

The Resurrection of the Spirit of Malcolm X: A Review of Manning Marable's Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention

The two hallmarks of Dr. Manning Marable's scholarship center on his showing compassion for and an understanding of African-Americans. An engaged scholar, he made accurate assessments on the economic, political and sociological questions facing Blacks in America. He stood as the vanguard against structural racism, poverty, sexism, materialism, and American militarism. As a pointed political analyst and activist, Dr. Marable was a democratic socialist with a keen intellect. His previous texts were wholly insightful. However, a major shift occurs in *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, his 2011 biography of Malcolm X, and the change is massive, making the biography a colossal failure or success depending on one's perspective. I think it's a failure.

A close reading of *Reinvention* – juxtaposed with an examination of classical African-American literature (including some of Dr. Marable's major works), American and African-American history and Christian Theology – reveals that this Pulitzer Prize-winning biography is filled with a multitude of cultural and historical distortions. The overall tenor of the book nearly contradicts most of all Dr. Marable's previous works. Major questions exist and will persist in the future. Race and space take center stage, colliding with each other miserably. Malcolm X, the man, his work, and his family are portrayed as truly flawed individuals in a fair and balanced world. In the end, the book gives readers a fabricated and poisonous reinvention of Malcolm X, one that lacks weight, and is divorced from cultural & historical accuracy and America's longstanding structural racism.

Dr. Marable states that his “primary purpose in this book is to go beyond the legend: to recount what actually occurred in Malcolm's life” (12). He claims that he wants to dispel or

demythologize Alex Haley's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. In Haley's book, Malcolm X says that, "Pimping, as Sammy did was out. I felt I had no abilities in that direction, and that I'd certainly starve to death trying to recruit prostitutes" (98) Yet, in *Reinvention*, Malcolm X is identified as a "steerer for Harlem prostitutes" (68) and a "onetime pimp" (78), perpetuating the myth of Malcolm as a pimp. Another area of contention is the framing of the Nation of Islam, referred to as a "sect" (9) that was a stone's throw from a cult. In *Martin & Malcolm & America: a Dream or a Nightmare* we learn that, in 1959, Malcolm X "urged Elijah Muhammad to go to Mecca in order to link the Nation of Islam with worldwide Islam" (Cone 312). In 1960, Elijah Muhammad travelled to Mecca and took what essentially was the Hajj but because it was during the off season it was termed the "urma." Malcolm later claimed the singular distinction of being the first American to officially complete the Hajj. As a result, the Nation of Islam was recognized internationally as a legitimate Muslim group. Part of a world religion. This is an important historical experience which is not honored in *Reinvention*.

As shamefully evidenced by *Reinvention* biographies can be skewed as ideological political texts. Here, accuracy and clarity are sacrificed although positive evidence and research exist. When the author of such a book is Dr. Marable, that is both shocking and unforgivable. The book also shows a gap in Dr. Marable's thinking. In *The Great Wells of Democracy: The Meaning of Race in American Life*, he knowingly maintains that there are two warring narratives in the American story:

One narrative, the story that is still largely taught in our schools and promulgated within the national media, within our major cultural institutions, and by our political and corporate elites, is that America has always been the world's finest example of "democracy"; that our Founding Fathers crafted a Constitution that preserved and guaranteed basic freedoms to all. This is the dominant national narrative, the story Americans like to celebrate and tell about themselves. The second, subaltern narrative,

however, a strikingly different version of these same events, informs the view of the most marginalized and disadvantaged.(xii)

This second narrative is the primary reality lived by African-Americans, in particular. But it is also true for all people of color, in general, who are living in America. This unfortunate subaltern narrative has included extreme violence, lynching, America's demonizing blackness, and the denigration of institutions created for Black people by Black people through an intricate web and construction of structural racism. The architects of America's political structure were white supremacists that, in the words of Fannie Lou Hamer, "created a system run by a handful for a handful." The primary narrative is itself a myth that excludes most whites, the poor and average workers who, subtracting the racism, suffer from class oppression. For the masses of people in America, the subaltern narrative is more closely aligned to their sociological, political and economic realities. How then can Dr. Marable write a biography on Malcolm X devoid of these realities?

To ensure that whiteness is supreme, the founding fathers created a color-based prejudiced system that ensures economic disparities for African-Americans. This is White nationalism which is promoted by the dominant myth or narrative of America and is the fiber of its laws governing its Black citizens. In *The Great Wells*, Dr. Marable reminds us that:

At the 1787 Constitutional Convention, the delegates agreed to count each slave as three-fifths of a person regarding each state's representation in the House of Representatives. Article IV, Section 2, of the Constitution also declared that persons "held to service or labour" in one state who flee successfully to another "shall be delivered up on the claim of the party to whom such service or labour may be due." Historian Roger Wilkins has noted that the notorious three-fifths compromise "would prove sufficient to give the South undue influence in national affairs up until the Civil War. The compromise that was deemed necessary to create the nation also preserved for posterity a mathematical expression of the cruelty and inhumanity at the core of American culture." Over several centuries, white Americans successfully constructed their own distinct racial universe, a white supremacist worldview in which, as Wilkins argued, "white people's versions of the way things were are the way things are; that black people's versions of the ways

things were are discredited at the source and thus may be discounted without any attempt at analysis.(34)

The 1857's landmark case *Dred Scott v. Sandford* questioned whether enslaved Africans were to be included in the US Constitution's "We the People." The decision gave Blacks no rights that whites were "bound to respect." Similarly, *Plessy v. Ferguson* was a major plank in the house that white supremacy built with its 1896 United States Supreme Court decision declaring "*separate but equal*." The formula for structural racism in America equals power, plus prejudice – power largely wielded by white Americans. Black life in America cannot be divorced from this damaging formula. Neither can Dr. Marable's biography in its examination of Malcolm X justifiably ignore the power of structural racism.

When the vantage point is Africentric, it is not difficult to understand how and why a massive biography is dedicated to bashing an important African-American icon like Malcolm X. Dr. Marable was not Africentric. To the contrary, he was a democratic socialist. But his work consistently promoted and encouraged Black people using unity or group cohesion as a tool for liberation and freedom. Acknowledging that the way to achieve this desired liberation was to collaborate with other oppressed and marginalized groups, Malcolm X dared to speak for the masses of the urban poor who rarely had any representation, or had inarticulate representation. He gave voice to the marginalized, Northern, urban poor. He showed white America their racist behavior and assigned blame. For this, American (and international) whites hated him. And systemic structural racism keeps hostile, antagonistic feelings still alive today, almost 50 years after his assassination. America's primary narrative continues. Promoted and programmed by the national media, willing or unwitting accomplices act as programmed. This includes scholars like Dr. Marable. .

