

MALCOLM X’S ATTEMPT TO INTERNATIONALIZE THE
CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT DURING THE PERIOD
BETWEEN MARCH 1964 AND FEBRUARY 1965

A Master’s Thesis

by

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November 2017

To my father

MALCOLM X’S ATTEMPT TO INTERNATIONALIZE THE CIVIL RIGHTS
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FEBRUARY 1965

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

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MASTER OF ARTS

THE DEPARTMENT OF
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İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
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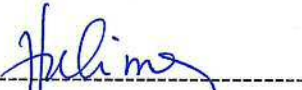
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ABSTRACT

MALCOLM X'S ATTEMPT TO INTERNATIONALIZE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT DURING THE PERIOD BETWEEN MARCH 1964 AND FEBRUARY 1965

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November 2017

In March 1964, Malcolm X split off from the Nation of Islam and continued his struggle as one of the foremost civil rights leaders until his assassination in February 1965. This thesis will examine Malcolm X and his attempt to internationalize the civil rights movement in the year before his death, and after his disengagement with the NOI, between March 1964 and February 1965. Malcolm X's engagement with the civil rights movements expanded its orientation beyond the borders of the United States and placed it in a global context, where he argued that the movement must be transferred to the global stage. This attempt at globalizing the movement gained momentum after his departure from the NOI, once he engaged directly in the larger civil rights movement ongoing at the time. The thesis will examine and analyze Malcolm X's attempt to internationally extend the civil rights

movement in the last year of his life, transforming it into one that included citizens of the world, rather than one confined to the borders of the US.

Key Words: Malcolm X, March 1964, the Civil Rights Movement, the United States, February 1965



ÖZET

MALCOLM X'İN MART 1964 VE ŞUBAT 1965 ARASI DÖNEMDE SİVİL HAKLAR HAREKETİNİ ULUSLARARASILAŞTIRMA ÇABASI

Çetindağ, Oğuz Kaan

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Mart 1964'te, Malcolm X İslam Milleti'nden ayrıldı ve mücadelesini 1965 Şubatı'nda gerçekleşen suikastına kadar sivil haklar hareketinin en önde gelen liderlerinden biri olarak sürdürdü. Bu tez Malcolm X ve onun ölümünden bir yıl önce sivil haklar hareketini içselleştirme çabalarını ve İslam Milleti'nden kopuşunu takip eden bir yılı, yani 1964 Martı ve 1965 Şubatı arasındaki zamanı kapsayan süreci ele almıştır. Malcolm X'in sivil haklar hareketi ile bağlantısı onun yönelimini Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin sınırlarını aşip, hareketin küresel ölçekte bir yere aktarılmasını dilediği gibi, küresel bir bağlama yerleştirmiştir. Hareketi uluslararasılaştırma çabası, halihazırda var olan sivil haklar hareketine katılıp İslam Milleti'nden ayrılmasına müteakip ivme kazanmıştır. Bu tez, Malcolm X'in kendi yaşamı sırasında Amerika sınırlarını aşip dünya vatandaşlarını içeren bir harekete

dönüştürmek istediđi sivil haklar hareketini küresel bağlamda yayma çabalarını irdeme ve tahlil amacı gütmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Malcolm X, Mart 1964, Sivil Haklar Hareketi, Şubat 1965



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRC	The Civil Rights Congress
MMI	The Muslim Mosque. Inc
NAACP	The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NOI	The Nation of Islam
NNC	The National Negro Congress
OAAU	The Organization of Afro-American Unity
OAU	The Organization of African Unity
USIA	The United States Information Agency
SCLC	The Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SNCC	The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Malcolm X was one of the most significant leaders of the civil rights movement during the mid-20th century in the United States. Mainstream American civil rights historiography, however, does not attribute similar importance to Malcolm X as a major leader of the movement, as much as it does to other prominent leaders of the movement, such as Martin Luther King, Jr and Whitney Young. This is particularly due to his radical viewpoint and hostility towards the general civil rights movement, especially during the years of the Nation of Islam (NOI).¹ In these years, Malcolm X argued for the improvement in the situation of African-Americans without involving in the civil rights movement. Instead of integration, which was accepted as a solution to the problems of African-Americans by the leaders of the movement, Malcolm X argued for separation and black supremacy. However, this argument was propagated

¹The Nation of Islam was founded in 1930 by Wallace D. Fard. It was mostly developed in poor urban black ghettos, in the United States, becoming particularly active after the Great Depression in 1929. W.D. Fard was a peddler who had Asiatic origins. No further information concerning him or his life exists. He declared himself *Allah* (God), and his organization, the Nation of Islam preached to the black people that the white race was evil by definition and that black people should annihilate “white evil’s Christianity”. Wallace D. Fard disappeared in 1934, and there is no eligible source concerning his eventual whereabouts. See Martha F. Lee, *The Nation of Islam: An American Millenarian Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 27. He was replaced by Elijah Poole (Muhammad) until his death. The organization mainly had religious motivations but also aimed to raise the political and economic conditions of Black people in the US. By the late 1950s thanks to Malcolm X’s efforts, great number of people was registered to the organization. The NOI still exists today, and is led by Louis Farrakhan who was a pupil of Malcolm X. Since Malcolm X’s separation from the NOI, the organization has not recognized Malcolm X’s legacy any longer. See Jim Haskins, *Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 1996).

for only a certain period during his lifetime as an activist, being particularly tied to the period of his life when he was a member of the NOI. Throughout the NOI years, Malcolm X became highly indoctrinated by Elijah Muhammad's (the leader of the organization) teachings. Through his involvement with the organization, he adopted black supremacist views that excluded whites and denoted all whites as the "devil", without any exceptions. In terms of its organizational level, "the NOI was a self-segregating group",² and therefore, isolated itself from any kind of organization. Thus, even though the organization aimed to improve the conditions of African-Americans, it did not collaborate with any black organization within the civil rights movements. Malcolm X believed that integration to those organizations was misleading.³ With his split from the NOI, Malcolm X divorced the organization's exclusive rhetoric against the civil rights movement from his own activities and ideology and adopted a more supportive and moderate approach.

Malcolm X left the NOI in March 1964 and continued his struggle as one of the foremost civil rights leaders until his assassination in February 1965. This thesis will examine Malcolm X and his attempt to internationalize the civil rights movement in the year before his death, and after his disengagement with the NOI, between March 1964 and February 1965. Malcolm X's engagement with the civil rights movements expanded its orientation beyond the borders of the United States and situated it in a global context, where he argued that the movement must be transferred to the global stage. This attempt at globalizing the movement gained momentum after his departure from the NOI, once he engaged directly in the civil rights movement at that time. The thesis will examine and analyze Malcolm X's

² Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Making of America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 307.

³ Robert L. Jenkins and Mfanya Donald Tryman, eds., *The Malcolm X Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002), 153.

efforts to extend the civil rights movement globally, transforming it into one that included citizens of the world, rather than one confined to the borders of America, during the last year of his life.

To internationalize the civil rights movement, he made attempts to reach out to the global community. His visits abroad were the first step, which resulted in the development of a suitable global base for his cause. Secondly, he founded a global organization meant to reach the African-Americans outside of the United States, in particular Africa, which came to be the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). His visits abroad consisted of two parts; the first occurred after his disengagement from the NOI, and second after the foundation of the OAAU. This study will examine both visits thoroughly.

In April 1964, after leaving the NOI, Malcolm X made the decision to visit Mecca. On this first visit, he was there to perform the *Hajj*,⁴ as a result of his theological transformation to Islamic beliefs in the US. By the completion of this first visit, his experiences in Mecca strongly influenced his religious thoughts and racial perspectives, which subsequently began to change. There he saw varieties of Muslim people, who came from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Compared to the NOI's theology, the orthodox Sunni view of Islam he encountered in Saudi Arabia, offered him a new understanding of the religion. This new understanding led him to reconsider his previous notions concerning the beliefs espoused by the NOI which led him to reconsider his understanding of religion and race. The visit to Mecca influenced Malcolm X to such an extent that he came to see that both Islam and the issue of race had to be regarded from a global perspective. Arguably, his

⁴ *Hajj* is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is an annual pilgrimage to Mecca. All Muslims are expected to make at least one visit during their lifetimes if they are financially and physically capable.

race-based religious ideology, which suggests Islam is only a black religion,⁵ had mostly vanished. It can also be argued that he gained a new vision to understand these issues more closely. The thesis will partially discuss the intellectual transformation that Malcolm X underwent and in what ways it came about.

The religiously motivated visit to Mecca led Malcolm X to develop contacts with other countries, particularly those situated in Africa. Having performed the *Hajj*, he began his visits to Africa in May 1964. The countries he visited included Egypt, Ghana, Morocco, Algeria, Liberia, Kenya, Nigeria, Zanzibar, Guinea, Tanzania, Ethiopia. All of these countries, with the exception of Egypt, gained their independence from colonial authorities during the decolonization process of the 1940-50s. For decades, they had to fight colonial authorities, namely the English and the French, for their independence. Once independence was achieved, they founded the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, in order to help secure their own interests in African politics. This process further influenced Malcolm X with regards to his own cause. He came to associate the African-American struggle with the struggle experiences within these newly independent African countries, arguing that Africans and African-Americans suffered the same fate in the world. Therefore, he regarded Africa as the ideal place to implement his strategy.

After his second visit to Africa in particular, he embraced a strategy that attempted to persuade African governments to support the cause of civil rights in the US by presenting it as a movement for human rights through the platform of the United Nations. He strongly believed that as a pressure group, the Organization of African Unity could support Malcolm X's attempts. He tried to convince them that

⁵ According to the Nation of Islam's theology, blacks are chosen people that Islam is pertained to black people.

the US must be judged on an international level for its human rights violations in regards to African-American people within its own borders. One of the most decisive attempts to realize this goal was Malcolm X's participation in an OAU meeting he was given permission to attend, which assembled in Cairo on July 17, 1964. As an observer of the conference, he presented an eight-page memorandum to the members of the OAU. Malcolm X criticized the US for its racist policies against the African-American people in this memorandum.⁶

In addition to visiting various countries in Africa and propagating his agenda abroad, Malcolm X also believed that he had to promote and take similar action at domestic level. He founded a new organization called the Muslim Mosque Inc. (MMI) shortly after his departure from the NOI. The MMI can be seen as an alternative organization to the NOI, also championing civil rights for black people by black people. However, it could not achieve important gains as Malcolm hoped. The MMI did not hold an adequately broad appeal to attract a significant number of members and participants because the MMI confined itself to a religious agenda. Understanding this reality, Malcolm X further founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), which was a non-religious organization based in Harlem, New York. Regardless of any religious and ideological differences, his mission was to try and unify all black people. He argued that organizations such as the OAAU helped to achieve this goal, as a united front which provided the tools needed to lobby in the global arena.⁷ In other words, the organization played an important role in internationalizing the civil rights movement.

⁶ James A. Tyner, *The Geography of Malcolm X: Black Radicalism and the Remaking of American Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 135.

⁷ William W. Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994), 91.

The OAAU also had a symbolic importance within the ongoing civil rights movement in the US. The organization embraced the civil rights struggle and hoped to provide aid to other mainstream civil rights organizations and leaders. For example, once Malcolm X conveyed a message to Martin Luther King, Jr. when he was running a non-violent campaign in St. Augustine, Florida. In this letter, Malcolm X essentially suggested that the OAAU would support his campaign if it was necessary. Although he continued to remain critical concerning Martin Luther King's philosophy of non-violence, he did not abandon his show of support Dr. King.⁸

In the light of this information, this thesis will argue that Malcolm X brought a new perspective and dimension to the civil rights movement and changed its classical discourse by attempting to internationalize it. According to the mainstream discourse of the civil rights movement, the struggle of the African-Americans had to be fought on the domestic level. The civil rights leaders were chiefly tended to solve problems by insisting that the US government could change federal laws.⁹ They were relatively successful in this attempt, and the Little Rock Crisis, for instance, was a representative example in this respect. During the crisis, the Supreme Court determined that segregation was unconstitutional, in that way, supported efforts of the civil rights protestors. The efforts of prominent leaders of the movement including Martin Luther King, Jr, Whitney Young,¹⁰ and Ralph Bunche¹¹ were shaped within this perspective. However, Malcolm X had a different agenda and ideology in reference to the struggle for equal rights.

⁸ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation*, 125.

⁹ Bruce Perry, ed., *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches* (New York: Pathfinder, 1989), 180.

¹⁰ Whitney Young was a prominent African-American leader of the civil rights movements in the US. He was also known with the organization named Nation Urban League which struggled against black employment discrimination in the country.

¹¹ Ralph Bunche was a symbolic figure of the civil rights movement. He was also the first African-American who received the Nobel Peace Prize for his attempt to ease the tension between Arabs and Israelis.

Even though Malcolm X embraced the movement after his departure from the NOI, he differed from the other civil rights leaders, particularly in terms of methodology. Unlike the accepted views in regards to action, Malcolm X argued that the civil rights struggle in the country had to be fought in the international arena rather than only in the domestic one. He deeply argued that as long as the civil rights struggle was fought within the American context, there would be no achievable gains. Malcolm X's primary concern was about the jurisdiction of the US, which he thought consisted of racist and segregationist people, and thus he came to argue that the US government was not able to properly dispense justice for that reason.¹² He believed if the civil rights struggle were to be elevated to general human rights, only then would the African-Americans be able to gain their rights.¹³ To clarify the issue, one must look at Malcolm X's "The Ballot or the Bullet" speech on April 3, 1964, in Cleveland, Ohio. In the speech, he stated, "when people expand the civil rights struggle to the level of human rights they can then present the plight of the black man in the country before the world states in the United Nations."¹⁴ The motivation behind Malcolm X's attempt for internationalizing the civil rights movements emerged from this mindset.

1.1 Literature Review

¹² Perry, ed., *Malcolm X The Last Speeches*, 178.

¹³ Human rights are known to be a set of fundamental rights which every human has access to including; the rights to life, education, free expression and fair trial. As a concept, human rights emerged after World War II. By the foundation of the United Nations, the organization adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that binds all nations all over the world. Civil rights, on the other hand, are the rights to be free from unequal treatment regardless of race, sex and gender. In the American context, civil rights protect citizens from all forms of discrimination. However, according to Malcolm X, black people could never achieve civil rights in America until their human rights were first restored. He said there must be respect and human rights first, and that civil rights without them were empty and put Blacks in a second class position.

¹⁴ Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet", Accessed May 09, 2017.

http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/speeches/malcolm_x_ballot.html

Malcolm X is one of the most studied persons in African-American history. However, his global attempts after the split from the NOI have been the far less studied, particularly compared to his domestic actions and ideology. Therefore, the literature concerning Malcolm X mostly consists of his religious side and his years in the NOI. One of the recent, and famous, studies of biography about Malcolm X by Manning Marable's *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*.¹⁵ Marable depicts Malcolm X's life story from his childhood to his death in great detail. The study captures his time in prison and conversion to the Nation of Islam. Marable sheds light on how Malcolm X was transformed politically and religiously, shortly after the split. He also focuses on Malcolm X's global attempts; nevertheless, he only provides broad information concerning these actions. However, as a reference guide, Marable's book offers worthwhile information about Malcolm X. It is necessary to mention that there are two recent books published as a response to Marable's book. Both of them strongly criticize Marable's account for not presenting Malcolm X's life accurately. First is *By Any Means Necessary: Malcolm X: Real, Not Invented*¹⁶ which edited by Haki R. Madhubuti, Herb Boyd, Maulana Karenga and Ron Daniels. The book consists of the opinions of famous scholars about Malcolm X's life and reactions to Marable's arguments. Second critical study on Marable's account is *A Lie of Reinvention: Correcting Manning Marable's Malcolm X*.¹⁷ The book consists of essays which deal with what is missing in Marable's account, and it is edited by Todd Steven Burroughs and Jared A. Ball. Even though these works attempt to challenge what Marable's research on Malcolm X, they are not fully capable to offer

¹⁵ Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011).

¹⁶ Herb Boyd et al., *By Any Means Necessary: Malcolm X: Real, Not Reinvented: Critical Conversations on Manning Marables Biography of Malcolm X* (Chicago, IL: Third World Press, 2012).

