Transcript of Malcolm X Interview with Dr. Kenneth Clark

Malcolm X (8:04): Part 1

Malcolm X: [Responding to the question of what he would say to critics who deride his movement as black supremacist, anti-Semitic, and hatred-teaching.] No, this is done by those who are guilty of all those things that you just -- the counterpart of all those things you just mentioned. The white people who are guilty of white supremacy try and hide their own guilt by accusing the Honorable Elijah Muhammad of teaching black supremacy when he tries to uplift the mentality, the social, mental, economic condition of black people in this country.

And Jews, who have been guilty of exploiting the black people in this country, economically, civically, and otherwise, hide behind -- hide their guilt by accusing the Honorable Elijah Muhammad of teaching -- of being anti-Semitic, simply because he teaches our people to go into business for ourselves, and try and take over the economic leadership in our own community.

And this other thing -- white supremacy, anti-Semitism, and what was the other one?

Dr. Kenneth Clark: And hatred...

Malcolm X: And hatred... and since the white people collectively have practiced the worst form of hatred against Negroes in this country -- and they know that they are guilty of it -- now, when the Honorable Elijah Muhammad begins to -- comes along and begins to list the historic deed, the historic attitude, the historic behavior of the white man in this country toward the black people in this country, again, the white people are so guilty, and they can't stop doing these things, to make Mr. Muhammad appear wrong, so they hide their wrong by saying that he is teaching hatred.

History is not hatred. Actually we are Muslims because we believe in the religion of Islam. We believe in one God. We believe in Muhammad as the apostle of God. We practice the principles of the religion of Islam, which mean prayer, charity, fasting, brotherhood. And the Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that since the Western society is deteriorating -- it has become overrun with immorality -- that God is going to judge it, and destroy it, and the only way black people who are in this society can be saved is to not integrate into this corrupt society but separate ourselves from it, reform ourselves, lift up our moral standards, and try and be godly, instead of trying... try and integrate with God, instead of trying to integrate with the white man, or try and imitate God, instead of trying to imitate the white man.

Clark: It has been suggested also that this movement preaches a gospel of violence, that --

Malcolm X: No, the black people in this country have been the victims of violence at the hands of the white man for 400 years. And following the ignorant Negro preachers, we have thought that it was godlike to turn the other cheek to the brute that was brutalizing us. And today, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad is showing black people in this country that just as the white man and every other person on this earth has god-given rights, natural rights, civil rights, any kind of rights that you can think of, when it comes to defending himself, black people should have -- we should have the right to defend ourselves also. And, because the Honorable Elijah Muhammad makes black people brave enough, men enough, to defend ourselves no matter what the odds are, the white man runs around here with the philo-- with the doctrine that we are -- Mr. Muhammad is advocating violence when he's actually telling Negroes to defend themselves against violent people.

Clark: I see. Well, Reverend Martin Luther King preaches a doctrine of non-violent insistence upon the rights of the American Negro. What is your attitude toward this philosophy?

Malcolm X: The white man pays Reverend Martin Luther King, subsidizes Reverend Martin Luther King, so that Reverend Martin Luther King can continue to teach the Negroes to be defenseless. That's what you mean by non-violent: be defenseless. Be
defenseless in the face of one of the most cruel beasts that has ever taken a people into captivity. That's this American white man. And they have proved it throughout the country by the police dogs and the police clubs.

A hundred years ago they used to put on a white sheet and use a bloodhound against Negroes. Today they've taken off the white sheet and put on police uniforms, they've traded in the bloodhounds for police dogs, and they're still doing the same thing. And just as Uncle Tom, back during slavery, used to keep the Negroes from resisting the bloodhound, or resisting the Ku Klux Klan, by teaching them to love their enemy, or pray for those who use them spitefully, today Martin Luther King is just a 20th century or modern Uncle Tom, or a religious Uncle Tom, who is doing the same thing today, to keep Negroes defenseless in the face of an attack, that Uncle Tom did on the plantation to keep those Negroes defenseless in the face of the attacks of the Klan in that day.

Clark: But the goal of Dr. King is full equality --

Malcolm X: No.

Clark: ... and full rights of citizenship for Negroes.

Malcolm X: The goal of Dr. Martin Luther King is to give Negroes a chance to sit in a segregated restaurant beside the same white man who had brutalized them for 400 years. The goal of Dr. Martin Luther King is to get Negroes to forgive the people who have brutalized them for 400 years by lulling them to sleep, and making them forgetting what those whites have done to them. But the masses of black people in America today don't go for what Martin Luther King is putting down. As you said in one of your articles, it's psychologically insecure, or something of that sort -- I forget how you put it. But you didn't endorse what Martin Luther King was doing yourself.

