

MALCOM X, 1965

The Organization of Afro-American Unity
OAAU Founding Rally

Salaam Alaikum, Mr. Moderator, our distinguished guests, brothers and sisters, our friends and our enemies, everybody who's here.

As many of you know, last March when it was announced that I was no longer in the Black Muslim movement, it was pointed out that it was my intention to work among the 22 million non-Muslim Afro-Americans and to try and form some type of organization, or create a situation where the young people our young people, the students and others could study the problems of our people for a period of time and then come up with a new analysis and give us some new ideas and some new suggestions as to how to approach a problem that too many other people have been playing around with for too long. And that we would have some kind of meeting and determine at a later date whether to form a black nationalist party or a black nationalist army. There have been many of our people across the country from all walks of life who have taken it upon themselves to try and pool their ideas and to come up with some kind of solution to the problem that confronts all of our people. And tonight we are here to try and get an understanding of what it is they've come up with. Also, recently when I was blessed to make a religious pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca where I met many people from all over the world, plus spent many weeks in Africa trying to broaden my own scope and get more of an open mind to look at the problem as it actually is, one of the things that I realized, and I realized this even before going over there, was that our African brothers have gained their independence faster than you and I here in America have. They've also gained recognition and respect as human beings much faster than you and I.

Just ten years ago on the African continent, our people were colonized. They were suffering all forms of colonization, oppression, exploitation, degradation, humiliation, discrimination, and every other kind of action. And in a short time, they have gained more independence, more recognition, more respect as human beings than you and I have. And you and I live in a country which is supposed to be the citadel of education, freedom, justice, democracy, and all of those other pretty-sounding words. So it was our intention to try and find out what it was our African brothers were doing to get results, so that you and I could study what they had done and perhaps gain from that study or benefit from their experiences. And my travelling over there was designed to help to find out how.

One of the first things that the independent African nations did was to form an organization called the Organization of African Unity. This organization consists of all independent African states who have reached the agreement to submerge all differences and combine their efforts toward eliminating from the continent of Africa colonialism and all vestiges of oppression and exploitation being suffered by African people. Those who formed the organization of African states have differences. They represent probably every segment, every type of thinking. You have some leaders that are considered Uncle Toms, some leaders who are considered very militant. But even the militant African leaders were able to sit down at the same table with African leaders whom they considered to be Toms, or Tshombes, or that type of character. They forgot their differences for the sole purpose of bringing benefits to the whole. And whenever you find people who can't forget their differences, then they're more interested in their personal aims and objectives than they are in the conditions of the whole. Well, the African leaders showed their maturity by doing what the American white man said couldn't be done. Because if you recall when it was mentioned that these African states were going to meet in Addis Ababa! all of the Western press began to spread the propaganda that they didn't have enough in common to come together and to sit down together. Why, they had Nkrumah there, one of the most militant of the African leaders, and they had Adoula from the Congo. They had Nyerere there, they had Ben Bella there, they had Nasser there, they had Sekou Toure, they had Obote; they had Kenyatta, guess Kenyatta was there, I can't remember whether Kenya was independent at that time, but I think he was there.

Everyone was there and despite their differences, they were able to sit down and form what was known as the Organization of African Unity, which has formed a coalition and is working in conjunction with each other to fight a common enemy. Once we saw what they were able to do, we determined to try and do the same thing here in America among Afro-Americans who have been divided by our enemies. So we have formed an organization known as the Organization of Afro-American Unity which has the same aim and objective to fight whoever gets in our way, to bring about the complete independence of people of African descent here in the Western Hemisphere, and first here in the United States, and bring about the freedom of these people by

any means necessary. That's our motto. We want freedom by any means necessary. We want justice by any means necessary. We want equality by any means necessary. We don't feel that in 1964, living in a country that is supposedly based upon freedom, and supposedly the leader of the free world, we don't think that we should have to sit around and wait for some segregationist congressmen and senators and a President from Texas in Washington, D.C., to make up their minds that our people are due now some degree of civil rights. No, we want it now or we don't think anybody should have it.

