

Submission to Department of Justice on Linward X Cathcart





*“The significance of Linward X Cathcart to any new investigation into the Malcolm X assassination is simply this: Cathcart was and remains the only member of the Nation of Islam (NOI) who was **observed and recognised** at the Audubon Ballroom **prior** to Malcolm’s assassination. Cathcart was and remains the only member of the NOI with whom Malcolm’s security guards, prior to the killing, had any **interaction** inside the Ballroom. Cathcart was and remains the only visitor to the venue, NOI or otherwise, who was subjected to a **body search** that afternoon. Cathcart was and remains the only member of the NOI who was **photographed** within the venue’s four walls.*

*Besides confessed assassin Talmadge Hayer, Cathcart was and remains the only member of the NOI who has **admitted** to being at the Audubon Ballroom that day. Besides Hayer, Cathcart was and remains the only member of the NOI who is known to have **witnessed** Malcolm’s assassination. And with the exception of Hayer (who was apprehended at the scene), Cathcart was and remains the only NOI member whom any other witnesses can positively confirm was **there...**”*

The Case Against Linward X Cathcart



That Jersey City Temple #21 Nation of Islam (NOI) lieutenant Linward X Cathcart was present at the Audubon Ballroom on 21st February 1965 is not a matter of dispute. Cathcart provided a [witness statement](#) to a 'Detective Confrey' and a 'Captain Phillips' of the New Jersey Police Department (NJPD) on 22nd March 1965 confirming his presence at the venue on the occasion of the [Malcolm X](#) assassination. Cathcart's presence would later be alluded to on pages 269 and 294 of Peter Goldman's ['The Death and Life of Malcolm X'](#) where reference was made to a member of the NOI who was observed at the Audubon 'laughing' as he gazed upon Malcolm's corpse in the aftermath of the assassination.

The 'Laughing Lieutenant'

"A Muslim from New Jersey with a Fruit of Islam pin gleaming in his lapel somehow slipped through unnoticed and took a seat down front. Somebody in the guard detail finally [spotted him](#) and asked him to step to the rear, where a couple of the brothers questioned him. He told them that

he had been getting disillusioned with the Nation and its teachings; they asked him to put his FOI pin in his pocket, then let him return to his seat without a search or even special instructions to any of the brothers to keep an eye on him...” – (p.269-270)

“Life (magazine) bought up some photos one of the brothers had taken immediately after the shooting stopped. The pictures, when the police got hold of them, identified and placed still more witnesses. One of them showed a known Muslim, the man who had got into the hall wearing an FOI pin and was allowed to stay once he took it off. The camera caught him standing there staring at Malcolm’s body. He looked as if he were laughing...” – (p.294)

As indicated in the Goldman excerpts, *photographic* evidence of Cathcart’s grinning display at the Ballroom was utilised by the NJPD to identify him as a witness and may still be available in police archives. Cathcart would later add his full name and face to Goldman’s account and confirm its essential details in this [2012 interview](#) with NOI broadcaster Lance Shabazz. This interview was one of a series which Cathcart conducted in the wake of the 2012 [defamation lawsuit](#) filed by his attorney, Mark Fury, against Viking Press (the publishers of Manning Marable’s 2010 biography ‘*Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*’) and in which Cathcart accused Marable of implicating him in the Malcolm X assassination.

Since Marable’s biography, while mentioning Cathcart’s presence at the Audubon, contained not the slightest suggestion that the Fruit of Islam (FOI) lieutenant played any role in the killing, Cathcart’s lawsuit, which was [thrown out of court](#) in 2013, can only be viewed as an unforced reflex born of a guilty conscience.

