

THE TEMPLE MURALS: THE LIFE OF MALCOLM X

BY FLORIAN JENKINS

HOOD MUSEUM OF ART | CUTTER-SHABAZZ ACADEMIC AFFINITY HOUSE | DARTMOUTH COLLEGE



PREFACE

The Temple Murals: The Life of Malcolm X by Florian Jenkins has been a Dartmouth College treasure for forty years, and we are excited to reintroduce it with the publication of this brochure, the research that went into its contents, and the new photographs of the murals that illustrate it. Painted during a five-month period in 1972 in the Cutter-Shabazz affinity house at Dartmouth, the mural speaks to a potent moment in American history, one connected to events both in the life of civil rights leader Malcolm X and the moment of Dartmouth history in which the mural was created. The themes are relevant today as we reflect on the past half century, and well beyond, of the fight for equal rights.

There are many people to thank for bringing this brochure to fruition. It began as an idea launched at the fortieth reunion of the Black Alumni at Dartmouth Association (BADA) on October 27, 2012, when Jenkins returned to the College as an invited guest of BADA. I wish first, therefore, to thank the artist for this astonishing work of art that he created. The accompanying preface by recent Dartmouth graduate Aaron Colston '14 on this page attests to the powerful legacy of his vision to create a series of murals for the benefit of Dartmouth students. I also wish to thank the brochure authors Stefan Bradley, Director of African American Studies and Associate Professor of History at Saint Louis University, and Crishuana Williams, Dartmouth Class of 2012, who conducted an important oral history project with Florian Jenkins in October 2012. Finally, I wish to thank Provost Carolyn Dever for her support of this publication through Dartmouth's Public Art initiative.

Malcolm X delivered a powerful speech on the stage of Spaulding Auditorium in the Hopkins Center for the

Arts at Dartmouth on January 25, 1965, just one month before his tragic assassination. Seven years later, students in the College's Afro-American Society invited Jenkins to create a mural in their affinity house, which they had just rededicated as the El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Temple, after the name and title that Malcolm X had adopted in 1964 after returning from his pilgrimage in Mecca. Now under the care of the Hood Museum of Art, *The Temple Murals* are powerful works that remind us of the strength of individual activist voices, which Jenkins memorialized in his paintings to inspire Dartmouth's students for generations to come.

Michael Taylor
Director, Hood Museum of Art

I couldn't count how many times I've been told I look like the subject of Jenkins's mural in Cutter-Shabazz, El Hajj Malik Shabazz, popularly referred to as Malcolm X. I think part of it has to do with being a young man of color who likes books. But, I will finally admit, part of it is actually true. I see similarities in jawline, wide shoulders, and in the right lighting, hair color. It doesn't help that I often wear thick-rimmed glasses. In some ways when I look at the mural, it's like looking in a mirror.

But I think to look any further for a physical resemblance would be to miss the point of Jenkins's mural. In fact, a great many of us share qualities similar to those depicted in the mural's numerous portrayals of Malcolm X. On one end he's quietly reading a book, reclined on

a bed of grass, his head lifted in contemplation; across the room, above the fireplace, his face appears in many angles and perspectives, with colors that are not absolute but nuanced, suggesting the subject's inner mysteries and anxieties, reflecting our own.

The murals also point out how starkly we differ from Malcolm, who is rendered in contrasts in color, especially above the door threshold. A white-masked specter stands behind a black gunman, holding the gun toward Malcolm as a horrified, blurred-face bystander watches as streaks of blood leap out in the spray of gunfire. Jenkins's accusation is bold and clear: America's violent history of oppression, filled with legacies of slavery, white men lynching black men, segregation, bombs thrown through windows of Black homes and churches—not just Malcolm X's black gunman—is responsible for the death of Malcolm X. It's a message hard to swallow just as paint is hard to swallow, and its vigil above the entrance and exit reinforces its cautionary strokes.

The mural's placement couldn't be more fitting. Cutter-Shabazz is home to a Living-Learning Community (residential education program) for Black students and allies. It is also home to the Afro-American Society, an organization that serves and advocates for the academic, cultural, social, and political needs of Black students. I can proudly attest that many groundbreaking moments in the recent history of the College were planned at Cutter-Shabazz, and I hope that Malcolm's familiar brown eyes piercing through his thick-rimmed glasses will be faithful witnesses for years to come.

Aaron Colston '14
Afro-American Society Vice-President, 2013–14

Black in Green: The Murals of Florian Jenkins at Dartmouth College

Stefan Bradley

Dartmouth College, the first of its Ivy League peers to graduate an African American, has played a noteworthy role in the Black Freedom Movement of the twentieth century.¹ Although traditional and conservative by nature of its age, location, and history, the College has at times displayed a brand of progressivism that has placed the exclusive New Hampshire educational center ahead of most of institutional America. The 1971 dedication of the El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Temple was a prime example of Dartmouth's push towards progressive action on behalf of black people. The Black Freedom Movement manifested itself in different ways on campuses across the nation. At Dartmouth, beautiful murals of the shining black prince of the movement, Malcolm X, showed the expanse of the push for African American freedom.