The purpose of our organization is to start right here in Harlem, which has the largest concentration of people of African descent that exists anywhere on this earth. There are more Africans in Harlem than exist in any city on the African continent. Because that's what you and I are Africans. You catch any white man off guard in here right now, you catch him off guard and ask him what he is, he doesn't say he's an American. He either tells you he's Irish, or he's Italian, or he's German, if you catch him off guard and he doesn't know what you're up to. And even though he was born here, he'll tell you he's Italian. Well, if he's Italian, you and I are African even though we were born here. So we start in New York City first. We start in Harlem and by Harlem we mean Bedford-Stuyvesant, any place in this area where you and I live, that's Harlem with the intention of spreading throughout the state, and from the state throughout the country, and from the country throughout the Western Hemisphere. Because when we say Afro-American, we include everyone in the Western Hemisphere of African descent. South America is America. Central America is America. South America has many people in it of African descent. And everyone in South America of African descent is an Afro-American. Everyone in the Caribbean, whether it's the West Indies or Cuba or Mexico, if they have African blood, they are Afro-Americans. If they're in Canada and they have African blood, they're Afro-Americans. If they're in Alaska, though they might call themselves Eskimos, if they have African blood, they're Afro-Americans. So the purpose of the Organization of Afro-American Unity is to unite everyone in the Western Hemisphere of African descent into one united force. And then, once we are united among ourselves in the Western Hemisphere, we will unite with our brothers on the motherland, on the continent of Africa. So to get right with it, I would like to read you the "Basic Aims and Objectives of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, started here in New York, June, 1964.

The Organization of Afro-American Unity, organized and structured by a cross section of the Afro-American people living in the United States of America, has been patterned after the letter and spirit of the Organization of African Unity which was established at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in May of 1963. We, the members of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, gathered together in Harlem, New York:

Convinced that it is the inalienable right of all our people to control our own destiny; conscious of the fact that freedom, equality, justice and dignity are central objectives for the achievement of the legitimate aspirations of the people of African descent here in the Western Hemisphere, we will endeavour to build a bridge of understanding and create the basis for Afro-American unity; conscious of our responsibility to harness the natural and human resources of our people for their total advancement in all spheres of human endeavour; inspired by our common determination to promote understanding among our people and cooperation in all matters pertaining to their survival and advancement, we will support the aspirations of our people for brotherhood and solidarity in a larger unity transcending all organizational differences; convinced that, in order to translate this determination into a dynamic force in the cause of human progress conditions of peace and security must be established and maintained; and by conditions of peace and security, we mean we have to eliminate the barking of the police dogs, we have to eliminate the police clubs, we have to eliminate the water hoses, we have to eliminate all of these things that have become so characteristic of the American so-called dream. These have to be eliminated. Then we will be living in a condition of peace and security. We can never have peace and security as long as one black man in this country is being bitten by a police dog. No one in the country has peace and security.

Dedicated to the unification of all people of African descent in this hemisphere and to the utilization of that unity to bring into being the organizational structure that will project the black people's contributions to the world; persuaded that the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights are the principles in which we believe and that these documents if put into practice represent the essence of mankind's hopes and good intentions; desirous that all Afro-American people and organizations should henceforth unite so that the welfare and well-being of our people will be assured; we are resolved to reinforce the common bond of purpose between our people by submerging all of our differences and establishing a non-sectarian, constructive program for human rights;

We hereby present this charter

I. Establishment

The Organization of Afro-American Unity shall include all people of African descent in the Western Hemisphere, as well as our brothers and sisters on the African continent. Which means anyone of African descent, with African blood, can become a member of the Organization of Afro-American Unity and also any one of our brothers and sisters from the African continent. Because not only it is an organization of Afro-American unity meaning that we are trying to unite our people in the West but it's an organization of Afro-American unity in the sense that we want to unite all of our people who are in North America, South America, and Central America with our people on the African continent. We must unite together in order to go forward together. Africa will not go forward any faster than we will and we will not go forward any faster than Africa will. We have one destiny and we've had one past. In essence what it is saying is instead of you and me running around here seeking allies in our struggle for freedom in the Irish neighbourhood or the Jewish neighbourhood or the Italian neighbourhood, we need to seek some allies among people who look something like we do. It's time now for you and me to stop running away from the wolf right into the arms of the fox, looking for some kind of help. That's a drag.

