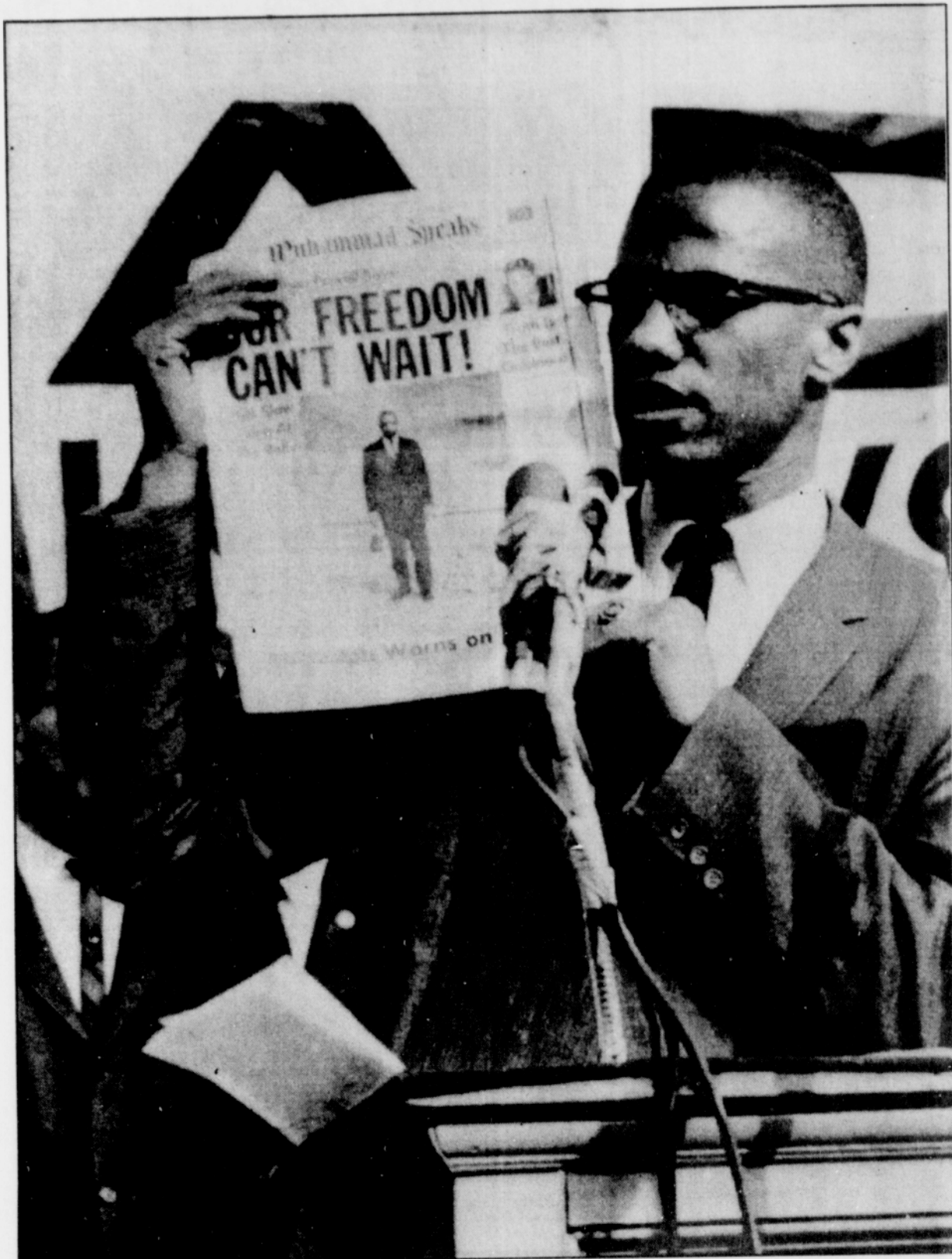


BLACK HISTORY

The Portland Observer

The Assassination Of Malcolm X: It's Time To Heal The Wounds



Political philosopher and visionary, husband and father, dynamic orator, militant minister, Malcolm X was both loved and despised, revered and feared-until an assassin's bullet cut him down in 1965. Credit: AP/World Wide Photos

(Part I)

February 21, 1995 will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X, one of the most tragic and painful events in the history of African people in America. El hajj Malik Shabazz, our "Black Shining Prince" was felled by a hail of bullets as he prepared to speak at the Audubon Ballroom in his beloved Harlem. One of the most extraordinary leaders African people have ever produced was cut down in the prime of his life and in the midst of a critical period of evolution and growth as a human being and leader.

