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# Malcolm X

(1925 - 1965)

## *"The Ballot or the Bullet"*

King Solomon Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan - April 12, 1964

Malcolm X was one of the most dynamic, dramatic and influential figures of the civil rights era. He was an apostle of black nationalism, self respect, and uncompromising resistance to white oppression. Malcolm X was a polarizing figure who both energized and divided African Americans, while frightening and alienating many whites. He was an unrelenting truth-teller who declared that the mainstream civil rights movement was naïve in hoping to secure freedom through integration and nonviolence. The blazing heat of Malcolm X's rhetoric sometimes overshadowed the complexity of his message, especially for those who found him threatening in the first place. Malcolm X was assassinated at age 39, but his political and cultural influence grew far greater in the years after his death than when he was alive.

Malcolm X is now popularly seen as one of the two great martyrs of the 20th century black freedom struggle, the other being his ostensible rival, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. But in the spring of 1964, when Malcolm X gave his "Ballot or the Bullet" speech, he was regarded by a majority of white Americans as a menacing character. Malcolm X never directly called for violent revolution, but he warned that African Americans would use "any means necessary" – especially armed self defense – once they realized just how pervasive and hopelessly entrenched white racism had become.<sup>1</sup>

He was born Malcolm Little in 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska. His father, Earl, was a Baptist preacher and follower of the black nationalist Marcus Garvey. Earl Little's political activism provoked threats from the Ku Klux Klan. After the family moved to Lansing, Michigan, white terrorists burned the Littles' home. A defiant Earl Little shot at the arsonists as they got away. In 1931, Malcolm's father was found dead. His family suspected he'd been murdered by white vigilantes. Malcolm's mother, Louise, battled mental illness and struggled to care for her eight children during the Great Depression. She was committed to a state mental institution when Malcolm was 12. He and the other young children were scattered among foster families. After completing the eighth grade, Malcolm Little dropped out when a teacher told him that his dream of becoming a lawyer was unrealistic for a "nigger."<sup>2</sup>

As a teenager, Malcolm Little made his way to New York, where he took the street name Detroit Red and became a pimp and petty criminal. In 1946, Malcolm Little was sent to prison for burglary. He read voraciously while serving time and converted to the Black Muslim faith. He joined the Nation of Islam (NOI) and changed his name to Malcolm X, eliminating that part of his identity he called a white-imposed slave name.

Malcolm X was released in 1952 after six years in prison. With his charisma and eloquence, Malcolm rose rapidly in the Nation of Islam. He became the chief spokesman and field recruiter for NOI leader Elijah Muhammad. As historian Peniel Joseph describes it, NOI's unorthodox interpretation of Islam was mixed with a doctrine of black personal responsibility and economic self-sufficiency, along with "theological fundamentalism, anti-white mythology, and total racial separation as the means to black



Malcolm X

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redemption."<sup>3</sup> Wearing impeccable suits, maintaining an air of fierce dignity and adhering to a strict code of moral propriety, Malcolm X was a living demonstration of how the NOI could save a wayward people from racial submission and personal self-destruction. The Nation dismissed the conventional civil rights movement – with its protest marches and demands for equal rights legislation -- as impotent and misguided. As Malcolm X declared in this speech, the only effective solution to racial inequality was black economic and social separatism.

As Malcolm X's national prominence grew, so did a rift between him and Elijah Muhammad. Malcolm X far overshadowed his mentor in the public sphere. He also grew disillusioned by Elijah Muhammad's scandalous personal behavior; the Messenger fathered several children through affairs with his secretaries. The conflict deepened when Muhammad suspended Malcolm X for saying that President John F. Kennedy's assassination represented "the chickens coming home to roost" because of the war in Vietnam.<sup>4</sup> Finally, in March 1964, Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam and charted his own course of militant, black nationalism.

On April 12, 1964, one month after splitting with the NOI, Malcolm X gave his "Ballot or the Bullet" speech at King Solomon Baptist Church in Detroit (he'd given the address nine days earlier in Cleveland, but the Detroit version is regarded by some scholars as definitive).<sup>5</sup> It was the fullest declaration of his black nationalist philosophy. Mainstream black ministers in Detroit tried to block Malcolm X from using the church, saying "separatist ideas can do nothing but set back the colored man's cause." But the church hall had already been rented out for the event.<sup>6</sup>

"The Ballot or the Bullet" became one of Malcolm X's most recognizable phrases, and the speech was one of his greatest orations. Two thousand people – including some of his opponents -- turned out to hear him speak in Detroit. President Lyndon Johnson was running for reelection in 1964, and Malcolm X declared it "the year of the ballot or the bullet." He outlined a new, global sensibility in the fight for racial justice: "We intend to expand [the freedom struggle] from the level of civil rights to the level of human rights."

