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Spike Lee Reflects On Malcolm X

BY IAN SPELLING
COLLEGE PRESS

"My previous five films were works of fiction, so I could do whatever I wanted," says Spike Lee. "With Malcolm X, I didn't have that liberty. This is a person who lived and breathed on this earth. That was the challenge for me, and it was an interesting challenge: How was I going to make this a personal film, put my stamp on it without betraying the legacy of Malcolm X?"

Lee, who was 7 when X was assassinated and didn't read the "Autobiography of Malcolm X" until junior high school, took a script by Arnold Perl and the late James Baldwin, and fine-tuned it. Then, with Oscar-winner Denzel Washington as X, Lee headed to Harlem, South Africa, Egypt and Mecca to film his \$34 million biography.

"We didn't want to put Malcolm into sainthood. That was a great concern of ours. We wanted him to be human. Denzel didn't want to do a caricature. He understood that would not be right," says Lee, 34. "At best, all Denzel could do was get the essence of the man. We did not want this to become a standard bio-pic. We did not want to soften or dilute Malcolm's message. And we didn't want this to be a two-hour television movie."

To accomplish his goals, Lee, who attended Morehouse College in Atlanta and earned a degree in film production from New York University, stuck to the facts. Malcolm Little was born in Omaha, Neb., and soon headed to Boston, here he hustled on the streets. Not long after moving to Harlem, N.Y., Detroit Red, as he called himself, wound up in jail, where he learned the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. As the leader of the Nation of Islam, Muhammad taught restraint from cursing and fornication, as well as a philosophy that deemed blacks superior to "white devils."

Upon leaving prison, the newly dubbed Malcolm X studied Muhammad's teachings and became a force to be reckoned with. His powerful words, spoken angrily, threatened whites and at-

tracted blacks, especially one Sister Betty, who would become his wife. Soon, however, X learned of sins committed by Muhammad, and despondent, he left the Nation. A trip to Mecca revitalized his belief in Islam, and he returned from the Middle East no longer preaching hatred.

Malcolm X was a changed man, ready to cooperate with such leaders as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in improving the lot of black Americans. It wasn't meant to be. X had alienated the Nation of Islam, the U.S. government, and though the hows, whos and whys are sketchy, X fell victim to a hail of bullets in February 1965. No one would ever know what effect Malcolm X might have had, not just on his race, but on America.

"I didn't want this to come off as a historical document, a museum piece. I wanted to show that Malcolm is still relevant today. There are things Malcolm talked about that still exist today. We as a people, for the most part, still are second-class citizens. The Rodney King videotape," says Lee, referring to the beating footage included in the film's opening sequence, "and the cops getting away with it is an indication of that. In some ways, things have not changed that much."

