OMB Control No. 1024-0018
expiration date 03/31/2022

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: _Malcolm X House_____
Other names/site number: _Little, Wilfred and Ruth, House_____
Name of related multiple property listing:
_N/A_____
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: _4336 Williams Street_____
City or town: _Inkster_____ State: _MI_____ County: _Wayne_____
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _X_ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property _X_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national _X_statewide ___local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

_X_A _X_B ___C ___D

	SHPO	**October 15, 2021**
Signature of certifying official/Title:		**Date**
Michigan State Historic Preservation Office		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

Malcolm X House | Wayne County, MI
Name of Property | County and State

In my opinion, the property _meets _does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title: **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

_X_entered in the National Register

_determined eligible for the National Register

_determined not eligible for the National Register

_removed from the National Register

_other (explain:) _____

James Gabbert 11/29/2021

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:	X
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	X
District	
Site	

Malcolm X House | Wayne County, MI
Name of Property | County and State

Structure ☐

Object ☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

---

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

_DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
MODERN MOVEMENT: minimal traditional

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property:
Foundation: CONCRETE
Walls: WOOD
Roof: ASPHALT: Shingles_

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Malcolm X House is located at 4336 Williams Street, in the City of Inkster, Wayne County, Michigan. The house is situated just north of the intersection of Inkster and Annapolis Roads. The seven-room house was built in 1950 and bears a modern minimalist design typical of working-class neighborhoods in Inkster during the 1940s and 1950s. The surrounding streets are replete with homes bearing identical designs. The home sits on a concrete foundation with access to a crawl space at the west face of the home and bears a gable and valley asphalt shingle roof. The 1.25 story 'modern movement' home contains an open, concrete porch and two main windows (in the front of the home), one on each side of the front door (which faces east). The doorway and nearly all of the windows are boarded, as the home has been unoccupied for years. The condition of the home can be described as in a state of deterioration as the asbestos-ridden synthetic fiber cement siding is enduring gradual, but clearly ongoing decay. In some areas, the wooden frame is exposed. The driveway and walkway leading to the porch are also in poor condition, with large visible cracks and uneven surfaces. The Malcolm X House possesses

historic integrity and continues to convey its significance in the social history and ethnic heritage of Inkster, Michigan, as the place where Malcolm Little formally became Malcolm X.

Narrative Description

Setting and Overview

The Malcolm X House is located at 4336 Williams Street in the city of Inkster, Wayne County, Michigan. The city of Inkster is located about fourteen miles to the west of Detroit (as measured from downtown). The house was constructed in 1950 on parcel 268 in the Burns-Van Alstine subdivision. The subdivision, platted in 1926, is located about one mile south of US-12 (Michigan Avenue), which runs roughly east-west from downtown Detroit to Chicago and on to Washington state, and bifurcates the city of Inkster into north and south sections. The block on which the house is situated is bordered by Pine Street on the north, Williams Street on the east, Lehigh Street on the south, and Henry Street on the west. As platted, the east and west sides of the block accommodated six parcels. The house sits in the middle of the block and faces east toward Williams Street.

The topography of the area surrounding the house is predominantly flat, and mature foliage is found throughout the neighborhood, and is generally to be found running along the middle of each block, between parcels, with an occasional tree located in a front yard. Houses are uniformly set back from the street and front by lawns. Coniferous trees were located at the northeast and southeast corners of the house, but have been removed. Concrete sidewalks run the length of each block, generally, but in some locations have deteriorated or have been removed. The house has a small front lawn, though a much larger lawn runs the length of the two (now empty) lots south of the home where weeds, shrubs, and tree limbs litter the grass. To the north and to the west of the home are trees and brush, with a medium-sized lawn constituting the backyard area.

The Malcolm X House is a single-family, 1.25-story, frame, three-bedroom, 768-square-foot, minimal traditional (modern movement) style home located on 3,615 square-foot lot (frontage 35.0/average depth 102.8 ft.). The wood frame home is built upon a cement or cinderblock foundation and has a crawl space accessible from the rear (west) of the house. The house runs thirty-two feet in length, while the width of the house, from north-to-south runs twenty-four feet. The exterior is composed of horizontally oriented fiber cement siding of an off-white, almost pinkish hue, over a wood frame. In some places the siding has deteriorated or been removed and parts of the frame are exposed and visible from the outside. The original (and/or functioning conventional front door) is missing, but instead, there is a heavy rectangular slab of wood superimposed over the entrance to prevent the home from being accessed.

A concrete path led to the front porch of the house. The porch, constructed of concrete blocks and a concrete slab, are accessed by two concrete steps. The path has either deteriorated

or been obscured by overgrowth. A concrete driveway is located at the south side of the house, where a secondary entrance (also currently boarded up) is located.

Most of the homes in the neighborhood were built in the 1940s and several, nearly identical homes, in the area were built in 1950, according to real estate records. It appears that parcels 266 and 267, adjacent to the north of the Malcolm X House, had not been built upon. At present, these two parcels are incorporated into a fenced yard associated with the house at 4312 Williams Street. The extant homes of the neighborhood are predominantly one-story ranch or 1.25-1.5 story "minimal traditional" houses. The west half of the block on which the Malcom X House is located (along Henry Street), and the north facing side of Lehigh Street are occupied by two-story, brick duplexes. As of 2021, some demolitions have occurred throughout the neighborhood. The two homes (4344 and 4352, both of which were architecturally similar to 4336) occupied the parcels to the south of the house (lots 269 and 270), both of which have been demolished[1], leaving only two homes on the entire block.

Above the front porch, to the right of the door, is a large rectangular window (currently boarded up with a slab of particle board wood and a Malcolm X banner over it). To the left of the front door and porch area is a, now-boarded, vertical, rectangular window frame. The former electrical service and phone line are located on the southern side of the home and there is a slotted gable vent above upstairs window facing south. There is also a metal access panel on the southern face of the house. The address marker on the front of the house remains intact (4336) and appears to be original. There are also remnants of a possible light fixture located immediately above it. It has a gable and valley roof with asphalt shingles and a red and brown brick chimney.

The house does not appear to have been altered, except for the roof (which appears to be in relatively good condition and almost certainly replaced at some point). Altogether, the home has fallen into a dilapidated state marked by cracked, broken, or missing siding, a complete loss of glass windows, missing doors, exposed wooden frame, damage and cracks in the cement driveway and walkway, and a lack of interior drywall. A c. 2020 real estate summary sheet described the home as forty-five percent in good condition.

East Elevation (Front)

The front, or east elevation, of the home faces east and contains two windows, one rectangular, vertical window (now boarded up) to the left of the front entryway (the actual door is missing, and the entrance is boarded up with a large slab of wood), and a larger rectangular (horizontal) window to the right of the door. The larger family room window (to the north of the door) also contains a banner that reads 'This was the home of Civil Rights Leader Malcolm X.' A cement, open porch is connected to a walkway but it, like the walkway, is in poor condition. The façade's siding is also in a state of deterioration, as many pieces of siding are missing, exposing the wooden frame behind it. The address sign reading '4336' appears to be original and remains in place.

[1] 4344 Williams was demolished sometime between August 2006 and April 2007, and 4352 Williams was demolished sometime between April 2015 and April 2016, based on Google Earth aerial imagery.

North Elevation

The north side of the house contains four rectangular windows (three on the first floor and one on the second floor), some of which are also boarded up. This face is close to the neighbor's property and tree line.

South Elevation

The southern facade includes three windows including one vertical window, which is missing its glass and is not boarded but open and exposed. Above the window is a gable vent at the peak of the roof. A side door is shuttered and abuts the cement driveway. Immediately to the right of the door is a vertical window and several feet to its right is another square window while several feet to the left of the side door is another window – all of which are either boarded or shuttered.

West Elevation (Rear)

The rear façade, which faces west, consists of two rectangular windows (both boarded), with a small portion of the wooden frame exposed (upper right of rear façade) and a much larger portion of the lower right siding (which exposes much of the wooden frame). There is also an area along the rear façade that appears to be an opening for access to a crawl space. There is also large, visible graffiti along this elevation.

Interior

The interior of the home is in a state of decay as a result of disuse, a fire, and the effects of the weather. A small fire inside the living room area led to limited damage. Drywall was intentionally removed (due to concerns over asbestos) from both the first floor and the upper quarter-story during a clean-up session in 2019.

Some wood wall studs have been selectively replaced, but most remain intact and in their original locations, marking the boundaries of the living room, bedrooms, kitchen, and bathroom (which still contains an outdated, damaged bathtub), as these spaces would have been when Malcolm X lived here in the early 1950s. Several rooms appear to retain original windows, which are covered on the exterior. The upstairs contains a single room resembling a bungalow-style upper bedroom. The wood flooring also remains intact, but is in poor condition. The drywall ceilings, likewise, are also in poor condition.

Upon entering the house from the primary entry, one enters the living room (northeast corner), roughly eleven feet wide by fourteen feet long. To the south is the kitchen (southeast corner), approximately eleven feet by eleven feet. The living room is rectangular in form, with its slightly longer sides oriented east-west. A large, picture window opening is located on the east elevation. A second window opening is located on the north elevation, near the bathroom. The living room is separated from the kitchen by a wall that runs east-west at roughly the center of the house.

The kitchen is accessed by a passageway near the western third of the dividing wall between the living room and kitchen. Secondary access to the kitchen is made from a utility room located at approximately the middle of the house on the southern half of the house. The kitchen is roughly square in form. Window openings are located on the south and east elevations, near the southeast corner of the house. The kitchen appears to retain an original, two-over-three window (Photo 0011).

The utility room is located to the west of the kitchen, and accessed either through the kitchen or through the secondary entry on the south elevation. This room is rectangular in form and oriented with its long ends north-south. A small window opening is located on the south elevation, adjacent and east of the secondary entry. Utility and mechanical equipment, including the chimney were located on the north side of the room, against a wall that separates the room from a hallway (Photo 0010).

A short hall provides access from the living room to the bathroom and first-floor bedrooms. The hall is largely formed by the north wall of the utility room, which is not accessible from the hall or living room and the southern wall and door of the bathroom and an adjacent closet. The bathroom is on the north side of the hall and a stair to the upper level on the south. The bathroom appears to retain an original window on the north elevation near the northwest bedroom. The window is covered by a wood board from the exterior. A small closet is located outside of the bathroom, adjacent to and on the south side of the bathroom doorway. Taken together, the bathroom and closet are roughly square in form.

The two first-floor bedrooms are located at the west end of the house (the northwest and southwest corners) and are structurally separated by a closet that is accessed by the northern bedroom. Both bedrooms are approximately ten feet by ten feet, though the northern bedroom is slightly smaller. The northeast bedroom has two windows, one on the north elevation near the bathroom and one on the west elevation near the closet that separates the bedroom. The northwest bedroom also contains two windows, one on the south elevation near the closet and the stairs and one on the west elevation near the closet that separates the bedrooms. The northwest bedroom appears to contain an original, four-over-two window, which is covered by a wood board on the exterior (Photo 0015).

The upper level was Malcolm's room while he lived with his brother. The entire upper level is composed of three spaces, roughly in thirds, separated by framed walls. The stairs from the first-floor lead to a large center space, roughly thirteen feet by twenty-four feet. A wood railing frames the stairs. The stairs are not centered on this space, but are located near the southwest corner of the space. A chimney, off-center in this room, rises from the utility room on the first floor. Window openings are located on the north and south elevations and centered on the walls. The north elevation appears to retain its original two-over-four window (Photo 0019). The south elevation opening lacks any window or exterior cover (Photos 0020 and 0021). Smaller spaces, approximately nine feet by twenty-four feet, are located to the east and west of the center space.

Integrity

The home is in a state of deterioration due to general wear and tear, vandalism, inoccupancy, weather, neglect, and lack of use. The home does not appear to have undergone any renovations over the years, though members and volunteers of 'Project We Hope, Dream and Believe' have spent considerable efforts clearing and cleaning the home's interior and exterior over the past two years including removing dead trees, wood, branches, and other trash and debris, as well as maintaining its lawn. Both the interior and exterior suffer from damage and general deterioration stemming from neglect and inoccupancy, but the home was in a far worse state of disarray prior to the non-profit's purchase of the home.

In terms of design, workmanship, and materials, the home was constructed in the, then, popular mid-century modern and very simple, minimalist style (lacking any striking décor or ornate features) and retains its original format and stylistic and structural integrity. The home does not appear to have undergone any major alterations except for the roof which appears to be in better condition than the rest of the home which implies it was likely replaced at some point. Unfortunately, city records regarding the home's chain of ownership and renovations are lacking. The uncomplicated design was commonplace in the area, and common in most working-class neighborhoods in the region and was built using cement cinderblock, wood, synthetic fiber metal siding, metal-framed glass (craftsman and bungalow) style windows with a shingled gable and valley roof typical of most of the other homes in its general vicinity. The seventy-year-old home, while requiring extensive repairs and renovation, is still-standing and is accessible.

The setting is rather serene, as the two homes (a neighboring home and another next to that one) to the immediate south, along the same side of the street, have been demolished. That area is now a large, empty, grassy lot abutting the driveway and home at 4336 Williams. Across the street, looking south of Williams St., is Lehigh St., which is home to more modern public housing, consisting of several brick apartment buildings which is next to the Inkster Housing Commission office. From the corner of Lehigh and Williams (on the southern end of the street), one can view the south side of the Malcolm X home without obstruction. Next to 4336 is only one, single home, before the end of the block, which ends at Pine Street. Across the street, to the immediate east of Malcolm's home, is a single 1.25 story house, similar in design and style, but which has been updated. It is the only still-standing home on the opposite side of Williams Street across from 4336. Thus, both sides of Williams Street consist of large, empty lots with only two homes on the west side of the street and one home on the east side of the street. The neighborhood in which the Malcolm X home is situated in is a testament to the complex financial, bureaucratic, and socioeconomic challenges that the city faced.

Regarding feeling and association, the home certainly evokes a sense of nostalgia and mystique and provides a direct connection to its period of significance, in particular, and mid-twentieth-century Inkster, in general. In part, this is because it is among the few homes that apparently have not undergone renovation or repair and appears very close to its original form. While few newer single-family homes have been erected in the area, some have clearly been updated. The Malcolm X house is void of aesthetics, outstanding décor, or architectural remarkability, but stands as a testament to time, as its neighboring homes have largely been razed. Thus, it has

become imperative that we attempt to preserve and restore this historically significant and even unique home, so that one of the world's most renowned civil rights leaders and an American icon can be properly recognized and appreciated.

Despite suffering from general deterioration and the removal of historical finishes, the Malcolm X House possesses historic integrity and conveys its historic significance in the social history and ethnic heritage of Inkster, Michigan, between 1952 and 1953, as the place where Malcolm Little received his "X" from Elijah Muhammad and thus became the Civil Rights leader Malcolm X.

Archaeological Potential

An archaeological survey was not conducted as part of this documentation project.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [X] A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [X] B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [ ] C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark “x” in all the boxes that apply.)

- [ ] A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- [ ] B. Removed from its original location
- [ ] C. A birthplace or grave
- [ ] D. A cemetery
- [ ] E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- [ ] F. A commemorative property
- [ ] G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black
SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance
1952-1953

Significant Dates
1952

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
Malcolm X

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Malcolm X House located at 4336 Williams Street in the city of Inkster, Wayne County, Michigan, is significant under National Register Criteria A and B under the themes of Ethnic Heritage: Black and Social History at the state level of significance. Though owned by Wilfred Little, the eldest brother of Malcolm X, during the period of significance, the house is significant for its association with African American Civil Rights leader Malcolm X. The Little House was built in 1950 and first owned by Wilfred Little (also known at that time as Wilfred X). Wilfred had joined the Nation of Islam and had risen to prominence in the Detroit Temple No. 1, and eventually served as minister of the temple. Wilfred Little resided at the home with his wife, Ruth, before his younger brother Malcolm joined them in the summer of 1952. Malcolm remained at this home until the late summer of 1953 when he was sent to the east coast to establish and support Nation of Islam temples in various cities. During his time at this house, Malcolm joined his brother at Temple No. 1, and was eventually named assistant minister. Significantly, it was during this time that the 'X' was formally conferred upon Malcolm by the Nation of Islam leader, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, and Malcolm Little became Malcolm X. The Period of Significance for the Malcolm X House begins in 1952, when Malcolm Little arrived at the house and ends in 1953 when he left as Malcolm X. This period was pivotal to Malcolm's ascent with the Nation of Islam as it established the foundation for his later, more public work. The house is significant at the state level of significance for its association with Malcolm X at a critical point in his life. Despite spending much of his childhood in Michigan, no other Michigan home he resided in is known to be extant. Moreover, no other home can illustrate both this pivotal period in Malcolm's life and the central role his older brother, Wilfred, played throughout his life. These factors make this home of particular and exceptional historic significance and bolster its significance at the state level.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Note 1: The early history of the Nation of Islam is too extensive and complex to recount in full here, nor is a full history directly relevant to this property and its period of significance. Interested readers should read the relevant titles noted in the bibliography, as well as *The Black Muslims in America*, C. Eric Lincoln (1961) and the volumes written by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, among the many other works that have documented the history of the Nation of Islam. Erdmann Doane Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult Among Negro Migrants in Detroit," *American Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 6 (1938): 894-907 addresses the early history of the organization in Detroit.