Clark: I do not reject his goals, of full integration and full equality rights for American citizens. Do you reject these goals?

Malcolm X: If you don't think that he's walking on the right road, I'm quite sure that you don't agree that he'll get to the right place. And if you would classify his method as "psychologically unrealistic" -- I think that if a man's method is psychologically unrealistic, which means that the road or the means or the method that he's using, I think that, as a psychologist, you'd be very doubtful that he would reach the right goals.

Clark: There is one correction, Mr. Malcolm, that I'd like to make here. In that same piece that you're quoting from, I said that he -- his methods are effective. His philosophy, of love, of the oppressor, I thought was psychologically burdensome. But I would be more interested in your goals. What are the goals of the movement which you represent so effectively?

Malcolm X: Just as you said in the same article, see, we're trying to -- Mr. Muhammad is trying to get us on God's side, so God will be on our side, and help us to fight our battles against the very vicious, deceitful, hypocritical enemy. And this is why Mr. Muhammad puts so much stress upon moral reformation. That when Negroes stop getting drunk, when Negroes stop fornicating and committing adultery, when Negroes stop being addicted to drugs, and these things that destroy the moral fiber and the morale of the Negro, then our people will be able to get together and unite in harmony and unity, and get our own problems solved.

Clark: Toward what end would you want our people united? What would you be --

Malcolm X: Toward being on God's side. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that God, now, is about to establish a kingdom on this earth, based upon brotherhood and peace. And the white man is against brotherhood, and the white man is against peace. His history on this earth has proved that. Nowhere in history has he been brotherly toward anyone. The only time that he's brotherly toward you is when he can use you, when he can exploit you, when he can oppress you, when you will submit to him. And since his own history makes him unqualified to be an inhabitant or a citizen in a kingdom of brotherhood, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that God is about to eliminate that particular race from this earth.
So, since they are due for elimination, we don't want to be with them. We're not trying to integrate with that which we know has come to the end of its rope. We're trying to separate from it and get with something that's more lasting, and we think that God is more lasting than the white man.

Clark: So in effect, Minister Malcolm, your movement does not share the integration goals of the NAACP, CORE [Congress of Racial Equality], Martin Luther King's movement, and the student non-violent movement?

Malcolm X: You don't integrate with a sinking ship. You don't do anything to further your stay on board a ship that you see is on its way down to the bottom of the ocean. Moses tried to separate his people from Pharaoh, and when he tried, the magicians tried to fool the people into staying with Pharaoh. And we look upon these other organizations that are trying to get Negroes to integrate with this doomed white man as nothing but modern-day magicians, and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad as the modern-day Moses who's trying to separate us from the modern-day Pharaoh.

Malcolm X (5:08): Part 2

Dr. Kenneth Clark: Well, do you feel that the Negroes who are attempting to influence the policies and actions of our federal government, the attorney general, the president of the United States, are going in the wrong dir--

Malcolm X: When James Baldwin recently had a conference with Robert Kennedy, he took Lena Horne, who's married to a white man, Lorraine Hansberry, who's married to a white man, [Harry] Belafonte, who's married to a white woman, Edwin Berry of the Urban League, who's married to a white woman, now...

And whenever you have a group of black people sitting down with the white man, supposed to represent the black masses, you can never get anybody who's involved in any intermarriage, in any kind of situation, who will be qualified to represent themselves as spokesmen for the black masses in this country. They were representing their own personal desires. They want to mix and mingle so that they can take their wife, they can go any of these places with their wife, they're involved in a mixed marriage.

But you can't find masses, sir, of black people who will accept any black man who's married to a white man [sic] as a spokesman for black people, or a black woman, who's married to a white man, as a spokesman or a representative of what black people feel and think.

Clark: What do you feel Negroes should do in respect to obtaining even more effective protection from our federal government?

Malcolm X: You never will get protection from the federal government. That's like, King is asking Kennedy to go to Alabama to stand in the doorway, put his body in the doorway. That's like asking the fox to protect you from the wolf.

And when black -- now, the masses of black people can see this. And it is only the Negro leadership, the bourgeois, hand-picked handful of Negroes who think that they're going to get some kind of respect, recognition, or protection from the government.

The government is responsible for what is happening to black people in this country. The president has power; you notice he didn't send any troops into Birmingham to protect the Negroes when the dogs were biting the Negroes. The only time he sent troops into Birmingham was when the Negroes erupted, and then the president sent troops in there, not to protect the Negroes, but to protect them white people down there from those erupting Negroes.