considered a classic text on samurai thought, it is a popular one for defining the ideals of samurai culture and their place within Japanese society.

The reason an Asian martial context was chosen over a western one is mainly a matter of philosophy and the concept of the ronin from samurai tradition. No disrespect

is meant to any other martial tradition, and themes from various warrior and martial traditions will be included where a valid connection can be made.

Traditions of the Samurai

Thanks to martial art cinematic exposure and current anime/manga popularity, the role of the samurai is enjoying a revival that is very comparable to the traditions of the knight and cowboy in the western world. The romantic ideal of a warrior in the service of justice is prevalent in most societies. The warrior tradition of Japan was built within the framework of a feudal society. The royalty was followed by a military class, and common folk brought up the rear of society. Japan has a history of launching military campaigns outside of its borders on its neighbors, but it is the internal struggle within its borders that makes the tradition of the samurai most interesting. Battles for the throne notwithstanding, there are many accounts of feudal lords battling over land and status at the royal court. Through it all, the samurai has been the knight upholding the ideal of loyalty by defending the name and honor of his lord and/or his emperor. Samurai were pledged to their lords in life and death. Samurai were the only class in feudal Japan who were allowed to wear swords. The most famous story of samurai is of the “47 Ronin”. It speaks to the time when the internal struggle for Japan ended and samurai were left without a definite function in Japanese society. The merchant class had risen because without constant conflict to get in the way, there was more time trading goods and more leisure time to enjoy them.

Ronin Samurai

Ronin are master-less samurai. The name translates literally as ‘wave man’ referring to his fate of being tossed upon the sea of life. Often samurai became ronin by choice in order to travel and learn from other disciplines not a part of their master’s immediate resources. Yamamoto Tsunetomo notes that the path of ronin should just be considered part of the samurai path:

It is unthinkable to be disturbed at something like being ordered to become a ronin. People at the time of Lord Katsushige used to say, “If one has not been a ronin at least seven times, he will not be a true retainer. Seven times down, eight times up. Men like Narutomi Hyogo have been ronin seven times. One should understand that it is something like being a self-righting doll. The master is also apt to give such orders as a test. (Tsunetomo 48)

The idea of a ronin in this context is an example of training for the samurai in order to become a better retainer (attendant warrior) by gaining experience in other disciplines besides fencing, archery and horse riding. Many did ronin as carpenters, potters and blacksmiths.

A man could be born a ronin by being the son of masterless samurai who retained his status as a warrior. Others were fired after falling momentarily out of favor with their lord, and some were dismissed for indiscretions that were unbecoming of a samurai’s rank and status. But, a member of the samurai class could also become a ronin due to changes in his lord’s or clan’s status. The emperor or shogun could disband or reduce the

size of a clan for any number of reasons. The story of the 47 Ronin illustrates how a stroke of misfortune could set samurai on the path to become a ronin. Their lord was provoked into attacking lord Kira Kozukenosuke Yoshinaka who insulted him within the Shogun's palace. This was a grievous offense since in times of peace samurai were allowed to wear their swords within the palace, but never allowed to draw them. For drawing his sword, the lord was ordered to commit "seppuku" or ritual suicide. Thus the samurai loyal to him became master-less. The lord's castle, land and property were all forfeited. Some of his samurai wanted to go down defending the castle; others wanted to go directly after the lord who tricked their lord, but a quiet plan for revenge was drawn up. The samurai stored a cache of weapons and dispersed each setting on their way as ronin leading ordinary unremarkable lives. On December 14, 1702, the ronin gathered together and prepared themselves for battle with arms and armor from their cache. They led a two front assault on lord Kira's compound, taking him by surprise, killed him and took his head to the grave of their lord. Then they turned themselves in and were ordered to commit seppuku. This popular example outlines the extreme action within the confined boundaries of samurai culture.

Given the peacetime environment of Japan, it might be that "doing" ronin forced the samurai into a role out of character with his or her traditional station within society. Many samurai during the Tokugawa Shogun period earned their living more as administrators rather than warriors. It has been suggested that the ronin may have been considered unemployed workers by the standards of their time.

Malcolm X fits the mold as a "waveman" because he was for all practical purposes fired by the Nation of Islam. He lost not only his position within that

organization, but he lost all property and materials that were purchased by the Nation of Islam. Basically, Malcolm and his family left the Nation of Islam with little more than the clothes on their backs. He and his family were tossed into a world outside the Nation of Islam to find their own way. But the striking similarity between Malcolm X and the way of the warrior is how he stoically handled his fate. Malcolm X continued to live his life as a journey of discovery in the face of threats and racism. He faced the firebombing of his home and an attempted car bombing, along with verbal challenges from the media and other civil rights contemporaries with a stoic calm. Many samurai valued falling in battle to serve their lord and maintain their honor. Malcolm X, like Dr. King, no longer feared death. Not out of false bravado, but because they both knew that death in the racial atmosphere of their time was poised to be tragic and violent. But they knew the truth of their convictions. This acknowledgement and acceptance of the truth is something that is understood by warriors. They found lasting value in that truth. Truth about their identities as human beings and their place in creation, much like the classic samurai warrior view of life, equating life to the cherry blossoms that do not last. The warrior priest Saigyō who died in 1190, wrote this death poem:

I wish to die
in spring, beneath
the cherry blossoms,
while the springtime moon
is full.

(Saigyō)

And so, both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King realized that they had come to the right time and place in their paths. If they turned back they would nullify not only their struggle but the struggle of all who long for freedom.

The connection between Malcolm X's style and that of the ronin does not end here, but goes deeper when we include the life of the Japanese "sword saint" Miyamoto Musashi. Musashi is considered to be Japan's ultimate samurai from the height of the samurai era. He rose from obscurity to become a samurai with a record of never being defeated in battle. The most interesting thing about Musashi is that he was not a one dimensional person obsessed with only fighting; he also sought to go beyond the realm of battle and embrace life. He studied different disciplines with various artists, priests and craftsmen. With a warrior's focus he eventually became a skilled poet, painter and sculptor. Malcolm X shared the same warrior focus as he used his time in prison to take his ability to adapt in situations and chart a course to more formal learning and education. With life being comprised of constant change, Malcolm X adapted to this change with the preparedness of a ronin. "Persona; power is the most potent buffer. It is the ability to influence what happens to us, which significantly reduces the detrimental consequences of stress. An effective method of increasing such feelings of power and control is to be prepared for change." (Potter 159).

The Nature of Conflict and the Way of Strategy

Samurai traditions involving combat and strategy are naturally grounded in military thinking. Miyamoto Musashi, aside from being invincible in battle, also authored the classic strategy guide, [A Book of Five Rings](#), that enjoys prominence today

in business circles right along with Sun Tzu's Art of War. Musashi's book is literally divided into five sections. In the course of studying Malcolm X's life, speeches and autobiography, one could easily assume that he might have studied Musashi's work and adapted his style.

- The “Ground” book introduces the foundation of Musashi's no-nonsense approach to martial arts, leadership, and training using them in the metaphor of building a house. Malcolm X would have appreciated such an introduction because the idea of rooting and being grounded is a part of life strategy. The first chapter of his autobiography hits right on the mark to capture our attention. “When my mother was pregnant with me, she told me later, a party of hooded Ku Klux Klan riders galloped up to our home in Omaha, Nebraska, one night.” Right away the reader knows that Malcolm's life is not going to be a pleasant pastoral stroll.
- The “Water” book defines and gives an overview of Musashi's style, *Ni-ten ichi-ryu*, or "Two Heavens, One Style." While Musashi shares some basic techniques and fundamentals, Malcolm cannot describe his life so simply. Unlike Musashi who had the benefit of being in a culture that he could identify with to define himself, Malcolm X and millions of other African Americans are dropped into the strange brew of Americas' “melting pot” that nearly boils them alive. But Malcolm does share through the story of his life, the shift of his style: Mal-content to a man of faith.