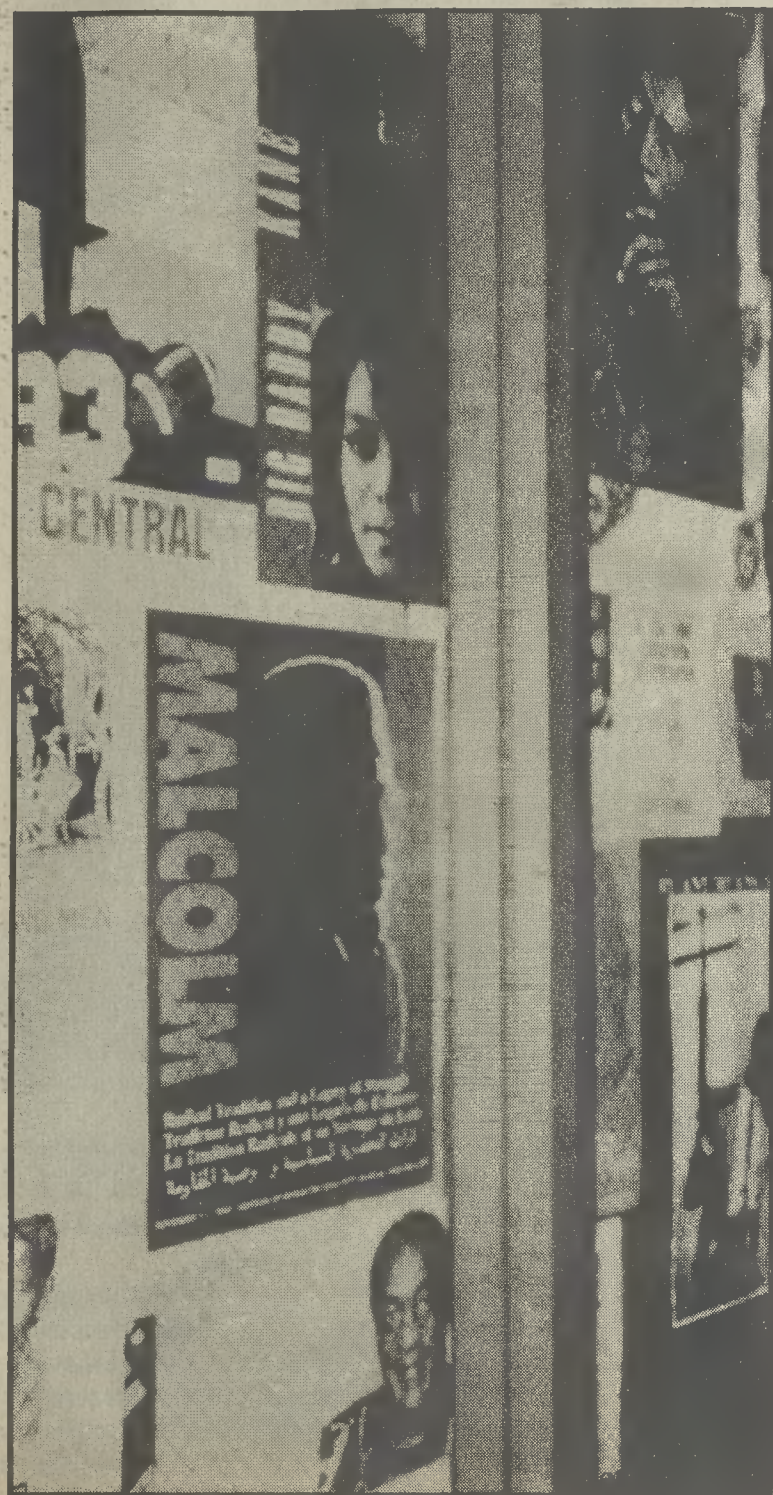
Lee says what he thinks, which often gets him in trouble. However, the media also has a tendency to misquote the director, worsening matters. During the development of X, Lee was in the news several times. He demanded a black director to make the movie, then he went over budget. Then he battled over the rights for the King footage. He was also quoted as saying he would only do interviews with black journalists and that black kids should skip school to see the Malcolm X film.

Though Lee has a rebuttal

to each of the situations, he perhaps sums up his thoughts best when he says, "A lot of stuff I say gets twisted around, attributed to me, or it wasn't my intent, or I never said it in the first place."

In the end, the hoopla doesn't matter to Lee. X is finished and out there in theaters. "We're not saying, 'You've seen Spike's film, there's no other information on Malcolm. You don't have to read 'The Autobiography of Malcolm X.' If we are successful, this film will make people want to read the book before they see the film or run out to the bookstore right after to read the material they missed," Lee said.

"If their image of Malcolm had been narrow, limited to one they got through the white media, hopefully their idea of him will be changed. I just want other people to come out of the theater inspired, motivated and spiritually uplifted by what they'd just seen."



SGA Wall Tribute To Malcolm X

Kwanzaa Celebrated In Seven Prong Program

BY JASON WILLIAMS
EDITOR

With a unified step show by organizations of the Pan-Hellenic Council, NCCU's first celebration of the African-American cultural holiday Kwanzaa officially opened last night.

Established in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Kargena, Kwanzaa is celebrated nationally from Dec. 26-Jan 1, but the SGA observance will be from from Dec. 2-8. "This is not a holiday to substitute for Christmas," said SGA cultural affairs member Alesia Fleming. Fleming also said that the holiday isn't a heroic one, where one would celebrate a person, explaining Kwanzaa is a holiday that can be celebrated by people of all religions, she said.

"It also shouldn't be commercialized; that's why all our events are free,"

Fleming said.

In all, there are seven principles of Kwanzaa:

- *Umoja (Oo-Moe-Jah) Unity
 - *Kujichagulia (Coo-Gee-Cha-Goo-Lee-Ah) Self-Determination
 - *Ujima (Oo-Gee-Mah) Collective Work and Responsibility
 - *Ujamaa (Oo-Jah-Mah) Cooperative Economics
 - *Nia (Nee-Ah) Purpose
 - *Kuumba (Koo-Bah) Creativity
 - *Imani (E-Mahn-E) Faith
- SGA have planned activities for each day.

