

# MALCOLM X LOVERS NETWORK SERIES

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Letter to the Editors  
NYC Press

Dear Editors:

Spike Lee has been roundly criticized for having, by implication, suggested that African American students stay out of school on Friday, Nov., 20, 1992 in order see the Malcolm X film on its Opening Day. He made the request at a meeting of Black journalists. He was, obviously, promoting a large turnout on the first day - and, seemingly, addressing his appeal to African American students.

The announcement set off a spate of articles, mainly critical of his 'stay out of school' appeal. We understood his appeal but were somewhat taken back by the nature of the criticisms. Much of it seemed really to be directed at Spike Lee, himself, whose film image elicits jealousy, adulation and a mixture of both.

As one who co-signed the historic 'Open Letter to Spike Lee', (7-27-92), we have busied ourselves in recent weeks seeking to project what we would like the film to do. In particular, we hoped that the film would not perpetuate the myth that Malcolm X was anti-white - as he was presented by the major media, while he was with us.

The above issue came up while discussing an episode...which describes a visit made by Malcolm X to the Encampment for Citizenship in August, 1961. One of my Board of Education colleagues, who happens to be white and Italian, was present at EFC as a staff person on that occasion. At my request, he described Malcolm X's presentation to the total group and his luncheon meeting with the staff. I wondered if Lee had included such an episode in the film. Such a scene would state its own message about the universal nature of Malcolm X's character, his appeal and his message.

Having myself spent a week at EFC as a guest - during which time the book, White Is (Grove Press) was produced - I was, personally, aware of the value of EFC's impact on the youth who were privileged to experience. My oldest daughter, Gwynne, now a lawyer at Local 1199, accompanied me and ended up as a camper for the balance of the summer. EFC re-created the piece of America that was easy to like. The name Algernon Black, its acknowledged founder, is indelible in the minds, souls and hearts of those who have ever been to EFC!

As my colleague, Joe Bernadello, and I discussed his article and the Lee request for students to remain out of school, Joe emphasized the 'universal' appeal of Malcolm X, whom he had met and shared lunch with face -to- face.

*"The Ability to read, awoke in me a long dormant craving to be mentally alive." - Malcolm X*

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Suddenly, a light clicked to the 'On' position inside my mind. We had clipped approximately, ten articles from the press dealing with Lee's 'stay-out-of-school appeal. While it was not explicit, there was a rather clear inference that Lee's appeal was addressed to African American students alone. We are not aware of a specific universal appeal to all students by Lee.

We recalled the ability of MLK, Jr. to rally interracial support and action to address Black grievances. We also wondered how Lee expected to score high in the rating system if the film was not viewed by a predominantly non - African American audience. Significantly, it has always been the case that more whites, in numerical terms, benefit from the social advocacy of Blacks, than Blacks, themselves. Veteran African American activists understand this formula. Hence, the vanguard roles of Blacks in the search for full freedom and justice. Malcolm X put it this way: "Freedom for everybody or freedom for nobody!" He also professed to be against all oppression, not just his own.

As Joe and I interacted, I was wondering whether there would have been a modified media reaction, had Lee's 'stay-at-home' appeal been more explicitly directed toward all students, regardless race, color or previous condition of servitude. Would he have received a more or less critical reaction? Indeed, the pattern of writing Africa and African Americans out of world and American history has, similarly, contributed, rightly to the miseducation of whites, also. Had Lee picked the Times - Warner lock to gain the right to produce the film, while locking himself into a circumscribed audience? Is he aware that LIFE magazine listed Malcolm X among the most influential Americans of the twentieth century? Did he ever re-read Ozzie Davis's eulogy to the Malcolm X, funeralized as El Hajj Malik El Shabazz? Does Lee understand our vanguard role, that America will not be free until Harlem is free; that the world will not be free until Africa, too, is free? Does he understand that the embargo against Cuba is an acute manifestation of our historic status as second class citizens? Is he aware that all human beings can trace their original roots to Africa? In the beginning, it was not Europe, it was Africa? Harlem is the most 'welcoming' community in America!

"I'm for truth no matter who tells it,  
I'm for justice no matter who it is  
for or against. I'm a human being  
first and foremost, and as such I'm  
for whoever and whatever benefits  
humanity as a whole.."

Malcolm X in  
The Autobiography of Malcolm X,  
1964, p. 372.