- The “Fire” book references actions in the heat of battle, discussing specific battle tactics. Malcolm X reflects this in his description of his encounters with the media, along with his white and black enemies.
- The “Wind” book is a play on the Japanese writing character and can mean both "wind" and "martial arts style." In this book, Musashi criticizes other contemporary schools of fencing. Malcolm X has plenty to say about the U.S. government and white controlled society of his time.
- The “Void” book is a concise epilogue using an esoteric writing style to comment on the introspective mindset that a warrior needs. Malcolm’s connection to “True Islam” is the spark of his true elegance as a warrior. He grows beyond street brawling and political hatchet jobs. Malcolm X enters into the true realm where the warrior and man of faith mutually support one another.

(Art of War)

This classic book of strategy reflects lessons and ideas that Musashi taught to his students. Malcolm X’s legacy is that his influence is also being shared by those closest to him. In a biography on Malcolm’s wife Betty she speaks about his advice to her in the face of conflict; “Malcolm had warned that bitterness only debilitates. Wrath, he had counseled, would sap her creativity and devour her joy” (Rickford 275). One of his colleagues in the Organization for African-American Unity cites, “Tomorrow, he told us, would see turbulent environmental changes in the international system, and it is there that

Afro-Americans, other oppressed minorities, and the Anglo-American working class must and can act to free themselves” (Johnson 82-83). And even some leftist admirers (Clark 11-19) have expressed gratefulness to Malcolm for sharing his gift of learning and inspiration.

Harmony and Balance: the philosophical and religious roots of the samurai

The samurai enjoyed a wealthy and unique blend of philosophy and religion that guided, strengthened and enlightened them as they remained rooted in Japanese culture. “Shinto” gave them a base in antiquity from which to develop a cultural source for aesthetics that are distinctly Japanese, structure and ethics stem from Confucianism, a belief in natural order from Taoism and introspection from Zen Buddhism.

In an incident that transcended religious beliefs, Zen had played no part in the revenge of the Forty-Seven Ronin other than the coincidence that the place where Kira’s head was taken was a Soto Zen temple. Confucian ideas of filial piety and benevolence on the one hand and loyalty on the other were the motivations that drove them forward, and there was no argument as to where their duty lay in this classic blending of the enduring traditions of the samurai and the sacred.

(Turnbull 163)

With tolerance eventually even Christianity was woven into the culture of Japan.

A strong connection between the Forty-Seven Ronin and Malcolm X is that they exist at a time where they are far ahead of their contemporaries. “In an age when samurai

were government employees whose loyalty, once expressed so dramatically on the battlefield, had become reduced to turning up for work on time, both he and they were glorious anomalies. Far from being typical samurai of the age, the loyal retainers of Ako [The Forty-Seven Ronin] became famous because they were so different from almost all of their contemporaries” (Turnbull 163). If compared to Dr. King, Clayton Powell, Bayard Ruston or any of his other contemporaries Malcolm X stood out because he, like the Forty-Seven Ronin, began to transcend the obvious religious differences, taking the racial argument to a humanitarian level.

Islam

The discovery of “True Islam” for Malcolm X has a profound effect on his outlook towards humanity. It breathes a depth of compassion and understanding into him that astounds his followers and confounds his adversaries. What has come to light and become a revelation even in recent years is that the original doctrine of the Nation of Islam seems to be a misinterpreted version of mainstream Islam. So much so that traditional Islamist groups regularly denounce the Nation of Islam as being false. Some key points that differentiate the two groups are:

1. The Nation of Islam states that God appeared in the Person of Master W. Fard Muhammad as the Messiah of Christians and the Mahdi for Muslims. This is considered as blasphemy to both Sunni and Shi’a Muslims.
2. The Nation of Islam teaches that the Black man is the original man and that whites were produced by the Black man using a

special method of birth control. This is not validated by either the Sunni or Shi'a Muslims.

3. Sunni and Shi'a Muslims believe that Muhammad was the last of the messengers from Allah, that there would be none after him and all should follow Muhammad. The Nation of Islam believes that Elijah Muhammad was also a messenger taught by God in the Person of W.D. Fard. Sunni and Shi'a Muslims consider this another blasphemous belief.

(Al-Muhajabah)

When Malcolm X makes the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj), he discovers that the True Islam has beautiful truths that got clouded by the racial motivation of the Nation of Islam. His transformation led to this statement in his 1965 speech at Ford Auditorium:

And also in that religion, of the real religion of Islam -- when I was in the Black Muslim movement, I wasn't -- they didn't have the real religion of Islam in that movement. It was something else. And the real religion of Islam doesn't teach anyone to judge another human being by the color of his skin. The yardstick that is used by the Muslim to measure another man is not the man's color but the man's deeds, the man's conscious behavior, the man's intentions. And when you use that as a standard of measurement or judgment, you never go wrong.

(Malcolm-x .org)

How does True Islam transform Malcolm X? Let us consider the Five Pillars (Malcolm X.com) that most Muslims agree upon. The first is Faith. The declaration reads thusly for every Muslim: There is no god worthy of worship except God and Muhammad is His messenger. This declaration honors what many scholars, historians and theologians consider being one of the greatest acts of faith known to humanity. Muhammad receives the Truth and the Message from God. This faith in the Message carries Muhammad to victory over enemies who sought to put an end to early Islam.

The second pillar is Prayer. Dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and nightfall, Malcolm, not only during Hajj but in everyday life, witnessed how prayer formed the core of Muslim life in Muslim countries. And the “Call to Prayer” would serve as a constant reminder that the Nation of Islam beliefs about Elijah Muhammad and W.D. Fard aren’t acknowledged in traditional Islam. A common translation of the prayer states:

God is most great. God is most great.

God is most great. God is most great.

I testify that there is no god except God.

I testify that there is no god except God.

I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God.

I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God.

Come to prayer! Come to prayer!

Come to success (in this life and the Hereafter)!

Come to success!

God is most great. God is most great.

There is no god except God.

(Noaman Ali)

The third pillar is the 'Zakat.' Translated as both 'purification' and 'growth,' it refers to charity. Akin to the ideal of Christian charity, possessions and wealth are considered as belonging to God and that people are merely beneficiaries of Gods trust. So as an act of piety Muslims are encouraged to donate anonymously what they consider to be two and a half percent of their earnings. But even simple acts of kindness are considered just as worthy. We see here the foundation of forming a community. Sharing and caring for others is a proven plan for viability and sustainability for any group.

The fourth pillar is the Fast (Ramadan). Fasting is a means of purification from the material aspect of life, no need to chase after creature comforts as a constant goal. This is a conduit to reconnect with the Divine. A chance to focus on the beauty and blessing that God has already allowed and given.

The fifth pillar is Pilgrimage or Hajj. It was during Hajj that Malcolm found the true community and belonging he had been seeking all his life. His change was in attitude was considered so radical that he had to explain:

You're asking me "Didn't you say that now you accept white men as brothers?" Well, my answer is that in the Muslim world, I saw, I felt, and I wrote home how my thinking was broadened! Just as I wrote, I shared true, brotherly love with many white-complexioned Muslims who never gave a single thought to the race, or to the complexion, of another Muslim.

My pilgrimage broadened my scope. It blessed me with a new insight. In two weeks in the Holy Land, I saw what I never had seen in thirty-nine years here in America. I saw all races, all colors, -- blue-eyed blonds to black-skinned Africans -- in true brotherhood! In unity! Living as one! Worshipping as one! No segregationists -- no liberals; they would not have known how to interpret the meaning of those words.

In the past, yes, I have made sweeping indictments of all white people. I will never be guilty of that again -- as I know now that some white people are truly sincere, that some truly are capable of being brotherly toward a black man. The true Islam has shown me that a blanket indictment of all white people is as wrong as when whites make blanket indictments against blacks.

