



*Witnessing Brother Malcolm X: The Master Teacher, A Memoir* by A. Peter Bailey. Washington, D.C.: A. Peter Bailey, 2013, pp.180, [A. Peter Bailey: 202-291-4560, [apeterb@verizon.net](mailto:apeterb@verizon.net)] reviewed by Todd S. Burroughs.

After a while, history shifts on a subject. Heroes in life become villains in history decades after their deaths, and then become heroes all over again in new histories. When it comes to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X), the history is almost always distorted. First, White journalism and White history books call him a racist who became the victim of the violence he preaches. Then, decades later, revisionist White journalism and history call him a former racist who became a proponent of racial brotherhood before dying tragically. Black journalism and history initially called him a Black nationalist who was the yang to Martin Luther King's yin, while White Leftist journalism

and history call him an internationalist Leftist—in effect, a radical integrationist. Now, a new generation of Black-led Malcolm scholarship is trying to turn him into some liberal Black progressive who publicly engaged in radical, often-unfortunate rhetoric.

Lost in all in all this historical Ping-Pong is a real man who had very concrete ideas about the evils of America, how Black Americans should view themselves, and how and why they should unite with other Black people across the world to push for freedom on Black terms.

A. Peter Bailey, a former associate editor of *Ebony* and the author of several books, including his co-authorship of the seminal book on Malcolm's family and his assistance on a major work about Malcolm. He is one of many still living today who worked with whom he always calls "Brother Malcolm." Unlike most of his colleagues, he has accepted the responsibility to self-publish his memoir of his time with his mentor-in-struggle

So who was Brother Malcolm to Bailey? "He urged that we strive, not for integration, not for separation, but the kind of group power that would enable us to effectively compete, on every level, with other groups in this group-oriented country. He believed strongly in self-defense as a way by which to curb the white supremacist-driven violence that killed and brutalized so many Black people between 1955 and 1965, the years he was on the public scene; he believed just as strongly in the need for us to develop independent political and collective economic power as instruments for group advancement and defense; he insisted that group cultural power was needed to combat the constant propaganda barrage from films, television programs, magazines, newspapers, textbooks, etc. that supported the 'divine right' of people of European descent to control the world; he taught us that we are a world-class people who were/are involved in a struggle for human, not just civil rights."

In a highly readable, brief book, Bailey recalls and documents his work as a 20-something member of Brother Malcolm's Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). He edited what would eventually be called "*The Blacklash*," the OAAU's newsletter. He writes at length about how Brother Malcolm taught him about domestic and international politics.

Historical gems Bailey presents include a never-before-published article that Brother Malcolm submitted for publication in "*The Blacklash*" the day before he was assassinated, pictures of the front pages of the newsletter, and Bailey's stream-of-consciousness essay reacting to Brother Malcolm's assassination hours after it happened.

The author's emphasis is on Brother Malcolm's potential impact as an African (-American) internationalist—someone who could organize the Third World versus the Western powers. He quotes now-defunct newspaper articles and now-forgotten-but-then-powerful columnists, Federal Bureau of Investigation files and other sources to show how the powers that be were scared to death of what Brother Malcolm could accomplish as a roving "Black America Ambassador" of Pan-Africanism.



**A. Peter Bailey**

Bailey thankfully brings the story all the way up to the present. He humorously recounts his post-assassination encounters with the New York City police and the FBI, both of whom tried to turn him (particularly telling is his documentation of the price he and his family paid—and still pay—for his activism, something activists rarely discuss publicly). He documents an OAAU reunion in 2006, and includes the views of many of his former comrades about Brother Malcolm.

He should be thanked by all concerned African-Americans for this long-overdue, first-hand account. It's just a small part of the "real" Brother Malcolm, but it's an important part.