Cathcart, Marable & Viking Press

Cathcart and Fury had previously appeared on New Jersey’s [WBG0 radio station](#) on 19th May 2011 to outline their complaint in an interview conducted by host Doug Doyle and during which

Cathcart made a series of assertions that were *contradicted* by his 1965 [witness statement](#) to the NJPD. Among these were:

Cathcart & Charles 26X: In the radio interview, Cathcart claimed that he didn't know "anybody" at the Audubon Ballroom that day even though his 1965 statement reveals that he saw "Brother [Charles \(26X Blackwell\)](#), Benjamin (Karim) and Rueben X (Francis)" at the venue. Since Charles 26X and fellow rostrum security guard Robert 35X Smith were both from New Jersey they are likely to have been the sentries who first noted Cathcart's presence at the Audubon and they, in turn, may have been known to Cathcart since he offered one of them, [Charles 26X](#), a ride back to Jersey City to whose Temple #21 Cathcart was affiliated.

(Charles 26X and Robert 35X were both former members of the same Jersey City Temple #21 to which Cathcart belonged and they may have even been planted within Malcolm's security force by Cathcart himself who would have thereafter served as their NOI 'handler' and point-of-contact.)

Cathcart's 'Benedict Arnold': Cathcart suggested that he had visited the Audubon to hear a sermon by his "first teacher and great friend, even now, [Malcolm X](#)" even though his 1965 statement evidenced his animus towards Malcolm whom he had likened to the traitor Benedict Arnold and about whose brutal assassination Cathcart gleefully proclaimed: "Allah takes care of all".

Lapsed Lieutenant?: Cathcart's claim that he "had not been out to the Nation for quite a while" implied that he was a lapsed or inactive member of the sect at the time of his visit to the Audubon even though in his 1965 statement he had declared that "he will be a Muslim until the day he dies". Cathcart's *distancing* of himself from the NOI mirrors that of confessed assassin Hayer (who also denied being an NOI member at the time of his arrest) and is highly suggestive of a coordinated cover story.

The Pat-Down: Cathcart's revelation that he, unarmed though he was, had nevertheless been singled out for *two* separate pat-downs

or body searches (on an occasion where not even the gun-toting assassins themselves had aroused suspicion enough to merit the same attention) was an acknowledgement of the *unease* his presence had clearly aroused and an admission of the potential *threat* he was deemed to pose – concerns that would later be vindicated by the bloody events that shortly ensued.

Linward's Lapel Pin: Cathcart's taunting display of an FOI lapel pin and his brazen flaunting of his Elijah Muhammad loyalties at what was a Malcolm X rally would appear to have been a calculated provocation devised to *distract* Malcolm's security guards and draw their attention away from the assassins who were making their way into the venue. Like a Trump troll who shows up to a Bernie Sanders rally wearing a MAGA hat, the attention drawn by Cathcart's brooch appeared to foreshadow the ['get your hand out of my pocket'](#) ruse which assassin Wilbur Kinley would later employ to lure Malcolm's security guards away from the stage and thus enable his compatriots to move in for the kill.

Cathcart's Freudian Slip

Cathcart went on to claim that Marable's book had implied that Louis Farrakhan of Boston Temple #11 (who had been assigned to lecture at Temple #25 that day) had instructed him to visit the Audubon in order to ["manage the affairs"](#) at the venue. Since no suggestion linking Farrakhan to Cathcart is to be found anywhere in Marable's book one is left to wonder whether Cathcart may have unwittingly let slip a Freudian disclosure of the way in which his presence at the Ballroom had, in fact, come about: namely, that Farrakhan, notwithstanding his decades-long denials, had indeed been privy to what was set to unfold at the Audubon later that afternoon – and that the Boston minister had been assigned to the Newark Temple to oversee events from that locale.

Cathcart, without any prompting from the interviewer, was at pains to *distance* Farrakhan from both himself and the events at the Audubon, insisting that he didn't meet [Farrakhan](#) until 1977 and

going so far as to advance the fanciful notion that the subject of Malcolm X, a man to whom they both claim to have been especially close, had never arisen between them even though, by virtue of their mutual New Jersey links, both Cathcart and Farrakhan must have shared their impressions of the killing.