¹⁷ Jared A. Ball, Todd Steven Burroughs, eds., *A Lie of Reinvention: Correcting Manning Marables Malcolm X* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2012).

totally new sights to the readers. For example, well known African-American scholar from University of Illinois, Sundiata Cha-Jua argues that “*A Lie of Reinvention* does not represent a groundbreaking paradigm shift but merely provides more detailed information about Malcolm X.”¹⁸

To understand Malcolm X’s international agenda, Marika Sherwood’s *Malcolm X Visits Abroad* is also quite a beneficial source.¹⁹ As indicated above, the visits had a vital importance in shaping his goals for the movement in America. Focusing on the last two years of his life and by using Malcolm X’s travel notebooks, newspaper coverage and firsthand interviews with heads of the states and political activists, it offers an examination that attempts to ascertain the extent of his role and impact on a global scale. Yet, what is lacking is a deep analysis concerning the relationship between his international visits and the domestic civil rights movement. Undoubtedly, the visits made a significant impression on Malcolm X and played a substantial role in helping to define his place in the civil rights movement. However, Sherwood’s work continues to provide an important insight into Malcolm X’s foreign visits and offers guidance for future researchers. *Geography of Malcolm X: Black Radicalism and the Remaking of American Space* is one of the recent studies on Malcolm X. The author, James Tyner investigates Malcolm X’s international activism within the scope of geography.²⁰ The book reveals Malcolm X’s changing perceptions of space and place. Connecting African-Americans to Africa was Malcolm X’s dream, in a sense that he hoped to achieve pan-African ideals. At first, he believed that psychically African-Americans and Africans should

¹⁸ Monroe H. Little, "What Manner Of Man?" *The Journal of African-American History* 98, no. 4 (2013), 587-588.

¹⁹ Marika Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visits Abroad: April 1964-February 1965* (Hollywood, CA: Tsehai Publishers, 2011).

²⁰ James A. Tyner, *The Geography of Malcolm X: Black Radicalism and the Remaking of American Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

unite, but then he came to understand that this idea was not a realistic goal and instead embraced the possibility of a spiritual connection. Considering Malcolm X's approach to geography, the study deeply examines his ideas concerning the space and place for African-Americans and Africans. The study provides a new perspective in understanding Malcolm X's global ideology within a geographic context.

On the other hand, William W. Sales, Jr.'s *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity* is one of the best-known studies, which offers a comprehensive examination of the organization and Malcolm X's attempt at globalization within the civil rights movement.²¹ This contains the best analysis concerning Malcolm X's political transformation and maturation and it also describes how Malcolm X evolved from the "petty" minister of the NOI to an international revolutionary figure. Sales' account can be regarded as the first to deal with Malcolm X's attempt for internationalizing the civil rights movement. Yet, the main focus of the book remains on the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) and does not really focus on the impact of his visits abroad and meetings with international leaders, namely heads of states, and other political activities, on both Malcolm X's ideology and on the Organization itself. Additionally, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* by Peter Goldman focuses mostly on Malcolm X's final years and his legacy after his death.²² The author defines himself as an outsider who examines Malcolm X through glasses of a white person. Even though the study focuses on Malcolm X's final years, his global ideology and actions are examined in a broader perspective. The work provides a short glimpse to Malcolm X's visits to Africa, and offer limited analysis concerning his efforts on the

²¹ William W. Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity* (Boston, MA: South End, 1994).

²² Peter Louis Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* (Urbana :University of Illinois Press, 1979).

continent. However, it presents rich biographical information about him and his life in general.

Malcolm X's global efforts also hold an important place in the context of the Cold War and decolonization. Thus, it is necessary to mention some of the critical studies regarding this issue. Mary L. Dudziak's book entitled *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* is one of the best-known studies, which deeply examines the relationship between the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War.²³ During the Cold War years, the civil rights movement turned into an international as well as a national issue for the American government. Dudziak deeply investigates how initially a national problem transformed into an international one. The study also refers to Malcolm X's reaction concerning the American propaganda abroad regarding the civil rights movement, and the fact that his political movements overseas were followed closely by the State Department. As he was creating an anti-American rhetoric in newly independent countries during the decolonization process, some state department officials became anxious about the possible impact of his rhetoric. Dudziak offers a clear picture regarding the struggle between Malcolm X and the State Department.

The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena is an important book about the relationship between the Cold War and the civil rights movement.²⁴ The book suggests that race problems in the United States played an important role in shaping international Cold War politics. According to the author, Thomas Borstelmann, "the American practices of the Cold War were

²³ Mary L Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000).

²⁴ Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001).

grounded in the central belief that the liberal, democratic, capitalist order of the United States represented a more open and humane society than that of the Communist states.”²⁵ Although the US policies were shaped by these values, the problem of race was damaging the country’s image in the eyes of the international community. The author reveals America’s efforts to repair this image through policies that were put into practice in response to the civil rights movement.

1.2 Thesis Structure

Including the introduction and conclusion, the thesis is composed of four chapters. The following section, Chapter Two, will present a general overview of the civil rights movement during the 1960’s, and Malcolm X’s engagement with the movement. It will begin by analyzing its emergence and spreading growth through a focus on certain incidents, such as the Little Rock, Arkansas, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and Student Sit-ins. Each incident had a vital importance symbolically within the movement, and thus will be examined in particular detail.

Having mentioned the movement, how and why Malcolm X became involved in it will be examined in the preceding section of the chapter. At first, Malcolm X’s relations with the movement were quite problematic, in that he frequently denounced it and its ideals. However, he embraced a more positive attitude towards the civil rights movement, a process that will also be examined in further detail. Additionally, after his engagement with the movement, Malcolm X decided to pursue a different agenda, arguing that the struggle to attain civil rights must be fought on a global

²⁵ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 2.

level. Chapter Three will discuss Malcolm X's attempts at globalizing the American civil rights movement and the effects of his efforts. Therefore, this chapter will focus, in particular, on his overseas visit within the context of his global rights idea by examining each visit chronologically and analyzing its impact and effect on Malcolm X and vice versa. The primary sources for this analysis consist of both his autobiography and his diary. Finally, the chapter will examine how Malcolm X was transformed into a global figure, rather than simply remaining an American national civil rights activist. It will also display the impact he had on the countries in which he was received. The final chapter offers a brief summary of the attempt at the globalization or internationalization of the civil rights movements by Malcolm X.

CHAPTER II

MALCOLM X'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

2.1 A Brief History of the Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement can be regarded as one of the greatest events in the history of the United States. The movement emerged as a reaction to racial segregation in the southern part of United States and then turned into a nationwide phenomenon throughout the 1950s and 1960s.²⁶ Even though some historians have traced the civil rights movement back to the 1950s some key events have been accepted as milestones in terms of the beginning of the movement such as the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955), and the student sit-ins (1960). All of these events paved the way for a mass mobilization of African-Americans, who stood together against racist practices all over the United States, and particularly, in the South.

In order to determine how such events led to the emergence of civil resistance, we must analyze the effect of each, not only in immediate terms and as

²⁶ “American Civil Rights Movement”, accessed September 10, 2017.
<https://www.britannica.com/event/American-civil-rights-movement>

isolated events, but as national ones connected to the general environment and mentality of the country as well. First, on May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court decided that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*.²⁷ The court's decision spearheaded a critical and real challenge towards racial segregation and race-based inequities experienced in other aspects of American life.²⁸ Therefore, this ruling can be argued to have been a dramatic turning point in regards to facing racial problems, particularly in the American south. As white Americans raised their voices against the decision, black Americans gained a stronger sense of self-confidence towards their struggle for equality. Arguably, the court's decision manifested itself in Little Rock High School, in Arkansas, in 1957. Nine African-Americans students enrolled in the all-white Little Rock High School, in accordance with *Brown v. Board of Education*. On September 4, 1957, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus called in the National Guard in order to prevent the entry of the newly enrolled black students into the school.²⁹ As a white supremacist governor, his decision not to recognize the Supreme Court's decision was due to the reaction of white Southerners, who consisted of his voting constituency. However, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent federal troops to protect the nine students while entering the school.³⁰ Furthermore, the action of the governor reflected the desire of Southerners to maintain segregation despite any federal intervention or federal court decision. Undoubtedly, the case also reflected the tension between the federal and state governments regarding civil rights, which

²⁷ Jenkins and Tryman, eds., *The Malcolm X Encyclopedia*, 135.

²⁸ Jenkins and Tryman, eds., *The Malcolm X Encyclopedia*, 135.

²⁹ John A Kirk. *Redefining The Color Line: Black Activism in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1940-1970* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 1.

³⁰ Jack E. Davis, ed., *The Civil Rights Movement* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 84.

remained a primary obstacle in putting into practice civil rights for black people in the US, especially in the Southern states.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 was another key event that had a major impact on the civil rights movement. The boycott was sparked by the actions of Rosa Parks who was a seamstress in Montgomery, Alabama. Once she refused to give up her seat to a white man, then she was arrested by the police.³¹ Her arrest caused great public disruption in the city of Montgomery. The people decided to boycott bus companies as result of this incident. The boycott led by Martin Luther King, Jr who was the leader of the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference). As the boycott gained notoriety throughout the state of Alabama, many people arrived to offer their support for the cause. For almost more than a year (December 5, 1955 to December 20, 1956), the black population of Montgomery did not make use of the public transit bus system, which caused great economic losses for the bus company.

As the boycott unexpectedly grew in the city, the participation of black Americans reached the highest level. Across the South, similar protests were enacted by black Americans. White authorities came to realize that the boycotts could create undesirable results. Due to the ongoing boycott and concurrent protests, a Montgomery federal court decided that segregated seating bus is a violation of the 14th amendment of the American constitution.³² Rosa Parks' peaceful activism challenged white authority in many ways and inspired black people towards the

³¹ Andrew Young, *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 90.

³² The 14th amendment granted citizenship and equal civil and legal rights to African-Americans since the American Civil War (1863-1865).

employment of non-violent protest across the country.³³ Owing to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Martin Luther King, Jr. also became the symbolic leader of the civil rights movement and his organization, the SCLC took more on active roles in subsequent civil rights protests.

Despite the fact that African-American people took a decisive step forward in terms of securing their civil rights, racial segregation remained a harsh reality in their lives. To overcome segregation, in 1960 a group of black students attempted to further protest their lack of civil rights through protest movements known as “sit-ins.” The first sit-in movements began in February 1960, when four college students from North Carolina in Greensboro, made a decision to a formal stand against segregation.³⁴ They were quite aware that no one was going to serve them; however, as a non-violent action, they stayed there until the restaurant closed, even after they were forced to leave the restaurant. In the following days, they continued to employ the same strategy. Their relatively successful protest was echoed by others in other cities in the South. Mirroring the events of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the sit-ins spread across the South. For example, on February 9, 1960, almost 150 African-American students from Johnson C. Smith University began sit-ins against white-only restaurants in Charlotte.³⁵

Sit-in protests were also based on the idea of non-violent direct action, which was employed by Martin Luther King, Jr. After the Greensboro case, African-Americans were exposed to violence at other lunch counters yet they remained loyal to the idea and implementation of non-violence. As the protest expanded through the

³³ Young, *An Easy Burden*, 90.

³⁴ Young, *An Easy Burden*, 125.

³⁵ Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality: 1954-1992* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 65.

South, some civil rights figures like Ella Baker³⁶ of the SCLC encouraged young sit-in African-Americans activist to form a new organization. With the initiative of Ella Baker, in April 1960, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was founded.³⁷ King expected the SNCC to join his SCLC organization; however, the SNCC decided to act independently. It is possible to say that the SNCC played an outstanding role in regards to the expansion of sit-ins throughout the American South. Sit-in protests continued until the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ended all forms of segregation. However, even after this period some of the protesters insisted to continue demonstrations.

Undoubtedly the Montgomery Bus Boycott, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the sit-ins had a symbolic meaning in the context of the civil rights movement. To a certain extent, all of these events contributed to the changing course of the 1960's American history. Of course, the civil rights movement cannot only be confined to the specific above-mentioned episodes. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, various historical events took place within the civil rights movement, including the March on Washington, the Selma Voting Rights and Freedom Rides. Even though citizens involved in the civil rights movement could not completely accomplish their goals, they reached enormous gains which included the end of segregation and attaining certain rights of citizenship in the legal sphere.

The main objective of the civil rights movement was to offer African-Americans with equal social and political rights that were held by white citizens of

³⁶ Ella Baker (1903-1986) was a well-known female African-American civil rights activist in the US. She worked with several civil rights organizations such as the NAACP, the SLCC and SNCC. She died in 1986 in New York.

³⁷ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), 70.

the United States.³⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr in his speech during the March on Washington in 1963 said: "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."³⁹ Civil rights organizations, regardless their differences, almost all shared the same goal and aimed to achieve integration through the movement.

Owing to the civil rights movement, many influential figures and organizations emerged. Their names are always associated with the civil rights movement such as Martin Luther King Jr, and Rosa Parks. But neither Malcolm X and nor his organization was as frequently or as famously associated with the civil rights movement, unlike many other figures or organizations. Arguably, Malcolm X was not regarded as one of the major civil rights leaders due to his "radical" image in American society. When viewed from this aspect, it is possible to regard Malcolm X as a misunderstood leader within the movement. Civil rights historians, in fact, tend to place him as a figure on the outskirts of the movement, rather than as an integral inner part of it. Despite the fact that Malcolm X challenged the mainstream rhetoric of the civil rights movement, he advocated unity among African-American civil rights leaders.⁴⁰ However, as these final years are generally ignored by scholars, his role in the movement has not been thoroughly evaluated. So far, a brief history of the movement, symbolic events, and leaders who paved the way for civil rights awareness among black Americans in this period have been discussed. One must also

³⁸ Aimin Zhang, *The Origins of the African-American Civil Rights Movement 1865-1965* (New York: Routledge, 2002), xvi.

³⁹ Martin Luther King Jr., "I Have a Dream" speech, accessed May 11, 2017. <https://www.archives.gov/files/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf>

⁴⁰ Frederick D. Harper, "The Influence of Malcolm X on Black Militancy." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol.1, No. 4 (June, 1971), 397.

examine how Malcolm X played a critical role in the movement in spite of the fact that he used different methods than other civil rights leaders.

2.2 Malcolm X's Engagement in the Civil Rights Movement

As a prominent member of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X did not embrace the civil rights movement until his split from the NOI because of the teachings of Elijah Muhammad who was the leader of the Nation of Islam. His ideas were mostly based on separation from American society rather than integration, which was in direct opposition to the methods and goals that other black leaders aimed to achieve through the civil rights movement. Black supremacy, which is a belief that black people are superior to those of other racial backgrounds, was the primary ideological standing of the NOI. According to James Cone, "Elijah Muhammad had neither the vision nor the integrity to be an appropriate symbol for unity in the African-American community."⁴¹ Also, the NOI was an apolitical organization, which did not demand a political solution from the White American government.⁴² For these reasons, during the years of his ministry in NOI, the apolitical stance and religious orientation of the movement prevented Malcolm X from becoming an active participant in the fight for African-American rights. After his departure from the NOI, he explained:

For 12 years I lived within the narrow-minded confines of the strait-jacket world created by my story belief that Elijah Muhammad was a messenger

⁴¹ James H. Cone, *Martin and Malcolm & America: A Dream or A Nightmare* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1991), 200.

⁴² Cone, *Martin and Malcolm & America*, 179 .

direct from God himself, and my faith in what I now see to be a pseudo-religious philosophy that he preaches.⁴³

During the years of his ministry in the NOI, Malcolm X accused the civil rights movement as manipulation of the whites because it defined the aims of the movement as the integration of Black people into the American system.⁴⁴ It can be indicated that he found the movement's ideology quite problematic as integration to the US system meant conforming to "Americaness" rather than accepting black identity. He had never been in favor of integration because he believed White supremacist view forced the Black population to be integrated into White American values.⁴⁵ In a speech given at Michigan State University on January 23, 1963, he strongly criticized the black people who defended integration by referring to Elijah Muhammad. He said:

So, when these called Negroes who want integration try and force themselves into the white society, which doesn't solve the problem- the Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that that type of Negro is the one that creates the problem. And the type of Negro is the one that creates the problem. And the type of white person who perpetuates the problem is the one who poses as a liberal and pretends that the Negro should be integrated someone else's neighborhood. But all these whites that you see running around here talking about how liberal they are, and we believe everybody should have what they want and go where they want and do what they want, as soon as Negro moves into that white liberal's neighborhood, that white liberal is-well he moves out faster than the white bigot from Mississippi, Alabama, and from someplace else.⁴⁶

On an organizational level, the civil rights leadership was also quite problematic for Malcolm X. According to him, the major civil rights groups and their leaders were not able to comprehend the priorities of the black masses, the goals and desires of the leaders were defined by White Americans. He used a metaphor for

⁴³ Louis A. DeCaro, *On The Side of My People: A Religious Life of Malcolm X* (New York University Press: New York), 240.