Shortly after its dedication, the Afro-American Society at Dartmouth College commissioned Florian Jenkins, a New Jersey artist and director of the MID-Block Art Service, to transform the walls of the first floor of Cutter Hall into a series of murals celebrating Malcolm X (El Hajj Malik El Shabazz). Jenkins started the murals in June 1972 and completed the project in October.² Inside the building, which became known as the El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Temple, the acrylic and plastic-based water-soluble painted images still adorn the inner walls of the student center. In spite of Dartmouth's liberal mission, it was unlikely that the College, one of the oldest (and whitest) institutions in the nation, would authorize funds to have walls made in the image of an avowed Black Nationalist—let alone name a building after him. Black

students, who desired to make the College an institution that recognized all American heroes, helped school officials understand the significance of the murals and building. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, those students' efforts reflected the struggle of African Americans on and off campus.

Acknowledging American icons was not a problem for Dartmouth, as it had already named a building after the great orator, U.S. Secretary of State, and Dartmouth alumnus Daniel Webster. Webster's biographer noted that the American nationalist was particularly elitist and conservative in his approach to society and politics.³ Perhaps the decision to name a building in Webster's honor fit well with the traditionalism of the College. Dartmouth, however, astounded the world of higher education by naming an edifice for a twentieth-century Black Nationalist, who not only had not attended Dartmouth (or any other college) but had spent time in prison. The Jenkins murals only shined more light on that notable act.

Under the influence of Dartmouth's evolving leadership, the conservative culture of the College steadily shifted toward liberalism in the decades after World War II. Alumnus John Sloan Dickey, Class of 1929, became the College's twelfth president after a short stint in the corrections field and in the U.S. State Department. Under the Dickey administration (1945–1970), Dartmouth doubled its black student population and increased the resources available to students of color.⁴ Black students, however, still faced problems because of the reaction of fellow Dartmouth students and affiliates to their race and backgrounds.

Dickey, in addition to his career in the State Department and as a corrections official, served on U.S. President Harry Truman's historic Civil Rights Committee that submitted the famous "To Secure These Rights" document that outlined necessary steps for black freedom

in the United States.⁵ As part of the committee, Dickey was well aware of the struggles of black people when he took the helm of the College, and he worked to make Dartmouth more accessible to students of color. Although the new president's emphasis on admissions provided a welcome change for black students, life for African Americans once on campus proved trying at times.

In an attempt to create a more welcoming atmosphere for black people on and off campus, black alumni and white students who were part of the Dartmouth Christian Union (DCU) took action. By the early 1960s, Dartmouth had graduated enough black students to allow for a Black Alumni Association. Members of the association worked for the Ford Foundation and the National Scholarship and Service Foundation for Negro Students that sought to expose schools like Dartmouth to a wider pool of black applicants.⁶ Those black alumni lent their talents to black student recruitment. At the same time, the mostly white participants in the DCU went to the South to help the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) register voters in states like Mississippi.⁷ They returned to campus to share what they learned about the civil rights movement with their peers.

To assist with black life in the Ivy League institution, one white alumnus took a unique approach. In the world beyond campus, wars raged over the treatment of black people and over the expansion of democracy in foreign lands. On a smaller scale, neighborhood gangs in cities around the nation skirmished over "turf." The Conservative Vice Lords attempted to carve out space and resources on the west side of Chicago. That is where white Dartmouth alumnus David Dawley, Class of 1963, came to embed himself as part of a sociological study.⁸ Dawley had participated in the voter registration movements with SNCC in the South. While living amongst the Conservative Vice Lords, however, he recognized

the intelligence of the young primarily black men, and thought that if given the opportunity and environment to grow, they could do well at Dartmouth. He, along with groups like the Black Alumni Association, worked to establish the Foundation Years program.⁹ In addition, the A Better Chance (ABC) program had already been established at Dartmouth some years earlier by Dickey, colleagues at the College's Tucker Foundation, and students in response to a call from President John F. Kennedy for help in addressing civil rights issues through access to education. Both programs offered students with backgrounds atypical of most Dartmouth students the opportunity to come to the Upper Valley to remediate their scholastic skills while acclimating to life at a predominantly white institution. Upon completing the programs and passing entrance exams, the student participants (nearly all of whom were black) could matriculate at Dartmouth. Several members, including one of the Vice Lords' founders, took advantage of the programs and enrolled in the College.¹⁰

The perspective of the Vice Lords members and other similarly situated students added nuance to that of black students who were not part of the ABC or Foundation Years programs. Taking into account the burgeoning movement for black freedom in urban areas, Ivy League institutions moved to increase their black recruitment efforts. Add to that effort the passage of the 1965 Higher Education Act, and the result was the highest number of enrolled black students in Dartmouth's history.¹¹ Many of those black students came from working- and middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds. The arrival of black students from urban areas, who had experienced poverty and had been exposed to violence, added diversity to the population of African Americans on campus. While united by race, the experiences of the two groups of students varied widely from each other and certainly from

the many white Dartmouth affiliates they encountered. As much as black students had to acclimate to life at a starkly white institution, traditional Dartmouth had to adjust to new groups of students.¹² This was the environment that El Hajj Malik El Shabazz (Malcolm X) entered in 1965.

