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Malcolm X VF

A TALK WITH MALCOLM X

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Interview By Ken Sharpe

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Ken Sharpe: Malcolm X, many people still connect your name with the Black Muslim movement, even though there was a split some time ago. I was wondering if you could first straighten out this misconception for us.

Malcolm X: Well, no, I'm not in the Black Muslim movement--that is, I'm not a follower of Elijah Muhammad. But I now belong to the Muslim community that practices the same religion of Islam as it is taught and believed in in the Muslim world--in Mecca, Cairo, Lahore--in the Muslim world.

KS: What was it that brought about this change of attitude?

MX: You mean what caused me to leave the movement--

KS: Yes.

MX: --or what brought this change of attitude? Actually, when I made the pilgrimage to Mecca in April of 1963 [1964], I saw many things being practiced there and many people practicing Islam there that was just contrary to what Elijah Muhammad had taught us in the Black Muslim movement. And I was confronted with having to make a choice between what he taught and what I saw. In Mecca and in the Muslim world, I could easily see that Islam was a religion of brotherhood, a religion that had eliminated the color bar, and a religion in which the people didn't judge one another based upon the color of their skin. And I had to make a choice between that and what

Elijah Muhammad had been teaching us was *supposed* to be Islam. And I accepted Islam as a religion that teaches and practices brotherhood, and have since not been identified with Elijah Muhammad in any way, shape or form.

KS: Could you possibly go a little further and make it very clear to everybody now what the differences are between Elijah Muhammad and the Black Muslims and the world-wide Muslim movement, as you see it?

MX: Well, number one, Elijah Muhammad teaches his followers that God came in the flesh and taught him what he now knows and that which he now calls Islam and, by so doing, made him the messenger of God or the Messenger of Allah, so to speak.

And every Black Muslim--I, myself, included--absolutely believed that God taught Elijah Muhammad and that Elijah Muhammad was a messenger of God. Whereas in the Muslim world, Muslims are taught *lā ilāha illa'llāh muhammadun rasūlu'llāh*:

There's no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah or Messenger of

Allah. And, in that sense, Allah being supreme, the creator--omnipresent, omniscient and all that--and Muhammad Ibn Abdullah--Muhammad who was born in Arabia fourteen hundred years ago--*is* the Muhammad that's being spoken of there. And in the Muslim world, the Muslims believe that Muhammad, who was born in Arabia fourteen hundred years ago, is the last prophet or last messenger. So that *anyone*

who comes along and says that God in the flesh or *Allāh* in the flesh came and taught him and made him His messenger, absolutely is diametrically opposed to the orthodox teachings of the religion of Islam.

KS: There's an old Biblical story about someone who asked, I guess it was, a Hebrew prophet to stand on one foot and explain Judaism to him. I don't want you to do that, but if you could possibly [Malcolm X chuckles] give us some idea of some of the other basic tenets of the Muslim religion, something that's fairly foreign to many people in the Western world.

MX: Well, the real Muslim religion teaches the oneness of God; it teaches that since there is one God, He has one religion, which is called Islam, which means complete submission to the one God; and since there is one God with ^{only} one religion, then all of the prophets who came forth on this earth to teach religion taught the same religion. So that, to a Muslim, Abraham and Moses and Jesus taught the same religion that the Prophet Muhammad taught. And, therefore, there's no opposition whatsoever, no division, no room for argument even. And it's a religion that creates brotherhood. After one accepts the religion of Islam, he practices prayer, charity, fasting, and ^{if} it's possible, he makes the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca at least once during his lifetime.

KS: Tell me, Malcolm X, what were some of the countries that you covered in this recent tour of yours of the ² ...
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MX: I visited Egypt, Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zanzibar, Tanganyika, which has now become Tanzania; I visited Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Guinea, and Algeria. Also Geneva and Paris and London.

KS: What were some of the examples, some of the first things that struck your mind along this idea of brotherly love that you found in the Muslim religion?

MX: Well, in the Muslim world, you don't find anyone judged by a yardstick that's based upon skin color. And in the Muslim world, you find some of the darkest people at the top and some of the lightest ones at the bottom, and vice versa. Whether or not you can rise is not judged by your color; it's what you are, what you do, what you can produce, what you can accomplish that's the yardstick that's used for judgment.

KS: Were you well received in these countries as you traveled through?

MX: Well, in Egypt, I had an audience with President Gamal Abdul Nasser for about an hour and a half; in Tanganyika, I spent three hours with [President] Julius

Nyerere; I flew from Tanganyika and Zanzibar to Kenya with Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta, who's now President Jomo Kenyatta, and Dr. Milton Obote, who's the Prime Minister of Uganda. When I was in Nigeria, I had an audience with President [Nnamdi] Azikiwe; and in Ghana, I had an audience with President Kwame Nkrumah; and in Guinea, I lived at President Sekou Toure's oceanside home for three days. So that--I think that speaks for itself. Nowhere that I went did I run into any closed minds or closed hearts or closed doors.