Finally, the overwhelming majority of the EFC campers who met face -to face with Malcolm X in August, 1961 were non - African American. They'll probably witness the opening day showing, but not because of Lee's appeal. They will be there because of Malcolm X's appeal.

Never lose touch with your own soul,

Brother Preston Wilcox  
Editor - Curator

cc: Joe Bernardello, Dr. Shabazz, Spike Lee, etc. including MXLN subscribers\*

\* Please feel free to pass this letter and the Subscription Application on to your local editors & radio & TV commentators.....

P.S.: If interested in Joe Bernardello's article, please send a s.a.s.e. (29¢).

Hoped For Consequences for our Youth as a result of viewing the Malcolm X Film:

- a) In view of the manner in which Malcolm X died and the intensity with which he lived on our behalf, we hope that our youth, particularly, our young men, will come to comprehend the genocidal nature of this society - and their special role in joining our struggle for full freedom and justice.
- b) Will our youth come to appreciate the negative implications of 'conspicuous consumption', that wearing a Malcolm X insignia is a serious responsibility - its not a costume - its a uniform worn by those who have enlisted in our struggle for freedom and justice - and that it's an honor to uphold Malcolm X's legacy and contribution.
- c) Malcolm X was the ultimate self - educated man; he investigated, studied, listened and learned in order to increase his ability to serve our goals, not just his own.
- d) Malcolm X operated from a spiritual, ancestral, ethnic and religious frame of reference; he's a tough act to follow but 'when the going gets tough, the tough get going!!'
- e) He functioned, first and foremost, as a member of our community; he never forgot from whence we came; he had an undying love of his people. He believed in and practiced UNITY.
- f) Now add your own.....

P.S.: Recall that our subject was funeralized as El Hajj Malik El Shabazz, was a Minister of The Muslim Mosque, Inc. (Theresa Hotel) and was organizing the all - inclusive OAAU. He talked about many of us, but never against any of us. He set high standards for himself and demanded the same of others. He taught by example.

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MXLN Query:

Isn't about time that someone began to outline the specifics of what they would like to see in the coming Malcolm X film?

For instance, our request is for the following:

- a) Malcolm Little Phase: Documentation of the forces and mechanics of oppression and denial, demonstrating what Malcolm Little learned about his ultimate purpose & life's mission.
- b) Detroit Red & Satan Phase: The conditions which led to his participation in activities outside of the oppressor's laws; the circumstances that made a 'Satan' reputation a survival skill in prison. Obviously, these events were not an expression of his character!
- c) Malcolm X: Phase: The circumstances leading to his joining the Nation of Islam. Was it, in fact a conversion - or a structural opportunity to begin to discharge his life's mission? Was he an exemplary leader with high standards, etc.? The positive contributions of The Honorable Elijah Muhammad & the NOI?
- d) El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Phase: His travels to Africa & Mecca; his formation of the Muslim Mosque, Inc. and the OAAU; his work with African Heads of State; his resignation from the NOI, etc.

# MALCOLM: YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER RELEVANT

( A View From The Past )

Take off Work and Celebrate Malcolm X's 65th Birthday With Us !

Brooklyn: Friday May 18th

4th Annual Malcolm X Day Parade and Celebration;  
Starts at 10:15 AM Parade Route: Mother Gaston Blvd & Dumont Ave. South to Pitken Ave, West to Saratoga Ave, North to Dumont Ave and ending at Besty Head Park.  
Mayor David Dinkens, Grand Marshall, Marshalls: Jitu Weusi, Preston Wilcox, Jeanette Gadson, Ed Towns, Major Owens, Enoch Williams, DeCosta Headley, Aida Smith & More.  
Ronald Ward,  
Founder and Chairman.

Saturday May 19th.

19 Gun Salute to Malcolm X:  
at the El Hajj Malik Shabazz School, Macon & Malcolm X Blvd. From 10:00 AM until 6:00 PM. Speakers and Panelists:( Imam Siraj Wahhaj, Rev. Al Sharpton, Jitu Weusi, Sonny Carson, Dr. Leonard Jefferies, Lenora Eulani, Robert Hunter, Safiya Bandele, Prof. James Smalls, Job Mashriiki, Sam Pinn, Izell Glover, Michael Hopper Torrie McCartney, & More

Manhattan: Saturday May 19th Sojourn to Malcolm's GraveSite. 11:00 AM Sharp! Buses : leave from 224 139th (7 & 8th Aves ) \$10.00 per person (We will leave no one for not having money to go.) If you are driving the libration flag outside your car.  
**Chairman James Small.**

