**Fear in the Fifties**

During the 1950s, fear of communism ran rampant throughout the United States. After World War II, the U.S. wanted to either contain or stop communism from spreading. At this time began the Cold War, in which there is a conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States that lasted until the end of the Reagan Administration. According to the FBI file on Malcolm Little, otherwise known as Malcolm X, he was registered as a confirmed communist. This is likely what brought him to the attention of the FBI in the first place. What follows is known as the Executive Order 9835, leading to the rage of McCarthyism from 1950 until 1954. Joseph McCarthy was a senator from Wisconsin who began a series of interrogations on intellectuals, actors, and anyone suspected in the slightest of being a communist. This period of time is known as The Second Red Scare, and it is no surprise that a young black radical, such as Malcolm, would become a target of a paranoid government  
 Malcolm Little was born in Nebraska to an impoverished family and lost his father at an early age. Because his early years were difficult, he turned to a life of crime. It was in jail that he would find himself after discovering the Nation of Islam, or as his FBI report states, the Muslim Cult of Islam which is loosely based on the Muslim religion. After he was released from prison he became an official member of the Nation of Islam under the leader, Elija Mohammad. His FBI file indicates that the belief of the Nation of Islam is that a war (or “Armageddon”) is inevitable between Muslims and Christians and that blacks should renounce their citizenship as Americans because they are behaving as slaves. Also, according to the file, members are encouraged to disobey civil law. The "Korean War is a futile effort by the United States to prevent the coming Asiatic conquest of the world," Malcolm quotes, also saying, "I have always been a communist."    
 In addition to the paranoia against communism, the nation was also in the early stages of the Civil Rights Movement. Racism permeated the U.S., especially in the South where the Jim Crow Laws and segregation still existed, and was only slightly better in the northern states. Communism must have looked very appealing to young men of color who grew up in poverty and saw no way to get ahead in the world. It is clear that the author of the FBI report had no sympathy for Malcolm’s station in life as a black man. It reduces his religion to a cult and shows no respect for any other beliefs beyond what was acceptable in American society at that time. The report is, however, an enlightening tool for historians who can look back on it and understand the context of the time period. It is fortunate that there is a system of intelligence gathering and that we are able to access what is not classified. Because, as a very smart historian once said, "Intelligence is like the diary of our country."