KS: *Did you get a chance to speak to some of the people in these countries?*

MX: Oh, yes, I got a chance to speak to people at all levels--in government, in religion, and just plain in the street.

KS: *Did these seem to be hopeful people, hopeful of the future in their countries?*

MX: Well, I think you'll find a more hopeful atmosphere in African countries today than ever before, and a great deal of confidence in their own ability to straighten out their own problems. When I first landed in Cairo in July--I might say this without your asking it--America had a fairly good image. There were negative characteristics and reactions, but she had a fairly good image. By the time I had left in November, her image had become almost bankrupt, in that her association with Moise Tshombe and the entire Congo operation during the months of July, August, September and October turned the most moderate Africans against the United States--just her identity with Tshombe and her involvement in the Congo. No African accepted it as something that was justified.

KS: *Was there a feeling that they should then help the rebels, or--I should not say rebels, I guess--to help the people that were fighting... [a portion of the audiotape is missing here]*

MX: ...even the dumbest African couldn't go along with that. And if you read closely, you'll find that the pattern of resistance on the part of the freedom

fighters during that period--they had taken captives, [but] they never made hostages of the whites that were in their territory. They only began to hold the whites as hostages when the American planes began to drop bombs on their villages. Their villages had no defense against bombs, so that when the bomb fell it killed women, children, babies, everything. And since there were white pilots flying these planes and dropping these bombs, the freedom fighters felt that their best defense, or their only defense, was to hold white Americans in the village, and then the white pilots couldn't drop bombs on these villages. This is the only reason they held those captives, or those hostages as captives, or the captives as hostages. And when Tshombe, seeing that he still couldn't gain any victories just with planes alone, began to hire the mercenaries from South Africa, and these mercenaries, [being?] very vicious, began to shoot Congolese people indiscriminately; and then when they turned around and used their airplanes to bring in Belgian troops to drop them upon these villages, this is when the actions took place that the Western press projected as atrocities and all of that--and called their own atrocities humanitarian acts. So the whole operation, probably, cost America the African continent, the African continent.

KS: *It's a generally accepted fact, then, that the Americans were the ones that put Tshombe back into power?*

MX: Oh, yes. One very influential African leader told me that there was an African head of state that left this country sometime within the past two years or sometime within the past year--I forget which--and one of the high officials from the State Department flew all the way to London with him for no purpose other than to beg him all the way to use his influence upon other African heads of state to get them to accept Tshombe as the prime minister. This was long before it was ever mentioned publicly that Tshombe even *might* become the prime minister. And it was American maneuvering that put Tshombe as prime minister in the Congo; in fact, it was American maneuvering that put Kasavubu in power. Because if you go back to

1960, when Lumumba and Kasavubu were fighting each other for control of the country, one day it would be Lumumba in power, the next day Kasavubu would be in power. It was like musical chairs, so to speak. And it was only after America interceded and brought Kasavubu to the United States and *forced* the United Nations to accept *him* as the rightful head of state in the Congo, that he became recognized by the world as the head of state. The first thing that Kasavubu did when he became recognized as the rightful head of state ~~when~~ when he went back to the Congo, he turned Lumumba over to Tshombe, and Tshombe [Lumumba] was murdered within a matter of days. And there's a book written by the present president of the U.N. General Assembly, Quaison-Sackey, called *Africa Unbound*, and it probably tells with more clarity the role that the United States played in this whole period than any other book that I've read.

KS: *Is it also generally accepted that if the Belgians had not put any influence on [the Congo] at first--let's say they had just pulled out--that things would have reached an equilibrium by themselves?*

MX: You mean back in those days?

KS: *Yeah--I'm thinking specifically in terms of the trouble that happened as soon as the Belgians pulled out.*

MX: As soon as the Belgians pulled out they instigated trouble. They had to make it appear that the Congolese were too childlike to run their own affairs. And it is well recognized, in many circles, that it was Belgian--not only Belgian, but Western intrigue that kept things stirred up, because they *had* to make it appear that these African nations that were demanding independence would fall into chaos, and this was supposed to set back their efforts toward independence. It was just intrigue. And had this intrigue not come into play, then I think you'd find that the Congolese people could have solved their own problems. Lumumba had even

