



University of  
Massachusetts  
Amherst

## Our Family From the Inside: Growing Up with Malcolm X

Item Type	Article
Authors	Little, Wilfred
Download date	2026-03-13 13:55:10
Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/7433">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/7433</a>

*Wilfred Little*

## OUR FAMILY FROM THE INSIDE: GROWING UP WITH MALCOLM X

1. Lecture delivered at the University of  
Massachusetts at Amherst, April 18, 1995

**W**ILLIAM STRICKLAND: Those familiar with Malcolm know that Malcolm was a stickler for time, so, were he with us tonight, he would be castigating both me and Wilfred for being 15 minutes late. I want to thank all the sponsors who made this possible. . . . This is a special time for us because you know that next month, the 19th of May, would have been Malcolm's 70th birthday. This year also marks the 30th anniversary of his assassination, and this month is the 30th anniversary of his famous, very much misunderstood trip to Mecca. So we are very pleased to have his eldest brother (whose looks belie his age), Wilfred Little, with us this evening. Those of you who have had the opportunity to view the documentary, "Malcolm X: Make It Plain," or the book by the same title,\* have seen Brother Wilfred, his sister Yvonne, and their late brother Philbert. Those of you who have had the even more wonderful good fortune to purchase the book, *Make It Plain*, will find in it several pictures of Malcolm's family, including an exceptional picture of Wilfred and Malcolm in Washington, DC, in 1961.

The television people have just asked what is the significance of this event today. I got involved with "Make It Plain" somewhat reluctantly because I was unhappy with most of the characterizations of Malcolm which seemed to

---

*Wilfred Little's appearances on April 18 and 19, 1995 at Hampshire and Amherst Colleges and the University of Massachusetts received support from offices and departments throughout the Five College community: at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Chancellor David Scott, Dean Lee Edwards of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts, the Graduate Student Senate, the Office of Campus Activities, the STPEC [Social Thought and Political Economy] Program, and the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities; at Hampshire College, the Lebraun Wiggins Praun Cultural Center and the Public Service and Social Change Program; at Amherst College, the Departments of Black Studies and English; and, finally, Coordinator Lorna Peterson of Five Colleges, Inc.*

\* *Malcolm X: Make It Plain*, text by William Strickland; with the Malcolm X: Make It Plain Production Team and Cheryll Y. Greene (New York: Viking, 1994).

me to be mostly concerned with explaining away Malcolm as opposed to explaining Malcolm. So I decided to contribute my perspective to the debate. What people don't understand was that Malcolm was part of a whole, that he was part of a particular experience, part of a tradition, part of a family that resisted the corner into which America tried to push them. Malcolm's father, Earl Little, followed the practices and philosophy of Marcus Garvey as did his mother, Louise Little, and Wilfred, the oldest son, who became at the tender age of eleven the man of the household after Earl Little died under very suspicious circumstances in 1931. It was Wilfred, along with his eldest sister Hilda, who had to assist his mother to assume responsibility for the Little family. The children resisted those people who schemed to take their land and to institutionalize their mother. One of the things that came up when I was researching the book and reading Brother Wilfred's transcript, one of the things that he talked about that was so moving to me, was their trying to fight against the institutionalized cabal in Lansing that was trying to take their land and institutionalize their mother. He took his mother to a psychologist who said there was nothing wrong with her that rest and better nutrition would not cure. But when the welfare doctor came to the house and Wilfred told him what the psychologist had said, he asked for the psychologist's name, and the psychologist then recanted his position. So as most of you know, the mother was institutionalized, the family was broken up, and the land was later obtained by the very judge who committed her. That experience causes one, I should think, to reflect carefully about the nature of the American system and the nature of American racial inequality.

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. Then from Detroit he called Betty Saunders—soon to become Betty Shabazz—and made this very unusual proposal over a pay phone. So, we are pleased to have Brother Wilfred Little with us tonight to reminisce about the man who more than any other pressured, chided, and challenged America to face up to the reality of race in the land and to press us to the realization that if we are ever to solve this problem that has haunted this nation from its beginning and that haunts us still, we must face the truth about American race relations. Thank you very much.

**Wilfred Little:** Thank you, Professor [Strickland], for this wonderful introduction. I see he's done his homework too. I'm happy to be here with all of you tonight. For some reason I have an affinity to students. It seems like the older I get, the more I appreciate being around students—especially at the college and high school level. I'm 75 now, and I don't know how much longer I got, but I do know that I got more years behind me than I have in front of me. And in spite of many of the negative experiences I, along with my family, may have had throughout my life I still can say that I have enjoyed life. I've learned a lot from it. It has been an experience that has taught me much, and I wonder what's ahead. But tonight I'm here more or less to talk to you and give you a picture of our family from the inside. I say *our* family because Malcolm has attracted so much attention that people sometimes wonder, "What is it that made him like he was? Where did he come from? How did he get to be like this?" And in order to understand that, you need to know something about his roots and some of his experiences. Some of it has been told, and some of it has not.

First, I'll say this: Malcolm was a blend of the genes from our father and mother. That's what all of us here are. All of us who are here tonight, we are a blend of the genes from our fathers and mothers. Do you realize that? That's what we came from, and there are certain traits that come along with that blend of genes from those two families that gives us the traits and other things that we build upon in this life. And then our experiences and our environment, and other experiences that we have add on to this, and help to shape us into what we have become today. Malcolm came from a father and mother who were activists in their time. My father was from the state of Georgia. My mother was from Grenada in the West Indies, so these were two completely different experiences that they came from. But they married and brought this together, and in so doing, produced some children. I was the first, there were others, but the one who made history was Malcolm. Malcolm made an impact upon history. And when I watch Malcolm at work, I see much of my father coming through, and I see much of my mother coming through at various times.

We had experiences in growing up that caused us to look at things in a little different way, and my father, being from the South, and being born in the time which he was, didn't get as much education as my mother who was born in the West Indies. In those days, very few of the boys got past the 6th grade unless there was a special effort put forth, and some of them ended up going further, and some ended up in college because of the sacrifices that their fathers and mothers would make to see to it that they got an education. My father with an elementary education, continued to educate himself and you wouldn't know that he hadn't gone further in school, because he learned from those who were around him who did have an education, and he became a very good speaker, and eventually became involved with Marcus Garvey, in that

movement, the UNIA [Universal Negro Improvement Association] as we called it, and became one of the foremost organizers that Garvey had. Wherever he would go, he would set up branches of the UNIA. And that's what it was: it was to improve the lot of the so-called Negro. And do you know that for that, they were branded as troublemakers? They weren't causing any trouble, weren't causing any problems. All they wanted to do was improve the lot of the Negro and get them united and figure out ways that they could work together to improve their lot. And for this they were branded as troublemakers. Marcus Garvey was eventually deported from this country as a troublemaker. Wherever my father went, and others were doing the same thing he was doing, they were branded as troublemakers. . . .

But I'm here tonight to talk to you mostly about Malcolm, and the family. My father and mother were people who were busy working under the philosophy of Marcus Garvey and that's the kind of household that we grew up in. We believed that black people could improve their lot. My mother used to tell us about how the banana boats would come into the West Indies and how the men would load those boats and get paid eleven cents a stalk for bananas. Do you know what a stalk of bananas is? They would get wealthy, going into these islands and going into Africa and other places where the resources were and bring them here, and get wealthy doing this. Marcus Garvey wanted our people to learn how to unite and get some control of some part of the economy, and get boats and have their own ships out there picking up resources from the islands and Africa and other places, and bringing them into the market, and establish an economy of their own. Is anything wrong with that? It must be, for black people, because as soon as you started talking about that, there was trouble, you were a troublemaker. And for that he was deported. For that same thing, our family caught hell. We were referred to, where we lived, as "those old uppity niggers" that live out south of town. Some of them would refer to us as "those smart niggers." In those days, you weren't supposed to be smart, and if you were, you were considered a troublemaker. All they wanted was weak minds and strong backs when it came to the black person. We come from that kind of environment.

My father, from the state of Georgia, had had many experiences there in Georgia—that's the state that our family did slavery in. I remember once I went back down there, and I used to listen at night to the stories that the women would tell about slavery, and what had been told to them by those who preceded them. When I was a little boy, the real old people around me were ex-slaves, and the other old people were the first generation out of slavery. So I heard many a story about slavery, and about things they had to work against in order to survive. Coming out of that kind of environment, he wanted to do something to better that kind of condition. My mother, coming from the West Indies,

there they didn't hinder them from getting an education, and as a result, they got a very good education, and they had a different way of seeing things. There's something about the way we're dealt with here in America that makes the blacks become domestic thinkers. But whenever you find the blacks from anywhere outside of America, they are international thinkers, they are able to see things from a different perspective. They can see the whole picture, and there's a difference. The difference is, the one here had his mind enslaved to a degree that he only thinks within the parameters that they have given him to think in here in America. This is one of the differences.

My mother didn't want us to fall victim to that, so she would teach us at home when we came home from school. We would give her what we had learned that day, and she would then re-teach it to us and give it to us in a way where it would do away with some of those negative things that they had incorporated in there. Because in those days, black children and white children could go to school, listen to the same teacher, read the same books, and when they would come out, that white child would have a superiority complex, and the black one would have an inferiority complex. It was skillfully done in the educational system, so she had to undo that with us, and she never allowed us to fall victim to that, and I never remember a time when we ever felt that because we were black, we were something inferior to anybody else. You were just not allowed to think like that. It made a difference, and we were considered oddballs, but she was good at what she did, and she saw to it that we learned to think and see things for ourselves the way they were. She would bring in papers from the West Indies and from other parts of the world, especially where Marcus Garvey had movements throughout Africa. She would have these papers, and we would read them, and we knew what was going on in the other countries where they were being exploited. We knew what was going on. This made us odd in that day. Teachers would look at us, because we had a different way of seeing things than the way they were teaching it to us in school. They'd make you think they did you a favor by bringing us here and making us slaves. And you had some of our folks that would believe that. They brought us here and civilized us. I'm pointing these things out, not to cause any antagonism, because we don't need that, we need to learn how to work together and improve things, and make this world a better place for all of us. But I'm pointing it out because we need to see where we came from and what brought into existence some of this stuff that exists today. . . .