Note 2: The Nation of Islam and the associated ecclesiastical buildings have both been known by different names over time. For simplicity, the Nation of Islam or NOI are used throughout the text. Known as mosques since about 1961, the buildings prior to that time were called temples. The historical "temple" is used throughout the text.

Note 3: Capitalization of color in reference to race follows the guidance of the National Association of Black Journalists and the Chicago Manual of Style. Colors in reference to race when used in a quotation are presented as found in the source documents.

Introduction

The Malcolm X House at 4336 Williams Street in Inkster, Wayne County, Michigan, was the one-time residence of Malcolm X who resided there upon the invitation of his elder brother Wilfred Little who purchased the home in 1950 and lived there with his wife Ruth. The home is located in a working-class neighborhood in the Detroit suburb of Inkster, Wayne County, Michigan, and is recorded and identified by the Detroit Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in their files as Malcolm's place of residence between 1952 and 1953.[2] While Malcolm, over the course of his life, lived in several homes and with several families in Lansing, East Lansing, Mason, and Flint, the house on 4336 Williams Street in Inkster appears to be one of the only extant homes he resided in in Michigan.[3] This home has special significance, however, because it is where Malcolm K. Little became Malcolm X and began his journey to iconic Nation of Islam minister and civil rights leader.

Malcolm's life was marked, to some extent, by transience. He was born in Omaha, Nebraska, lived briefly in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and spent many of his childhood years in Michigan, before spending his teens in Boston and New York City. He then returned to Michigan for a few years, and then returned to the East Coast. Many of the previous homes he lived in (Omaha, Milwaukee, and several in Michigan) no longer exist. The site of the Little House (it was demolished prior to 1970) in Omaha was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the *Malcolm X Home Site* in 1984. More recently, the home of Malcolm's sister, Ella Collins, 72 Dale Street, in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts, has received attention in the last few years, where archaeological excavations were conducted at the home owned by Ella's

[2] Malcolm X FBI Files, File no. 100-399321, Section 1. Serials 1-17. The FBI opened a file on Malcolm Little/Malcolm X in 1953 and continued to surveil Malcolm until his death in 1965.
[3] A discussion of these homes appears toward the end of the Narrative Statement of Significance.

son and Malcolm's nephew, Rodnell Collins.[4] The *Malcolm X-Ella Little Collins House* was listed in the National Register in early 2020. The Collins House is regarded as Malcolm's only surviving childhood home, where he lived during his teenage years.

Malcolm Little's Early Years, 1925-1940

Malcolm X (later, Malcolm Shabazz, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) was born Malcolm K. Little in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1925 to Earl and Louise Little, both of whom were advocates of Marcus Garvey's teachings and members of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.).[5] Malcolm's siblings, including those from Earl's previous marriage, consisted of Ella (1914-1996), Mary, Hilda (1922-2015), Yvonne (1931-2003), Earl, Wilfred (1920-1998), Reginald (1927-2001), Robert (1938-1990), Wesley (1928-2009), and Philbert (later Abdul Omar Aziz, 1923-1993). After leaving Omaha, the Little family relocated to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, before settling in Lansing in 1928, not long before the Great Depression.

The family's first home in the Lansing area was located in the predominantly white Westmont subdivision, which was then located in Lansing Township. Racially restrictive covenants in place at that time barred occupancy to African Americans. Westmont was platted and developed by the Capitol View Land Company in 1924 and 1925. Advertisements for the subdivision first appeared in 1924 and extolled the virtues of the development. Among the reasons to buy land in the Westmont development was that lots were not sold to "objectionable people."[6] A later advertisement indicated that the subdivision was also "wisely restricted."[7]

Despite these restrictions, the Littles moved to a "small but comfortable house."[8] Wilfred Little recalled that their father "was famous for moving into areas where we were the only black ones."[9] After the Littles moved in, the developers of the subdivision sued, the Littles were found to be in defiance of that covenant, and the family was evicted by the circuit court in 1929. The court ruled that Blacks could surely own property in the subdivision but they could not reside on that property.

At the same time, Earl Little's Garveyite lectures and his preaching had drawn the attention of the Black Legion, an offshoot of the Ku Klux Klan that had been formed in Ohio in the latter 1920s and spread northward into Michigan (similar organizations were established in many other states at the same time).

[4] Sylvia Cunningham, "Boston Archaeologists Begin Digging into Malcolm X's Past," www.nbcnews.com, March 29, 2016.
[5] Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2015, 2-3.
[6] "Westmont Subdivision," *Lansing State Journal*, September 5, 1924.
[7] "Westmont," *Lansing State Journal*, May 14, 1926.
[8] Les Payne, *The Dead are Arising*, New York: Liveright Publishing Company, 2021: 63.
[9] Payne, *Arising*, 68.

Much like in Nebraska, the Littles were harassed by these groups as being "uppity" and for "spreading unrest and dissention" among Lansing's African American community.[10]

Before the family could move, though, their home was burned to the ground in November of that year. Malcolm recounted in his *Autobiography* the events of that evening:

> I remember being suddenly snatched awake into a frightening confusion of pistol shots and shouting and smoke and flames. My father had shouted and shot at the two white men who had set the fire and were running away. Our home was burning down around us…My mother, with the baby in her arms, jus made it into the yard before the house crashed in, showering sparks… The white police and firemen came and stood around watching as the house burned down to the ground.[11]

Despite the presence of racist organizations, the lawsuit by the developers, and the presumably hard feelings held by the Little's neighbors, it was Earl Little who was booked on a charge of arson.[12] While investigators were still determining the cause of the fire, Earl was held on a charge of "having a pistol which had not been properly registered."[13]

After some time, Earl, a carpenter by trade, built a new house in East Lansing (not extant) shortly thereafter, then the family moved to the southern outskirts of Lansing. That home is no longer extant, but Michigan Historical Marker identifies the site of the family home. In the 1930s, the street was known as South Logan Street, later it was designed as part of Michigan Highway 99, and today it is known as Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Payne observed that these years, often overlooked in earlier works (including Malcolm's *Autobiography*) were especially influential to Malcolm's make up. His parents, "despite a terrifying price extracted, continue[d] to pursue the American ideals so flagrantly denied black citizens."[14] Earl and Louise imprinted upon their children "a genuine sense of racial equality."[15] This direct and indirect training was in contrast to the upbringing of most Black children at that time. As Payne wrote, "for the sake of sheer survival, parents generally felt compelled to groom acquiescence into their offspring."[16] Not so for Malcolm and his siblings.

Legal battles and harassment were not the only troubles the Littles faced. Just as the family had recovered from the loss of their previous homes and while facing the uncertainty of the Great Depression, Earl Little's body was found mangled on the streets of Lansing in 1931.

---

[10] X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 5.
[11] X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 5.
[12] "Hold Man During Probe of Blaze," *Lansing State Journal*, November 9, 1929.
[13] "Place Pistol Charge Against Fire Suspect," *Lansing State Journal*, November 12, 1929.
[14] Payne, *Arising*, 68.
[15] Payne, *Arising*, 68.
[16] Payne, *Arising*, 68.

Officially, his death resulted from a streetcar accident. Malcolm, however, believed he was murdered by the Black Legion. Earl's death was, at the least, "very suspicious."[17]

Following his father's death Malcolm's brother Wilfred and sister Hilda, the oldest of the Little children, assumed some of the parental roles and assisted Louise Little in caring for their younger siblings. Wilfred recalled that after his father's death he took on the responsibilities of a parent: "I paid the bills. I bought things we needed for the home. I worked. I'd go to school in the daytime and work at night, and stuff like that. And I took care of things. So they saw me more or less as a father figure, and he more or less looked at me in that sense."[18]

Wilfred returned to this fatherly role throughout his time with Malcolm. He recalled in 1995:

> Just like when Malcolm decided to get into what was wrong. He came and told me about it. That's one thing about him, he was very honest… Whatever it was, he just believed in dealing with it up front. He came to me and told me what he was doing, and I tried to dissuade him from getting involved in those kind of things… I let him know if there was anything I can do to help you, if you get in trouble, I'll try to help you. And a few times I did have to do that. I had to pay bail and stuff to get him out of jail and stuff different times, and things like that. But he knew he could count on me.[19]

Later, it was Wilfred who played an influential role in Malcolm's developing relationship with the Nation of Islam, and later still it was Wilfred to whom Malcolm went to discuss his relationship with Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam, as it began to deteriorate.[20] Malcolm, for his part, "looked up to and admired [his] big brother."[21]

Elijah Muhammad noticed this special relationship, too. Wilfred recalled that Muhammad had told him, "you know, your brother, you'd think you were your brother's father the way he refers to you. You'd think you were his father."[22]

Despite the many challenges she faced, Louise continued to teach and instill in her children the Garveyite principles of independence, self-reliance, a strong sense of pride (both personal and racial),[23] and a commitment to Black unity.[24] The loss of Earl, his paternal influence, the precarious financial situation, and the challenges imposed by the Great Depression created a

[17] Wilfred Little, "Our Family from the Inside: Growing Up with Malcolm X," *Contributions in Black Studies* 13/14 (1995-1996): 8.
[18] Little, "Our Family," 23.
[19] Little, "Our Family," 22.
[20] Little, "Our Family," 25-26.
[21] X and Haley, *Autobiography*, p. 23. It should be noted here that Malcolm also acknowledged Hilda's influence and importance at that time. He wrote that she "was like my second mother."
[22] Little, "Our Family," 23.
[23] Payne, *Arising*, 93.
[24] Payne, *Arising*, 44.

"devastating downward spiral"[25] for Malcolm and his family. His mother's mental health deteriorated, and, on January 9, 1939, she was committed to the Kalamazoo Psychiatric Hospital. As a result, the youngest of the Little children were separated and put into foster care (Wilfred and Hilda continued to live in the family home). Malcolm was initially sent to live with a family in Lansing, and a short time thereafter sent to the Ingham County Juvenile Detention Home[26] in Mason, about fifteen miles south of Lansing. Though separated from each other, Malcolm and his siblings did their best to remain together and in contact with each other.

Malcolm last saw his mother at the mental health facility in 1952, before she was finally released in 1963 and reunited with Malcolm's bother Philbert, in Lansing.[27] Louise Little, a Grenada-born woman and Garvyite activist who spoke three languages (English, French, and a Creole French dialect) spent more than two decades at the Kalamazoo hospital. She outlived Malcolm, passing away in 1989 at the age of ninety-one.

To Malcolm, his early Michigan experiences were the stuff of nightmares. He suffered major losses, family turmoil, racial harassment, and a crushing blow to his young psyche and self-confidence when he was told by a teacher that he need not consider a future career as a lawyer, since it was unreasonable for a young Black boy (though the teacher used a racial slur to describe him) to have such outlandish aspirations. Thus, while his early memories of life in Michigan were riddled with death, grief, mourning, social dislocation, hunger, and racism at the hands of locals, the courts, and state social workers, they were undoubtedly influential to his psychology as an adult.

The Boston Years and Prison

During the summer of 1940, Malcolm left Michigan to visit his sister, Ella Collins, in Boston, before she took custody of him in 1941. Malcolm, young and enamored by street life there, began hustling, and landed himself in trouble with the law along the way. According to the *Flint Journal* archives, Malcolm returned to Michigan in late 1942. He found work in Flint, where he was employed at A.C. Spark Plug, a division of General Motors, as a janitor. Malcolm resided in the city for about two months,[28] before he moved to New York City in 1943. In Boston and Harlem, he was often known among his peers as 'Detroit Red' due to his reddish hair color and skin tone and of course, because of his Michigan roots. The Flint home he lived in, which was located on Liberty Street, has since been demolished, as it was situated in an area that ultimately became the site of a freeway system (I-69 and I-475).[29] Malcolm returned to Boston in 1945 and landed in prison the following year, following charges that included grand larceny. Over the next several years, Malcolm served time in several prison facilities including the State Prison (Charlestown), Massachusetts Reformatory

[25] Payne, *Arising*: 103.
[26] This is the name given to the home in United States Census records for 1940. Malcolm Little is listed as among those residing there.
[27] X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 21-22.
[28] Dominic Adams, "The Feds, Flint and Malcolm X," www.mlive.com, December 05, 2016, updated Jan. 19, 2019.
[29] Adams, "The Feds"

(Concord), and Norfolk Prison Colony – all located in Massachusetts – until he was paroled in 1952.

Only a couple years into his sentence, Malcolm was encouraged to develop his intellectual capabilities by both inmates and siblings, four of whom had come to join the Nation of Islam, referred to by the FBI as the 'Muslim Cult of Islam' in their reports.[30] Malcolm noted that he was heavily influenced by an inmate named 'Bimbi' (John Elton Bembry), who pushed him to read as much as he could,[31] and by his sister, Hilda, who encouraged him to study English and improve his penmanship.[32] Wilfred was also invested in converting Malcolm. He wrote to him and urged him, "don't you serve the time, let the time serve you. So while you're in there, spend time in that library. Get into the classes where you can learn something and improve yourself so that when you come out, you'll be able to do something other than the things that got you in here."[33]

He was also inspired by what his brother Reginald had told him regarding how to manage and, ultimately, leave prison (by adopting many of the dietary and behavioral regiments of the Nation of Islam).[34] Reginald visited Malcolm several times while in he was in prison, as did his sister, Hilda, and several of his siblings in Detroit wrote to him frequently about the Nation of Islam and Elijah Muhammad, the Nation of Islam's leader, whom the Littles came to call the Holy Apostle.[35]

The Nation of Islam (NOI) was an unorthodox pseudo-Islamic movement and organization operating within a Black Nationalist framework and was founded in Detroit in 1930 by a man named W.D. Fard (though he had many aliases). However, after his disappearance around 1934, the movement, after some internal schisms, came to be led by Elijah Muhammad, who was one of his early recruits.

In 1948, through the work of his sister, Ella, Malcolm was transferred from Charlestown to the Norfolk Prison Colony. About this time, Malcolm began a somewhat regular correspondence with Elijah (regarded as the Messenger of Allah). Through these letters and those of his siblings, Malcolm underwent a life-changing transformation that began with the adoption of the beliefs of the Nation of Islam between 1948 and 1949.

---

[30] The early Nation of Islam was also known as or referred to as the Allah Temple of Islam (FBI), the Muslim Holy Temple of Islam (*Detroit Free Press*). The organization was also referred to as a "Voodoo Cult" in its earliest years.
[31] X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 177-178.
[32] X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 179.
[33] Little, "Our Family,"
[34] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 182-186.
[35] Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad*, New York: Pantheon Books (1999), p. 160.

The idea for the Norfolk Prison Colony had been developed by Howard B. Gill in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In Norfolk, Gill sought to create a "community with a wall"[36] that sought to elevate the individual treatment of each prisoner.[37] Norfolk was conceived as an alternative to what he viewed as the typical, punitive prison of the day. The Norfolk prison organized the men into small groups, a hospital, a school equipped for adult education, and a social center.[38]

When Malcolm arrived at Norfolk in 1946, he had access to a large library overflowing with books. He spent considerable time reading the works of various philosophers and thinkers, both classical and modern, and continued expanding his vocabulary and upgrading his oratory skills through lecturing and debate. Malcolm found Norfolk to be "heaven"[39] compared to other institutions he was incarcerated in, and in many ways credited the culture there for some of his educational development.

