

Malcolm X exhibit: 'Astounding'

By **HERB BOYD**

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Set aside at least a couple of hours if you want to absorb the entire Malcolm X (El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) "A Search for Truth" exhibit at the Schomburg Center.

Last Monday, after a press conference with the center's chief curator, Howard Dodson, and three of Malcolm's daughters, Ilyasah, Malaak, and Gamilah Shabazz (Attalah was there via telephone), visitors were given a tour of the exhibit that presents material that even the daughters had never seen.

"What was most impressive for me were the photos that show the evolution of my

father's life," said Ilyasah Shabazz. "They reflect his compassion and his love for people. I think the exhibit helps to clarify his contributions and his impact on society at large."

The exhibit has photos, written notes and diary entries, some of Malcolm's personal items, including his briefcase, several of the books he read while incarcerated, and a whole floor devoted to the drawings of Tracy Sugarman depicting the trial of those accused of assassinating Malcolm.

One of the oldest items in the expansive collection is a notebook Malcolm had in the eighth grade. It is one of those

personality books that kids had at that time in which friends entered their comments. "He is tall and handsome," one entry read. Another said as a boxer, Malcolm was "foeey." To begin to list the number of notables in the photos with Malcolm would exhaust this article, but there's a young Dick Gregory seated behind Malcolm as he stood at a podium; James Baldwin, James Farmer, Ossie Davis share a table with Malcolm; the late James Gilbert, a longtime photographer for the Amsterdam News, can be seen at Malcolm's funeral. There's an enlargement of a photo with attorney Milton Henry

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Ilyasah Shabazz gazes on photos of her father.

(Herb Boyd photo)

Malcolm X

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(Brother Gaidi) and Malcolm at the airport near Detroit where he had gone to speak a week before his assassination.

"I remember renting a car in Detroit and driving to Mr. Henry's house to get a lot of the photos you see here," Dodson told reporters. Many of the precious items on display are from photographer Laurence Henry's collection, which now belongs to the Schomburg.

As the Shabazz sisters toured the exhibit, they expressed astonishment at some of the photos. They stared a long time at the often published color photo of Malcolm in Mecca that was shot by John Launois.

"This is really astounding," said Malaak Shabazz. In another section of the center, the Sugarman drawings are on display and they are remarkable renderings and much more like paintings than courtroom depictions. At the center of this collection are two glass enclosures with items rescued from the Audubon Ballroom that fateful day. Two spent shotgun shells are among the items, along with the actual autopsy report from the medical examiner. There is only one photo of the slain Malcolm.

"It is not widely known that the ballroom was not secured as a crime scene," Dodson said. "A party was scheduled that evening and the place was cleaned up and readied for that event." Dodson said that the items on display represented

only one percent of Malcolm's memorabilia at the Schomburg, much of which was secured in a settlement with the owner who had purchased it during an auction in Florida.

"This is one of the single most important collections to come to New York Public Library in the last decade," Dr. Paul LeClerc, president of the New York Public Library, said during the press conference. "It is important that the history of his efforts be preserved and made accessible to future generations."

Dodson said that by the fall the materials will be made available to scholars and researchers. Meanwhile, the exhibit will stand until December 31, so find some time, lots of it, to take the family on a tour they will never forget.