I'll get on another thing that helped us. My mother taught us, she had grown up in the West Indies and she had been around some of the Carib Indians, what they call the Caribs there. Wherever you find most of the Indians in this country, they don't want anybody bringing them any religion, but you couldn't find anyone who believes in God more than they do. Do you know

that? They believe in God, and they practice it better than most religious people do. They establish a relationship with God that means something, and they live according to that, make it a part of their life. She taught us “Don’t you ever join any religion. If you do, it makes that religion right and the rest of them wrong.” She says, “That’s not true. All religions are a path to God. One is no better than the other one. When you boil it right down, religion doesn’t come from God, it comes from man. Man is the one who makes religion. Some of the worst crimes that have ever been committed against humanity have been under the banner of a religion, so don’t get involved in that. But I want you to study all of them and take what you see is good out of them. Whatever you see is good for you, take it out of them. Take that and use it. And the rest of it, just leave it there on the shelf.” And that’s the way we did. She took us everywhere. Took us to the Catholic Church, to the Baptists, to the Methodists, Episcopalians, took us to Jehovah’s Witnesses, to the Seventh Day Adventists, Holy Rollers, the Buddhists, the Hindus, she wanted us to know about all of them. When we’d get back, we’d discuss it, and she’d show you, “You take what you see will fit you, and the rest of it, just leave it there, but establish your own relationship with God, not a religious relationship, but a spiritual relationship with God and be true to that.” And she said, “You’ll find out that you’ll do better than you’ll ever do getting all hung up in these religions, and you won’t be confused. Another thing, let me explain to you something about tithing. Don’t you fall for that. These preachers will have you bringing ten percent of your money to them, and when they get it, you don’t know what they do with it.” She says, “Don’t you fall for that.” She says, “if you want to tithe, you go to the bank and start an account and put ten percent of everything you earn in that account and consider that God’s money, and you be the one that’s in charge of it. When you see somebody that needs help and you want to help them, you go take it from there and help them. Loan it to them or give it to them, whatever you decide to do. Use it, and you be the one that’s in charge of it. Then whenever you find yourself in an emergency situation, you don’t have to run to somebody and beg them for what you need. You go to that account and get that money to help you out of whatever the situation is, and just keep on putting ten percent in every time you get paid.” She said, “If you do that, you’ll be surprised how it’ll serve you.” And I’m here to tell you it will serve you well. You’ll be surprised what you can accumulate with compound interest over a period of time. You don’t have to beg anybody for anything.

As far as I know, I’m the only one in my family that did it, because the rest of them, when they get into trouble, they come running to me, because they know I do it. So they know if they need some help I can help them. But they haven’t done it. But it’s a discipline that you can practice. There’s a lot of things she taught that made sense to us, and I’m glad for what she taught us, and what

my father taught, to help us to have some kind of a perspective other than the slavery-times perspective that we were given here in America. We didn't have to fall victim to this domestic way of thinking. It makes you a free thinker, it makes you able to see things from a different perspective. You can see a much broader picture when you don't get all hung up in some of these illusions that have been foisted off on us. . . .

Now, in our home, Marcus Garvey and Booker T. Washington were our idols. They were the ones we looked up to in our home. Marcus Garvey because of his philosophy to improve the lot of black people, and encourage them to unite and do for themselves, and Booker T. Washington's philosophy, my father liked his educational philosophy. This is something we looked up to, and we tried to pattern after that, and follow that path. In that day, our people were assigned to the menial jobs and as we grew up, we could look forward to being janitors, ditch diggers, caddies on the golf course, waiters on the train, things like that. That's what we looked forward to, because that was the way we were set up. In order to break that, even the ones who got an education, the best thing they could get was in the Post Office. You had some of ours working in the post office who had their degrees, just to work in the Post Office, because they couldn't get into the field that they had trained for. But time has changed things. As time has gone by, there's been a gradual evolvement that has changed things.

And Malcolm, growing up seeing what was there, he eventually decided that he just wasn't going to submit to that. He just wasn't going to be a ditch digger. He wasn't going to be a caddie on the golf course. He thought he wanted something different, whatever way or route it took. He eventually decided, he made a conscious decision, that he was going to get out into the rackets and hustle like these guys who had the fine clothes and the big cars and the money, and he found out that they couldn't do that being a janitor. He found out how they did it, and thought that he would copy some of that. And that's how he ended up getting into the hustling world. I'm trying to cut it short, there's more to it than that, but he eventually ended up among the hustlers and became a good one. Whatever he put himself into he was good at it. If he was a crook, he was a good crook, one of the best. He didn't believe in halfway doing anything. But luckily, he got caught. I say luckily—it was good fortune that he got caught because that broke that, and he ended up in prison. I think if he had stayed on the street, he would have ended up dead, because the way he was going at it, it could bring nothing but trouble.

Anyway, he ended up in prison, and in prison I encouraged him to follow the pattern that my mother had given us, and educate himself in prison. I told 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." And he did this, and I reminded him, I said, "You know how Ma would do." When we would come home from school, she had a dictionary on the dining room table, and she had picked out things in the newspaper for us to read. And we would have to stand there and read it to her. She'd be ironing, or cooking, or whatever, but she's hearing you. And whenever you made a mistake, she'd stop you and make you go to that dictionary, look it up, "syllablize" it, get the meaning of it, and that way you began to improve your vocabulary. And we ended up, at that age, reading at a grade level beyond our age, and at school they would wonder about us sometime, and some of them would ask, "Is your mother a school teacher?," because she was keeping us ahead of the class.

I reminded Malcolm about this, so he started doing that in prison. He got the dictionary, and he filled his mouth with that dictionary. He would go into the antonyms and synonyms, and that dictionary took on a whole new meaning to him. Words took on a meaning to him, and he realized that that's how you communicate. He wanted to be able to communicate. So he studied that dictionary, and he read all the good books and did everything he could to improve his mind. He got into classes in semantics and other classes that would give him a better knowledge of the language and how to use it. He got on the debating team so that he could get experience in thinking on his feet, and expressing himself. He became one of the most formidable debaters in the prison. When he came out of prison, he was ready. The first time he was about to come up for parole, I made a trip out and I talked with him. And I explained to him, I said, "You've been causing too much trouble in here," because he was always challenging the guards and challenging everybody who was in authority. Always challenging, and so I told him, "Look, there's a book you need to read that will do you more good than the Bible in here." He looked at me like I was crazy. I said, "I'll tell you the name of it. It's a book written by a man named Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*." He wouldn't read it! At the time I told them this, his friend [Shorty Jarvis] who had been arrested with him was sitting there beside him. Because I went to see Malcolm, I took my sister Hilda with me, and she asked for his friend, so we had the two of them there together. Now his friend, Jarvis, went and got the book and read it. He started putting some of those techniques into practice. When parole time came up, he was paroled, but Malcolm got turned down, and had to stay another year. So when he realized what had happened, he went and got that book, and he started to study it and put it into practice. You wouldn't believe the change that book made in him. In fact, they couldn't believe it in prison. They didn't know what to do with him. Here's this guy they had called Satan—they had nicknamed him Satan—always giving them a hard time and challenging

everything. All of a sudden, now he's a diplomat! They just didn't know what to do.

Anyway, by the time parole time came up a year later, he got paroled. In the meantime, I'd made arrangements in order to make parole easier. If you could prove that you had a stable home to live in and a job, you could get parole much easier. So I'd gone to the people that I worked with, and they agreed to give him a job, and also he could live with me and my family. So he got paroled, and he was paroled to me, and that was one experience. When he came out, he was a whole different person. He had changed his way of looking at things, but I didn't want him to get back on the street too much, because I was afraid he might get enticed back there. Every week—the pay we got was good, for what was being paid at that time, for the kind of work that we were doing—but every week when payday would come, I would have to go through a thing with Malcolm. He would look at that money, and he said, “I worked all week for this. Do you mean to tell me that I worked every day, eight hours a day, all week, for this?” He said, “Listen, I could have breakfast with you this morning, and go out and come back and meet you for lunch at noon and have more money than this.” Because he knew how to hustle. I never saw anyone so alert. He was an exceptionally alert person. He could go out on the street and just observe a while, and he could tell you just what was going on, who was who. He could tell you who the prostitutes were, he could tell you who the police were. He could just point it out, because there were just little points that he would observe that would tell him. He was just alert. Wherever he was, he was aware of what was going on with everything that was within his sight or hearing. He saw it, heard it, and was observing and knew what was going on. I just never saw anybody so alert and so aware.

He had an exceptional memory. This is the way he was. There were certain facets about him that helped shape him into what he became, certain traits that he possessed. Along with his experiences, it helped to shape him into the man he became. He was a person who was never satisfied. He was continuously evolving. Every day he was continuously learning something. He was always searching and reading. He just read everything, keeping up with what was going on and was always enhancing his mind, and gaining more knowledge about things. This was why he was continuously changing from one person to another. Throughout his life he lived many lifetimes in one lifetime because he was continuously changing from one stage to another. Once he learned something that made him see further, he'd let you know. He'd say, “Look, yesterday I thought such and such, but today I found out that it's such and such a thing.” And he would change. By being willing to change and continuously on the alert for improvement, he was able to rise in the ranks and become a person who had an impact on history here in America. We have had

very few people who could present the case of black people here in America as well as he could. He eventually became the lawyer that he wanted to be.

Back in those days when you were in high school and you'd express what you wanted to be, the white teachers would discourage you if it were something in the professions. I remember one time in school, one of them told me, when I expressed what I wanted to do, said, "No, why, you've got a good voice. You should be a singer or an entertainer." This is the way they would steer you away from the professions and things. When Malcolm said he wanted to be a lawyer, and I believe the teacher meant right, the white teacher said, "Look, why don't you think in terms of reality and be something that you can be. You can't be a lawyer." I believe that he may have felt that he was telling Malcolm right because he knew what the circumstances were out there, and he knew there were no intentions for that to happen, but that discouraged him. But Malcolm was never satisfied with that, and always felt that he could be a lawyer. Really, when it all boils down, he did become one, he didn't have the degree, but you couldn't beat him presenting our case before the world, and you couldn't beat him in indicting America for its wrongdoing to our people. This is how he made an impact on history. He could present our case wherever he went. I'm hitting around here, because I don't want to take up too much time, and I want you to have an opportunity to ask questions later. By asking questions, I'll be talking about something that you're really interested in. Some of these things I'm talking about, you may not be that particularly interested in, and I do want to satisfy whatever you're inquisitive about.

When we were children, and had learned to read and all, there were a lot of our people around us who couldn't read and write—especially the older generation—because they hadn't been allowed to go to school. Many times they would have letters and things that they would get and they wouldn't know how to interpret it. So my mother would send me or one of us who could read to go and read the person's mail for them. Some of them that I'd go to and I'd read their mail for them and try to interpret it to them, they'd say to me, "I can read reading, but I can't read writing." And I used to scratch my head, and try to figure out, "What are they saying? They can read reading but they can't read writing." I couldn't understand what that was about until later I figured it out. What they meant was what little reading they could do, they had learned to do it on printed material, and they could read that which was printed, but anytime somebody wrote something in long hand, they just couldn't read it, they couldn't figure it out. That's what they were talking about when they said they could read reading and couldn't read writing. So we had a lot of experiences growing up in seeing what was happening. . . .