Malcolm was now free of the NOI's ban on members participating in the mainstream civil rights movement. He encouraged black militants to get involved in voter registration drives and other forms of community organizing to redefine and expand the movement.<sup>7</sup>

The day after his Detroit speech, Malcolm X embarked on an overseas tour that included a life-changing pilgrimage to the Muslim holy city of Mecca. Known as the Hajj, the pilgrimage must be carried out at least once in a lifetime by every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so. The racial diversity he experienced in the Middle East, especially among Muslims, led him to discard his strict notions of black separatism for a wider, more inclusive movement against white supremacy and colonialism. In the summer of 1964, Malcolm X announced a new effort, the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU).

In the last months of his life, Malcolm X's conflict with the Nation of Islam grew increasingly bitter. Elijah Muhammad and the NOI had a long history of using violence and intimidation against members who strayed. In February, 1965, Malcolm X's home was firebombed. He publicly blamed the Nation of Islam and predicted he would be killed. Malcolm X was shot to death on February 12, 1965 as he prepared to speak at an OAAU rally at the Audubon Ballroom in New York. Three black men, all members of the NOI, were convicted and sent to prison for the murder.

In an editorial after his death, The New York Times described Malcolm X as "an extraordinary and twisted man, turning many true gifts to evil purpose."<sup>8</sup> Actor and activist Ossie Davis eulogized him as "our own black shining prince."<sup>9</sup> In death, he became a seminal figure to an increasingly militant generation of young African Americans, a beacon for activists in the 1960s Black Power and Black Arts movements.

In assessing Malcolm X's impact, theologian James Cone wrote: "More than anyone else he revolutionized the black mind, transforming docile Negroes and self-effacing colored people into proud blacks and self-confident African-Americans."<sup>10</sup> By the end of the 20th century, Malcolm X was recognized in mainstream culture as a hero of the civil rights era. The militant radical whose image once provoked fear and hatred among many white Americans was celebrated in mainstream movie theaters, on Black History Month posters in elementary school classrooms, and on a 1999 postage stamp issued by the United States government.

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Mr. Moderator, Rev. Cleage, brothers and sisters and friends, and I see some enemies. *[laughter, applause]* In fact, I think we'd be fooling ourselves if we had an audience this large and didn't realize that there were some enemies present.

This afternoon we want to talk about the ballot or the bullet. The ballot or the bullet explains itself. But before we get into it, since this is the year of the ballot or the bullet,

I would like to clarify some things that refer to me personally, concerning my own personal position.

I'm still a Muslim. That is, my religion is still Islam. *[applause]* My religion is still Islam. I still credit Mr. Muhammad for what I know and what I am. He's the one who opened my eyes. *[applause]* At present I am the minister of the newly founded Muslim Mosque Incorporated, which has its offices in the Theresa Hotel right in the heart of Harlem, that's the black belt in New York City. And when we realize that Adam Clayton Powell, is a Christian minister, he has Abyssinian Baptist Church, but at the same time he's more famous for his political struggling. And Dr. King is a Christian minister from Atlanta Georgia, or in Atlanta Georgia, but he's become more famous for being involved in the civil rights struggle. There's another in New York, Rev. Galamison, I don't know if you've heard of him out here, he's a Christian minister from Brooklyn, but has become famous for his fight against the segregated school system in Brooklyn. Rev. Cleage, right here, is a Christian minister, here in Detroit, he's head of the Freedom Now Party. All of these are Christian ministers *[applause]* ...all of these are Christian ministers but they don't come to us as Christian ministers, they come to us as fighters in some other category.

I am a Muslim minister. The same as they are Christian ministers, I'm a Muslim minister. And I don't believe in fighting today on any one front, but on all fronts. *[applause]* In fact, I'm a Black Nationalist freedom fighter. *[applause]* Islam is my religion but I believe my religion is my personal business. *[applause]* It governs my personal life, my personal morals. And my religious philosophy is personal between me and the God in whom I believe, just as the religious philosophy of these others is between them and the God in whom they believe. And this is best this way. Were we to come out here discussing religion, we'd have too many differences from the out start and we could never get together.