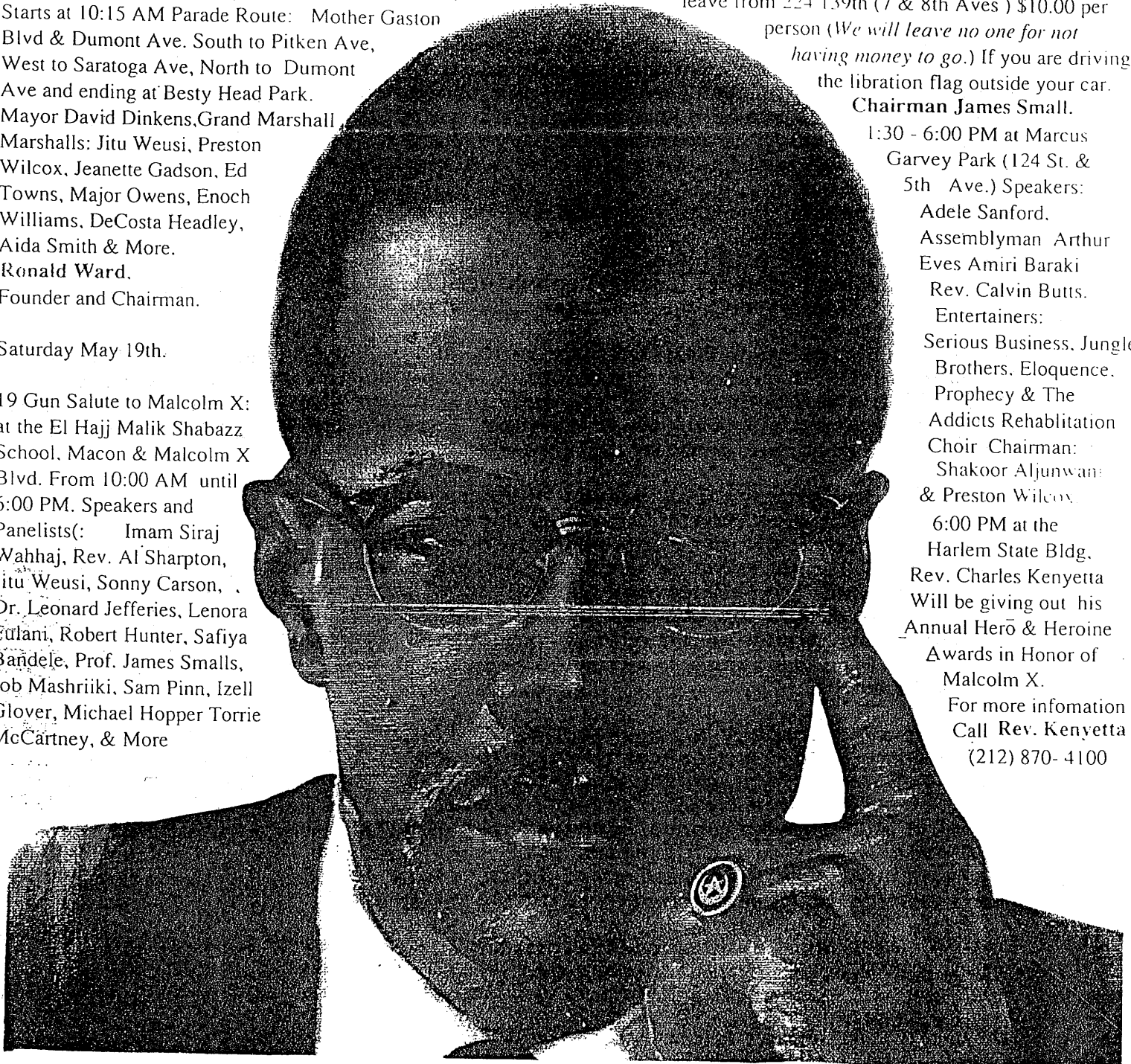
1:30 - 6:00 PM at Marcus Garvey Park (124 St. & 5th Ave.) Speakers:

Adele Sanford,  
Assemblyman Arthur Eves Amiri Baraki  
Rev. Calvin Butts.

Entertainers:  
Serious Business, Jungle Brothers, Eloquence, Prophecy & The Addicts Rehabilitation Choir  
Chairman: Shakoer Aljunwan & Preston Wilcox.