“Malcolm Asked To Die”



That ‘bond’ over Malcolm’s murder may have flickered to the surface in this [horrific 1972 tirade](#) in which Farrakhan celebrated the assassination, glorified Malcolm’s killers as “fearless men” and ridiculed what he referred to as the “cowardice” of the defenceless men, women and children at the Audubon who had attempted to flee as the assassins bullets ricocheted around the auditorium.

What was peculiar about Farrakhan’s diatribe was his graphic, blow-by-blow characterisation of the chaotic manner in which Malcolm’s bodyguards had responded to the melee. Farrakhan, who *wasn’t* present at the Ballroom, vividly recounted the mayhem which unfolded inside the venue and described Malcolm’s bodyguards as “damn cowardly dogs” and “damn punks” who were “ducking and running” as the bullets flew.

To the close listener it appeared that Farrakhan was relaying a *first-hand* account which may have been shared with him by someone who had *personally* witnessed the killing – and that he was doing so in the same *derisory* terms in which that account had itself been conveyed to him. The likeliest source of Farrakhan’s sickening narrative would appear to have been Cathcart himself since the FOI lieutenant had witnessed Malcolm’s murder from a front-row seat and would appear to have passed on what had transpired at the venue to Farrakhan in the same [disparaging vernacular](#) in which Farrakhan later retold it to his audience. Simply put, Farrakhan appeared to be describing Malcolm’s slaying – in Cathcart’s *very own words*. If true, it would furnish yet more proof that Cathcart was a *hostile* presence at the Audubon and one who may have acted in league with the assassins.

In addition, Farrakhan’s *lauding* of the assassins as “fearless men” who boldly murdered Malcolm “in front of his own followers” amounted to an *admission* that the killers were, indeed, members of the NOI and gave the lie to the organisation’s long-standing denials of responsibility for a crime it routinely blames on ‘agents’ of the United States government.

[A recording or transcript of Farrakhan’s 21st February 1965 sermon at Newark Temple #25 has yet to surface and would be useful in gauging the degree to which its theological content and rhetorical character mirrored that of his infamous 4th December 1964 [‘worthy of death’](#) diatribe in the Muhammad Speaks. More importantly the Newark speech, were it to contain statements that in any way hinted at or ‘teased’ the events that would later unfold at the Audubon Ballroom, would be vital in ascertaining the extent to which Farrakhan had [prior knowledge](#) of Malcolm’s assassination and may have been complicit in the crime.]

Cathcart Arrives At the Ballroom

In both the [Doug Doyle](#) and [Lance Shabazz](#) interviews Cathcart stated that he was one of the *first* people to arrive at the Audubon Ballroom and immediately noted the absence of *security* at the

venue – a peculiar, *surveillance-like* observation for one who claimed that they had only attended the event out of innocent ‘curiosity’ about Malcolm’s new program and/or to find out what the dispute between Malcolm and the NOI was all about.

The notion that a supposedly lapsed FOI lieutenant who, by his own admission, had continued to follow developments in the *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper, was still in the *dark*, in February 1965, as to the nature of the very public feud which had been raging between Malcolm and the NOI since March 1964 (and about which the *Muhammad Speaks* had carried [weekly editorials](#)) strains credulity and is undermined by the indignant *clarity* which Cathcart had earlier displayed in his witness statement where he had likened Malcolm to the notorious turncoat Benedict Arnold.

The Three Men On The First Row

Cathcart further stated that, upon arriving at the Audubon, he took up a seat on the same *first row* where he would later be joined by assassins Talmadge Hayer and Leon Davis. In an account provided by undercover NYPD-BOSSI agent Gene Roberts (which features in Jack Baxter’s *‘Brother Minister’* and Ark Media’s *‘Who Killed Malcolm X’*) [agent Roberts](#) reported that, upon arriving at the venue to assume his guard duties for that afternoon, he had noticed *three* men seated on the first row reading newspapers and seemingly engaged in silent communion.

