

MALCOLM X

## *Human Rights, Civil Rights*

*MALCOLM X (1925–1965), originally named Malcolm Little, was a controversial civil rights leader, a powerful organizer, and a spectacular spokesperson for human rights in America. Initially he advocated separatism and black nationalism, but as a result of his conversion to Islam and a pilgrimage he made to Mecca, he revised his political views. Shortly before he was assassinated he adopted a platform of brotherhood and equality. Here he distinguishes between human rights and civil rights.*

[INTERVIEWER]

One question that I've wondered about—in several of your lectures you've stressed the idea that the struggle of your people is for human rights rather than civil rights. Can you explain a bit what you mean by that?

MALCOLM X:

Civil rights actually keeps the struggle within the domestic confines of America. It keeps it under the jurisdiction of the American government, which means that as long as our struggle for what we're seeking is labeled civil rights, we can only go to Washington, D.C., and then we rely upon either the Supreme Court, the President or the Congress or the senators. These senators—many of them are racists. Many of the congressmen are racists. Many of the judges are racists and oftentimes the president himself is a very shrewdly camouflaged racist. And so we really can't get meaningful redress for our grievances when we are depending upon these grievances being redressed just within the jurisdiction of the United States government.

On the other hand, human rights go beyond the jurisdiction of this government. Human rights are international. Human rights are something that a man has by dint of his having been born. The labeling of our struggle in this country under the title civil rights of the past 12 years has actually made it impossible for us to get outside help. Many foreign nations, many of our brothers and sisters on the African continent who have gotten their independence, have restrained themselves, have refrained from becoming vocally or actively involved in our struggle for fear that they would be violating U.S. protocol, that they would be accused of getting involved in America's domestic affairs.

CHESHIRE CA

## *Justice, C*

CHESHIRE CALHO  
Colby College in Maine