Our memories of Malcolm are marred by the unresolved questions about his assassination. The FBI's recent charge that Qubilah Shabazz, one of Malcolm's daughters, was plotting to kill Minister Louis Farrakhan brought a lingering question to the forefront once again. Who killed Malcolm X and what role did Minister Louis Farrakhan play in the murder of Malcolm? It is the question which hangs over the head of Minister Farrakhan standing as a barrier to his full acceptance as the preeminent African American leader on the scene today. It is the question which the U.S. government hoped to exploit to provoke conflict and division within the Black Nation when it brought its bogus charges against Qubilah Shabazz.

It is the question which must be addressed if the wounds opened by this terrible event are to be healed. We must learn the lessons from this painful period and move on determined to heal the wounds and determined not to repeat the errors which were made as this tragedy unfolded. We must heal the wounds so that we can forge the kind of operational unity required for the restoration of the race into the Twenty-First Century. For the healing process to begin, however, we must sum up what can reasonably be concluded from this tragic moment in our history.

In departing from the Nation of

Islam (NOI) and splitting with his former teacher, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X did what he felt he had to do. Malcolm was increasingly the victim of envy and jealousy on the part of many within the NOI who resented his growing popularity with the Black masses and his special relationship to the "Messenger." But Malcolm's growing ideological, religious and ethical differences with the Messenger were the major factors in the rupture of the relationship. When the Honorable Elijah Muhammad silenced Malcolm over remarks which he made about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, all of the latent and overt contradictions in the relationship between Malcolm and his mentor were ripe to be exploited.

When Malcolm's overtures to the Honorable Elijah Muhammad to lift his suspension were rebuffed, Malcolm made the fateful decision to leave the Nation and form the Organization of African American Unity (OAAU) and Muslim Mosque, Inc. In leaving, however, Malcolm also broke his silence about what he had discovered about his spiritual father, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. He lashed out at the Messenger and revealed that he had fathered several children by women in the NOI. These damning revelations, uttered no doubt out of Malcolm's sense of rejection, hurt and pain, infuriated Malcolm's detractors within the Nation and provided the ammunition for them to inflame the passions of the rank and file membership and the dread Fruit of Islam - the deadly military force which was sworn to enforce discipline within the NOI.

As Haki Madhubuti suggests in his most recent book, Claiming the Earth, Malcolm's attack on the Honorable Elijah Muhammad was tantamount to signing his own death certificate. It is reasonable to assume that the Honorable Elijah Muhammad wanted Malcolm silenced/elim-

inated for good and that Malcolm's enemies within the Nation were also eager to be rid of him. Minister Farrakhan had been recruited into the Nation by Malcolm and Malcolm was Farrakhan's friend and mentor. Malcolm's break with the NOI, however, forced people within the Nation to choose sides. Many Malcolm loyalists left the nation with him and joined in the effort to build the OAAU. Farrakhan elected to stay in the Nation in support of the man he perceived to be his ultimate teacher and leader, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad.

No doubt the departure of Malcolm and many of his closest allies created space for upward mobility in the hierarchy of the NOI. What better way to prove one's loyalty to the "father" and advance up the ladder of per in the NOI than to vehemently denounce and vilify the "traitor" Malcolm X. Indeed, Philbert, one of Malcolm's own brothers, joined in the campaign to discredit and destroy him. In this atmosphere Ministers throughout the NOI were caught up in jockeying to see who could deliver the most damaging denunciations of Malcolm.

But it was the, youthful, fiery, aspiring Farrakhan, the up and coming Minister from Boston, who emerged as the point man in the campaign against Malcolm. It was Farrakhan in a highly publicized speech who proclaimed that Malcolm X, his former mentor and friend, was "worthy of death." Though there is no evidence that Farrakhan was directly involved in the assassination of Malcolm X. His indictment of Malcolm, along with the collective utterances of ministers and officials of the NOI, provided the sanction for the assassination of Malcolm X. To murder Malcolm would be a "badge of honor." By his own admission, Farrakhan contributed to the climate which led to the assassination of Malcolm X.

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