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Malcolm X and the Sudanese. Directed by Sophie Schrago. Written & produced by Hisham Aidi. VisuaLive Productions, 2020. 25 mn. Language: English.

Reviewed by: Youssef J. Carter, Harvard University.

Ahmed Siddig Osman, a Sudanese development economist, first visited Muhammad's Temple #7 in Harlem in 1963 while a student at Dartmouth. In a short documentary written and produced by Hisham Aidi and entitled "Malcolm X and the Sudanese", Osman recounts entering the building upon a whim with fellow Muslim students in order to witness Malcolm X (aka El Hajj Malik Shabazz) give one of his lectures in person. Osman explains that during their visit to the temple, he was brave enough to correct Malcolm on his interpretation of a verse in the Qur'an. After encouraging Osman to speak his mind in spite of the crowd's dismay, he and Malcolm remained friends from that point onward until Malcolm's assassination. In fact, it was Osman who arranged Malcolm's Hajj to Mecca and facilitated his Muslim burial when he was assassinated in 1965. He was even introduced by Ossie Davis when giving a rousing eulogy at Malcolm's funeral at the age of 22.

Those who have either read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* or have watched Spike Lee's widely-acclaimed biopic of Malcolm are given little information regarding Malcolm's travels to the African continent and his many conversations with African leaders and are given little understanding of the manner in which his international travels had impacted him religiously and politically particularly from 1963 until the end of his life (two years later). Therefore, the importance of this film is extensive. It is a welcome addition to the growing collection of literature and conversation surrounding the legacy and memory of Malcolm X. Yet, perhaps one of its most interesting contributions is to undo assumptions that the majority of the Muslims that Malcolm X interacted with while traveling in predominantly-Muslim nations were light-skinned Arabs. The film shows quite explicitly that this was not the case. In fact, his spiritual advisor during the Hajj and the Saudi politician, he met during his time there, were both of Sudanese origin.

This film is an extension of Hisham Aidi's prior work in which he focused intently on Malcolm X's pan-Africanism and internationalism. In particular, as revealed in an interview with Sapelo Square about the film, Hisham Aidi hopes to shed further light on Malcolm's interaction with Sudanese Muslims against the backdrop of his critique of colonization and global white supremacy, as well as his move toward Sunni orthodoxy. While there has been some explication of the impact of Malcolm's travels to African countries such as Ghana and Nigeria on his thought and political philosophy, Aidi asserts that Malcolm's travels to Sudan and his interaction with Sudanese Muslims can reveal more.

In addition to an expanded insight on Malcolm X's internationalist identity, the film sheds further light on the interpersonal relationships with people who loved Malcolm and had an impact on him. While many Muslims around the world, and particularly in the United States, acknowledge that his impeccable character and willingness to charismatically speak truth in the face of oppression - what Terrence L. Johnson calls an "abolition ethics" - partly inspired their wanting to learn more about the religion of Islam, Malcolm is too often reduced to a political figure. Less

focus is placed on understanding who he was spirituality. He certainly fought for justice, but he also was a believer who prayed.

“Malcolm X and the Sudanese” thus offers a deeper sense of who Malcolm was beyond the political and gives us a glimpse into his religious life, in addition to the lasting impact he had on others. Finally, the film contributes to a vital need to expand knowledge regarding African-American Muslim history in such a way that does not merely treat that history as mainly configured by domestic phenomena, but rather acknowledges that African-American Muslims have always maintained global connections and have been immersed in transnational relationships, global religious discourse and contemporary Muslim political thought.

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