visited this country, seeking technicians from the Afro-Americans, Black Americans, as well as others. He was making every effort to get his problem solved, but the Congo was too rich a prize for them to give up that easily. Not only is it valuable in terms of mineral wealth, but the Congo is so strategically located, [Geographical-] ly, if you look at it, you'll see that once a bonafide African government is in power there, then it makes it possible for that government to use its border with Angola to launch an attack against the Portugese who are in Angola. And an independent Congo would soon bring about an independent Angola. And if Angola fell, then South West Africa, Bechuanaland and Mozambique and these other countries would also fall. By "fall" I mean the Africans in those territories would become independent. And then it would put the African people right on the border with South Africa ^A and you'd have what is ultimate, you'd have what ultimately must come about anyway. And all of these Western interests are inseparably interwoven and they're protecting their own interests. And South African interests are involved as well as South West Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and Angola, and the Congo. All of these economic interests are involved there, and they use their power over the press to make the Western public think that it's the "humanitarian" reason for which they're in there. No one is dumb enough to accept that today.

KS: Before we move back to the United States, let me ask you a final question on this African situation. In your eyes or in the eyes of the people you've seen in the Muslim world, if we're talking now about U.S. prestige and U.S. influence, what would you see as the best way--if it's true that the U.S. has misused its role in Africa--what would you say the best way for the U.S. to act in the future would be?

MX: Well, there's no country probably on earth that's in a better position to help--if it were objective and motivated morally. But I saw some good contribution being made on the African continent by Americans. I also saw some bad contribution that would offset the good. All Africa needs is education. All any underdeveloped or--not underdeveloped, because when you use the word underdeveloped you're

implying that there are areas that are developed, and when you use the West as an example of what development should be in that sense, there are too many things here that are negative that negate the so-called development, or level of development, here in the West. But the nations on the African continent or any place on this globe that need help, need technical help, or that are behind ⁱⁿ education would solve their problem. Education is the solution to almost every negative characteristic that exists in those particular areas. And America is in a good position to provide education, to provide technicians, to provide machinery, to provide technical help--personnel. ^{She} has that, she has perfected that. And if this type of contribution could be made--based ^{upon} ~~on~~ moral motivation--then it would get the same results that they are now trying to get through *political* motivation. But because the contribution that America makes all over the world right now is motivated politically rather than morally, she negates her own objective, because this political motivation makes everything she does suspect--people can see it, they can sense it, they can feel it. So she still doesn't accomplish what she's after. ^{from} But if she could become *morally* motivated--which I doubt that she can--then she'd get good results.

KS: Do you see any danger of this aid we were talking about, or this help, do you see any danger in the implications that would occur if the aid, say, came from the communist side of the fence?

MX: People who need aid don't care whether they come from communist or capitalist [nations]; and this is, I think, what Americans don't realize. This thing about condemning an African country because it gets aid from Russia or China--the Africans *laugh* at that. Just to give you an example: Here's America ^{aiding} Tshombe--a rascal, a murderer, you know--she aids him, gives him everything he wants, and then she has the audacity to get angry when the people who are the *victims* of Tshombe's murderous operations turn [*chuckles*] to China or some ^{place} else for aid. People who are downtrodden and oppressed don't think in terms of a

man's politics or any of that when they're looking for aid.

KS: Well, let's grant, then, that the aid is needed. [What] I'm asking you, though, is would there be any danger, you think, that the same influence claimed on Tshombe by the United States would be exerted by the communist nations on the countries they helped? In other words, a bad political influence eventually, granted that they need the aid, no matter who they get it from.

MX: President Nasser in Egypt, which is in northeast Africa, is one of the best examples of the African thinking when it comes to being capable of taking aid and, at the same time, not being in the pocket of the one who has given the aid, because he has taken all of the aid Russia can give, in [the] building of the Aswan [High Dam] and other ^{projects} ~~things~~ that are going on there, and, at the same time, he has put more communists in jail in his country than has been done in France or Italy, countries that are *allies* of the United States. I don't see how condemnation can be given or the finger of condemnation can be pointed at an African nation for taking aid from a communist country, and the finger of condemnation not be pointed at a European country, which has half of its population, sometimes, voting the Communist ticket during election time. They don't use the same yardstick for measurement there, and it makes Africans become suspicious.

KS: You don't think these Africans would be in any danger, then, in the future, of, let's say, communist infiltration as has been claimed by U.S. infiltration?

MX: I don't quite understand.

KS: In other words, I'm thinking of what might happen in the future, now. Let's say they do get the aid, they do need it, and the communists are willing to supply it, good aid--do you think that there may be a situation when the communists, then, are able to take over the government of the country?

MX: I think an African is an African--

KS: *No matter what.*

MX: --and he thinks in, especially today...the African's concept of even capitalism, socialism, communism, any kind of -ism that you find--even the African concept of, take as an example, socialism. The African concept of socialism is an *African* concept. It's not something that's identical to the concept of socialism in Europe. The Africans are thinking in terms of what is good for Africa, and I doubt that you'll find any African country that's willing to supplant one ruler for another ruler. If there's going to be a ruler, he'll be African.