So today, though Islam is my religious philosophy, my political, economic and social philosophy is black nationalism. You and I – *[applause]* As I say, if we bring up religion, we'll have differences, we'll have arguments, and we'll never be able to get together. But if we keep our religion at home, keep our religion in the closet, keep our religion between ourselves and our God, but when we come out here we have a fight that's common to all of us against an enemy who is common to all of us. *[applause]*

The political philosophy of black nationalism only means that the black man should control the politics and the politicians in his own community. The time when white people can come in our community and get us to vote for them so that they can be our political leaders and tell us what to do and what not to do is long gone. *[applause]*

By the same token, the time when that same white man, knowing that your eyes are too far open, can send another Negro in the community, and get you and me to support him, so that he can use him to lead us astray, those days are long gone too. *[applause]*

The political philosophy of black nationalism only means that if you and I are going to live in a black community – and that's where we're going to live, 'cause as soon as you move into one of their....soon as you move out of the black community into their community, it's mixed for a period of time, but they're gone and you're right there all by yourself again. *[applause]*

We must, we must understand the politics of our community and we must know what politics is supposed to produce. We must know what part politics play in our lives. And until we become politically mature, we will always be misled, led astray, or deceived or

maneuvered into supporting someone politically who doesn't have the good of our community at heart. So the political philosophy of black nationalism only means that we will have to carry on a program, a political program, of reeducation – to open our people's eyes, make us become more politically conscious, politically mature. And then, we will – whenever we are ready to cast our ballot, that ballot will be cast for a man of the community, who has the good of the community at heart. *[applause]*

The economic philosophy of black nationalism only means that we should own and operate and control the economy of our community. You would never have found—you can't open up a black store in a white community. White man won't even patronize you. And he's not wrong. He got sense enough to look out for himself. It's you who don't have sense enough to look out for yourself. *[applause]*

The white man, the white man is too intelligent to let someone else come and gain control of the economy of his community. But you will let anybody come in and control the economy of your community, control the housing, control the education, control the jobs, control the businesses, under the pretext that you want to integrate. Nah, you're out of your mind. *[applause]*

The political ... the economic philosophy of black nationalism only means that we have to become involved in a program of reeducation, to educate our people into the importance of knowing that when you spend your dollar out of the community in which you live, the community in which you spend your money becomes richer and richer, the community out of which you take your money becomes poorer and poorer. And because these Negroes, who have been misled, misguided, are breaking their necks to take their money and spend it with the Man, the Man is becoming richer and richer, and you're becoming poorer and poorer. And then what happens? The community in which you live becomes a slum. It becomes a ghetto. The conditions become rundown. And then you have the audacity to complain about poor housing in a rundown community, while you're running down yourselves when you take your dollar out. *[applause]*

And you and I are in a double trap because not only do we lose by taking our money someplace else and spending it, when we try and spend it in our own community we're trapped because we haven't had sense enough to set up stores and control the businesses of our community. The man who is controlling the stores in our community is a man who doesn't look like we do. He's a man who doesn't even live in the community. So you and I, even when we try and spend our money on the block where we live or the area where we live, we're spending it with a man who, when the sun goes down, takes that basket full of money in another part of the town. *[applause]*

So we're trapped, trapped, double-trapped, triple-trapped. Any way we go, we find that we're trapped. Any every kind of solution that someone comes up with is just another trap. But the political and economic philosophy of black nationalism...the economic philosophy of black nationalism shows our people the importance of setting up these little stores, and developing them and expanding them into larger operations. Woolworth didn't start out big like they are today; they started out with a dime store, and expanded, and expanded, and expanded until today they are all over the country and all over the world and they getting some of everybody's money.

Now this is what you and I – General Motors, the same way, it didn't start out like it is. It started out just a little rat-race type operation. And it expanded and it expanded until today it's where it is right now. And you and I have to make a start. And the best place to start is right in the community where we live. *[applause]*

So our people not only have to be reeducated to the importance of supporting black business, but the black man himself has to be made aware of the importance of going into business. And once you and I go into business, we own and operate at least the businesses in our community. What we will be doing is developing a situation, wherein, we will actually be able to create employment for the people in the community. And once you can create some employment in the community where you live, it will eliminate the necessity of you and me having to act ignorantly and disgracefully, boycotting and picketing some cracker someplace else trying to beg him for a job. *[applause]*

Anytime you have to rely upon your enemy for a job, you're in bad shape. *[applause]* When you — and he is your enemy. You wouldn't be in this country if some enemy hadn't kidnapped you and brought you here. *[applause]* On the other hand, some of you think you came here on the Mayflower. *[laughter]*