The biography's negative portrayal of Malcolm X is parallel to the racist treatment of Haiti, by the American media over two centuries after the Haitian Revolution. Black individuals like Malcolm X and Black nations like Haiti are not forgiven when they dare to rebel against their white oppressors and fight for their rights. History sanctions white people and nations having the right to fight physically and intellectually as was the case in the American Revolution. When Black people and Black nations rebel they are perpetually punished, reprimanded, and instructed in the virtues of obedience to the masters, and nonviolence. In his article *Haiti: The Truth African-Americans Have Not Been Allowed to Know*, which appeared in Ebony Magazine's April 2010 issue, Randall Robinson elucidated this point while posing pressing questions:

MOST OF WHAT THERE IS TO BE TOLD ABOUT HAITI, THE AMERICAN GENERAL PUBLIC HAS NEVER BEEN TOLD. And much of what little the American general public has been told about Haiti is not true. Following the earthquake that crippled the country on January 12, virtually every news mention of Haiti carried with it the doleful description of the country as "the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere." Never asked was the question: Why? Why is Haiti so different from the rest of the democratic, middle-income Caribbean countries that surround it? How could a people so wonderfully resilient, so artistically gifted, so braced by pride, so knowing of their heroic history and rich culture--how could such an unquestionably special people remain so poor economically? What root cause, what uniquely defining historical event set Haiti adrift from the rest of the black world—the event that has, for more than 200 years, benefited virtually everyone in the Black world save the Haitian people; the event for which the Haitian people have been relentlessly punished by the United States, France and much of the white world over virtually the entire term of Haiti's beleaguered history as a free and independent black nation; the event of which, sadly, far too many African-Americans have been all but oblivious?(78)

The answer is simple: The Haitian Revolution. Truth can be hidden or manipulated for many reasons.

Although Dr. Marable lived to see the text finished, I submit that the breadth and depth of the racism, classism, sexism, materialism, historical distortions, sociological lies, and mean spiritedness that can be found in the biography are absent in Marable's other major works. Did

his illness – causing him to work against the clock – contribute to his move away from an overall pro-Black political focus? Did his illness gravely affect the tenor of his scholarship? In none of Dr. Marable’s other major works can you find active anti-Black sentiment. This politicized biography systematically discredits Malcolm X, a clear champion of the marginalized and poor. *Reinvention* dismantles Malcolm X’s humanity. And, yet Dr. Marable signed off on this.

This is not the first time Black humanity is devalued. Malcolm X represents Black resistance. He remains a key symbol of a positive, pro-Black, political resistance movement that started on the shores of Africa with the resistance of Africans who fought against their captors and waged mutinies on the enslaver’s ships by Africans like Cinque and others. Africans rebelled in all of the islands creating maroon colonies that fought bravely and gallantly for our freedom. These struggles continued in African-American history without ceasing. Herbert Aptheker documented hundreds of these revolutions which are poorly taught and often never mentioned in American history. Small wonder that African-Americans continue the tradition and began to aggressively question the so-called unquestionable racist environment created by the dominant culture. Black people, the proverbial fish, began questioning the water, the social construction, the hell that they have been forced to endure. A sociological hell for blacks and people of color in America exists. Malcolm X correctly pointed an accusing public finger at the pattern of white America’s corrupt behavior. Historically, unchecked behaviors which are destructive must be condemned to be stopped. This can be accomplished by requiring perpetrators now to take responsibility and become accountable for their actions.

Malcolm X raised up a mirror to white America. He exposed their institutional violence, lies and murderous tendencies. He exposed their role as one of the world’s greatest progenitors of hate, imperialism and violence. He was able to debunk white American propaganda, which

points a finger at Black people as the source of the social, political and economic evils present in American culture. In spite of Dr. Marable's best intentions, he became an unwitting accomplice to maintaining the primary narrative.

Malcolm X was a truth-teller like the Biblical serpent. And accordingly, he has been vilified. Nevertheless, when we get past all of the theological acrobatics and religious dogma, the serpent was indeed a truth-teller. Everything the serpent said was going to happen did in fact come true. Modern biblical scholarship suggests that our old understanding of the serpent story must be completely revised. Dr. Elaine Pagels' *The Origin of Satan* and the *Nag Hammadi Library* anthology containing the essay "The Testimony of Truth" delve into this further. Like the serpent, Malcolm X has been demonized by western culture, white folks and others who support white imperialism and capitalism.

Dr. Marable was a superb historian with a firm grasp of how white imperialism and capitalism are anti-Black. He knew how these negative white values and evils clash with the hopes and goals of the Black community. His own knowledge and education of Black culture began at a young age. Marable's mother was an educator, a public school teacher. She gave him books to read on Black history as a child. By the time he reached middle school, he had read Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folks* and Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* as he proudly boasts in *The Great Wells* (ix). Yet *Reinvention* fails to incorporate white America's denial of the subaltern narrative which has deep roots in these classic texts.

It is the failure of white culture to both acknowledge and understand that this subaltern narrative is a monumental source of tension between Blacks and whites. An imbalance continues to exist. Dr. Marable seems to miss this point altogether. His *Reinvention's* analysis shows it by siding with the traditionally dominant, imperialist, and racist narrative. This is a major and

striking shift away from and in opposition to all of Dr. Marable's previous major works which have a pro-Black leaning and are positive relative to group unity and interests. Notably, those works had little appeal to the whites. Today, Black interests still demand credible Africentric scholarship and group unity. Black freedom remains vulnerable at the hands of white American culture. After more than one hundred years after freedom white people are still practicing white-supremacy, racial segregation, lynching of Blacks, and injustice. As a result, Black people are essentially second class citizens in a two-tier society, despite token Blacks like President Obama and Colin Powell.

Morality and Christianity in this two-tier society has a disturbing history. It wasn't until the early 60s that white morality and black morality began to merge. Although African-Americans professed Christianity, many if not most maintained a morality that was culturally separate from that of white America. For example, Booker T. Washington in his classic *Up From Slavery* gives us some important insight into the enslaved African's concept of morality when he relates the following story:

...one of my earliest recollections is that of my mother cooking a chicken late at night, and awakening her children for the purpose of feeding them. How or where she got it I do not know. I presume, however, it was procured from our owner's farm. Some people may call this theft. If such a thing were to happen now, I should condemn it as theft myself. But taking place at the time it did and for the reason that it did, no one could ever make me believe that my mother was guilty of thieving... (17)

Here we are allowed to witness the historical contextual moral reasoning of a formerly enslaved African in a process of what I call *African-American situational ethics*. White Christians made an effort to separate enslaved Africans from their own native concepts of morality. The enslaved African reasoned that no people who enslaved another people were owed moral deference. Therefore, Washington's mother was innocent of any wrongdoing because her enslaver was a thief and a kidnapper. He was guilty of the crime of having taken her or her ancestors from the

state of freedom in Africa. Thus, a white criminal has no rights that an enslaved African was bound to respect. This is the profound logic of many enslaved Africans and African-Americans concerning white history and slavery.