We lived for a while in Omaha, and we had problems there because my father was trying to organize black people to get together and do things to

improve their conditions. For that, he was considered a problem. I remember one evening when my father was out of town, in Milwaukee, and a group of whites came up on horses and they wanted my father. I remember one of them rode up to the house and took the butt of his rifle and knocked all the glass out of the front. But my mother, she was pregnant with Malcolm at that time, and she stood there and just had no fear and just told them. . . . I never saw anybody who could tell you off so intelligently and never use a word of profanity, never cussed. When she got through, you felt like you'd been beaten up. Finally they got together and they rode on off. When my father came back, she told him what had happened, and he said that as soon as the baby was born, and was big enough to travel, we would leave there and go to Milwaukee, because while he was in Milwaukee, he found things were better for him there because he was in the building trades, he was a carpenter by trade. He built houses there in Omaha, he built the house that we lived in in Omaha, and he built the house we lived in in Lansing. In Milwaukee, there was more work, so he figured he would go to Milwaukee and so we eventually moved to Milwaukee, and lived there for a while. While in Milwaukee, he did the same thing he always did: he started with the branch that was there and worked with it and made it grow. I watched how Malcolm worked in spreading and enlarging the Nation of Islam as they called it at that time. First it was called Mohammed's Temples, and they each had a number, and it was later named the Nation of Islam. And he spread Mohammed's Temples all over the country.\* It was hardly heard of before him, but once he got involved, he used some of the same techniques that my father used with the UNIA. I used to observe that.

But anyway, as time went by, we found ourselves moving to Milwaukee and then eventually ended up in Lansing, Michigan. In Lansing, we went through the same thing. We were branded as troublemakers, they referred to us in derogatory terms. Even black people would talk about us because they felt that my father was rocking the boat. They'd say, "He's always talking that old black talk," and then in that time, there was a lot of confusion because some of them had named Marcus Garvey's movement the "Back to Africa" movement, which it was not. Marcus Garvey never had any intentions of all our people getting together and going back to Africa. What he was after was for them to realize what was in Africa, and how Africa was being used to make everybody else rich. And that they, too, could have some of those riches if they could learn how to set up their own economy, and learn how to import or whatever they

---

\* W. D. Fard founded the Nation of Islam in 1930. After he departed the midwest in 1934, one of the resulting factions run by Elijah Muhammad sometimes called itself the Allah Temple of Islam, and at other times the Holy Temple of Islam. Around 1957 the organization reclaimed the original name given by W. D. Fard. [Ed.]

had to do to get ships and bring the stuff in themselves. He was after getting them to improve their lot, and become a part of the international economy. But this was trouble, and it got him deported.

In Lansing we were looked upon as a problem. Eventually, my father ended up dead under some suspicious circumstances. I never like to put the blame—there were no witnesses. So you can't say who actually did it or how it was done. All we knew was he was found on the streetcar tracks and was bleeding to death. I remember when the police came to our house and told my mother he had been injured and they wanted her to come to the hospital. But by the time they had got her there, he was dead. He bled to death because the streetcar had run over him in a way . . . because when she went to see the undertaker, I slipped into the back where his body was, and I saw his body on this stone table, and his left leg was cut completely off. The streetcar had run across him just below his abdomen, and cut off his left leg and crushed all this side. It was all crushed. His head, I remember seeing all these bruises on his head and some gashes on the right side of the back of his head, things like that, and I looked that over good. Pretty soon the undertaker realized I wasn't out there, and he came back in and made me come out of there. But I had already seen it. We don't know exactly how it happened, and all kinds of stories went out about how it happened. But we never knew exactly what happened. He was dead.

When my father died, he left my mother in an unfinished house full of children. The house was unfinished. He always built his houses according to his money. Every payday he'd buy whatever he needed and do some more to the house, and get it to where we could move into it. He had it up, had it covered, had the roof on, had the windows in, and had it partitioned off, so we moved in on the sub-floor. You know what a sub-floor is? That's the first floor they put on, the wide boards, then later they put the fine flooring in. We moved in on the sub-floor, and were living on that sub-floor, and each week when he would get paid, he would buy some more flooring. I remember when he brought the flooring in, he did the living room and the dining room. The next week when he got paid, he took that money and got some more flooring and did the bedrooms on one side of the house, and the next week he did them on the other side and did the kitchen. Each week he would do more and he was gradually getting that house together. That way, he could do it without getting in debt, and it would be his. He believed in being independent.

On our land we raised everything we needed, as far as food was concerned. We had our own chickens, so we had our own eggs. We had a cow, so we had our own milk. So we didn't have to kiss butt for anybody. Back in those days if you didn't kowtow to them, and go along with them, they would blackball you and get you fired off of your job, so that you couldn't make it. But by being on his own land, he didn't have to worry, because he could eat, no

matter what happened. My mother would can enough of what we raised to carry us through the winter months. This is how we stayed independent. But when my father died, that was very devastating. She was able to hold things together for another seven years with all kinds of problems. They made every kind of problem they could for her, because they wanted to get that land. The land happened to end up as time went by, becoming more and more valuable, and they wanted it. So they had to get her off of it, and get her children scattered so they could take it, and that's what they did. Now, that's not unique to us. This has happened to black people all over America. All throughout the South this has happened. They figured out ways to take their land away from them, and do it where it appears to be legal. This has gone on and on, and we just happened to be one of the victims also. But the way this turned out, after they got my mother into the institution and out of the way, and got the children scattered around in foster homes, then they began to move in on what they wanted. That's the way the story went.

But, in spite of all of this, most of us didn't do too bad. My youngest brother [Robert Little] went to college at Michigan State, got his degree, got involved in social services, and became one of the best administrators. And today, he's wanted all over the country. When Dinkins was the mayor in New York, he worked with him to help correct some of the problems they were having in that department. But after the change and Dinkins was voted out, he didn't want to be part of the next group, because he could see that their intentions were altogether different. So at the present time, he's consulting. He's taking contracts on his own, throughout the country, at various colleges and various departments of social services around the country. He's aiding them and consulting them and getting things started. He's working with them at the present time. Eventually, he said he might take a job, but for now he's satisfied with the way things are going, and he's doing all right, so he says he'll just work with it as it is for the time being. . . . Eventually I left the Temple of Islam, because I had to do something for me before I got too old. You fool around working in these causes, first thing you know you get to be old and poor, because you don't have anything. So I realized I had better do something pretty soon. I was 50 years old when I went to work for Michigan Bell. They had no idea I was 50, because I looked like I was 35, and they had no idea. Most of the people I worked with were in their 30s, and they just assumed I was in my 30s too, and I looked like it. So many times the women would come to me and complain, "That old so-and-so over there, he's always trying to hit on me," and they're talking about somebody that's 40 or 45 years old. I'd look at them, and they had no idea that I'm older than this one that they're talking about. I used to laugh to myself about that. But sometimes it's an advantage to look younger. Sometimes it's not.

Anyway, my younger sister, Yvonne, worked for this company also, and she became a manager in the town that she was in. It was the first job she had; she was one of the first blacks hired by the telephone company in Lansing, Michigan. She worked for them until she retired. It was the first job she had, and she worked enough years so she could take an early retirement and get her pension, and she did, then went up into northern Michigan and went into business for herself. My mother eventually lived with her. Now, me, I went to work for Michigan Bell and did all right, too. I worked my way up into management, and when I retired I was a manager in the Urban Affairs department. I had been assigned to schools and community-based organizations. That's what I worked with there in the community, representing the company. I had an opportunity to do a lot of worthwhile things in the community through the help of the company, because they wanted to spend money in ways that would help in the community. I was able to help them determine where some of this money would go. It was a job that I enjoyed, and I got paid to do some of the things I like to do. I'm pointing these things out to say that it all wasn't a loss, in spite of the negative things we had to go through.

One of the things that helped me to be successful to the degree that I was were two things that we were taught by our parents. One was, always do the best you can with what you got. Never sit around and talk about "what I would do if I had this, and if I had that." Look at what you do have. Take an inventory and see what you do have to work with, and what you do have, do the best you can do with that. What that will do is carry you to a point to where you can get more, and when you get more, you take that and do the best you can with that. And that will carry you further, and eventually, you'll get to where you've opened up some doors to where you can do still better. When you get better, you take that and do the best you can with that. If you keep doing that, you'll find yourself gradually rising through life and things get better and better as you go. But you have to be able to observe and recognize the opportunities that exist and know how to take advantage of them and use them to the best advantage. We don't need welfare, and we don't need all this other stuff. We need to get our mind and our thinking straight and realize what we have to do, what effort we have to put forth and the things we should do for ourselves. You'd be surprised how we can change our lives ourselves, if we just put into practice a few things that will help us. . . .

We're living in a world of illusions. This is a great big phony world. In school, you're taught all the idealism, but when you get out here in the real world, you find out it's a phony world. Nothing but lying and stealing and murdering and cheating and all of that. That's what makes this world go. Profit. By any means necessary. And that's the way it goes. Unless you know that, you're going to have a hard time making it through life, if you think you can

live according to this idealism that you've been taught. No. We have to learn to face it like it is, and we are the ones who can change it. I'm counting on you, the younger generation here, to realize what needs to be done and be willing to do it, and make this a better place for everybody. It can't be done unless we desire to do it for everybody. To have the desire for everybody to share in the benefits of it, and work toward that which will make this a better place for all of us. And if we do that, that'll take care of most of the problems that exist. So, with this I'll kind of bring my part right now to a close, and leave time to answer some of your questions, and that way I can bring out some of the things that you might like to hear. Thank you [applause].

**Q:** Good evening, Mr. Little. First of all, I wanted to welcome you here to the University. It's an honor to have you here. My question was your opinion on your portrayal of your brother in the movie, *Malcolm X*, if you thought it was an accurate portrayal, or if the facts were presented as they should have been?

**Little:** On that movie, I hear a lot of positive things said about it, and a lot of negative things. But we have to look at it from this perspective. First, how many black people do we have that are making movies? It's been a closed field up until recent years. And those who get to where they can do it, you don't know the hell they have gone through to get to where they can make a movie, and then much less get the money to make it. So Spike had a hard time getting the money, and had a hard time getting accepted to make that movie. So just the fact that he was able to make it, he should get credit for being able to overcome those obstacles and getting to where he could make it. Now, another thing. There's no way that you can tell the full story of Malcolm's life in a movie format. It just can't be done. In order to tell it, it would have to be like Alex Haley did. Alex Haley did "*Roots*" in segments over a period of time, so it could be stretched out and he was able to tell most of that story in two-hour segments. That way, he could bring out a lot of things that wouldn't have been brought out otherwise. To boil all of Malcolm down into a movie, you just can't do it. What Spike did, he did pick out interesting parts of Malcolm's life, and he had to put it together in a way where it would be entertaining, hold people's attention, have box office draw, all of those things had to be considered. As it was, the movie was three hours and twenty minutes. That's a long time for a movie. When I heard that, I said, "Boy, how am I going to watch this thing for three hours and twenty minutes?" But do you know, he did such a good job of moving from one thing to another that you lose all track of time, and you don't even realize that you've been there for three hours and twenty minutes, and when it ends, you're still looking for some more. So I think he should be given credit for doing a good job as far as the movie was concerned. Now there's a lot of

things that would have had to be different if it had been done in a documentary format, and you could tell the story better.