(Malcolm X Autobiography 368-369)

If you read Malcolm X's Autobiography as a true biography and not just a playbook for rhetoric, you can see all the clues that point to a masterful warrior and wandering wizard looking for a home. Islam gives Malcolm a set of values and guidelines just as the samurai warrior had a code and a style that gave them a place in the society of medieval Japan. Malcolm is gifted and powerful but, without a nuclear family, scattered extended family, government education system that never truly accepted him as human, failed relationships with women, forming a connection with criminals as a substitute family so he flails inwardly until finally he finds refuge with Elijah

Muhammad as a father figure that guides him in partly a Lord/Vassal and teacher/student relationship. Each of these stages sent Malcolm X on an emotional roller coaster until he peered past the veil of the dust of the world and found a home in True Islam. He found his home, but that didn't sate his spirit. The history of slavery remained an outrage as the unjust system of racial, social and economic inequality remained in place throughout American society. The formal institution of slavery disappeared but the lynchings and murders of African Americans didn't disappear. Malcolm X's connection with Islam did not magically stop the forces of racism, but what changed is that Malcolm X had a staging area he could rely on to muster an assault upon the racist establishment. He gained the solid spiritual grounding where he could establish roots in a welcoming community from which he could continue the fight against racism. With a truth he could believe in Malcolm's warrior spirit was free to be loyal to, honor, respect and have the courage to learn the truth of humanity.

FINAL CURVE

When you turn the corner

And you run into *yourself*

Then you know that you have turned

All the corners that are left.

(Langston Hughes 136)

Mystical Significance

True Islam provides Malcolm X a richness that he could never comprehend in the Nation of Islam. The mystical connection of true Islam with its daily religious practice offers something that is not found in the Nation of Islam. But before this point of spiritual awakening, Malcolm X acknowledged that Elijah Muhammad gave him a start in seeing a way to freedom from his old personality as “Detroit Red.” He states that after writing to Elijah Muhammad the first time, “Mr. Muhammad sent me a typed reply. It had an all but electrical effect upon me to see the signature of the ‘Messenger of Allah.’ After he welcomed me into the ‘true knowledge,’ he gave me something to think about. The black prisoner, he said, symbolized white society’s crime of keeping black men oppressed and deprived and ignorant, and unable to get decent jobs, turning them into criminals.” (Malcolm X Autobiography 172). This acknowledgment shows that Malcolm got much needed acceptance and an invitation to join the human race that held an opportunity to rise above racist oppression. But something was missing. The glue that defines successful religious and spiritual movements is universality. It is the appeal that others can join through conversion that makes a religious movement grow beyond its geographical boundaries. And it is this fact that is the Achilles Heel of the Nation of Islam. It is a black only organization that propagates black, African and African American superiority over whites. The Nation of Islam departs from the philosophy of W.E.B. Du Bois and takes the concept of race to the other edge of racial chaos where there is a role reversal in black and white racial identities instead of a level playing field.

Second, before going on to explain its connections and implications the definition of mysticism provided by William C. Chittick is needed. “In short, ‘mysticism,’ as I

would prefer to understand it, stresses the fact that many religious people have been seriously and intimately engaged with ultimate reality, or, at the very least, that they have been engaged with a quest for communion with that reality. In this sense, the word does not imply ‘vague speculation’ or ‘belief without foundation’ unless, of course, one takes the position-- common enough these days--that there is no such thing as ‘ultimate reality.’” (Chittick, par. 6) The ultimate reality of many religions is one truth that applies to all. Whether it is the Buddhist concept that we can escape pain and suffering or the common Christian belief that Christ is the way to salvation, the themes that connect them are that others can share the path. The issue with Christianity in America that opened the door for the Nation of Islam is that many Christian churches in America had a double standard when it came to minority membership. This was evident even in the twentieth century when a black man was denied access to worship at former President Jimmy Carter’s church due to “Jim Crow” racial barriers. President Carter left his family’s Southern Baptist roots due to other rigid creeds at odds with his personal beliefs as a Christian.

How does Islam address the “ultimate reality”? It is built right into the “second pillar” of Islam, prayer. From the testimonies of faith known in Islam as “*Shahadahs*” one need only reflect on the first one stating “there is no god but Allah.” The concept translated further is “there is no god but God.” William C. Chittick states “The first Shahadah is called *kalimat al-tawhid*, that is, ‘the sentence that asserts (God’s) unity’ (Murata Chittick Staff 49). It is this concept of unity that does not appear in the Nation of Islam in relation to non-blacks. Unity is a powerful concept it can bring natural diversity through inclusion. Yet like any powerful tool it has to be used with wisdom. The idea of

a “universal faith for all” is about as elusive as the concept of utopia. The concept that reality is God and having God as reality is a loop in logic that defies modern complexity. And to the world that has come to build its reality on material things the concept dissolves differences of race, economics and in some circles, sex. This mystic concept can prove maddening to a modern society filled with barriers that silo groups into neat little packages of sameness. But Islam carries with it a tradition of spiritual explorers that blazed the trail into the quiet void. These masters of the mystic path are Sufis. William James found his definition of Sufism from Al-Ghazzali, “The Science of the Sufis,” says the Moslem author, “aims at detaching the heart from all that is not God, and at giving to it for sole occupation the meditation of the divine being” (James 348). One of the major Sufi figures will be expounded upon later on. The main point of Islam is to connect to God what is lost in modern political and religious rhetoric, which is what Malcolm found. He found peace, the peace that the Sufis found that in the end this life is truly but a dream of shadows and that the true face of God lies beyond this material world. So he saw on his trip to Mecca that people are looking to connect to what is sacred. And if we look further all people are trying in their own way, no matter if they are or are not religious, to make that connection that will bring meaning to their lives. We all seek the truth of where we came from and where we are going as human beings. With this truth the warrior can be benevolent and acknowledge that others may just be misguided.

Spiritual Enlightenment

It is often said that “when the student is ready the teacher comes along.” And for Malcolm X, his journey to a more traditional understanding of Islam starts with Elijah Muhammad. Here Malcolm’s relationship to the samurai and the western European knight is where he is comparable to being an apprentice or squire. The most striking account by Malcolm X that can help any person starting out on a personal spiritual journey is, how after he hears from his family about the Nation of Islam, about avoiding pork and cigarettes, that the path often unfolds in a predestined manner (Malcolm X 158-159) “Later I would learn, when I had read and studied Islam a good deal, that, unconsciously, my first pre-Islamic submission had been manifested. I had experienced, for the first time, the Muslim teaching, ‘If you will take one step toward Allah – Allah will take two steps toward you.’ This leads Malcolm to further state in his autobiography how as he dissected the Christian religion to what effect the concept that Christianity with racial barriers meant. “I remember how, sometime later, reading the Bible in the Norfolk Prison Colony library, I came upon, then I read, over and over how Paul on the road to Damascus, upon hearing the voice of Christ, was so smitten that he was knocked off his horse, in a daze. I do not now, and I did not then, liken myself to Paul. But I do understand his experience” (Malcolm X 166). And most striking is his vision account while he prayed and struggled to reconcile his family ties with his brother Reginald who is suspended from the Nation of Islam along with his new home within the Nation of Islam:

It was the next night, as I lay on my bed, I suddenly, with a start, became aware of a man sitting beside me in my chair. He had on a

dark suit. I remember. I could see him as plainly as I see anyone I look at. He wasn't black, and he wasn't white. He was light-brown-skinned, an Asiatic cast of countenance, and he had oily black hair.

I looked right into his face.

I didn't get frightened. I knew I wasn't dreaming. I couldn't move, I didn't speak, and he didn't. I couldn't place him racially – other than that I knew he was non-European. I had no idea whatsoever who he was. He just sat there. Then, suddenly as he had come, he was gone.