In addition, white Americans practiced racism, slavery and segregation in their churches. In Dr. Howard D. Gregg's *The A.M.E. Church and the Current Negro Revolt*, he states that, "The first protest movement by Negroes in America was started in 1787 by Richard Allen" (7)

Allen and Absalom Jones led a group of Blacks out of a church in St. Georges, in Philadelphia, when they were forcibly removed while on their knees in prayer by a group of whites demanding they leave the altar and go upstairs to the segregated section of the church to pray. From this act of racism the A.M.E. church was born. Racism was an integral part of western Christianity. Ironically, the Civil Rights Movement was instrumental in helping African-Americans accept white America's cultural and religious values. In Dr. Marable's *Race, Reform and Rebellion: the Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1982*, he states that "between 1962 and 1965, Martin Luther King was the acknowledged moral and political leader of millions of Americans, black and white. After the March on Washington, King became one of the three or four most influential figures in the world" (84)

Since Allen's encounter with racism in 1787, African-Americans have been clear that western Christianity, as practiced by the majority of white Christians, has failed as a sociological unifier in America. In a two-tier society, two faces of Christianity have existed, which allowed white Americans to reduce African-Americans to status of their property. That was a subhuman status, violating principles that all Christians were commanded to live by. By denying Africans and African-Americans status as potential Christian human beings they denied Black people access to the primary, narrative and subsequently, justified and rationalized the subaltern

narrative. Whites who did apply Christian scriptures to Africans were certainly in the extreme minority.

Also in the minority is a sensible framing of Earl Little, Malcolm X's father, in *Reinvention*. Dr. Marable gives readers a picture of Little's hometown of Reynolds, Georgia, in 1890:

Between 1882 and 1927 Georgia's white racists lynched more than five hundred blacks, putting the state second only to Mississippi in lynching deaths. The depression of the 1890s had hit hard...As jobs grew increasingly scarce, skilled white laborers faced increasing competition from blacks especially in masonry, carpentry, and the mechanical trades. [Consequently], Earl Little's status as a skilled carpenter probably provoked tensions with local whites, and his parents and friends feared for his safety.

...Little frequently got into heated arguments with whites who resented his air of independence. Reynolds...had seen several lynchings and countless acts of violence against blacks. ...Daisy's extended family liked neither his brawling with whites nor the way he treated his wife. By 1917, tired of fighting his in-laws, and of white threats of violence, Earl abandoned his young wife and children as part of the great northern migration of Southern blacks that began during World War I.(15-17)

We are given a sterile, matter-of-fact description of Reynolds, Georgia, although it was ranked #2 in lynching. No comment on lynching is given. In *Up from Slavery* Booker T. Washington considers lynching an "evil habit" of white America (192) This is the environment Malcolm's father, lived in. Although a skilled carpenter, he was routinely denied employment and thereby unable to support his family, not because he lacked skills but, as Dr. Marable states, because he was "well over six feet tall, muscular and dark skinned..." (15) We are also told that Little was a "brawler," and that "Earl was prone to physical violence with his wife and most of his children" (30) Earl's story is given in isolation without proper historical and political context. Again, Dr. Marable signed off on this erroneous account.

There is no mention of Little as a Christian minister in Georgia or his strong Christian leaning. When he disciplined his children in the 1930s and 40s it is conceivable that as a

Christian minister, he adhered to the Bible and Proverbs 13:24 where it says, “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.” This is the classical biblical scripture that is quoted when Christians are asked why they indulge in corporal punishment. During this time physical discipline in child rearing was the popular understanding of scripture. In short, that meant that to spare the rod was to spoil your child. In this regard, Malcolm’s father is no exception. He should not be classified as some brute simply because he believed in corporal punishment.

Similarly, the Book of Colossians 3:18-19 gives women explicit instructions as well as to the men when it says, “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as if fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.” The then-popular understanding of this was women should do what their husbands ask of them, and if they did not the husband could physically coerce them. The 19th verse says, “Do not be harsh with them” and love them.

We now know that many of these Biblical ideas are sexist. However, to make it appear that Little is unduly violent for disciplining his children (not beating them), and for being sometime harsh with his wife, is problematic. Within Christian culture at that time Earl was within the norm. To suggest otherwise, is to lie and do violence to cultural Biblical history that was and is fundamentalist Christianity.

According to Dr. Marable, Little’s status as a skilled carpenter probably provoked tension with local whites. His skills surely threatened both skilled and unskilled whites. That Little would stand his ground and fight for himself and his family made his family and friends afraid for his safety. This would have caused his wife Daisy, and other rational family members, to fear for his life. This is not because Little is abusive as implied by the statement, “Daisy’s extended family liked neither his brawling nor the way he treated his wife”(Col. 15 -16). The absence of a

note, citation or evidence should prompt readers to question Little's inferred abuse. We are told that Earl abandoned his young wife and children as part of the great northern migration of Southern Blacks. Did he abandon his family, or did he leave for the great northern migration to find work so that he could support his family? It cannot be both. Little's choice would destroy him either way. This places him in what some psychologists call the classic double bind. If he stays in Georgia he must not "brawl" for his humanity. He must stand by and watch his family suffer and quite possibly die. He might be lynched himself. Or, he could leave this racist town where hundreds of blacks had been lynched to go find work up North. He is then subject to being accused of abandoning his family, and always running the risk of not being able to bring them back together again. Additionally, *Reinvention* refers to Earl and Daisy's home life as "slightly less tumultuous" (Marable 15) than the lynchings and countless acts of violence committed against Blacks in Georgia. Is this an attempt at humor? If it is, the humor is lost on me.