**Q:** Brother Wilfred, first off, I want to say that I'm a carpenter, and I just finished the bathroom, and I know what it's like to live on the sub-floors. And I can appreciate that. I also have two teenage boys and I know that sometimes they're best of friends and other times they're best of enemies. I'm curious at what your adolescence was like with your brother Malcolm. The second part of that is, imagine coming up to his birthday, the two of you are sitting down to dinner talking about your life. What would each of you say about each other's life? So, adolescence, and retrospect.

**Little:** Okay. We were the same as most adolescent children growing up. We had our times when we agreed and times when we didn't agree. But, my mother had taught us to never trespass on each other, that we all had the right to our opinion, and to think things out for ourselves, and if we didn't agree, whatever the choice of the other one was, to accept that. That was their choice, as long as it wasn't causing any problems, or any trouble. And so we learned not to trespass on each other, if we didn't agree, well, that's your business, and I'll take care of mine, you know. 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. He didn't believe in being two-faced. 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. But, he had made up his mind, so I backed off and let him go. He had to have the experience he had to have. And that was the route he chose. 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. So we had a very good relationship. And I would, I would come to his rescue. He would put down the worst plea down there, you had to go find something to help him out. Then when he got out, it wouldn't be long before he'd be back out in the same path again. But the best thing that happened, as I said, when he got put in prison long enough to find himself and start getting himself ready for a different kind of a life. And that made a whole different person out of him.

Now, the other one, what would we say to each other? I really don't even know how to approach that. Except, I was always proud of the stand that he took, and his ability to express himself and to present our case before the world. If he could have lived, a lot of things would be different, because he was going, especially in the last two years of his life, he said that he had gotten out

of that straightjacket, referring to the cult-like atmosphere that he was in under the Nation of Islam. It had become what he had called a corrupt cult. Having to be under that and having to continuously try to put forth that, what that stood for, he was no longer in that, and that left him free now to think for himself, and express some views other than what the Nation of Islam said, so he felt free to do that. And when he did that, he became a whole different person, but you don't know that here in America because that part of him was never shown too much. They know more about that in Europe and in parts of Africa, places like that, they know about that because they saw him from that standpoint. The press never let us see that here, because this is a controlled press, and they saw to it that we never saw that part of him. A lot of people don't know that Iran of all places, put out a postage stamp with Malcolm on it. In what they called their year of freedom struggle, they had a big demonstration, people by the thousands, as far as you can see, had big billboards with Malcolm's picture, and they put that on a postage stamp. It shows you the esteem with which he was help in these countries where they began to know him as he really was.

Throughout Africa, he had made friends with all of the rulers, Nasser in Egypt, in Kenya, throughout those countries over there, Ghana, all of them, he had admiration for them, and they had admiration for him. And whenever he came into their country, they accepted him as if he were a diplomat, representing the black man here in America. He was a diplomat from America, representing black folks here in America. That's the way they saw him. So he was a whole different person. Now, I don't know what he would say about me. But I do know that to him, I was more like a father figure, because after my father's death I seemed to have had the makeup as I grew into my genes to take on some of the responsibilities in order to assist my mother. This made me more or less highly looked upon. 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. Many times, people would, in fact Elijah Muhammad even told me one time, he said, "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." So, this is the kind of relationship we had, and he knew he could trust me. I knew I could trust him, and that was the relationship we had.

**Q:** Hi. My question related a lot to the transition toward the end of his life, toward the end of Malcolm's life, and I was wondering if you could elaborate a little bit more on the specifics on his change of views after his break from the Nation of Islam.

**Little:** Well, there's a lot of things. For one thing, in going into the eastern world, he got exposed to the real religion of Islam, which some referred to as the orthodox way of Islam, or the Sunnis, or the different parts of it. He became aware of that and got a better knowledge of it, and when he did, he could see how wrong he had been in some of the things he had said. Because that wasn't a part of Islam, some of the things he said were not a part of Islam at all, especially about branding all white people devils and stuff like that, and he realized that. So he no longer believed that all white folks were devils, but he knew some of them were. That's the way that was. But he stopped making that charge and began to realize that there were some who would be willing to work with us to improve things for everybody. Many of the colleges and all that he would go to and speak, they could see the difference in what he was saying, and many of the young white students began to admire him back in those days, because they liked what he was saying. They knew what he was saying was true. It caused some problems because some of them would go home and argue with their parents and use what Malcolm said to argue and then this would make their parents go wild because they had this opinion of Malcolm being something completely different than what the student had seen.

Another thing that happened, he began to go throughout Africa, speaking with those who were the rulers there, and those who were in positions of authority, and explain what he was really about and what he was after from a nationalistic viewpoint, and they could understand that. He let them know that eventually, if things went the way he wanted, he felt that our struggle here in America should be a human rights struggle and not a civil rights struggle. He said, as long as it's civil rights, that makes it domestic and it can be controlled, but if it's human rights, then you can seek allies from other parts of the world and they can get involved on a human rights level, but they can't get involved in a civil rights struggle. So he was after seeing if he could acquire allies for our human rights effort. Eventually, he intended to bring it before the United Nations. I think knowing that he intended to do this hastened his death. They moved on him faster than they would have otherwise. And he ended up dead. After that split also, he felt guilty or responsible for bringing a lot of people into that, feeling at the time that he was doing the right thing. And it was right for some of them, because it really cleaned them up and helped them out in that sense. But . . . it caused them to get caught up in this cult atmosphere, so that their thinking was being done for them by others. They were being controlled. They had to move when they said move, come when they say come, go when they say go, do what they say do. They were almost like zombies. He could see that he helped create that, and he felt guilty for that, and was hoping that he could do something about it. So when he spoke to them there in the east about it, they agreed that they would send a sheik over to teach the religious side. And

he intended to start a Muslim group here in the states, and let them be taught the true religion of Islam other than what they had been, for those who wanted it. But he himself mainly would go into the nationalistic approach that he had made and work from that angle for the OAAU. So, that kind of gives you some idea of what he was about.

**Q:** First, I want to thank you for being here today. I have a two-part question. One, you talked about how Malcolm felt when he broke from the Nation of Islam. At the time, how did you feel, how did you perceive his break from the Nation of Islam. And, second, how is your relationship with the Nation of Islam now?

**Little:** At that time, I knew that the break would eventually come. But he didn't. He's the one who was surprised because he was so busy doing what he was doing, that he wasn't paying attention to what was really going on. But I was aware of some of the things that were being said by the family, what they called the royal family at that time, and they saw him being recognized more than the father was, than their father. His name was everywhere. But their father's name was getting smaller and smaller all the time, and they didn't like that. They wished that they could wish him away. So, I was aware of this. Then the FBI would go around and inform different ones of what was going on, and they're the ones that told some of us about Elijah having all these babies by his secretaries. The FBI knew that all the time, but they would split it among different ones, so we knew about it, but Malcolm didn't. And I remember the one who woke him up was Wallace. Wallace didn't believe in that stuff that he saw his family doing, and he thought they should be in the true religion of Islam, and they should stop all this cult-like way of doing things the way they were doing. When he spoke out about it, they put Wallace out, Wallace was out when Malcolm was out. This is what happened. But Wallace told Malcolm what was going on, and it just shocked Malcolm. So when Wallace told him, he called me from Chicago, he was in Chicago at the time, and he called me and said, "Listen, I'm on my way back out to New York, and I'm going to get my ticket split in a way where I can stop in Detroit, and I want you to meet me at the airport, and then I'll continue on from there on to New York." And when I went to the airport and saw him, he was just in a daze. He just was lost. And I wondered what's wrong. So then we found a place where we could go off and talk, and then he told me what he had found out. So when he told me, I said, "That's right, you found out the truth." So he says, "What?" He says, "You mean you knew this and you didn't tell me?" I said, "Listen, if I had told you, the first thing you would have done is run back to Chicago and tell Elijah Muhammad what I told you and say that I was a hypocrite." And he stopped and thought about it a

while, and said, "You know, you probably are right." But he had found out now, so he had to deal with that, and he went on back. But as soon as they found out that he knew it, he was marked for death. The family wanted him dead, all of them wanted him dead. Elijah Muhammad, Jr., was going all over the country asking the brothers, "How come it's taking you so long?" Joseph in New York was doing the same thing, they were all trying to do what they could to get him out of the way, because they knew if he started making known what was really going on, it would break up a good thing that they had, because they had become wealthy off of Malcolm's effort. So this is how that thing went down.

What was the other part of your question? What was my relationship with the Nation today? Now, people still refer to the Nation of Islam—that's Farrakhan's group. Then you still have Wallace here, who had brought them into the Sunni Islam. See, Wallace shut down the Nation of Islam, when he came in after his father and took over, he closed that thing down, because he knew it was corrupt. He bought the FOI [Fruit of Islam] to a close. There was no longer an FOI or an MGT, as they called the Muslim Girls' Training class . . . that was no longer to be. He closed all that down. He got rid of all the captains, as they called them, and told the people, "There's nobody has any authority over you. You are free to make your own choices. You decide whether you want to sell papers or not. If you don't, you don't have to sell them. You shouldn't let them make you, or tell you that you got to take so many papers and pay for them whether you sell them or not. That's not right to do that to you. It has nothing to do with Islam whatsoever." He told them, "I'm freeing you from all of that. You decide how many times you want to come to a meeting. Don't nobody tell you you got to be here. You decide if you want to contribute toward it. Nobody tell you you got to contribute so much every week and be on you if you don't do it. That's not right. You are the one who should make that choice." So he set them all free and said, "There's no longer a Nation of Islam, no longer FOI or MGT," and closed it all down, and brought Farrakhan out of New York into Chicago where he could keep an eye on him, and have him working with him in Chicago.

But Farrakhan could see here's a good thing about to go to waste, because he knew the kind of money that was coming in, and the control it had over people who believed in it. So Farrakhan broke away from him [in 1977], and restarted it again, and that's what you call the Nation of Islam today. But those who stayed with Wallace, they went to Sunni Islam, or the orthodox way of Islam, which is altogether different. My relationship is the same relationship I always had. I never gave myself entirely to any religion. I left myself free to do my own thinking, and I decide how I want to relate to God. I don't let any preacher, no Pope, no anybody come between me and God. I'm a child of God, just like everybody else is, and I establish my own relationship with God, and

those who don't like it, to hell with them. That's the way I look at it [laughter, applause]. If we are true to that relationship, it's a spiritual relationship that we can establish with God. Nobody should teach us. Then you should listen to your own conscience, and your own conscience will guide you. God will guide you through your conscience to do the right thing. If you follow that, you'll never be confused. But you get into these religions and start listening to all that stuff they tell you, you won't know if you're coming or going. They put these guilt trips on you, and one thing and another, and you don't know whether you're going to heaven or hell. But you can make life what you want it to be, and God will help you, if you just be true to the relationship that you established with God, the spiritual relationship. You don't have to have religion to do that. Or, if you want to be in religion, you can be in religion and still practice that. So it's up to you.