Malcolm was transferred from the Norfolk facility back to Charlestown in early 1950, perhaps in response to a protest about religious freedom in which he was involved. He remained there until his release in 1952.

Wilfred Little, the Little Family, and the NOI

Wilfred Little had moved from Lansing to Detroit between 1941 and 1945. In that time, he had met and married Bertha Ansley that year, and lived on East Kirby Street.[40]

While living in Detroit, Wilfred was invited to Detroit Temple No. 1 by a member of the temple.[41] When Wilfred heard the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, it was to him "like finding a long-lost friend."[42] He joined the NOI within months, and was followed shortly thereafter by his siblings Philbert, Reginald, Wesley, and Hilda.[43] According to Wilfred, the family "already had been indoctrinated with Marcus Garvey's philosophy, so that was just a good

[36] Thomas O'Connor, Norfolk Prison (draft), May 1934. Norfolk Prison Colony Collection (MS 074). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums074-f05-i001

[37] Howard B. Gill, "The Norfolk State Prison Colony at Massachusetts." *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* (1931-1951) 22, no. 1 (1931): 107-12. Accessed July 26, 2021. doi:10.2307/1134901.

[38] Gill, "Norfolk," 108.

[39] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (1999), 160.

[40] Wilfred Egerton Little and Bertha Lee Ansley Wayne County Marriage License, June 4, 1945. Bertha Little passed away in 1948. According to Sanborn maps, the building in which Wilfred lived was located on the northeast corner of Kirby and Rivard Streets. The corner is no longer extant.

[41] William Strickland, *Malcolm X: Make it Plain*, New York: Viking (1994), p. 60; Payne, *The Dead are Arising*, p. 265. Strickland puts the date at 1947, while Payne writes that it was 1946.

[42] Evanzz, *The* Messenger, 160.

[43] Evanzz, *The Messenger*, 160.

place for us. They didn't have to convince us we were Black and should be proud or anything like that."[44]

Though the Messenger had moved to Chicago and established Temple No. 2 in that city as his primary teaching location, the Detroit temple remained significant to both Muhammad and the NOI. On those occasions that Muhammad returned to Detroit, he often stayed at Wilfred's home.[45] This is a notable choice given that the Messenger's youngest sister, Emma, and her husband Wille B. Muhammad, were among the "pioneers" of Temple No. 1.[46]

When Wilfred first joined Temple No. 1, it was, in his estimation, "a dump."[47] The Messenger questioned Wilfred about this characterization and Wilfred invited him to see it for himself. Upon confirming Wilfred's analysis, Elijah Muhammad ordered the organization to find a new meeting place.[48] Wilfred brought in his family members. They helped improve the bookkeeping, brought younger recruits to meetings, and "just helped turn that whole thing around," and "started things rolling."[49] By 1950, Wilfred was identified as a spokesman for Temple No. 1, which was then located at 1474 Frederick Street,[50] where it remained until it moved to 5401 (5403) John C. Lodge Service Drive, in the latter 1950s.

In 1995, just three years prior to his passing, Wilfred was interviewed by Gil Noble on *Like It Is*, an influential television show produced in New York City. In that interview, Wilfred described how Malcolm came into his care as well as how he arranged for him to get a job and join his family, both of which were stipulations of his parole. The centrality of Wilfred in Malcolm's life is summed up by Strickland in his introduction of Wilfred Little in an April 18, 1995, interview at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst:

> Wilfred was the first of the family to join the Nation of Islam. He recruited his brothers and sister, and recruited Malcolm when Malcolm was still incarcerated. It is Wilfred who made possible the arrangements which facilitated Malcolm's parole in 1952, and it is to Wilfred's house that Malcolm went after being released. It is Wilfred who introduced Malcolm to his first organized experience at Temple No. 1 in Detroit. It is with Wilfred whom Malcolm stayed, and it is Wilfred who later became the Minister of Temple No. 1 in Detroit. It is to Wilfred's house that Malcolm went when he was deciding to marry.[51]

[44] Strickland, *Malcolm X*, 60.
[45] Evanzz, *The Messenger*, 160.
[46] "The Growth of a Nation," *Muhammad Speaks*, July 12, 1974.
[47] Payne, *Arising*, 266.
[48] Payne, *Arising*, 266.
[49] Payne, *Arising*, 266-267.
[50] Ulysses Boykin, "Temple of Islam Sees Negroes Ruling World After Armageddon," *Detroit Free Press*, June 26, 1950.
[51] Wilfred Little, "Our Family."

From Malcolm Little to Malcolm X

In 1951, Malcolm was up for parole but was denied. A second chance came the following year, however, and on August 7, 1952, Malcolm was finally paroled. Malcolm left Charlestown prison,[52] where he had been transferred back to, in order to complete the final year of his prison term, and stayed the night at his sister Ella's home in Boston. At this time, he was formally transferred from authorities in Massachusetts to the custody of the Michigan Parole Board and arrived in Detroit via bus the following day,[53] and then returned to what some may consider his home state, since it was Michigan where he spent his childhood between the ages of three and fifteen, before returning briefly in the mid-1940s (followed by many more visits and stays in the 1950s and 1960s).

After serving some six years in prison (1946-1952), Malcolm was finally free and spiritually rejuvenated. He had committed himself to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam and had reformed himself, particularly during the last four years of his life during incarceration.

Malcolm wrote in his autobiography that after moving in with Wilfred, he felt a "healing" sensation upon arriving to his brother's cozy home. There, with his brother's family, he practiced Islam with fellow Muslim family members.[54] Malcolm had read descriptions of the Islamic rituals performed in the sanctity of the home, but had not yet experienced them, and seemed to be ecstatic over the prospect.

At Malcolm's new place of residence, Wilfred, the head of the household and homeowner, led Malcolm and his own family during the morning prayer ritual that consisted of a pre-prayer wash to ensure cleanliness, before engaging in spiritual offerings, some of which mimicked orthodox Islam's standardized prayer.[55] Malcolm described the morning routine, noting that Wilfred conducted the ritual ablution (rinsing), then himself, before Ruth and the children, in the small, first-floor bathroom. According to Malcolm, Wilfred then laid out the prayer rug, likely in the living room, to accommodate the family members. Donning robes, they all removed their slippers, stepped onto the rug and performed their daily prayers as a unit.[56]

Malcolm wrote of the impact his brother's family and home had upon him:

> …this Muslim home's atmosphere sent me often to my knees to praise Allah. My family's letters while I was in prison had included a description of the Muslim home routine, but to truly appreciate it, one had to be a part of the routine. Each act, and the significance of that act, was gently, patiently explained to me by my brother, Wilfred.[57]

---

[52] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (1999), 192.
[53] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (1999), 196.
[54] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (1999), 198.
[55] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (1999), 197.
[56] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (1999), 198.
[57] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 222.

Malcolm also noted Wilfred's influence as father and husband:

> There as none of the morning confusion that exists in most homes. Wilfred, the father, the family protector and provider, was the first to rise. 'The father prepares the way for his family…'[58]

Here, as in Lansing so many years before, Wilfred served as a guiding and steadying force for Malcolm. In Inkster, at his brother's home, Malcolm saw the love and dedication of the Muslim home. He saw how Islam, as taught by Elijah Muhammad, could change his life. He experienced stability, character, kindness, and love – the opposite of the street life with which he was so enamored so many years before.

While living with Wilfred and his family at their home in Inkster, Malcolm, in accordance with his parole stipulations, had to be employed. His first job was at Cut Rate Department Store at 8940 Oakland Avenue,[59] in Detroit, where his brother Wilfred was employed as a manager.[60] There, like at his brother's home, Malcolm engaged in ritual ablution and prayer with Wilfred.[61]

It was also Wilfred, as Strickland points out "who introduced Malcolm to his first organized experience at Temple No.1 in Detroit."[62] His experience there, among other Muslims, showed Malcolm a version of Black life with which he was unfamiliar. At the temple, he saw Black people who were proud to be Black and who acted with love instead of jealousy and suspicion.[63] He was thrilled, he wrote, at seeing how his fellow Muslims "used both hands to grasp a black brother's both hands, voicing and smiling our happiness to meet him again. The Muslim sisters… were given an honor and respect that I'd never seen black men give to their women, and it felt wonderful to me."[64]

The months between August 1952 and June 1953 are fundamentally important in the evolution of Malcolm Little to Malcolm X. In that short time, Malcolm's life changed rapidly and profoundly, as did the Nation of Islam (NOI), which benefited from

---

[58] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 222.
[59] Clayborne Carson, *Malcolm X: The FBI File*, 1991, p. 102.
[60] Several publications note Malcolm's employ at the Cut Rate Department Store, including the FBI's files on Malcolm. The company operated from 8940 Oakland Avenue (a second store was located at 3701 Hastings Street), for a number of years, but by about 1947 advertisements in the *Detroit Free Press* end and are replaced for about one year by the Kay Bee Sales Co. No further advertisements were identified for either company after that time. Advertisements for the company were identified in city directories after 1947, however. The building appears to no longer be extant. FBI files, in places, also suggest the Cut Rate store was located in Inkster. This does not appear to be correct. In the Autobiography, Malcolm notes that the store was "right in the black ghetto of Detroit."
[61] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 223.
[62] Strickland in Wilfred Little, "Our Family."
[63] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 224.
[64] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 224.

Malcolm's public speaking skills and charisma, considering the major boost in NOI membership for which he was responsible.

According to FBI files, Malcolm requested permission to visit Elijah Muhammed in Chicago in late August 1952. His request was granted and he traveled there with several of his brothers and other members of Temple No. 1.

In his *Autobiography*, Malcolm described that day in 1952 when he left Detroit with his brothers, to drive to Chicago to meet Elijah Muhammad:

> Today, I have appointments with world-famous personages, including some heads of nations. But I looked forward to the Sunday before Labor Day in 1952 with an eagerness never since duplicated. Detroit Temple Number One Muslims were going in a motor caravan-I think about ten automobiles-to visit Chicago Temple Number Two, to hear Elijah Muhammad. Not since childhood had I been so excited as when we drove in Wilfred's car. At great Muslim rallies since then I have seen, and heard, and felt ten thousand black people applauding and cheering. But on that Sunday afternoon when our two little temples assembled, perhaps only two hundred Muslims, the Chicagoans welcoming and greeting us Detroiters, I experienced tinglings up my spine as I've never had since.[65]

During his visit, Malcolm, his brothers, and others from his group had dinner with Elijah Muhammad and his family at their house in Chicago. During dinner, Malcolm asked for Muhammad's advice on recruiting members to the Detroit temple.[66] Upon returning to Detroit, Malcolm discussed a new recruitment strategy with Minister Lemuel X and employed Muhammad's advice, and within a few months' time, membership at Temple No. 1 had tripled.[67]

It was also about the time of Malcolm's first visit with the Messenger (sometime between August 31 and September 1952) that he was formally assigned the "X," by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad,[68] which, Malcolm wrote, "meant that forever after in the Nation of Islam I would be known as Malcolm X."[69]

After receiving his "X," Malcolm addressed members and visitors at Temple No. 1 for the first time.[70] Reflecting later on the importance of that formative experience, Malcom wrote:

---

[65] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 225-226.
[66] Marable Manning, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, New York: Viking 2011), p. 102.
[67] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 229.
[68] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (1999), 203; Clayborne Carson, *Malcolm X: The FBI Files*, 1991, 60.
[69] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 229.
[70] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 231; Manning, *Malcolm X*, p. 103.

> Today when thousands of Muslims and others have been audiences out before me, when audiences of millions have been beyond radio and television microphones, I'm sure I rarely feel as much electricity as was then generated in me by the upturned faces of those seventy-five or hundred Muslims…[71]

Malcolm's early lectures had an impact on others, as well. Raushanah Hassain, who, in a 1996 interview with Les Payne, recalled, "you know when a chill can go up and down your spine with the way a person teaches? He could teach that type of way."[72]

Raushanah was not the only person to notice Malcolm. Malcolm's ability to attract new members to Temple No. 1 and the NOI, and his substantial oratorical skills, drew the attention of Elijah Muhammad, and early in 1953, despite "never [feeling] remotely qualified"[73] Malcolm began preparation for the ministry. In April 1953, Malcolm, still residing at his brother's house, indicated he was "preparing for the Ministry in the 'Temple of Islam,'" and "studying at the 'University of Islam' in Chicago, Illinois."[74] Malcolm was still required to work at this time and traveled to Chicago as time permitted.

When in Chicago, Malcolm was taught by the Messenger, directly. The two spent hours together, with Malcolm sometimes accompanying Muhammad on errands.[75] Their relationship brought to Malcolm's mind both Socrates and Aristotle and the way they had taught their students.[76] This relationship was so special to Malcolm that he felt that he "was treated as if I had been one of the sons of Mr. Muhammad and his dark, good wife Sister Clara Muhammad."[77]

At the same time that Malcolm began his studies with the Messenger, Malcolm was both actively involved in Temple No. 1 and worked full time. He left the Cut-Rate Department Store in early 1953,[78] then was briefly employed at Ford Motor Company's Lincoln-Mercury plant in the nearby city of Wayne, where he only worked for a week as a final assembler in January 1953, but who, by virtue of being hired, was instantly enrolled in the UAW's Local 900 chapter.[79] Shortly thereafter, Malcolm found work at Gar Wood Industries, also in Wayne, where he worked a strenuous, grueling job as a grinder.[80]

---

[71] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 231.
[72] Payne, *The Dead are Arising* (2015), 279.
[73] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 230.
[74] Federal Bureau of Investigation file, May 23, 1955.
[75] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 235; Strickland, *Malcolm X*, 70.
[76] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 236.
[77] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 235.
[78] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 230.
[79] Ferruccio Gambino, "The Transgression of a Laborer: Malcolm X in the Wilderness of America," *Radical History* (Winter 1993). Ford Motor Company communication to author, 20 May 1981. Malcolm Little's job was described as "Wayne Assembly Plant--Assembly Major."
[80] Gar Wood Industries was an important producer of garbage trucks, particularly the 1938 Load Packer. Manning defined a grinder as a "worker who pulverizes material or grinds surface objects" in *Malcolm X*, 103.

According to documented parole check-ins, Malcolm, outside of work, spent virtually all his evenings at home and never left the house unaccompanied.[81] It is likely that he spent this time at home – that is, at his brother's house in Inkster – in study, preparing for his coming ministerial roles. Malcolm's room is understood to have been in the second-floor space, and it is likely there that he studied when at home.

Malcolm's parole officially ended on May 4, 1953.[82] The next month he was named Assistant Minister of Temple No. 1.[83] His appoint to a ministerial position at Temple No. 1 also marked the end of conventional employment and the beginning Malcolm's full-time work for the NOI.

Minister Malcolm X, 1954-1964

In the late summer or fall of 1953, the Messenger sent Malcolm from Detroit to the East Coast, where there were several temples that were "weak and disorganized."[84] He was sent first to Boston where he stayed until March 1954, then to Temple No. 12 in Philadelphia, and then to serve as Minister of Temple No. 7 in Harlem. Malcolm's success in building these east coast temples led to requests for him to speak around the country, and the beginning of a schedule that Strickland observed as "superhuman" and "miraculous."[85] Malcolm actively taught in three temples, lectured in others, and, in 1956 alone, drove thirty thousand miles in five months.[86]

In each place, Malcolm strengthened existing temples, helped to establish new temples, increased membership, and attracted crowds.[87] His brother Abdul Aziz Omar (formerly Philbert Little), recalled that in those days, "we were growing in leaps and bounds, thousands and thousands of people… Most of these people came through Malcolm."[88]

Benjamin Karim, friend of Malcolm and assistant minister of Temple No. 7, observed that "it was not just his person, it was his message. It was his ability to arrange it in his own way…"[89] Peter Bailey, a civil rights activist in New York, remembered that, "once you heard him speak, you never went back to where you were before. Even if you kept your position, you had to rethink it."[90] Malcolm's powerful presence captivated his audiences. Karim recalled that during one of Malcolm's speeches he had noticed that "people stopped blinking their eyelids, as though they were in a trance… it started raining, but all of those people stayed, thousands, blocking off the street for two blocks in both directions."[91]

---

[81] Manning Marable and Felber, Garrett (eds.), *The Portable Malcolm X Reader*, 2013, 55.
[82] Manning, *Malcolm X*, p. 103.
[83] Marable and Felber, p. xxx (under 'chronology').
[84] Payne, *Arising*, 274.
[85] Strickland, *Malcolm X*, 71.
[86] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 259.
[87] C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in American*, Boston: Beacon Press (1961), 189.
[88] Strickland, Malcolm X, 111.
[89] Strickland, *Malcolm X*, 115.
[90] Strickland, *Malcolm X*, 115.
[91] Strickland, *Malcolm X*, 115.