⁴⁴ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation*, 73.

⁴⁵ Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites, "Malcolm X and the Limits of the Rhetoric of Revolutionary Dissent." *Journal of Black Studies* 23.3 (1993), 296.

⁴⁶ Bruce Perry, ed., *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, 33.

defining the leaders' role in American society. Malcolm X referred "house Negro", in back to the time of slavery, when this "house Negro" obeyed and did what master ordered him to. This "house Negro" metaphor was highly criticized among other civil rights leaders. Even after his involvement with the movement, their attitude towards him remained negative due to this initial harsh criticism.

For the most part, Malcolm X underestimated the leaders of the civil rights movement. For instance, he referred to the August 1963 March on Washington as the "recent ridiculous March on Washington."⁴⁷ In a speech in Harlem, Malcolm X likened the March a Hollywood movie, and awarded Oscars: President Kennedy was the best producer, the white speakers were the best actors, Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders were the supporting cast.⁴⁸ Until his engagement in the movement, he remained to have a strong anti-rhetoric against the civil rights movement.

Without going further detail on Malcolm X's engagement with the civil rights movement, it is necessary to mention the reason behind his split from the NOI. One of the accepted reasons for his exit from the group stems from a negative remark that he made regarding President John F. Kennedy's assassination. In the aftermath of his assassination, the NOI leader Elijah Muhammad urged his entire ministers not to talk of the president.⁴⁹ Yet, despite all warnings of Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X made a remark concerning President Kennedy. He stated that Kennedy's death was an example of a "chicken coming home to roost."⁵⁰ Upon such a statement, the media vilified Malcolm X and depicted him as a radical. His statement over the president

⁴⁷ Bruce Perry, ed., *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, 16.

⁴⁸ Stephen G. N. Tuck, *The Night Malcolm X Spoke at the Oxford Union: A Transatlantic Story of Antiracist Protest* (Oakland, CA: U of California, 2014), 32.

⁴⁹ Tyner, *The Geography of Malcolm X*, 29.

⁵⁰ C.Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc. 1994), 258.

resulted in a direct conflict with Muhammad, and he came to the decision that Malcolm X needed to be silenced for ninety days as a punishment.

The fallout from Malcolm X's comment concluded the brewing dispute between himself and Elijah Muhammad. This punishment was the last straw regarding Malcolm X's decision to quit the NOI. Before the dispute about Kennedy, Malcolm X learned that Elijah Muhammad had been accused of sexual misconducts towards some women in the NOI.⁵¹ Malcolm X had perceived Muhammad as a divine man free from all sins since his involvement with the NOI. Thus this rumor led Malcolm X to question Muhammad's "divinity." Additionally, as Malcolm X became increasingly more of an important figure, his rising charisma in the Nation concerned Elijah Muhammad that Malcolm X might want to dispose of him.⁵² Furthermore, his political dispute about whether the Nation should enter the civil rights movement or not also became visible. When the conflict between Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammed emerged, the civil rights movement had reached a highly critical moment. This led Malcolm X to believe that the Nation had to take some steps and support black rights in tandem with the civil rights movement.⁵³ However, Muhammad's apolitical stance prevented him from taking any action. Within the NOI, Malcolm X began to develop independent thoughts in regards to certain aspects of black freedom. For a long time, he had underestimated the civil rights movements and its gains. Towards his final moments in the NOI, he began to question the possibility whether the NOI should indeed actively enter the civil rights scene or not. However, Muhammad's constant opposition to the movement did not allow him to act within the confines of the Nation. Therefore, Malcolm X finally reached the

⁵¹ DeCaro, *On The Side of My People*, 189.

⁵² DeCaro, *On The Side of My People*, 276.

⁵³ Tyner, *The Geography of Malcolm X*, 29.

decision to quit the NOI in order to be able to act independently and pursue his own goals concerning black rights.

Having left the NOI on March 8, 1964, Malcolm X experienced a dramatic transformation as apparent in the “Declaration of Independence” speech that he gave on March 12, 1964. In the speech he stated:

Because 1964 threatens to be a very explosive year on the racial front, and because I myself intend to be very active in every phase of the American Negro struggle for *human rights*, I have called this press conference this morning in order to clarify my own position in the struggle especially in regard to politics and nonviolence.

I’m not out to fight other Negro leaders or organizations. We must find a common approach, a common solution, to a common problem. As of this minute, I’ve forgotten everything bad that the other leaders have said about me, and I pray they can also forget the many bad things I’ve said about them.⁵⁴

Along with his split, Malcolm X announced that he also founded a new organization that he named the Muslim Mosque Inc. (MMI), could be perceived as an alternative to the NOI for black people. He announced the MMI as a new political and economic organization, which sought Black Nationalism and armed resistance.⁵⁵ He gained the opportunity to be a minister in his own organization while representing his own political interests. Until Malcolm X’s *Hajj* visit, theologically the organization mirrored the NOI’s teachings which were still based on a heterodox version of Islam.⁵⁶ Most of the members of the MMI followed Malcolm X from the NOI. For that reason, the MMI can be regarded as a product of his transition period. FBI reports reveal the followings:

⁵⁴ "Civil Rights Era." Teaching American History. Accessed May 15, 2017.
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/a-declaration-of-independence>.

⁵⁵ Jenkins and Mfanya, eds., *The Malcolm X Encyclopedia*, 409.

⁵⁶ DeCaro, *On The Side of My People*, 196.

Malcolm X stated his new movement is not “anti-anything” He wants the black man to control the politics in his own residential areas by voting, helping to choose and to support their own candidates. He wishes them to become economically sound by owning and investing in the business within the Negro areas, and he feels that they should become socially sound by complete separation from white people and organizing their own separate society. He proceeded that the Negro has become disillusioned with non-violent action and would be ready for any action which will get immediate results in their goal for civil rights. Malcolm X stated that the Negro realizes he is being exploited and lied to and is sick of it.⁵⁷

Until his death the organization existed in tandem with the OAAU, however, Malcolm X lacked both the organizational experience and a clear strategy for his cause. As Peter Goldman has pointed out “the MMI clearly did not work out as Malcolm X had both hoped and planned. It was a hybrid, too worldly for some of the Old Muslims and too religious to bring the first-class leaders.”⁵⁸ For that reason, the MMI was neither influential nor long-termed.

Malcolm X’s liberation from the NOI doctrine was the first key step towards making a thorough analysis of American politics and the civil rights movement. His direct involvement in the civil rights movement started with the 1965 Selma Voting Rights movement in Alabama shortly before his assassination. He told the audience in his Harlem speech given to the OAAU that “I promised the brothers and sisters in Alabama when I was there that we’d be back. I’ll be back, we’ll be back.”⁵⁹ After the Selma incident took place, Malcolm X indicated that “I am throwing myself into the heart of the civil rights struggle and will be in it from now on.”⁶⁰

⁵⁷ FBI Report. Subject: Malcolm X Little. File No.100-399321. Section: 10. Serials: 80-108, in Clayborne Carson, ed., *Malcolm X: The FBI File* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1991), 264.

⁵⁸ Peter Louis Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 189.

⁵⁹ Perry, *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, 16-17.

⁶⁰ Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet”

Malcolm X made the decision to enter the civil rights movement as a follower of the blacks everywhere who were struggling against racial segregation.⁶¹ His hostility towards civil rights figures disappeared. It is arguable that he became relatively moderate in regards to his opinions concerning them. Even if he did not fully support the civil rights leadership, he tried to find a common approach to overcome the problem.⁶² Yet, unlike Martin Luther King, he remained firm in his belief that integration was not possible because it was not a realistic goal for the American Negro.⁶³ While he was rejecting integration he did not come to believe separation from the American society. He only demanded all people in the US should live on the basis of equality.⁶⁴ Malcolm X also differed from King in terms of his ideas about how to protest. During his active years in the civil rights movement, King always advocated non-violent action, whereas Malcolm X constantly resisted the idea of non-violence. He called it “this little passive resistance or wait-until-you-change-your-mind-and-let-then-let-me-up philosophy.”⁶⁵ In spite of the fact that Malcolm X advocated self-defense, within the context of civil rights movement, he and his followers never committed any violent action against white people. His philosophy remained a matter of rhetoric.

Malcolm X’s self-defense philosophy in regards to the civil rights movement was simply one aspect of his general ideology and goals, which most importantly, centered on the objective of entering the movement in order to change its dimensions by bringing a new vision forward.⁶⁶ His aim moved far beyond integration into

⁶¹ Cone, *Martin and Malcolm & America*, 193.

⁶² Cone, *Martin and Malcolm & America*, 193.

⁶³ Tyner, *The Geography of Malcolm X*, 79.

⁶⁴ Robert Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound A History of America’s Civil Rights Movement* (New York: A Plume Book, 1991), 177

⁶⁵ Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X*, 73.

⁶⁶ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 484.

American society.⁶⁷ Civil rights activists were preoccupied with changing federal and state policies.⁶⁸ As mentioned above, integration was not considered as a viable solution for Malcolm X because he argued that the problem exceeded the issues of integration and civil rights. During his speech at Corn Hill Methodist Church in New York on February 16, 1965, he stated:

The problems of the Black man in this country today have ceased to be a problem of just the American Negro or an American problem. It has become a problem that is so complex, and so many implications in it, that you have to study it in its entire world, in the world context or its international context, to really see it as it actually is.⁶⁹

He continued his speech as such:

In no time can you understand the problems between Black and white people here in Rochester or Black and white people in Mississippi or Black and white people in California, unless you understand the basic problem that exists between black and white people not confined to the local level, but confined to the international, global level on this earth today. When you look at it that context, you'll understand. But if you only try to look at it in the local context, you will never understand.⁷⁰

The timing of this speech is important as it was given after Malcolm's return from his visits abroad. These journeys greatly impacted Malcolm X's change with regards to his vision concerning the issue of race and the civil rights struggle. By stating that the problem was not an American problem, Malcolm X addressed a critical point that could have changed the discourse of the civil rights movement. Malcolm X's decision to become actively involved in the movement coincided with a time when African-American leaders developed a tendency to see the Black problem, as a domestic issue within the United States. King, for example, continued to believe that the federal government could advance a solution for the black rights. The "I Have a

⁶⁷ Tyner, *The Geography of Malcolm X*, 80.

⁶⁸ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 484.

⁶⁹ Perry, ed., *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, 152.

⁷⁰ Perry, ed., *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, 155.

Dream” speech can be regarded as a sign of King’s hope for the government to act in the name of Black rights and it was this expectation of the movement itself that garnered the largest amount of critique from Malcolm X. He argued that international courts should judge civil rights violations in the US the same as human rights abuses anywhere.⁷¹ During a critical conference with some of the symbolic figures of the civil rights movement on June 13, 1964, he presented a proposal about bringing the African-American problem to the United Nations. However, the civil rights leaders did not pay much attention to his proposed idea, as Malcolm X was in the initial stages of his active involvement in the movement, and therefore was too little of an influential figure to effectively alter any opinions.⁷²

It is necessary to understand the motivation behind Malcolm X’s attempt to internationalize the civil rights struggle. In fact, Malcolm X argued that the American government mostly consisted of “segregationist” and “racist” figures and thus he believed the government could not be relied upon to dispense justice.⁷³ He justified his arguments by addressing certain problems within US Congress:

This government is controlled by thirty-six committees. Twenty congressional committees and sixteen senatorial committees. Thirteen of the twenty congressmen that make up the congressional committees are from the South. Ten of the sixteen senators that control the senatorial committees are from the South. Which means that of the thirty-six committees that govern the foreign and domestic directions and temperament of the country in which we live, of the thirty-six, twenty- three of them are in hands of racists outright, stone-cold, a dead segregationist. This is what you and I are up against. We are in a society where the power is in the hands of those who are the worst breed of humanity. Now how are we going to get around them? How are we going to get justice in a Congress that they control? Or a White House that they control? Or from a Supreme Court that they control?⁷⁴

⁷¹ Amardeep Singh, From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Malcolm X and the Post-Colonial World, January 01, 1970, accessed June 04, 2017. <http://www.electrostan.com/2015/02/from-civil-rights-to-human-rights.html>.

⁷² Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound A History of America’s Civil Rights Movement*, 177.

⁷³ Perry, ed., *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, 178-179.

⁷⁴ Perry, ed., *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, 178-179.

Even though the United States had passed one of the most critical civil rights legislation in 1964, during the Johnson administration, the lack of trust from the US government led Malcolm X to search for a new platform for the African-American struggle. After his second visit to African countries, in particular, he made the decision to present the African-American problem, as an international issue, to the United Nations. Undoubtedly, his travels to the African continent had a major impact on his decision, which will be examined and analyzed in detail in the next chapter. As he aspired to expand the civil rights struggle by including it in the larger ideals of human rights, he realized that the UN provided an opportunity to potentially challenge the segregationist policies of the United States. Furthermore, by presenting the cause to UN General Assembly, he believed he would be able to address a “respectable audience.”

The importance that Malcolm X placed on the United Nations as the most suitable platform to present the fight for civil rights in America was also particularly influenced by the early experience of other African-American leaders. Malcolm X, in fact, was not the only civil rights activist who presented the racism felt against Black Americans within the US to the international community. Arguably, these early activists including W.E.B DuBois⁷⁵ and Paul Robeson⁷⁶ inspired Malcolm X to appeal to the UN. These leaders had written petitions on several occasions to the United Nations for the human rights violations of African-American people in the US. Before Malcolm X’s attempt, three different petitions had been presented to the

⁷⁵ W.E.B DuBois was the most influential black intellectual in American History. Scholarly, he made great contributions to history and sociology. He was also accepted as the earliest civil rights activist who struggled against racism in both the United States and the world. He helped to found one of the famous black organizations the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the United States. “The Souls of Black Folk” is his well-known work in American Literature.

⁷⁶ Paul Robeson was an African-American singer and political activist. He was also a strong advocate of racial equality in the US. His anti-American rhetoric against segregation led him accused of being communist by the American government. For a while, he needed to prove he is not a communist and left the country in 1958.

United Nations by three different black organizations. The National Negro Congress (NNC) presented the first petition in 1946. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) presented the second petition in the year of 1947.⁷⁷ The Civil Rights Congress (CRC) presented the third petition in 1951.⁷⁸ The third petition was submitted and demanded UN relief for African- Americans from the racist practices of the United States against them.⁷⁹ To what extent these three petitions did have a serious impact in terms of changing the position of African-American people is still a questionable issue. However, particularly, the last petition contributed to a rising awareness within the international community of the scale and intensity of racism in the US and inspired Malcolm X to take actions in the international arena.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Azza Salama Layton, *International Politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States: 1941-1960* (Cambridge, New York : Cambridge University Press, 2000), 49.

⁷⁸ Layton, *International Politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States*, 49.

⁷⁹ Layton, *International Politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States*, 49.

⁸⁰ Charles H. Martin. "The American Dilemma, The Civil Rights Congress and the 1951 Genocide Petition to the United Nations". *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Summer, 1997), 55

CHAPTER III

MALCOLM X BRINGS THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE TO INTERNATIONAL ARENA

3.1 Malcolm X Visits Abroad

In the previous chapter, it was discussed how Malcolm X got involved in the civil rights movement, an action that did not occur immediately. It can be argued that it was his visit to the African continent that finally convinced him to become firm in his stance with regards to the civil rights struggle. As an outcome of these travels, he began to see the African-American struggle within a global context. Furthermore, these visits proved to effect a multidimensional impression on his own ideology as he both enlarged his political vision and experienced a “religious awakening.” As the *Hajj* transformed the theological belief held by Malcolm X, the visits to African countries – in particular to Ghana - subtly altered his ideas concerning politics of race.⁸¹ Malcolm X’s visits began with a stay in Egypt and continued with travels to other countries in the continent. During his travels, he was presented with various opportunities to meet several state leaders, including Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, Saudi King Faisal, President

⁸¹ Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X*, 179.

Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, President Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana and President Sekou Toure in Guinea. His travels to the continent were conducted on two separate occasions. The first series commenced on April 13, 1964, and ended on May 21, 1964, and thus had him traveling for just over a month. The second commenced on July 9, 1964, and ended on February 13, 1965, thus having him spend the better part of half of a year abroad, engaging in actively developing his goals. After establishing the OAAU, he made this second visit abroad. Before discussing the details of his visits, it would be prudent to provide a chronological timeline for his travels. This will then provide the basis for understanding exactly which regions he toured, and thus give a foundation for an analysis concerning their impact on his own philosophy and following actions concerning the internationalization of the civil right movement:

The Hajj (Mecca): April 1964
Beirut: 30 April 1964
Cairo, Alexandra: May 1-4 1964
Nigeria: 6-10 May 1964
Ghana: 10-17 May 1964
Liberia(Monrovia), Senegal, 17 May 1964
Morocco: 18 May 1964
Algeria: 19-21 May 1964

London, Cairo: July- September 1964
Kenya: October, 5-9 1964
Zanzibar and Tanganyika: October, 9-17 1964
Nairobi: October 17-24 1964
Addis Ababa: October, 24-25-26 1964

Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Guinea, Algeria, Geneva and Paris: October-November, 1964
London and Paris: November 22-24 1964
England: December, 1-6 1964
Oxford: December, 2-3 1964
Manchester: December, 3 1964
Sheffield: December, 4 1964
London: December, 5-6 1964

London: February, 6-8 1965
Paris: February 9, 1965

London: February 9-11, 1965
Smethwick: February 12 1965
London: February 12-13 1965

After he broke ties with the Nation of Islam, his pilgrimage became the justification for his first visit abroad to learn how to practice orthodox Sunni Islam, and therefore he traveled to Mecca to perform the *Hajj* in April 1964.⁸² Due to the rhetoric of the NOI against white people, Malcolm X was always hostile to the white race in the US. He mostly denounced the white race as “devil”, yet his time in Mecca led him to reconsider the race issue as a binary one, for he realized that people in Mecca performed the *Hajj* together, regardless of race. According to James H. Cone “in Mecca, he discovered that Elijah Muhammad’s Islamic teachings especially the idea that white people were evils by nature contradicted the teachings of Orthodox Islam.”⁸³ It can be assumed that this was an incredibly unique experience for him in an environment that directly contrasted that experience in the segregated United States. In his autobiography, he stated:

“White man”, as commonly used, means complexion only secondarily; primarily it described attitudes and action. In America, the white man meant specific attitudes and actions towards the black man, and toward all other non-white men. In the Muslim world, I had seen that white complexions were genuinely brotherly than anyone else had ever been.⁸⁴

Before the *Hajj* visit, he had already started to question the Nation of Islam and Elijah Muhammad’s teachings about religion and politics. However, his visit to

⁸² After his split from the NOI, he began to cultivated contacts with some Muslim scholars who taught him the teachings of orthodox Islam. As he learnt much about orthodox Islam, as practiced in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, he decided to make a journey to Mecca with the support of these Muslim scholars. His first visit was primarily about with trying to encounter and experience orthodox Islamic teaching. Then he began to make other trips, which were motivated by his desire to politically enlarge his vision for the civil rights struggle.

⁸³ Cone, *Martin and Malcolm & America*, 205.

⁸⁴ Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm* (New York: Thirty-Third Printing, 1992), 333-334.

Mecca dramatically changed his ideas concerning race and religion. By the time of the *Hajj* visit, his black-oriented Islamic beliefs changed so completely that he came to fully encompass the belief that Islam had nothing to do with race, in contrast to the preaching of Elijah Muhammad. As he revitalized his ideas, he embraced a new political vision, which resulted in a direct influence on his struggle in the US. Towards the end of the *Hajj*, his own understanding of the orthodox version of Islam gave a clear idea about how it contributed to the change in his religious thinking. He claimed that

America needs to understand Islam because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world, I have met and talked to, and even eaten with people, who in America would have been considered 'white' - but the 'white' attitude was removed from their minds by the religion of Islam. I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practiced by all colors together, irrespective of their color.⁸⁵

Seemingly, his discovery of the new understanding of Islam opened Malcolm X new doors to comprehend religion and race in both the United States and the world. For example, Anna Hartnell indicates that "he embraced a more authentic, universal and anti-racist Islam that enabled him to integrate his understanding of the race problem in America within the wider global legacies of slavery and colonialism."⁸⁶ For that reason, his pilgrimage to Mecca, in a broader context, can be accepted as the first spark towards inspiring Malcolm X to attempt to actively implement the internationalization of the African-American struggle.

Having performed the *Hajj*, Malcolm X traveled to Beirut on April 30, 1964, adopting the new name of El-Hajj Malik El Shabazz. There, he was invited to the

⁸⁵ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm*, 340.

⁸⁶ Anna Hartnell, "Between Exodus and Egypt: Malcolm X, Islam, and the Natural Religion of the Oppressed." *European Journal of American Culture* 27.3 (2008), 220

University of Beirut's Sudanese Cultural Center to speak about the African-American struggle.⁸⁷ According to his memoir, the audience received his lecture warmly and showed an appropriate level of interest. Some Sudanese and Lebanese Muslim students asked questions about the ongoing civil rights protests in the US.⁸⁸ He wrote "I spoke at the Sudanese Cultural Center to some student and faculty from the American University of Beirut. The White Americans were subjective and defensive but later became more submissive. The African students were strongly pro."⁸⁹ His speech at the center was published in *The Beirut Daily Star* in the May 1 issue.

The renowned American Negro leader unequivocally stressed that there was a new generation of Negroes in the United States in 1964 who had lost their patience and are on the verge of bursting forth into a violent explosion... there were no political gains made in 1963 toward achieving civil rights... Non-violent Negro leaders like Martin Luther King Jr... had achieved very little if anything toward solving the racial question in the United States... If I sound pessimistic, you have to know that if have waited for 200 years to get what you want and you still don't have it, you are bound to be pessimistic... To give back the American Negro his self-confidence, to make him love the color of his skin, to make him proud of his cultural heritage, to reverse the dehumanizing process through which the Negro has experienced, the great task is still ahead. In this manner, the American Negro could regain his sense of dignity as a human being... When the constitution of the United States was written we were not even regarded as humans and being second class citizens today is still nothing but a form of 20th-century slavery.⁹⁰

Before he took a more decisive step, his early experience abroad reveals that he found a willing audience to whom he could directly speak about the African-American problem. On May 2, 1964, the *New York Times* reported that "Malcolm X

⁸⁷ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visits Abroad*, 20.

⁸⁸ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visits Abroad*, 20.

⁸⁹ Herb Boyd, and Ilyasah Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz 1964*. (Chicago, IL: Third World, 2013), 33.

⁹⁰ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visits Abroad*, 20-21.

had made the charge that American Negroes were living within the modern form of slavery.”⁹¹ Seemingly, his actions began to arouse curiosity in the US.

After the Mecca and Beirut visits, Malcolm X’s next stop was Egypt. During that period, Egypt was ruled by Colonel Gamal Abdal Nasser, who had come to power in 1952. He was known to harbor mostly an anti-colonial and anti-Western stance within the Arab and African world. Nasser argued that Egypt’s identity is composed of the Arab, the African and the Islamic. He aimed to embrace all these identities, though after the 1956 Suez crisis he emerged as a leader of the non-alignment movement.⁹² Malcolm X was aware of his influence over Africa. There he met Nasser to discuss the race problem in the US. After Malcolm X founded the OAAU, he demanded more attention with regards to his struggle due to Egypt’s leading position in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which was a political organization that functioned as a pressure group at the United Nations seeking the interests of African countries. The organization inspired Malcolm X to develop a similar program for the African-American people in the US.⁹³

Having met with Nasser, he continued his visits in Africa. Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Morocco, and Algeria were the countries he traveled during this time; however, his longest stays were primarily in Nigeria and Ghana. On May 6, 1964, Malcolm X went to Lagos (Nigeria). Nigeria had gained independence from Britain in 1960 yet when Malcolm X arrived in Nigeria, the country was grappling with an internal disturbance as Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first president of Nigeria, was attempting to consolidate his power. There Malcolm X met the famous African

⁹¹ "Negro Moderation Decried By Malcolm X in Lebanon," *The New York Times*, May 01, 1964, accessed April 02, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/1964/05/02/negro-moderation-decried-by-malcolm-x-in-lebanon.html?_r=

⁹² Edward E Curtis, "My Heart Is in Cairo: Malcolm X, the Arab Cold War, and the Making of Islamic Liberation Ethics." *Journal of American History* 102.3 (2015), 786.

⁹³ Jenkins and Mfanya, eds., *The Malcolm X Encyclopedia*, 430.

scholar Essien-Udom, who was teaching at the University of Ibadan and who had published a famous book about Black Muslims in the United States.⁹⁴ Malcolm X had already met him previously in the United States in 1962. On May 7, Malcolm X addressed the students at the University of Ibadan. The lecture topic was “Our Struggle in the Context of the African Liberation movement.” In the lecture, he stated:

I urged that Africa’s independent nations needed to see the necessity of helping to bring the Afro-American case before the United Nations. I said that just as the American Jew is in political, economic, and cultural harmony with world Jewry, I was convinced that it was time for all Afro-Americans to join the world’s Pan-Africanists. I said that physically, we Afro-Americans, might remain in America, fighting for our Constitutional rights, but that philosophically and culturally, we Afro-Americans, badly needed to “return” to Africa and to develop a working unity in the framework of Pan-Africanism.⁹⁵

His visits to African countries deeply influenced his own ideology concerning the position of African-Americans within a global context. However, he still had not determined the formulation in terms of how to implement this ideology until the foundation of the OAAU.⁹⁶

In Nigeria, Malcolm X privately talked to various state officials. They told him that the USIA (United States Information Agency) was making propaganda about African-American's rights and the agency promised that race issue would be solved in the near future.⁹⁷ No doubt the agency was worried about the image of the country abroad, for the continued conflict arising from the “race problem” in the country was creating a “repugnant” image in the eyes of the people around the world. The US manifested itself as the leader of the free world and advocate of democracy

⁹⁴ Essien Udosen, *Black Nationalism: The Rise of The Black Muslims in U.S.A.* (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1966).

⁹⁵ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 350.

⁹⁶ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation*, 84.

⁹⁷ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 351.

in the context of the Cold War. However, African-Americans had been exposed to many human rights violations that negated this international image that the country was cultivating at the time. This dilemma made the United States and its image of a democratic society questionable in the international arena. In that sense, Malcolm X's actions in Africa were regarded as a great threat to the agency's efforts that aimed at restoring the American image in the continent, particularly since Malcolm X found the chance to directly address a lot of people and inform them about the true situation experience of Black American in the US. As Malcolm X continued to emphasize the need for unity between African and African-American people, the agency officers tried to convince the people in Africa that there was no physical or ideological unity between Africans and African-Americans.⁹⁸

From there Malcolm X went to Ghana, which had a symbolic importance in the context of decolonization. The country gained independence from Britain in 1957, and it became a first sub-Saharan nation which terminated colonial rule through the efforts of Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of the Convention People's Party. After independence, Nkrumah began to embrace a Pan-Africanist ideology and a socialist stance, announcing that his country was part of a non-alignment movement.⁹⁹ The consequences of the Ghanaian independence echoed all around the world, particularly in the southern United States, and across the African continent. When Ghana declared independence, the civil rights movement in the US had reached its most tense periods. For example, this was the same year that the Little Rock desegregation crisis of 1957 emerged as a major national issue. Kevin K.

⁹⁸ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 85.

⁹⁹ Non-alignment movement, international organization aimed to represent and seeking interest of "developing" countries. At the 1955 Bandung Conference countries (mostly Asian-African) decided to free themselves from "big powers", the US and USSR. In the context of the Cold War, the world was divided into two parts; however, these countries did not want to ally with neither US nor USSR. The non-alignment movement officially was founded in 1961, and held its conference in Belgrade under the leadership Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Gamal Abdal Nasser of Egypt, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Sukarno of Indonesia.

Gaines suggests “African-Americans accelerated their demands for an end to segregation, Ghana’s triumph over British rule was widely celebrated by people of African descent in and beyond the new nation.”¹⁰⁰ Nkrumah also celebrated and modeled his country as the representative sign of black modernity and freedom. During the most intense period of the civil rights movement, many African-Americans in the United States including, writers, activists, political dissidents went to Ghana.¹⁰¹ Such famous and influential figures including Richard Wright,¹⁰² Maya Angelou,¹⁰³ and W.E.B DuBois, were the leaders of these expatriates. The primary reason behind this exodus to Ghana was a loss of faith in American liberalism due to the ongoing and slow-changing racist practices in the country.¹⁰⁴ Nkrumah embraced a policy of welcoming this influx of Americans, and thus they felt welcomed and accepted in the country. In other words, it can be argued that Ghana had become a “promised land” for these people, whose disillusionment with the American system inspired them to look elsewhere for answers with regards to the racism question. Other than becoming a home to these expatriates, Ghana became an important location for several intellectual gains for Malcolm X. As historian Gerald Horne suggests that “whatever impact the *Hajj* had on Malcolm X’s racial consciousness, his visit to Ghana and his interaction with whites, as well as black revolutionaries,

¹⁰⁰ Kevin Kelly Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and The Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill:University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 2.

¹⁰¹ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 6.

¹⁰² Richard Wright was a well-known African-American writer in the US in the twentieth century. His best known works are *Native Son* and *Black Boy*. He left the country due to ongoing racial practices. For a while he was in Ghana and then he lived in France until his death.

¹⁰³ Maya Angelou was a famous poet and civil rights activist. She left the United States for Ghana due to political pressure, and she became the leader of African-American expatriates there. She had close contacts with Malcolm X during his Ghana visit.

¹⁰⁴ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 7.

enabled him to imagine coalitions with non-blacks and therefore to reject the NOI's parochial Black Nationalism."¹⁰⁵

Before Malcolm X reached Ghana, the situation in the country was tense as in the United States, at that moment the US was accused of involvement in the attempted assassination of President Nkrumah.¹⁰⁶ When the president came to power, the relationship between the US had already worsened due to Ghana's hosting so many African-Americans expatriates, who were deemed as committed to "anti-American" activities in Ghana according to the US government. The assassination attempt further intensified the public hostility towards the United States. Seemingly, the presence of expatriates in Ghana annoyed the US. They brought to the forefront the broadly contested issues of African-American political awareness during an era of rising challenges regarding the legitimacy of the US's position as a world power in geopolitics.¹⁰⁷

Malcolm X arrived in Ghana in this tense atmosphere. It is necessary to mention that when Malcolm X was *en route* to Ghana, he saw some of the press stories about his visit. He mentioned these in his autobiography:

Malcolm X's name is almost as familiar to Ghanaians as the Southern dogs, firehouses, cattle prods, people sticks and the ugly, hate contorted white faces.

Malcolm X's decision to enter the mainstream of the struggle heralds a hopeful sign on the sickeningly dismal scene of brutalized, non-violent, passive resistance.

An extremely important fact is that Malcolm X is the first Afro-American leader of national standing is to make an independent trip to Africa since Dr. Du Bois came to Ghana. This may be the beginning of a new phase in our

¹⁰⁵ Gerald Horne, *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 188.

¹⁰⁶ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 35.

¹⁰⁷ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 12.

struggle. Let's make sure we don't give it less thought than the State Department is doubtless giving it right now.

Malcolm X is one of our the most significant and militant leaders. We are in a battle. Efforts will be made to malign and discredit him.¹⁰⁸

He held a press conference on May 10, 1964, after his arrival from Nigeria. At the press conference, he stated that:

African nations should not restrict themselves to pointing a finger at South Africa in the United States but should take up American racial segregation in the world organization. What is going on in the United States is worse than what is going on in South Africa. The American system perpetuates the enslavement of the Negro.¹⁰⁹

Malcolm X's emphasis on the unity between Africans and African-Americans was a theme that was echoed in Nigeria.¹¹⁰ In the conference, Malcolm X was asked why he had left the NOI and founded his own organization as the African audience had heard rumors concerning the dispute between Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad.¹¹¹

However, he spent little time answering questions regarding the NOI and Elijah Muhammed. He simply explained that there had been a disagreement between himself and Elijah Muhammad in regards to the group's political and religious ideology, but he concluded that he still respected the NOI for its efforts towards African-American people.¹¹² In the conference, Malcolm X also made an important remark about the race issue in America,

All of Africa unites in opposition to South Africa's apartheid, and to the oppression in the Portuguese territories. But you waste your time if you don't realize that Verwoerd and Salazar and Britain and France, never could last a

¹⁰⁸ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 353. Please note that he did not mention the names of the newspapers.

¹⁰⁹ "Malcom X Feels 'At Home' in Africa," *The New York Times*, May 12, 1964, accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1964/05/13/malcom-x-feels-at-home-in-africa.html>

¹¹⁰ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 354.

¹¹¹ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 354.