In his [1977-78 affidavits](#) confessed assassin Hayer revealed that he and his fellow murderers had agreed to get to the Audubon *early*, drifting into the venue *individually* or in *pairs* to avoid suspicion and taking up seats on the front rows from which they would later launch their attack. Having agreed among themselves that Hayer and Davis would sit on the first row, with William Bradley and Ben Thomas immediately behind them on the second row and Kinley located to the rear of the venue, it seems likely that the *three* men whom Roberts observed on the first row were none other than Hayer, Davis – *and Cathcart himself*. And since Cathcart and

[Bradley](#), who was seated on the row behind him, were FOI *lieutenants* who both answered to Minister James 3X Shabazz of Newark, the likelihood that these two NOI adjutants may have *recognised* each other at the venue cannot be ruled out.

Most damningly, however, was an [8th March 1965 witness report](#) from Malcolm X associate Earl Grant which relates to Cathcart's presence at the Audubon Ballroom. According to the report:

*“Above subject interviewed by the undersigned and stated that one of the guards was a Charles Blackwell of 53 Grant Ave., Jersey City, Tel. 201-435 8096 and a former member of the Mosque in Jersey City (Linward's Jersey City Mosque #21); was stationed on the left side of the rostrum looking at the stage alongside of Booth #2. He states that Blackwell told him that he saw a fellow named **Linwood** (Linward) from Plainfield N.J. enter the room and sit on the front row on the right side facing the platform and two other men who had entered **with him** separate, and sit on the left front row of chairs. These two men were dressed alike and were wearing trench coats. **All three** subjects kept **staring** at him during the talks, he feels because they recognised him. He then heard a commotion in the back of the Ballroom and then the shooting started...” – **Earl Grant witness statement, 8th March 1965***

Grant's account corresponds with the Hayer [affidavits](#) with respect to Hayer's testimony that he and his fellow assassins entered the venue in *pairs* and that Hayer and Davis took their seats [to the left side](#) of the front row. Missing from Hayer's account, however, was any reference to the fact that both he and Davis had entered the venue *with* Cathcart who then *parted* from them and took his seat on the *right* side of the front row as Grant described.

The remarkable overlap between Grant's [report](#), Hayer's [testimony](#) and the accounts provided by BOSSI agent Roberts and Malcolm X associate Benjamin Karim in [‘Brother Minister’](#) regarding the *three men* whom they had both observed on the first row while performing their duties at the Audubon is reinforced by an additional detail in Grant's interview that is found in this line:

*“He (Charles 26X Blackwell) also noticed another person who he knows as **Benjamin** from Paterson or Newark seated about the third row on the left side...” - Earl Grant witness statement, 8th March 1965*

The reference to ‘Benjamin’ (aka Ben X Thomas aka Albert Benjamin Thomas of Newark Temple #25) seated on or about the *third* row’s left side represented **(1)** the *first* time this member of the Newark hit squad had been identified by *name* prior to the affidavits which Hayer swore a full *12 years later* and **(2)** Thomas’ seating location marries up with the seating arrangements of the assassins first provided by Hayer in 1977-78.

Like Grant’s account of the manner in which Cathcart, Davis and Hayer, upon entering the venue together subsequently *parted ways*, with Cathcart heading to the *right* of the first row while Hayer and Davis made their way to the *left* of that same row, BOSSI agent Roberts has stated that, upon arriving to perform his security duties for the day, he had observed *three* men on the first row whose behaviour indicated to him that they were there *together*.

This, in turn, buttresses Grant’s account of what Blackwell had told him regarding the manner in which all three men (Cathcart, Davis and Hayer) were behaving as if of *one mind* and kept *staring* at him either to intimidate him or in apparent concern that they may have been recognised by Blackwell who once belonged to the same New Jersey mosque network to which they were affiliated.