Recalling the impact of Malcolm as a minister, Jean Reynolds, a member of Temple No. 7, in an interview with Russel J. Rickford, biographer of Betty Shabazz, said:

> I knew that I did not die and go to heaven. But to me, he in my time was the Christ I hear everybody talkin' 'bout. Like, he's my everything. 'Take your burden to the Lord and leave it'—that's what he represented to me. And I could not wait to get away from there to go tell my family and my friends… He gave me a gut and a backbone. He took the fear out of me.[92]

Indeed, Malcolm played a central and significant role in the growth of the Nation of Islam in the 1950s and early 1960s, though he was not alone. He acknowledged this when he wrote that the NOI had developed some "smart, fine, aggressive young ministers,"[93] some of whom had been guided by Malcolm, but all of whom were trained by Elijah Muhammad.[94] Despite his incredible popularity and his potential power in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Malcolm remained deferential to the Messenger, who he credited with "everything I know that's worthwhile."[95]

The growth and appeal of the NOI was also due, in part, to the core messages of Black unity, racial pride, and self-worth as expressed by Elijah Muhammad. Wilfred noted that "the main thing they were after was just gettin' rid of that inferiority complex that existed among our people and spreading new ideas."[96] Lincoln observed that the most important aspect of the Nation of Islam and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad was the "new sense of dignity, a conviction that they are more than the equals of the white man and are destined to rule the earth," that was given to Muhammad's followers.[97]

Silberman suggested that the Messenger's Black Nationalist message also posed the question of whether Black Americans *should* (emphasis original) want integration.[98] The answer Muhammad provided, Silberman wrote, was clear: African Americans must "look to no one but themselves for their salvation."[99]

Wherever he went and wherever he spoke, Malcolm X clearly and persuasively embodied and illustrated this message. He spoke to audiences, both Black and White, with "pride and confidence in his voice."[100] John Peoples recalled Malcolm's impact on the way he thought about himself and his relationship to Whites: "The dignity that I saw in Malcolm gave me confidence in myself… His teachings totally removed the fear of the white man from me. For the

---

[92] Russel J. Reynolds, *Betty Shabazz*, Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc (2003): 38.
[93] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 258-259.
[94] Strickland, *Malcolm X*, 112.
[95] As quoted in Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 192.
[96] Strickland, *Malcolm X*, 101.
[97] Lincoln, Black Muslims, 17.
[98] Charles E. Silberman, *Crisis in Black and White*, New York: Vintage Books (1964), 145.
[99] Silberman, *Crisis*, 154.
[100] Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 192.

first time I was proud of being black."[101] Likewise, Fred Forrest told Payne in a 1993 interview, "Malcolm made me feel like a man for the first time in my life."[102]

Likewise, Ossie Davis, who, in his eulogy of Malcolm X called him, "our Black shining prince", said that while many African Americans disagreed with some or all of what Malcolm said, that even those who disagreed with him, "all, every last, black, glory-hugging one of them, new that Malcolm – whatever else he was or was not – Malcolm was a man!"[103]

The Messenger also provided an answer to the dissatisfaction and anger many African Americans felt at that time. John Henrik Clarke, a historian and an associate of Malcolm X, observed that Muhammad "introduced a form of Islam that could communicate with the people he had to deal with… he found a haven for people who had no haven. He was the king to those who had no king, and he was the messiah to those who some people thought unworthy of a messiah."[104]

James Baldwin made a similar observation. He wrote that:

> Elijah Muhammad has been able to do what generations of welfare workers and committees and resolutions and reports and housing projects and playgrounds have failed to do: to heal and redeem drunkards and junkies, to convert people who have come out of prison and to keep them out, to make men chaste and women virtuous, and to invest both the male and the female with a pride and a serenity that hang about them like an unfailing light.[105]

It was not just those who "had no haven," to whom the NOI sought to appeal, but to all African Americans. Lincoln observed a general "feeling of quarantine" among many African Americans at that time. Malcolm likewise argued, "when you say 'Negro,' you're trapped right there. Makes no difference who you are nor how many degrees you have from Harvard; if you're a Negro, you're trapped. If you're black, the doors close."[106]

Although some progress had been made in some areas, many legal, social, political, and economic obstacles remained. To Lincoln, "the lynchings, the danger of being killed while under arrest, the unevenness and uncertainty of justice in the courts, [and] the continuing problem of simply finding a decent place to live"[107] all contributed to the appeal of the NOI's Black Nationalist message and program. Many of those who did not join the Nation agreed with the core of the critiques put forth by Muhammad, Malcolm, and other NOI ministers.

---

[101] Quoted in Payne, *Arising*, 309.
[102] Quoted in Payne, *Arising*, 309.
[103] Ossie Davis, "Why I Eulogized Malcolm X," *Negro Digest* (Feb. 1965), 64. https://books.google.com/books?id=5zkDAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false
[104] Strickland, *Malcolm X*, 99.
[105] James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, New York: Vintage Books (1993), 50-51.
[106] Quoted in Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 7.
[107] Quoted in Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 8.

Through these intense years, Minister Malcolm X returned to Michigan on a regular basis. According to FBI files, he held a meeting in Lansing, Michigan, in May 1955,[108] and he returned to Detroit several times in 1956: January 22, June 3, and all or most of December.[109] FBI reports also record a number of newspaper articles that documented Malcolm's activities in both Michigan and elsewhere.[110]

The FBI recorded that the August 17, 1957, *Pittsburgh Courier*, carried an article that read, "Malcolm will spend four weeks in Detroit."[111] The same report followed with an article from the August 22, 1957, *Los Angeles Herald Dispatch* that read "Negroes, No Compromise on Civil Rights Malcolm X," and read that "more than 4,000 Moslems and Non-Moslems filled Muhammad's Detroit Temple of Islam to capacity to hear young Malcolm X…" The FBI also recorded that the September 7, 1957, *New York Amsterdam News* reported that "Malcolm X Making Hit in Detroit," and noted that "Muhammad's Detroit Temple of Islam was again packed to capacity Sunday, August 25, to hear Malcolm X."[112] According to FBI records, Malcolm may have been in Detroit in August and September 1957 to act as minister when Minister Lemuel Hassan was sent to the temple in Cincinnati, Ohio.[113]

At the end of Malcolm's four weeks in Detroit and over the ensuing several weeks, the membership and attendance of Temple No. 1 had tripled, according an October 26, 1957, *New York Amsterdam News* article recorded in the FBI's files. The FBI's source, as noted in the files, indicated that Malcolm was "well liked in Detroit and the meetings at which he spoke were well attended by NOI members."[114]

By 1957 the number of temples had increased to twenty-seven designated temples (those that received a number) and likely many others that were unnumbered or did not last long. One of these may have been established in Inkster circa 1957, but was not given a number by Elijah Muhammad. According to the FBI, Malcolm spoke there in 1957 and determined that the rent was too high, that the money could be better used in Detroit, and that expenses could be cut by combining the two temples.[115] As a result, the Inkster temple never developed.

It was during this time, that Malcolm met Sister Betty X (Betty Dean Sanders, Betty Shabazz), a Detroit native, who, at that time, was a nursing student in New York and a member of Temple No. 7. Malcolm realized his feelings for Sister Betty and avoided her for a time, but eventually asked her to marry him.[116] Malcolm had stopped at a gas station on the way to visit Wilfred, and called Betty from the pay phone there. Malcolm wrote that about that day that when Betty picked

[108] FBI files, Malcolm X, January 1, 1956.
[109] FBI files, Malcolm X, undated.
[110] The actual newspaper articles were either unavailable or could not be corroborated through available resources.
[111] FBI files, Malcolm X, undated. This article could not be located.
[112] FBI files, Malcolm X, undated. This article could not be accessed.
[113] FBI files, undated.
[114] FBI files, undated.
[115] FBI files, Malcolm X, undated.
[116] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 263-264.

up the telephone, he "just said it to her direct: 'Look, do you want to get married?'"[117] According to Malcolm, Betty "acted all surprised and shocked."[118] She flew to Michigan and within a few days had married Malcolm in Lansing on January 14, 1958, in what the *Pittsburgh Courier* described as "a surprise wedding ceremony."[119]

Sometime after their wedding, Malcolm resumed his normal schedule of "trying to be everywhere at once."[120] Temples were being built across the United States with rapidity in the late 1950s. By 1961 the number of temples reached eighty,[121] and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad could be heard on some two hundred radio stations across the country.[122] In Michigan, temples had been established in Flint (No. 53), Grand Rapids (No. 61), Muskegon, and Saginaw.[123]

As the NOI grew, it drew attention of academics and the media (not to mention various government agencies). The broadcast of *The Hate that Hate Produced* in 1959, the publication of Alex Haley's article, "Mr. Muhammad Speaks" in *Reader's Digest* in 1960, and the publication of C. Eric Lincoln's *The Black Muslims in America* in 1961 brought significant attention to the NOI, both good and bad.[124] A second article by Haley, "Alex Haley Interviews Malcolm X," was published in *Playboy* in May 1963 and brought more attention to Malcolm and the NOI and set the stage for Malcolm's *Autobiography* in 1964. A great number of magazines and newspapers published pieces on the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad, and Malcolm X in the early 1960s.

In the *Playboy* article, Haley wrote of the progress and growth of the NOI:

> A relatively unknown and insignificant radical religious Negro cult until a few years ago, the Muslims have grown into a dedicated, disciplined nationwide movement which runs its own school, publishes its own newspaper, owns stores and restaurants in four major cities, buys broadcast time on 50 radio stations throughout the country, stages mass rallies attended by partisan crowds of 10,000

---

[117] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 265.
[118] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 265.
[119] "Malcolm X Married!," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 25, 1958. Even though Malcolm was, by that time, "widely known," as the Pittsburgh Courier noted, the *Lansing State Journal* did not mention the wedding, though their marriage license was acknowledged in the January 18, 1958, issue of the paper.
[120] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 269.
[121] "Meeting Places for the Religion of Islam," *Muhammad Speaks*, October-November 1961.
[122] "Muhammad's Nationwide Radio Schedule," *Muhammad Speaks*, October-November 1961.
[123] "Meeting Places," *Muhammad Speaks*, October-November 1961.
[124] Malcolm X strenuously objected to the term, "Black Muslim," and wrote in his autobiography that it "distressed everyone in the Nation of Islam." He had "tried for at least two years to kill off" the phrase. See X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 284. He seems to have conceded the point, however, and used the term himself, including in his 1964 diary in which he documented his travels in Mecca and Africa.

> and more, and maintains its own police force of judo-trained athletes called the Fruit of Islam.[125]

Malcolm, too, wrote of the growth and increasing significance of the organization as he described the NOI's mass rallies:

> Where once Detroit's struggling little Temple One proudly sent a ten-automobile caravan to Chicago… now… as many 150, 200, and even as many as 300 big, chartered buses rolled the highways to wherever Mr. Muhammad was going to speak…. Hundreds more Muslims and curious Negroes drove their own cars… Law agencies once had scoffed at our Nation as "black crackpots"; now they took special pains to safeguard against some "white crackpots".[126]

Silberman, in 1964, urged "very careful attention" of the NOI, not for the size of the organization (Silberman estimated about fifty thousand), but that "they spring from and speak to a number of basic forces in Negro life – forces which have gained considerable strength in recent years."[127]

Although Malcolm played a direct and significant role in the growth of the NOI, he attributed everything to the Messenger.[128] His answers to questions frequently began with "the Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us…," and he attributed his prominence to both Islam and Muhammad. In fact, Malcolm wrote, "everything I was that was creditable, he had made me."[129] He continued, "when I was a foul, vicious convict, so evil that other convicts called me Satan, this man had rescued me. He was the man who had trained me, who had treated me as if I were his own flesh and blood. He was the man who had given me wings – to go places, to do things I otherwise never would have dreamed of."[130]

On November 10, 1963, Malcolm spoke to the Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference,[131] organized in part by Reverend Albert B. Cleage Jr., and the Group on Advanced Leadership (GOAL), which had been founded by Reverend Cleage and brothers Milton and Richard Henry (later Gaidi and Imari Obadele) and held at King Solomon Baptist Church in Detroit (NRHP 2015). There, Malcolm delivered one of his most important speeches, "Message to the Grassroots."

---

[125] Alex Haley, "Alex Haley Interviews Malcolm X," *Playboy*, May 1963, reprinted at https://alexhaley.com/2020/07/24/alex-haley-interviews-malcolm-x/, accessed July 29, 2021.
[126] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015): 284-285.
[127] Silberman, *Crisis*, 148.
[128] In his portrayal of the mass rallies of the Nation of Islam in his *Autobiography*, Malcolm acknowledged that he "had either established or organized for Mr. Muhammad most of the represented temples." See X and Haley, Autobiography (2015): 287.
[129] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015): 342.
[130] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015): 344.
[131] The Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference was organized after the some of the organizers of the Norther Negro Leadership Conference objected to the inclusion of "Black Muslims" and the Freedom Now Party, and the organizing groups split.

In this speech, Malcolm persuasively and forcefully argued for a Black revolution akin to historical revolutions, including America's own. He argued that revolution necessarily involves bloodshed, that a revolution cannot be peaceful and asked how could anything could change without revolution. Malcolm wove American and world history together into a "secular ecstasy"[132] in support of Black Nationalism and revolution. The Grassroots Conference, and Malcolm's speech, reflected early Black Power militancy and was reflected in the later work of Black Power militants.[133] This speech was also one of Malcolm's last before he left the Nation of Islam.

Despite all that had been built over the previous decade, a series of events between 1962 and 1964 led to Malcolm's withdrawal from the Nation of Islam. First, in 1962 Ronald X. Stokes, member of Temple No. 27, was killed and other Muslims beaten by Los Angeles police. Police officers then entered the temple, ransacked it, and conducted "one of the most bizarre strip searches in the annals of law enforcement."[134] Malcolm, outraged, called for a forceful response, but the Honorable Elijah Muhammad rejected such an approach. The lack of response further angered Malcolm, though he accepted the Messenger's directive.

In 1963 two more events crucial to Malcolm's relationship with Elijah Muhammad and the NOI took place: he discovered that Elijah Muhammad had engaged in multiple adulterous affairs over several years and Malcolm's comments in response to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas, resulted in what became a suspension from the NOI and the loss of his leadership roles.

What was to be a temporary suspension was made indefinite, and Malcolm announced his departure from the NOI in March 1964. He was clear in his intention to remain a Muslim, but intended to focus on Black Nationalism as "a political concept and form of social action."[135] He also established Muslim Mosque, Inc. (MMI) and the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU).

Though many of his Harlem followers went with him, Malcolm encouraged Muslims to remain with the NOI and under the spiritual leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad.[136] He stated that he would continue to "pay homage to Mr. Muhammad for teaching me everything I know and making me what I am."[137] Malcolm also indicated that while he had been prevented from participating in the struggle for civil rights, he would thereafter "join in the fight wherever Negroes ask for my help."[138]

---

[132] Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight House: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, New York: Henry Holt & Co. (2006): 89.
[133] Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 92.
[134] Evanzz, *The Messenger*, 245.
[135] Quoted in "Malcolm X Splits with Muhammad," *New York Times*, March 9, 1964.
[136] "Malcolm X Splits with Muhammad," *New York Times*, March 9, 1964.
[137] Quoted in James Book, "Malcolm X: 'Why I Quit and What I Plan Next,'" *New York Amsterdam News*, March 14, 1964.
[138] Quoted in "Malcolm X Splits with Muhammad," *New York Times*, March 9, 1964.