II. Self Defence

Since self-preservation is the first law of nature, we assert the Afro-American's right to self-defence. The Constitution of the United States of America clearly affirms the right of every American citizen to bear arms. And as Americans, we will not give up a single right guaranteed under the Constitution. The history of unpunished violence against our people clearly indicates that we must be prepared to defend ourselves or we will continue to be a defenceless people at the mercy of a ruthless and violent racist mob. We assert that in those areas where the government is either unable or unwilling to protect the lives and property of our people, that our people are within our rights to protect themselves by whatever means necessary. I repeat, because to me this is the most important thing you need to know. I already know it. We assert that in those areas where the government is either unable or unwilling to protect the lives and property of our people, that our people are within our rights to protect themselves by whatever means necessary. This is the thing you need to spread the word about among our people wherever you go. Never let them be brainwashed into thinking that whenever they take steps to see that they're in a position to defend themselves that they're being unlawful. The only time you're being unlawful is when you break the law. It's lawful to have something to defend yourself. Why, I heard President Johnson either today or yesterday, I guess it was today, talking about how quick this country would go to war to defend itself. Why, what kind of a fool do you look like, living in a country that will go to war at the drop of a hat to defend itself, and here you've got to stand up in the face of vicious police dogs and blue-eyed crackers waiting for somebody to tell you what to do to defend yourself!

Those days are over, they're gone, that's yesterday. The time for you and me to allow ourselves to be brutalized non-violently is passé. Be non-violent only with those who are non-violent to you. And when you can bring me a non-violent racist, bring me a non-violent segregationist, then I'll get non-violent. But don't teach me to be non-violent until you teach some of those crackers to be non-violent. You've never seen a non-violent cracker. It's hard for a racist to be non-violent. It's hard for anyone intelligent to be non-violent. Everything in the universe does something when you start playing with his life, except the American Negro. He lays down and says, "Beat me, daddy."

So it says here: "A man with a rifle or a club can only be stopped by a person who defends himself with a rifle or a club." That's equality. If you have a dog, I must have a dog. If you have a rifle, I must have a rifle. If you have a club, I must have a club. This is equality. If the United States government doesn't want you and me to get rifles, then take the rifles away from those racists. If they don't want you and me to use clubs, take the clubs away from the racists. If they don't want you and me to get violent, then stop the racists from being violent. Don't teach us non-violence while those crackers are violent. Those days are over.

Tactics based solely on morality can only succeed when you are dealing with people who are moral or a system that is moral. A man or system which oppresses a man because of his color is not moral. It is the duty of every Afro-American person and every Afro-American community throughout this country to protect its people against mass murderers, against bombers, against lynchers, against floggers, against brutalizers and against exploiters.

i might say right here that instead of the various black groups declaring war on each other, showing how militant they can be cracking each other's heads, let them go down South and crack some of those crackers'

heads. Any group of people in this country that has a record of having been attacked by racists and there's no record where they have ever given the signal to take the heads of some of those racists why, they are insane giving the signal to take the heads of some of their ex-brothers. Or brother X's, I don't know how you put that.

III. Education

Education is an important element in the struggle for human rights. It is the means to help our children and our people rediscover their identity and thereby increase their self-respect. Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs only to the people who prepare for it today. And I must point out right there, when I was in Africa I met no African who wasn't standing with open arms to embrace any Afro-American who returned to the African continent. But one of the things that all of them have said is that every one of our people in this country should take advantage of every type of educational opportunity available before you even think about talking about the future. If you're surrounded by schools, go to that school. Our children are being criminally short-changed in the public school system of America. The Afro-American schools are the poorest-run schools in the city of New York. Principals and teachers fail to understand the nature of the problems with which they work and as a result they cannot do the job of teaching our children. They don't understand us, nor do they understand our problems; they don't. "The textbooks tell our children nothing about the great contributions of Afro-Americans to the growth and development of this country." And they don't. When we send our children to school in this country they learn nothing about us other than that we used to be cotton pickers. Every little child going to school thinks his grandfather was a cotton picker. Why, your grandfather was Nat Turner; your grandfather was Toussaint L'Ouverture; your grandfather was Hannibal. Your grandfather was some of the greatest black people who walked on this earth. It was your grandfather's hands who forged civilization and it was your grandmother's hands who rocked the cradle of civilization. But the textbooks tell our children nothing about the great contributions of Afro-Americans to the growth and development of this country. The Board of Education's integration plan is expensive and unworkable; and the organization of principals and supervisors in New York City's school system has refused to support the Board's plan to integrate the schools, thus dooming it to failure before it even starts. The Board of Education of this city has said that even with its plan there are 10 percent of the schools in Harlem and the Bedford-Stuyvesant community in Brooklyn that they cannot improve.