Little, and his marriage to Daisy, are put under a wider than necessary lens. Late 19th century through pre-Civil Rights America, and murderous terrorism (mobocracy) and racism in the south are not disparaged. Structural racism is, thus, made more benign. This helps depict Little as almost pathological. The burden of problems is placed on Little and his family, which is equivalent to blaming the victim. Little was a Black man who wanted to live life on his own terms, without the permission of white people. Nevertheless, according to Dr. Marable in his book *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*, he states:

The most striking fact about American economic history and politics is the brutal and systemic underdevelopment of Black people. Afro-Americans have been on the other side of one of the most remarkable and rapid accumulations of capital seen anywhere in human history, existing as a necessary yet circumscribed victim within the proverbial belly of the beast. The relationship is filled with paradoxes: each advance in white freedom was purchased by black enslavement; white affluence coexist with Black poverty; white state and corporate power is the product in part of Black powerlessness; income mobility for the few is rooted in income stasis for the many. Many politicians,

intellectuals and civic leaders condemn the United States on the grounds that white society has systematically excluded Blacks as a group from the material, cultural and political gains achieved by other ethnic minorities. Blacks are unemployed, economically exploited and politically disfranchised because they are excluded or segregated because of caste or racial discrimination. But there is another point of view on this issue: Blacks occupy the lowest socioeconomic rung in the ladder of American upward mobility precisely because they have been “integrated” all too well into the system. America’s “democratic” government and “free enterprise” system are structured deliberately and specifically to maximize Black oppression. Capitalist development has occurred not in spite of the exclusion of Blacks, but because of the brutal exploitation of Blacks as workers and consumers. Blacks have never been equal partners in the American Social Contract, because the system exists not to develop, but to *underdevelop Black people*. (Emphasis his) (1-2)

Revisiting the fish and water analogy, pre-*Reinvention* the water is indeed poisonous, deadly, according to Dr. Marable. It is the predator killing particular fish. In fact, in *How Capitalism*, he further insists:

...Underdevelopment was the direct consequence of this process: chattel slavery, sharecropping, peonage, industrial labor at low wages, and cultural chaos. The current economic amnesia of the west is therefore no accident, because it reveals the true roots of massive exploitation and human degradation upon which the current world order rests. The world ‘periphery’ and capitalist ‘core’ share a common history.(3-4)

By implication, Dr. Marable is saying that capitalism is the problem of the Little family and not their individual flaws. American capitalism and its brutality have long damaged the Black community and Dr. Marable always exposed it. Yet, such insight is conspicuously missing from Little’s story.

Malcolm’s half-sister, Ella, Little’s daughter from a previous marriage, receives equally harsh treatment from Dr. Marable in *Reinvention* after initially being portrayed in a positive manner:

With Malcolm separated from the family,...*help* [emphasis mine] arrived from Boston in late 1939 or early 1940 in the form of Ella Little, their oldest half sister. One of Earl’s children from his first marriage...Though she had never met—or at least had never been

much involved with—Earl’s second family, when news reached her of their troubles in Lansing, she set out to take an active role in the children’s supervision.(37)

The 26 year-old Ella takes on the mammoth responsibility of rearing children that she had never met. She’s a savior and mother figure. However, the biography quickly starts to denigrate and reduce Ella into a paranoid, mentally unstable and criminally-minded woman. The assault includes describing her appearance in pejorative terms. We are told that, “to the fifteen-year-old Malcolm, [Ella] was an assertive, no-nonsense woman...Malcolm was particularly affected by the physical differences between the two women; Ella’s jet-black skin and robust physique provided a striking contrast to Louise’s [Malcolm’s mother] much lighter complexion” (Marable 37). ‘Jet-black’ versus dark and “much” lighter complexion. “Robust physique” is usually a term used to describe men. Since no citations are given, this description could be construed as pure conjecture and projection.

In most of his previous works, Dr. Marable was conscious of physical racism and its roots. In *Black American Politics: From the Washington Marches to Jesse Jackson* he explains: “Western Europeans were...preconditioned to identify aliens as ‘black.’ The word itself was by the fifteenth century linked with ‘sin, damnation, death, despair, ugliness and evil.’ The devil was the ‘Black Prince;’ to become black was gradually transformed from being merely ‘soiled’ and ‘dirty’ to a state of malignancy. As historian C. Vann Woodward observed, ‘long before Jamestown was founded the English had associated slavery with blackness, heathens, captivity and Biblical injunction’.” (5) These are the historical seeds of western obsession with color. Neither Malcolm X nor Dr. Marable shared such prejudice, and the biography’s lack of positive race consciousness that each and every one of Dr. Marable’s major works carry, is a complete

disappointment. Additionally, the text describes Little's family hostilities that must be questioned.

Dr. Marable says that when Ella invited Malcolm to spend a summer with her, he "jumped at the chance" (37) although he had never met or spent time with her. Where is his supposed resistance toward her? In *Reinvention*, Dr. Marable's attack against Ella then takes a nasty turn:

Ella turned out to be neither a stable parental figure nor a particularly pleasant housemate. Her repeated run-ins with the law testify to her belligerent and paranoid behavior, a recklessness that only worsened through the years. Two decades after these events, she was admitted to the Massachusetts Mental Health Center, after charges of being armed with a dangerous weapon. There, she was interviewed by the center's director of psychiatry, Dr. Elvin Semrad. Even though he reported that she had been "a model patient, entirely reasonable, showing wit, intelligence, and charm," he was far from won over. Ella was also "a paranoid character," he observed, who "because of the militant nature of her character...could be considered a dangerous individual.(40)

We see again that behavior and end results are given without context. Ella is labeled a dangerous, societal misfit needing restraint. In the chapter *Psychopolitics* from his book *From the Grassroots: Social and Political Essays Towards Afro-American Liberation*, which, by the way, challenges the position taken in the biography, Dr. Marable discusses clinicians' racist assessments:

"Social deviance," as defined by most psychologists and other intellectuals is a term which connotes specific patterns of behavior which are not shared by those participants within the "normal" society. As Frantz Fanon revealed, within a racist society the racist is the healthy or normal person... To be "deviant" within a capitalist society is to question or react negatively to the basic social values of the society.(128)

In this, his earlier work, symbolic Ella is mentally healthy. Ella, the woman, knows that the real problem is white America, in part because her father Earl Little would have instilled in her young mind a sense of racial pride and resistance to structural racism. Dr. Marable says Little

“constantly drilled in the principles of Garveyism, to such an extent that they expressed their Black Nationalist values at school” (29) Racial pride centers individuals and provides psychological armor. It doesn’t fracture individuals. Black racial pride is an integral component of Blacks in America taking action, of building institutions and moving the race forward.

In *The Great Wells*, Dr. Marable explains the limitations of “state-based” and “race-based” social reforms. He informs us that the first social theorist to comprehend this was Dr. Du Bois:

Black political history has largely been construed around two major paradigms of public activism---“state-based” and “race-based” reform movements. Liberal integrationists, on one hand, endeavored to increase opportunities for the upward mobility of blacks by changing U.S. laws and pushing for reforms within the state and civil society. Reforms such as affirmative action were the result and greatly expanded the black middle class. “Race-based” politics, or the politics of Black Nationalism, emphasized the construction of strong black institutions, families, and communities and gave millions of African Americans a sense of cultural integrity and pride. Both strategies, however, represented in some respects the tension between Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X a generation ago, were limited. “Integration” into a system of inequality did not make the system fundamentally more egalitarian or create a more vibrant civil society; racial separatism kept African-Americans from the larger recognition that our dilemma could not be solved in isolation from the oppression and exploitation of others within our society. The first social theorist who really understood this was W.E.B. Du Bois. Through his work spanning nearly a century, Du Bois attempted to imagine a different kind of multiracial democracy, a society of access and opportunity where our unique voices and cultural gifts would not be lost in the process of desegregation.(xv)