KS: *All right, let's move now across the ocean back to the United States for a minute and look at what are some of the appeals that the Muslim movement has for the American Negro.*

MX: Well, first, I want to point out that it's good that you went into what's happening on the African continent before coming back over here, because what is happening on the African continent is having a direct impact upon what's happening in the Black communities here in America. The *mood* of the African continent is inseparable from the *mood* of the Black man here on the American continent; they both are beating to the same tune today--same heartbeat. I might point out here, too, I'm involved in two movements. The Muslim movement, that is, the Muslim Mosque, Incorporated, which is not in any way connected with Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslim movement--we have set up the Muslim Mosque for the purpose of giving people who are interested in Islam an opportunity to learn more about the religion of Islam, [people] who want to practice the Muslim religion. But the problem of the Black American goes above and beyond religion, so we established another group, known as the Organization of Afro-American Unity, which is not religious at all, and to which any Black American can belong who is interested in participating in an action program

designed to eliminate the political, the social, and the economic evils that our people are confronted by.

KS: What are some of the things this movement does?

MX: Well, one of the first: we feel that the problem of the Black man in America has ceased to be a Negro problem or an American problem but has now reached the point where it has to be considered as a world problem, or a human problem, a problem for humanity. We don't regard it any more as a problem of civil rights but a problem of human rights. As long as it was regarded as a problem of civil rights it was domestic, it was confined to the domestic jurisdiction of the United States government, and we had to rely upon the congressmen and the senators, many of whom were Southern racists, and Northern racists, and the Supreme Court, to bring us some kind of redress to our grievances. This is at the *civil*-rights level. And we don't feel that the government or those in the United States government are morally capable of looking at the problem objectively enough to come up with meaningful efforts to solve it. So we feel that at the *human*-rights level, which takes it above and beyond the jurisdiction of the United States government, it opens the way for us to take our grievances away from the courts of the United States, and the Senate and Congress of the United States, to the United Nations. We can take our plight into the U.N. and charge the racists that control *this* government with violating our *human* rights, because ours is a human-rights violation rather than a civil-rights violation. So one of the first objectives of the Organization of Afro-American Unity is to make our problem become recognized as a world problem, a human problem, that can be fought at the international level with allies from all over the world, rather than to keep it confined to the domestic level of civil rights and then we can only turn to allies right within the country to help us in our struggle.

KS: Do you believe that a large part of the American government is in the hands of racists?

MX: Oh, yes, yes. I believe that the government, Washington, D. C. is controlled by racists--I can prove it. If you analyze this governmental system, it's controlled by committees. I think it's 16 senatorial committees and 20 congressional committees. And these committees are the ones that control and determine the foreign and domestic direction of the country. Ten of the 16 senatorial committees have Southern segregationists as their chairmen; thirteen of the 20 congressional committees have Southern segregationists as their chairmen. Which means that twenty-three of the 36 committees that govern the foreign and domestic direction of this country have chairmen who are Southern segregationists--racists, themselves. These men are in the most influential positions of government. The reason that they are in these positions as committee chairmen is because they have the seniority system, and these men are from areas of the country where the Black man is not permitted to vote. So this enables them to stay in the Congress and the Senate based upon the "whims" of the white racists in their particular areas, rather than upon their desire to represent the entire element--the black as well as the white. So, yes, it's definitely controlled by the racist element.

KS: Well, let's say, then, that some of the chairmen are segregationists. Does this necessarily mean that all their committees are going to follow these types of policies?

MX: Well, they do. Anybody will tell you that nothing can go through, for instance, the Judiciary Committee without the approval of Senator Eastland of Mississippi. Nothing goes through the ~~Armed Forces Committee~~ ^{—[what] is it—the} [Armed Services Committee] without the approval of, I think, [Senator] Russell of Georgia. You have [Senator] Fulbright of Arkansas, who is over the, I think, Foreign Relations [Committee] or something of that sort. In fact, when you name the most well-known

senators in Washington, usually they are well-known because of their position over one of these committees. And most of these persons are Southern segregationists, they're racists--they even voted against Lyndon B. Johnson in the recent election. But still they occupy these positions of power. And Senator Long, the grandson or son of Huey Long, from Louisiana--the Southern element or Southern bloc in Washington, D. C., is so powerful, that even though the state of Louisiana went against Lyndon B. Johnson and went against the Democratic party, still Long, a Democratic senator, who also went against Johnson, was put in as the whip there in the present administration.

KS: Well, let's look at some of the other leaders--let's say ^{the} people like Dirksen--

MX: Dirksen--

KS: --who's from Illinois.

