

Description: The story of one of the most prominent African-American revolutionary figure's discovery of true Islam, and how it resolves the problem of racism: Part 2: A new man with a new message.

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Published on 16 Jan 2006 - Last modified on 31 Jul 2006

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The Oneness of Man under One God

It was during his pilgrimage that he began to write some letters to his loyal assistants at the newly formed Muslim Mosque in Harlem. He asked that his letter be duplicated and distributed to the press:

"Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and the overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is practiced by people of all colors and races here in this ancient Holy Land, the House of Abraham, Muhammad, and all the other Prophets of the Holy Scriptures. For the past week, I have been utterly speechless and spellbound by the graciousness I see displayed all around me by people of all colors...

"You may be shocked by these words coming from me. But on this pilgrimage, what I have seen, and experienced, has forced me to rearrange much of my thought-patterns previously held, and to toss aside some of my previous conclusions. This was not too difficult for me. Despite my firm convictions, I have always been a man who tries to face facts, and to accept the reality of life as new experience and new knowledge unfolds it. I have always kept an open mind, which necessary to the flexibility that must go hand in hand with every form of intelligent search for truth.

"During the past eleven days here in the Muslim world, I have eaten from the same plate, drunk from the same glass, and slept in the same bed (or on the same rug) - while praying to the same God - with fellow Muslims, whose eyes were the bluest of blue, whose hair was the blondest of blond, and whose skin was the whitest of white. And in the words and in the actions and in the deeds of the "white" Muslims, I felt the same sincerity that I felt among the black African Muslims of Nigeria, Sudan, and Ghana.

"We were truly all the same (brothers) -- because their belief in one God had removed the "white" from their minds, the 'white' from their behavior, and the 'white' from their attitude.

"I could see from this, that perhaps if white Americans could accept the Oneness of God, then perhaps, too, they could accept in reality the Oneness of Man - and cease to measure, and hinder, and harm others in terms of their "differences" in color.

"With racism plaguing America like an incurable cancer, the so-called "Christian"

white American heart should be more receptive to a proven solution to such a destructive problem. Perhaps it could be in time to save America from imminent disaster -- the same destruction brought upon Germany by racism that eventually destroyed the Germans themselves.

"They asked me what about the Hajj had impressed me the most. . . . I said, "The brotherhood! The people of all races, color, from all over the world coming together as one! It has proved to me the power of the One God. . . . All ate as one, and slept as one. Everything about the pilgrimage atmosphere accented the Oneness of Man under One God."

Malcolm returned from the pilgrimage as El-Hajj Malik al-Shabazz. He was afire with new spiritual insight. For him, the struggle had evolved from the civil rights struggle of a nationalist to the human rights struggle of an internationalist and humanitarian.

After the Pilgrimage

White reporters and others were eager to learn about El-Hajj Malik's newly-formed opinions concerning themselves. They hardly believed that the man who had preached against them for so many years could suddenly turn around and call them brothers. To these people El-Hajj Malik had this to say:

"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."

To the blacks who increasingly looked to him as a leader, El-Hajj Malik preached a new message, quite the opposite of what he had been preaching as a minister in the Nation of Islam:

"True Islam taught me that it takes all of the religious, political, economic, psychological, and racial ingredients, or characteristics, to make the Human Family and the Human Society complete.

"I said to my Harlem street audiences that only when mankind would submit to the

One God who created all - only then would mankind even approach the "peace" of which so much talk could be heard...but toward which so little action was seen."

Too Dangerous to Last

El-Hajj Malik's new universalistic message was the U.S. establishment's worst nightmare. Not only was he appealing to the black masses, but to intellectuals of all races and colors. Now he was consistently demonized by the press as "advocating violence" and being "militant," although in actuality he and Dr. Martin Luther King were moving closer together in outlook:

"The goal has always been the same, with the approaches to it as different as mine and Dr. Martin Luther King's non-violent marching, that dramatizes the brutality and the evil of the white man against defenseless blacks. And in the racial climate of this country today, it is anybody's guess which of the "extremes" in approach to the black man's problems might personally meet a fatal catastrophe first -- 'non-violent' Dr. King, or so-called 'violent' me."

El-Hajj Malik knew full well that he was a target of many groups. In spite of this, he was never afraid to say what he had to say when he had to say it. As a sort of epitaph at the end of his autobiography, he says:

"I know that societies often have killed the people who have helped to change those societies. And if I can die having brought any light, having exposed any meaningful truth that will help to destroy the racist cancer that is malignant in the body of America - then, all of the credit is due to God. Only the mistakes have been mine."

The Legacy of Malcolm X

Although El-Hajj Malik knew that he was a target for assassination, he accepted this fact without requesting police protection. On February 21, 1965, while preparing to give a speech at a New York hotel, he was shot by three black men. He was three months short of forty. While it is clear that the Nation of Islam had something to do with the assassination, many people believe there was more than one organization involved. The FBI, known for its anti-black movement tendency, has been suggested as an accomplice. We may never know for sure who was behind El-Hajj Malik's murder, or, for that matter, the murder of other national leaders in the early 1960s.

Malcolm X's life has affected Americans in many important ways. African-Americans' interest in their Islamic roots has flourished since El-Hajj Malik's death. Alex Haley, who wrote Malcolm's autobiography, later wrote the epic, *Roots*, about an African Muslim family's experience with slavery. More and more African-Americans are becoming Muslim, adopting Muslim names, or exploring African culture. Interest in Malcolm X has seen a surge recently due to Spike Lee's movie, "X". El-Hajj Malik is a source of pride for African-Americans, Muslims, and Americans in general. His message is simple and clear:

"I am not a racist in any form whatever. 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."

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