**Q:** Can you talk a little bit about the organization that Malcolm started after he broke from Elijah Muhammad and the Muslims?

**Little:** All right. There's two of them, you know. Although he didn't intend to get that heavily involved in the Muslim part [the Muslim Mosque, Inc.], that was to be taken over by a sheik that had been sent here from over there. He was going to teach them the religion of Islam. Malcolm was still going to stick with his nationalistic point of view, if you want to refer to it in that manner, where he was going to push the things that he believed in that would improve the conditions of our people without religion getting involved in it. He said that it's hard to do anything when you let religion get in, because then you got all these problems that don't have to exist. But if we get together on our common problems that we have and work on those without letting religion getting too involved in it, then we can at least focus on that and accomplish something in that manner, and take care of religion on the side. That way, people could work with him no matter what their religion was—Christian, atheist, whatever, he didn't care what your religion was. If you want to work toward making things better, join the OAAU [Organization of Afro-American Unity]. But, what happened after his death, there was nobody to take over, and our half-sister Ella came in and convinced some of them that he had told her that she should take over, and that was the worst thing that could have happened. When she got involved in it, all the intelligent ones left, and with the ones who stayed there with her, she turned it into something completely different than Malcolm had ever intended for it to be. And it eventually came to almost nothing. She contacted me and wanted to know would I come and help her, and I said no, I don't want any part of anything that you're involved in. I don't want to get involved in that kind of mess, so don't ask me to get involved in it.

Who could you get that could replace Malcolm? People don't realize the amount of work that he did, because it's never made known in this country. The sacrifice that you have to make in order to work on an international level. He was working on an international level. It calls for more than the average person has. I don't know how he did it himself. Malcolm was an unusual kind of a person and completely committed to what he was doing. Here's a person that . . . could get by on two and three hours' sleep. I used to wonder, he would wear you out trying to keep up with him. Whenever he'd stop to sleep, he just couldn't go any further, and then when he'd wake up, he'd wake up mad because he had lost that time sleeping. Time to him was altogether different than it is to the average person. He just didn't believe in wasting time. Every minute meant something to him. When he would come to the city and you'd get involved with him and what he was doing, he would wear you out. By the time he had been there two or three days and would leave, you'd just give a sigh of relief that you could get back to normal, because he was just continuously on the go, day and night. Writing letters all over the world, making phone calls, you wonder how in the world this man does all this. Plus reading everything, reading certain papers every day: the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, other papers, and a few foreign papers. Every day he would be reading those papers to see what's going on in order to keep a perspective on what was happening on an international level. Besides all that reading he would do, and all the writing, he was continuously writing to somebody. I don't know how he kept up with himself. Very little sleep. He had a tremendous amount of mental energy and physical energy. I've never seen anybody like him when it comes to that.

**Q:** Before I ask my question, I'd like to say I hope you get to as many campuses as possible, because I think you have a really important message to bring to people. You have a warmth toward humanity that it's nice to see. It seems to me that after the deaths of Malcolm and Martin Luther King, the unification of blacks and progressives in this country fell apart, and these groups have been fragmented ever since. And now, you have this trumped up court case brought up against your niece. . . .

**Little:** You have two questions there. One is about Martin Luther King and Malcolm. It's true things have changed since their deaths because these were two unusual individuals. Many people don't realize, those who were involved in the civil rights struggle, that we were blessed, that we had both of them on the scene at the same time. That was good for the civil rights struggle. Many times I've referred to it as . . . the same as if there were an angel out here fighting our battle for us, and the angel had a two-edged sword, and one edge was

Malcolm, and the other edge was Martin, because they both had different approaches to how they were doing it, but they were after the same goal. They began to realize that themselves, as time went by, and they were not as far apart as some people think. Many people think they were antagonistic toward each other, but they were not. Martin was glad that Malcolm was out there, and Malcolm was glad that Martin was out there. Because when he said that all white folks was devils, then Martin would march his people out there, and they'd see the police beating them in the head with the clubs and putting the dogs on them, and washing them down the street with hoses, that proved that they were the devil. Martin was glad he was out there calling them devils, so that's the way that thing went. As time went by, they had admiration for each other, and may have eventually come together on many things if they had both lived. That's something we have to realize, and stop getting caught up in this thing as if they were two adversaries, because they were not. Malcolm used to ask a question sometimes. He'd say, "If you are out in the woods somewhere, and a bear jumps on you, and two dogs start biting on that bear, are you going to argue about where they're biting that bear? Because one is biting him someplace and the other is biting him somewhere else, you going to argue about that? Just be glad both of them are biting him." That's the way that he'd refer to it sometimes. We can easily get caught up in things and get deluded into accepting illusions instead of reality. And what was that last part of your question?

**Q:** Farrakhan and that case against your niece.

**Little:** Oh, my niece, yeah, Qubilah. I'll say this—I don't get into that too much—but I'll say this. Since it happened, I think we're going to find that it may have happened for a good purpose. Sometimes a thing happens that's a negative and it turns out to be a positive. We see a thing happen sometimes and we say it's so bad that that happened, but in the long run, we see that that was a good thing that that happened. That might be the case here, because what it's doing is forcing a lot of things to come to the front that wouldn't have come forth otherwise. You'd be surprised what's out here in the closet that hasn't been made known. By this thing happening, it's bringing it to the front, where people can see it for what it is. So, I think as time goes by we're going to find out a lot of things that we were not aware of.

**Q:** Why do you think the government has brought this case now?

**Little:** I don't really know. Sometimes you don't see the whole picture of what they're doing, so I don't really know. But I don't think it's going to come out the way that they think. I think right now they wish they could drop it, because

it's bringing some things out that they didn't intend to come forth.

**Q:** Good evening, Mr. Little. It's an honor to have you here tonight. Some of us who have read a little about Malcolm and trying to read about his speeches and all, haven't gotten a chance to learn about the family, so I'm glad you shared some of those things tonight. One could almost say that Malcolm would not have been where he was, were it not for you, that got him into the Nation of Islam to start with, so I was wondering if you could tell us a little of how you got into it, what drew you into the Nation of Islam and Elijah Muhammad, since we have the honor of having you tonight here, and not Malcolm.

**Little:** I'm glad you asked that question, because that's an insight that people need to have. The way I got involved, I'll tell you how I got involved. In Detroit, I had gone to work for a company where they sold household furnishings, and I worked my way up to manager in that company, and while working there, there was a Muslim who worked there, driving the truck, and I didn't know he was a Muslim. I didn't even know what a Muslim was. But he used to observe me. At this company, this was during the second world war, our people were coming up from the South, many of them not too well educated, they didn't understand business too well, and they would come in and buy things on contract, on credit. And when the shopkeeper would add their bills, they would add another hundred dollars in. The price they were charging them was already way beyond where it should be, but they'd add another hundred dollars or two into their bill, and they wouldn't even know it. They could see this person wasn't too good at figuring, so they knew they could take advantage of them. Things like that. When I would notice this, I would go to them and say, "Look, why do you have to rob a person like this? You're already getting the biggest price for it. Why do you have to rob them some more?" And I'd make them change it. So everybody thought I'd get fired, because I'm interfering with these people. But you know, they wouldn't fire me? I was good at what I did. They thought it was better to keep me than to get rid of me and have to try and find somebody else to take charge of the things I was doing. So, they kept me. Other times I'd be out in the store, and young, beautiful black women would come in there to do business, and these white guys would be around trying to pat on them, you know, making all kind of snide remarks and all kind of things, so I'd walk over there and I'd tell them, I'd say, "Look, if one of your women came in here, and you saw me doing that with one of your women, you wouldn't like it, would you?" So they'd look at me all funny. I'd say, "What makes you think I should stand here and like it when you do it? I want to see you respect my women the same way you want me to respect yours." And everybody would know "He's fired tonight. . . ." But I wouldn't get fired, I'm still there.

So, just different things like that would take place. When the time would come for them to get their raises, the employees, and they were all black employees, most of them. They would begin to intimidate them and make them feel that they weren't worthy of their raise, so when the time came for their raise, they wouldn't give it to them, and they'd be almost afraid to ask for the raise when they knew it was due because they would intimidate them so. So one day I happened to walk in, and they had this truck driver over in the corner, and they were just giving him the going over, and I could see what they were doing, so I just walked over there, and I told them, I said, "Look, why don't you stop intimidating him and making him think that he's not worth it, and give him his raise, because you know he deserves his raise. He's one of the best truck drivers we got, he's here every day, he's on time, everything we need. There's no problems with him. We don't have any problems with him. He deserves his raise. You give him his raise." So they gave him his raise, and they didn't fire me. So, a couple of days later he walked up to me. He says, "Listen, you're a Muslim aren't you?" I said, "A what?" He said, "You're a Muslim." I said, "No, I'm not a Muslim." He says "You're not fooling me, I know you're a Muslim." I said, "No, I don't even know what that is. What is it about me that makes you think that I'm a Muslim." He said, "Well, I observe you. You don't smoke, you don't drink, you make these white folks respect our women, you don't let these white folks misuse us. You just believe in black people and making it better for black people." I said "Is that what Muslims believe in?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Well, where do they meet?" And that's how I got involved. I started going to the meetings and I got involved, and I saw that they had a program that was designed for our people who really needed it. They were reaching for those that nobody else wanted. NAACP didn't have any use for them, because they didn't have anything to offer. Urban League didn't need them, nobody wanted them. They were misfits. They were reaching for those who were drunks, and dope addicts, and prostitutes. Those who were on the welfare, doing nothing. Those who just didn't fit into society, had nothing to add to it. Those were the people they reached for. And when they got them, you wouldn't believe what happened. They should have taken some before and after pictures. Some of those people would come in there, they'd be so *ugly* from misusing their own selves.