MX: --was with Goldwater, a Goldwater backer. He was one of the first supporters of Goldwater.

KS: Yeah, but he did play an important part in the civil rights bill that was put through.

MX: Some deals were made.

KS: Well, deals, maybe.

MX: They were wheeling and dealing--

KS: Let's say they were wheeling and dealing--

MX: --with the rights of 22 million Black Americans at stake.

KS: But, despite their wheeling and dealing, something was done.

MX: Such as?

KS: *The Civil Rights Bill* [Civil Rights Act], which [law?] ...

MX: No, they passed a bill which wasn't necessary in the first place.

KS: *Why don't you think it was necessary?*

MX: If you don't need civil-rights bills for these refugees who come to this country from behind the iron curtain... Soon as they get here they enjoy full status, all constitutional benefits; they need no new legislation. But when it comes to the Black man who was born here, when his constitutional benefits are at stake, he needs new legislation, new bills. My contention is that if the Constitution in itself is sufficient, you don't need new legislation. If it is sufficient for foreigners who come here, then it should be sufficient for the Black man who was born here. Plus, the Civil Rights/involved new legislation, which means new laws--which are no good unless they can be enforced. And if the Supreme Court desegregation decision came into being as a law in 1954 and has been implemented less than 10 percent in the following 10 years--they can't even enforce that law in New York City where I live; from they're having problems trying to integrate the schools, or desegregate the schools. And my contention is that if you can't pass [enforce] a law handed down by the Supreme Court in New York City, supposedly one of the most progressive cities in the country, why, it's a farce to come up with new legislation, thinking that this is going to solve the problem of our people in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and these other less progressive areas.

KS: What do you suggest, then, as an alternative to this, since it seems that for the past four hundred years nothing else has worked?

MX: Definitely nothing else has worked. My opinion is that a complete new analysis of the problem has to be gone into, and this analysis cannot be done by those politicians in Washington, D.C., because they're just politicians--anything

they do is for political expediency. But the students, the youth, the young people in this country probably are the only ones who are in a position to be objective enough to analyze the problem as it actually is. Number one, if you look at the problem as an American, you never can see it, because, as an American, you are being subjective and you're actually analyzing yourself, which--a doctor won't even try and diagnose his own sickness. And to look at the problem as an American blinds you to the reality of the problem. If you look at a problem as an American, if your analysis is against America, then you can't accept that analysis. Even though your analysis might be for a human being or for human beings, if it's against an American, or if it's against America, when you look at it as an American, you can't accept it. If you look at it as human beings, as a human problem, then if your analysis demands a solution that is for human beings, even though it's against America, you still have to accept it as *the* analysis and *the* solution, because you're now interested more in human beings than you are Americans. My contention is that too many people in this country try and approach the problem as Americans, and they're too objective [*subjective*], they're too involved in it, and they can't see it as it actually is.

KS: *Well, is there any way to go about changing this situation within our constitutional framework? I mean, it's all fine and well to say, "This is the way it should be." But what I'm groping for now is* ...
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MX: When you say constitutional framework ...
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KS: *In other words, without...I'm assuming that we're going to keep the American system, the constitutional system, basically the way it is, not excluding amendments, but not excluding [anything?]* ...
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MX: The Constitution was put together by men who were slave-owners themselves at the time the Constitution was put together. And if you read it very closely, there's nothing in the Constitution that in any way encourages or recognizes the right

of the *Black Man*, who was a slave at that time, to be recognized and accepted as a human being; in fact, if my memory of the Constitution serves me right, somewhere in there it classifies the Black Man or the slave as three-fifths of a man--he wasn't regarded as a full ~~man~~ ^{...} _^

KS: *This is for voting rights.*

MX: Well, that's still--

KS: [Indistinct], *yes.*

MX: --voting rights is the most basic right! And if the Constitution *itself* didn't recognize the voting right of the Black Man--and it didn't; it didn't give the Black Man voting rights equal to the white man. The Black Men were classifi[ed]--three-fifths of Blacks were equal to ~~...~~ ^{...} _^

KS: *Well, this is something that's since been taken out.*

MX: How?

KS: *I mean that the official ~~...~~ ^{...} _^*

MX: How was it taken out?

KS: [*... ~~the~~ ^{...} _^ the three-fifths...*]

MX: By the amendments?

