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Who killed Malcolm X and why?

By Stephen Millies

"And we will know him then for what he was and is — a prince — our own Black shining prince! — who didn't hesitate to die, because he loved us so." That was how the legendary actor Ossie Davis ended his eulogy at Malcolm X's funeral.

Over a half-century later, two of the convicted assassins of Malcolm X, Muhammad Aziz and Khalil Islam, were exonerated on Nov. 18. They were framed in a 1966 show trial.

Justice delayed is justice denied. Muhammad Aziz, now 83 years old, spent 20 years in prison, while Khalil Islam served 22 years.

Both Black men survived years in solitary confinement. Khalil Islam, who died in 2009, never got to see his name cleared.

Muhammad Aziz, then known as Norman 3X Butler, and Khalil Islam, then known as Thomas 15X Johnson, were convicted with Mujahid Abdul Halim. Then known as Talmadge Hayer or Thomas Hagan, Halim confessed during the trial to killing Malcolm X but said his two co-defendants were innocent.

That didn't matter to the police and the courts. All three defendants were convicted and given life sentences by Judge Charles Marks.

The police were so disinterested in finding out who killed Malcolm X that they even didn't close off the crime scene. A dance was allowed to be held the evening of the assassination at the Audubon Ballroom with Malcolm's blood still on the stage.

All of the physical evidence, including a sawed-off shotgun that was one of the weapons used to murder Malcolm X, has disappeared.

Judge Marks turned down a defense motion to reveal the police interviews with a hundred eyewitnesses. Why?

When Halim gave the names of four people who were his fellow assassins in two affidavits in 1977 and 1978, Judge Harold Rothwarf refused to reopen the case. New York police and the FBI didn't investigate.

Both Muhammad Aziz and Khalil Islam had strong alibis. Aziz was at home suffering from thrombophlebitis in his right leg. Islam was also at his home when Malcolm X was killed, as confirmed by a neighbor who visited him.

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. apologized for the convictions of the two men. So why doesn't Vance announce an investigation into who assisted Mujahid Abdul Halim in murdering Malcolm X?

Vance refused to prosecute Dominique Strauss-Kahn, then head of the International Monetary Fund, for raping the Black hotel worker Nafissatou Diallo. The DA is the son of former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, who was a top Pentagon official during the dirty war against Vietnam and Laos.

FBI war against Black people

Black leaders have been targeted by the U.S. Government for over a century. The army considered Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to be a threat. FBI Director J. Ed-



Malcolm X speaking in Harlem in New York City on June 29, 1963. J. Edgar Hoover sent a telegram to the New York FBI office on June 6, 1964, demanding that they "do something about Malcolm X."

gar Hoover wanted him dead.

Dr. King denounced the war against Vietnam. He declared at New York's Riverside Church that "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today (is) our own government."

Exactly one year later, Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968. The same day, eight Green Berets were in Memphis.

During World War I, the Military Intelligence Division investigated one of Dr. King's grandfathers for "subversive activity" because he gave a sermon against lynching.

The FBI had the Nation of Islam under surveillance since the early 1940s. During World War II, NOI leader Elijah Muhammad was sent to prison for four years on charges of urging his followers not to register for the draft.

The U.S. armed forces were then completely segregated. So was its blood-supply, a Nazi-like practice.

In response, the Pittsburgh Courier started a "Double V" campaign, calling for victory over the Hitlers at home and abroad. Other Black newspapers joined the campaign and exposed racism inside and outside the military. With the support of President Franklin Roosevelt, J. Edgar Hoover wanted the Black newspaper publishers tried for treason.

During the anti-communist witch hunt after the war, the FBI tried to destroy every progressive organization in the country. Hoover launched COINTELPRO, short for counterintelligence program. It sought to provoke dissension within groups and between organizations.

Along with the Communist Party and Socialist Workers Party, COINTELPRO targeted Black activist groups. These included the Southern Christian Leadership Conference led by Dr. King, the Nation of Islam and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, known as SNCC.

COINTELPRO later waged a war of extermination against the Black Panther Party. As shown in the film "Judas and the Black Messiah," the FBI planted its informant William O'Neal within the Illinois Black Panther Party. O'Neal

was crucial to Chicago police murdering Illinois chapter chairman Fred Hampton and fellow Panther member Mark Clark on Dec. 4, 1969.

J. Edgar Hoover sent a telegram to the New York City FBI office on June 6, 1964, demanding that they "do something about Malcolm X." Eight-and-a-half months later the Black shining prince was murdered in front of his family and an audience of 400.

Letting Malcolm X be murdered

Malcolm X was assassinated in the Audubon Ballroom on Feb. 21, 1965. Now called the Malcolm X & Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Educational Center, it's located in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan.

A week before, on Feb. 14, the home of Malcolm X and his family — at 23-11 97th St. in the East Elmhurst section of Queens — was firebombed. The police refused to investigate. They planted a bottle filled with gasoline in the house, implying Malcolm set the fire himself.

There were always at least a half-dozen cops in front of any place where Malcolm X spoke in order to intimidate people. Yet a week after Malcolm and his family were nearly killed, there was just one cop stationed at the Audubon Ballroom's entrance. Other police were kept hidden nearby.

The well-known journalist Jimmy Breslin got a tip from the police that he should go to the meeting at the Audubon Ballroom. Did the NYPD know what was going to happen?

Cyrus Vance said, "that on orders from director J. Edgar Hoover himself, the FBI ordered multiple witnesses not to tell police or prosecutors that they were in fact FBI informants." In addition there were undercover cops in the audience belonging to the Bureau of Special Services (BOSS), the NYPD's Red Squad.

Several people shot at Malcolm. None of the dozen or so FBI agents and police inside the ballroom did anything to try to prevent the assassination. Nor were they responsible for arresting Talmadge

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