According to Dr. Marable’s position on King’s “state-based” liberalism, and Malcolm’s “race-based” stance, both have merit but are limited. As a Marxist, Dr. Marable’s analysis is unique and clearly tintured with nationalist sentiment. He maintains that:

Part of the rationale for a new conversation about race must inevitably include the issue of black reparations, compensation for centuries of structural racism—not just for enslavement and the transatlantic slave trade, but also for a century of Jim Crow legal segregation, urban ghettoization, and mass incarceration. Any nation that incarcerates 2 million of its own citizens behind bars and disenfranchises over 4 million for life cannot expect to have social peace unless fundamental changes occur. The contemporary issue

of terrorism must also be viewed, in part, through the lens of race, if we are to negotiate new terms for what our democracy should become.(xiv)

Ironically, structural racism helped to produce Malcolm X. Had Earl Little not migrated North, he never would have met his second wife, Malcolm's mother. I find it equally important to note that, "Ella was arrested an astonishing twenty-one times, and yet convicted only once" (Marable 42). It is in fact "astonishing" that the police harassed her twenty times without finding her guilty of a crime. Although an arrest does not equal guilt, the biography cloaks her in a recidivist's cape.

An unsubstantiated link between Ella and Malcolm is then made in the biography: "Her [Ella's] criminal behavior and knack for evading responsibility presented him with a vivid message. Unchecked by any moral counterforce, he was set on an unsteady path that would define the next phase of his youth.

Years later he would describe this time as a 'destructive detour' in an otherwise purpose-driven life" (Marable 42). An independent statement by Malcolm about his destructive behavior in his early youth is unfairly placed at Ella's feet. Readers, beware of the double-talk, and, the push-pull tactic of routinely attacking and praising Malcolm X and his family as they see the need. Here, Malcolm is responsible, "Malcolm's obvious attractions to the ghetto's underworld caused tension back at his new home, and partially to placate Ella he found part-time employment as a shoeshine boy at the Roseland Ballroom" (Marable 43).

Malcolm made the decision to drop out of school, not Ella (Marable, 45). According to Dr. Marable, Ella encouraged Malcolm to date Gloria Strother from the "solidly middle-class" and spoke out against his liaison with club dancer Bea Caragulian (46) This time, the book gives Ella credit: "Living with Ella may have reinforced the importance of politics and racial identity,

prized by his parents” (Marable 42). This back-and-forth is absurd and undermines the positive influence Ella had on her brother.

In closing Ella’s see-saw portrait in the book, I must comment of the notion of “half brothers and sisters.” In the African-American community, the concept of a “half” sibling is not as class structured as it is in white America. Children of the same mother or father are generally accepted as brothers and sisters—not “half” siblings. Going even further, a wonderful passage from Booker T. Washington’s *Up from Slavery* tells the story of how he and his brother, both college graduates with some means, provide the money for their adopted brother, James, to go to Hampton Institute. The concept of a “half” sibling magnifying the division of a family is more of a European/white concept. .

A further examination of Malcolm’s relationships with women is explored by Dr.

Marable in *Reinvention*:

Bea Caragulian, an ethnic white woman...blonde Armenian...had been a professional dancer, who, with the exception of Betty Shabazz, maintained the longest intimate relationship with Malcolm... Malcolm was not yet legally an adult ...It is difficult to know her motives for having an open sexual relationship with a black teenager...Their sexual relationship was yet another violated taboo in a society still defined by race and class, but Bea’s obvious desire created, for Malcolm, a sense of masculine authority and power. To the world of hustlers, he had arrived as a serious player. The liaison infuriated Ella.(46)

There is no mystery here. It is simple: a married, adult white woman likes young Black boys.

She’s a pedophile. No relationship exists. She’s a white woman slumming, a bottom feeder.

Irrespective of her criminal behavior, she was breaking the miscegenation laws. By 1940, a majority (31 out of 48) of states had banned interracial marriage (or miscegenation) in some form. Although her interracial relationship with Malcolm was not a crime in Detroit in 1940, her sexual relationship with a teenager was definitely a crime. And despite the label that she was a professional dancer, she was a lowly club dancer and was not a society woman; and certainly,

she was not of the social elite. That the book puts her and Betty Shabazz together is an insult. Betty Shabazz was college educated and had strong Christian values which had been instilled in her by her parents. And, she was Malcolm's legal wife. To some extent, for some Afrocentric scholars, Dr. Marable and his team of scholars, can be indicted are academic zombies, intellectual thugs hired by the white society, and complete with troglodyte ideologies.

Malcolm was openly sexual at a time and age when sexual promiscuity in Ella's house was certainly not encouraged. Malcolm was at the height of his delinquency, yet the book fails to mention this important fact. Ella called Bea, "a thrill-[seeker] for whom young black men like Malcolm were just another wild adventure" (Marable 46). Nothing could have been truer. In the Black community, younger males who are sexual with older women are given an elevated social status. Bea's role is downplayed because of the metaphysics of white skin privilege. The effect on Malcolm is never discussed although he was a child who just a year before did not drink, smoke, and probably had not known many girls sexually, and had no relations with adult women. We do not know for certain that this is Malcolm's second longest relationship. He could have had other relationships with women we know nothing about. Apex predator Bea in no way deserves to be placed alongside Betty Shabazz.

The book's overall lack of sensitivity sadly increases exponentially, when it focused on Malcolm's life. Scholar Derrick Bell may have referred to Malcolm X as "the last Black hero." Nevertheless, *Reinvention* steers clear of offering him a hero's welcome. Betrayed, Malcolm becomes a target and a pawn in yet another demonstration of how structural racism damages lives. It is insidious. Malcolm's brilliance as Black America's pivotal social, political and economic figure and advocate is tarnished. Once more, Dr. Marable signed off on this point too.