6:00 PM at the Harlem State Bldg.  
Rev. Charles Kenyetta  
Will be giving out his Annual Herō & Heroine Awards in Honor of Malcolm X.

For more infomation  
Call Rev. Kenyetta  
(212) 870-4100



For City-Wide information on call: The COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE IMAGE AND WORKS OF MALCOLM X,  
(718) 498-2150 Torrie McCartney, Events Coordinator or **Howard D. Wright** Chairman

- SUBSCRIPTION APPLICATION -

The ability to READ awoke in me a long dormant craving to be mentally alive.

Malcolm X

(TAX EXEMPT CONTRIBUTIONS - to continue this archiving process - GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED.)

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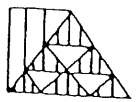


Malcolm X

With the advent of Spike Lee's movie on Malcolm X, we are seeking to equip viewers to be able to, effectively, evaluate the movie. All new subscribers will, automatically, receive a 28 pp. BONUS COMPOSITE EDITION. It's a Collector's Item! An index of back issues is available @ \$1.25 plus a s.a.s.e. (29¢); payable to "AFRAM". Build your own Malcolm X Library. See over.

Nov., 25, 1989  
See over..

July 26, 1992



# AFRAM FILES

Finally,  
there is an alternative.

Suffering alone does not describe us.  
Out of it has come a new understanding  
And a new life style.

KNOWLEDGE is too  
PRECIOUS to  
HOARD!

Malcolm X Lovers Network Series: ISSN: 1044 - 9116

This network was developed at the suggestion of Brother Omar Farooq of Terre Haute, Indiana. He has been both a collector and a disseminator of Malcolm memorabilia for years. His network reaches into Africa into the Islamic strongholds.

The purpose of the network is as follows:

- a) to collect and exchange memorabilia and thought perspectives.
- b) to promote annual memorial (Feb., 21st) and birthday (May 19th) commemorations as community education and building vehicles.
- c) to support the efforts of the Malcolm X Memorial Fund, 2019 20th St., Omaha, N E 68110: attn: Rowena Moore. (Malcolm X's birthsite in Omaha was listed in the national Registry of Important Places in March, 1984.)
- c) to keep his legacy and contribution vital and fresh by exemplifying and enacting his teachings.
- e) to identify and establish namesake institutions, streets, buildings, offsprings, etc.
- f) to convene occasional regional and national meetings. (The network is usually well-represented at the annual Malcolm X Conferences, held at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, 199 Chambers St., New York, N.Y. 10007. Get your name on the mailing list.)

The network is, possibly, the most active alternative information network that exists. It includes authors, artists, photographers, collectors, materials producers and promoters, veteran activists, elected officials, policy-makers, news columnists, etc. They subscribe; they share information; they promote the sale of subscriptions and communicate by phone. Many are in demand as conference participants and speakers. The MXLN has compiled over 170 pp. of newsclippings, in addition to eleven Sunday Supplement and magazine articles, dealing with Spike Lee and the production of the Malcolm X film; thanks to the network.

Subscriber Services: (\$15.00 per year for INDIVIDUALS; \$50.00 per year for ORGANIZATIONS.)\*

- a) Monthly mailing of 10 pp. composites of news clippings, flyers, manuscripts bibliographies of books, video & cassette tapes, etc., etc. Composites of more than 10 pp. are included in the AFRAM Communique Series, about which subscribers are regularly informed.. Subscribers now have their own Malcolm X Libraries!
- b) We respond to research inquiries - and refer to other sources

NAME (Contact Person) \_\_\_\_\_ Organization \_\_\_\_\_

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\* payable to "AFRAM".