You've seen someone just misuse themselves till they get ugly? That's the way some of them were, from drinking and smoking, and just eating the wrong kind of food, and just misusing themselves to where they just got ugly. And when you'd see that guy after he's been in there a while, he'd be all cleaned up, he'd be wearing clean clothes, he'd have a job. He'd be acting like a worthwhile citizen of the community who could be accepted anywhere. So they had a good program, and that's how I got involved in it. I didn't get involved

in it for religion, I got involved for what I saw that the program was doing to help people who really needed help. I got involved in it in that manner. I worked with it, and helped them in many ways, and then eventually, we started to let Malcolm know about it. At first Malcolm didn't quite understand what we meant, especially when we said the white man was the devil. He'd wonder how we could say that. So, my brother Reginald, I sent him out, I said, "You go out there and talk to him." Because Reginald had been on the street with Malcolm, and they hustled together and all, so Reginald knew how to talk to him. And Reginald came back and told me how he got to him. He says, "He started telling me about all the money we used to make"—they used to pay Malcolm a thousand dollars a trip to go out and bring back two big suitcases of that which wasn't right—so he was telling Reginald about all this money he made, how good they were. So Reginald said, "Okay, let's just take a look at it. You don't believe they're the devil. What you brought back was probably worth maybe \$300,000, and they gave you a thousand dollars, and you're the one who was taking the chance. If you got caught with it, you were the one who'd have gone to jail. After that, once they get it here, who do they sell it to? They're selling it to our people, and ruining our people with that stuff." So then he looked at it from a different perspective and he saw what they meant when they said the white man was the devil. And then he decided he wanted to get involved. And from then on he began to study more and more about it, and got involved. And when he came out of prison, I took him straight to Chicago and got him with Elijah because I wanted to tie him down real quick before he got loose on the streets again and got back out there with the hustlers. And that's how he got involved in it. It's the best thing that ever happened as far as Mohammed's Temples, as they were called at that time, was concerned. Because he spread them all over the country, and made them wealthy. Money started rolling in from everywhere. That's how he got involved. Does that kind of clear it up for you?

**Q:** What was the time period?

**Little:** 1947 and beyond. I came in in 1947. He came out of prison in, I think, '52, and we went from there [applause]. Thank you. I've enjoyed being here very much and I hope all of you can continue to work together to make things better for all of us. This world can be a beautiful place, but it's got to be done by people. We can't blame our problems on the devil, we can't blame them on God. We know the cause of our problems, and it's people. People have to change it if it's going to be changed, and I hope some of you can be a part of bringing about a change to make things better for all of us. Thank you.

## 2. Question and Answer Session Following Video Presentation, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, April 18, 1995

**Strickland:** What we're going to do today is show you two videos for the context of our discussion. This first video, some of you may remember, was first aired in 1992 by CBS, and it's called "Malcolm X: The Real Story." It's 45 minutes long. It exemplifies a semi-change of heart in Mike Wallace from the Mike Wallace that those of you that know from the documentary, "The Hate That Hate Produced," in 1959, and is much more accommodating to Malcolm. In fact, Malcolm—that's another untold story, because Malcolm called Wallace in 1964 to do an interview on Mike's show about Elijah and the children for a show in June. This is a 45-minute documentary dealing with reflections on Malcolm. It features Mike Wallace and Dan Rather. It raises questions about who killed Malcolm X and then it has almost, in a semi-revolutionary way, managed to suggest government involvement, at least to the extent that they conceded that the FBI has at least 46,000 documents concerning themselves and Malcolm which they had not released at that time, which was three years ago. And then following that, Brother Wilfred has a short video which he brought with him from Detroit which gives some more information, more insight into Malcolm's thinking in London in the summer of 1964 and at the end of '64 in December, and you will see him talking in an interview about his political ideas at the time. Any questions before we begin?

[The videos are screened.]

The floor is open for questions.

**Q:** When did you finally leave the Nation, and why?

**Little:** As far as leaving the Nation, I have to clear up something. Many times when I hear people speak about the group today, I hear them refer to the Nation and the Muslims in general, and they don't seem to know how to differentiate. So I try to clear that up. At the time of Elijah Muhammad's death, his son Wallace took over. When Wallace came in and took authority, he changed everything. Previous to that, he and Malcolm had both been put out. You don't hear too much about that, but both of them were put out because Wallace was espousing the fact that what they were teaching was not the true religion of Islam and that they should get into Islam the way it was being taught in the Eastern world, the way the Muslims practiced it wherever you find them, which was altogether different from the way it was being taught in the Nation of Islam.

They were calling it Islam, but that's not what it was. It was a nationalistic form of teaching, and it was based upon a myth that had been put together by a man named Fard, and he's the one that gave that message to Elijah, and Elijah took it and carried it from there. And then when Malcolm came in, he just spread it all over the country and made it seem like it really was a religion.

But Wallace knew that it wasn't, because Wallace had gone over into Egypt and studied a while and he found out the truth about it, he found out what they had was not Islam. Malcolm eventually found this out himself. So, when you say, Nation of Islam, when Wallace came into authority, after his father's death, he called them all into Chicago into a national meeting, and shut the whole Nation of Islam down. And he told the people that "it's wrong what they've been doing to you." It has become corrupt, which he and Malcolm knew that it was corrupt, and that they were taking advantage of them. He said that there's no such thing as they should be able to come to you and tell you you've got to be at the meeting, or you've got to sell papers, or you've got to take this many papers whether you sell them or not, and pay for them, and stuff like they were doing which was really wrong. It was a shame how they were being enslaved and being used. So Wallace shut all that down. He said, there's no more Nation of Islam, there's no more FOI, no more MGT, which was the Muslim Girls' Training class, and there's no more captains and lieutenants, nobody has any authority over you, so you are free to do your own thinking, and you decide what you want to do. If you want to sell papers, okay, if you don't, you don't have to. If you want to contribute, that's up to you, you decide how much. If you don't want to contribute anything, that's all right. He just let them know "you're free." These uniforms, if you want to wear them, okay, if you don't want to wear them, you don't have to wear that. So he just freed them from the whole cult-like atmosphere that had been—because that's what it had become—it had become a personality cult.

That's what it is today, under Farrakhan, it's a personality cult. When you study what cults are and compare it to what they are doing, you'll see it's nothing but a cult, a personality cult. They're just taking advantage of a bunch of young people who don't know what it's all about, and they do a lot of good, but along with that, they're enslaving them. They're freeing them from one thing and enslaving them in another. So it has become a self-serving kind of a thing. And those who run it, it's self-serving for them. It serves their purpose, and that's what it has become. That's what it was then, and that's the reason that Wallace Muhammad shut it down. He brought Farrakhan out of New York, into Chicago, to work with him where he could keep his eye on him. And he could keep him from doing some of the things he was doing at that time. Because he was telling him, "you're taking the poor people's money and you're spending it just like it's yours. You don't need to be driving around in a Rolls

Royce and wearing \$500 suits and all that sort of thing. You're taking poor people's money to do that? When you're telling them that you're taking it so that you can do something for them? And they aren't getting anything in return for their money?" So he stopped all of that. But Farrakhan, after a while, he broke away from Wallace, because he knew this was a good thing, so he broke away from Wallace and restarted it. And that's where you see it exist today.

As time went by, I had to figure out a way that I could ease out of it, because I was in a precarious position myself, being Malcolm's brother. So, I had to figure out a way to gradually ease out of that thing in a way where they would be satisfied and I could be free. At that time I was going on 50 years old and didn't have anything. You know, you devote all your time to causes and don't do anything for yourself, you'll end up when you get old in the poor house. And I could see I better do something for myself, so I decided that I would get out of it and get into something where I could make a future for my own head in a short time. I'm 50 years old. I only had 15 years before I'm 65. Now I'm 75. So, what I did, I studied that thing and I could see what they wanted. So I had to figure a way they could get some of what they wanted, and at the same time I could get what I wanted.

I knew that they wanted to reward my brother Philbert, because my brother Philbert was one of the ones who spoke out against Malcolm. They had just used him all kinds of ways, they just used him up. But he was the kind of person that—when you get caught up in religion, or what you think is religion, you can just be led into all kinds of things. All they got to do is call the name of God when they tell you what they're doing, and you just get into it, and that's the way he was. They had led him into this thing, and he just thought he was on his way to heaven—so, he let them use him against Malcolm in many ways. He wrote an article, he put an article in the paper that they had at that time, *Muhammad Speaks* was the name of the paper, and he also made some remarks on radio. He was interviewed on television, different things, and they used him and Farrakhan, they used them mostly to push the idea that Malcolm was a hypocrite and should be removed and all these kind of things. So, they wanted to reward him.

So I got the idea how to do it. I told Elijah Muhammad, "You know, it's time for me to get out of this temple here in Detroit, it's time for me to stop being in the position of authority because you need somebody that's better qualified," and I recommended Philbert. And his eyes brightened up, because here is his chance now to give to Philbert. I said, "Philbert would be good for Detroit," and he agreed to it. So they put Philbert in authority there, and I gradually eased myself out of the situation, to where I could go to work somewhere else. I still stayed there just to be seen and not feel like I was pulling myself right out. You know, I had to do it slow and easy. You know, when you're

in a cage with a snake, you can't move too fast. You gotta move real slow, if you don't want that snake to strike you, so I had to move slow and easy, and I got Philbert in there, and I stayed there, and just gradually involved less and less and then I went to work with Michigan Bell, or as it is called today, Ameritech, and became a manager there, worked my way into management and retired as a manager from Michigan Bell. And I just got my 15 years in, see? According to the setup they had, you had to be 15 years to qualify for a pension, so I just got the 15—I was 50 when I started. They had no idea when they hired me that I was 50, because when I was 50 I looked like I was 35, 37, somewhere along in there. You would never have judged me as being 50 years old at the time I was 50. I just didn't look that way at all. So, they hired me and they had no idea that I was 50, and the way I got away with it, on the application. . . .

I'll tell you a little something here. Growing up in our family, our mother had explained to us not to get caught up in religion, but she taught us that we should believe in God, and that we should establish a relationship with God and be true to that. And she says, "If you don't get caught up in religion, you won't get confused. Religion is what confuses people. If you go throughout the history of not only Christianity, all religions, you'll find that a great part of it is nothing but b.s." She said, "All religions come from man, they don't come from God. Sometimes they're named after a man that God has inspired to give people a message that they needed for the particular time and circumstances that they were under then. It fits that, and after that man is dead, then the people will make a religion around his name, and then they form a religious hierarchy, and then they have control of the people under that religion, and it's used mostly for control and power of numbers of people." So she says, "Stay away from religion, as far as joining, but I want you to study them all, because all of them have something, but you have to be able to sort it out for yourself." And she said, "Study them, whatever you see that you can use, accept that, and the rest of it, just put it on the shelf."

And she took us everywhere. She'd take us to the Catholic Church, to the Methodists, Episcopalians, the Baptists, even went to the Holy Rollers. We used to go sometimes, it's just like going to a nightclub show, you know, you see them jumping and dancing and going on, and we'd go, because we'd enjoy that, you know, it was just like going to a show. We'd go back home and we'd talk about it, and she would point out to us what can happen to people when they let themselves get carried away in these kind of things. She said, "If somebody saw you on the street acting like they acting in church, they'd put you in the nuthouse, saying you must have lost your mind, but in church they can get away with it." So we learned to study. We had to learn about Hinduism, Buddhism, and all the other eastern religions, and realize what they had in them. But, she said, the way she believed, she explained to us how she learned to relate

to God was from the Indians. She came from the island of Grenada in the West Indies, and you have Indians there, the original people who were there before the slave master came in and brought his slaves and all that. Because the black people you find in the West Indies were brought there as slaves. But originally there were Indians there, similar to the Polynesians and others, and they call them Caribs. One old man, she used to spend time around him, one old man was the one who made her aware of how to relate to God. She got to know Indians here in America, the American Indians, and they just loved her. They would like to spend time with her and talk with her and they would do chants and things with her, because she understood them, and they knew she understood, and they could communicate on a spiritual level. A lot of people don't know that the American Indians have a spiritual relationship with God that they carry out, and they don't want religion interfering with it, especially Christianity, because Christianity is what did them in.