(Malcolm X Autobiography 189-190)

Later Malcolm would come to believe that this “pre-vision” was of Master W. D. Fard. These accounts would sound mad or crazy if taken only in our modern secular understanding of the world but in the realm of religion, spirituality and theology; they represent “a call.” This call is recognized across the human experience. William James notes it in the collection The Varieties of Religious Experience in the chapter “Other Characteristics”:

The last aspect of the religious life which remains for me to touch upon is the fact that its manifestations so frequently connect themselves with the subconscious part of our existence.... You will in point of fact hardly find a religious leader of any kind in whose life there is no record of automatisms. I speak not merely of savage

priests and prophets, whose followers regard automatic utterance and action as by itself tantamount to inspiration, I speak of leaders of thought and subjects of intellectualized experience. Saint Paul had his visions, his ecstasies, his gift of tongues, small as was the importance he attached to the latter....They had these things, because they had exalted sensibility, and to such things persons of exalted sensibility are liable. In such liability there lie, however, consequences for theology. Beliefs are strengthened wherever automatisms corroborate them. Incursions from beyond the transmarginal region have a peculiar power to increase conviction. The inchoate sense of presence is infinitely stronger than conception, but strong as it may be, it is seldom equal to the evidence of hallucination. Saints who actually see or bear their Saviour reach the acme of assurance.” (James 411)

So the “pre-vision” of Malcolm X isn’t as crazy as it might seem. Putting aside what and how people feel about him he deserves to be placed in the context of the other religious seekers mentioned by William James above. The classical Sufi author Attar of Nishapur says it best in this poem:

LIGHT

The true lover finds the light only if, like the candle, he is his own fuel, consuming himself.

*Attar of Nishapur
(Shah71)*

This concept is important for continuing thought about whom Malcolm X was and his transformation into Malik El Shabazz. It is my belief that while Elijah Muhammad was a key figure in Malcolm's transformation, he did not complete Malcolm's true self and awareness. The same association can be seen today where Barak Obama is seen as "distancing himself" from his former pastor Reverend Wright. The reliance of confrontational and anger infused rhetoric can lose steam and sound hollow over time as hard line positions become dogmatic. Thus President Obama's speech on race reached out beyond past ills to talk about future solutions.

Another impressive piece of the Malcolm X/Elijah Muhammad relationship is that it was more than a dictator/follower relationship. It was in the beginning a classic master/disciple relationship. This relationship is crucial to the growth of individuals following any discipline. Countless examples can be drawn of its value from the history of the martial arts. The student is a seeker. A seeker of knowledge to attain a goal and the teacher is an experienced guide for the student. The teacher helps the student to gain confidence, clear confusion and to stand on their own. Malcolm's correspondence with Elijah Muhammad while he is in prison illustrates the basis of the teacher/student dynamic. In chapter eleven of his autobiography, Malcolm X talks about writing Elijah Muhammad and the response he received. "Mr. Muhammad sent me a typed reply. It had an all but electrical effect upon me to see the signature of the 'Messenger of Allah' (Malcolm X 172). Malcolm goes on to say "He told me to have courage. He even enclosed some money for me, a five-dollar bill" (Malcolm X 172). Here the teacher gives both acknowledgement and encouragement. The first trouble Malcolm runs into after receiving the "true knowledge" from Elijah Muhammad is a true test as Elijah

Muhammad becomes his guide through a rough patch of realization. Malcolm's brother Reginald was suspended from the Nation of Islam after an affair with a secretary at the New York Temple was discovered. Malcolm pleads his brother's case to Elijah Muhammad in correspondence and later that night, Malcolm X has the vision of who he believed later to be Master W. D. Fard. Malcolm receives a reply from Elijah Muhammad concerning his brother and his punishment: "If you once believed in the truth, and now you are beginning to doubt the truth, you didn't believe the truth in the first place. What could make you doubt the truth other than your own weak self?" (Malcolm X 190). Here the master leads the disciple through the waters of confusion. Malcolm may not have been led to the right island, but he was given a path out of the storm of doubt. Malcolm X's zeal for faith, nobleness in his work for the Nation of Islam and gift for organization made him a standout as a student of Elijah Muhammad. Moreover Malcolm was authentic, he had no desire but to belong and find salvation. Malcolm's loyalty, trust and respect for Elijah Muhammad, is equal to a knight's loyalty to the king and a samurai to his lord. Malcolm followed Elijah Muhammad into the fire of racial battles that had destroyed his family and belittled him. But with honor and loyalty he pressed on in the face of racist and social oppression knowing full well what could befall him if he lost once more to the white power structure of the time.

DISCIPLESHIP

With a Guide you may become truly Human.

Without a Guide you will remain mainly Animal

If you can still say: 'I could not submit to any man'

-- You are still worthless for the road.

But if you say: 'I wish to submit', in the wrong way

-- The road will never find you, and you are lost.

Zulfikar son of Jangi
(Shah 227-228)

Parting ways with a teacher, master, parent or friend is a gut wrenching experience if the relationship possessed any solid footing. "What is true of individuals everywhere remains true when the same people interrelate in the corporate world. There are times when a company begins to realize that the stereotypes, concepts, and paradigms on which it is based are beginning to age – and not gracefully. In some cases, the paradigms are completely obsolete" (De Brabandere 74). Some were horrified, others were probably gleeful and yet others were probably puzzled by the fact that Elijah Muhammad was eventually confronted with the evidence of his improper relationship with his secretaries and the children he bore with them. For Malcolm, this becomes the ultimate failure for his guide because it was personal. What did his teacher believe? Was the relationship with these women more important than the truth? As a knight his quest for truth under the Nation of Islam's banner becomes a fool's errand. He begins to find himself adrift in uncertainty and the samurai path of the ronin calls. His longing for spiritual connection would lead him to explore the world and thus he expanded his mind to embrace a global vision with his trip to Mecca and various African countries.

On a different level we must look at knowledge transmission and what it means. Being accepted as a student gives an undeniable sense of belonging. If you are a swordsman, either European or Asian, your skills are inherent of a certain style associated with your school. Michael Rosenbaum writes in Kata and the Transmission of

Knowledge, “Knowledge is power; this has never been as true as it is within the ranks of the warrior. The means to communicate and transmit knowledge has often been a deciding factor in the course of history” (Rosenbaum 53). Despite the failure of trust that would lead to a tragic outcome, Malcolm X’s and Elijah Muhammad’s relationship, at its height touched on the foundation that could have set the stage to be something great. The world would be a different place if master and disciple could work through their differences, but that was not the case and Malcolm X had to move on.

OBEDIENCE

The lowest form of obedience is performing actions for someone else. The high form of obedience is when one desists from behavior which one desires to carry out. The highest form of obedience is to be able to carry out no action at all. When this is possible, the other forms of obedience are also possible. Together they make up what people, ignorantly, imagine to be one single thing, ‘obedience’.

The first thing to learn is that what you have been accustomed to calling obedience is always either habit or servitude, whether it gives you pleasure or not.

Anisa Imtihani
(Shah 247)

Malcolm X’s transformational change in perspective is often described as something beyond belief by those who lived through the height of the civil rights era. But his change of heart is nothing new if you even look at solely Christian sources.

History provides ample examples, but some of the most well known are Saint Francis of Assisi who confronted his spiritual crisis after becoming disillusioned with a wealthy lifestyle, and Saint Augustine of Hippo whose early youth produced a son. Yet each of these men is recognized not for their sin, but for their tremendous commitment to their faith. Malcolm's acceptance of the reality that his mentor and guide, Elijah Muhammad, was very human set his feet on a transformative path. He could have lied for his leader but he understood that there is a higher calling in looking for salvation and that holding to the truth was the key.

An Answer of Jesus

Some Israelites reviled Jesus one day as he was walking through their part of the town.

But he answered by repeating prayers in their name.

