

Abdul Alkalimat

Malcolm X. El Hajj Malik El Shabazz is an important historical person. In fact, we might well state that he is one of those rare individuals who will always be remembered. He was great, but even greater because he carried forward a major tradition, because he personified a great mass movement, because he made such a dramatic impact on so many including most of us here today. Because of this, MalcolmX is also a prism through which we can examine all of these things. Through Malcolm we can see the legacy of the nationalist tradition, through Malcolm we can see The Black Nationalist movement from the 1950's through the 1960's close up, through Malcolm we can better understand ourselves.

We have convened this symposium as a beginning of the serious study of MalcolmX. We need a collective collaborative approach to many aspects of the kind of research enterprises we need: Data base development – The building of a systematic bibliography, the speeches and what evidence we have of Malcolm's actual activities, also the analysis of his ideology by adherents and critics of every position pan-africanism, nationalism, and Marxism. So we hold this our first symposium to begin sharing studies on Malcolm X and to stimulate your taking up this work as well. Now this work group, as Professor Haptu said, is focused specifically on Malcolm X. However, it is part of a broader context called The Cooperative Research Network in Black Studies, which is based upon the notion that it is important to organize scholars of The Black Experience around the production of knowledge. Many organizations are (and appropriately so) organized around the distribution of ideas—holding conferences, etc., but what we want to do with this work group is to organize people who are producers of information, doing the research and writing so that this is going to be a work group focused on the production of ideas. The Cooperative Research Network is organized out of The University of Mississippi right now. We publish The Afro Scholar newsletter, various study guides, and there are other work groups as well specifically I'll mention one on The Afro American novel—the creating of a computerized data base of all of the novels written by Afro Americans as well as a work group on the experiences of Being Black in Mississippi which has recently had its third research conference, namely by scholars in Mississippi working on The Black Experience in Mississippi. As a MalcolmX work group, we have initiated a newsletter called “Studies on Malcolm X” and we hope that you'll participate in that as well. Now this morning we're going to focus on Malcolm as a thinker, both from a theological as well as a political perspective, and then we'll break for lunch, and in the afternoon session, we'll focus on Malcolm as an inspiration and as a way of dealing with The Black Experience through the arts and that should be very interesting, through the medium of creative writing. Then we'll end with a discussion of how we can further the research on Malcolm and how that research on Malcolm might interface with the other research we're

engaged in so that we can hook this up with our enterprise with the larger research programs being undertaken in Black Studies and also hopefully later today Dr. Betty Shabazz will join us on this important occasion. Let me just say that while we're holding this symposium on May 19, 1987 in New York, something very important happened today – Lenox Boulevard was officially renamed Malcolm X Boulevard so this is a very important day because this is a major victory given the fact that Malcolm represents something about the Black Community that stands in tension with the rest of the political culture of this country and consequently to name that street in Harlem after Malcolm will be a great inspiration for generations to come and hopefully that will lead to greater struggle and a greater carrying forward of his legacy.

This morning we're going to deal with Malcolm as a thinker and we have two important scholars to present and initiate our discussion—hopefully we'll have some give and take. The first presentation will be made by Professor James Cone, who is a professor of theology at Union Theological Seminary. He is perhaps the initial and most important proponent of Black liberation theology who is working on a comparative study of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Then he'll be followed by Professor Bill Sales from Queens College and Seton Hall who as a political theorist in studying Malcolm as a political thinker looking at how Malcolm was able to bring into focus Pan Africanism and nationalism with a revolutionary bent. And so we'll have those presentation, then discussion.