In 1964, shortly after Malcolm left the NOI, Reverend Cleage and GOAL invited Malcolm to speak in Detroit again. On April 12, 1964, Malcolm spoke at King Solomon Baptist Church and delivered one of his most powerful and provocative speeches, "The Ballot or the Bullet."[139] In that speech, Malcolm affirmed his religious identity as a Muslim and recognized the Christian religious identity of several prominent ministers who were also leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. He noted that the struggle for civil rights, and Black Nationalism in particular, must transcend religious differences in order to fight for a common cause:

> Whether you are a Christian or a Muslim or a nationalist, we all have the same problem. They don't hang you because you're a Baptist; they hang you 'cause you're black. They don't attack me because I'm a Muslim. They attack me 'cause I'm black. They attacked all of us for the same reason. All of us catch hell from the same enemy. We're all in the same bag, in the same boat.[140]

To Malcolm, even after his separation from Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam, the legacy of violence, discrimination, and disprivilege suffered by African Americans could only be resolved by separation, or Black Nationalism. He explained his Black Nationalist political, economic and social philosophy in his speech in Detroit:

> The political philosophy of black nationalism only means that the black man should control the politics and the politicians in his own community… The economic philosophy of black nationalism only means that we should own and operate and control the economy of our community.[141]

He continued:

> Black nationalism is a self-help philosophy… What's so good about it – you can stay right in the church where you are and still take black nationalism as your philosophy. You can stay in any kind of civic organization that you belong to and still take black nationalism as your philosophy. You can be an atheist and still take black nationalism as your philosophy. This is a philosophy that eliminates the necessity for division and argument, 'cause if you're black, you should be thinking black.[142]

In Detroit, Chicago, and other cities, the NOI, through the leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, established stores, restaurants, and farms, in addition to temples and schools.[143]

---

[139] Malcolm gave earlier versions of this speech at Rockland Palace in Harlem and Cory Methodist Church in Cleveland, Ohio. The Detroit version was considered the "definitive" version by Peniel E. Joseph.
[140] Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," Detroit, April 12, 1964.
[141] Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," Detroit, April 12, 1964.
[142] Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," Detroit, April 12, 1964.
[143] Linwood Avenue between Calvert and Monterey developed into the heart of the Nation of Islam's Muslim community in Detroit. In addition to Temple No. 1 and the University of Islam was found the Shabazz Restaurant, Adhan West

These businesses and institutions provided material support to the Black Nationalist program of Muhammad and the NOI.

In addition to racial pride and unity, the Black Nationalist agenda that had been set by Elijah Muhammad, and heretofore preached by Malcolm, carried with it currents of a physical response as an answer to the physical mistreatment of African Americans. Although Muhammad and Malcolm both stated that Islam is a religion of peace and that neither advocated unprovoked violence, they maintained that all Black people should – and had an inherent right to – defend themselves when violence was thrust upon them. The mere suggestion that African Americans literally fight back alarmed many (especially Whites), and was at odds with the nonviolent approach of Martin Luther King Jr.

King's nonviolent approach was a product of his faith and a refusal to commit evil regardless of the cause and injury.[144] According to Cone, "for King, love was the most powerful force in the world, and nonviolence was love expressed politically."[145] Yet, Malcolm too was motivated by love. In West's view, the rage expressed by Malcolm was due to his "great love" for his people.[146] Ossie Davis closed his eulogy of Malcolm by declaring that Malcolm's willingness to die was borne of his love for his people.

Some mistook King's nonviolence for cowardice or an unwillingness to act. Malcolm, perhaps his chief antagonist, took particular exception with King's approach, given that Whites could not be expected to practice nonviolence themselves. Malcolm found the expectation by Whites that African Americans "turn the other cheek" in the face of violence to be the height of hypocrisy, especially considering the hundreds of years of violence suffered by African Americans and that the country itself was born in violence.

Yet, King's nonviolent approach offered many of the same critiques and analyses as that of Muhammad and Malcolm, but offered solutions in what was considered a morally righteous system. King's movement was also the larger of the two movements, and had the support of a broader range of Black Americans and of some Whites.

The "Walk to Freedom," held in Detroit on June 23, 1963, drew 125,000 people. The event was organized by several prominent religious and Civil Rights leaders in Detroit, among them Reverend C. L. Franklin and Reverend Cleage, and the Detroit chapter of the NAACP. King was the featured speaker of the event and gave a preliminary version of his now-famous "I Have a Dream" speech. The "Walk" was the largest civil rights demonstration in the nation's history to that point, and King wrote shortly after the march that "America has never seen anything like

Shop, the O&C Market, and Milk Depot. Other shops and markets were found throughout Detroit. Betty DeRamus, "Muslims Build Own Nation," *Detroit Free Press*, April 3, 1973.

[144] James H. Cone, "Martin and Malcolm on Nonviolence and Violence" *Phylon* 49, no. 3/4 (2001): 176.

[145] Cone, "Martin and Malcolm": 176.

[146] Cornel West, Race Matters, New York: Vintage Books (1994): 136.

[it].”[147] The *Detroit Tribune* claimed a “New Day” had come to Detroit, in which “the status quo is altered,” and “an altogether new situation must be reckoned with.”[148] The “Freedom Walk,” as it was also known, was also a significant precursor to the “March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom,” which was held two months later in Washington, DC, and which drew more than 200,000.

This “acceptability” of King’s nonviolence is part of what Malcolm found objectionable. Among his critiques of nonviolence, he said:

> As long as you got a sit-down philosophy you'll have a sit-down thought pattern… They'll have you sitting in everywhere… What – think of the image of someone sitting. An old woman can sit. An old man can sit. A chump can sit, a coward can sit, anything can sit. Well, you and I been sitting long enough and it's time for us today to start doing some standing and some fighting to back that up.[149]

Malcolm also observed that nonviolence was based on principles of morality, which could only succeed when “dealing with a basically moral people.”[150] Nonviolence could not work to secure human rights for African Americans in America because “a man who oppresses another man because of his color is not moral.”[151]

Malcolm’s urging for African Americans to forgo nonviolence and practice self-defense, as necessary, was interpreted and portrayed as a threat by the media, government, and all levels of law enforcement. His militarism was also off-putting for many as it violated their religious and political sensibilities.[152] Yet, his critiques of the failure of (White) America to treat African Americans as human beings for four hundred years was both on the mark and well received, at least to the extent that even some Black men and women who did not subscribe to his perceived militancy or separatism, not to mention the NOI, agreed with the critiques offered by Malcolm. This “most formidable race critic in American history” exposed the hypocrisy, contradictions, and failures of America, American democracy, and Christianity.[153] His analyses, according to Cone, were “uncompromising,” “unrelenting,” and “devastating.”[154] West wrote that Malcolm, unprecedented in American history, forced White America to see “sheer absurdity” of the “incessant attacks on black intelligence, beauty, character, and possibility.”[155]

---

[147] Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., letter to Reverend C. L. Franklin, July 10, 1963, in folder “Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963,” in C. L. Franklin Papers, 1957-1991, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
[148] “New Day Here,” *Detroit Tribune*, June 29, 1963.
[149] Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet,” Detroit, April 12, 1964.
[150] Han J. Massaquoi, “Mystery of Malcolm X,” *Ebony*, September 1964, 40.
[151] Massaquoi, “Mystery of Malcolm X,” 40.
[152] Cone, “Martin and Malcolm”: 178.
[153] Cone, “Martin and Malcolm”: 178.
[154] Cone, “Martin and Malcolm”: 178.
[155] West, *Race Matters*, 136.

El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, 1964-1965

One day after his speech in Detroit, on April 13, 1964, Malcolm traveled to Mecca to make the Hajj. Afterward he went on to Ghana, and spent time in Senegal and Algeria, before returning to New York on May 21, 1964. Malcolm's experiences throughout his travels, though specifically during the Hajj, had a profound impact on his views of race and, in particular, his relationship with and acceptance of Whites. He wrote in his diary on April 17, while in Mecca, "…crowded, all colors, bowing in unison – not conscious of color (race) around whites for the 1st time in my life. The whites don't seem white – Islam actually removed differences."[156] Several days later, on April 25, he wrote, "the Hajj makes one out of everyone, even the king, the rich, the priest loses his identity (rank) on the Hajj – everyone forgets self & turns to God & out of this submission to the One God comes a brotherhood in which all are equals."[157]

He summed up his experiences in his *Autobiography*:

> There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all colors, from blue-eyed blonds to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white.[158]

Malcolm returned from abroad with views on race fundamentally different from those he held when he left. His interactions with Muslims who would be considered White in America showed him, to some extent, that one's color mattered less than one's thoughts, actions, and heart. He wrote in his diary on April 25, 1964, "for me the earth's most explosive evil is racism, the inability of God's creatures to live as One, especially in the west."[159]

Though his pilgrimage to Mecca opened his eyes,[160] and Malcolm accepted Whites as human beings, rather than devils, Whites, he told a journalist, would "definitely not" be accepted as members of the OAAU.[161]

Malcolm remained "definitely not interested" in nonviolence as a response to the "mass murderers, bombers, lynchers, floggers, brutalizers and exploiters" who forced violence upon African Americans across the United States.[162] Rather, he continued to hold as important the right and necessity for African American self-defense, which some read as militant and dangerous, others as simply off-putting. When asked if he was serious about sending armed

---

[156] Herb Boyd and Ilyasah Al-Shabazz, *The Diary of Malcolm X, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz 1964*, Chicago: Third World Press (2013): 5. The parenthetical note is Malcolm's.
[157] Boyd and Al-Shabazz, *The Diary*, 23. The parenthetical note is Malcolm's.
[158] X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 390-391.
[159]
[160] Han J. Massaquoi, "Mystery of Malcolm X," *Ebony*, September 1964, 39.
[161] Massaquoi, "Mystery of Malcolm X," 40.
[162] Massaquoi, "Mystery of Malcolm X," 40. Malcolm's response here was, in part, an answer to the discussion of membership in the OAAU.

fighters to Mississippi to protect civil rights workers, Malcolm replied that he was "dead serious," and not just Mississippi, but to "any place where black people's lives are threatened by white bigots."[163] A June 30, 1964, telegram from Malcolm to Martin Luther King Jr, while King was in St. Augustine, Florida, illustrated his willingness to work with and support those he previously dismissed, even ridiculed, as well as the retention of his desire for group self-defense, he offered to "immediately dispatch some of our brothers there to organize self defense units among our people and the Klu (sic) Klux Klan will then receive a taste of its own medicine." He concluded, "the day of turning the other cheek to these brute beasts is over."

While Malcolm had been abroad, the OAAU, the organization he had established shortly after his departure from the NOI, suffered from "a growing disillusionment" among its members, and some felt Malcolm lacked sufficient interest in the organization.[164] Haley wrote that Malcolm received "more blunt criticism… than ever before in his career," and this in his "hometown" of Harlem.[165] The complaints, Haley noted, were of two general types. The first was that Malcolm "only talked" while others (e.g., King, SNCC, CORE) were "getting beat over the head."[166] The second was that Malcolm was "too confused to be seriously followed any longer."[167] The formation of the OAAU and the MMI came at a time of transformation for Malcolm. It may not have been disinterest or confusion so much as it was that Malcolm was in a period of recreation and was figuring for himself and his fellow African Americans a way forward based on his experiences in Mecca.

Shortly after his return to the United States, a series of articles published in *Muhammad Speaks* sought to discredit Malcolm. He was labeled a hypocrite, indirectly called a "false prophet," accused of "vicious scheming," and "exposed" as bent on the destruction of Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam. Malcolm, initially silent, responded in the fall of 1964, which only exacerbated the tension between the NOI and Malcolm. As 1964 turned to 1965, he knew his life was in danger, and stated in an interview, "I probably am a dead man already."[168]

Despite the enveloping threat, he continued to speak publicly, continued to speak to the media, at universities and other venues, and continued work on his autobiography with Alex Haley.

On February 14, 1965, Malcolm's home in Queens was firebombed while the family slept. Undeterred, a few hours later, he boarded a plane to speak at an event in Detroit, sponsored by the Afro-American Broadcasting Company (AABC), which had been organized by Richard and Milton Henry. The AABC, which had been formed a few years earlier, had regularly broadcast speeches of Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X on WGPR-FM. This speech was largely ignored by the local media, though an advertisement in the February 7, 1965, issue of the *Detroit Free*

[163] Massaquoi, "Mystery of Malcolm X," 39.
[164] X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 482.
[165] X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 482.
[166] X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 482.
[167] X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 482.
[168] "Malcolm X," documentary, 1972.

Press announced, "The New Malcolm X" was to speak in Detroit the following week.[169] The speech was recorded by the AABC and given the title, "The Last Message." Afterward, Malcolm returned to New York and later spoke at the Audubon Ballroom and Theater, 3940 Broadway, New York City.[170]

On Sunday, February 21, 1965, Malcolm returned to the Audubon Ballroom, where some four hundred people had gathered to hear him. Among those in attendance were his wife, Betty, and his daughters, Attallah, Qubilah, Illyasah, and Gamilah (Malaak and Malikah were not yet born). Shortly after he began his talk he was shot and killed by NOI assailants. Two days later, explosions and the resulting fire destroyed Temple No. 7 in Harlem. It was considered retaliation for Malcolm's murder.

Malcolm X was buried in Ferncliff Cemetery, Hartsdale, New York, on February 27, 1965. His funeral was held at the Faith Temple Church of God in Christ,[171] 1763 Amsterdam Avenue. Several area churches had refused to host the funeral, but Bishop Alvin A. Childs opened the doors of Faith Temple, an action that led to several bomb threats, though none were carried out. Thousands came to view Malcolm's body, and despite the specter of violence, the day was peaceful.

Malcolm's views continued to evolve throughout his life, up until his death, and his rhetoric changed sharply after he performed the Hajj, the orthodox Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Islam's holiest city, in 1964. Malcolm's views on race changed after this experience and he adopted orthodox, Sunni Islam and abstained from the type of language that was often seen as racially inflammatory upon his return. This period coincides with his break from the Nation of Islam and the creation of both Muslim Mosque Inc. and the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), which was a movement that cut across religious lines and aimed to unify African Americans in the diaspora, particularly in the United States. The OAAU called for the restoration, reorientation, education, economic security, and self-defense of African Americans and framed the community's struggle for equality as a matter of human rights (and the acquisition of basic human dignity), not just a matter of civil rights.[172] Ella Little-Collins, Malcolm's half-sister, assumed leadership of the OAAU and the MMI after his death until her passing in 1996.

---

[169] "Afro-American Broadcasting Co. Presents," *Detroit Free Press*, February 7, 1965.
[170] In the early 1990s the Audubon Ballroom, as it was commonly called, was scheduled to be demolished and replaced with a laboratory building for Columbia University. Though the building had fallen into disrepair, the proposal drew criticism and was eventually modified, and a portion of the building was retained. For more, see Tracie Rozhon, "Research Park Rising on Site of Audubon Ballroom," *New York Times*, June 11, 1995. A portion of the interior how holds the Malcolm X & Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Educational Center, a partnership between the Shabazz family and Columbia University.
[171] Faith Temple was constructed in 1921 as the Bluebird Theater. The building was acquired in 1951 by Bishop Childs. Most recently known as Childs Memorial Temple Church of God in Christ, the building was demolished circa 2018.
[172] X and Haley, *Autobiography* (2015), 419.

Inkster, Race, the Great Depression, and Malcolm

By 1930, Inkster became an incorporated township described as "fourteen miles west of Detroit in the eastern part of Nankin Township is a station on the Michigan Central Railroad and the Detroit Railways."[173] Inkster became home to a growing African American population seeking work at Ford Motor Company which offered decent daily wages, and since Blacks were prevented from living in many towns and neighborhoods under segregationist and discriminatory laws, they sought to live in areas that were still close to Detroit and close to the factories, if they could not find housing within the city limits. Inkster, thus, became a prime choice due to its proximity to Detroit, where employment opportunities were more readily available. Ford, through its 'Sociological Department' had invested in Inkster, creating a special program called the 'Inkster Project' which ran from 1931 to 1933, during a major economic downturn amidst the Great Depression. The 'Inkster Project' was Ford's public relief operation that invested in Inkster's African American residents, some of whom worked for Ford Motor Company. The project assisted in the construction of a healthcare center, school, home renovations, quality food offerings through a newly established commissary, and provided additional financial relief and/or employment although provisions for the repayment of financial obligations was also a stipulation of the project's relief program.[174] While some saw the Inkster Project as a temporary lifeline to the city's African American community hit hard by the depression, others have interpreted the 'Inkster Project' quite differently, seeing it as a way to keep African American communities segregated and at a distance and as a way to stifle unionization, using race as 'a weapon.'[175]

Though Inkster was increasingly settled by African Americans, its residents sought work beyond its borders. Nearby Dearborn, for example, became a hub for the employment of African Americans including at places like the famed Greenfield Village, though Dearborn's homes and neighborhoods were off-limits to Blacks. Edward Cutler, the man who saw Henry Ford's Greenfield Village renovations described the relationship of Ford and Inkster's African American residents:

> these people here at Inkster, Michigan (of course, they are all Negroes in that subdivision were taken care of by him…). Of course, the men had to work or do something. They all got credit for working if they were cleaning up their yards and the subdivision… They were all very fond of him. It was even more than that. There was a certain love for him I would say. You take the Negroe

[173] History of Wayne County and the City of Detroit, Michigan. Volume 1. The S.J. Publishing Company, Chicago-Detroit, 1930: 442
[174] Joyce Shaw Peterson, *American Automobile Workers, 1900-1933*, 1987: 137.
[175] For further reading on the role of race in the Inkster Project's broader aims, read Amy Maria Kenyon's *Dreaming Suburbia: Detroit and the Production of Postwar Space and Culture* 2004, p. 135.