So as you can see, brothers and sisters, today — this afternoon it is not our intention to discuss religion. We're going to forget religion. If we bring up religion we'll be in an argument. And the best way to keep away from arguments and differences, as I said earlier, put your religion at home, in the closet, keep it between you and your God. Because if it hasn't done anything more for you than it has, you need to forget it anyway. *[laughter, applause]*

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

We suffer political oppression, economic exploitation and social degradation. All of 'em from the same enemy. The government has failed us. You can't deny that. Any time you're living in the 20th century, 1964, and you walking around here singing "We Shall Overcome," the government has failed you. *[applause]* This is part of what's wrong with you, you do too much singing. *[laughter]* Today it's time to stop singing and start swinging. *[laughter, applause]*

You can't sing up on freedom. But you can swing up on some freedom. *[cheering]* Cassius Clay can sing. But singing didn't help him to become the heavyweight champion of the world. Swinging helped him. *[applause]*

So this government has failed us. The government itself has failed us. And the white liberals who have been posing as our friends have failed us. And once we see that all of these other sources to which we've turned have failed, we stop turning to them and turn to ourselves. We need a self-help program, a do-it-yourself philosophy, a do-it-right-now philosophy, a it's-already-too-late philosophy. This is what you and I need to get with. And the only time — the only way we're going to solve our problem is with a self-help program. Before we can get a self-help program started, we have to have a self-help philosophy. Black nationalism is a self-help philosophy.

What's so good about it — you can stay right in the church where you are and still take black nationalism as your philosophy. You can stay in any kind of civic organization that you belong to and still take black nationalism as your philosophy. You can be an atheist and still take black nationalism as your philosophy. This is a philosophy that eliminates the necessity for division and argument, 'cause if you're black, you should be thinking black. And if you're black and you not thinking black at this late date, well, I'm

sorry for you. *[applause]*

Once you change your philosophy, you change your thought pattern. Once you change your thought pattern you change your attitude. Once you change your attitude it changes your behavior pattern. And then you go on into some action. As long as you got a sit-down philosophy you'll have a sit-down thought pattern. And as long as you think that old sit-down thought, you'll be in some kind of sit-down action. They'll have you sitting in everywhere. *[laughter]*

It's not so good to refer to what you're going to do as a sit-in. That right there castrates you. Right there it brings you down. What goes with it? What – think of the image of someone sitting. An old woman can sit. An old man can sit. A chump can sit, a coward can sit, anything can sit. Well, you and I been sitting long enough and it's time for us today to start doing some standing and some fighting to back that up. *[applause]*

When we look at other parts of this Earth upon which we live, we find that black, brown, red and yellow people in Africa and Asia are getting their independence. They're not getting it by singing, "We Shall Overcome." No, they're getting it through nationalism. It is nationalism that brought about the independence of the people in Asia. Every nation in Asia gained its independence through the philosophy of nationalism. Every nation on the African continent that has gotten its independence brought it about through the philosophy of nationalism. And it will take black nationalism to bring about the freedom of 22 million Afro-Americans, here in this country, where we have suffered colonialism for the past 400 years. *[applause]*

America is just as much a colonial power as England ever was. America is just as much a colonial power as France ever was. In fact, America is more so a colonial power than they, because she is a hypocritical colonial power behind it. *[applause]* What is 20th – what, what do you call second-class citizenship? Why, that's colonization. Second-class citizenship is nothing but 20th slavery. How you gonna to tell me you're a second-class citizen? They don't have second-class citizenship in any other government on this Earth. They just have slaves and people who are free! Well, this country is a hypocrite! They try and make you think they set you free by calling you a second-class citizen. No, you're nothing but a 20th century slave. *[applause]*

Just as it took nationalism to remove colonialism from Asia and Africa, it'll take black nationalism today to remove colonialism from the backs and the minds of twenty-two million Afro-Americans here in this country. And 1964 looks like it might be the year of the ballot or the bullet. *[applause]*

Why does it look like it might be the year of the ballot or the bullet? Because Negroes have listened to the trickery and the lies and the false promises of the white man now for too long, and they're fed up. They've become disenchanted. They've become disillusioned. They've become dissatisfied. And all of this has built up frustrations in the black community that makes the black community throughout America today more explosive than all of the atomic bombs the Russians can ever invent. Whenever you got a racial powder keg sitting in your lap, you're in more trouble than if you had an atomic powder keg sitting in your lap. When a racial powder keg goes off, it doesn't care who it knocks out the way. Understand this, it's dangerous.