INDIVIDUAL subscribers must receive mailings at home for family uses.  
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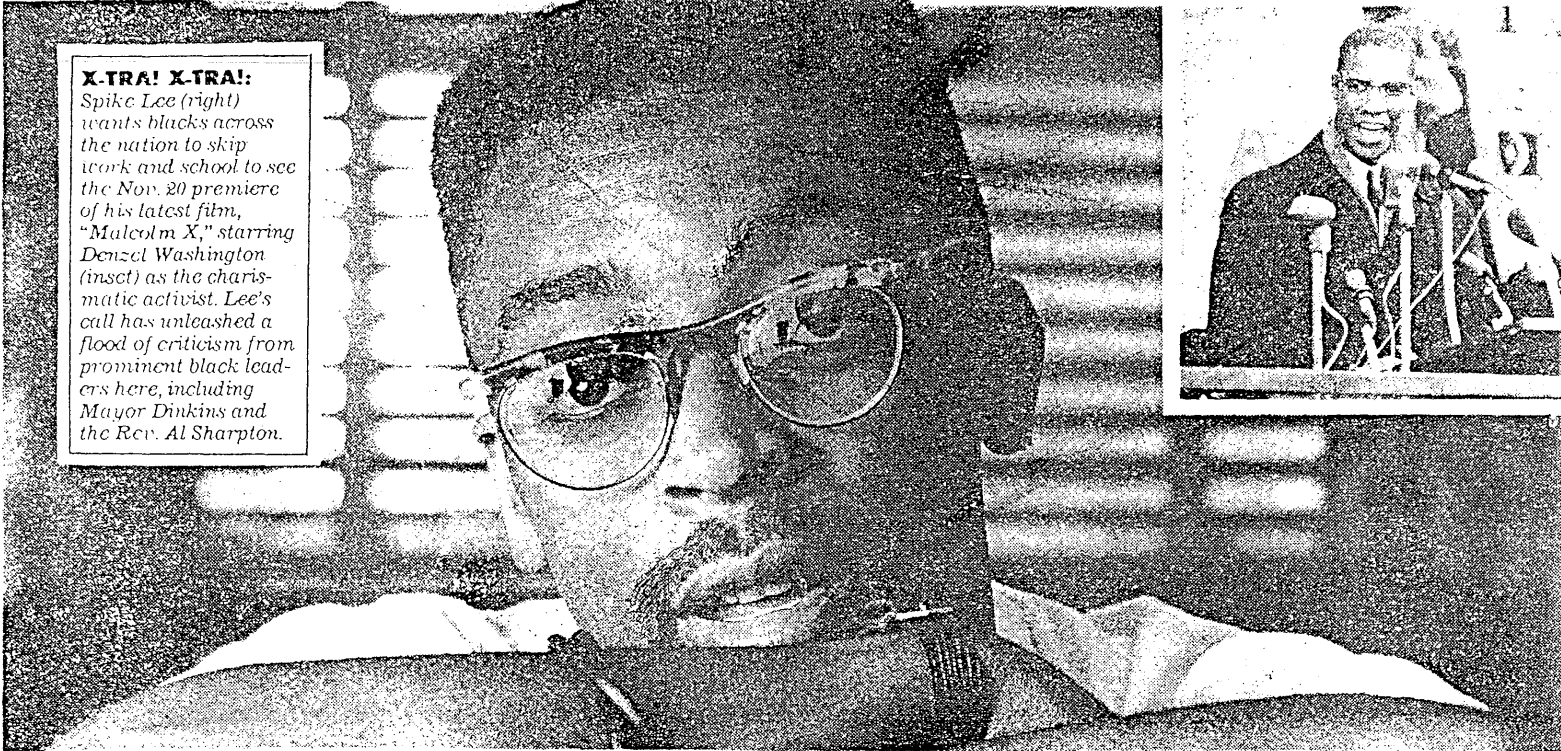
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# SPIKE: PLAY HOOKY

## X-TRA! X-TRA!

Spike Lee (right) wants blacks across the nation to skip work and school to see the Nov. 20 premiere of his latest film, "Malcolm X," starring Denzel Washington (inset) as the charismatic activist. Lee's call has unleashed a flood of criticism from prominent black leaders here, including Mayor Dinkins and the Rev. Al Sharpton.



By MARSHA KRANES, RICHARD STEIER, FREDRIC DICKER & DON BRODERICK

## Urges blacks to stay home for 'Malcolm X'

Controversial black filmmaker Spike Lee is urging all blacks to take off from work and school the day his new movie, "Malcolm X," opens.

"We're telling them they've got to turn out to support this film and support Malcolm," Lee said in an interview published yesterday in the Los Angeles Times.

His 3-hour, 11-minute epic, featuring Denzel Washington as the assassinated black leader, is scheduled to open nationwide on Friday, Nov. 20.

Lee, who was out of the country yesterday and unavailable for comment, told the Times that playing hooky for the day is justified because his film provides "the American history [children are] not getting in school."

"If they go see the film and write a report of what they've seen, the teachers can't hold that against them," he said.

Officials and black leaders here disagreed.

"The mayor agrees with Spike that his movie is very compelling and will provide a rich history lesson to young African-Americans," said Dinkins' spokeswoman, Ruby Ryles.