> people down south. You could tell the plantation Negroes, because they were all clean and had clean overalls and shoes on. He cleaned them all up.[176]

In one of Malcolm's last speeches which took place at the Ford Auditorium (demolished) in Detroit on February 14, 1965, while calling attention to the hypocrisy of the American willingness to help the people of Africa yet refusing to help African Americans in the United States, he referenced his life in neighboring Inkster[177] and recalled nearby Dearborn as a city hostile towards Blacks, describing it as a city filled with "Klansman." A little over an hour into the speech, Malcolm, while speaking about the racial climate in the Detroit suburbs, stated, [They] can't help us in Alabama or in Detroit, out here in Dearborn, where some real Ku Klux Klan live", and continued, "I know Dearborn. I'm from Detroit. I used to live out here in Inkster, and you had to go through Dearborn to get to Inkster. Just like riding through Mississippi trying to get to Dearborn. Is it still that way? Well, you should straighten it up.[178]

Malcolm was obviously aware of Dearborn's storied history of anti-Black racism and implies that Dearborn was but a corridor of bigotry linking Detroit's larger Black community with Inkster, which was often seen as an island of Black neighborhoods in the overwhelmingly white and segregated suburbs.

In 1950, the year the Malcolm X House was built and just two years before Malcom's arrival, Inkster was a village with a population of 16,728.[179] Located west of Detroit, and bordering Dearborn Heights, Westland, and Garden City, Inkster was a working-class town that became home to a growing African American population during the first half of the twentieth century, which included Wilfred's neighborhood. Inkster's twentieth century economy was linked to Detroit's and the manufacturing, transport, shipping, and automotive industries of the surrounding areas. The period dubbed "The Great Migration" saw millions of African Americans flee the south, *en masse* in the decades following the abolition of slavery. During the decade of the 1920s, alone, more than 800,000 African Americans gradually made their way from southern states in search of a new life in the industrialized north.[180] They settled in all the major northern urban centers, including Detroit where Henry Ford's Ford Motor Company provided an attractive source of employment. Detroit's African American population rose from forty thousand to 120,000 during those ten years, which also gave rise to business and cultural centers in Black Detroit neighborhoods such as Black Bottom and Paradise Valley.[181] By the 1960s urban renewal led to the construction of freeways, like the Chrysler Freeway (Interstate-75), which led to major disruptions to social life and the physical

[176] Amy Maria Kenyon, *Dreaming Suburbia: Detroit and the Production of Postwar Space and Culture* 2004, pp. 134-135.
[177] Malcolm stated that he lived in Inkster during his last speech in Detroit known as the "The Final Message" on February 14, 1965, at 1:03:10 into the speech: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StX42WT0UZc
[178] Ibid. February 14, 1965, speech in Detroit.
[179] Census records, Vol. 01-25 (1950) Number of Inhabitants (Michigan) Table 4, 22-11.
[180] Alfredteen Harrison, (ed.). *Black Exodus. The Great Migration from the American South*, 1992, p. 10.
[181] Harrison, (ed.). *Black* Exodus, p. xv.

dislocation of its residents.[182] The north was still ripe with racist segregation and rampant anti-Black sentiments continued to impact all aspects of African American life and Malcolm had endured the many faces of racial injustice during his life in Michigan, both before and after his rise to civil rights leader.

Detroit, the Civil Rights Movement, and Malcolm X

Note: though Inkster is a wholly separate municipality, the proximity of the city to Detroit, its inseparable connection to Detroit, and the importance of Detroit in the general Civil Rights Movement and the development of Black Nationalism warrants a discussion of the general events of the city and the struggle for civil rights there.

Detroit holds a central and primary position within the annals of NOI history. It was the birthplace of the Nation of Islam as well as home to its first temple, Temple No. 1.[183] It is also a significant city in Malcolm's life. Detroit is where Malcolm, and later his brother Wilfred, served as ministers, and it was in Detroit that he proposed to his future wife, Betty Dean Sanders (Betty X, Betty Shabazz), a native Detroiter herself, from a phone booth in 1958; and it was in Detroit that he delivered some of his most important speeches. Detroit was central to his civil rights psychology, as the city was ripe with inequity and inequality, and African Americans faced a multitude of discriminatory laws and practices that impacted where they could work, socialize, and live.

The city is also important to the broader Civil Rights Movement. The Detroit chapter of the NAACP held, for a time, the largest membership in the country. Religious figures like the Reverend C. L. Franklin developed a national audience. The Walk to Freedom in June 1963 demonstrated the power and resolve of Black Detroiters and illustrated the importance of Detroit in the struggle for freedom and equality.

Detroit also has a particular importance to the Civil Rights Movement as an important center of development for Black Nationalism, Black Christian Nationalism, and other, radical aspects of the Civil Rights Movement, particularly but not solely the Revolutionary Union Movement, best illustrated by the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement, better known by the acronym, DRUM, and which later evolved into the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. The development of some of these so-called radical organizations was due, in part, to the Nation of Islam and the impact and influence of Malcolm X, but was also borne out of the labor struggles of both Black and White workers in the 1940s.

Malcolm X (then, Malcolm Little) arrived in Inkster in 1952, toward the end of the period identified as the "Birth of The Civil Rights Movement" in the 2002 (rev. 2008) National Park Service theme study, *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*, which began in 1941 and extended to 1954.

[182] Detroit Historical Society. Encyclopedia of Detroit (under 'Paradise Valley').

[183] Documented locations included 3408 Hastings (demolished), 1470 Frederick Street (demolished), 5401 John C. Lodge (demolished), and 11529 Linwood (extant). In its earliest years, the NOI met in various halls.

According to the NPS theme study and the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), *The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit*, this was a period marked by transformative economic, political, and social change brought about by World War II, Black migration to the North, continued organization and activism, significant lawsuits, and federal policy changes. The period culminated in the Brown *v.* Board of Education decision in 1954 that found racially segregated public schools to be unconstitutional and nullified the doctrine of "separate but equal."

Gains, however, were uneven and progress was not linear. The incredible demand for factory workers resulted in "tens of thousands"[184] of Black workers during the 1940s. These jobs were available to both men and women. "The United Autoworkers union (UAW)," according to Detroit Civil Rgiths MPDF, "began opening membership to African Americans and lobbying for civil rights protections for African Americans, despite incurring the opposition of some of their own rank and file members and corporate managers."[185]

By way of example, the number of Black women employed in Chrysler factories in Detroit increased from zero in 1941 to five thousand by 1945.[186] Yet, many of these jobs were lost after World War II, with the return of White servicemen, and later by a recession in the 1950s.

In addition to being assigned the "noisiest, dirtiest, and most dangerous"[187] jobs, African Americans were routinely fired during an initial period of employment before they were fully protected under the terms of the same labor contracts enjoyed by Whites. Many, perhaps all, of these companies fired "hundreds of workers per week," which had the effect of creating a "permanent pool of insecure job seekers."[188]

Black Detroiters also faced resistance and discrimination in the workplace from their White counterparts. In March 1943, seven hundred White women who worked at the Packard Motor Car Company factory engaged in a wildcat strike in protest of four African American women who had been recently hired.[189] This was followed in June 1943 by a second strike at the Packard Motor Car Company factory, which the virtually the entire complement of White workers left their jobs. The articles that covered the strike did not report the number of workers that participate, but Widick puts the number at twenty-five thousand.[190] The company, at that time, produced Rolls-Royce aircraft engines, which were used in a number

[184] Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, Chicago: Haymarket Books (2012): 27.
[185] Mills and Little, "The Civil Rights Movement."
[186] Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit*, 27.
[187] Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit*, 28.
[188] Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit*, 28.
[189] "Walkout Hits Packard Shops," *Detroit Free Press*, March 19, 1943.
[190] B. J. Widick, *Detroit: City of Race and Class Violence*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press (1989): 97. See also: Walter White and Thurgood Marshall, *What Caused the Detroit Race Riot*, Detroit: NAACP (1943): 7. The Packard strike is but one such example of many that occurred during the 1940s war years, both in Michigan and elsewhere.

of Allied aircraft. For several days production fell to nearly zero. The strike was initially reported by the company as related to "upgrading" (e.g. promoting) three Black workers, but was really a matter the striking workers refusal to work "should to shoulder" with Black workers on the assembly line.[191]

Housing, never abundant or even adequate for African Americans in Detroit, was made worse by by *de jure* and *de facto* segregation. Access to housing was prevented through tactics like red-lining, facilitated by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, and through physical barriers like the Birwood Wall (NRHP 2021), a six-foot-high concrete wall constructed in 1941 to separate Black and White neighborhood. The *Detroit Free Press* reported that between December 7, 1941, and March 1945, the population of Detroit increased by more than 254,000.[192] Despite the construction of more than sixty thousand units of housing between December 1941 and March 1945, housing for both Black and White Detroiters remained more than ninety-nine percent occupied.[193] The construction of new housing and the conversion of existing buildings to residential use provide some relief, but Black Detroiters were very limited in where they could live through "many hundreds" of restrictive covenants and informal neighborhood agreements.[194] The competition for the Sojourner Truth Homes was in part the result of limited housing, generally, in Detroit, though more so by racism. In the case of the Sojourner Truth Homes, protests led to mob violence. According to the March 16, 1942, issue of *Life*:

> White residents of the [nearby] neighborhood threw a 24-hour picket line around Sojourner Truth Homes. Few nights before the riot they staged a "call-out." Cars tooted through the streets and in 15 minutes a mob of 200 men had convened. The Ku-Klux Klan met, urged violent action, burned several fiery crosses. At 7:30 a.m. on Feb. 28 – the day set for occupancy – a picket line of 700 whites surrounded the project. Several moving vans… were halted a few blocks away. Some 300 Negroes massed behind them. A thin line of police stood between. On both sides clubs, brickbats, guns and knives appeared.

In the later 1940s, planning began for the "clearance" of the Paradise Valley and Black Bottom neighborhoods, "the heart of the Black community" in Detroit.[195] The demolition of the entire area began in the late 1950s and resulted in the displacement of African Americans without any compensation or support in a city that, in many ways, remained segregated. In

[191] "White Employees Won't Work Beside Negroes," *Detroit Free Press*, June 4, 1943.
[192] James M. Haswell, "War-Job Rush Outran Housing," *Detroit Free Press*, March 15, 1945.
[193] James M. Haswell, "New City Housing Still is Inadequate," *Detroit Free Press*, March 16, 1945.
[194] James M. Haswell, "Numerous Pacts Bar Negro Residents," *Detroit Free Press*, March 17, 1945.
[195] Mills and Little, "The Civil Rights Movement."

all, 423 houses, 109 commercial buildings, and 22 factory buildings were demolished for one highway and nearly three thousand buildings for another.[196]

Groups like the Detroit chapters of the Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) fought for equality in housing and employment. They organized boycotts, restaurant sit-ins, and pickets in protest of anti-Black discrimination and was more confrontational in their initial activism, though this changed by the early 1950s when NAACP membership dropped.[197] In fact, the membership of the Detroit NAACP chapter, for a time the largest chapter in the nation, had decreased from more than twenty-five thousand during WWII to just 5,162 in 1952, the year Malcolm arrived in Detroit.[198] Some of the decrease in membership was attributed to the expulsion of militant members.[199] A curious action when one considers that, "before the Black Muslim movement came along, the NAACP was looked upon as radical."[200]

Malcolm, through his work with the Nation of Islam and Temple No. 1, was able to capitalize on both the lull in activism and the disassociation of the NAACP and other moderate groups with the more militant and radical contingent of the Civil Rights Movement. He was able to make inroads with Detroit's African-American population. Especially at first, he convinced the downtrodden and dispossessed of his organization's cause by highlighting the need to achieve self-determination by following the teachings of the group's leader, Elijah Muhammad. Seeing Malcolm's arguably unique ability (and, according to biographers, envy on the part of NOI leadership and Elijah Muhammad himself) Muhammad, later in 1953, sent Malcolm to east coast cities to garner more recruits and organize mosques there.

Into the 1950s, the "Modern Civil Rights Movement"[201] developed. This was a time of gathering strength for the Civil Rights Movement, in general. During this period, roughly beginning in 1954 and ending in 1964, "civil rights activists in both Detroit and the United States as a whole became increasingly impatient with opposition by Whites to full equality in housing, employment, and public accommodations."[202]

---

196 Nithin Vejendia, "Detroit's Most Enduring Monuments to Racism," *Detroit Free Press*, July 5, 2020.
197 Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* - Updated Edition, 2014, pp. 170-172.
198 Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, p. 170. According to the June 18, 1960, *Detroit Tribune*, the number of Detroit NAACP members grew to more than twenty-two thousand by 1960 from the post-World War II decline.
199 Ruth E. Mills and Saundra Little, "The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit," Multiple Property Documentation Form, National Park Service.
200 Malcolm X, "The Final Message," Detroit, February 14, 1965, at 1:04:34 into the speech: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StX42WT0UZc
201 This is the name given to the period of 1954 to 1964 in both the 2002 (rev. 2008) National Park Service theme study, *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* and the 2021 MPDF, *The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit*.
202 Mills and Little, "The Civil Rights Movement."

As a result, two general and contrasting strands of activism emerged, one, nonviolent and moderate, embodied by Martin Luther King Jr. and another, radical and separatist, by Malcolm X.[203] Both were increasingly empowered and assertive. King's nonviolent approach to integration and Malcolm's so-called radical separatism both found receptive audiences in Detroit. Though certainly not the only advocates of integration and separatism, King and Malcolm were the most visible and identifiable persons associated with each movement.

Malcolm's analysis of the social, economic, and political problems that converged to deny the human rights of African Americans, and his fearless articulation of Black rage, was unprecedented in American history.[204] His ability to boldly discuss the "moral hypocrisy and insincerity"[205] of many Whites brought him the respect and admiration of many. As important was his desire, motived by love, to speak for and on behalf of the millions of Black Americans who did not have a voice.

Though Malcolm travelled across the nation, it was in Detroit that he gave some of his most fiery and famous speeches, including arguably his most famous speech ever, "The Ballot or the Bullet," which he presented at the King Solomon Baptist Church 1964.[206] He also gave a talk the previous year, in 1963, at Wayne State University, in room 101 of State Hall,[207] which overflowed with students who excitedly crammed into the auditorium to hear him speak. Detroit played a pivotal role in shaping Malcolm's worldview; one might argue, considering the many significant moments of his life are so intimately tied to the city. During and after Malcolm's visit there, Wayne State University became a major base for civil rights and social activism and an advocate and pioneer in Black Studies programs.[208]

Malcolm's work – both with the NOI and after – laid the foundation for the Black Power movement of the 1960s. He utilized his position to call attention to the racial disparities in access, opportunity, privileges, etc. He appeared on television, over the radio waves, presented lectures at universities, gave talks at mosques and churches, and utilized all the mediums available at his disposal to heighten awareness about the African American plight.