Malcolm, is essentially an orphan whose father was lynched and whose mother was driven to distraction by the weight of having to care for nine people alone. But this important fact is shown little to no humanity. Incarcerated as a child and somehow identified and labeled the ring leader in a motley crew that included the delinquent, Shorty, he became hardened. The biography keeps Malcolm hard, a stereotype. At the same time, he must at every turn be the protector and defender of African humanity. In the eyes and words of Dr. Marable, he can't win on these pages:

Bea's self-serving actions left a profound impression of Malcolm. "All women, by their nature, are fragile and weak," he observed. "They are attracted to the male in whom they see strength." His misogyny had been reinforced during his time as a steerer for Harlem prostitutes. Reflecting on his experiences, Malcolm wrote, "I got my first schooling about the cesspool morals of the white man from the best possible source, from his own women: Bea's actions underlined what he perceived as women's deceptive, opportunistic tendencies. Malcolm rarely examined his own behavior—his broken relationship with Gloria Strother, his physical abuse of Bea Caragulian—let alone his betrayal of his partners.(68-69)

This is one of the most incredibly disturbing passages in American letters. Although a victim, Malcolm is portrayed as an unreflective, harsh misogynist. Malcolm-as-pimp is reintroduced as well, showing that Dr. Marable staunchly believes this to be true. If Malcolm became a misogynist it was certainly not driving as a steerer for men. Bea's role and effect on him are non-existent. As noted by Dr. Marable in *Race, Reform and Rebellion* Malcolm once said, "For the white man to ask the black man if he hates him is just like the rapist asking the raped, or the wolf asking the sheep, "Do you hate me?" The white man is in no moral position to accuse anyone else of hate" (97)

Although a teenager, Malcolm is blamed for refusing to commit himself to Gloria Strother, another teenager (Marable 46). This position is absolutely untenable. The whole concept of dating is that you may date someone else; you are learning about women or men. The

idea that he had to be committed to Gloria is ridiculous. Bea, a married white woman preying on a young Black boy, gets to walk away unscathed, although she is a pedophile and a rapist. In a Du Boisian sense, the continuous insulting of Ella Collins, juxtaposed with putting Betty Shabazz and Bea together, is an unforgivable attack against Black womanhood.

Still a boy, Malcolm is never given room or allowed to make mistakes, as all children do growing up. In *Reinvention*, Dr. Marable unfairly and unrealistically demands that he be responsible in early childhood, when we are told that as Malcolm's mother lost all sense of financial and mental stability:

the only children who apparently failed to rally were Philbert and Malcolm, who took no part in the household obligations. After school, at Lansing's Pleasant Grove Elementary, the two boys would hang out with local whites "to create mischief" as Philbert later admitted.

...even at seven Malcolm had a knack for avoiding hard work. Yvonne recalled her mother sending a group of children out to work in the garden. Almost immediately, "Malcolm would start talking, and we would start working...I can remember Malcolm lying under a tree with a straw in his mouth. [He] was telling these stories, but we were so happy to be around him that we worked.(32-33)

Dr. Marable tells us that in 1913, "Michigan passed its first comprehensive pension law for poor children with mothers who were judged suitable guardians" (33). However, in Russell Freedman's *Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the Crusade Against Child Labor*, Freedman notes that in 1913 the National Child Labor Committee passed the *Declaration of Dependence: By the Children of America in Mines and Factories and Workshops Assembled*, which states, in part:

Resolved I – that childhood is endowed with certain inherent and inalienable rights, among which are freedom from toil for daily bread; The right to play and dream, the right to the normal sleep of the night season; the right to an education, that we may have equality of opportunity for developing all there is in us of mind and heart.

Resolved II – That we declare ourselves to be helpless and dependent; that we are and of right ought to be dependent, and that we hereby present the appeal of our helplessness that we may be protected in enjoyment of the rights of childhood.

Resolved III – That we demand the restoration of our rights by abolition of child labor in America.(91)

A key omission by Dr. Marable. Accordingly, conclusions drawn on Malcolm’s work ethic as a child are cruel. Especially when we consider democratic socialists and liberal scholars boldly claiming to represent the worker and the working class. Who are more in need of an advocate than poor Black children living in a racist, capitalist system fundamentally grounded in exploitation? These were children. The fact that Malcolm’s other brothers and sister could and did “rally” is a testament to their humanity and their desire to keep their family together. But, to suggest that Philbert and Malcolm did not take part in household obligations is a violation of their characters. Malcolm is being judged as an adult although only 7 years old.

Dr. Marable helms a team of scholars caught in the act of creating fiction. Convicted of the very thing he claims Alex Haley and others have done regarding Malcolm’s life. Malcolm’s knack for “shirking” work is further documented in his “non-cooperative attitude toward prison work detail” (Marable 73). Are these defenders of the working class and laborers making such a scandalous assessment, or is this the mindset of the oppressor and capitalist? In *Reinvention* Dr.

Marable goes on to speak about Malcolm’s poor attitude and actions in prison:

During his first seven months at Charlestown, he was assigned to the prison auto shop, then, that October to work as a laborer in the yard. The month following, he was moved again, this time to sew in the underwear shop. Here he immediately ran into problems, being charged with shirking his duties. For this he was given three days detention. His work performance improved somewhat when he was reassigned to the foundry where he was considered “cooperative, poor in skill and average to poor in effort.(73)

A biography which claims to humanize Malcolm (as if he needs it) is keeping him a stereotype. One wonders if Dr. Marable has either an ax to grind or the need to create such fiction.

What is real is Malcolm X's still relevant status as an urgent champion for change in America. A social, political and economic activist, he was a man who argued for human rights while the vast majority of Black Americans in particular, and white America in general, were talking about civil rights. He was a man who told the world that African-Americans would never receive citizenship rights until America could first see us as human beings. Derisive stories about him, framing him as, essentially, a lazy Negro, only add to the negative mythology the biography sets out to debunk.

Few people in African-American history during the 20th century have had to endure prison life more than Malcolm X. According to the 13th Amendment, Section 1:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

America boasts democratic freedom. Nevertheless, America has over 2 million people in prison today. They are among people who are literally enslaved. Slavery and involuntary servitude are gone, "except" as punishment for a crime for which a person has been "duly convicted."

Malcolm describes himself as "being physically miserable and as an evil-tempered as a snake" (Marable 70). He was convinced that his lengthy prison sentence was solely due to his involvement with Bea and another white woman. He also dreaded being a child, and the challenges of prison life, a dangerous world about which he knew only horror stories. In 1946, twenty-one was the age of legal adulthood, and Malcolm was a child trapped in an adult world. This is why, according to Dr. Marable in *Reinvention*:

Malcolm fashioned his own version of adult behavior whole cloth, learning to present himself as being older, more sober, and more worldly than he really was (42)...He had exaggerated his criminal experience, making himself appear tougher and more violent than he really was.(71)

If and only if this is true, Malcolm was most probably terrified most of the time and cooperating in work or anything else would hardly be at the top of his agenda. Survival in a hostile environment must have been overwhelming. Malcolm had never been physically strong, years of alcohol addiction and cocaine use could not have helped.

Prison life is hell. It would have been overwhelming and shocking for young Malcolm. Being expected to “cooperate” in work assignments when survival is primary is somewhat of a stretch. One can say that, in 1946, young Malcolm was literally practicing nonviolent resistance with the American Prison Industrial Complex nearly a decade before Rosa Parks lit the flame of the Civil Rights Movement in 1955. Although moot within a penal context, Malcolm’s interests would have leaned more toward library work. Malcolm had little criminal experience in a violent world. And, the book falls short in adequately critiquing Michigan’s beleaguered welfare bureaucracy. It fails to denounce the welfare system for failing to assist Malcolm’s impoverished family. The system caused it to disband and ultimately led Malcolm’s mother to mental instability and being sent to a Boston Mental Hospital.

