

## Malcolm X, excerpt, 2.14.1965, Ford Auditorium, Detroit

---

[1] Also I am very pleased to see so many who have come out to always see for yourself, where you can hear for yourself, and then think for yourself. Then you'll be in a better position to make an intelligent judgment for yourself. But if you form the habit of listening to what others say about something or some one or reading what someone else has written about someone, somebody can confuse you and misuse you. So as Afro-Americans or Black people here in the Western Hemisphere, you and I have to learn to weigh things for ourselves. No matter what the [white] man says, you better look into it.

[2] And a good example of why it's so important to look into things for yourself: I was on a plane between Algiers and Geneva and it just happened that two other Americans were sitting in the two seats next to me. None of us knew each other and the other two were white, one a male, the other a female. And after we had been flying along for about forty minutes, the lady, she says, "Could I ask you a personal question?"

[3] I said, "Yes." She said, "Well--" she had been looking at my briefcase, and she said, "Well, what does that X," she says, "What kind of last name could you have that begins with X?" So I said, "That's it -- X." And she said, "Well, what does the 'M' stand for?" I said, "Malcolm." So she was quiet for about ten minutes, and she turned to me and she says, "You're not *Malcolm X*?"

[4] You see, we had been riding along in a nice conversation like three human beings, you know, no hostility, no animosity, just human. And she couldn't take this, she said, "Well you're not who I was looking for," you know. And she ended up telling me that she was looking for horns and all that, and for someone who was out to kill all white people, as if all white people could be killed. This was her general attitude, and this attitude had been given her -- this image had been given [to] her by the press.

[5] So before I get involved in anything nowadays, I have to straighten out my own position, which is clear. I am not a racist in any form whatsoever. I don't believe in any form of racism. I don't believe in any form of discrimination or segregation. I believe in Islam. I am a Muslim. And there's nothing wrong with being a Muslim, nothing wrong with the religion of Islam. It just teaches us to believe in Allah as the God. Those of you who are Christians probably believe in the same God, because I think you believe in the God who created the universe. That's the One we believe in, the one who created the universe, the only difference being you call Him God and I -- we call Him Allah. The Jews call him Jehovah. If you could understand Hebrew, you'd probably call him Jehovah too. If you could understand Arabic, you'd probably call him Allah.

---

Directions: Read and annotate the speech. Focus your annotations on ideas, questions, etc. that help you respond to this prompt: How would Malcolm X evaluate Pearl-Cohn's instructional focus on reading, thinking, and communicating: is this focus critically important; is it educationally appropriate but realistically unhelpful; or is the instructional focus of PC actually harmful to the 37208 community?

[6] But since the white man, your "friend," took your language away from you during slavery, the only language you know is his language. You know, your friend's language. So you call for the same God he calls for. When he's putting a rope around your neck, you call for God and he calls for God. [Laughter and applause.] And you wonder why the one you call on never answers you.

[7] So that once you realize that I believe in the Supreme Being who created the universe, and believe in him as being one -- I also have been taught in Islam that one God only has one religion, and that religion is called Islam, and all of the prophets who came forth taught that religion -- Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, all of them. And by believing in one God and one religion and all of the prophets, it creates unity. There's no room for argument, no need for us to be arguing with each other.

[8] And also in that religion, the real religion of Islam -- when I was in the Black Muslim movement, I wasn't -- they didn't have the real religion of Islam in that movement. It was something else. And the real religion of Islam doesn't teach anyone to judge another human being by the color of his skin. The yardstick that is used by the Muslim to measure another man is not the man's color but the man's deeds, the man's conscious behavior, the man's intentions. And when you use that as a standard of measurement or judgment, you never go wrong.

[9] But when you just judge a man because of the color of his skin, then you're committing a crime, because that's the worst kind of judgment. If you judged him just because he was a Jew, that's not as bad as judging him because he's Black. Because a Jew can hide his religion. He can say he's something else -- and which a lot of them do that, they say they're something else. But the Black man can't hide. When they start indicting us because of our color that means we're indicted before we're born, which is the worst kind of crime that can be committed. The Muslim religion has eliminated all tendencies to judge a man according to the color of his skin, but rather the judgment is based upon his deeds.

[10] And when, prior to going into the Muslim world, I didn't have any -- Elijah Muhammad had taught us that the white man could not enter into Makkah in Arabia, and all of us who followed him, we believed it. And he said the reason he couldn't enter was because he's white and inherently evil, it's impossible to change him. And the only thing that would change him is Islam, and he can't accept Islam because by nature he's evil. And therefore by not being able to accept Islam and become a Muslim, he could never enter Makkah. This is how he taught us, you know.

---

Directions: Read and annotate the speech. Focus your annotations on ideas, questions, etc. that help you respond to this prompt: How would Malcolm X evaluate Pearl-Cohn's instructional focus on reading, thinking, and communicating: is this focus critically important; is it educationally appropriate but realistically unhelpful; or is the instructional focus of PC actually harmful to the 37208 community?

[11] So when I got over there and went to Makkah and saw these people who were blond and blue-eyed and pale-skinned and all those things, I said, "Well!" But I watched them closely. And I noticed that though they were white, and they would call themselves white, there was a difference between them and the white one over here. And that basic difference was this: in Asia or the Arab world or in Africa, where the Muslims are, if you find one who says he's white, all he's doing is using an adjective to describe something that's incidental about him, one of his incidental characteristics; so there's nothing else to it, he's just white.