"But the mayor very much prefers that kids go to see Spike Lee's movie after school and that workers see the movie after work — as he plans to do," she added.

The Rev. Al Sharpton, who plays an activist in the film, agrees.

"Even though they would be seeing the premiere of me as an actor, I would not say they should boycott the school," Sharpton said.

"I would be more inclined to challenge schools to bring students to go and see it," he said.

Roy Innis, national chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality, was more outspoken, blasting Lee as "a merchant of shame."

"This is a sick little guy. Who the

hell does he think he is?" Innis fumed.

"Black kids need their education, and he's using them selfishly for his own self-aggrandizement."

Lee first called on blacks to cut school and work to support his film last week at a meeting of the National Association of Black Journalists in Detroit.

According to the Detroit News, he exhorted his audience, "Don't go to work that day! Don't let the children go to school! Go to this movie! We have to support this film or Hollywood will have the excuse it wants."

In his L.A. Times interview, Lee explained that he wants his movie to score big on its opening weekend.

He also told the newspaper he will make no changes in the film's controversial opening sequence, which features a burning American flag that dissolves into a charred letter "X."

Nor will he edit out footage showing the March 1991 beating of Rodney King by white police officers in Los Angeles.

"It's staying in," Lee told the Times.

"Anybody who sees the opening credit sequence will have no trouble interpreting what the juxtaposition [of 1960s and more recent events] is saying: that this [story] is something we're not fabricating. It's not Hollywood, this ain't Walt Disney. This is about the present state of race relations in the world."

He added that Warner Bros. will not insist on deletions because "they know they're being watched very closely on this."

Lee has been tangling with Warner Bros. ever since the film went \$5 million over its \$28 million budget and the film company balked at footing the extra bills.

After a series of public attacks, Lee, the budget problems were solved — and Lee went on to spend a total of \$35 million.

"Warner Bros. has gotten the best bargain in the world," Brooklyn-based filmmaker told Times.

Among those who hope school don't heed Lee's call to cut class here are officials of the city's Bd. of Education and the United Federation of Teachers.

"Children should never be used as tools in these kind of political discussions. They belong in school," said Jim Vlasto, spokesman Schools Chancellor Joseph Fernandez.

Added UFT spokesman Shanas, "Keeping kids out of school is not the answer to the kind of problems Spike Lee is raising. Proving the curriculum where necessary is what must be done."

# Media racists attack filmmaker Spike Lee

By Monica Moorehead

With the release of the film "Malcolm X" just three months away, director Spike Lee is urging the public and especially the Black community to turn out in huge numbers for the film during the opening weekend.

In an interview with the Los Angeles Times Aug. 26, Lee called for a boycott of classes and work on Nov. 20, the first day the film goes into wide release. He initially made the request at a recent meeting of the National Association of Black Journalists in Detroit.

In the interview, Lee justified the school boycott with the explanation that his film will "provide the American history children are not getting in school. If they go see the film and write a report on what they've seen the teacher can't hold that [skipping class] against them."

Whether Lee's call for a boycott will have an impact is anybody's speculation. It's too early to tell. But it has already roused a racist reaction.

The New York Post, notorious for its racist vulgarities, went out of its way to solicit quotes from moderate African American officials like New York Mayor David Dinkins and even the totally discredited right-wing reactionary Roy Innis of the Congress of Racial Equality. Both took issue with Lee's pronouncement.

The big business media are forever seeking opportunities to drive a wedge into the Black, Latino and other oppressed and working class communities. Lee has been a long-time target of the media for his outspokenness on the question of institutionalized racism within the education system and even Hollywood.

The movie "Malcolm X" could arguably become the most controversial movie of 1992, similar in impact to the movie "JFK."

It has been nothing short of a struggle for Lee to make this film. Originally it was to be directed by Norman Jewison, a well-respected white director associated with the movie "In the Heat of the Night." When Lee pointed out that only a Black director should make a film on Malcolm X, Jewison bowed out.

The next hurdle was the budget for the film. Warner Brothers had agreed to a \$28 million budget. When the film's production costs exceeded that figure, the studio denied Lee additional funding. Lee appealed to several Black entertainers, including Bill Cosby and Oprah Winfrey, who intervened financially to insure the film's completion.