Someone said to him:

'You prayed for these men, did you not feel incensed against them?'

He answered: 'I could spend only of what I had in my purse.'

- Attar of Nishapur (Shah 69)

Malcolm X changed with the wisdom he had gained. His heavy handed tactics were at the ready, but he had expanded his arsenal to include discernment of what and who true enemies are in addition to prudent use of a "big stick." If you grow up as an African American in the pre-civil rights and pre-Obama eras, your history of America will always be different from the mainstream politically correct and sanitized textbook

pictures with the decedents of slaves pasted into token spots. So to assume that Malcolm X would not being able to change would have pigeonholed him as a misguided black racist. But in denying him the capability of change, his critics along with all humanity, then would be trapped as leopards unable to change their spots. Our diversity and cultural sensitivity training/education would be a joke and become just a cheap way for public and private institutions and organizations to avoid lawsuits. No true change could or would happen. And the undercurrent of mutual influence between church and state would set the precedence where the children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, etc. of white supremacists and slave holders could never be trusted by anyone of color. And so another entrance would be built for the cycle of hatred. Yet Malcolm's enlightened change set the course for something else. While Dr. King found the "strength to love," along the same note but from a different angle, Malcolm X found the strength to reconcile. The warrior returns from the battlefield a true holy man and astonishes everyone who knew him before he left. And yet is it so strange? Many knights went on to become monks and many samurai went on to become Buddhist and Shinto priests. The warrior is not just a robotic killing machine always seeking battle. The warrior is a human being who after seeing the loss of life, even for a just cause, learns the hard way that life is something precious and fragile.

Once approached by a white co-ed who asked, "What can I do to help?" Malcolm X replied, "Nothing." (Malcolm X Autobiography 292). The exchange hits on several deep levels from Malcolm's past. It is not just someone white approaching him, but a white woman. His experience would have been to remember that it was a white woman who helped break up his home after the death of his father, a white woman who helped

raise him as a “nigger” and a white woman who abandons him once he is incarcerated. But Malcolm changes. His trip to Mecca not only shows him that whites can be brothers and sisters of true Islam, but he finds whites helping blacks in Africa and finds whites in Britain who hear him out on his perspective and experiences. Malcolm isn’t using change and transformation as a cheap parlor trick for personal gain or political power. He has experienced a change of the heart. Changing the heart is often attached to humanist terms, but in Islam the Sufi tradition expresses it best as the “knowing heart.” And so like Jesus, Malcolm is only spending what he has “in his purse.” And thus, like the practice of Buddhist thought and philosophy that states you can change “mind,” Malcolm changed his and was able to experience humanity to its fullest.

Just as in Langston Hughes’ poem noted earlier, Malcolm takes a final curve that leads him to a leap of faith. It is the very leap that any human being with a religious/spiritual core has to take. Kabir Helminski in his book the The Knowing Heart: A Sufi Path of Transformation points out that “We cannot afford to live much longer in denial of the facts: that we are destructive to the planet and to ourselves. Nor can we afford to lose our awareness of the energy at the core of nature, the power of unconditional, spiritual unity, which is experienced by the knowing heart as love” (Helminski 11). Malcolm X, in such a situation where his relationship ended awkwardly with Elijah Muhammad, would need to make a change. Malcolm chose to explore for the answers inwardly instead of seeking approval from others leading to the birth of his heart as an elegant warrior. In discovering and believing in the depth of his own humanity he came to understand that decency and respect for others was the best path for change.

Rumi and the Heart

QUIETNESS

Inside this new love, die.

Your way begins on the other side.

Become the sky.

Take an axe to the prison wall.

Escape.

Walk out like someone suddenly born into color.

Do it now.

You're covered with thick cloud.

Slide out the side. Die,

and be quiet. Quietness is the surest sign

that you've died.

Your old life was a frantic running

from silence.

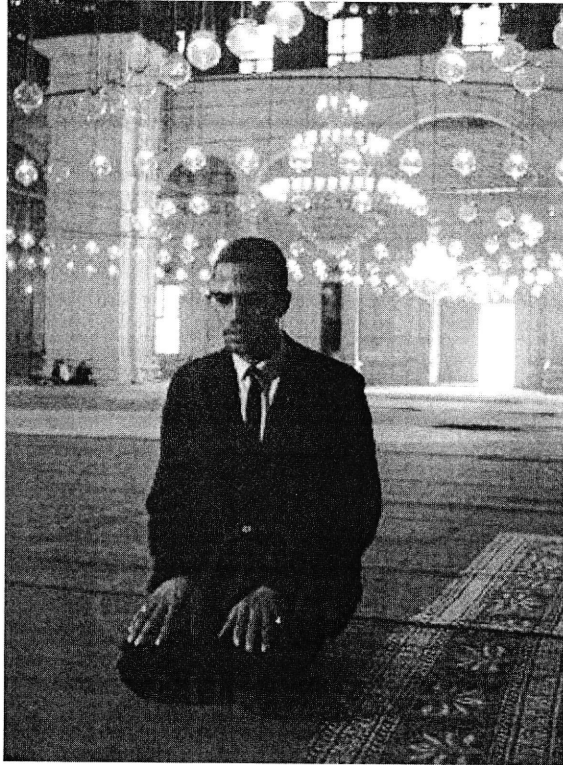
The speechless full moon

comes out now.

Rumi
(Barks 22)

After the Koran, the numerous and wondrous work of the Sufi poet Rumi is read by many Muslims. Born in 1207, this mystical poet has given readers everywhere a chance to experience the love and intoxication of the Divine without the need of a human

lover or the need to get inebriated with alcohol. I do not know if Malcolm X ever got a chance to touch the poetry of Rumi, but I am certain that his awakened heart and mind found what many Sufis have found: the Peace and Love beyond this world. There is a photo of Malcolm X in prayer at the Mosque of Muhammad Ali during a trip to Cairo in September 1964 taken by John Launois (Davis 127). It was taken after his trip to Mecca. In the photo, Malcolm X is kneeling in prayer within a virtually deserted mosque. It must have been a wonderful photo opportunity for Mr. Launois. What is striking is its sense of stillness and timelessness. This picture of prayer also delivers a perspective of Malcolm X as a true believer. Unlike earlier pictures, there aren't armies of followers or reporters. Just a human being opening himself up to prayer, the picture is so universal and beautifully simple that either friend or foe cannot doubt his devout intensity. In samurai tradition the same warriors that take to the battlefield are the same warriors who enjoy gardens, appreciate and make music and art. They are people who also find solace and unity in performing the tea ceremony.



(Launois)

The trip to Mecca marked a turning point for Malcolm X because he opens to being more authentic as a leader as he gains spiritual authenticity. The self-consciousness and pretense that kept denying the truth about the Nation of Islam, the Civil Rights movement and even a woman's place in modern society dissipated. With an awakened heart, Malcolm becomes an awakened warrior and his elegance emerges as elegant modesty. It does not connect with people at first because throughout the first part of his autobiography the reader is gripped and captivated by the racial conflict that rips through his life. Malcolm is a survivor of life at the edge within the context of his time. He is genuine in his path to truth and mature enough to know there is no shortcut to the truth. The truth he encounters is at the very edge of mysticism and he learns that he is only a drop in the ocean of life. That is what he encounters at Mecca, that racial hatred is

a powerful tool to embolden and drive a human being to survival. But racial hatred, the subordination of one human being to another in a social context, and the modeling of truth to fit a lie are poor weapons against our need to connect to one another on a human level with respect. The power of truth can be seen in Malcolm's account of meeting and talking with Dr. Omar Azzam in Jedda.

The more we talked, the more his vast reservoir of knowledge and its variety seemed unlimited. He spoke of the racial lineage of the descendants of Muhammad the Prophet, and he showed how they were both black and white. He also pointed out how color, the complexities of color, and the problems of color which exist in the Muslim world, exist only where, and to the extent that, that area of the Muslim world has been influenced by the West. He said that if one encountered any differences based on attitude toward color, this directly reflected the degree of Western influence.