So what are we to do? This means that the Organization of Afro-American Unity must make the Afro-American community a more potent force for educational self-improvement. A first step in the program to end the existing system of racist education is to demand that the 10 percent of the schools the Board of Education will not include in its plan be turned over to and run by the Afro-American community itself. Since they say that they can't improve these schools, why should you and I who live in the community, let these fools continue to run and produce this low standard of education? So, let them turn those schools over to us. Since they say they can't handle them, nor can they correct them, let us take a whack at it.

What do we want? "We want Afro-American principals to head these schools. We want Afro-American teachers in these schools." Meaning we want black principals and black teachers with some textbooks about black people. We want textbooks written by Afro-Americans that are acceptable to our people before they can be used in these schools. The Organization of Afro-American Unity will select and recommend people to serve on local school boards where school policy is made and passed on to the Board of Education.

And this is very important. "Through these steps we will make the 10 percent of the schools that we take over educational showplaces that will attract the attention of people from all over the nation." Instead of them being schools turning out pupils whose academic diet is not complete, we can turn them into examples of what we can do ourselves once given an opportunity. If these proposals are not met, we will ask Afro-American parents to keep their children out of the present inferior schools they attend. And when these schools in our neighbourhood are controlled by Afro-Americans, we will then return our children to them. The Organization of Afro-American Unity recognizes the tremendous importance of the complete involvement of Afro-American parents in every phase of school life. The Afro-American parent must be willing and able to go into the schools and see that the job of educating our children is done properly. This whole thing about putting all of the blame on the teacher is out the window. The parent at home has just as much responsibility to see that what's going on in that school is up to par as the teacher in their schools. So it is our intention not only to devise an education program for the children, but one also for the parents to make them aware of their responsibility where education is concerned in regard to their children. We call on all Afro-Americans around the nation to be aware that the conditions that exist in the New York City public school system are as deplorable in their cities as they are here. We must unite our efforts and spread our program of self-improvement through education to every Afro-American community in America. We must

establish all over the country schools of our own to train our own children to become scientists, to become mathematicians. We must realize the need for adult education and for job retraining programs that will emphasize a changing society in which automation plays the key role. We intend to use the tools of education to help raise our people to an unprecedented level of excellence and self-respect through their own efforts.

IV. Politics and Economics

And the two are almost inseparable, because the politician is depending on some money; yes, that's what he's depending on. Basically, there are two kinds of power that count in America: economic power and political power, with social power being derived from those two. In order for the Afro-Americans to control their destiny, they must be able to control and affect the decisions which control their destiny: economic, political, and social. This can only be done through organization. The Organization of Afro-American Unity will organize the Afro-American community block by block to make the community aware of its power and its potential; we will start immediately a voter registration drive to make every unregistered voter in the Afro-American community an independent voter. We won't organize any black man to be a Democrat or a Republican because both of them have sold us out. Both of them have sold us out; both parties have sold us out. Both parties are racist, and the Democratic Party is more racist than the Republican Party. I can prove it. All you've got to do is name everybody who's running the government in Washington, D.C., right now. He's a Democrat and he's from either Georgia, Alabama, Texas, Mississippi, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, from one of those cracker states. And they've got more power than any white man in the North has. In fact, the President is from a cracker state. What's he talking about? Texas is a cracker state, in fact, they'll hang you quicker in Texas than they will in Mississippi. Don't you ever think that just because a cracker becomes president he ceases being a cracker. He was a cracker before he became president and he's a cracker while he's president. I'm going to tell it like it is. I hope you can take it like it is. : We propose to support and organize political clubs, to run independent candidates for office, and to support any Afro-American already in office who answers to and is responsible to the Afro-American community. We don't support any black man who is controlled by the white power structure. We will start not only a voter registration drive, but a voter education drive to let our people have an understanding of the science of politics so they will be able to see what part the politician plays in the scheme of things; so they will be able to understand when the politician is doing his job and when he is not doing his job. And any time the politician is not doing his job, we remove him whether he's white, black, green, blue, yellow or whatever other color they might invent. "The economic exploitation in the Afro-American community is the most vicious form practiced on any people in America." In fact, it is the most vicious practiced on any people on this earth. No one is exploited economically as thoroughly as you and I, because in most countries where people are exploited they know it. You and I are in this country being exploited and sometimes we don't know it.