¹¹² X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 354.

day if it were not for the United States support. So, until you expose the man in Washington, DC, you haven't accomplished anything.¹¹³

Malcolm X regarded Ghana, with its criticism of American racism at home and neocolonialism abroad, as a suitable platform for his ideas.¹¹⁴ According to the FBI reports Malcolm X emphasized the following themes during this tour to Ghana:

1. Negroes were stolen from Africa and forced to forget their culture and traditions, yet their culture and traditions, have never been accepted into American society.
2. The Christian religion has been used to oppress Negroes and encourage them to accept an inferior position.
3. Force is the only way to achieve equality.
4. The United States is the 'master of imperialism' without whose support other imperialistic nations could not exist.
5. White America is guilty of dehumanizing the American Negro and putting him to death as a human being.
6. If America is not interested in human rights in America how can she be interested in human in Africa? The American Government should not send the Peace Corps to Africa, they should send them to Mississippi and Alabama
7. The only difference between apartheid in South Africa and racism in the United States is that while South Africa preaches and practices segregation, the United States preaches integration and practices segregation.¹¹⁵

His Ghana visit lasted seven days. Within this period, he met African-American expatriates, ambassadors, and President Nkrumah. Julian Mayfield, then the editor of the *African Review*, was the first contact Malcolm X made. He talked with him about his break with the Nation of Islam, his pilgrimage and his speech in Ibadan University.¹¹⁶ Mayfield gave Malcolm X the opportunity to have a conversation with some important figures, and took him to the Cuban Embassy, to meet Ambassador Entralgo Gonzales.¹¹⁷ The ambassador offered Malcolm X support for his cause in the United Nations. As a part of the communist bloc, Cuba's support can be perceived as a political move taken against the United States. In the Cold War

¹¹³ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 353.

¹¹⁴ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 188.

¹¹⁵ FBI Report. Subject: Malcolm X Little. File No.100-399321. Section:14. Serials: 214-227, in Carson, ed., *Malcolm X The FBI File*, 326-327.

¹¹⁶ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 38.

¹¹⁷ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 39.

atmosphere, the Cuban ambassador's approach to Malcolm X was meaningful. After their talk, the ambassador gave a dinner in Malcolm X's honor.¹¹⁸ After meeting with the Cuban ambassador, in the following days, Malcolm X had the chance to meet ambassadors of Algeria, China, and Nigeria. In all these meetings, Malcolm X received a warm welcome, where the common theme of discussion in the meetings was, of course, the African-American problem in the United States.¹¹⁹ The Chinese ambassador, for example, told Malcolm X that Mao Tse Tung, who was the first head of state in China at the time, supported those involved in the Civil Rights Struggle.¹²⁰ The Nigerian ambassador told of his own experience when he was in Washington, DC. He, himself, was exposed to the segregationist laws.¹²¹

Having met those officials, Malcolm X was invited to give a speech to the students at the University of Ghana on May 13, 1964. The audience was relatively large compared to the ones in other African countries where he had talked. The people mostly consisted of students and guests of African descent, but there were numerous whites who also attended the address. As Malcolm X's opinion concerning the situation in Africa increased, he became aware of the USIA's efforts on the continent. Malcolm X believed that the government's propaganda agency the USIA spread a "false image" of American race relations throughout African continent. In the address, he tried to provide his listeners with a "true picture" of African-American people. In this regards, he told the following:

I've never seen so many whites so nice to so many blacks, as you white people here in Africa. In America, Afro-Americans are struggling for integration. They should come here to Africa and see how you grin at Africans. You've really got integration here. But can you tell the Africans that in America you grin at the black people? No, you can't! And you don't

¹¹⁸ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 49

¹¹⁹ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 50

¹²⁰ Abdul Alkalimat, *Introduction to Afro-American Studies* (Chicago: Twenty-first Century Books, 1985), 334.

¹²¹ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 51.

honestly like these Africans any better, either- but what you do like is the minerals Africa has under her soil.

I am not anti-American, and I didn't come here to condemn America. I want to make that very clear. I came here, to tell the truth - and if the truth condemns America, then she stands condemned.¹²²

Malcolm X needed to say "I am not anti-American" because the white people seemed annoyed by his remarks concerning the actions of and the situation in the US. However, what he said was radical, particularly as it was said on foreign soil where Malcolm X condemned the US for its racial policies. Ultimately the purpose of the speech was to make the audience aware of the parallels between the African problem and the problems faced by Black Americans in the south.

Towards his final days in Ghana, Malcolm X had a great opportunity to speak with the members of the Ghanaian parliament and with President Nkrumah. In his autobiography, he stated that "I would never imagine that I would actually have an opportunity to address the members of the Ghanaian parliament."¹²³ On May 15, he arrived at the Parliament but he learned that the session was postponed. However, parliament members were still there, at the house Malcolm X spoke about the segregated status of African-Americans.¹²⁴ At that time, Ghana condemned Portugal and South Africa to human violations, in particular condemning South Africa's racist apartheid system. In his speech, Malcolm X suggested that the US also had to be condemned in a similar manner.¹²⁵ He warned against American propaganda agencies, which, according to him, offered a "distorted" image of the place and role of African-Americans within American society.¹²⁶ After his talk, Malcolm X heard

¹²² X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 355-56.

¹²³ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 356.

¹²⁴ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 50.

¹²⁵ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 356.

¹²⁶ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 356.

from the audience that “we support the Afro-American morally, physically, materially if necessary.”¹²⁷

One of Malcolm X’s critical contacts, of course, was President Nkrumah of Ghana. Malcolm X met him at the government offices in Christianborg Castle, one of the old slave forts dotting the West African coast.¹²⁸ It is necessary to mention that one of the famous expatriates, Shirley Graham DuBois, the second wife of W.E.B. Dubois, had a role in arranging Malcolm X’s meeting with Nkrumah. When Malcolm X came to Ghana, she had a negative view of him and regarded him as radical who constantly preached violence as the method to bring about true civil change for Black Americans. However, shortly after she met him, she reconsidered her views and came to the conclusion that he was not a man who embraced violence.¹²⁹ Furthermore, during this time, Shirley Graham DuBois had developed a close relationship with President Nkrumah. She encouraged the president to make contact with Malcolm X, as he was initially reluctant to meet and associate with him. Arguably the reason behind this reluctance was the fact Nkrumah probably judged it prudent to keep his distance from a figure as controversial as Malcolm X, particularly since he was openly critical of the United States.¹³⁰ In his autobiography, he described the first meeting with the president by saying “I knew that he was particularly well informed about the African-American plight, as for years he had lived and studied in America. We discussed the unity of Africans and peoples of African descent.”¹³¹ In this brief meeting - not more than twenty minutes – Malcolm X had the opportunity to meet one of the state leaders, despite his non-official position, all owing to Shirley Graham DuBois’ intervention.

¹²⁷ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 356.

¹²⁸ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 194.

¹²⁹ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 194.

¹³⁰ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 190.

¹³¹ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 357.

During the same day, after his meeting with the president, Malcolm X spoke before two hundred students at the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute in Winneba. The institute was founded by the president as a place where students worked on how to implement social changes and raise awareness for post-colonial African development.¹³² On one occasion, prominent African and Third World revolutionaries such as Ernesto Che Guevara, Amilcar Cabral, and Agostinho Neto delivered speeches at the institute.¹³³ In his speech Malcolm X stated:

...you will be called upon to help great leaders like President Nkrumah, lead the oppressed people of the world out of darkness into light, out from under the shackles of ignorance that was created by slavery, colonialism and imperialism- into the light of new world that is now being creating by freedom, justice and equality...

1. Your success is our success
2. We are all the same people
3. We must unite against the enemy
4. Can't stop South Africa and Portugal unless you stop the USA.¹³⁴

The critical points he raised were about themes related his global attempt within the civil rights movement. These were quite important points for carrying the struggle to the international level. During his presentation, Malcolm X's constant criticism of the United States annoyed a young African-American, who possibly did not belong to any group of the expatriates living in Ghana. He reacted to Malcolm X's criticism about the US by responding that only action that African-Americans could take was to defend passive resistance. Apparently, the man did not support Malcolm X's position regarding racism and its solution within the United States. Upon his argument, the people in the audience accused him of being an "American agent" and the "victim of Rockefeller."¹³⁵

¹³² Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 196.

¹³³ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 196.

¹³⁴ Sheerwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 52.

¹³⁵ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 357.

The opportunity to conduct and experience a long stay in Ghana provided Malcolm X with the chance to intellectually improve him in large part due to meetings, conferences, and other activities. In the “fountain-head of Pan-Africanism” Malcolm X tried to provide Africans, in his own words, with a “true picture” of the status of African-Americans in the United States. According to all of his comments with regards to the political and social situation he witnessed in Ghana, it can be argued that the country had been his own personal “Mecca” for the development of his own particular understanding of the political struggle back home. He noted as such:

The Ghanaians are by far the most progressive and independent-minded. Even their laughter is tinged always with an ominous note of seriousness—they laugh and joke with each other almost constantly, but it is not the same type of laughter (or jokes) found among other Africans but all of Africa is seething with serious awareness of itself, its potential wealth and power and the role it seems destined to play. We must identify with (migrate to) Africa, culturally, philosophically and psychologically and the life or new spirit will then give us the inspiration to do the things necessary (ourselves) to better our political, economic and social life.¹³⁶

After his long visit in Ghana, Malcolm X arrived in Monrovia, Liberia on May 17, 1964. In his diary, we learn that the (white) head of Peace Corps introduced him to his wife, and they debated the civil rights problem for about 10 minutes,¹³⁷ after which he traveled onwards to Dakar, Senegal. In fact, many of Malcolm X’s visits were quite short and limited in time.

On May 18, he went to Morocco. In his diary, he writes, “About 7 pm Mahi and a friend took me to his office for coffee where I met his wife and son. They are very-race conscious, proud of Black Muslims and thirsting for faster progress. They

¹³⁶ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 55.

¹³⁷ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 54.

knew most of the American Negro celebrities.”¹³⁸ On May 19, he arrived in Algeria, where he celebrated his 39th birthday at Ghanaian Ambassador’s home, who then sent Malcolm X to the Algerian Foreign Ministry. While at the ministry, Malcolm X spoke about the race problem in the US, however, no detailed information exists about on their conversation. In considering Algeria’s struggle for independence against France, Malcolm X stated that “they were true revolutionaries, as for so long, they had faced death in order to realize their goals.”¹³⁹ Malcolm X returned to the States. On May 21, thus his first series of the visit was completed. This set of journeys can be summarized as his one of his first attempts at internationalizing the civil rights movement. Even though initially he did not achieve serious gains for his cause, his presence came to be known by influential people and representatives in African politics. Arguably, after his visits, the foundation of the OAAU turned out to become another serious attempt at internationalizing the civil rights movement. In the following section, the primary discussion will focus on the process of founding the organization and its role in the civil rights movement.

3.2 The Organization of Afro-American Unity

In the final year of his life, Malcolm X came to be an international figure. His travels were one of the main contributions to his emerging reputation around the world. Even though he did not take any government position, he was generally positively welcomed by civil rights leaders and foreign government official, a fact that worried the US government. Upon his return from his first visit to the African states, Malcolm X held a press conference on May 21, 1964, in Hotel Teresa in New York

¹³⁸ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 56.

¹³⁹ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 360.

City. In the conference, he mentioned that “he had been rallying support abroad in order to bring charges against the USA at a United Nations congress.”¹⁴⁰ As the *New York Times* reported:

The case of against the United States for its treatment of the Negro people, he said, would be prepared and submitted to the United Nations sometime this year. He did not say which nations intended to lodge the formal charges. The case to be presented to the world organization, he asserted, would compel the United States Government to face the same charges as South Africa and Rhodesia.¹⁴¹

He also mentioned his desire to create a new organization which embraced all African-American peoples, regardless of their different ideological and religious orientations. Furthermore, he claimed that financial support from white Americans was welcome, however, their membership would not be possible, arguing this would impede the most important objective of the organization: the complete unity of all African-Americans.¹⁴² In the press conference, he emphasized how his own racial perspectives had changed by seeing people from different races and colors treat him as “human being.” After separating himself from the NOI’s racist doctrine, Malcolm X embraced himself in the international political struggle.¹⁴³ Before the official declaration of the OAAU, on June 24 he sent a letter to the leaders of civil and human rights organizations, and also to the representatives of African countries in the United Nations. In the letter, Malcolm X wrote:

I have been requested, and indeed it is my pleasure, to announce the existence of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, patterned after the letter and the spirit of the Organization of African Unity. Its purpose is to unite Afro-Americans and their organizations around a non-religious and non-sectarian constructive purpose for human rights.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 64.

¹⁴¹ "Malcolm Says He is Backed Abroad," *The New York Times*, May 21, 1964, accessed April 05, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1964/05/22/malcolm-says-he-is-backed-abroad.html>

¹⁴² Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 319.

¹⁴³ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 319.

¹⁴⁴ George Breitman, *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Revolutionary* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1968), 77.

After the long discussions and meetings in the US and Africa, Malcolm X finally reached to decision to establish the organization on June 28, 1964.¹⁴⁵ According to the Malcolm X, the movement was a non-sectarian and a non-religious based on organization principally human, not civil rights.¹⁴⁶ Referring to the MMI, Malcolm X justified the creation of another group led by him, the OAAU, by saying that “we realized that many of our people aren’t going to become Muslim; many of them aren’t even interested in anything religious.”¹⁴⁷ Influenced by the Organization of African Unity, Malcolm X was inspired to parallel the organization, in particular, its concepts of unity, among African-Americans back home. For Malcolm X, the OAU could possibly influence African politics in the global arena, particularly after the emergence of independent African countries. The OAU functioned as a pressure group to seek for solving problems of African countries and to deal with internal problems among them at the United Nations.¹⁴⁸ Thus the OAU inspired Malcolm X to found the Organization of Afro-American Unity in the United States, with perhaps the similar function of acting as a pressure group, domestically and internationally.

The primary objective of the organization was to unite African-Americans against the racist practices of the United States and to internationalize the African-American struggle.¹⁴⁹ Thus, appealing to the UN was a good strategy for Malcolm X, in terms of having a legitimate political base in the global political arena. Instead of expecting reforms from American Congress, he sought to present the violation of African-Americans’ rights to international bodies in the hopes of acquiring

¹⁴⁵ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation*, 104.

¹⁴⁶ Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X*, 190.

¹⁴⁷ DeCaro, *On The Side of My People*, 226.

¹⁴⁸ “Organization of African Unity”, accessed April 07, 2017.

<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=271>

¹⁴⁹ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation*, 89.

international intervention.¹⁵⁰ As he suggested, “I would like to impress upon every African-American leader that there is no kind of action in this country that is ever going to bear fruit unless that action is tied in with the overall international struggle.”¹⁵¹ The formation of the OAAU was a physical manifestation of Malcolm X’s beliefs that the method towards attaining civil rights would never occur through domestic change, but only through the intervention of international bodies.

On June 28, 1964, Malcolm X declared the basic aims and objectives of the Organization of Afro American Unity:

Dedicated to the unification of all people of African descent in this hemisphere and the utilization of that unity to bring into being the organizational structure that will project the Black people’s contribution to the world;

Persuaded that the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Constitution of the USA and the Bill of Rights are the principles in which we believe and these documents if put into practice, represent the essence of mankind’s hopes and good intentions;

Desirous that all Afro-American people and organizations should henceforth unite so that the welfare and well-being of our people will be assured;

Resolved to reinforce the common bond of purpose between our people by submerging all of our differences and establishing a non-religious and non-sectarian constructive program for human rights.¹⁵²

Even though Malcolm X was generally labeled as “anti-American”, he prominently referred to the Constitution and to the Bill of Rights in the declaration. No doubt, in order to have a legitimate base for his cause, on both domestic and international front, he needed to find an organization which could command both the unity of Black Americans, which he sought and the respect of various officials.¹⁵³ He said that “international recognition could only be possible if African-Americans could

¹⁵⁰ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 337.

¹⁵¹ George Breitman, ed., *By Any Necessary*. (New York: Pathfinder, 1972), 153.

¹⁵² Breitman, *The Last Year of Malcolm X*, 106.

¹⁵³ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation Unity*, 89.

organize as a nationality and present their demands in a national capacity.”¹⁵⁴ In Malcolm X’s view, a “united front” against American racism would effectively challenge the US politics in the eyes of international community.¹⁵⁵ Through the efforts of the OAAU, he hoped that the United Nations Charter might impact domestic policy regarding the rights of black Americans in the US. In other words, Malcolm X wished to see the organization as a pressure group in the United Nations.¹⁵⁶ Malcolm X believed challenging the US in the global arena was the most effective strategy for achieving his goals. In fact, he was partially right, as in the context of the Cold War, the race problem had become America’s “Achilles’ heel”, as was defined by Republican senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.¹⁵⁷ Due to the “Achilles’ heel”, the domestic civil rights crisis turned into an international crisis,¹⁵⁸ not only worrying the United States but also possibly damaging its prestige abroad. Thus, Malcolm X desired to benefit in this regard, from America’s shortcomings in the international arena. This issue is going to be discussed in the following sections in detail.