(Malcolm X 366)

As he approaches the mosque, Malcolm finds himself even more of a drop in a much larger reality. "Carrying my sandals, I followed the Mutawaf. Then I saw the Ka 'ba, a huge black stone house in the middle of the Great Mosque. It was being circumambulated by thousands upon thousands of praying pilgrims, both sexes, and every size, shape, color, and race in the world" (Malcolm X 342). With these experiences, among the others Malcolm had during his travels, his old construct of reality

is destroyed. But he does not fall into a nihilistic void where life is meaningless. He approaches human completion by acknowledging spiritual kinship with all Muslims and in his return home he sees that from this context he might possibly find some way to connect to non-Muslims as well. “I understood it better now than I had before. In the Holy World, away from America’s race problem, was the first time I had ever been able to think clearly about the basic divisions of white people in America, and how their attitudes and their motives related to, and affected Negroes. In my thirty-nine years on this earth, the Holy City of Mecca had been the first time I had ever stood before the Creator of All and felt like a complete human being” (Malcolm X 372).

Leadership Styles and Comparisons

Wash yourself clean. With simplicity, with humility, with
indifference to everything but right and wrong.
Care for other human beings. Follow God.

Meditations
Marcus Aurelius
Book Seven, entry 31
(Hays 90)

Styles

Leadership styles are hot buzz words within our new global economy experience. And with uncharted territory comes the increased creation of new leadership categories for each new situation. There are four basic types of leadership are often injected into leadership discussions. They are the autocratic, bureaucratic, democratic and Laissez-

faire leadership modes. And these four basic styles were all in operation during the life of Malcolm X, but just as globalization is reshaping our world today, racial awareness in the context of civil rights was beginning to reshape the racial paradigm within which Malcolm X lived. And so new styles emerged and were validated as they were put into practice. Charismatic, transformational, transactional, creative, corrective, change, intelligent, pedagogical, servant, bridging, multicultural and purposeful leadership styles are all considered separate; but Malcolm X broke ground in leadership evolution by employing principles from each of these styles. And thus he achieved a kind of resonant leadership, yet I hesitate to stash Malcolm X into a neat leadership category. “Malcolm X’s enormous popularity now lies in the resilience of his myth and in our own need for such a myth more than in the teaching and understanding of his work...Malcolm X was himself the originator of this tale of transformation and, long before he became widely known, he used the mythic aspects of his own life as a tool with which to teach” (Davis 8). So I have chosen to embrace the idea of Malcolm X as an ‘elegant’ leader. He was one who addressed the situation and needs of others just like the dancer who changes his moves to fit the terrain on which he must dance, the writer who changes his work to reflect the mood or task at hand and the warrior who must change a movement to adapt, intercept or anticipate an enemies attack.

The Politics of Self Destruction

Malcolm was incarcerated for burglary that exposed his relationship with a white woman. Despite the odds Malcolm X avoided the pitfalls of exposure to prison life that usually leads to a criminal path where he could have made a career of cycling in and out of prison. For Malcolm that meant as he started working on himself and grew into his

identity, strengthened by true Islam, he gained new skills and insights from his transformation. He developed a heightened sense of personal responsibility and accountability that allowed him to follow a high standard of moral and ethical behavior. By starting with his own self development and realizing who he was, he easily realized and sized up who would be friend or foe.

One who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be in danger in a hundred battles.

One who does not know the enemy but knows himself will sometimes win, sometimes lose.

One who does not know the enemy and does not know himself will be in danger in every battle.

Sun Tzu (Chapter 3)

To achieve this self knowledge and wisdom, Malcolm would move beyond the confrontational rhetoric from his early days with Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam and build a bridge of thought for sustainable solutions. His travel and study abroad gave him the overview of a big picture that he could not see as Malcolm Little in Michigan or as a minister in the Nation of Islam. Like a worker who finds a better company and opportunities to grow, Malcolm X becomes a seeker and traveler in search of his lost soul. When he finds it, he is truly transformed. "Then he breathed upon me and took away the trembling from my limbs and caused me to stand upon my feet. And after that, he said not much but that we should meet again, and I must go further up and further in." (Lewis 165).

Avoiding disaster

A real life comparison can be drawn from Arnold Beichman's article The Politics of Personal Self-Destruction in the Policy Review where he details the downfalls of both Adlai Stevenson and Joseph McCarthy, describing them both as "anti-leaders." Malcolm X was in the same position as these two men in his confrontation with the Nation of Islam. Yet while Adlai Stevenson is a distant memory and Joseph McCarthy can only get credit as "tail-gunner Joe," Malcolm rose so far above his opposition with class and elegance that his critics and naysayers have come to embrace him for being ahead of his time. While Adlai Stevenson and Senator McCarthy were poles apart ideologically they succumbed to the tactics of self-destruction:

Adlai Stevenson is an excellent example of the anti-leader. The qualities that made him one of the most attractive political personalities of twentieth-century American history — intellect, wryness, self-deflation, uncertainty, humor, and, above all, charisma — were the very qualities that forced him in the end to accept as dismal a fate as was ever accorded any man who has reached out for greatness. (Beichman 64)

Above is the illustration of a liberal minded leader that in the end was forced to battle President Kennedy, the man who had appointed Stevenson to the post of U.N. Ambassador. And instead of resigning to realigning his career in calmer waters, he chose to play power politics in the media and with foreign policy that was in his own self interest.

Adlai Stevenson was the winner of the Democratic nomination for president in 1952 and 1956. After losing both times he was not able to make up his mind to run again in 1960. He was offered a deal to be appointed secretary of state if he supported the nomination John F. Kennedy for president, but he rejected the offer. This rejection set up a cold relationship with the Kennedy White House, so his appointment to United Nations was used to embarrass him. Stevenson was lied to about the Bay of Pigs incident which made him look like a precursor to Colin Powell and the weapons of mass destruction. And false accusations in the press about his involvement in the Cuban Missile Crisis were leaked to the press. President Kennedy's closest advisors felt that Stevenson was a target that needed to be destroyed because he stayed on in the post even after it was made clear that he was no longer wanted in the administration.

McCarthy was a one-man movement who said what he pleased about anyone he pleased. While it may seem hyperbolic to suggest sedition, he was really seditious about the values of a democratic society. McCarthy in his four years became an extra-legal sharer of powers with the coordinate executive branch. (Beichman 71)

Senator McCarthy is someone described as having no lust for power but an effective wielder of it to inspire fear and hatred. At the point in history when America was at its peak coming off of the Second World War, McCarthy was a black-eye on American liberty. Eventually he reached a junction in his career where he could have exited the stage of politics quietly and avoided a censure vote by his colleagues but his uncompromising nature drove his career right off a cliff.

Malcolm X dodges the fates of these two leaders in that he accepted a higher calling than just power seeking so he never thinks to go head to head with Elijah Muhammad. The true warrior knows that the ultimate opponent is himself. Like the knight that faces his darkest temptation that threatens his oath or the samurai who knows that discipline and adherence to training defines his character, Malcolm knows the only one really standing in his way is himself. And in a real sense, I feel he truly wanted to share with his early master the jewels he had found on the road to Mecca. Yet he found much like Stevenson that others surrounding Elijah Muhammad felt he was too dangerous and ambitious so the bridge was set on fire by others and not Malcolm X. Also, Malcolm X came to understand the meaning of true success. And unlike Joseph McCarthy, he did not continue to let hatred drive and fuel him. He showed definite changes in his tone and understanding of issues. He grew to understand the concept of race within spiritual truth and freedom. Malcolm began to acknowledge and understand before his death that women are people and fellow seekers of truth and justice, not mere servants to men.

