The Woeful Tales of Malcom X

In the 1950s, Americans had a closed-minded stance on change. In the case of Malcolm X, this certainly was no exception. Malcolm’s beliefs were considered radical for the time period; he was a Muslim Communist with an extensive criminal record. This caused the FBI to look into him as a threat to the “American Dream”.

The FBI’s main goal is to protect the commonwealth of the American people, but in their eyes Malcom X sought to compromise that. Due to the majority of the public’s negative view towards groups and individuals such as Malcolm, the general thought towards these parties was one of animosity, and the FBI’s behavior reflected this in their rulings. These rulings took into account the fact that many people were scared and confused by Malcolm’s views. This directly related to how the report was written about him. According to this report, Malcolm prided himself on being a Communist, a political affiliation regarded negatively by most Americans, even going so far as to claim he attempted to join the Japanese army in World War II. This is not the only taboo subject listed in the FBI report, which later goes on to include such information about his association with Islam, a religion that at the time was also under much fire from the American public. The FBI state many beliefs of what they call the Muslim “cult,” including that members “disavow their allegiance to the United States” and disobey “any civil law which conflicts with Muslim law.” Such statements claim Muslims aren’t—or, rather, shouldn’t be—considered U.S. citizens since the members of this new group seem to be less than patriotic. This was plenty enough information to spook the Feds during that time, as it would have made anyone uneasy in the society, catalyzing their decision to write their report. In the report itself, we see that many of the rulings and accounts in the write-up were premediated by the public’s general attitude towards these types of outsiders, even in a so-called unbiased association like the FBI. They referred to members of Islam as “fanatics” who would abandon their country at any chance they got and stressed that Malcolm X is a member of this group. They included Malcolm’s own quote where he professed that he was a “crazy” Communist thinking of committing treason.

There is, of course, extreme prejudice in these statements included in the FBI’s investigation report. As mentioned before, the goal of the FBI is to protect the common good of American citizens. If a whirlwind of “radical” and presumably dangerous beliefs crashes into America on the back of a convict, the FBI should persuade the public that the criminal is harmful to their way of life. In other words, considering Malcom’s views, it would be detrimental for him to be a part of society because he is hurting it as a whole with his difference in beliefs. It is because of these differences that the man once known as Malcom X saw his downfall, immortalized in FBI archives not because of who he was, but because of what he was affiliated to.