

Look at any headline and examples of prejudice will be evident. In fact, Michael Crichton correctly says, “Do you know what we call opinion in the absence of evidence? We call it prejudice.” This can especially be seen in the early 1950s, where many current prejudices were only magnified due to the pressure and fears that came from the ongoing Cold War. One such example is a 1953 United States Government document giving a summary of Malcolm X, of all things, showing that almost no one appreciated black men or any of their actions, no matter the intent.

This document shows how the FBI feared Communists’ ideologies and the threat of the US being infiltrated by the Soviet Union. Because of these threats, the FBI followed those who had suspected Communist ties (although the requirements for a person who may be tied to Communist movements were probably low). The FBI collected information about his residence, religion, political beliefs and criminal record. This information is not useful to connecting Malcolm to Communism, since it focuses on the subject’s religious beliefs and not his Communist ties. The government saw an opportune moment to both detract Malcolm’s fanbase as well as give a reason to put him in jail without saying “just because he is black,” and this document is that reason. In sum, the government is prejudiced against Malcolm due to his race as well as his religion, and uses this prejudice to make his life, along with most of the black community’s, terrible.

Because of these gross biases, the FBI’s judgments are largely incorrect, and therefore not persuasive enough to make one think this man might act violently towards the US from Communist ties. Moreover, these assumptions about Malcolm X are incorrect and offensive: not only does the government call his religion a cult, but also assume that his appreciation of

Communism means that he is a threat actively working against the US government. However, the prejudice does not stop there - it infers that Malcolm's facial hair and want to be a part of the Japanese Army as motive to be a threat to the government and deserves to be watched. These horrible biases not only influenced the report, but rendered it useless in its primary purpose to see if Malcolm X was dangerous because of his Communist ties. In fact, the document barely focuses on its actual accusation of Communist ties, and instead turns its attention to these prejudices, thus causing it to be invalid.

Due to the US's fear of Communism, they made profiles about everyone who was a suspect. Malcolm X was one of these suspects, whose intents were not malicious, but taken that way by the government from both the Red Scare and pro-Black ideas prevalent during this time. However, the document focused more on his ties to the nation of Islam and Elijah Muhammed. The government focused on any possible charge to put Malcolm in prison, this included his physical attributes, race, and his religion. Overall this instance goes to show that perception and prejudice are not enough to base arguments on and certainly not enough to cause a person to be investigated. In this case, Malcolm's only offense was being a Black Muslim man who supported the Communist party. He neither harmed himself or anyone during his surveillance and should not have been investigated for Communist ties in the first place.