And in 1964, this seems to be the year. Because what can the white man use, now, to fool us? After he put down that March on Washington – and you see all through that now, he tricked you, had you marching down to Washington. Had you marching back and forth between the feet of a dead man named Lincoln and another dead man named

George Washington, singing, "We Shall Overcome." *[applause]*

He made a chump out of you. He made a fool out of you. He made you think you were going somewhere and you end up going nowhere but between Lincoln and Washington. *[laughter]*

So today our people are disillusioned. They've become disenchanted. They've become dissatisfied. And in their frustrations they want action. And in 1964 you'll see this young black man, this new generation, asking for the ballot or the bullet. That old Uncle Tom action is outdated. The young generation don't want to hear anything about "the odds are against us." What do we care about odds? *[applause]*

When this country here was first being founded, there were thirteen colonies. The whites were colonized. They were fed up with this taxation without representation. So some of them stood up and said, "Liberty or death!" I went to a white school over here in Mason, Michigan. The white man made the mistake of letting me read his history books. *[laughter]* He made the mistake of teaching me that Patrick Henry was a patriot, and George Washington – wasn't nothing non-violent about ol' Pat, or George Washington. "Liberty or death" is what brought about the freedom of whites in this country from the English. *[applause]*

They didn't care about the odds. Why, they faced the wrath of the entire British Empire. And in those days, they used to say that the British Empire was so vast and so powerful that the sun would never set on it. This is how big it was, yet these thirteen little scrawny states, tired of taxation without representation, tired of being exploited and oppressed and degraded, told that big British Empire, "Liberty or death." And here you have 22 million Afro-Americans, black people today, catching more hell than Patrick Henry ever saw. *[applause]*

And I'm here to tell you in case you don't know it – that you got a new, you got a new generation of black people in this country who don't care anything whatsoever about odds. They don't want to hear you ol' Uncle Tom, handkerchief-heads talking about the odds. No! *[laughter, applause]* This is a new generation. If they're going to draft these young black men, and send them over to Korea or to South Vietnam to face 800 million Chinese... *[laughter, applause]* If you're not afraid of those odds, you shouldn't be afraid of these odds. *[applause]*

Why is America – why does this loom to be such an explosive political year? Because this is the year of politics. This is the year when all of the white politicians are going to come into the Negro community. You never see them until election time. You can't find them until election time. *[applause]* They're going to come in with false promises. And as they make these false promises they're going to feed our frustrations, and this will only serve to make matters worse. I'm no politician. I'm not even a student of politics. I'm not a Republican, nor a Democrat, nor an American – and got sense enough to know it. *[applause]*

I'm one of the 22 million black victims of the Democrats. One of the 22 million black victims of the Republicans and one of the 22 million black victims of Americanism. *[applause]* And when I speak, I don't speak as a Democrat or a Republican, nor an American. I speak as a victim of America's so-called democracy. You and I have never seen democracy – all we've seen is hypocrisy. *[applause]*

When we open our eyes today and look around America, we see America not through the eyes of someone who has enjoyed the fruits of Americanism. We see America

through the eyes of someone who has been the victim of Americanism. We don't see any American dream. We've experienced only the American nightmare. We haven't benefited from America's democracy. We've only suffered from America's hypocrisy. And the generation that's coming up now can see it. And are not afraid to say it. If you go to jail, so what? If you're black, you were born in jail. *[applause]*

If you black you were born in jail, in the North as well as the South. Stop talking about the South. As long as you south of the Canadian border, you South. *[laughter, applause]* Don't call Governor Wallace a Dixie governor, Romney is a Dixie Governor. *[applause]*

Twenty-two million black victims of Americanism are waking up and they are gaining a new political consciousness, becoming politically mature. And as they become – develop this political maturity, they're able to see the recent trends in these political elections. They see that the whites are so evenly divided that every time they vote, the race is so close they have to go back and count the votes all over again. Which means that any block, any minority that has a block of votes that stick together is in a strategic position. Either way you go, that's who gets it. You're in a position to determine who'll go to the White House and who'll stay in the doghouse. *[laughter]*

You're the one who has that power. You can keep Johnson in Washington D.C., or you can send him back to his Texas cotton patch. *[applause]* You're the one who sent Kennedy to Washington. You're the one who put the present Democratic administration in Washington, D.C. The whites were evenly divided. It was the fact that you threw 80 percent of your votes behind the Democrats that put the Democrats in the White House.