The lack of financial resources was at the center of Malcolm’s family’s crisis. American racism killed Earl Little. His absence is central, and none of this is actually factored into regarding how and why an intellectually gifted child came to be “duly convicted” and legally enslaved at 20. Dr. Marable has lost his way. His analysis is full of holes; a dire injustice to a historical figure like Malcolm. Capitalism breeds contempt for truly powerful change agents. Thus begins the fiction—the *true* reinvention or conning of Malcolm’s image. “Reinvention” is more acceptable than outright calling Malcolm a con man. The connotation is well understood.

By showing a clear disinterest in adding *Reinvention* to the rich Malcolm canon, we must search for Dr. Marable's real goals in writing the text. Critical questions include: Why is both Black Nationalism and Black solidarity being downplayed and attacked? Why is communism/Marxism being promoted as the best mode of operation for the African-American community, why? How and why are Dr. King and the civil rights pro-Black stance being reinterpreted to represent mainstream values? What's the agenda fueling how the Nation of Islam is being represented to the American public? Do some of the answers revolve around helping to control Black America? What conclusions can we draw? One unintended insight may be an understanding of how "reality," propaganda and American history are shaped, created, intertwined then disseminated to the American masses, and beyond.

In *Martin & Malcolm & America*, Dr. Cone offers a theory and a window into Malcolm's state (of mind) before and after his second trip to the so-called Middle East: Malcolm was undergoing a religious transformation as he began to discover new aspects of the Middle East and Islam. I have a different perspective; one accounting for Malcolm's political and religious transformation. I believe that his transformation was brought on by economic need. Malcolm was unemployed and unemployable because his image projected violence. By the time of his death, Malcolm had six children, a dependent wife and himself to take care of. The economic stress must have been enormous, and almost unbearable.

Death loomed over him. Government officials wanted him dead, as well as some members of the Nation of Islam. Malcolm was homeless because the Nation of Islam had required that he give up the tiny home they had given him. Is there any wonder why he was visiting the offices of Dr. King and SCLC? Malcolm needed employment, but he was outside the Civil Rights Movement. In fact, he had been very critical of Dr. King and the nonviolent

component of the Civil Rights Movement. To this end, Dr. Cone notes that Dr. King avoided Malcolm because of his violent image. Malcolm is a man without an economic base, parallel to a man without a country. And in 1964, Malcolm X became El Hajj Malik Shabazz, a man whose economic need was, in part, so strong it extended to a name change to separate himself from his controversial image. He knew that only a radical adjustment could result in fresh soil for a new, economic harvest. However, fresh soil needs water, and America's tumultuous waves, would only drown him. How to achieve such a goal was a conundrum.

Ella gave Malcolm the suggestion, the solution that changed his life. She told him to take a trip to Mecca. To get out of the country, was to relax. She and friends would take care of his family. During his travels, Malcolm decided to strengthen his role as a political, social and human rights activist and advocate. He knew he needed legitimacy in the eyes of both Black and white America. Through letters sent to political allies and high-profile friends, he tells the world that he's worshiped alongside people who might be considered white. But, as Dr. Cone points out, Malcolm had seen cross-racial worshipping before when he made the first trip to the Middle East in 1959. Why then, was it so revelatory in 1964? I began to realize that there could be another motive at work. The need was simple, Malcolm needed some employment.

As a stereotyped "Malcolm X," he cannot make headway with Dr. King or with key individuals within the civil rights community. He knows his letters will be shared and disseminated, and construed as a political conversion, affording him the opportunity to enter the Civil Rights Movement – not as a foot soldier but as a thinker and intellectual. He needs this for economic reasons as well. This is not to say that Malcolm remained fixed in his religious or political views. He was changing. He was broadening his perspective. His world had grown larger than the Nation of Islam and its parochial Black views and focus. But his economic needs

would have been more of a motivating factor than simple political and ideological altruism. We must not allow admiration for Malcolm to detract from the fact that he was a human being, a man with a family who needed employment. In the last days of his life, Malcolm had become a Black public intellectual without a platform. He had no economic base. He had very little savings and was nearly, homeless without marketable or tangible skills for self-employment.

Malcolm would have to go back to school, and at one point to acquire marketable skills for employment. He did say he would be willing to do so, to study to be a lawyer. But no such opportunity ever came. Simply put, the urban hero has clay feet like the rest of us. There should be no shame to this since Malcolm was expelled from the Nation of Islam and silenced. Let's cease and desist with the romanticism of religious conversion. He changed because of his political and economic reality, and he had to make compromises in a world without the Nation of Islam. When he returned to America, he attempted to get a meeting with Dr. King. One was indeed arranged but he was tragically murdered before they were able to meet. That these two brilliant men met face-to-face only once remains a historical tragedy. Contributing his many gifts to and working in tandem with the Civil Rights Movement, as an ally, thinker and strategist, may have changed America.

Unfortunately, America's penchant for introducing sexual supposition and scandal, as devices to undermine Black leadership, movements and change agents, has a long, disturbing history. This is especially true for biographers. In Martin Bauml Duberman's *Paul Robeson* there is a suggestion that Paul Robeson was bisexual. We are told that Robeson was not homophobic and mixed and mingled regularly with gay and lesbian artists and therefore was painted with the wide brush of guilty by association. Duberman states, "The notion that Robeson may have been bisexual, and had an affair with Eisenstein, has gained some currency... [but] I have found

absolutely no evidence to support these suggestions, and my sources have included an interview with a gay man.” (631) In fact, David Levering Lewis, in *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963*, the two-volume set of his Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of W.E.B Du Bois, walks a thin line between intellectual curiosity and obsession with Du Bois’ philandering. Regarding the size of his genitalia, the comment, “He was very well hung,” comes from the lips of an undocumented paramour (186) Serving to undermine Du Bois’ status as one of his generation’s highly regarded intellectuals.

When there is no known instance of activity, it is nevertheless generated. When biographers make comments, whether substantiated or not, they tend to become reality in the minds of readers simply because they are written on the page and allegedly documented. Could it be that the salacious nature of the claim helps to sell more books and feed a nation’s obsession with sex? Let me say for the record, homosexual American citizens should be afforded every right that heterosexual citizens are given in this country. Honestly, there is no demerit to Alex Haley’s rendition of Malcolm’s story regarding the rich older homosexual with whom, according to Malcolm his friend Rudy had a homosexual encounter. We can either accept it or reject it. I accept it. Dr. Marable’s team cannot. Apparently, for Malcolm befriending a homosexual is not enough. He must be perceived as having become one.

