

Parades, lectures to mark Malcolm X's birthday
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New York Amsterdam News (1962-1993); May 15, 1993;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: New York Amsterdam News
pg. 4

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By AKINSHIJU C. OLA
Special to the AmNews

One of the most stirring stories of the past year has been that which has put Malcolm X on our minds. Sometimes we have not been able to capture and hold him in the confines of any one political category. But on his birthday, May 19, we always seek ways to understand the man who pushed us on the path of new directions.

New York State Senator David Paterson approaches it this way: "May 20th is my birthday, and it is a special meaning for me — because the day before my birthday is Malcolm's birthday."

Senator Paterson was also firm in his understanding that Malcolm X has made an impact in terms of how he sees his role as a person elected by the African-American community. He remembers a very pertinent essay by the Detroit activist, organizer and political analyst James Boggs,



MALCOLM X

"The City Is the Black Man's Land," which dealt with a perspective for African-American elected officials to set a tone and direction of alternative politics.

"That is exactly the way I try to represent my constituency. I must say that I have tried to urge that the ballot is a positive way of changing things," Paterson said in our interview with *AmNews* relating to Malcolm's speech on "The Ballot or the Bullet."

Paterson went on to say, "We've proved through the ballot that we can get elected. We have not proved that we can implement anything. As we get elected, we don't make anything happen. And the reason is because people become seduced by 'success' and will not wage what they have or what we have to get more."

What makes Malcolm X important, says Sen. Paterson, is that "he had a lot going and could've dealt with a whole lot of things, but

he chose to speak out against injustice wherever he saw it."

This perspective has obviously been the cutting edge that marks the political and social difference between the thrust of Malcolm X's vision and that of the traditional civil rights objectives.

This difference comes out in what former political prisoner Eddie Ellis has to say. Ellis, along with Sam E. Anderson — popularly known as S.E. Anderson — worked in the Deep South organizing the original Black Panther Party.

"What Malcolm represents to me personally is the transformation of a street hustler into a conscious, dedicated political Black man. And the transformation took place in the joint. I can identify with that as a person who was in the joint and understands that experience," Ellis said in an interview with the *AmNews*.

Ellis said he sees Malcolm X as

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a symbol, someone who stands out as "an inspiration for what other brothers can do. Mainly, because being in there you have time to study and read and understand what we need to come back with to our communities. The important thing is that those of us who deal with that kind of thing in the prisons become examples to all of us there."

Pushes Malcolm's legacy

Like Malcolm, Ellis has come out of prison to concretize that reality. He pushes the legacy of Malcolm. While he did not come out to the Nation of Islam, he has helped in the formation of the Community Justice Center, which is run by ex-offenders. It is a focal

point where ex-prisoners can come and feel comfortable and talk with folks without feeling that anything is being imposed on them.

It is a small start, says Ellis, to get involved with some positive input. It is the Community Justice Center, 54 McCoombs Place, at 139th St., (212) 234-2888.

But Malcolm also was an inspiration on the international scene. One of the things missing in the popularized version of Spike Lee's view of Malcolm X was his last year in the international arena.

Yuri Kochiyama, a longtime activist in the struggle against Third World oppression, invited a number of civil rights leaders in 1964 to her home to discuss and put into

perspective the atomic testing of bombs in Japan, and understanding of the concentration of Japanese-Americans during World War II. Malcolm was the only Black leader to show up. And this was at a period when his life was in danger, about three months before he was assassinated.

"We asked Malcolm to come and talk to the people. My husband, Bill, and I were incarcerated in the concentration camps. But it seemed that the traditional civil rights groups were not really concerned about what that meant. But Malcolm came," Kochiyama told *AmNews*.

May 19, as Senator Paterson says, is a very significant day in the lives of African-Americans and in the political truth of all of our lives. In the lives of the people of the world.

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