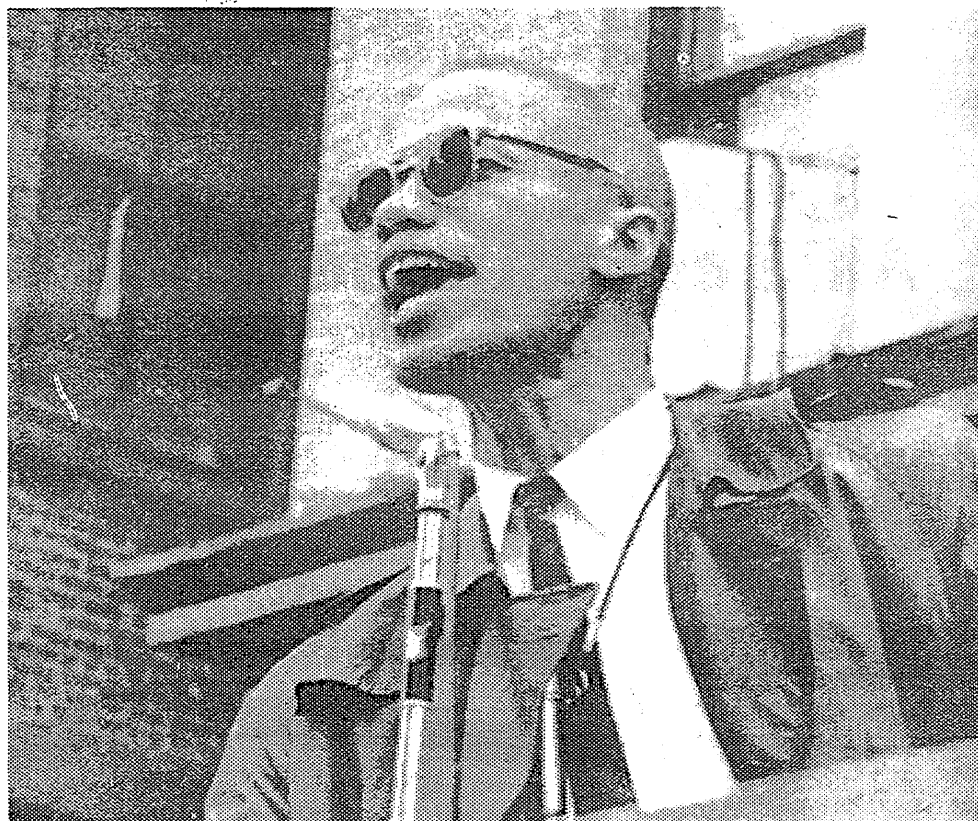
It is not unusual for a film to go over budget. It is unusual for a studio to deny extra funding. Except when the film is being made by a Black director on a subject like the life of Malcolm X. ■



## MALCOLM X

Media racists attack film maker Spike Lee

6



Malcolm X



**ABOUT SPIKE LEE**

# Civics Lesson Or Self-Promotion?

By Lionel McPherson

**W**ITH HIS PRONOUNCEMENT two weeks ago that black Americans collectively should skip work and school to attend the opening of his upcoming film, "Malcolm

**Inside the Heads of the Democratic Senate Hopefuls: Today, Robert Abrams on Page 78**

X," Spike Lee broke new ground in the dubious art of self-promotion. Never mind the justification that his film is integral to understanding African-

American history, which most schools don't teach in any depth. This nucleus of truth should not cover the real motivation of one of the leading black apostles of pop commercialism.

Perhaps Lee equates his own benefit with that of other African Americans. He seems to be saying, A dollar for me equals a dollar for "the community." While he asserts the film's tremendous instructional value, the lesson comes at a price — \$7 or so to offset its \$35-million production cost. But of course this is for black America's sake.

(Lee, who apparently favors the Republican platform goal of "school choice," might have suggested discounted admissions, at least for black students, to accompany such bold academic claims.)

These sorts of ploys are not new for him. A couple of years ago, he opened Spike's Joint in the Fort Greene section of Brooklyn, a store dedicated to hawking the official merchandise of his films. As Lee explained it, this was community investment — though his store markets luxury items, not staple goods or services essential to neighborhood development. Similarly, he has stated that the opportunity to teach black cinema and screenwriting at Harvard University is his way of giving something

*Lionel McPherson, formerly racism desk coordinator at FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting), will be a graduate student in philosophy at Harvard.*



back to the black community — all few hundred of us at Harvard.