In today's political arena the very notion of a roguish Malcolm Little becoming the powerful Malcolm X is often met with the same amount of skepticism as it was during the period he lived. His growth and maturing perspective on the subject of women, the Nation of Islam vs. True Islam and civil rights minus "hate speech against white devils" evolving into human rights, would meet and have to deal with the term "flip-flop". But what John Kerry and Malcolm X could both state is that the term "flip-flop" is incorrectly used. "We wage war in order to have peace. Now, the practical virtues activated in political and military pursuits, but the actions involved in these

pursuits seem to be un-leisurely. This is completely true of military pursuits, since no one chooses to wage war or foments war for the sake of war; he would have to be utterly bloodthirsty if he were to make enemies of his friends simply in order to have battle and slaughter.” (Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics 1177b 5-12) What a true leader experiences often is “realization.” It is this realization that causes a leader to accept the responsibility of “mea culpa” for past actions and beliefs that are found and accepted as being incorrect. People who follow such leaders will find that they are often ahead of the curve as a society, community, company and country.

Ground in Today’s World

He (Muhammad) reportedly spent hours devising tactical and political stratagems, and once remarked that “all war is cunning,” reminding modern analysts of Sun Tzu’s dictum, “all war is deception.” In his thinking and application of force Muhammad was a combination of Karl von Clausewitz and Niccolo Machiavelli, for he always employed force in the service of political goals. An astute grand strategist, he used nonmilitary methods (alliance building, political assassination, bribery, religious appeals, mercy, and calculated butchery) to strengthen his long-term position, sometimes even at the expense of short-term military considerations. (Gabriel 6)

Often, being the curse of history, it is stated and questioned constantly as to whether or not any historical figure including Malcolm X has any relevancy in today’s

world. Malcolm X is more relevant today than ever because he was ahead of his time. Malcolm X had the ability to innovate and master complex concepts and apply them with a strategic deftness to any situation. He read widely during his period of incarceration and quite possibly studied not only the fundamentals of logic, but rhetoric as well. While Malcolm X never got a major in philosophy or political science, on the ground experience often trumps theory. Malcolm's masterful application of rhetorical skill and critical thinking make him just as relevant as any leader or faux leader living today.

Malcolm's use of critical thinking in actual combative situations is remarkable. He deftly applies the principles of rhetoric in classic fashion. The three divisions of oratory: political, forensic and the ceremonial oratory of display are masterfully handled as verbal weaponry in the hands of Malcolm. He hit the civil rights movement politically speaking to urge America to not avoid the issue of black poverty and to do something more than just make a public showing of minimum civil rights to save face with the international community. His forensic speaking delivered devastating attacks on the tradition of America's white supremacy matrix that never disappeared even with the initial outcome of the civil war. His ceremonial display of oratory borrowed heavily from the black American church to strike a chord that resonated with everyone in the black community on the subject of injustice, mistreatment and foul play by the mindless white mainstream. His skills were well evident when he was a participant in a round table discussion on the June 12, 1963 during a special episode of the television program Open Mind entitled: Race Relations in Crisis. With the focus of the discussion focused on American racial issues, Malcolm opened up in full force against the softer racial reprimands that Alan Morrison, Wyatt Tee Walker and James Farmer wanted to present.

In another discussion on race he went one on one with acknowledged leaders such as James Baldwin and Bayard Rustin. And he even held his own on foreign soil at an Oxford University debate. Malcolm lent a sense of urgency to the racial struggle of African Americans that was missing from the main civil rights drive.

The philosophical tools of logic were well understood by Malcolm X. His early arguments about whites, though incorrect, follow the rules of logic with the information he was given. But as a warrior who seeks the truth and will ultimately follow the path of the truth teller, he brings fierceness to his arguments. Instead of a high concept comedy that starts with a plausible premise about race and identity, he and many other African Americans are steered toward tragedy, but his growth in critical thinking can be obviously seen in his understanding of the Nation of Islam after basically using *reductio ad absurdum* to dissect its' inconsistencies once learning more about traditional Islam. "The high-concept comedy then follows through the logical consequences of that premise to its (we hope) hilarious conclusions; the philosopher follows through the logic of the premises to their absurd conclusion." (Baggini and Fosl 117). He was able to stabilize the inductive force of the Nation of Islam's arguments about their version of God and Islam by balancing them with deductive validity. "People always tell us that we can learn from our mistakes; and yet without critical thinking skills in place, people misinterpret the lessons and create even more mistakes." (Boast and Martin 77). Malcolm X possessed a tool that was essential to his transformation but takes considerable courage to wield and that tool is a commitment to the truth. "Knowing the truth, good or bad, is a value in itself. No matter how elusive, exciting, daunting, disappointing, useful, complex, humbling, ugly, ambiguous, or inconvenient, intellectual honesty and integrity

compel us to value truth for its own sake. Despite natural pain that comes with the loss of cherished myth, truth itself is both a goal and a starting point” (Hindes 14). Here again we see Malcolm as a warrior who delves into path of the holy man and scholar to discover who and what he really needs to defeat. He no longer wishes to be a brute swinging wildly at every person who is white but a warrior who hammers out justice and truth against racism.

Simplicity is often overlooked in how Malcolm X proceeded with his life after obtaining discipline from Islamic thought. In taekwondo the tenets of behavior each student is to follow are: courtesy, integrity, self-control, perseverance and indomitable spirit. As the well known stresses of racism and the effect it had on African American leaders of the civil rights are acknowledged, Malcolm X coming from a troubled background, kept his focus; kept searching to find his role in a racist society and hit his stride once he committed to taking the path to something higher than himself. Many leaders of middle class backgrounds found themselves much more vulnerable than anyone thought to vices. Even with his house bombed and under constant threat, Malcolm X maintained the calmness and presence of mind not to lash out blindly at everyone. He remained focused on his goal of building a stable African American organization that could reach out and build bridges with other groups interested in civil and human rights. “Between the warrior and the holy man lies the battlefield. And it is to the battlefield that the holy man in his compassion returns. There the realization of the true nature of the world and mankind is made clear, and those who have experienced enlightenment in this way bear witness before other people” (Thornton 49).

Organizational Development

There is a pivotal scene in Spike Lee's movie on Malcolm X when he organizes an assembly of fellow Black Muslim males to march and confront the police after the beating of a Black Muslim male. The confrontation was a classical military maneuver in a show of strength without provocation that led the unprepared police authority to listen and allow the injured man to get medical attention which was easier than getting into a major battle with a large number of males of unknown tactical ability. The question is how did a person with some pretty big roadblocks in life become such a well honed leader? One need only look at his criminal past where he learned how others survived in the black culture of the times.

During the time when blacks were at their highest rung as far as wealth in America yet at the same class position as when they were freed from slavery, who were the closest to being truly free from the social shackles of slavery? Often they were criminals, from drug dealers to number runners, operating outside the established order of society. They made their own rules, operating by the "golden" rule -- where the one who had the gold makes the rules. In the history of crime, it is also well known that the authorities are vulnerable to bribery. With his biological family fragmented, Malcolm X needed to connect with different living role models to breathe new life into his identity.

First, as "Cincinnati Red" Malcolm was able to find success as a criminal apprentice with a caring mentor who became a father figure until they parted ways. Once on his own Malcolm X took what he had learned and applied it to forming his own criminal network. Though very successful in tactical operation his operation suffered a betrayal that led to his incarceration. While unsuccessful at becoming a sustainable

criminal element on his own, he demonstrated the basic building blocks of leadership, leading by example, having a vision and giving direction.

