Thizz, Grills, "The Town,"Malcolm X And Da" Youth By César A. Cruz

Can or should a Mexican even speak on Black Liberation? This is not even about that. Malcolm X is my shining prince. He is a living example of how I can transform my life and stand up for freedom by any means necessary.

As I have been observing "The Town," Oakland, Calif., and I have also checked out East L.A., having grown up there, the east side of Chicago and the east side of New York, something strange is happening all over again.

We are being led to go dumb! Corporate Hip Hop music - that is the one played on the radio and TV stations such as MTV, BET - teaches us the following:

1. Do/pop pills: Mac Dre popularized the THIZZ movement as another way of glamorizing the feeling that you get when you are high from various types of pills. These pills come to "The Town" from the invisible South Oakland. South Oakland is the non-existent place where boats are docked that come from many places, including Colombia and Puerto Rico, where the island was taken over (occupied) by pharmaceutical (drug) companies in the 1940s-"50s with Operation Bootstrap. Black and Brown people need to be kept "high" so they never realize who is jacking them up. That's why we need rappers like Mac Dre to make putting poison in your body popular. That's where Mac Dre, Keak da Sneak and others come along.

Malcolm X, then Malcolm Little, then Detroit Red connects big time because he did all kinds of drugs, as many of our youth are doing today.

2. Smoke purple/reefers: Getting high and staying high is crucial in the hood in order to keep people not ever really thinking about anything but getting rid of the pain of daily living. During Malcolm's time "smoking purple" meant smoking reefers. Youth are never told that hitting one joint is like smoking 20 cigarettes to the lungs. Or they are never told about the brain cells that get lost. Why tell them; let them think it's cool. Why not even have them sing songs about it all the time.

3. Shooting dice, runnin" numbers: Since jobs are hard to get for teens, and resorting to selling weed or cocaine becomes a bit dangerous, many youth resort to making some pocket money by gambling. It is a welcome addiction that creates entire cities like Las Vegas, Reno and Atlantic City. During Malcolm's time, he would run numbers, and now the youth shoot dice, play poker or bones to make some ends. America tells us that "we gotta" have money. Money somehow becomes the most important thing to have.

4. Looking sharp, buying material "crap": During Malcolm's time, he had to look sharp with his zoot suits, and now the youth are constantly sold products left and right. They are sold certain t-shirts with fake Hollywood created heros such as Scarface, who is an Italian actor pretending to be Latino, with a fake accent. The youth are even sold shoes by making three-minute commercials that actually seem like songs, such as the catchy jingle, "Got my vans on, but they look like sneakers."

5. The need to "floss" (grills): Showing off what we don"t have is not a new phenomenon. But our "going dumb" culture has reached an all-time high as somehow we have convinced the youth that it is cool to wear metal in your mouth. The new "grills" movement, led by Nelly, Paul Wall and other hired goons, is about helping young people poison themselves quickly. Imagine having the ability to make youth pay $200-$500 to put metal in their mouths as it seeps into their saliva and the residue poisons their body.

6. Need to make drinking "the thing" to do: In East Oakland, East L.A., the east sides of Chicago and New York, there are liquor stores on every corner. Young Malcolm believed he loved to drink. It is no coincidence that on every corner the government gives liquor licenses so easily to businesses to keep the youth drunk. When people drink, they develop so-called beer muscles, and that's when fights break out. Also, you find malt liquor in the form of 40 ouncers in the hood, to "jack up" the youth quicker. Companies like St. Ides caught on quick that the best way to make drinking popular is to use rap artists like Ice Cube, Notorious B.I.G., Tupac (2Pac) and so many others to sell their poison. It's working! Just ask Lil" Jon, he"ll tell you, "I drink (Seagram's Gin), and they payin" me for it!"

So what does all this have to do with Malcolm, "The Town" we rep" and even the youth? Malcolm was also being sold all of this: 1. pills, 2. weed, 3. gambling, 4. clothes/material goods, 5. need to floss (make money), 6. alcohol.

So how did he escape? Why should someone from "The Town" care about Malcolm?

Malcolm was also told that he wasn"t worth anything.

Going dumb (Let's not get an education) and proud of it: What if the government could hire actors (pseudo rappers) and have them create a "yellow bus," "going retarded," "dumb" culture where knowledge would be the kryptonite (only thing that could stop Superman) for Black and Brown youth. Malcolm faced that. It wasn"t until he arrived in prison that he realized that all this time he had been in prison. In prison he realized he was "hella dumb," and not proud of it. So, while in prison, he read the entire dictionary and couldn"t stop reading his story, history. In prison, he learned that the government was setting him up to be a slave.

Our youth are being set up to be slaves. So what can we learn from Malcolm? Even if I come from:

1. A broken home: Malcolm's mom was considered crazy, his dad was killed, and all his brothers and sisters were separated and put in foster homes.

2. A world where cash and prostitution rule my life: Malcolm, as a teenager, considered himself a pimp and had little to no respect for women.

3. A world filled with violence.

Malcolm transformed himself. Here's how: He

1. began to understand that he had been lied to.

2. stopped believing in the cash/drugs/guns set-up that the government had for him.

3. began to study for freedom -

I read entire dictionary to learn the meaning of all words.

I read about his roots, Africa, the motherland, to be grounded.

I read about his people's struggles.

I connected to the Most High, in his case, Allah, and began to realize that his body is a temple and not a trash can to dump any kind of "crap" in.

I stopped wanting drugs because he knew they were government poison. No more alcohol, pills or weed.

I stopped cursing because he wanted to be able to "tell someone off" without needing to curse.

I stopped trying to be White by no longer conking his hair. Became proud of his hair, proud of what he looked like.

I realized that he is a king.

I realized that he is a warrior, and began walking like one.

So why should we care about Malcolm X? Because Malcolm provides a powerful example that

anyone can change. No matter how "messed up" things are in the "hood," we can change.

Malcolm also found his voice. He stopped being shy or afraid to speak out. Once he knew the truth, no one could shut him up. Too many of our youth are embarrassed to even go up in front of the class to speak.

Your silence will not protect you. It is time to honor Malcolm. It is time to honor yourself.

I refuse to be a slave to pills, alcohol and the ghetto the government has created for me. I am no one's prostitute. I am somebody. I am strong. I am proud.

That is the gift that Malcolm has left us. The gift is that we no longer need to be slaves. It is time to open it.

Onamove,

César A. Cruz

*Fidel Castro describes a classic act of Black-Brown solidarity that occurred in 1960 in these comments made 30 years later: “I always remember when I met with Malcolm X at the Hotel Teresa, because he was the one who gave us support and made it possible for us to be accommodated there. We had two choices: One was the patio in the United Nations. When I told this to the Secretary General, he was horrified at the thought of a delegation camping in tents there. And then we received Malcolm X’s offer. He had talked to one of our comrades. And I said, ‘That is the place, Hotel Teresa.’ And there we went. So I have personal memories of him.”