When you see this, you can see that the Negro vote is the key factor. And despite the fact that you are in a position to be the determining factor, what do you get out of it? The Democrats have been in Washington, D.C. only because of the Negro vote. They've been down there four years. And they're – all other legislation they wanted to bring up they've brought it up, and gotten it out of the way, and now they bring up you. And now they bring up you! You put them first and they put you last. Because you're a chump! *[applause]* A political chump.

In Washington, D.C., in the House of Representatives there are 257 who are Democrats. Only 177 are Republican. In the Senate there are 67 Democrats. Only 33 are Republicans. The party that you backed controls two-thirds of the House of Representatives and the Senate and still they can't keep their promise to you. 'Cause you're a chump. *[applause]*

Any time you throw your weight behind a political party that controls two-thirds of the government, and that party can't keep the promise that it made to you during election-time, and you're dumb enough to walk around continuing to identify yourself with that party, you're not only a chump but you're a traitor to your race. *[applause]*

What kind of alibi do come up with? They try and pass the buck to the Dixiecrats. Now, back during the days when you were blind, deaf and dumb, ignorant, politically immature, naturally you went along with that. But today, as your eyes come open, and you develop political maturity, you're able to see and think for yourself, and you can see that a Dixiecrat is nothing but a Democrat – in disguise. *[applause]*

You look at the structure of the government that controls this country, is controlled by 16 senatorial committees and 20 congressional committees. Of the 16 senatorial



committees that run the government, 10 of them are in the hands of southern segregationists. Of the 20 congressional committees that run the government, 12 of them are in the hands of southern segregationists. And they're going to tell you and me that the South lost the war? *[laughter, applause]*

You, today, are in the hands of a government of segregationists. Racists, white supremacists, who belong to the Democratic party but disguise themselves as Dixiecrats. A Dixiecrat is nothing but a Democrat. Whoever runs the Democrats is also the father of the Dixiecrats. And the father of all of them is sitting in the White House. *[applause]* I say, and I'll say it again, you got a president who's nothing but a southern segregationist *[applause]* from the state of Texas. They'll lynch in Texas as quick as they'll lynch you in Mississippi. Only in Texas they lynch you with a Texas accent, in Mississippi they lynch you with a Mississippi accent. *[cheering]*

The first thing the cracker does when he comes in power, he takes all the Negro leaders and invites them for coffee. To show that he's all right. And those Uncle Toms can't pass up the coffee. *[laughter, applause]* They come away from the coffee table telling you and me that this man is all right *[laughter]*. 'Cause he's from the South and since he's from the South he can deal with the South. Look at the logic that they're using. What about Eastland? He's from the South. Why not make him the president? If Johnson is a good man 'cause he's from Texas, and being from Texas will enable him to deal with the South, Eastland can deal with the South better than Johnson! *[laughter, applause]*

Oh, I say you been misled. You been had. You been took. *[laughter, applause]* I was in Washington a couple of weeks ago while the senators were filibustering and I noticed in the back of the Senate a huge map, and on this map it showed the distribution of Negroes in America. And surprisingly, the same senators that were involved in the filibuster were from the states where there were the most Negroes. Why were they filibustering the civil rights legislation? Because the civil rights legislation is supposed to guarantee boarding rights to Negroes from those states. And those senators from those states know that if the Negroes in those states can vote, those senators are down the drain. *[applause]* The representatives of those states go down the drain.

And in the Constitution of this country it has a stipulation, wherein, whenever the rights, the voting rights of people in a certain district are violated, then the representative who's from that particular district, according to the Constitution, is supposed to be expelled from the Congress. Now, if this particular aspect of the Constitution was enforced, why, you wouldn't have a cracker in Washington, D.C. *[applause]*

But what would happen? When you expel the Dixiecrat, you're expelling the Democrat. When you destroy the power of the Dixiecrat, you are destroying the power of the Democratic Party. So how in the world can the Democratic Party in the South actually side with you, in sincerity, when all of its power is based in the South?

These Northern Democrats are in cahoots with the southern Democrats. *[applause]* They're playing a giant con game, a political con game. You know how it goes. One of 'em comes to you and make believe he's for you. And he's in cahoots with the other one that's not for you. Why? Because neither one of 'em is for you. But they got to make you go with one of 'em or the other.