On Friday, for example, the freshman class will sponsor Ujima. They seek help in a campus clean-up with students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

"We are going to plan and acknowledge the

See KWANZAA, page 5

Students Respond to Survey About New Malcolm X Movie

BY MAURICE CROCKER
NEWS EDITOR

A Dec. 2 poll taken among 25 NCCU students suggests why Spike Lee's "Malcolm X" is the hottest topic on college campuses.

At NCCU, the poll suggests, 80 percent of the student body has already seen the film, and the other 20 percent plan to.

An overwhelming majority, 90 percent, say they enjoyed the film. Those who didn't like the film complain that it is not faithful to Alex Haley's "Autobiography of Malcolm X," on which the film is based, or that it places too much stress on Malcolm's racial attitudes before his pilgrimage to Mecca.

Most viewers, however, find the film a tribute to Malcolm and to his struggle for racial identity and self-determination. According to one viewer, Charles

McNair, "Malcolm's greatest contribution to the African-American community was the raising of black consciousness. Malcolm helped the black man develop pride and changed the way blacks looked at themselves."

Spike Lee's film and the interest it has generated in Malcolm has also changed the way blacks look and dress. "X" paraphernalia has become the latest fashion fad.

McNair, who was wearing a Phi Beta Sigma jacket and a blue baseball cap sporting the "X" logo, said that he knows a lot of people wear the "X" clothes because their friends are wearing them but that he has other reasons. "I waited before purchasing anything with the 'X' logo because I first had to research the man himself and understand just what he stood for."

Malcolm X Survey

We asked the opinions of 25 students on the campus of NCCU on the much talked about Spike Lee film "Malcolm X"

The results were as follows:

80% agreed

10% disliked

it

10% didn't see

it

NCCU Chancellor To Receive \$550,000 Residence

BY ERNIE SUGGS
DURHAM HERALD

NCCU's new chancellor will live in a sprawling \$550,000 brick home in Croasdaile, one of Durham's most expensive and exclusive subdivisions.

The Council of State agreed on Nov. 10 to let the University of North Carolina system to buy the 6,800 square foot house at 18 Appleton Place for Julius Chambers, who become NCCU chancellor on Jan 1.

Chambers and his family will move to Durham in December from New Jersey. He now works in New

York as director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc.

Chambers and C.D. Spangler Jr., president of the University of North Carolina system, have said a larger chancellor's home is needed so NCCU can hold receptions and other money raising activities.

They have said the current home, a 3,293-square-foot house at 1108 Chowan Ave. in Emorywood Estates about a mile south of campus, needs numerous repairs and cannot meet the university's future needs.

The current chancellor's house was last permanently occupied by Tyrone Richmond, who stepped

down as head of NCCU last Dec. 31.

The Herald-Sun reported more than a month ago that the UNC system was shopping for a new house. It also reported that the search was likely to lead to Croasdaile in western Durham or another of the city's most expensive neighborhoods.

Built in 1982, the Appleton Place house is owned by retired business Nelson Strawbridge. It is about 10 miles from campus.

"[UNC officials] were primary responsible for trying to locate a place," said Clint Jobe, director of state property. "They felt that this was the location that best suited

their needs."

Neither Spangler nor Chambers could be reached for comment. Durham County tax records put a \$466,570 value on the one-story Croasdaile home, which sits on 1.98 acres. Part of the lot borders the Croasdaile golf course.

Of the \$550,000 price, \$500,000 will be paid up front.

The other \$50,000 will be paid interest-free within five years. "That was designed to give the university the option of raising additional money," Jobe said.

Jobe said \$250,000 in private donations has been pledged toward the purchase. The sale of the

current chancellor's home is expected to generate enough money to make up the rest of the price, UNC officials said.

The value of the current home, built in 1974, has been estimated for insurance purposes at \$327,410.

It was built to replace the Shepard House on Fayetteville Street, home to the university leaders since it was erected in 1925.

Because the Shepard house was deteriorating, the 3,293-square-foot Chowan Avenue home was built, essentially to specifications provided by then chancellor Albert N. Whiting.

Based on the insurance replacement costs of the 15 other

chancellor's homes in the UNC system, NCCU's new house is the fourth most-expensive-behind UNC Wilmington, UNC And UNC Greensboro.

Under UNC guidelines, a chancellor must live in the official residence because of federal tax laws.

The chancellor is not required to declare the home as taxable income, because he or she is required to live there and uses the home for state fund-raising purposes.

The home's purchase by the UNC system also takes it off the tax rolls meaning the city and country get no tax revenue from the property.

"By Any Means Necessary" -- Malcolm X