KS: *No, let's--Well, let's put it this way: it's something that's being...we'll have to see in the next few years what the--*

KS: *Well, let's put it this way: We'll have to see in the next few years what the--*

MX: This is what I'm trying to make you see. A Black Man--this generation of Black People in this country--will never wait for no next few years. And this is

what whites don't realize. The former generations of Blacks were so conditioned mentally that they felt it necessary to wait until the power structure *deemed them* ready to be qualified to be accepted into the mainstream of things. But world conditions-- and this is where your African conversation of a few moments ago comes into importance--the emergence of Africa on the world scene as an *independent power* automatically makes the Black Man in this country take a new look at himself as a human being, and his role in the family of human beings. And he just doesn't see where he should have to sit around and wait for a segment of humanity, which is actually a *minority*--the European or white segment is a *minority* of humanity--and we don't see where we should have to sit around and wait, year in and year out, for these whites who consider themselves civilized, and who consider themselves the head of a political system supposedly designed to recognize the rights of a human being--we don't see where it's necessary for us to sit around and wait for another two or three years.

KS: Well, if this political system, then, fails to solve the problem, what do you suggest as a means to solve it--what framework?

MX: If this system fails, you're ~~going to have to~~ replace it with another system. If this system is not going to respect a man as a human being, and we are living at a time now when all human beings are developing their own independent intellect so that they can think independently as human beings, and tell what they should be receiving as human beings, and what contribution they should be making as human beings--if the society itself in which they live doesn't offer that, then I think you're going to find a very serious conflict of interest ^{is} developing.

KS: So then you would advocate a basic change in the whole governmental framework in the United States?

MX: I advocate anything that will produce a society in which all human beings are recognized and respected as human beings. Anything necessary to bring about that condition--that's what I advocate. And by any means necessary--that's what I

. advocate.

KS: Including violent means.

MX: Whenever a man, a human being, is being *criminally*--not only legally, or rather, illegally, but *criminally* mistreated, he's within his rights to use whatever *means* are necessary to bring an end, immediately, to that criminal mistreatment.

KS: Well, I'm not at all condoning what goes on in many parts of the country.

MX: I don't think you are.

KS: But I'm asking if you feel this is the weapon that should be used--if there's not a more peaceful weapon, a more ~~2~~ ¹...

MX: If a peaceful weapon could be used to correct the situation, I'd be as much for it as anybody else. But I'm a realist, and I've watched this peaceful approach. America doesn't use the peaceful approach in South Vietnam, she didn't use the peaceful approach in the Congo, she didn't use it in dealing with Castro in Cuba. She has *never* used a peaceful approach--not when her interests are at stake. And I don't fault her for that; I think any intelligent *being* is going to use whatever means necessary when his interests are at stake. And all I'm saying is that when the Black American really begins to think with his own mind, he's going to be just as human as all other human beings, and he's going to think in terms of *reacting* as all other human beings. And he will see that he should be nonviolent only when his enemy is nonviolent. If he's dealing with a peaceful enemy, then be peaceful. If he's dealing with a nonviolent enemy, then [chuckles] be nonviolent. But don't be peaceful when you're in the clutches of an enemy that's not peaceful, or don't be nonviolent when you're in the clutches of an enemy that's not nonviolent, and don't be merciful when you're in a [the] clutches of an enemy that's not merciful. And I think if you study the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizen's Council and these other vicious, racist groups in this country, it's absolutely insane for us, for our people,

to think that we can contend with them in a peaceful, loving, forgiving way.

KS: *Is this something that you see as corresponding to the basic Muslim doctrines--this fighting violence with violence?*

MX: The Quran says, "Fight against those who fight against you." This is one of the things that I love about the Muslim religion. It's a religion of peace, but, at the same time, you see the intelligence of it, because it says, "Fight against those who fight against you." Don't initiate acts of aggression; don't attack people indiscriminately. But, at the same time, the religion of Islam gives one the right to fight when he's fought against. No, this is in no way in conflict with Muslim religion.

KS: *Do you see, now, looking just at the United States, where we have--is it ²⁰ 22 million Negroes now?*

MX: Twenty-two million.

KS: *Twenty-two million versus the total population of about a hundred and eighty million. Do you see any possible danger in this idea of violence escalating?*

MX: Yes, it might escalate. When a man wants freedom, he doesn't care anything about escalation. Again, you go right back to the human being. When a human being becomes a human being, his most valuable commodity is his freedom. His freedom is worth more than his life, and if he can't have freedom, what good is his life? If he lives in a society that denies him freedom, it castrates him; it castrates him psychologically, which eventually leads almost to a physical castration. So that I, for one, feel that in the present world context, you'll find that we aren't a 22 million minority. We're only a minority when we think within the confines of the limitations of the American stage. We're a minority then because we're standing on a white stage, so to speak. But when you realize that the world has gotten so small that there's really no such thing as an American stage or a European stage or an

(there's a world stage.)
African stage. It's almost a one world, whether we like it or not. And on that one-world stage where we stand today, we're not a minority; [laughs] in fact, if anything, we're^A part of the dark majority.