When we look at the basic aims and objectives, unity regardless of any religious and political standing was indeed the main theme of the organization. Malcolm X believed that sectarian tendencies in such groups highly damaged the organization’s agenda and its attempts to accomplish its goals. For that reason, in the membership meetings of the organization he used an inclusive tone to appeal to people with different religious and political backgrounds, such as Latinos, Leftists,

¹⁵⁴ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation Unity*, 89.

¹⁵⁵ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation Unity*, 89.

¹⁵⁶ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation Unity*, 89.

¹⁵⁷ Borstelmann, *Cold War and the Color Line*, 76.

¹⁵⁸ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000), 6.

and Liberals.¹⁵⁹ However, his past experience in the NOI made it difficult for people to reconcile this Malcolm X, despite his all efforts, with the one previously associated with the NOI, and therefore, people were inclined to see him both violent and a hater.¹⁶⁰ Even after his death, his violent image remained. For example, his best friend Wallace Muhammed, the son of Elijah Muhammad, did not want to be involved in Malcolm X's organization, arguing that he was preaching violence. Thus, initially, Malcolm X was unable to attract people. The OAAU members mostly consisted of Black working class people and opponents of established civil rights organizations.¹⁶¹ It is necessary to mention that Malcolm X could not attract supporters from his old organization the NOI.¹⁶² Therefore, the NOI members remained unsupportive of his new organization and did not patronize his new organization by becoming its members. Moreover, the NOI threatened people who had contact with Malcolm X, and this negative propaganda greatly affected the growth of the OAAU. As a member of the NOI, he had been greatly successful at recruiting others into the organization, yet at that moment, he could not achieve the same level of success.

However, without a doubt, the OAAU redefined Malcolm X's approach and methodology towards the civil rights movement. The organization itself was truly a sign of his ambition to take part in the movement. Shortly after the foundation of the organization, he paved the way for reconciliation with various civil rights leaders. Actually, meeting with Martin Luther King, Jr on March 26, 1964, in Washington D.C., was one of these first signs of reconciliation. While Congress was debating the Civil Rights Bill, they were able to meet briefly. After the meeting, when Dr. King

¹⁵⁹ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation Unity*, 109.

¹⁶⁰ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation Unity*, 109.

¹⁶¹ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation Unity*, 110.

¹⁶² Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation Unity*, 109.

was asked to give his opinion about Malcolm X, he implied that even though they did not fight on the same ground, the race problem was for both of them the main concern.¹⁶³ Despite their differences, Malcolm X entered the civil rights movement thanks to the OAAU.

The first direct action by the OAAU on the domestic front, within the scope of the civil rights movement, came on June 30, 1964. As Martin Luther King, Jr was running a non-violent campaign in St. Augustine, Florida, Malcolm X, as the leader of the OAAU, sent a telegram to him. In the telegram, he wrote:

We have been witnessing with great concern the vicious attack of the white race against our poor defenseless people in St. Augustine, Florida. If the federal government will not send troops to your aid, just say the word and we will immediately dispatch some of our brothers there to organize our people into self- defense units among your people and the Ku Klux Klan will receive a taste of its own medicine. The day of turning the cheek to the inhuman brute beasts is long over.¹⁶⁴

Ironically, when Malcolm X wanted to show his support to Dr. King and his organization, he still ignored the non-violent rhetoric of civil rights movement. However, it can be argued that his tone with regard to Dr. King, had clearly become supportive and respectful, particularly considering the fact that during his years in the NOI, Malcolm X was prone to deeply insulting him. How Dr. King reacted to the telegram is unknown. In parallel with his telegram, Malcolm X's wife Betty send a telegram containing the same spirit of support to the executive director of the SNCC, James Forman, in Mississippi, then in the midst of the Mississippi Freedom Summer Campaign.¹⁶⁵ For Malcolm X, the SNCC was his favorite civil rights organization and before his break from the NOI, in 1962 Stokely Carmichael, one of the leaders in

¹⁶³ "King Meets Malcolm X". accessed September 17, 2017.
http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/chronologyentry/1964_03_26.1.html.

¹⁶⁴ Simon Black, "Riots Simon Black", accessed October 15, 2017.
<http://simonblack.org/pages/tag/riots/>

¹⁶⁵ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation*, 125.

SNCC had invited Malcolm X to address the students of Howard University.¹⁶⁶ With regard to other organizations which supported his rhetoric and actions, the student organization of the SNCC embraced his legacy. However, despite any efforts made on the part of Malcolm X, he could not attain much support from many of the civil rights leaders. In his autobiography, he mentioned:

I must be honest. Negroes-Afro-Americans- showed no inclination to rush to the United Nations and demand justice for themselves here in America. I really had known in advance that they wouldn't. The American white man has so thoroughly brainwashed the black man to see himself as only a domestic "civil rights" problem that it will probably take longer than I live before the Negro sees that the struggle of the American black man is international.¹⁶⁷

Despite his emphasis on collaboration with the civil rights leaders after his involvement, Malcolm X discovered that he had a different vision than the leaders in terms of the movement's future. Aware of the reality, he began to plan a second visit abroad. In the subsequent part of this thesis, this second set of voyages will be discussed and analyzed in the context of how internationalizing the racial problem in America might have impacted or echoed in foreign countries.

3.3 Malcolm X's Second Visit Abroad

Malcolm X's first visit abroad had significantly helped to change his vision regarding issues of race not only in the world and but also in the US. In the context of the civil rights movement, he also redefined his own position, which ultimately led him to actively engage in the movement after his return to the US. Yet, by doing so, he also challenged the mainstream rhetoric of the movement. Unlike other civil rights leaders, he emphasized carrying the movement towards the international stage and gave it

¹⁶⁶ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation*, 127.

¹⁶⁷ X and Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 364.

a new dimension by founding the OAAU. However, in order to realize this attempt, he decided to embark on a second visit to the African continent. He arranged to stay abroad longer and did not return to the United States until shortly before his assassination. Malcolm X's initial travels greatly impacted his own ideas and beliefs, particularly within the context of the race problem in America. Furthermore, they resulted in his mobilization and entrance into the civil rights movement by embracing the concept of "human rights", and attempting to internationalize what was considered by others as a domestic issue. For his return, however, this time he had a both intellectually and politically planned agenda. If the *Hajj* led Malcolm X to reconsider of his Islamic life, his second African trip motivated him to embrace Pan-African ideology.¹⁶⁸ In addition to this conscious involvement and experience of pan-African ideology, he was also traveling to these countries in an official capacity as the chairman of the OAAU. This new position probably enabled him to project a more "prestigious" and "legitimate" image in the eyes of the international community.

Malcolm X's second visit began on July 10, 1964, and lasted nineteen weeks and comprised of stops in the Middle East, Africa and Europe, and a short pause where he returned to the US, before once more resuming his travels. According to Peter Goldman, "while his first trip had been impromptu and private, his second was formal and public a VIP tour down the corridors of power in a third of the then, independent, nations of Africa."¹⁶⁹ In Egypt, he participated in the OAU conference and made contact once more with Nasser; in Ghana, he met Maya Angelou and Shirley Dubois; in Kenya, Oginga Odinga; in Tanzania, Abdulrahman Mohamed

¹⁶⁸ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 360.

¹⁶⁹ Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X*, 213.

Babu, and Julius Nyerere; and Jomo Kenyatta.¹⁷⁰ Arguably, no other black leader in the United States experienced such an opportunity to meet with such important figures in Africa. Moreover, Malcolm X's rising reputation around Africa gave him the chance to be able to take the time and get in touch with his the audience in order to express himself thoroughly.

His first stop was London where he met with the African Prime Ministers and attended the Commonwealth Prime Minister Conference. It is clear that his intention was to lobby for his cause to the attending African leaders before he traveled to Africa. He hoped that he could persuade some African leaders who would take the race problem of African-Americans to the United Nations. Two days later, he left for Cairo. *The New York Times* reported that "he was going to Cairo as an observing party in the meeting of the OAU. There he intended to devote his time to intensely lobbying for the mobilization of African pressure on the United States government at the United Nations."¹⁷¹

When he came to Cairo on July 12, 1964, he had to wait for permission to attend the OAU conference, as non-African citizens were not permitted to participate in the conference. Therefore, his eventual participation in the conference, in that sense, was an exception. Before Malcolm X received permission to attend the conference, the American Embassy in Cairo aspired to pressure the Egyptian government and the OUA officials to deny the permit for Malcolm X's to attendance at the conference. However, the embassy ultimately failed as both sides rejected its demand. As he mentioned in his diary, "there is a real debate going on backstage at this conference as to whether I should be admitted or heard - already they have

¹⁷⁰ These entire figures were highly important in African politics. For Malcolm X they would help him for his attempt to internationalize civil rights struggle.

¹⁷¹ "Malcolm X to Meet Leaders of Africa," *The New York Times*, July 09, 1964, accessed April 17, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1964/07/10/malcolm-x-to-meet-leaders-of-africa.html>

succeeded in keeping Moise Tshombe (Congolese politician) away is a great victory for those who would have me admitted.”¹⁷² On July 17, 1964, Malcolm X got the opportunity to attend the OAU conference in Cairo. As an observer of the conference, he submitted an eight-page memorandum on behalf of his organization, the OAAU.¹⁷³ He stated that:

The American Government is either unable or unwilling to protect the lives and property of your 22 million African-American brothers and sisters. We stand defenseless, at the mercy of American racists who murder us at will for no reason other than we are black and of African descent.

Our problem is your problem. No matter how much independence Africans get here on the mother continent, unless you wear your national dress at all time when you visit America, you may be mistaken for one of us and suffer the same psychological and physical mutilation that is an everyday occurrence in our life.

We beseech independent African states to help us bring our problem before the United Nations, on the grounds that the United States Government is morally incapable of protecting the lives and the property of 22 million African-Americans. And on the grounds that our deteriorating plight is definitely becoming a threat to world peace.

Don't escape from European colonialism only to become even more enslaved by deceitful, "friendly" American dollarism.¹⁷⁴

Connecting African-Americans with Africans was, of course, the main theme of the memorandum. Seemingly Malcolm X hoped that the rhetoric of brotherhood would attract the attention of African leaders. However, the United States Information Agency (USIA) managed to convince the African state officials that there was no cultural and political affiliation between African-Americans and Africans.¹⁷⁵ Yet, despite all of his efforts, Malcolm X failed to persuade any African leaders to decisively support his ideas at the conference and to pass a resolution condemning

¹⁷² Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 83.

¹⁷³ Tyner, *The Geography of Malcolm X*, 135.

¹⁷⁴ “OAU Speech”, accessed March 18, 2017. <http://www.oopau.org/2.html>

¹⁷⁵ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 85.

the US.¹⁷⁶ Arguably, they avoided directly criticizing the United States hence did not mention “racism” while addressing the civil rights problem in America. In his diary, Malcolm X wrote that “I attend my first Summit conference. Nkrumah made the best (most-all inclusive) speech. But all the heads of States seem to avoid mentioning the US and its racism.”¹⁷⁷ Although he did not get a resolution condemning the US, the one that was passed for him was a good compromise and he was also generally satisfied with the outcome of his activities at the conference.¹⁷⁸ The resolution stated:

Considering that one hundred years have passed since the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in the United States of America

Deeply disturbed by continuing manifestations of racial bigotry and racial oppression against Negro citizens of the United States of America

1. Reaffirms its belief that the existence of discriminatory practices is a matter of deep concern to member States of the Organization of African Unity
2. Urges the Government authorities in the United States of America to intensify their efforts to ensure the total elimination of all forms of discrimination based on race, color, or ethnic origin.¹⁷⁹

Arguably, Malcolm X partially had little effect on the African leaders for the resolution; however, there were several key reasons why Malcolm X could not have achieved his actual goal. Firstly, the African diplomats were not convinced by his arguments. On the one hand, the African diplomats were not ready to directly accuse the United States of human rights abuses.¹⁸⁰ However, as some African countries were financially supported by the US, it was not possible to challenge or question the race problems of the US. In fact, when Malcolm X uttered “don’t escape from European colonialism only to become more enslaved by deceitful, friendly American

¹⁷⁶ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 352.

¹⁷⁷ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 85.

¹⁷⁸ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation*, 123.

¹⁷⁹ Racial Discrimination in the United States of America. AHG/Resolution.15.I, accessed March 27, 2017, http://archive.au.int/collect/auassemb/import/English/USARacialDiscrimination_E.pdf

¹⁸⁰ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation*, 124.

dollarism”¹⁸¹ he specifically referred to the dependent African countries were being developed as an outcome of the American aid. Furthermore, when the Civil Rights Act passed on July 2, 1964, the African leaders came to acknowledge the idea that the American government was making a genuine effort to address the race issues plaguing the country.¹⁸² Throughout Malcolm X’s entire Africa visit, the act was used as a propaganda tool by the American government to impress the newly independent African states for Malcolm X.¹⁸³

Secondly, due to the Cold War climate of the era, any criticism or actions attempted or made against the United States could potentially be regarded as a move in and support of Soviet Russia, and thus of communism and against democracy. As most African countries espoused a position of non-alignment, they did not want to appear to favor any “big powers”, and thus lead to the impression that they supported the side over the other on the international scene.¹⁸⁴ The anxiety displayed by these African leaders in relation to Malcolm X’s demands could therefore be directly related to the geopolitical climate of the time.

Finally, another reason was the hesitation about the support given to Malcolm X, which due to internal political issues, was caused by a rising disputes amount many of the countries. In comparison to their own accelerating internal political struggles, the African-American problem was not their priority. Many leaders were already convinced that there was no common relationship between the African-Americans and Africans, in part owing to the success of the American government’s propaganda. As suggested above, Malcolm X had to lobby to gain support for his struggle because the US government almost convinced African leaders that there was

¹⁸¹ “OAU Speech”

¹⁸² Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 70-71.

¹⁸³ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 222.

¹⁸⁴ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 362.

no common identity between African-Americans.¹⁸⁵ Breaking this mindset had been another struggle for him in Africa.

By that time, Malcolm X's participation in the conference created reactions in the US media. One of the speculative comments came from a well-known journalist, Victor Riesel. He alleged that Malcolm X did not actually even attend the conference. He mentioned that "Malcolm X prepared a series of inflammatory anti-US documents while within the US only giving the impression that he attended the conference. He claimed that it was nonsense. He did not get near the parley."¹⁸⁶ However, Riesel could not provide any adequate evidence for his claims and furthermore, he went so far as to accuse Malcolm X of dealing with the Chinese communists. For Riesel, Malcolm X had become a great threat to US national security while participating in the civil rights movement than he had during his years in the Nation of Islam. His presence at the conference was also reported by the *New York Times* on 13 August 1964:

The State Department and the Justice Department have begun to take an interest in Malcolm X's campaign to convince African states to raise the question of persecution of American Negroes at the United Nations...Malcolm's 8-page memorandum became available only recently... The officials studying it are reported stating that if Malcolm succeeded in convincing just one African government, it would be faced with a touchy problem. The United States... would find itself in the same category... as South Africa... and other countries whose domestic policies have become debating issues at the United Nations. The issue would be of service to critics of the United States... and contribute to the undermining of the position the United States has asserted for itself as a leader of the West in the advocacy of human rights.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 76.

¹⁸⁶ Victor Riesel, "Malcolm X and the Red Chinese." *The New York American Journal*, August 5, 1964

¹⁸⁷ "Malcolm X Seeks UN Negro Debate," *The New York Times*, August 12, 1964, accessed April 13, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1964/08/13/malcolm-x-seeks-un-negro-debate.html>.