Between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s a number of influential organizations and events had built off of the intellectual legacy of Malcolm X. Dyson wrote that in the wake of his death,

---

[203] For an analysis that questions the popular understanding of Martin-Malcolm dichotomy of the Civil Rights Movement and explores the complexity of their roles and relationship, see Peniel E. Joseph, *The Sword and the Shield: The Revolutionary Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.* (2020).
[204] West, *Race Matters*, 135.
[205] Michael Eric Dyson, *Making Malcolm: The Myth & Meaning of Malcolm X*, New York: Oxford University Press (1995): XV.
[206] Branden Hunter, "Malcolm X Proposed to Wife from Detroit Phone Booth: How He was Connected to city," *Detroit Free Press*. May 19, 2020.
[207] See Wayne State University's Walter P. Reuther Library (27991) Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, Meetings, Wayne State, 1963 for images and other information regarding speech.
[208] Herb Boyd, *Black Detroit: A People's History of Self-Determination*, 2017 (under 'Introduction', pages. viii-ix).

several groups – SNCC, CORE, the Black Panther Party, RNA, and LRBW – claimed to be Malcolm's "ideological heirs."[209] There are likely many other groups that would stake a similar claim. Malcolm's depth and breadth, however, negates a single claim to the intellectual legacy he left. Rather, that so many would claim a sort of ownership or guardianship speaks to his ability to inspire so many and for varied reasons. Among the gifts he left was the continued ability to inspire so many to fight for change.

In Detroit, Malcolm's work and legacy coalesced with that of local activists like James and Grace Lee Boggs, brothers Milton and Richard Henry, Ed Vaughn, Reverend Albert B. Cleage Jr., and others. This led to formation of a number of local groups like the Malcolm X Society, formed by the Henrys in the wake of Malcolm's death, and the various Revolutionary Union Movements, which were later consolidated into the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. Businesses such as Black Star Publishing, Broadside Press, and Vaughn's Book Store, along with organizations like the Black Consciousness Library, collectively built on the work of Malcolm X by publishing works by radical Black activists and intellectuals, and thereby "made significant contributions to Black consciousness"[210] in Detroit and beyond.

Places in Michigan Associated with Malcolm X

Malcolm X lived in Michigan from the late 1920s to 1941 and then from 1952 to 1953, though he returned to Detroit, presumably Inkster, and Michigan frequently. During the earlier period and the ten months in the early 1950s, he lived in several communities, and, therefore, there were or are many places that are historically associated with him, predominately homes, schools, and places of worship. Places in Michigan associated with Malcolm under these three broad properties are discussed below. Other places, such as places of employment are not considered, as they were of limited duration and are not well known and more difficult to document, based on available information. Still other places, such as locations of important speeches are not considered here. The primary locations of his major Detroit speeches have either been listed in the National Register (King Solomon Baptist Church) or demolished (Ford Auditorium)..

Between 1952, when he arrived in Inkster, and his death in 1965, Malcolm visited many other places in Michigan. Lectures, teaching, and other events took him to cities like Flint, East Lansing, and Ann Arbor, in addition to Detroit, where he spoke at universities, churches, and Nation of Islam events. His speech, "The Race Problem in American," at the Erickson Kiva on the campus of Michigan State University in East Lansing, on January 23, 1963, is among his important speeches in Michigan. Many of these places and events, however, represent singular moments in Malcolm's life and career. Taken individually they may not rise to the level of significance necessary for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Locations of speeches, especially, should be considered in the context of his public career, rather than narrowly considered.

[209] Dyson, *Making Malcolm*, 25.
[210] Mills and Little, "The Civil Rights Movement."

Homes

All of the Little family homes in Lansing have been destroyed or demolished over time.

The Little family does not appear in the 1928 Lansing city directory, but other accounts of the family's time in Lansing place them in the Westmont subdivision upon their arrival there. The first family home in the Westmont subdivision was burned in 1929.

The family then resided at 401 South Charles Street, according to the 1929 city directory and the 1930 United States Census. This area of the city is just outside the area covered by last available edition of the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. It is not clear if the present street addresses for Charles Street are the same as those in 1930, though it is likely. If so, the Little home would have been located at or near the southeast corner of the intersection of Charles Street and Kalamazoo Street. That location is currently occupied by an automobile parts store. The family also appears in the 1931 city directory, but a specific address is not provided. Instead, the entry for Earl and Louise Little is given as "R D No 3," Presumably RFD No. 3, or Rural Free Delivery Route Number 3.

Louise Little and her children do not appear in available Lansing city directories from 1932 to 1939, and the 1933 directory does not contain a listing for 401 Charles Street (given as South Charles Street). The first address in the 400 block, which intersects Kalamazoo is 403 for that year. The family may have moved to their next home on what was South Logan Street by this time. If so, that part of the city was not yet annexed into the city of Lansing and was not covered by maps or directories.

The 1940 United States Census indicates that Wilfred, Hilda, and Philbert were still living at the Logan Street house. A house number is not given in the census, but Wilfred's World War II draft registration card gives their address as 4111 South Logan Street (presently Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard), an address confirmed by the 1940 city directory. The site, now the location of an apartment complex, is marked with a Michigan Historical Marker.

In early 1939 Louise Little had been committed to the Kalamazoo State Hospital. About that time the family was split up and Malcolm was sent to live with Albert (given as Thornton, in Payne, *The Dead are Arising*) and Mabel Gohanna. The 1940 census gives an address of 1010 William Street, the same as that of the 1939 and 1941 city directories. The Gohannas had moved to 831 West Saint Joseph Street, then a few blocks to the north. Malcolm likely lived with then at the William Street house. In any case, both homes have been demolished. William Street is now part of a large General Motors assembly factory and the Saint Joseph Street house was likely demolished for the construction of United States Interstate 496.

Malcolm was then sent to the Ingham County Juvenile Detention Home at 304 East Cherry Street[211] in Mason, about fifteen miles to the south of Lansing. The building was operated by

[211] The address is sometimes given as 304 East South Street, which intersects Cherry Street.

James and Lois Swerlein for a number of years. The building was demolished circa 1962[212] and an apartment complex now occupies the site.

Malcolm left the custody of the detention home and was released to the Lyons family, who also lived in Mason. The Lyonses may have been Harold and Ivy Lyons. Payne identified the Lyonses as having five children and as one of the two Black families in Mason.[213] The 1940 United States Census indicates Harold and Ivy Lyons as Black and having five children. Their house appears to be extant. Malcolm lived with the Lyons family for two months, according to the *Autobiography*.[214] This house is one of two places in Mason that may be able to illustrate important aspects of his childhood and should be evaluated for eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

One house in Detroit in that appears to have some association with Malcolm X during the important, pre-East Coast period of 1952 and 1953.[215] Payne wrote that Malcolm spent some time with Moustafa and Raushanah Hassain (Robert Davenport and Dorothy Warren)[216] at their home on Keystone Street. Payne does not give an address, and the FBI files for Malcolm suggest the house was located at 18887 Keystone. No such address exists, however, and there are no empty lots that would suggest the home has been demolished. The 1954 Detroit city directory indicates Robert Davenport resided at 18827 Keystone, which is extant. The extent of Malcolm's connection to this house is unclear and not well documented. FBI reports repeatedly state that Malcolm received mail at the Hassain Home, but also suggested that Malcolm continued residency at his brother's house. Payne reported that some tension existed between Ruth and Malcolm, but the nature and extent of that tension is not described, nor is the length of time he resided with the Hassain family.[217]

Schools

While in Lansing, Malcolm attended several schools. He attended elementary school at the Pleasant Grove School between c. 1930 and the early fall of 1938.[218] The school building that Malcolm attended is a two-story brick building constructed in 1929. An earlier building, constructed in 1903, occupied the parcel but was destroyed by fire in February 1929. The extant building was designed by the prominent Lansing firm of Bowd & Munson (Edwin A. Bowd and Elmer J. Munson).[219] In 1950 a significant addition, designed by Lansing architect

[212] "Bids Wanted," *State Journal* (Lansing, Mich.), October 17, 1962.
[213] Payne, *Arising*, 142.
[214] X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 45.
[215] Payne, *Arising*, 272.
[216] Payne gives a different spelling of Mustafa Hassain's first name. Hassain also went by Robert X. In 1956, Mustafa Hassain was sent to Pittsburgh by Elijah Muhammad. He remained there until his passing c. 2010.
[217] Payne, *Arising*, 272.
[218] Bruce Perry, *Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America*, New York: Station Hill Press (1991), 11; and Perry, *Malcolm*, 31.
[219] "Modern $75,000 Structure Being Erected to Replace Pleasant Grove School Razed in Fire," *Lansing State Journal*, June 7, 1929.

Clark Ackley, was constructed as a wing of the 1929 building.[220] The exterior of the 1929 appears to retain integrity, although the windows have been replaced. The interior of the school was not evaluated and it is not known if the interior retains integrity. More importantly, the Pleasant Grove School building is associated with Malcolm's childhood years, and although important, are not associated with the areas and periods of significance addressed in this nomination.

After elementary school, Malcolm attended what was West Junior High School, located 500 West Lenawee Street. The building still stands and is today used as Stephen A. Partington Education Center for the Lansing School District. The exterior building has been modified to a minor extent with replacement windows and the application of synthetic stucco panels along the second and third floor windows. The fenestration pattern for visible elevations appears to remain unaltered and exterior architectural details remain. No information is available for the interior of this building. More importantly, however, is that the school does not appear to have been associated with Malcolm for a significant amount of time, nor does his time at the school appear to have had a significant impact on his development.

The last school associated with Malcolm was the Mason Junior High School, 500 South Jefferson Street, which later became Jefferson Street School, an elementary school. Sometime in the 1980s, the school was converted to Jefferson Street Square, a senior apartment building. The exterior of the property appears to possess historic integrity. No information is available for the interior of this building. The school building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places under the Courthouse Square Historic District under the Mason Michigan Historic Multiple Resource Area. Though listed, the historic district nomination does not mention Malcolm or any other significant people that may have attended school there. Like the Lyons house, the school may be able to illustrate important aspects of Malcolm's childhood.

Mason, according to Payne, "something of an oasis" for young Malcolm,[221] and Wilfred suggested that his time in Mason may have been the "most stable and constructive" of his childhood.[222] These early years are essential to understanding his later years and connections can be drawn to Malcolm as an adult. The few resources that remain may important in the ongoing quest to understand Malcolm X.

Though these may be significant places in relation to Malcolm X, these buildings illustrate Malcolm's earlier, childhood years, which is a fundamentally different period in his life.

---

[220] "To Dedicate New Pleasant Grove School," *Lansing State Journal*, October 5, 1950. Photographs of the 1929 and 1950 buildings are available at the Capitol Area District Library website, https://cadl.pastperfectonline.com/archive/1174EE4C-10B2-4B4C-B995-750054266267.

[221] Payne, *Arising*, 130.

[222] Payne, *Arising*, 131.

Religious Buildings

Nation of Islam Temple No. 1 was established in Detroit in the early 1930s. The temple moved to several locations within Detroit between the time of its founding and 1959, when it acquired a building at 11529 Linwood Street. The building was constructed for the Workman's Circle, a Jewish benevolent organization. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, the building was then used by James F. "Prophet" Jones for a short time until it was acquired by the NOI.[223] This building postdates Malcolm's time as Assistant Minister at Temple No. 1 by several years. After the death of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad in 1975, Imam Warith Deen Muhammad, Elijah Muhammad's son, reorganized the Nation of Islam to be in line with Al-Islam (Sunni Islam). The names of the temples were changed to masjids, and, in 1976, Temple No. 1 was rededicated a masjid, or mosque, and renamed World Community of al-Islam in the West. Today the temple is known as Masjid Wali Muhammad.[224]

The earlier NOI temples at 5401 (5403) John C. Lodge Service Drive, 1474 Frederick, and 3408 Hastings Street, which was located within the Castle Theater building, have all been demolished. It was the temple on Frederick Street where Malcolm attended his first NOI services and where he served as Assistant Minister, and the temple on John C. Lodge where he would have preached in his returns to Detroit.

Malcolm X is also associated with King Solomon Baptist Church, 6100 14th Street. He gave two historic speeches at King Solomon, "Message to the Grass Roots" in 1963 and "The Ballot or the Bullet" in 1964. The church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2015, in part for its significant role in history of the Civil Rights Movement in Detroit.

[223] Don Beck, "Negro Race Cult Plans New School," *Detroit Free Press*, September 27, 1959.
[224] "The History," Masjid Wali Muhammad website, https://www.historicmwm.com/about.html

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Adams, Dominic. "The Feds, Flint and Malcolm X." Mlive.com, December 05, 2016, Updated Jan 19, 2019.

Associated Press. "Wilfred Little, 78, Brother of Malcolm X." *New York Times*. May 21, 1998.

Boyd, Herb. *Black Detroit: A People's History of Self-Determination*. New York: HarperCollins, 2017.

Carson, Clayborne. *Malcolm X: The FBI File*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1991.

Cunningham, Sylvia. "Boston Archaeologists Begin Digging into Malcolm X's Past." March 29, 2016.

Detroit Historical Society. Encyclopedia of Detroit. https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/black-bottom-neighborhood

Evanzz, Karl. *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1999.

Federal Bureau of Investigation Files, "Malcolm Little (Malcolm X)," https://vault.fbi.gov/malcolm-little-malcolm-x.

Federal Bureau of Investigation Files, "Malcolm X," https://vault.fbi.gov/Malcolm%20X.

Gambino, Ferruccio. The Transgression of a Laborer: Malcolm X in the Wilderness of America (from 'RADICAL HISTORY', Winter 1993). Ford Motor Company communication to author, 20 May 1981.

Haley, Alex. *Family: A Humanizing Force*. Volume 1 of the 13-Volume proceedings of the 1980 World Conference on Records: Preserving Our Heritage, August 12-15, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1980.

Harrison, Alfredteen (ed.). *Black Exodus: The Great Migration from the American South*. Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1992

History of Wayne County and the City of Detroit, Michigan. Volume 1. Chicago & Detroit: S.J. Publishing Company, 1930.

Hunter, Branden. “Malcolm X proposed to wife from Detroit phone booth: How he was connected to city.” *Detroit Free Press*. May 19, 2020.

Kenyon, Amy Maria. *Dreaming Suburbia: Detroit and the Production of Postwar Space and Culture*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004.

Lincoln, C. Eric. *The Black Muslims in America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961.

Little, Wilfred (1995) “Our Family from the Inside: Growing Up with Malcolm X,” *Contributions in Black Studies*: Vol. 13, Article 2. https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cibs/vol13/iss1/2

Marable, Manning. *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*. New York: Penguin Books, 2011.

Marable, Manning and Garrett Felber (eds.). *The Portable Malcolm X Reader*. New York: Penguin Books, 2013.

Michigan Census records, Vol. 01-25 (1950).

Payne, Les (and Tamara Payne). *The Dead are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X*. New York: Liveright Publishing, 2020.

Peterson, Joyce Shaw. *American Automobile Workers, 1900-1933*. SUNY Press, 1987.

Real Estate Summary Sheet (11/24/2020) City of Inkster

Wayne State University Walter P. Reuther Library (27991) Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, Meetings, Wayne State, 1963.

Strickland, William. *Malcolm X: Make it Plain*. New York: Viking, 1994.

West, Cornel. *Race Matters*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

X, Malcolm. "The Last Message" presented in front of the First Annual Dignity Projection and Scholarship Award Ceremony at the Ford Auditorium in Detroit, Michigan on February 14, 1965.

X, Malcolm and Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1999.

X, Malcolm and Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Random House Publishing, 2015.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
____ previously listed in the National Register
_____previously determined eligible by the National Register
_____designated a National Historic Landmark
____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
_____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _Less than one_(0.08)__

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 42.277478 Longitude: -83.312950

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or
UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ AD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

36B268 LOT 268 BURNS-VAN ALSTINE SUB T2S R93 L60 P70 WCR

2021 Parcel Number: 44 014 02 0268 000

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The verbal boundary description is the legal description for the property. The location of the house, as provided in the legal description, corresponds with the plat number as identified in the 1926 plat map for the Burns-VanAlstine Subdivision. The legal description and 2021 parcel number were derived from available tax records.

