THIS IS TAMBIKO FOR MIN. MALCOLM X, AN
OFFERING OF WORDS AND WATER IN REVERENT
REMEMBRANCE OF HIS LEGACY- RICH LIFE, HIS
JIHAD OF RIGHTOUS SELF- RAISING AND
LIBERATIONAL STRUGGLE, HIS AWESOME SACRIFICE AND HIS
CONTINUING POWERFUL PRESENCE IN THE INTEREST AND
ADVANCE-MENT OF AFRICAN AND HUMAN GOOD IN THE
WORLD. THE DAY OF MALCOLM’S SACRIFICE AND
MARTYRDOM, FEBRUARY 21, 1965, HAS BEEN SINCE
1966, A SACRED DAY FOR OUR ORGANIZATION US. HE
WAS FOR US AND REMAINS A MODEL AND MIRROR, A
MODEL OF AFRICAN AND HUMAN EXCELLENCE TO
EMULATE, AND A MIRROR BY WHICH TO MEASURE
OURSelves IN THE WAY WE LIVE OUR LIVES, DO OUR
WORK AND WAGE OUR STRUGGLES FOR GOOD IN THE
WORLD. INDEED, MANY OF THE TENETS OF OUR
PHILOSOPHY, KAWAIDA, A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE, WORK
AND STRUGGLE, ARE ROOTED IN AND REFLECTIVE OF MIN.
MALCOLM’S TEACHINGS.

In the midst of a context of fear, silence
and uncertainty following the assassination and
sacrifice of Min. Malcolm, we stood up in
February 1966 as Simba Wachanga (audacious
Young Lions), named the day of his martyrdom
in Swahili Siku ya Dhabihu, the Day of
Sacrifice, and called the community to come
together to commemorate the awesome enduring
meaning of his life, legacy and sacrifice. And
they responded in rightful appreciative homage.
And that May, we brought his wife, Betty
Shabazz, to Los Angeles to celebrate Malcolm’s
birth and life and called students to honor his
birthday May 19th as a holiday, a sacred day, by
staying away from school and coming to a mas-
sive teach-in at our headquarters. And the stu-
dents responded massively.

Thus, in this year which marks the fifty-
fifth anniversary of Min. Malcolm’s martyrdom,
we came together again for a communal celebra-
tion of his life, legacy, righteous struggle and
awesome sacrifice. For even though the media
decided to use the occasion to present the film
and raise again the question “Who Killed
Malcolm?”, we knew the need was to focus on a
larger conception and memory of Malcolm.
Indeed, we must focus on the whole of his life
and especially his jihad, this continuous striving
and struggle to live a righteous life, to be a con-
sistent servant of his people, to be a fearless and
steadfast soldier in the struggle and leave an
account of his life that “might prove of some
social value.”

Clearly, there is a need to revisit the ques-
tion of who killed Malcolm for various reasons.
However, the most essential, enduring, over-
arching and fruitful question and which all other
questions must be derived from and related to is
“Who is Malcolm?”. Who is this man who
taught us the right and responsibility to resist
evil, injustice and oppression, to value the les-
tions and legacies of history, to wage cultural
revolution and return to the source and not flinch
or flee in the face of the death planned and
promised against us.

The film series is six parts, which could
suggest we are still looking for his assassins and
that it requires an extremely lengthy TV treat-
ment. But we already know the onsite assassins
and their offsite enablers, co-conspirators and
crime partners. What we don’t know well
enough or in the expansive way we should, is
the deep meaning of Malcolm, his teachings and
practice that were determined to be too dang-
erous to our enemy and too valuable to us for him
to be allowed to live in dignity, defiance and
righteous and relentless resistance.

Surely, we must seek and speak our own
cultural truth, the truth of our own history,
heroes and heroines, the truth of our lives and
longings, or strivings and struggles for good and
flourishing in the world. And we must do this in
disciplined, dedicated, depthful and expansive
ways, constantly seeking to apply lessons
learned and insights gained.

Malcolm cannot be summed up and set
aside as “as civil rights icon” as the film series
and current history books designate him.
Malcolm was a severe critique of the struggle
for civil rights and constantly called for a
struggle for human rights. Thus, if he is an
“icon” at all, a popular term for athletes, artists
and almost everyone else popular, it would be
for being a human rights activist not a civil right one. We speak here of Malcolm not in icon shorthand, but of Malcolm as a leader and liberator, freedom fighter, seba (moral teacher), master teacher, minister, organizer, counsellor, journalist, author, institution builder, martyr, mujahid (righteous soldier), pan-Africanist, prison rights and human rights advocate, moulder of men and women, and prophet who saw and predicted the unfolding of a new future for Africans and humankind and sacrificed his life to show the way forward toward it. Thus again, as always, our oppressor cannot be our teacher and even our allies cannot be our tutors. We must, Malcolm taught, “think for ourselves, see for ourselves, hear for ourselves” and then come to conclusions for ourselves directed toward human good and the well-being of the world.

Thus, we call this great tragedy and loss for Africans and humanity the 55th anniversary of Min. Malcolm’s self-sacrifice and martyrdom rather than simply his assassination. For as I’ve often noted, the assassination is what his enemies, the enemies of his people and the enemies of human freedom did. But his self-sacrifice and willingness to be martyred in the interest of African and human freedom, justice and other human needs and rights is what he, himself, demonstrated and did and left as a lesson and legacy for us.

Again, the central question before our people, then, is not “Who Killed Malcolm?”, but “Who is Malcolm?”, who is this man who loomed so large in our liberation struggle of his people that the oppressor felt the need to foster and facilitate his targeted political murder? What is the meaning of Malcolm’s legacy of thought and practice that so threatened and sent into a murderous rage the grey and greedy monsters of the world, who created the conditions, pointed the way, urged and enabled the assassination and let escape the assassins who ultimately pulled the trigger?

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