Wherever the Christians went, they went in with that cross and the Bible, and when it ended up, that's all the people had was that, the cross and the Bible, and they had all the gold and everything else, taking it back to Europe, see? So, that's the history of it. But anyway, she explained to us about that so we could understand. Me being the older one who she figured out could understand, she taught me the way she was taught. She taught me, she said, "This old man could go and sit in a chair and he'd put somebody to make sure that nobody would touch him while he was doing that." She said they call that soul travel. The real us is our soul, and this body is only our vehicle. God is concerned about the soul, the real us, but when this body itself dies, it decays and goes back to the earth or whatever we want to do with it. But what God is concerned about is that soul, and that soul does leave that body and go on to its next existence, because it never dies. That's the way she would explain to us. So she said, "This soul has the ability, if we learn how, to leave that body and come back to it, as long as that body is still alive, and that's what this man would do. He would go places and see things and observe what was going on, and then come back to his body, and then he would tell them what he had seen." And she said that he told her the way you do that is to learn to listen to your conscience. That is the inner us. Listen to your inner self, which is your conscience. And she said that if you learn to do that, the more you do it, the stronger it becomes.

So one day she took me in a room and put me in a chair, and she said "I'm going out of here, and I'm going to close the door, and I'm going to leave you in here, and you just listen to your conscience. And after a while, I'm going to come back." So, when she came back, she asked me about different things, and then she gave me more ways of developing and getting stronger with it, and she said, "you never do it to try to get into somebody's business, because then

you are trespassing, it's called spiritual trespassing, and when you do that, it's a crime and you have to pay for that, so you don't do that." But, she said, "There will be times when something will come to you that will give you something you need to know to be able to help a person. You don't let them know how you found that out or whatever, you just figure out a way to communicate it to them, so that it can be helpful." And just different things that she would show me. So I would do that from time to time. Sometimes I'd go so long I'd forget all about it, until something would happen where I would be really concerned about something, then I'd find myself doing it again, to try to get an answer as to what I should do about some particular situation that I was in. I told you all that to tell you how I got into Michigan Bell . . . after I left the Muslim movement.

As far as being in an administrative capacity, I was seeking other jobs. I had been recommended to people at Michigan Bell, so they wanted me to come in and see if I would be willing to work for them. So I went to talk to them, and they really wanted me. But I'm thinking to myself, "They're not going to hire me, because I'm 50 years old." They weren't hiring anybody 50 years old. Most companies don't want somebody 50 years old. They can't tell you that. They want a younger person, where they figure they get more years out of you. So I went and they said, "You come back on Thursday, we'll give you a test. If you pass the test, then we'll give you the application. You fill out the application, and we'll hire you." I said okay. So I went back home and I'm thinking about this. "Gee. Thursday. I know they're not going to hire me because I'm 50 years old." Well, when that Thursday came, I got up that morning, after I got out of the shower and everything and I'm getting ready to go. I'm thinking about it. And it came to me to go on in the room and see what's happened. So I went in the room, sat in the chair, and I'm sitting there, thinking about it. And I'm going to tell you what happened. It just zapped like I was out of my body, down there at Michigan Bell, in the employment office.

And I was filling out the application, and when I came to the line where it asked age, I put "2/12/20." I didn't even think about it, it's my birthday, 2/12/20. And I looked at it, I wondered why I did that. And then I could hear this voice speak to me. This voice spoke to me and said "You haven't lied. If they don't take time to figure your age, it's not your fault." And ZAP, I'm right back in my chair, in my room. I sat there thinking about it, and said, "okay." So then I got up and got busy and around later it was time to go, I went on down to the office. And I completely forgot. That experience left me altogether. I hadn't even thought any more about it. And I got down there and they gave me the test. There were others taking the test, and I was in taking the test. And that morning my mind seemed like it was working smoother than it had worked in I don't know when. My mind was just clicking. So, they gave me this test. So I sat down and went through the test and I finished it, and I looked around and others were still working on the test and I'm through with it, and I felt kind of

funny. But I'm sitting there and I glanced back through it again, and I was sitting, and the lady came over and asked, "Are you through?" I said, "yeah." And she looked at me. She said "You're really through?" I said "yeah." So she took it and took it on back wherever they did the checking. So while I'm sitting there, I'd see a head stick out the door back there and look down there at me, and they'd go back in. And pretty soon I'd see another head stick out. And I didn't find out until later after I was working for the company one day, I got to know somebody in that department. They told me what it was. They said they were looking out there trying to see who is this "super nigger." That's what this girl told me. She worked in there, and she knew. She said, "that's what they called you. They wanted to know who is that super nigger out there who did this test so fast and got such a high score on it?" I had an unusually high score on this test, and that's what they were trying to see. And we laughed about it.

Anyway, I got an exceptionally high score on the test, and then they gave me the application. And when I came to that line where it said "age," a chill went all through my body, just like the hair was standing up all over my body. Then I remembered the experience I had had at home. So I just put "2/12/20," my birth date on there, for the age. And they hired me. I went to work for the company. Nobody took time to figure the age. Well after you've worked for them six months, then you're eligible for insurance, for life insurance, and they had to know your age. So they went and got my application, and that's when they took time to figure it out, and found out I was 50 years old. And the man that I worked for, I worked under, the manager at that time, was a man from Mississippi, of all places. And one of the nicest men I had ever worked for. We became just like brothers. And he was from Mississippi, he was what they used to call "Mississippi crackers," but he was just one nice man. And we got along well. So one day, we were out working, and he says, "Listen, come here I want to tell you something," when I came in that evening. He said, "They called me from Detroit today and want to know what am I doing hiring this 50 year old nigger." And we just laughed, and I said, "What did you tell them?" He said, "I didn't know what to say for a while. I thought about [the fact] that I was 52 years old. So I just put it back on them. I asked them, is something wrong with me? I'm 52" And they left it alone. But he told me, he said, "You don't have to worry about a thing. You didn't lie, and you're hired. Everybody likes you, and you're here as long as you want to be." And I stayed until I retired. And when retirement came, I was 65, most of the people had no idea I was 65 years old. So when they sent my papers, I never sent them back. I just stuck them in my desk drawer. And I skated for three more years. And I was 68 when they finally realized that I was supposed to be retiring. And they came in on us, so I agreed to leave. But many people thought I was taking an early retirement. They didn't realize that I was that age.

I just give you that experience because there is more to life and there's more to understanding God than what we have been given. There is a spiritual relationship—if we are going to deal with God, we should establish a spiritual relationship, not a religious relationship. And you can practice that, even in any religion, that can be your own personal conviction, and you can practice it in whatever religion you're in, and it won't interfere. A spiritual understanding of God and practice of a spiritual relationship with God won't interfere with any religion. And it's more rewarding. There's a confidence that you develop in yourself. There's an inner guidance that you get. There's something that you can explain. My mother used to sing a little song explaining it—it's something you can't explain, yet you know it's there. She would say, "something within me that I cannot explain." And it was more to it than that, but there would be times when she would be more or less thankful for the relationship that she had with God, and she'd be expressing it in song or in some other way. It works. The closest thing that I have to that is a group here in America called Eckankar.\* That's the name they use. That's the closest thing I have found to that. Sometimes you see it listed in the phone book, that tells where they meet or who gets together, and they have books and things that kind of give people instruction about how to relate in that way. So I went into a long dissertation, but I thought that might be a good experience to share with you.

**Q:** What did you think about your brother at the time he left the Nation? The Nation was corrupt as well?

**Little:** Yes, at the time that Malcolm left, he had found out from the Messenger's son, Wallace, that things just weren't what they appeared to be. Wallace told him how corrupt it had become. Up to that time, Malcolm had been so busy building and going all over trying to represent it and cause it to grow and causing money to be sent in, that he didn't even realize what was going on otherwise. Or, if he had seen signs of it, he just ignored it. The day Wallace told him, Wallace almost had to cuss him out to get him to stand still and listen to him. Because any time he'd go to say something negative about Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm didn't want to hear that, and would try to push him away. He almost had to cuss him out to use some shock therapy on him to get him to stop long enough to listen to what he had to say. He told him what was happening. He said, "You got all this money coming in here, telling people we're going to build schools and businesses and all this kind of stuff. They're not going to do that. My family just waits on that money, and they're out here

---

\* For further information on the Eckankar organization, see Paul Twitchell, *The Eck-Vidya: Ancient Science of Prophecy* (Menlo Park, CA: Illuminated Way Press, 1972); and Paul Twitchell, *The Far Country* (San Diego: Illuminated Way Press, 1975). [Ed.]

buying up cars and fur coats and traveling, and spending the money. They aren't thinking about these things you're talking about. Let me tell you the real thing that's going on. All these babies that all these secretaries have been having, you know who they are? Those are my brothers and sisters." And Malcolm didn't quite understand what he meant. He said, "My father is the father of those babies that these secretaries are all having all over the place." And Malcolm was just shocked. As you saw on the thing here today, he mentioned how he had to go and talk to the girls himself to find out, and they told him that Elijah was the father of their babies. Even then, he still wanted to try to save the Nation if he could. He was trying to figure out some way that they could explain that away, and try to keep things going, because he felt that the program they had could do too much good for it to just have to come to an end because of that. He wanted some way he could cover this thing up or explain it away or something and still keep on going. But it never turned out that way.

Once the family found out that he knew, then they wanted him out of the way. And from then on, it started. They wanted him removed, some of them were asking for his death, everything they could so they could create some situation where he could be eliminated. Once he accepted the fact that he was no longer going to be a part of that, then he began to think for himself. He got out of all that religious hocus pocus and all that other stuff. He even asked me one day—you know Malcolm was an exceptionally smart person, very alert and aware; nothing very seldom passed him—he wondered how that got by him. But he could see the signs of it all around and still didn't see it. And I'll give you the answer I gave him. I told him, "The reason you couldn't see it . . ." Well, first he asked me why I didn't tell him, because when Wallace told him about it, he had me meet him at the airport and he told me what he had found out. And I told him, "Yeah, that's true." And he was surprised. He said, "You mean to tell me you knew it?" I said, "Yeah, the FBI . . . [end of tape] . . . once he accepted the fact that he was through with that, then he became himself, and he began to express himself differently. That's why I brought the clips today, so that you could see that part of him being interviewed in Europe. You hear a person speaking in an altogether different manner. He's more relaxed. He's speaking in a more sensible way because he's no longer caught up in that stuff. He's talking, now, from his own inner conviction. And that's what can happen. I wanted you to see that so you could see the difference in a person who is speaking from their own inner conviction. And those last few minutes that you saw, here's a man speaking from his own inner conviction, you can tell it. It's not a whole lot of hype. Now I'll come back to the point I was trying to give you. When he asked me why I hadn't told him, and I explained to him why, then I told him, "The reason you couldn't see it is because you were believing your own bullshit. You were the one talking all that stuff about Elijah Muhammad

was some divine something and all. You were so busy with that, that after a while you started believing it yourself, and you couldn't see anything else."