So this is a con game, and this is what they've been doing with you and me all of these years. First thing, Johnson got off the plane when he become president, he ask,

"Where's Dickey?" You know who Dickey is? Dickey is old southern cracker Richard Russell. Lookie here! Yes, Lyndon B. Johnson's best friend is the one who is a head, who's heading the forces that are filibustering civil rights legislation. You tell me how in the hell is he going to be Johnson's best friend? *[applause]* How can Johnson be his friend and your friend too? No, that man is too tricky. Especially if his friend is still ol' Dickey. *[laughter, applause]*

Whenever the Negroes keep the Democrats in power they're keeping the Dixiecrats in power. This is true! A vote for a Democrat is nothing but a vote for a Dixiecrat. I know you don't like me saying that. I'm not the kind of person who come here to say what you like. I'm going to tell you the truth whether you like it or not. *[applause]*

Up here in the North you have the same thing. The Democratic Party don't – they don't do it that way. They got a thing they call gerrymandering. They maneuver you out of power. Even though you can vote they fix it so you're voting for nobody. They got you going and coming. In the South they're outright political wolves, in the North they're political foxes. A fox and a wolf are both canine, both belong to the dog family. *[laughter, applause]* Now, you take your choice. You going to choose a northern dog or a southern dog? Because either dog you choose, I guarantee you, you'll still be in the doghouse.

This is why I say it's the ballot or the bullet. It's liberty or it's death. It's freedom for everybody or freedom for nobody. *[applause]* America today finds herself in a unique situation. Historically, revolutions are bloody, oh yes they are. They have never had a bloodless revolution. Or a non-violent revolution. That don't happen even in Hollywood *[laughter]* You don't have a revolution in which you love your enemy. And you don't have a revolution in which you are begging the system of exploitation to integrate you into it. Revolutions overturn systems. Revolutions destroy systems.

A revolution is bloody, but America is in a unique position. She's the only country in history, in the position actually to become involved in a bloodless revolution. The Russian Revolution was bloody, Chinese Revolution was bloody, French Revolution was bloody, Cuban Revolution was bloody. And there was nothing more bloody than the American Revolution. But today, this country can become involved in a revolution that won't take bloodshed. All she's got to do is give the black man in this country everything that's due him, everything. *[applause]*

I hope that the white man can see this. 'Cause if you don't see it you're finished. If you don't see it you're going to become involved in some action in which you don't have a chance. We don't care anything about your atomic bomb; it's useless, because other countries have atomic bombs. When two or three different countries have atomic bombs, nobody can use them. So it means that the white man today is without a weapon. If you want some action you've got to come on down to Earth, and there's more black people on Earth than there are white people. *[applause]*

I only got a couple more minutes. The white man can never win another war on the ground. His days of war – victory – his days of battleground victory are over. Can I prove it? Yes. Take all the action that's going on this Earth right now that he's involved in. Tell me where he's winning – nowhere. Why, some rice farmers, some rice farmers! Some rice-eaters ran him out of Korea, yes they ran him out of Korea. Rice-eaters, with nothing but gym shoes and a rifle and a bowl of rice, took him and his tanks and his napalm and all that other action he's supposed to have and ran him across the Yalu. Why? Because the day that he can win on the ground has passed.

Up in French Indochina, those little peasants, rice-growers, took on the might of the French army and ran all the Frenchmen, you remember Dien Bien Phu! The same thing happened in Algeria, in Africa. They didn't have anything but a rifle. The French had all these highly mechanized instruments of warfare. But they put some guerilla action on. And a white man can't fight a guerilla warfare. Guerilla action takes heart, take nerve, and he doesn't have that. *[cheering]* He's brave when he's got tanks. He's brave when he's got planes. He's brave when he's got bombs. He's brave when he's got a whole lot of company along with him. But you take that little man from Africa and Asia; turn him loose in the woods with a blade. A blade. *[cheering]* That's all he needs. All he needs is a blade. And when the sun comes down – goes down and it's dark, it's even-Stephen. *[cheering]*

So it's the, it's the ballot or the bullet. Today, our people can see that we're faced with a government conspiracy. This government has failed us. The senators who are filibustering concerning your and my rights, that's the government. Don't say it's southern senators, this is the government. This is a government filibuster. It's not a segregationist filibuster, it's a government filibuster. Any kind of activity that takes place on the floor of the Congress or the Senate, that's the government. Any kind of dilly-dallying, that's the government. Any kind of pussy-footing, that's the government. Any kind of act that's designed to delay or deprive you and me, right now, of getting full rights, that's the government that's responsible. And anytime you find the government involved in a conspiracy to violate the citizenship or the civil rights of a people in 1964, then you are wasting your time going to that government expecting redress. Instead you have to take that government to the world court and accuse it of genocide and all of the other crimes that it is guilty of today. *[applause]*

