

Malcolm X's Speech to the Oxford Union Club, England

“By Any Means Necessary”

Dec 12, 1964

Mr. Chairman, tonight is the first night that I've have ever had opportunity to be as near to conservatives, as I am. And the speaker who preceded me, first I want to thank you for the invitation to come here to the Oxford Union, the speaker who preceded me is one of the best excuses that I know to prove our point concerning the necessity, sometimes, of extremism, in defense of liberty, why it is no vice, and why moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue. I don't say that about him personally, but that type. He's right, X is not my real name, but if you study history you'll find why no black man in the western hemisphere knows his real name. Some of his ancestors kidnapped our ancestors from Africa, and took us into the western hemisphere and sold us there. And our names were stripped from us and so today we don't know who we really are. I am one of those who admit it and so I just put X up there to keep from wearing his name.

And as far as this apartheid charge that he attributed to me is concerned, evidently he has been misinformed. I don't believe in any form of apartheid, I don't believe in any form of segregation, I don't believe in any form of racialism. But at the same time, I don't endorse a person as being right just because his skin is white, and often times when you find people like this, I mean that type, when a man whom they have been taught is below them has the nerve or firmness to question some of their philosophy or some of their conclusions, usually they put that label on us, a label that is only designed to project an image which the public will find distasteful. I am a Muslim, if there is something wrong with that then I stand condemned. My religion is Islam I believe in Allah, I believe in Mohammad as the apostle of Allah, I believe in brotherhood, of all men, but I don't believe in brotherhood with anybody who's not ready to practice brotherhood with our people.

I think the only way one can really determine whether extremism in the defense of liberty is justified, is not to approach it as an American or a European or an African or an Asian, but as a human being. If we look upon it as different types immediately we begin to think in terms of extremism being good for one and bad for another, or bad for one and good for another. But if we look upon it, if we look upon ourselves as human beings, I doubt that anyone will deny that extremism, in defense of liberty, the liberty of any human being, is a value. Anytime anyone is enslaved, or in any way deprived of his liberty, if that person is a human being, as far as I am concerned he is justified to resort to whatever methods necessary to bring about his liberty again.

Just one step farther to see if I am justified in this stance, and I am speaking as a black man from America which is a racist society, no matter how much you hear it talk about democracy it's as racist as South Africa or as racist as Portugal or as racist as any other racialist society on this earth. The only difference between it and South Africa, South Africa preaches separation and practices separation, America preaches integration and practices segregation. This is the only difference, they don't practice what they preach, whereas South Africa practices and preaches the same thing. I have more respect for a man who lets me know where he stands, even if he's wrong, than the one comes up like an angel and is nothing but a devil.

I don't believe in any form of unjustified extremism. But I believe that when a man is exercising extremism, a human being is exercising extremism, in defense of liberty for human

beings, it's no vice. And when one is moderate in the pursuit of justice for human beings, I say he's a sinner.

And I might add in my conclusion, in fact, America is one of the best examples, when you read its history, about extremism. Ol' Patrick Henry said "liberty or death" – that's extremism.

I read once, passingly, about a man named Shakespeare. I only read about him passingly, but I remember one thing he wrote, that kinda moved me. He put it in the mouth of Hamlet, I think it was, who said "to be or not to be". He was in doubt about something. Whether it was nobler, in the mind of man, to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune – moderation – or to take up arms against the sea of troubles and, by opposing, end them. And I go for that; if you take up arms you'll end it, but if you sit around and wait for the one who is in power to make up his mind that he should end it, you'll be waiting a long time. And in my opinion, the young generation of whites, blacks, browns, whatever else there is, you're living at a time of extremism, a time of revolution, a time when there's got to be a change, people in power have misused it, and now there has to be a change. And a better world has to be built and the only way it's going to be built is with extreme methods. And I, for one, will join in with anyone – don't care what color you are – as long as you want to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth. Thank you.