When thinking about Malcolm's life and his dealings with the Nation of Islam, it is amazing to see his influence in organizing its' growth in membership and recognition. Muhammad's intelligence service eventually rivaled that of Byzantium and Persia, especially when it came to political information. Malcolm X mirrors this ancient practice in his building of mosques and growth of membership for the Nation of Islam. He led the way as activist, lecturer, and communication outreach and community rally head. His example is pertinent today because governments, companies and societies are facing the challenge of understanding globalization. Malcolm X was ahead of his time in that he realized that a global paradigm shift was the way of the future and he became an early practitioner of 'organizational development'. While it is assumed that he was a blind follower of Elijah Muhammad devoted to a classic hierarchal model based on the traditional "king of the hill" pyramid model, Malcolm X's sharing and spreading the message of the Nation of Islam was a more networked model based on his understanding of the Nation's teachings. In the networked model that Malcolm practiced, Elijah Muhammad sat in the center as Malcolm grew an ever widening circle of connections around him as Allah's messenger. In following a pattern as a teacher and one who wanted to share knowledge, Malcolm X was captured in a Gordon Parks photo teaching 'husbandry' where ultimately the path leads to God. (Davis 70). Even in a heavily structured organization such as the Nation of Islam the sharing of information toward a mutual goal of finding reward in life was the key to not just becoming another empty bureaucratic power structure.

Later, Malcolm X would use the network model to try and build the Organization of Afro-American Unity that would grow by reaching out to other groups and organizations. In discussing his method and leadership, William W. Sales Jr. points out that “Malcolm X took advantage of the traditional ways in which Black people communicated political attitudes. He understood the importance of apparently informal encounters in influencing people’s politics. Malcolm’s leadership style allowed him information about the mood and condition of the ghetto masses and to react to his analysis of what was going on in the community, the country, and the world” (Sales 57). Malcolm’s style of elegant leadership allowed him to see what proponents of systems thinking call the “feedback loops” in the social process and who racism impacted the system beyond the black community. He is the warrior who works with the people, learning from them instead of just estimating from his position. The central focus of his model was to connect groups and individuals in a dialogue of human rights. He had moved beyond the civil rights movement that was a key to the freedom of black Americans from racist oppression. And he, like Dr. King, had seen that humanity needed help around the globe. The preamble of the Program of the Organization of Afro-American Unity that Malcolm X worked on with his allies gives an excellent example of his grasp of organizational structure:

Pledging unity...

Promoting justice...

Transcending compromise...

We, Afro-Americans, people who originated in Africa and now reside in America, speak out against the slavery and oppression inflicted upon us by this racist power structure. We offer to downtrodden Afro-American people courses of action that will conquer oppression, relieve suffering, and convert meaningless struggle into meaningful action.

Confident that our purpose will be achieved, we Afro-Americans from all walks of life make the following known:

(Malcolm X.org)

By understanding how informal communication works within the context of society and larger group systems, Malcolm X demonstrated the basic principles of small unit leadership that is practiced in the military. They can be summed up in ‘doing the “Right” things’, developing people, teamwork and utilizing all levels of skill for teamwork. Malcolm X is also a leadership example of how to; listen, process information, communicate, be a self-starter, plan, handle time management, setting standards, motivate others, handling fear and asking the right questions.

Conclusion

Those who believed and those who suffered exile and fought (and strove and struggled) in the path of Allah – they have the hope of the Mercy of Allah: and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

(The Holy Quran, The Heifer, Section 27)

Malcolm X has much to offer the world today, by being the example of an “elegant warrior.” The elegant warrior is the one who returns from battle forever changed. The elegant warrior is one who lives the martial way each day and at the same time dwells within the sacred. The elegant warrior is an enigma to friends and foes. As a warrior and seeker of truth he possesses the means to destroy with both brute force and the content of his character. But he also possesses the strength to build bridges of trust and the integrity to maintain relationships. Beyond the dynamics of race and religion, Malcolm X offers a human based liberation theology that individuals can carry with them anywhere. And as an “elegant warrior” his leadership skills were on par with the many political, business and military leaders. He was ahead of his time by being an authentic truth-teller who looked reality right in face. Malcolm X did not compromise his identity, ethics or spiritual understanding once his heart opened to the truth. He confidently held to being true to his search for meaning, even if his earlier life choices and tactics alienated others. Towards the end of his life he reached out to build bridges and dialogue, not just to “play nice” but to do the right thing for the future of American and international race relations. To see him only as a belligerent warrior and disillusioned

religious hack would miss the growth and maturity that Malcolm X demonstrated as an elegant leader.

African American wizards and warriors have always had the ability to discern the true meaning of actions and events. While they acknowledge the emotions and immediacy of living in a racist environment they are able to see beyond present situations. As we still deal with racial issues in America often the topic arises of what Malcolm X would do. If he were alive today Malcolm X would be astonished by five events that would embolden and shake him to the foundation of his warrior's core and challenge his faith. The first event would be the rise of technology and its contribution to social complexity. He would be astonished that he could actually run his own website and blog, reaching millions of people over the internet with his message and story. He could preempt the media and firing back at his enemies via the internet. But at the same time he would be frustrated that racism, sexism and violence are equally proliferated in the online sphere.

Second would be the unfolding of 9/11, that event would be grievous to him as it is to so many Muslims in America who are still paying the price due to the actions of terrorists. A new form of fear and discrimination has touched and hindered anyone in America who is of Arab descent. The level of fear has been so high that other minority groups in America have been swept into proving their nationality and racial identity. For example, the religious followers of Sikhism have been wrongly identified for being Arab when they are from India, merely because part of their cultural dress includes wearing a turban.

The third event would be the resulting Iraq war and “global war on terror.”

Fanatical fundamentalists play right into the hands of materialistic power brokers using the terrorist acts and the fear they generate to deceive the mainstream public into giving up rights to privacy and freedom. Many governments around the world have altered democracy and transformed it into a gangster style protection racket in the name of national security. Fear rules the day and whatever message a radical group is trying to voice without violence is lost in the classic “Us vs. Them” game play where communication consists of taunts and “official positions.” It was this same mindset that dominated the politics of race in Malcolm’s time and to some extent still lingers in the discussion of racial division in America today. The fourth event in today’s world that has astonished many has been the realization that Islam has the largest following of any religion in the world today. Malik El Shabazz would have been overjoyed with such a fact. But such news is bitter sweet. Islam has a skeleton in its closet and that is the Sunni/Shia split. The dispute left the confines of historical and theological disagreement to outright bloodshed on the streets of Iraq. Not only is it sad for humanity as a human conflict but some part of it strikes at the heart of many religious disputes. There is something that resonates with any religious and spiritual seeker about the Five Pillars of Islam that isn’t radical or threatening and yet people of the same faith are in violent conflict with each other. It echoes the conflict between Catholics and Lutherans which has taken centuries to soften. The fifth event would be the rise of political power for African Americans. The path Malcolm and many other civil rights activists traveled has led to a string of political successes for African American mayors, governors, senators, congressmen, judges, CEOs and high ranking military personnel, now that has

culminated in Barack Obama who ran a progressive and solid campaign, winning the Democratic Party's nomination and ultimately becoming the first African American president elect. But like all seekers who reach the summit of the mountain top, he would find a valley below where many African Americans continue to struggle with racism, poverty and crime. Malcolm as a leader in today's world, embracing both the wizard and warrior ethos, would be able to understand that the world is comprised of human complexity. And it is that very complexity that makes us diverse and unique is also the same complexity that gives birth to our conflict and frustration with one another. Malcolm as a warrior would understand the need for people to defend their positions and identities but at the same time as a wizard he would offer magnanimously the experience of true peace that he found in his journey to true Islam.

Two Wolves: A Cherokee Teaching

An elderly Cherokee Native American was teaching his grandchildren about life...

He said to them, "A fight is going on inside me, it is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves.

One wolf is evil -- he is fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, competition, superiority, and ego.

The other is good---he is joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.

This same fight is going on inside you, and inside every other person, too."

They thought about it for a minute and then one child asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The old Cherokee simply replied: "The one you feed"

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