More recently, Lee took out full-page ads in mainstream New York City newspapers announcing the opening of a Spike's Joint boutique at Macy's. Those who insist that he is a racially divisive provocateur need only take one look at his sly smile in the ad to catch the underlying drift: He is an equal-opportunity capitalist broker, and his Afrocentric posturing, almost as bankrupt as the department-store chain itself, is the spark inciting further revenues.

Spike Lee is clearly a talented filmmaker with a genuine ability to tap into this country's racial apprehensions. As "City Sun" film critic Armond

—Continued on page 77

NOTE: As Friday, Nov., 20, 1992 approaches - when Spike Lee's 'Malcolm X' film hits the national theatre outlets - one can get oneself published as long as references to 'Spike Lee & Malcolm X' are included. This article, then, is essentially a non - article in that it asks an obvious question and, narrowly, responds to it in an exceedingly logical fashion. Spike has used himself and his film production activities to promote the film and himself. So what? He has created an anticipation without giving any serious clues as to the substance of the film. Is he presenting himself as a historian and a griot or as an artist with his own rights, designs and interest? Will it be another 'Fountainhead' a la Jane Rayn? Like the Michael Jordan syndrome, when all is forgotten when he picks up the basketball, if the Malcolm X film is a blockbuster, all will be forgotten. (PW), -9-8-92.



AP Photo

Malcolm X: Is Spike Lee going too far?

—Continued from page 40

White noted, "There's no reason to believe that 'Malcolm X' won't be an interesting and important film . . . better than most stuff out there." But Lee is also a one-man media conglomerate who directs and appears in Nike shoe ads and rents his image to Gap clothing, among other ventures. Nothing inherently wrong with any of this. As the huge cross-cultural success of rap music has shown, it is possible for black artists to insist on being "paid in full" and remain so-

cially, even politically, vital.

Yet with "Malcolm X," Lee has gone too far. He has played upon the concerns of black Americans for a culturally inclusive curriculum to promote his own film, cynically placing black youths in the crossfire by encouraging them to do the wrong thing. \*

The truth is, the black audience he targeted will see this film anyway. His appeal for a general strike on Nov. 20 really amounts to an opportunistic attempt to whip up controversy — a tactic he has copied from black public figures from Rev. Al Sharpton (who appears in the film) to Roy Innis.

There's also the nasty business of Lee believing he's secured all rights to Malcolm X's name. Not content with the success of his trendy "X" caps and the worthy insinuation of the black activist into pop consciousness, he complains about bootleggers ripping him off. Further, he now has the nerve to insist — over the objections of Malcolm X's widow, Dr. Betty Shabazz — that he somehow owns not merely the right to make a biographical film and sell thousands of T-shirts, jackets, caps and posters, but to define and control the image and meaning of Malcolm X himself.

The spectacle is ludicrous and infuriating. This is not "a black thing," and people should recognize self-serving crass commercialism when they see it. Sadly, such spirited objections only fuel Lee's promotional machine — indeed, he might be counting on the media's penchant for "black-on-black" criticism.

But I will pay my money along with everyone else to see his three-hour-11-minute magnum opus. I hope it will be possible to separate the art from the artist.

## POINT OF VIEW | The Way To Curb Illiteracy

**T**EACHERS IN OTHER countries with alphabets have successfully used phonics for the last 3,500 years. The United States is the only country in the world with teachers who try to teach most of their students to read with sight repetition of whole words. And the United States is the only country with illiterate schoolchildren, and with illiterate adults who were once illiterate schoolchildren.

We must stop pinning our hopes for better schools on "free choice" systems for millions of parents and students who live in towns with one poor grade school, one poor middle school and one poor high school. And for millions more who live in inner cities with 50 poor grade schools, 20 poor middle schools and 10 poor high schools. Chester Finn's "world class standard" achievement tests won't help students who can't read "world class standard" questions — much less answer them. More trips to the zoo and the ballet for pre-schoolers aren't the answer.

We need to give all children the only "head start" that matters — literacy by the age of seven. We did it before the introduction of "see and say." We can do it again. Then we can see what else needs to be done.

— From "That's Right — They're Wrong" by Regna Lee Wood in *National Review*

\* If staying out of school is the 'wrong thing', how about staying out on Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays; both of whom were beneficiaries of slavery; the days when teachers are given time to do 'clerical' work; or on Jewish holidays in majority Black & Hispanic schools where there are so few Jewish teachers that their absence does not really effect the operation of the school. Surely, for students to stay out of school on the opening day is not 'typical truancy' it has educational, cultural and political value!