KS: All right, granted that, I'd like to come back again to the United States, just dealing with this problem, though I realize that it is related, of course, with the entire problem all over the world. This question of violence has become more and more important, especially as the summers progress. It seems that the summers are equivalent with violence in many of the cities. There've been many complaints among many people that some of the violence is not necessarily directed at civil rights, at human rights, but is more an excuse by some people for a vandalism type [indistinct word].

MX: That analysis itself is an excuse by the society itself for its own failure to have eliminated the negative conditions that exist in Black communities. When you find the criminal conditions that exist in the Black community...and have existed for so long...it's only natural to expect the degree of frustration to mount in those communities to such degree that an explosion is inevitable. And in these explosions, one doesn't plan to be polite or to direct his exploding energy in any one direction. This is something to expect in any explosion that's a sociological explosion or an explosion that stems from social conditions that are criminal. You don't expect everybody in that area to explode intelligently and legally and lawfully and politely. You have all types of elements in that community.

KS: This is one of my major problems, is that there are many explosions going on. And what I'm wondering is if it would not be easier to prevent the explosion than try to pick up all the pieces after it happened.

MX: It would be more intelligent to prevent the explosion rather than to pick up the pieces after it happens. But, again, you're dealing with a power structure that consists primarily of politicians. And instead of trying to remove the causes

of the explosion, they deal with the *condition*, so to speak, and leave the causes there. When the Black community becomes explosive, they get some big Negro leader and send him in to quiet the community down. They never remove the causes that create the conditions, but they have these little century-old methods that always have failed in instances like this.

KS: *Would you say that the work being done now in the South by people that are from some of the other civil-rights organizations, like SNCC and CORE and the N double-ACP, towards voter registration, towards education of these people, is this at all useful? Does this fit into your idea...*

MX: Education is first; voter registration is second.

KS: *But you do see this as helping?*

MX: Oh, yes. Education is the first step towards solving any problem that exists anywhere on this earth which involves people who are oppressed. As a rule, the oppressed people lack education, and this has affected their ability to cope with their problem themselves. And their inability to cope with their own problem places them at the mercy of someone else, who's supposed to come up with a solution for their problem, but who can't--without a conflict of interest. It's only when the masses of people can approach their own problem that their problem will be solved.

KS: *Where, then, do you see these other civil-rights organizations, like CORE and SNCC and the N double-ACP, as fitting into this over-all picture in the United States?*

MX: Well, I think you'll find that even right at this moment, James Farmer, the national director of CORE, is in Africa, traveling the African continent. Since he's been over there I've heard a couple of broadcasts that he's made. He sounds more like Jomo Kenyatta and Lumumba than he does like James Farmer--just since he's

been over there. And an article in the *U. S. News & World Report* magazine a couple of weeks ago pointed out that the entire Negro civil-rights leadership is beginning to voice publicly the fact that the Black Man's problem in this country is inseparable from the problem of the Black Man on the African continent, and that we should seek ^{own} allies among the independent African nations in our/struggle to try and get some kind of correcting of our problem. Now, when the civil-rights leaders are forced to think like this...a year ago, they didn't think like this. They didn't mention their problem in the context of world affairs or in the context of the African struggle. But now they're being forced to think like this, and as the two problems are linked up and made inseparable, and the Black People in this country see African statesmen also speaking out in their behalf, this will give the Black populace in this country more courage and more energy and they'll press harder. And, then, one thing will lead [to] another and you can get your escalating that you were talking about a moment ago.

KS: So, then, you do see some of these leaders bringing back these ideas of violence versus violence, if that's what it needs, and...

MX: I don't use the word ^uviolence, ^uever. Because--

KS: [Well?], what would be a better...

MX: --if you notice, if you don't initiate an attack on someone... If you react to defend yourself, I don't call your reaction violence. And all I say in this context of violence is that our people *never will* initiate acts of aggression indiscriminately against whites. But I do say that the Black Man in this country, if he's attacked, he should strike back. Yes, I say that--even if it costs him his life, he should strike back. He should at no time, no matter what the odds are, let someone come and issue a beating upon him when he's doing nothing other than seeking his rights as a human being. No. He should fight back--if it costs him his life. st And if he has to *take* life in fighting back, he shouldn't even hesitate to do so. If

'someone is trying to take his life, he shouldn't hesitate to take the lives of those Klan-like elements that are trying to take his life. No. I don't see it.

