



**MIN. MALCOLM, PROSECUTOR FOR THE PEOPLE:  
UNMASKING RACISM IN AMERICA'S CLAIM OF INNOCENCE**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**I**T IS THE CRITICAL AND INCISIVE CHARACTER of his understanding of us, society and the world that gives Min. Malcolm's message and insights, their instructive and enduring relevance. So, whether we raise his life and legacy as lesson, model or mirror during the days and months we mark his birth and martyrdom or any other times, his voice is of great, promising and perennial value. As we once again find America faced with the choice and challenge to concede and begin in earnest to correct and rid herself of her systemic racism, Seba Malcolm's teachings in talk, text and living practice offer us insights and understanding of the problem itself, and our responsibility to continue the struggle, keep the faith and hold the line until victory is achieved.

Malcolm's critical studies and lived-experience compel him to conclude that America is a sick society. Thus, he says "Uncle Sam is sick with racism . . . plaguing America like an incurable cancer." From the inception of his conscious and committed life as a Muslim minister and teacher, he has been central to the struggle to expose and end racism which he saw as both a systemic killer and suppressor of Blacks and other peoples of color and the self-deluding and suicidal practice of a society against itself. Indeed, unchecked and unrepentant "racism leads America (down) the suicide path" and we are compelled to resist it.

The message Malcolm constantly delivered to the guardians of the gates of systemic racism was that they should not delude themselves or reassure themselves with lies and the comfort food of fantasies about the imagined innocence of the country. Indeed, he says that the seeds of racism have been deeply planted in this country since its beginning with genocide, enslavement and oppressions of various kinds. And this holds true regardless of Mitch McConnell's and Tim Scott's self-deluding and dishonest denial and Joe Biden's and Kamala Harris' questionable strategic denial to appease the rabidly and reservedly unrepentant and to avoid being labeled and opposed as anti-American.

But Malcolm will not deny America's racism in delusion, dishonesty or for strategic appeasement, for he realizes its deadly and destructive character. And he puts America on trial as a continuing and compelling prosecutor, concerned with the well-being and health conditions of his people and the social conditions of the society which are both pathological and pathogenic, sick itself and causing sickness in others. Thus, he is both prosecutor and injured physician. Like his people, of whom he is a deeply rooted part, he and they are injured physicians who must heal, repair, renew and remake themselves in the process and practice of repairing, renewing and remaking the sick, racist and oppressive society which wounds and kills us.

Indeed, Min. Malcolm defines himself and his role of speaking truth to the people and truth to power in similar terms. He says early in his mission that he recognizes that people might mistakenly see him as anti-white, a teacher of hate, and a "reverse racist," but he is neither. It is only America's misunderstanding of his mission and meaning that makes it see and pose him as such. He explains this with the following analogy. He says, "My friends if you see a man attired in white with a sharp instrument, bending over someone who is prostrate on a table, your lack of understanding might compel you to shout 'murderer'. But when you know the place is a hospital, the sleeping man is a patient, the man attired is a surgeon and the sharp instrument must be used to perform some surgery that is necessary to save the patient's life, you can then accept that although the operation is very painful, it must be performed."

Min. Malcolm's sharp instrument is his compelling critique of domination which he defines as "sharp truth," a scalpel and sword which he wields with surgical precision, unmasking racism in America and in its self-deceiving claims of innocence. He states that the sharp and incisive truth he speaks "is like a two-edged sword. It cuts into you. It causes you great pain, but if you can

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take it, it will cure you and save you from what otherwise would be certain death.”

Malcolm starts by asserting that racism and the White supremacy that it is founded in and fosters is systemic, not simply personal, psychological or episodic. “The entire American economy is based on white supremacy,” he says, as is America’s religious philosophy, political foundation, social philosophy, and educational system. And whether it is raw racism of the outward racist or a hypocritical and hidden or disguised racism, he tells us, “It doesn’t alter the basic immorality of white supremacy” and its anti-human imposition of force and violence, its dishonest and self-stroking ideological justification, and its brutal institutional processes and practices of domination, deprivation and degradation.

Min. Malcolm cites the police violence approved by the White public; the educational system that savages the mind and breaks the spirit of our children and youth; the political system that suppresses our voice and vote; the media that distorts and criminalizes our identity and interests; an economy that exploits and deprives us of a life of dignity and decency; and the churches which abandon their moral responsibility to support and ally in radical struggle with the downtrodden, poor and disempowered. He speaks too of not only the domestic problem and oppression posed by racism, but also its reach abroad as imperialism and colonialism and the damage and devastation this imposes on the lives and lands of the people, whether in brutally occupied Haiti, Palestine or Uighur land (Xijiang) in China.

Haji Malcolm, speaking as a noble witness for his people and his Islamic faith imagined a world without racism and the “oppression, exploitation and degradation” it practices, promotes and perpetuates. He holds out hope that through righteous and relentless struggle, we can radically

reorder the structure and process of things in more humane, hopeful and history altering ways. He believed that we could develop a new logic of liberation, think for ourselves and “change our thinking by liberating our minds through the study of philosophies, psychologies, cultures and languages that don’t come from our racist oppressor.”

Also, Min. Malcolm held out hope that “the whites of the younger generations in colleges and universities” would embrace and act on the truth and tragic consequences of America’s racism and join the struggle against it, as “the only way left to America to ward off the disaster that racism inevitably must lead to.” But in the final analysis, Min. Malcolm, our honored teacher, reminds and reassures us that we are our own liberators. He tells and teaches us that “the key to our success lies in united action” in our struggle against America’s oppression, exploitation and degradation and for freedom, justice and equality. He wants us to love and respect each other and to boldly and defiantly take this oath and honor it: “We declare our rights on this earth 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.”

“FREEDOM BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY” was his constant battle cry. And it has two essential meanings. It means first, by whatever means the oppressor compels us to take to win our freedom. But equally important and perhaps more important, it means by any service and sacrifice required of us to secure and sustain this sacred right of ours and every human being – to be free from all that oppresses, exploits and degrades and to be free to develop, flourish and come into the fullness of ourselves.▲

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