Cathcart, Butler & Johnson

The most intriguing revelation in Cathcart’s 1965 witness statement was the suspicions that he aroused in the NJPD detectives themselves when, having volunteered that he *knew* both Norman 3X Butler and Thomas 15X Johnson ‘well’, he abruptly *reversed* himself when presented with *photographs* of both men.

This raises grave concerns in the light of the ongoing effort to [exonerate Butler](#). Cathcart, after all, was *present* at the Ballroom. He sat on the same row from which two of the assassins launched

their attack. He has clearly stated that he saw neither Butler nor Johnson, *two men he knew well*, at the venue. But when presented with their photographs in the course of his being questioned about Malcolm's assassination he found it necessary to *deny* knowing them and distanced himself from their acquaintance.

Could Cathcart's *volte-face* have been prompted by his having earlier encountered his fellow lieutenants Butler and Johnson at a [February 1965 meeting](#) (which had been convened by [National Secretary John X Ali](#) at the *Muhammad Speaks* NYC offices on 119th street) to discuss Malcolm's imminent murder – and upon finding himself confronted with photos of Butler and Johnson was suddenly jolted into the realisation that they, *aware of his own role in the [assassination](#)*, could one day offer testimony that implicated him in whatever part in Malcolm's killing both he and they may have been scheduled to play – or did, indeed, play?

And just how tragic would it be were we to find ourselves compelled to rely on the exculpatory testimony of a man believed to be the 'team leader' of Malcolm's assassins in the course of an ill-conceived effort to exonerate one of the men long suspected of having firebombed Malcolm's home?

The Sixth Assassin

The significance of Linward X Cathcart to any new investigation into the Malcolm X assassination is simply this: Cathcart was and remains the only member of the Nation of Islam who was *observed* and *recognised* at the Audubon Ballroom *prior* to Malcolm's assassination. Cathcart was and remains the only member of the NOI with whom Malcolm's security guards, prior to the killing, had any *interaction* inside the Ballroom. Cathcart was and remains the only visitor to the venue, NOI or otherwise, who was subjected to a *body search* that afternoon. Cathcart was and remains the only member of the NOI who was *photographed* within the venue's four walls. Besides confessed assassin Talmadge Hayer, Cathcart was and remains the only member of the NOI who has *admitted* to being at the Audubon Ballroom that day. Besides