As Malcolm X raised his voice against the US in such a global manner, American politicians were disturbed by his rhetoric and, went so far as to even accuse him of being a traitor. Therefore, they argued that his campaign abroad had to be legally stopped. For example, Congressman Charles C. Diggs suggested that Malcolm X must be charged with violating The Logan Act if he negotiated with foreign governments.¹⁸⁸ Interestingly, when the State Department responded to Diggs, it argued that Malcolm X was not officially admitted into the conference. Considering media reports and Malcolm X's statement on his attendance to the conference, how the department came to such a conclusion remains debatable. But the department had to admit that despite the lack of Malcolm X's diplomatic success, there was no denial of the fact that the propaganda, generated by his extreme statements, could possibly damage the image of the United States.¹⁸⁹

Malcolm X's second visit to Egypt was a unique experience for him as he underwent a widening and greater understanding of the global political horizon, contributing to his political maturity. His efforts during the conference could be regarded as an example of people-to-people diplomacy, where he was admitted to attend, even without any governmental support, though American government officials initially ignored these developments. At first sight, it is arguable that Malcolm X failed in his endeavors, as he could not persuade anyone to pass the resolution he expected. However, he did not abandon his attempt and instead realized that much needed to be done for his struggle. The refusal in the OAU conference, in fact, led him to visit key African countries to further lobby for their support. He planned to contact and meet with critical figures in African politics whom he had previously met during his initial visits, including African-American expatriates Maya

¹⁸⁸ Sherwood, *Malcolm Visit Abroad*, 83.

¹⁸⁹ Sherwood, *Malcolm Visit Abroad*, 83.

Angelou, Julian Mayfield, Alice Wisdom, a Nigerian scholar E.U. Essien Udom, Oginga Odinga of Kenya, and Abdulrahman Muhammed Babu of Tanzania. While Malcolm X's visit brought him into power circles in the African political environment, he seemed to meet important people wherever he went.¹⁹⁰

After he completed his visit to Egypt, he traveled to Nairobi, Kenya on October 5, 1964. Kenya had gained independence from Britain on December 12, 1963, under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta. He declared the country a republic in 1964 by appointing himself as president and Oginga Odinga as vice-president. When Malcolm X came to Kenya, ethnic tensions had risen to critical and disturbing levels. On October 8, Malcolm X had the chance to meet Vice President Odinga. Their meeting was scheduled initially for October 7, however, Odinga's busy schedule did not permit an earlier appointment.¹⁹¹ In his diary, Malcolm X mentioned that "he was very attentive, alert, understanding, and sympathetic" and Odinga said to him "I am not anti-American. Martin Luther King is a tool of imperialists. This young X talks my language."¹⁹²

On October, 15 Malcolm X received an invitation to address the Kenyan Parliament. Before his speech in Kenya, between October 9 and October 17, he also made visits to Zanzibar and Tanzania. Zanzibar is an archipelago of islands and a country that had been settled by Arabs, Persians, and Africans. It gained its independence as a constitutional monarchy in 1963 from Britain. However, the sultan was overthrown by Abeid Karume, the leader of the Afro-Shirazi party and Abdulrahman Muhammed Babu, the leader of the socialist Umma Party. Babu became a very critical figure in Zanzibar politics, and so the county turned into an outpost of the USSR and China. Tanzania, on the other hand, gained its

¹⁹⁰ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 371.

¹⁹¹ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 146.

¹⁹² Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 146.

independence in 1961 under the leadership of Julius Nyerere from Britain. A key player in the Organization of African Unity (OAU), he believed in a United Africa under a single government.¹⁹³

Malcolm X met with Babu in the Tanzanian capital city of Dar es Salaam. In his diary, Malcolm X stated “Babu was very informal and friendly. An extremely alert man, and dedicated to what he believes.”¹⁹⁴ Babu and Malcolm X had the same perspective concerning many issues, especially in terms of the importance for an emergence of “third-world” solidarity. During this visit, their friendship gained a new dimension. Even years after Malcolm X’s death, at a conference in 1990, Babu explained:

I met him for the first time in Cairo, when there was a crucial meeting of the second summit of the OAU. Malcolm came to my room in the very ambivalent mood because at very moment Harlem was burning. Malcolm was in two minds. He wanted to go back...and lead the struggle and be with people in the struggle. We wanted him to remain there in the conference so as to give us the feeling of the struggle and to convey to all the Third World leaders what America, the real America, was going through.¹⁹⁵

The following day Babu took him to meet President Julius Nyerere. In the context of decolonization, Nyerere was a symbolic political figure who played a significant role in being able to achieve independence without bloodshed. Compared to other African leaders who had had to use violence in their struggle for independence, his power was long-lasting. In 1985, he willingly gave up the Presidency by his own free will. In his diary, Malcolm X related his impressions about the president by stating that “he is very shrewd, intelligent, disarming, man who laughs and jokes much but is deadly serious”¹⁹⁶ and when they had dinner, the president said to Malcolm X “the importance of land; no one has right to own land: it should be socialized... neither a

¹⁹³ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visist Abroad*, 103.

¹⁹⁴ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 149.

¹⁹⁵ Abdul Alkalimat, *Perpesctive on Black Liberation and Social Revolution* (Chicago: Twenty-first Century Books, 1990), 105.

¹⁹⁶ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 150.

monarchy and a republic. China has made a human being out of the white man. He is now frightening like all other humans.”¹⁹⁷ There is no further information about the conversation in the diary.

As Malcolm X traveled throughout various African countries, he became more familiar with certain relevant themes, such as decolonization, the Third World, and Pan-Africanism. When Malcolm X returned to the US, he mostly gave reference to President Nyerere’s thoughts on decolonization in his addresses. However, throughout the Tanzania visit, he also had appointments in various embassies. One of them was the Cuban Embassy, where the Afro-Cuban Ambassador Rodriguez gave a dinner in honor of Malcolm X.¹⁹⁸ It was at this point that the American government was monitoring Malcolm X’s actions very closely. For example, when he gave an interview to the local Tanzanian newspaper *Tanganyika Standard*, the US embassy in Dar-es-Salaam sent a summary of the interview to the State Department. As the embassy suggested, “he had repeated his fundamental message of the need for African/Afro American Unity and gave a warning about the Negro leadership created by the state department.”¹⁹⁹ Along with the State Department, USIA continued its propaganda about the success of the Civil Rights Bill. Wherever Malcolm X went, the agency spread information about how the Civil Rights Bill guaranteed rights for its Black citizens. In one of the rallies on November 29, 1964, as he praised Tanzania and he complained about the USIA’s actions in the region:

I am telling you, they’ve done a vicious job... It will make that propaganda machine that Goebbels had, under Hitler, look like child’s play. Why, in every country the USIS window has a picture in it, showing the passage of the civil rights bill to make it look like the problems of every Negro over here have been solved... They use that passage of the bill to make it appear that Negroes’ voting right isn’t being trampled upon anymore, that police aren’t

¹⁹⁷ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 150.

¹⁹⁸ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 151.

¹⁹⁹ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 107.

busting Negroes' head with clubs anymore, nor are they using dogs and violence and water hoses to wash down the drain
To show you how vicious they are... the USIA has circulated a document about me throughout the African continent- knocking me.²⁰⁰

Malcolm X returned to Kenya from Tanzania on October 17, 1964. He was informed that he had received permission to address the Kenyan parliament upon his arrival. He first met Tom Mboya, who played a significant role in Kenyan politics and was the leader of the Kenya Federation of Labor. A day after this meeting, he learned that John Lewis and Don Harris of the SNCC²⁰¹ had checked on the way to Zambia. They met him, and Don Harris and Malcolm X reached an agreement concerning their future cooperation. Free from any doubt, Malcolm X's visits abroad thus inspired several civil rights leaders, particularly the SNCC members.²⁰² The members of SNCC also began to visit African countries. They also wanted to lobby in those countries for their cause; however, they lacked the fame, thus the potential influence that Malcolm X had attained. In addition to that, there was no general unity between the SNCC members and Malcolm X during their visits to Africa.

Malcolm X was interviewed on local TV in Nairobi on October 21. He had urged African leaders "to condemn the United States in the United Nations for racism."²⁰³ One of the major events that occurred in Kenya, which was particularly important for Malcolm X, was a speech engagement before the Kenyan parliament on October 22, 1964.²⁰⁴ Before his address, the American embassy urged the Kenyan government to cancel Malcolm X's talk to the parliament. The embassy's demand

²⁰⁰ George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements with Prefatory Notes*, (New York: Grove Pr., 1966), 143.

²⁰¹ These two were the leading figures in the SNCC. After Malcolm X's Africa visit, they aimed to carry the civil rights struggle to Africa. It is arguable that they partially adopted Malcolm X's agenda about Africa for the civil rights movement.

²⁰² Cleveland Sellers and Robert Terrell, *The River of No Return: The Autobiography of a Black Militant and the Life and Death of SNCC* (Jackson and London: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), 187.

²⁰³ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 373.

²⁰⁴ Some of the sources suggest that the address took place on October 15, however, according to his diary; the actual date of the address was October, 22 1964.

was rejected. After the failed attempt in the OAU conference, Malcolm X considered that an important opportunity and a second chance to address an official audience. The theme of the speech was similar to his other addresses that he had given throughout his travels and meetings in Africa; he highlighted the rising importance of Africa in world politics. He stated that Africa was the key to overcoming the Negro problem, and he added that America would never be willing to give American Negroes their deserved human rights unless the world over forced them to. Afterwards, the Kenyan parliament made an important decision and passed “a resolution of support for our human rights struggle.”²⁰⁵ It was Malcolm X’s suggestion. Despite his failed attempt in Cairo, he successfully convinced a sovereign nation to support his cause at internationalizing the civil rights movements. For an independent African state to endorse his human rights suggestion was a huge political move.²⁰⁶

When the American embassy was informed that the resolution passed, the decision worried the Secretary of State because it was an official decision and would possibly influence American policies with regards to Africa. After a couple of hours, Malcolm X met American Ambassador William Atwood who asked Malcolm X for the details of the resolution. In his diary, Malcolm X mentions “I went past the embassy: talked to the ambassador. Worried about my contacts, wanted to know who I have spoken to if I had spoken to any MP’s and what had I said. The ambassador said he thought I was a racist.”²⁰⁷ Considering “Malcolm X’s failure” in the OAU meeting, the State Department was convinced that he had no real impact on the Kenyan government’s decision. However, in Kenya, the embassy alerted the department about Malcolm X’s achievement. Days after Malcolm X’s address,

²⁰⁵ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 373.

²⁰⁶ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 373.

²⁰⁷ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 156.

Atwood sent a telegram to the State Department and other US embassies in Africa on November 2, 1964. In the telegram, he stated that “they disagreed that Malcolm X had no real impact on Africa. He had considerable success in Kenya publicizing his views and in getting the ear of Kenyan leaders.”²⁰⁸ Arguably, Atwood was deeply worried that the American government would face a “touchy problem” in certain African countries, as a consequence of Malcolm X’s success in Kenya.²⁰⁹ When Malcolm X left Kenya, Atwood cabled the State Department that his travel was broadening.

Malcolm X left Kenya for Ethiopia (Addis Ababa) on October 24, 1964. Before his second visit to Nigeria, he needed to stop there because his friend Essien Udom had arranged events for him in Addis Ababa.²¹⁰ Throughout the visit, he had the chance to talk with local people. In the diary, he mentions that “a white missionary from North Carolina called and invited me to see his Baptist mission. He picked me up it was quite a place: new, well equipped and nicely located. Most of the audience was young Ethiopian students.”²¹¹ It is necessary to indicate that Malcolm X did not hesitate to make contact with Christians during these visits. As he embraced a universalist stance, contact with individuals practicing other beliefs and religions was no longer an ideological issue for him. Towards the end of the visit in Ethiopia, he went to meet Diallo Telli.²¹² In his diary, he mentions a meeting with Telli, however, no further information concerning the meeting is given. Malcolm X left Ethiopia for Nigeria on 28 October 1964. This was the beginning of his second

²⁰⁸ Sherwood, *Malcolm Visit Abroad*, 114.

²⁰⁹ Sherwood, *Malcolm Visit Abroad*, 114.

²¹⁰ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 373.

²¹¹ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 157

²¹² Diallo Telli (1925-1977) was a Guinean diplomat and was politician. Telli played a leading role for founding the Organization of African Unity (OAU). In African visit, Malcolm contacted him in several occasions.

West Africa visit which played an essential role in furthering his political awakening. However, the second visit was relatively short.

He arrived in Nigeria, Lagos on October, 29. He had previously visited Lagos, a few months earlier, in May 1964. His friend, the scholar Essien-Udom accompanied Malcolm X during the visit and arranged some of the meetings for him. First, upon his arrival, he held a press conference, during which he highlighted the internal problems facing African countries. His press conference was also followed by the US government. Based on the FBI reports Malcolm X said that “in East Africa, it is the Africans against the Asians, and in West Africa, it is the Moslem against Christians and all these fed by outside force.”²¹³ As Malcolm X became more acquainted with the complex internal political struggle within the continent, he realized that these could damage his cause, rather than help, as his rhetoric concerning unity relied upon African unity as well.

During his second day in Nigeria, Malcolm X mentioned in his diary that “President Nnamdi Azikiwe’s secretary sent a letter stating the president wanted to see me at 11 am tomorrow. I called and accepted the invitation.”²¹⁴ For Malcolm X, President Azikiwe was well informed about the ongoing civil rights struggle in the United States. In his diary, Malcolm X also noted that two reporters from local newspaper contacted him due to his positive views on the President. He noted “I was attacked verbally by the reporters for the good statements about Azikiwe. The mood among the young generation is mostly impatient and explosive.”²¹⁵ During Malcolm X’s second tour to Nigeria, internal disputes within the country were gradually increasing to the point that they led to one of the most destructive civil wars (Biafran

²¹³ FBI Report. Subject: Malcolm X Little. File No: 100-399321. Section 14. Serials 214-227 in Carson, *Malcolm X The FBI File*, 337.

²¹⁴ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 160.

²¹⁵ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 163.

War)²¹⁶ after a couple of years. The dispute also interested Malcolm X as he became aware of the highly critical inner problems experienced within the country. He predicted the possible war in the future. For example, he stated that “it will take much bloodshed to straighten this country out and I don’t believe it can be avoided.”²¹⁷

After his stay in Nigeria, his next stop was Ghana. Upon his arrival, he learned that the OAAU Information Bureau had been set up at the Ghana Press Club with the support of his friends in Ghana. No doubt Malcolm X’s influence over Ghana was more deeply felt than in any other place in the Africa. A local Ghanaian newspaper reported that the bureau had been formed to better acquaint the people of the African continent with the day-to-day struggles of the Afro-American press against white supremacy and would also supply the Afro-American press.²¹⁸ Malcolm X met with both Maya Angelou and Julian Mayfield. They introduced Malcolm X to some of the important figures in Ghana. In his diary on 2 November, he noted “Met by Maya and Julian. Delphine King. Saw Cassius. Maya took me to Nana NKetsia’s home for dinner with Mr. Welbeck and Dr. Mark.”²¹⁹ When Malcolm X was in Ghana, world famous heavy boxing champion Muhammad Ali was also visiting the country. Thousands greeted Ali. He also met with President Kwame Nkrumah. In fact, Ali’s fame came before Malcolm X in Ghana because he became a worldwide phenomenon. When Muhammad Ali has converted to Islam (the NOI version of Islam) Malcolm X had been his tutor during his years in the NOI.

²¹⁶ Biafra War or Nigerian Civil War (1967-70) was one of the bloodiest civil war in Africa. The war was fought between the central Nigerian government and the separatist Biafra state. Almost 3 million people lost their life during the conflicts. See Chinua Achebe, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (London: Penguin, 2013).

²¹⁷ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 374.

²¹⁸ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 124.

²¹⁹ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 164.

Malcolm X also played a role in the conversion of Muhammad Ali. Their relationship, however, broke down when Malcolm X split from the NOI.²²⁰

Having met with Maya Angelou and Julian Mayfield Malcolm X was interviewed by *the Evening News* in Ghana. In the interview Malcolm X pointed out the following issues:

The most remarkable achievement made by Africa since the arrival of the white man is the establishment of the Organization of African Unity. Heads of state should give maximum and uncompromising support to the OAU and the concept of a Union Government for the continent; those who don't do this are contributing to the continued presence and dominance of the West in Africa...The building of bridges of understanding and communications between Afro-Americans and Africans will result in cooperation in areas that are mutual benefit to us

President Nkrumah is one of the few leaders who is genuinely working for the improvement of a lot of the Afro-American population in the United States... I respect his realistic analysis of the world situation and also his suggestions towards the solution of many of the world's problems.²²¹

He went to meet President Nkrumah on November 5 according to his diary. He noted that "Mrs. Dubois called me at 7:30 to let me know of my appointment at 1 pm the president... I then dashed to the office of the Pres. Arrived at 12:59. He had already asked for me: he was dressed in black, very clean looking, relaxed but alert."²²² Despite the lack of information concerning the details of the meeting, they discussed the recent Civil Rights Bill and its possible influence on US society and Malcolm X's lobbying efforts during the recent OAU meeting. In fact, before the meeting, President Nkrumah was put under pressure by the US government to avoid meeting with Malcolm X, but he somehow he still managed to speak with Malcolm X.