KS: *There's a difference I see in looking at defending your own life, which I'm certain most people, most rational people, in most places in the world would not object to--to defending your life against someone that's trying to take it. But what I was thinking more in terms of is the large-scale riots versus picketing that now seems to be spreading over much of the country. This type of violence, where it's a destructive violence, it's a violence that, true enough, may have been spurred on by things that have been done by [to?] them, but yet it's not really defending themselves in this manner. They're using violence to gain their means now.*

MX: Well, if you notice, instead of striking at the humans who inflict this brutality upon them, they strike at buildings--property. This has been the pattern. I was in Africa during all of the riots last summer, and many of the Africans asked me the question: Why do they tear up their own neighborhood? And I pointed out that it isn't their own neighborhood. They don't own the homes that they live in. The homes are owned by white landlords who live someplace else. They call them slumlords. The stores in the community are owned by white merchants who live someplace else. Usually all of these absentee landlords and absent[laughs]ee merchants are considered liberals, you know. They contribute to the N double-ACP and things of that sort; but they also play a major role in the community exploitation. And when the Black community erupts, it looks upon this outsider as nothing but an exploiter. He doesn't own the house in the community to contribute good housing to the community; he doesn't own the store in the Black community to contribute a higher quality merchandise at a cheaper price. Almost the entire existence of these outsiders is wrapped up in the image of exploitation. And the policeman in the Black community is not looked upon by the Black citizen as someone who's there to protect their interest; they look at him as someone who's in the Black

community to protect the stores of the white merchant, or to protect the houses of the white landlord. He's looked upon almost as an enemy army--proof of which, he's the one, in uniform, who's used against the people of the community when they're trying to seek redress to just grievances, or when they're trying to enforce rights which the courts have said that they have. So that the pattern in the past has been not to strike back at the policeman, who crushes their skull with his club, or whose dog tears the flesh from their limbs; they haven't struck back at him. But their tendency has been to strike at the property ^[simultaneously claps his hands] of the outsider that's in the neighborhood. And then the power structure interprets that as thievery and vandalism and things of that sort because they haven't yet analyzed the motive of the man who's involved in that, and their refusal to analyze it makes them miss the boat. It's not vandalism. It's not a few criminals who are taking advantage of a situation. No, it is the reaction, the explosion, the frustration that is experienced by a people who feel that for too long they have been held down by a system who gives them nothing but promises that never materialize, no matter whose mouth the promise is made from.

KS: [Long pause] *Do you see the Organization for Afro-Asian Unity as...*

MX: Afro-American Unity.

KS: *...I'm sorry--Afro-American Unity as a possible means to reach the international level, solve some of the problems on the international level, before the violence erupts, before the explosion occurs?*

MX: Well, let me say this first: I'm not interested in violence. See, when whites approach the problem, they approach it to avoid violence. This is the wrong approach. This is the wrong objective. This is the wrong motive. If a problem is criminal, it should be approached to eliminate the criminal aspects of it--violence having nothing to do with it, or the threat of violence having nothing to do with it. who's been criminally motivated But when you help a man, just to keep him from exploding violently, it's the wrong

motive. And this is what I have been trying to make the *white* citizen see.

KS: *Do you have any...*

MX: So anything that we do is not to avoid violence. What we do is to correct a problem that has existed too long. Now, if it takes *more* violence to correct it, we're not even afraid of that. If it can be done *peacefully*, then we're hopeful of that. But violence or the threat of violence or the fear of violence no way enters into our plan of operation at all. But the Organization of Afro-American Unity has a two-pronged attack. Number one, to link our problem with the world struggle and get allies toward solving our problem at the world level by making our problem a world problem, a human problem. That's the external approach, the international approach. At a national level, it's our intention to become actively involved with all other groups who are genuinely trying to come up with programs designed to solve the problem. Whereas the political aspect is concerned, voter registration is good as long as it's coupled with voter education. We think that our people should be educated into the knowledge of the science of politics so that once they're registered they won't be *exploitable* by crooked politicians. So that we go along with voter registration, but we also believe in voter education. We also believe that in areas of this country where students are sent in to help Black People get registered, we feel that units should be sent along with them to protect them from the organized attack of the Ku Klux Klan; that these units should be qualified, capable and equipped to retaliate and speak the same kind of language that the Klan speaks, so that they will communicate and understand one another. And in any area of programming that's genuinely designed to bring immediate results for the masses, not a hand-picked few, then we go along with that.

KS: *One final question, then. Do you foresee the day when the white man and the black man, when all races all over the world, can live together in peace?*

MX: *[Long pause]* When humanity looks upon itself not as black men, white men, brown men, red men and yellow men, but as human beings, then they will sit down and live together in peace; not when they look upon themselves as Americans or Europeans or Asians or Africans, then they can sit down and live with each other in peace. The only time you'll have a society on this earth when all men will live as brothers will be when all men *respect* each other and *treat* each other as brothers.

KS: *Let's end on that note, then. Thank you very much, Malcolm X. It's been a pleasure talking with you.*

MX: Thank you....