



MALCOLM X

Movie provides detailed account of controversial Muslim leader

By ANAS BEN-MUSA

Reviewer of THE BATTALION

"X" Starring Denzel Washington, Angela Bassett, Spike Lee
Directed by Spike Lee
Rated PG-13
Playing at Cinema III

We declare our right on this earth to be a man, to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence by any means necessary. . . Malcolm X 1963

This is an example of the words that have created so much hate, confusion, and interest about a man and a leader called Malcolm X.

The fervor of interest to understand this complex and controversial leader has enabled Spike Lee to create the first big-budget, epic film by an African-American director.

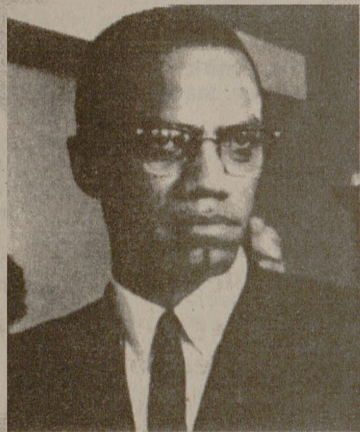
The result is a powerful and masterfully detailed account of the life of Malcolm X.

However, if you want to learn about Malcolm X this movie is only a start.

Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska in 1925. His father, a Baptist minister, was killed by the Black Legion, a white supremacist organization, when Malcolm was still a child. His mother was soon taken to the state mental hospital because of a nervous

breakdown. Malcolm was raised in a foster home and at the age of 16 moved to Boston to stay with his aunt.

During the next five years Malcolm degenerated, becoming a drug user, drug seller, thief, and much more. He was finally caught and sentenced to prison for several years at the age of 21. During his prison



The life of Malcolm X is the focus of Spike Lee's new movie.

stay, Malcolm learned about the Nation of Islam from his family and later converted.

The Nation of Islam teaches that mankind was black until a scientist created the "devil-race," white men, who took over the world and enslaved the black man.

This theory or philosophy created a hatred toward white people. After being appointed as a minister in the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X began to preach

for total segregation from white people, whom he considered an evil influence on African-Americans.

In the film, Lee squeezes in an enormous amount of information and knowledge from Malcolm X's speeches and autobiography, but what he presents is his own interpretation and understanding.

Lee does not try to distort Malcolm X, but he had to pick and choose parts of speeches and the autobiography in order to create the film. That in itself is an interpretation and understanding of the most important aspects of Malcolm X's life.

A 3-hour, 15-minute film cannot encompass all of Malcolm X's life.

For example, Lee concentrates on Malcolm's adult life and uses flashbacks to explain what happened to him in his childhood.

Both parts of Malcolm X's life shaped and defined him; unfortunately, Lee could only focus on one part.

But what Lee showed in his film was mesmerizing. It seemed only five minutes had passed and then the film was finished.

Denzel Washington's portrayal of Malcolm X is spectacular.

In one particular scene, Washington is passionately reciting a chapter from the Koran in Arabic. He is precise in articulation and from this moment I realized Washington truly was Malcolm X.

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Lecturer promotes cultural unity, encourages student creativity

By JULIE POLSTON

Feature Writer of THE BATTALION

One Texas A&M lecturer in particular continues to create an atmosphere where all students have a place to be somebody.

Charles Gordone, an actor, director and playwright, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1970 for his play entitled No Place to Be Somebody.

He teaches in the English and Speech Communications Departments at A&M, and fosters creativity and individuality among his students.

Yet, Gordone has little interests in his accomplishments.

"I'm not into fame and fortune anymore; and what I know, I want to give to young people," he said.

Currently, Gordone is teaching Speech Communications 489: "American Voices: Race, Gender, Ethnicity." Although this course will not be taught in the spring, it will be offered again next fall.

SCOM 489 interprets popular culture in a historical context while allowing students to recognize cultural diversity as a benefit to society.

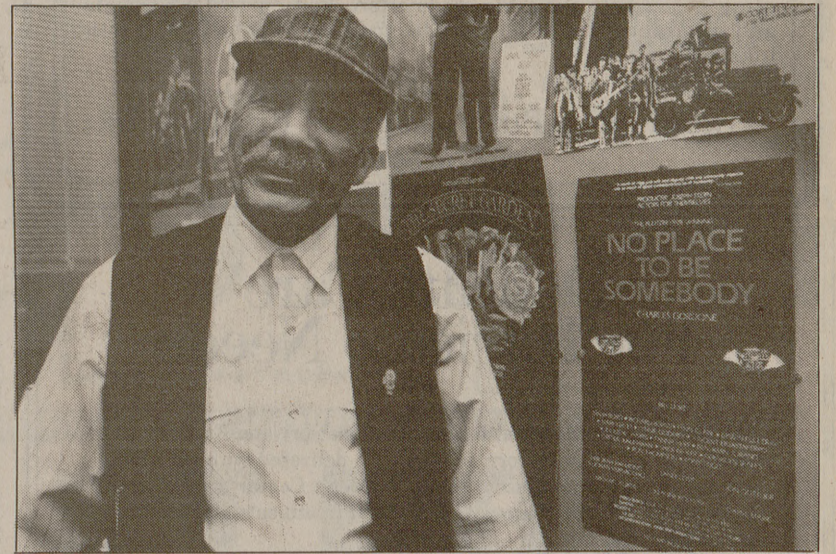
"If your thinking is always Eurocentric, you won't see how the cultures overlap," he said.

Gordone said he does not believe in multiculturalism in a sense, because it has a trendy connotation.

"We need to redefine multiculturalism," he said. "There's only one culture — the American culture, and we have many ethnic groups who contribute."

"You can't mandate students to learn about other people," he added. "That's not the way this country works."

After living in New York for more than 35 years, Gordone spent a summer in New Mexico on a D.H. Lawrence writing fellowship before coming to Texas



Jennifer Lockard / THE BATTALION

Charles Gordone challenges students to think independently and freely.

A&M in 1987.

"I wanted to go where I could teach a class the way I think it should be taught," he said.

Gordone fosters group interaction and involvement among his students, and challenges them to think independently and to speak freely. He knows his students by name, but more importantly, he knows his students.

In one of his classes, Gordone began the discussion with a poem from a reading by Ed Stabler the previous night, leaving only 20 minutes of "traditional" lecture time. The poem described the life of a married couple who lived in the country.

As Gordone watched his students drain every bit of meaning and life from the poem they could muster, Gordone worked his magic: taking a poem by a western folk singer/songwriter and applying a universal theme for all of his students to relate to.

He called on one of his students to answer a question about the poem, and she asked him, "Why are you asking me?"

"Because you're getting married," he replied.

Gordone is aware. He takes time to really know his students, and he tries to make students see the big picture of the class discussions by relating lectures to their own lives.

Gordone, who served in the Army and then graduated from Los Angeles State College (now California State University at Los Angeles), went to New York in 1952.

"I was not going to teach," he said. "I was going to go to New York and be rich and famous."

Gordone had a few parts as an extra and bits in movies, but said he was more interested in the theater.

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