Malcolm X left Ghana for Liberia on November 6th. Following day, two Liberians interviewed him for the radio. Afterward, Sam Payne Cooper (under-secretary of agriculture) took him to the Secretary of State. During the meeting with

²²⁰ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 125.

²²¹ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 128.

²²² Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 165.

Cooper, he said to Malcolm X “we want American Negro technicians and other skilled workers to migrate here, use their talents to make Liberia strong. But we don’t want them to interfere with our internal political structure. Our fear is that they may get into our politics.”²²³ Arguably, despite Malcolm X’s “anti-American” stance in Africa, in Liberia, he was treated as an ordinary American citizen. For that reason, complaining about the Afro-American plight in the US was not possible for Malcolm X. He desired to meet President William Tubman but learned that he was busy.

On November, 9 he moved to Guinea which had been one of France’s West African colonies. In 1958 the country gained independence from France under the leadership of Sekou Toure. At Conakry airport, Malcolm X met some of the foreign ministry officers. Simultaneously, he encountered Diallo Telli and according to his diary, he was welcomed warmly. By the efforts of Telli, Malcolm X was given three servants, a driver, and an army officer. He noted that “my thoughts come strong and clear and it is easier to express myself. My mind has been almost incapable of producing words and phrases lately that has worried me. This ocean side is so relaxing.”²²⁴ On November 11th Malcolm X was given the chance to meet President Toure at the home of the presidency. In regards to the meeting, Malcolm X notes that “He welcomed me... and he congratulated me for my firmness in the struggle for dignity. He said ‘Our people need dignity more than they need money’. He was dressed in white, Guniea style.”²²⁵ As Marable pointed out, in the meeting, President Toure told Malcolm X “we are aware of your reputation as freedom fighters.”²²⁶

Towards the end of his African visit, Malcolm X went to Algeria (Algiers) on November 14th, 1964. He noted that “language barrier in Algiers is tremendous. I

²²³ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 167.

²²⁴ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 168.

²²⁵ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 169.

²²⁶ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 385.

decided to leave tomorrow after trying hard to make contacts.”²²⁷ However, the visit could not have been as productive as he hoped, even without the language barrier, for unlike during preceding visits he could not find a suitable audience to discuss the African-American civil rights problem.

Ultimately, he therefore, decided to travel to Geneva and to make contact with the members of the Islamic Center, which was linked to the Muslim Brotherhood.²²⁸ Here, he met here Dr. Said Ramadan, who was one of the founders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Ramadan was expelled by President Nasser and thus had fled Saudi Arabia, and then moved to Switzerland. According to Ramadan, the main objective of the center was to spread the Islamic faith worldwide. It was a well-known fact that there was an ongoing dispute between the Muslim Brotherhood and President Nasser.²²⁹ During the meeting between Malcolm X and Dr. Ramadan, Malcolm X learned that the Dr. Ramadan has been expelled by President Nasser. Considering Malcolm X’s pro-Nasser stance, how he reacted to Dr. Ramadan remains unknown.²³⁰ However, encountering such politically complex situations that clashed with his own experiences and ideals certainly led Malcolm X rethink or reform his own ideas concerning Africa, African Unity, and President Nasser.²³¹ Before Malcolm X returned to the US, he made a short visit to London and Paris on his way home to New York. In London, he addressed the Federation of Mohammedan Student’s Societies and he appeared on BBC’s tonight show program. In Paris, Malcolm X was invited to speak by *Presence Africaine*, an African journal, and cultural organization.²³² The invitation came from the journal’s editor, Alioune

²²⁷ Boyd and Shabazz, eds., *The Diary of Malcolm X*, 172.

²²⁸ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 134.

²²⁹ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 368

²³⁰ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 134.

²³¹ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 134.

²³² Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 142.

Diop.²³³ The topic of the speech was “African Revolution and Its Effect.” He gave a speech there on November 23rd, and made remarks concerning the black struggle in the United States and also mentioned the efforts of the OAAU. Upon his speech in there *The Militant* on December 7, 1964, reported that Malcolm X said:

We also realized that, as Afro-Americans, our problem went beyond religion. To find out the kind of organization that would be most helpful to us, we studied the tactics and strategy that our brothers and sisters were using in Africa. They tried to unite on the basis of what they could agree on and formed the Organization of African unity. We in the United States decided to form a similar organization, called the Organization of Afro-American Unity. Since the topic of this lecture, tonight has been listed as the African Revolution and Its Effect on the Afro-American Struggle. I feel that I should speak in my capacity as chairman of the OAAU rather than in my religious capacity- since the OAAU is a political movement.²³⁴

Thus, after his travels throughout Africa, Malcolm X found an audience for himself which allowed him to discuss African-American problem in Europe. Since he was aware of the presence of a lot of people of African origin living there, he constantly emphasized how Africans and African-American shared the “same destiny.” Therefore, his popularity gradually spread throughout Europe. The efforts he made in Africa came to be celebrated by people in Europe, who had different political orientations. As *The Militant* suggested “African-Americans, black and white, European leftists of all persuasions, and representatives of the press, all were intensely interested in what Malcolm X would say.”²³⁵ By the time of his Paris visit, although Malcolm X’s completed his journeys he made a short visit to England and France, closely before his assassination. However, compared to his first and second visits to the African continent, his last visits to Europe were politically less

²³³ Alioune Diop (1910-1980) was a Senegalese intellectual who was founder of *Presence Africaine* journal in France. Shortly after World War II he was elected a senator in France as representative of Senegal.

²³⁴ Ruth Porter, “Paris Meeting Hears Malcolm X”. *Militant*, December 7, 1965.

²³⁵ Ruth Porter, “Paris Meeting Hears Malcolm X”.

influential. When Malcolm X arrived in the United States on November 23rd, he was greeted by his family and his followers from the MMI and the OAAU.

Arguably, after such a long journey, Malcolm X became more politically mature and familiar with world affairs. Even though he did not achieve any internationally political serious gains, he his lobby over African leaders led them to receive the African-American problem seriously. In the US, he continued his struggle and shared his experiences in Africa with the people until his death. In that context, it can be argued that Malcolm X brought a different dimension to the civil rights movement with his global vision. To understand Malcolm X's global vision for the civil rights movement, it is necessary to mention how the Cold War and decolonization process influenced his attempt.

3.4 Malcolm X's Global Attempt in the Context of the Cold War and Decolonization

As indicated in the preceding sections, internationalizing the civil rights struggle had been the main objective for Malcolm X in his final years. To implement this strategy, he made several foreign visits and committed towards a people-to-people style of diplomacy throughout Africa. The attempt to transform a domestic, civil rights issue into an international, human rights issue, however, must be understood in the context of the cold war and decolonization for Malcolm X's strategy was shaped by these ongoing realities in world politics.²³⁶ When Malcolm X desired to make use of the international forum, the Cold War had reached a highly critical phase and

²³⁶ Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 485.

decolonization was challenging “super-powers” as former colonies declared their independence.

In the Cold War atmosphere, the civil rights movement transformed a critical foreign problem for the United States. For example, the Little Rock Crisis in 1957 in Arkansas had unexpected repercussions around the world. For example, Elizabeth Eckford’s (one of the nine black students in Little Rock High School) trials appeared on the front pages of newspapers published in many countries such as the *Times of India* and the *Tanganyika Standard*.²³⁷ The country was home to human rights violations witnessed by millions of people outside of its borders, as a leader of the “free world.” Once, Secretary of State Dean Rusk emphasized how important it was for American foreign policy to show the world that the US, in fact, had racial equality. He said that “we are looked upon as a leader... and when we fail to meet our commitments, this has a major impact on the countries.”²³⁸ Especially after World War II, the United States made a point of having an international opinion. As a symbol of democratic values and the free market system, the country was in a critical position in terms world politics, particularly as the democratic antithesis to communist Soviet Russia. In this respect, the civil rights movement played a significant role in shaping the Cold War policies for the US. The Civil Rights efforts during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations reached their highest level to win the “minds and hearts” of those in Asia and Africa.

Regarding the American image abroad, the Kennedy administration took the civil rights movement seriously even though Kennedy himself harbored negative views with regards to the civil rights leaders. He defined civil rights organizers as

²³⁷ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 119.

²³⁸ Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in The Global Arena* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 180.

disobedient followers tended to jump outline.²³⁹ On several occasions, he privately insulted prominent civil rights leaders. However, he realized that the “bad propaganda” generated by the Soviet Republic concerning the civil rights movement could have a permanently destructive effect on the image of the United States.²⁴⁰ For that reason, he had to find a way to embrace and support the civil rights case. The president was highly worried that another Little Rock crisis might happen and create new problems in the eyes community.²⁴¹ During the Kennedy administration, one of the largest protests of the era erupted in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. The police used excessive violence against non-violent civil rights demonstrators against dogs and clubs, and in reaching this level of police brutality, it received global attention. In Kenya, the police dogs and fire hoses were featured on television news programs. The US Embassy in Accra stated that the US had lost legitimacy due to this crisis.²⁴² To overcome domestic and foreign pressure, Kennedy decided to propose new civil rights legislation. As Kennedy took decisive steps for the legislation, he was assassinated in the year of 1963 and Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson came to power, continuing work on Kennedy’s project regarding civil rights legislation.

President Johnson came to the idea that Civil Right Act could possibly decrease criticism against the US government abroad for its treatment of people of color.²⁴³ One of the biggest achievements in this era, for Johnson, was the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which ended segregation.²⁴⁴ It can be argued that the act partially restored the image of the United States as a leader of the “free world” and a representative of democracy for all. For example, at the second OAU meeting in

²³⁹ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 157.

²⁴⁰ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 158.

²⁴¹ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 158.

²⁴² Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 170.

²⁴³ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line*, 180.

²⁴⁴ William T. Martin Riches, *The Civil Rights Movement: Struggle and Resistance* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1997), 77-78.

Cairo on July 12, 1964, the Civil Rights Act was praised by the OAU.²⁴⁵ Such remarks concerning the civil rights act from the OAU were quite important as the organization had become a strong opponent of American policies in Africa. No doubt the act, for a short time at least, convinced people in the African continent that the United States was taking an important step to resolve its own internal race problem. On the other hand, while Malcolm X was participating in the OAU meeting, he warned its leaders about the civil rights act. He said:

Many of you have been led to believe that the much publicized recently passed civil-rights bill is a sign that America is making a sincere effort to correct the injustices we have suffered there. This propaganda maneuver is part of her deceit and trickery to keep African nations from condemning her racist practices before the United Nations, as you are now doing as regards the same practices in South Africa.²⁴⁶

For the Secretary of State the Civil Rights Act could be used against Soviet propaganda, however, Malcolm X argued that the act itself was an American propaganda.²⁴⁷ Despite all publicity efforts made by the American government, he was keenly aware of “America’s Achilles heel” during the Cold war era. While the American government attempted to restore its own image in the eyes of the world, Malcolm X challenged this attempt at any occasion, particularly when abroad in Africa.

Along with the Cold War, decolonization had been produced a moment of momentous global change for the “non-Western” world. During the decolonization process, former European colonies gained their independence, both diplomatically and forcefully. Newly independent countries emerged as political actors in own their

²⁴⁵ Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visit Abroad*, 88.

²⁴⁶ Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks*, 76.

²⁴⁷ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 222.

geographies. Arguably, one of the critical results of decolonization was that the white-oriented mindset in world politics came to be questioned by new emerging powers.²⁴⁸ For a long time, white-supremacist Western powers had dominated the non-white majority, all around the world. Decolonization brought a new vision for racial relations that offered a more egalitarian and critical perspective. As Thomas Borstelmann suggested, “colonialism had been grounded in racial inequality and discrimination, and the successful struggles for national liberation brought a new day of formal racial equality to the world’s non-white majority.”²⁴⁹

Malcolm X’s timing for his own travels it, therefore, particularly significant as when he decided to travel to Africa and the Middle East, many of the countries he visited had very recently declared their independence. Thus, Malcolm X tended to equate the anti-colonial struggle with the Afro-American struggle in the US, he saw a parallel between the former oppressive colonial regimes in Africa and the current oppressive government in America.²⁵⁰ He deeply believed that African-Americans should equate their own conditions with anti-colonial movements that were sweeping across Asia, Africa, and anywhere.²⁵¹ As mentioned above, Malcolm X mostly praised the efforts of African leaders for their struggle for independence. The leaders were exalted and formulated to fit into a “heroic image” for Malcolm X. Obviously, he saw the “African awakening” as a strong psychological drive for African-Americans. Arguably, the gains of decolonization in Africa and Asia could have affected Malcolm X’s decision to take the initiative to globalize his own cause.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line*, 269

²⁴⁹ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line*, 111.

²⁵⁰ Nicholas M. Creary, ed., *African Intellectuals and Decolonization* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), 16.

²⁵¹ Tyner, *The Geography of Malcolm X*, 125.

²⁵² Creary, ed., *African Intellectuals and Decolonization*, 17.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Divorcing from the NOI's teachings, Malcolm X took a unique position in the civil rights movement during the 1960's. His religious transformation after his he broke ties with the Nation of Islam and the foreign visits changed his vision of religion and race that lead to redefining his position for African-American's struggle. Even though he is, and was, not regarded as one of the major civil rights leaders in the movement by some civil rights historians, his role within the movement was highly important. He provided a new dimension to the movement and changed its discourse. During the most critical period of the movement, other civil rights leaders hoped that reforms like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 could lead overcoming racial inequality in the United States. Their vision shaped the theme of "we shall overcome" and "I have a dream." Needless to say, their efforts should not be underestimated as their struggle and fight for change resulted in substantial for African-American people. The leaders changed the course of American history in many ways throughout the movement. However, their vision did not expand beyond the domestic sphere, and could not embrace the ideas suggested by Malcolm X. Although Martin Luther King, Jr, for example, celebrated the struggle of oppressed people around the world and supported the spirit of international brotherhood, he never took tangible steps towards actively

linking the movement with America to those around the globe, in a manner similar to Malcolm X.²⁵³

As Sales stated, “Malcolm X was the first black leader of the 1960’s to speak in Africa directly about the plight of blacks in the United States.”²⁵⁴ Despite the fact that Malcolm X held no governmental position, he was welcomed in several African countries in a manner befitting a diplomat by the heads of states and by their citizens. His people-to-people diplomacy over the countries provided him with a suitable environment to express his cause. After his first journey to Africa, Malcolm X perceived that African struggle was directly connected and tied to the African-American struggle. His second visit took place in light of this perception. In his last speech in February 1965, he told the audience that “African-Americans must help in their struggle to free themselves from Western domination. No matter where the black man is, he will never be respected until Africa is a world power.”²⁵⁵

Some scholars suggest that Malcolm X’s idealism concerning Africa was so naïve as he celebrated all African leaders and their struggles throughout his visits. As he was creating this “heroic image” of the African leader, he simultaneously lacked the ability to discern the various problems that these leaders both dealt with. Internal politics in Africa particularly dictated many of their political problems as leaders were accused of being the puppets of “big powers”, namely of the Soviet Union and the United States of America. Internal conflicts in these countries further created tensions and even violence, which prevented stability and development in these new states. Several of them remained on the edge of severe civil wars, which eventually manifested and caused thousands of deaths and humanitarian crises. For example, the

²⁵³ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation*, 104.

²⁵⁴ Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation*, 101.

²⁵⁵ DeCaro, *On The Side of My People*, 225.

Biafra War in Nigeria was catastrophically destructive. In addition, though they took the position of non-alignment in regards to the Cold War, they could not abandon the harsh Cold War realities. In other words, non-alignment was an illusion and eventually, some sort of declaration of fidelity had to be made on one side or the other. Additionally, carrying the struggle to the United Nations seemed a strategic move, in terms of finding a global audience for Malcolm X, but African heads of states and diplomats were hesitant to openly discuss, condemn or take direct action against the United States due to the political and economic pressure of the US.

Despite the harsh realities Malcolm X faced, his singular struggle in the world arena had a symbolical importance for the civil rights struggle in the US during the 1960's. Although he did not fully achieve his goals as a foreign voice in Africa, he was able to raise awareness about racist practices in the US against African-Americans in the 1960s to the rest of the world by remaining within civil rights movement. As he raised his voice abroad, the US government tried to stop him on almost every occasion. However, he continued to speak out against his own government, and his belief in the globalization of the civil rights movement and its place within a larger issue that of human rights was strong enough to combat resistance from his own country. No doubt, for Malcolm X, speaking about problems of African-American abroad was a great value to the civil rights movement.

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