**Q:** So you didn't believe it?

**Little:** Not to the extent Malcolm was carrying that thing, no. The reason I got involved with the Muslims was because they had one of the best programs going at the time for our people who are in the mud out here. There was no program doing what theirs was doing. They were reaching for the ones who were dope addicts and drunkards, misfits in society, people who didn't have much education. People who were on the welfare, had a welfare mentality, looking for something for nothing, and all that kind of stuff. So, they were the only ones reaching for those people. All the other programs wanted intelligent people who had something to offer. They didn't want these problem people. But they were taking these problem people who were misfits, and cleaning them up. They'd bring them in and get them under control, lay a law down to them. They had to bathe everyday, they had to wear clean clothes, they had to be busy doing something constructive. Those who were on the welfare when they came in, they gave them so much time to get a job and get off the welfare. Now, you can't beat that. There's never been a program as good as that one. Even some of them who were just completely gone. When their families would see what happened to them, they'd wonder, "What happened to this guy? He's clean, he's working, he's not drinking anymore, he's not smoking, he's busy trying to learn something." And they would come down to see what happened, and then they'd get hooked and they'd be a member, and that's why it grew like it did, that's why it grew so fast, because they really had a good program. It served its purpose well, and that's the reason I got involved, not for religion. So I never got caught up in the religion part of it. I just worked with the common sense part of it, and I was satisfied to do that.

**Q:** Do you feel that Malcolm would have been pushed out of the Nation one way or another whether or not he had made the "chickens coming home to roost" statement?

**Little:** Oh, yeah. That just gave them the opportunity to do it. But previous to that, there was concern in the family, in Elijah Muhammad's family, because Malcolm's name was getting bigger and bigger, Elijah Muhammad's name was getting smaller and smaller. It bothered them.

**Q:** Then what happened to Elijah, Jr.?

**Little:** Yeah, he's the one who continuously asked for the death of Malcolm, Elijah Jr., and he's still around.

**Q:** He accepted Wallace as . . . ?

**Little:** I sometimes wonder. He is with Wallace from time to time, he's supposed to be following Wallace. But sometimes I wonder if he can be true to anybody.

**Q:** I was wondering if you could speak a little about Philbert's relationship with Malcolm, and if they had any personal disputes over a period of time that may have affected his eventual decision to speak out against his brother. You've mentioned the influence of the Nation of Islam basically, and this cult mentality possibly having an influence on his speaking out against Malcolm. In contrast to Wallace Muhammad, whom I would expect to side with his father, but instead was very active in speaking out against his father in terms of his speaking with Malcolm, and confirming Elijah Muhammad's sexual exploits.

**Little:** Wallace wanted to convert them to the true religion of Islam, the way it's being taught by Muslims all over the world, rather than that pseudo-religion that they had. Philbert was a little different than the rest of us. He was our brother, but for some reason he was always somewhat different. He's the one that would get caught up in religion. He just liked being around religion, he liked religious talk, he just liked talking that b.s. So, it was easy for him to be caught up in Elijah Muhammad's way. He got to the place where he wanted to be part of the wrong family. So, Elijah could take him and tell him what he wanted him to say, and he'd say it. And they used him. They used him up. They used him to write an article in the *Muhammad Speaks* paper against Malcolm. They used him on some radio interviews, and also on some television interviews to speak against Malcolm. And he was willing to do this. And when I saw Malcolm, he was furious. He said, "I know Philbert is our brother, I know he was a low-down so and so, but I didn't think he could get that low." That shows you what the cult-like environment can develop in a person's thinking. And he fell victim to that and was willing to speak out and go against Malcolm in the manner in which he did. In the last year or so of his life, he was sorry that he had done it, and there would be times when he would he try to say things to kind of alleviate some of that. But that wouldn't take it away.

**Q:** "In Make it Plain," there's an interview with him where I believe he discussed one particular television interview, or a press conference where he said that there was a representative of the Nation of Islam who basically handed a script to him to read and that he didn't have a chance to read it beforehand.

**Little:** That was John Ali. They tricked him into getting before this camera, not knowing exactly. . . .

**Q:** You think he was tricked?

**Little:** He was tricked to a degree, because of his desire. Malcolm said that he had such a desire to be seen and heard and recognized, that the only way he could do it was to attack him. He said, "he would never be recognized anywhere, he'd never be on T.V. speaking or anything like that, if it hadn't been that people wanted to use him to speak against Malcolm." He said he was willing to do that, just so he could be seen on television and have an opportunity to be recognized. That's the way it was. He was willing to do it. He says that they put that before him and he read it. But I told him, I says, "Look. If they had put something like that before me to read, when I saw what it was, I would've stopped, and asked them right there, 'who wrote this?' But you kept on reading it, so you must have been willing."

**Q:** What did he say?

**Little:** What could he say? He knew it was true.

**Q:** The undercover bodyguard in the film said in a quote that society wasn't ready to accept someone like Malcolm. I was wondering what you thought about how today's society would accept someone like Malcolm, and do you know of anyone of this generation or in the next two generations who could ever compare to him?

**Little:** Well, now, it's true that they weren't ready for Malcolm, and this country has never been ready for any black man who would express himself in the manner that Malcolm or Marcus Garvey or these various ones would express themselves. Never. When Martin Luther King started changing the way he expressed himself, they found out they weren't ready for him. The powers that be just don't want to see that happen, and will do whatever is necessary, by any means necessary, to see that it doesn't happen. That's where Malcolm got that word, by any means necessary, he picked that up and found out that's the buzz word they used when they want to control things. By any means necessary. Whatever it takes. If it takes killing a president, it's okay. By any means necessary. They don't care what it costs, don't care what lives have to be taken, whatever. By any means necessary, whenever they set a particular goal. There's always been the goal to keep the black man in his place here in this country. Never let him be able to elevate himself and become assimilated into the rest of the family, the

rest of the human family, and be recognized as a part of the whole. What was the last part of that?

**Q:** How do you think today's society would view someone like Malcolm, and do you know of anyone?

**Little:** The younger generation today has a little different way of seeing things. The younger people today—in fact Malcolm [himself] started to recognize . . . in the last two years of his life as he would speak around at the various white colleges, he said he was finding out that the younger generation of white people were willing to listen to reason. And they would weigh things on their own. Much of what he would say, they would agree with. He said that some of them would come to him and tell him they were having problems because when they would go back home among their parents and the older generation and begin to express themselves and use some of Malcolm's arguments, that it was causing some problems. He said that the younger generation is willing to make some changes to make things better for all of us. He felt that that could be. There was a possibility that could be.

Now, as far as somebody like Malcolm, I haven't seen anybody. And I've looked hard. I don't know if there's somebody coming later, but I haven't seen anyone. Now, I've seen a few who had some of the facets, because Malcolm was an exceptionally complex individual. People in this country don't even know how much he had accomplished on an international level. Many people in this country don't know Malcolm had become an international person. He was no longer dealing with the situation that exists here in America. He was dealing with it on an international level, and was being recognized as that by the heads of these various countries in Africa and Asia, because they could see his sincerity and his ability, and they recognized him. As far as they were concerned, he had diplomatic privilege in their country. They recognized him. But I don't know anybody who could take that place. I haven't seen anyone come anywhere near taking his place. He had mental energy and physical energy that's beyond the average person. Here's a man that didn't have to sleep. I never saw anybody go so long without sleeping. When he lived with me, I'd go to bed at night, and he'd be busy writing letters all over the world, to different people, on the phone calling and you'd wonder how he could keep all these—he's like a juggler, you know—how do you keep all these things going at the same time? Just never got tired. I'd wake up in the morning, he'd still be there doing that. He hadn't even been to bed. Sometimes he'd do that for two or three days, and finally he'd get so tired he'd have to sleep, and he would sleep long then. When he'd wake up he'd be mad because he had lost that time sleeping. You never saw a person that time meant so much to. It was almost as if he knew he wasn't going to live too

long, and he had to accomplish what he could within the time that he had. That was the way he approached things. I've never seen anybody who could be as committed to what they were doing as he was. He put his whole heart, soul, and body into what he was doing. So I don't see another one on the scene now. I don't know if one will come that will have the ability that he had.

**Q:** First I would like to thank you for being here, and you look like 50 now [laughter].

**Little:** Some people tell me that, you know. I had an accident. Some fool drove through where he was supposed to stop, flying through there, and broadsided my car, and totaled my car with me in it, and busted me up. And since then, it's slowed me down. Broke my arm in two places, fractured my hip, had lacerations all over my head, I was lucky to be living. People that saw the car just couldn't believe, you know. But I pulled through it and here I am.

**Q:** I'd like you to put in perspective when you first found out that Malcolm was assassinated, how did you feel? Anger? Or were you afraid for your own life too?

**Little:** When I first heard about it, it didn't surprise me, because we expected it. He even expected it. He knew that he couldn't duck it but for so long, he knew sooner or later, the way they were zeroing in on him, there was no way to escape. He knew eventually it would happen. I used to slip out to New York and see him on weekends, and slip back into Detroit, and whenever I would come, he wouldn't let me go anywhere with him, because he was afraid that if it happened and I was with him, they'd get both of us. That was the way he was, he was very protective in that sense. But when I heard about it, I wasn't surprised. It was just one of those things we just have to accept. Death is something I have never had a problem dealing with. My mother is the one that taught me how to deal with that.

My father was killed under suspicious circumstances. When my father died, the day we were going to the funeral, she took me aside and told me, "Listen. When we get there, don't you get caught up in that." She says, "because you'll find yourself crying and carrying on and going on and grieving just like they're doing. She says, "So let me explain to you what death is." She says that when the physical body dies, the soul itself still lives, the soul never dies. So when that physical body dies, the soul has to get out of it, it can't stay in it. It has to get out of it and go on to what it's next existence is. It can't take anything from this world with it. So that physical body has to be left there, and we have to dispose of that body for them. So she said, "When you get there and you look in that casket, realize that that's not your father in that casket. That's

just the body that he had. That's the physical body that was his vehicle that he used in this world for his physical experiences. And now it's dead, and it's through, but he has gone on to whatever his next existence is." So, when you look at it from that sense, then it eliminates that grief and all that other stuff, and you see it altogether in a different way. I could give you some examples, but it makes a person sound nuts when they talk about those sorts of things, so I won't talk about them too much. Unless I'm talking to somebody I know really understands.

Thank you, I've enjoyed being here with you, and hope it has served a good purpose [applause].