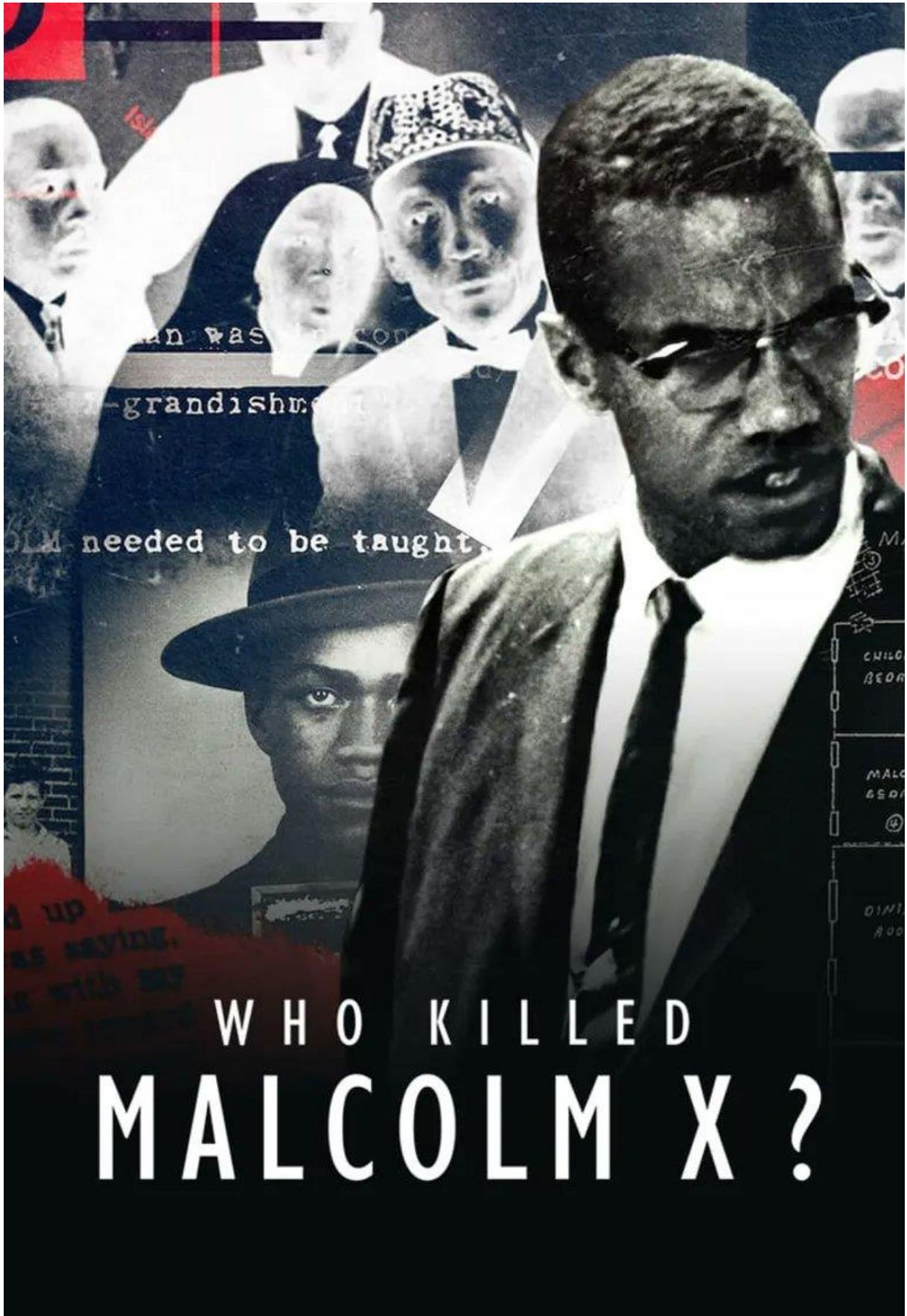
Hayer, Cathcart was and remains the only member of the NOI who is known to have *witnessed* Malcolm's assassination. And with the exception of Hayer (who was apprehended at the scene), Cathcart was and remains the only NOI member whom any other witnesses can positively confirm was *there*.

As the person whose job it was to witness Malcolm's murder and report it back to the NOI's leadership, Cathcart was nothing less than the 'eyes of Elijah Muhammad' at the Audubon that fateful Sunday. And the FOI lapel pin he wore with such effrontery identified Cathcart as the umbilical cord linking the Newark hit team with the NOI's leadership who ordered Malcolm's killing. Cathcart may have even journeyed to Chicago or Phoenix in the days following the slaying in order to brief Muhammad in person.

And it may have been at just such a briefing that Muhammad likely conferred on Cathcart the unofficial title of 'General' by which the FOI lieutenant has since come to be known, with a nod and a wink, by his [slavish acolytes](#) in New Jersey – a coded macabre tribute to the role he played leading the Newark 'troops' into 'battle' on the 21st of February 1965.

The reported presence at the Audubon of every other NOI suspect – William Bradley, Leon Davis, Albert Benjamin Thomas, Wilbur Kinley, Norman Butler and Thomas Johnson – remains, as of 2020, a matter of pure *speculation*. And yet these men have each garnered more notice and filled more column space than the one suspect whose presence at the venue may yet prove to be the most significant. For these reasons, Cathcart must now face questioning as a 'Person of Interest' in any new investigation into the crime.

Paul Bitakaramire is a freelance writer based in Manchester (UK) who has previously been published in Britain's *Spectator* magazine and has launched a petition to secure the release of the FBI files on the Malcolm X assassination. That petition can be found [here](#).



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