[12] But when you get the white man over here in America and he says he's white, he means something else. You can listen to the sound of his voice -- when he says he's white, he means he's boss. That's right. That's what "white" means in this language. You know the expression, "free, white, and twenty-one." He made that up. He's letting you know all of them mean the same. "White" means free, boss. He's up there. So that when he says he's white he has a little different sound in his voice. I know you know what I'm talking about.

[13] This was what I saw was missing in the Muslim world. If they said they were white, it was incidental. White, black, brown, red, yellow, doesn't make any difference what color you are. So this was the religion that I had accepted and had gone there to get a better knowledge of it.

[14] But despite the fact that I saw that Islam was a religion of brotherhood, I also had to face reality. And when I got back into this American society, I'm not in a society that practices brotherhood. I'm in a society that might preach it on Sunday, but they don't practice it on no day -- on any day. And so, since I could see that America itself is a society where there is no brotherhood and that this society is controlled primarily by racists and segregationists -- and it is -- who are in Washington, D.C., in positions of power. And from Washington, D.C., they exercise the same forms of brutal oppression against dark-skinned people in South and North Vietnam, or in the Congo, or in Cuba, or in any other place on this earth where they're trying to exploit and oppress. This is a society whose government doesn't hesitate to inflict the most brutal form of punishment and oppression upon dark-skinned people all over the world.

[15] To wit, right now what's going on in and around Saigon and Hanoi and in the Congo and elsewhere: they are violent when their interests are at stake. But all of that violence that they display at the international level, when you and I want just a little bit of freedom, we're supposed to be nonviolent. They're violent. They're violent in Korea, they're violent in Germany, they're violent in the South Pacific, they're violent in Cuba, they're violent wherever they go. But when it comes time for you and me to protect ourselves against lynchings, they tell us to be nonviolent.

---

Directions: Read and annotate the speech. Focus your annotations on ideas, questions, etc. that help you respond to this prompt: How would Malcolm X evaluate Pearl-Cohn's instructional focus on reading, thinking, and communicating: is this focus critically important; is it educationally appropriate but realistically unhelpful; or is the instructional focus of PC actually harmful to the 37208 community?

[16] That's a shame. We get tricked into being nonviolent, and when somebody stands up and talks like I just did, they say, "Why, he's advocating violence!" Isn't that what they say? Every time you pick up your newspaper, you see where one of these things has written into it that I'm advocating violence. I have never advocated any violence. I've only said that Black people who are the victims of organized violence perpetrated upon us by the Klan, the Citizens' Council, and many other forms, we should defend ourselves. And when I say that we should defend ourselves against the violence of others, they use their press skillfully to make the world think that I'm calling on violence, period. I wouldn't call on anybody to be violent without a cause. But I think the Black man in this country, above and beyond people all over the world, will be more justified when he stands up and starts to protect himself, no matter how many necks he has to break and heads he has to crack.

[17] I saw in the paper where they -- on the television where they took this Black woman down in Selma, Alabama, and knocked her right down on the ground, dragging her down the street. You saw it, you're trying to pretend like you didn't see it 'cause you knew you should've done something about it and didn't. It showed the sheriff and his henchmen throwing this Black woman on the ground -- on the ground. And Negro men standing around doing nothing about it saying, "Well, let's overcome them with our capacity to love." What kind of phrase is that? "Overcome them with our capacity to love." And then it disgraces the rest of us, because all over the world the picture is splashed showing a Black woman with some white brutes, with their knees on her holding her down, and full-grown Black men standing around watching it. Why, you are lucky they let you stay on earth, much less stay in the country.

[18] When I saw it I dispatched a wire to Rockwell; Rockwell was one of the agitators down there, Rockwell, this Lincoln Rockwell [leader of the American Nazi Party]. And the wire said in essence that this is to warn him that I am no longer held in check from fighting white supremacists by Elijah Muhammad's separatist 'Black Muslim' movement. And that if Rockwell's presence in Alabama causes harm to come to Dr. King or any other Black person in Alabama who's doing nothing other than trying to enjoy their rights, then Rockwell and his Ku Klux Klan friends would be met with maximum retaliation from those of us who are not handcuffed by this nonviolent philosophy. And I haven't heard from Rockwell since.

[19] Brothers and sisters, if you and I would just realize that once we learn to talk the language that they understand, they will then get the point. You can't ever reach a man if you don't speak his language. If a man speaks the language of brute force, you can't come to him with peace. Why, good night! He'll break you in two, as he has been doing all along. If a man speaks French, you can't speak to him in German. If he speaks Swahili, you can't communicate with him in Chinese. You have to find out what does this man speak. And once you know his language, learn how to speak his language, and he'll get the point. There'll be some dialogue, some communication, and some understanding will be developed.

---

Directions: Read and annotate the speech. Focus your annotations on ideas, questions, etc. that help you respond to this prompt: How would Malcolm X evaluate Pearl-Cohn's instructional focus on reading, thinking, and communicating: is this focus critically important; is it educationally appropriate but realistically unhelpful; or is the instructional focus of PC actually harmful to the 37208 community?