So those of us whose political and economic and social philosophy is black nationalism have become involved in the civil rights struggle. We have injected ourselves into the civil rights struggle. And we intend to expand it from the level of civil rights to the level of human rights. As long as you fight it on the level of civil rights, you're under Uncle Sam's jurisdiction. You're going to his court expecting him to correct the problem. He created the problem. He's the criminal! You don't take your case to the criminal, you take your criminal to court. *[applause]*

When the government of South Africa began to trample upon the human rights of the people of South Africa they were taken to the U.N. When the government of Portugal began to trample upon the rights of our brothers and sisters in Angola, it was taken before the U.N. Why, even the white man took the Hungarian question to the U.N. And just this week, Chief Justice Goldberg was crying over three million Jews in Russia, about their human rights – charging Russia with violating the U.N. Charter because of its mistreatment of the human rights of Jews in Russia. Now you tell me how can the plight of everybody on this Earth reach the halls of the United Nations and you have twenty-two million Afro-Americans whose churches are being bombed, whose little girls are being murdered, whose leaders are being shot down in broad daylight? Now you tell me why the leaders of this struggle have never taken *[recording impaired]* *[their case to the U.N.?)*

So our next move is to take the entire civil rights struggle – problem – into the United Nations and let the world see that Uncle Sam is guilty of violating the human rights of 22 million Afro-Americans right down to the year of 1964 and still has the audacity or the nerve to stand up and represent himself as the leader of the free world? *[cheering]* Not only is he a crook, he's a hypocrite. Here he is standing up in front of other people, Uncle Sam, with the blood of your and mine mothers and fathers on his hands. With

the blood dripping down his jaws like a bloody-jawed wolf. And still got the nerve to point his finger at other countries. In 1964 you can't even get civil rights legislation and this man has got the nerve to stand up and talk about South Africa or talk about Nazi Germany or talk about Portugal. No, no more days like those! *[applause]*

So I say in my conclusion, the only way we're going to solve it: we got to unite. We got to work together in unity and harmony. And black nationalism is the key. How we gonna overcome the tendency to be at each other's throats that always exists in our neighborhood? And the reason this tendency exists – the strategy of the white man has always been divide and conquer. He keeps us divided in order to conquer us. He tells you, I'm for separation and you for integration, and keep us fighting with each other. No, I'm not for separation and you're not for integration, what you and I are for is freedom. *[applause]* Only, you think that integration will get you freedom; I think that separation will get me freedom. We both got the same objective, we just got different ways of getting' at it. *[applause]*

So I studied this man, Billy Graham, who preaches white nationalism. That's what he preaches. *[applause]* I say, that's what he preaches. The whole church structure in this country is white nationalism, you go inside a white church – that's what they preaching, white nationalism. They got Jesus white, Mary white, God white, everybody white – that's white nationalism. *[cheering]*

So what he does – the way he circumvents the jealousy and envy that he ordinarily would incur among the heads of the church – whenever you go into an area where the church already is, you going to run into trouble. Because they got that thing, what you call it, syndicated ... they got a syndicate just like the racketeers have. I'm going to say what's on my mind because the preachers already proved to you that they got a syndicate. *[applause]* And when you're out in the rackets, whenever you're getting in another man's territory, you know, they gang up on you. And that's the same way with you. You run into the same thing. So how Billy Graham gets around that, instead of going into somebody else's territory, like he going to start a new church, he doesn't try and start a church, he just goes in preaching Christ. And he says anybody who believe in him, you go wherever you find him.

So, this helps all the churches, and since it helps all the churches, they don't fight him. Well, we going to do the same thing, only our gospel is black nationalism. His gospel is white nationalism, our gospel is black nationalism. And the gospel of black nationalism, as I told you, means you should control your own, the politics of your community, the economy of your community, and all of the society in which you live should be under your control. And once you...feel that this philosophy will solve your problem, go join any church where that's preached. Don't join any church where white nationalism is preached. Why, you can go to a Negro church and be exposed to white nationalism. 'Cause when you are on – when you walk in a Negro church and see a white Jesus and a white Mary and some white angels, that Negro church is preaching white nationalism. *[applause]*

But, when you go to a church and you see the pastor of that church with a philosophy and a program that's designed to bring black people together and elevate black people, join that church. Join that church. If you see where the NAACP is preaching and practicing that which is designed to make black nationalism materialize, join the NAACP. Join any kind of organization – civic, religious, fraternal, political or otherwise that's based on lifting the black man up and making him master of his own community. *[applause]*

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