---

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Dr. Tareq A. Ramadan/Project Manager
organization: Project We Hope, Dream and Believe
street & number: 3430 Springhill Avenue
city or town: Inkster state: Michigan zip code: 48141
e-mail: tareqramadan@gmail.com
telephone: 313-829-1948
date: 1/7/2020

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Malcolm X Home

City or Vicinity: Inkster

County: Wayne State: Michigan

Photographer: Tareq A. Ramadan and Aaron Sims

Date Photographed: May 7, 2020

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of _21_. Façade/east elevation; facing west. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0001

2 of _21_. Façade/east elevation and south elevation; facing northwest. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0002

3 of _21_. South elevation; facing north. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0003

4 of _21_. West elevation; facing east. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0004

5 of _21_. North elevation and façade/east elevation; looking southwest. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0005

6 of _21_. South elevation entrance; facing north into kitchen. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0006

7 of _21_. Living room; facing north from kitchen. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0007

8 of _21_. Living room; facing east from bathroom. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0008

9 of _21_. Living room, hallway, and bathroom from living room; facing west from living room. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0009

10 of _21_. Utility room from south elevation entrance. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0010

11 of _21_. Kitchen from living room, utility room at right; facing south. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0011

12 of _21_. Bathroom (with slight view of tub) from hallway; facing north. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0012

13 of _21_. Bathtub; facing east. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0013

14 of _21_. Bedroom, first floor, northwest corner; facing northwest. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0014

15 of _21_. Bedroom, first floor, northeast corner; facing west. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0015

16 of _21_. Stairs to upper level bedroom, from bathroom; facing south. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0016

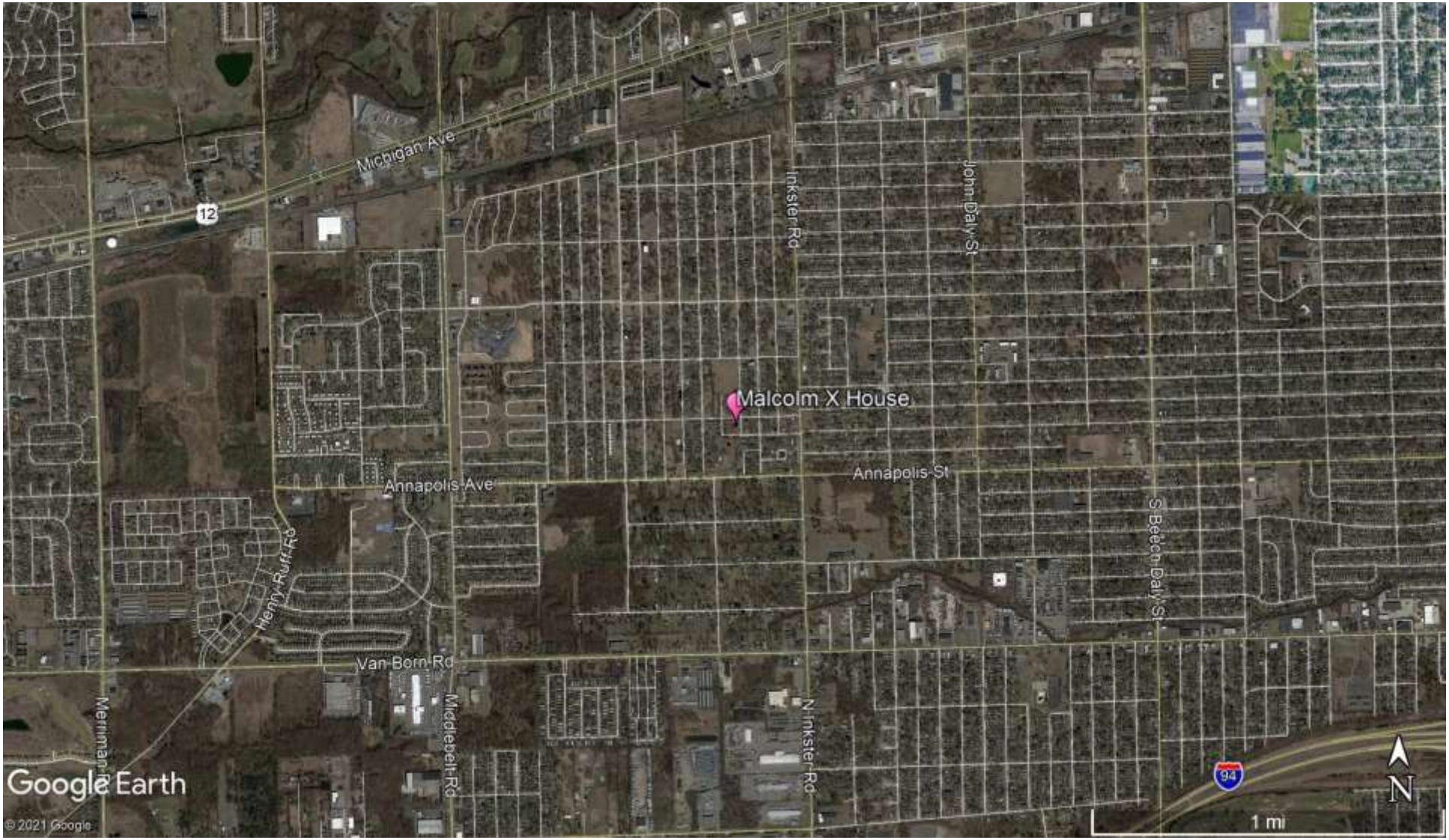
17 of _21_. Stairs leading to upper level, from hallway; facing south. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0017

18 of _21_. Top of stairs looking down; facing north. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0018

19 of _21_. Upper level, center space (Malcolm X's room), facing north. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0019

20 of _21_. Upper level, center space (Malcolm X's room), facing south. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0020

21 of _21_. Upper level, center space (Malcolm X's room), facing south-southeast. MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0021



Malcolm X House (Wilfred and Ruth Little House)
4336 Williams Street, Inkster, Wayne County, Michigan

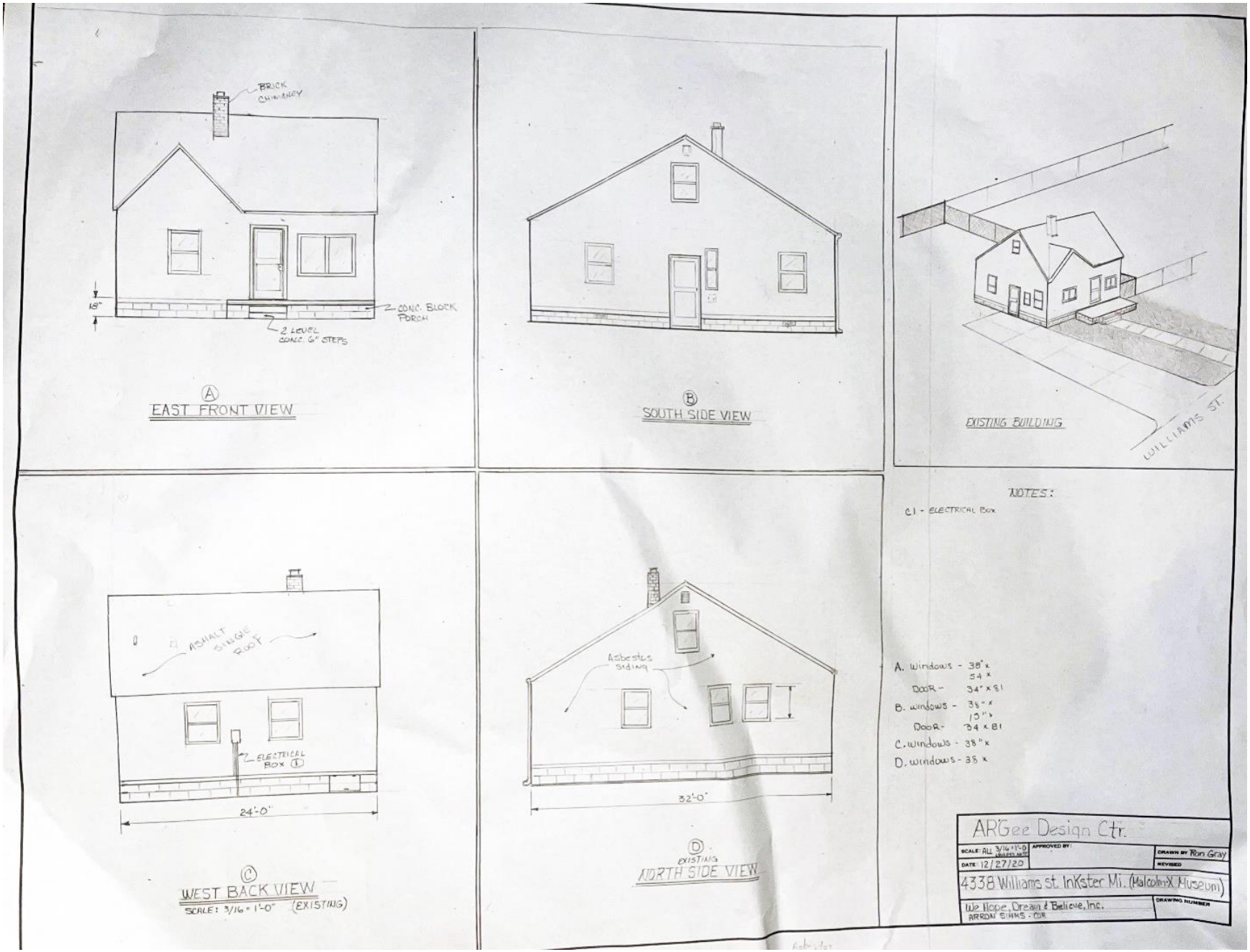
Latitude: 42.277478
Longitude: -83.312950

MICHIGAN SHPO STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

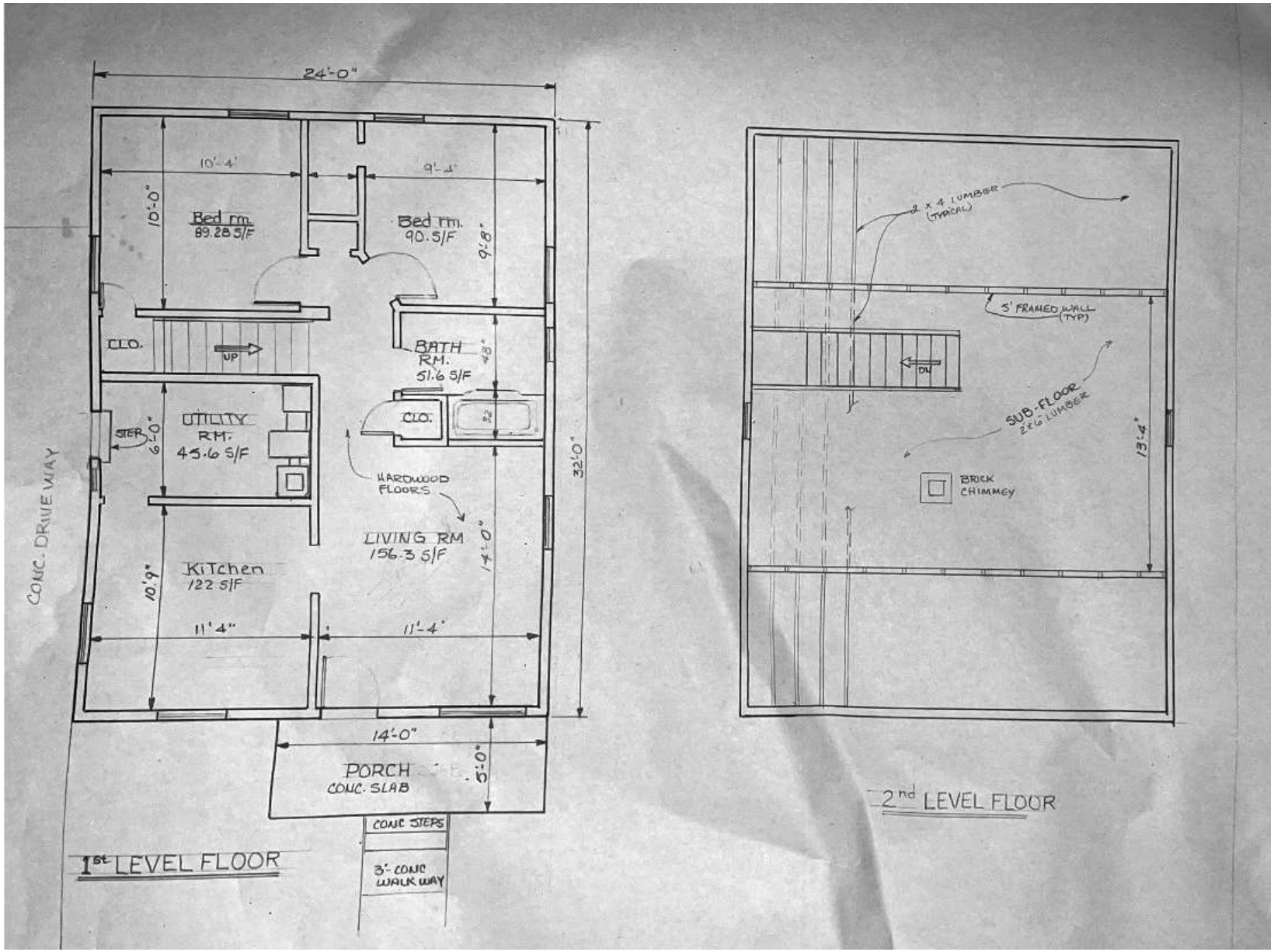
Malcolm X House (Wilfred and Ruth Little House)
4336 Williams Street, Inkster, Wayne County, Michigan

Latitude: 42.277478
Longitude: -83.312950

MICHIGAN SHPO STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



Malcolm X House (Wilfred and Ruth Little House) – Elevation Drawings
4336 Williams Street, Inkster, Wayne County, Michigan



Malcolm X House (Wilfred and Ruth Little House) – Floor Plan

4336 Williams Street, Inkster, Wayne County, Michigan

MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0001

MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0002

MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0003

MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0004

MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0005

Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0007

MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0015

MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0017

MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0019

MI_Wayne County_Malcolm X House_0021

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:	Nomination
Property Name:	Malcolm X House
Multiple Name:	
State & County:	MICHIGAN, Wayne

Date Received:	Date of Pending List:	Date of 16th Day:	Date of 45th Day:	Date of Weekly List:
10/22/2021	11/2/2021	11/17/2021	12/6/2021	

Reference number:	SG100007205
Nominator:	SHPO

Reason For Review:

X Accept _____ Return _____ Reject **11/29/2021** Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Although in poor condition, the house has sufficient historic integrity to reflect is individual significance as the house where Malcolm Little became Malcolm X. The home of his older bother, this residence is where Malcolm Little was paroled to out of a Massachusetts prison. While in prison, Little had studied Islam; his brother, though, introduced him to the Nation of Islam, Detroit Temple No. 1, and eventually Elijah Mohammed. During his time at his brother's house, Little was bestowed with his new name, studies to become a minister in the faith, and took on a role as a primary speaker and recruiter for the Nation of Islam. He eventually moved to the east coast to set up new temples and continue his work. POS 1952 -53.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept / A & B

Reviewer Jim Gabbert Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275 Date

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN STRATEGIC FUND
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

QUENTIN L. MESSER, JR.
PRESIDENT

Friday, October 15, 2021

Ms. Joy Beasley, Keeper
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Beasley:

The enclosed discs contain the true and correct copy of the nomination for the **Malcolm X House, 4336 Williams Street, Inkster, Wayne County, Michigan**. This property is being submitted for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This nomination is a __X__ New Submission ____Resubmission ____Additional Documentation ____Removal.

__1__ Signed National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
__2__ Locational maps (incl. with nomination file)
__2__ Sketch map(s) / figures(s) / exhibits(s) (incl. with nomination file)
__1__ Pieces of correspondence (incl. with nomination file)
__10__ Digital photographs (incl. with nomination file)
____ Other (incl. with nomination file): _____

COMMENTS:

____ Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed.
____ This property has been approved under 36 CFR 67.
____ The enclosed owner objections constitute a majority of property owners.
____ This nomination has been funded by the following NPS grant: _____
____ Other:

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Todd A. Walsh, National Register Coordinator, at walsht@michigan.gov or (517) 331-8917.

Sincerely yours,

Mark A. Rodman
State Historic Preservation Officer

MICHIGAN SHPO STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

300 NORTH WASHINGTON SQUARE • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48913
michigan.gov/shpo • (517) 335-9840