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Apryle Everly: What Malcolm X means to me

written by Apryle Everly
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We share this piece to commemorate the revolutionary leader Malcolm X, who was assassinated 60 years ago on Feb. 21, 1965.

Malcolm X, to me, embodies one of the many great examples of what it means to be a communist. Malcolm would not have always considered himself a communist earlier on in his life. His own considerations, as many know, were far more religious in nature, with Black power at its center. After being forced out of the Nation of Islam for pointing out precisely how the struggles of all Black people across the world are interconnected and for voicing his principled opposition to American imperialism, he solidified his communist turning point.

In some twisted sense of irony, Henry Kissinger said it best, "Disciplined communists see everything in relation to the class struggle." Malcolm's view on the crisis facing Black Americans was initially that Black people needed separate services, communities, education, health care, etc. to uplift poor Black communities. As Malcolm saw that not all the needs of Black people were being met through the measures taken by the Nation of Islam, he began the journey of joining class struggle politics with Black Power.

Malcolm understood that class and race intersect in such a way that the material change needed to bring millions of Black Americans out of poverty would never come to fruition simply by banding together to create exclusively Black services. Rather, an overhaul of the current power structure would have to occur. That means overthrowing the ruling class – the capitalists, those who own the means of production. This was true in Malcolm’s time, and it is still true in our own.

As we all understand, the ruling class knows no specific skin color or nationality. Malcolm put it best when he said: “It doesn’t mean that we’re anti-white, but it does mean we’re anti-exploitation, we’re anti-degradation, we’re anti-oppression.”

Being against these very actions goes to the heart of the problem because if we own nothing, then the very goal of extinguishing poverty becomes infinitely harder to accomplish. From my perspective, communities organizing together and pooling resources is more of the beginning step in the larger revolution, not the ultimate goal. Joining this concept with the reality that many African nations were simultaneously undergoing their own independence movements, he understood that tactics at home had to change. It is at the crux of this understanding that explains what a communist aims to do: provide material changes for their community.

Lastly, I want to add that Malcolm showed great wisdom. For the movement today, I want us all to embrace the ability to reflect on current methods that we utilize to organize and continue to learn from others who are in the movement with us. Malcolm was in community with many revolutionaries around the world, many of whom gave him ideas for some of the speeches and actions he was involved in. I wish for the communist movement in the U.S. to continue to change tactics when the old ones no longer serve their intended purpose. I think Malcolm’s life shows us that tactile change is one of the most disciplined decisions we, as revolutionaries, can make.



Apryle Everly is a youth activist and organizer with the People's Power Assembly and Struggle for Socialism. They contributed to the new book [The U.S. War drive against China - What it means for workers.](#)