It should be noted that in an effort to locate the original Haley quote, I had an extremely difficult time finding it because Dr. Marable’s biography contained no footnote above or below the citation. Therefore, they set out to create this sexual fiction. Now, it is time to debunk this fiction. A homosexual act is a sexual act between same-sex persons upon which they agree. Dr. Marable calls him a “homosexual lover” which infers sex acts over time. Who was this lover? We are told in a footnote that Dr. Marable received the information that Malcolm had bisexual

tendencies from Shorty or Malcolm Jarvis. Notice how we are not told this within the body of the text. Could Shorty have an ax to grind with Malcolm whom he considered a Judas by ratting him out to the police? If Shorty is the source why hide his name in a footnote? Could it be he is not a reliable source?

Delving further, after he became incapacitated due to illness, Dr. Marable's team was led by a trained anthropologist, her first profession. A biography on a multi-layered, historical figure like Malcolm X, now-helmed by someone other than a scholarly historian of Dr. Marable's caliber, record, and longstanding well-documented politics, most likely contributed to the book's major shift in content and tenor. How could it not?

Additionally, awareness existed about current legislation regarding gay marriage and a growing national movement towards support for full human rights for gay people. However, this is not about homosexuality at all. It centers on defaming Malcolm X's character. Moreover, what we have here is another double bind. If, on the one hand, nationalists and Malcolm X followers exclaim too loudly that he was not homosexual, they could be seen as homophobic. If they say nothing, Malcolm X becomes the newest poster boy for the homosexual lifestyle. If the biographers can smear Malcolm's reputation via homosexuality, using it as a weapon, they can bring down the titan.

It is true that homosexuality is seen as a sin in the fundamentalist, Christian, Black Nationalist and Arabic communities, as well as by great many Americans. Associating Malcolm X with this particular sin denigrates his position in the eyes of these fundamentalists and, because of the politically sensitive nature of the allegation, many heterosexuals are fearful of touching the issue. It is at the discretion of every biographer to use or not use information they may uncover. Every biographer has the final say on what goes in and what is edited out. The

biography tells us that Malcolm was part of a sexual con known to Ella and Shorty. By definition, a con is a fabrication and a false representation of reality.

We are then expected to believe that what is actually a con is now reality. This is ridiculous. This is not lost on the astute reader. Malcolm made a clear choice to be a heterosexual male who, by the time he was murdered, had four beautiful daughters in the world and twin girls on the way. There seems to be something more sinister afoot here. Once more, in Christianity, blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Matthew 12:31-32) is considered an unforgivable sin; to be tainted however slightly by homosexuality means you are forever a homosexual. This is the classic definition of homophobia; it's a contagion. The biographers say Malcolm is a "homosexual lover" without giving proof. Malcolm's homosexual "experience appears to have been limited. There is no evidence from his prison record in Massachusetts, from his personal life after 1952 that he was actively homosexual" (Marable 66). The biographers are guilty of two things: being homophobic, and trying to increase book sales.

The longstanding fear of homosexuality in the African-American community can destroy a person's heterosexual image if insidiously designed to hit the right psychological buttons. Homosexuality, unlike any other sin in the Bible, is considered the greatest sin. One can commit any other transgression and be forgiven, but homosexuality is different. Singled out, it is the only sin for which there is no forgiveness. This is not said but implied. Malcolm was a delinquent teenager when this alleged con happened. He lived twenty more years. He married and had children, while fighting for Black folks as a dedicated, committed, and loyal minister in the Nation of Islam, and later rallied for human rights for people all over the world.

Malcolm and his wife Betty, faced many serious challenges. Included among them social isolation, financial stress, and most likely, sexual problems due to his absence two-thirds of the

time. Sister Betty had been a Christian. She then converted to Islam and married the Nation of Islam's dynamic minister. She had to learn the details of being a Muslim wife from envious women who punished her socially and isolated her. This was on top of being estranged from her parents due to her and Malcolm's decision to elope, and her difficult relationship with Ella. All of these items must be considered, factored in when looking at her relationship with Malcolm. Still, they had three times as many children as the average American by the time of his death.

The groundless questioning of Malcolm's sexuality is a by-product of the confusion the biographers have brought to his story and life. This information should never have been published because the source is highly questionable at best. It's 2013. Almost five decades have passed since his death. Malcolm's life work is what matters. His unyielding commitment to helping Black Americans develop racial pride and integrity, and understand the importance and efficacy of actively inserting oneself into the political, social and economic equation of this country – ideally, resulting in positive change – is what rises above and past the distracting sexual din. He taught Black folks that speaking up, standing up, and taking action matters. We must all become active participants in our lives. We must become both thinkers and doers. And that change is always possible. His contributions to Black Americans and American history must be honored, not undermined. And, he deserves compassion and ongoing respect from the scholarly community.

I ask that understanding be given to and friendship extended to a son left alone, whose father was murdered by the Klan, and whose mother was, essentially, imprisoned by the state. I ask justice for a teenager who was corrupted by a white female pedophile. I ask for support from the African-American community in particular and humanity in general for someone who loved us so much, who taught us so much, and who gave his life for us.

I want to ask my mentor and teacher Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. how he could, along with Dr. Cornel West and Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, the triumvirate of American and African-American Studies, how on earth could they allow this monstrosity to be considered legitimate scholarship? *Reinvention's* biographers leave us with feelings of hopelessness, despair, and a creeping sense of bewilderment. Yet, we are rejuvenated by an injection of balanced storytelling. We are no longer dependent on profit-seeking, disconnected biographers to tell the stories of our heroes and heroines. We shall write them ourselves.

A message to all academic gangsters and intellectual ghouls who attempt to corrupt and diminish the noble legacy and ferocious spirit of El-Hajj Malik Shabazz in their quest to use important African-American icons to raise their own personal economic stock. Those among us with equal and/or superior intellectual talent will expose those who sell the souls of Black folks on the capitalist auction block to gain the financial world's approval. We will expose their economic greed to sell books to whites at the expense of Black history and its makers. Therefore, we will expose their betrayal and apocalyptic bitterness and their Faustian bargaining and prostitution of communal integrity to the world. The world will then see them as they are in their naked nastiness. Some academic opportunists are using their incendiary journalism and literature to postulate their bombastic theories of self- and communal hatred to build a personal shrine to white supremacy which has far-reaching negative effects, and cultivate a positively euphoric state for destructive American structural racism. Malcolm X remains a Black nationalistic and hero, who championed our liberation from oppression into freedom by "any means necessary." He complemented Dr. King's work and made him more appealing to the white activists and politicians. Black America owes a great debt to the real Malcolm X and not the fictional one of Dr. Marable's *Malcolm X Reinvented*.

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