It bears noting that Shabazz's visit, while exciting and timely, was very much in context with other guest speakers at Dartmouth. Well before the Undergraduate Council invited Shabazz in 1965, Dartmouth had a reputation for featuring potentially controversial speakers on campus. In 1963, George Wallace, the segregationist governor of Alabama, had lectured at the College. That year, Alabama state and municipal officials tortured black and white activists who pushed to desegregate public facilities. As the state executive, Wallace observed the deaths of numerous innocent children in churches and attempted to deny the entrance of black students to the University of Alabama. He came to Dartmouth to espouse his views regarding the need for segregation, as he tried to maintain what he called "the southern way of life." His arrival on campus caused some stir, but he was able to deliver his lecture without disruption or significant protest. Further, his message of segregation found a home with some Dartmouth affiliates.¹³

While Wallace visited, students at the College faced their own crisis regarding segregation on campus. In 1954, there had been a referendum regarding campus fraternities that stated: "By April 1, 1960, any fraternity, which as a result of a nationally imposed written or unwritten discrimination clause restricts, or can be interpreted to restrict membership because of race, religion, or national origin, shall be barred from all interfraternity participation."¹⁴ Apparently the chapter of Sigma Epsilon Chi fraternity either did not receive notice of the referendum or disregarded it, because in 1963, a black student

seeking to pledge the fraternity was "blackballed" and prevented from entering. The chapter president explained a small but powerful minority of members blocked the progress of black candidates by threatening to leave the brotherhood if black men were admitted. Dartmouth, like many American institutions at the time, was accessible to some black people but could be cold to them once they arrived.

The few black students in the predominantly white setting felt a need to create an identity for themselves. Shabazz, and his encouragement for black people to take interest in their own history and to delve into the beauty of black culture, greatly influenced Dartmouth's small contingent of black students, both those who were present when he lectured and those who came years later. With so few black students, establishing a racial identity and getting Dartmouth affiliates to recognize that unique identity was not always easy.

Shabazz, by way of his service in the Nation of Islam and in his own Organization of Afro-American Unity, sought to create a black consciousness among all classes of people of African descent. In his speeches and commentary, he pointed to the idea of ghettos representing colonies of the United States and the need to get beyond a struggle for civil rights in favor of a campaign for human rights.¹⁵ Young people found his concepts penetrating and inspirational. Students from groups like SNCC met with him and appropriated his ideas of Pan-Africanism as well as his opposition to neo-colonialism. As the news media reported about the civil rights movement, Shabazz indicated that by pursuing only civil rights, black people had taken the wrong tack. According to the Black Muslim leader, his people needed human rather than civil rights. He explained that civil rights depended on the cooperation of the same Americans who had always opposed the freedom of black

people. The push for human rights, he asserted, involved taking the case of black mistreatment and oppression to the United Nations (a body that Dartmouth President Dickey had served with in 1951). By going to what he termed a world court, black people could perhaps find justice. During his 1965 visit to Dartmouth, he elaborated on the struggle.

Arguably one of the finest American orators of the twentieth century, Malcolm X visited the College in January 1965 as part of his tour of Ivy League institutions (fig. 1). His associate Dartmouth student Ahmed S. Osman, Class of 1965, from Sudan, was instrumental in extending the invitation for the black freedom fighter to come to campus (fig. 2).¹⁶ Even before arriving in the Upper Valley, the famed Black Muslim leader had an indirect connection with Dartmouth's president. For a short while during his years at Harvard Law School, John Sloan Dickey worked in the Charlestown State maximum-security prison in Massachusetts, which happened to be the same correctional facility at which Malcolm X served between 1946 and 1947, although the two never met in that setting.¹⁷

In Cutter Hall, Spaulding Auditorium, and in a WDCR radio interview, the Black Nationalist spoke about the place of racism in the United States and abroad. He focused specifically on the inefficacy of political leaders to do anything about the violence that black people consistently faced in the United States, and then on how western nations imposed their will on African nations in the international realm.¹⁸ He mentioned that by entering the conflict in Southeast Asia, the United States practiced a brand of imperialism and racism that needed to be checked. Prognosticating that America was en route to destruction, Malcolm X expressed a dream not dissimilar to that of Martin Luther King Jr.'s: "I dream that one day history will look on me as having been one of the voices



Fig. 1. Front page of *The Dartmouth*, January 27, 1965, featuring an article on Malcolm X's lecture in Spaulding Auditorium on January 26. Copyright 2014 The Dartmouth, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

that perhaps helped save America from a grave."¹⁹ Less than a month after making that statement at Dartmouth, Malcolm X entered his own grave after assassins riddled his body with bullets in Harlem. In death, the leader was perhaps even more significant than in life, with his words, thoughts, and spirit inspiring generations to come.

By 1966, the year that Stokely Carmichael popularized "Black Power" as a plank of the movement, black students at Dartmouth absorbed Shabazz's messages of identity and struggle and established the Afro-American Society (AAS). Doing so placed those students in line with thousands of others around the nation who joined Black Student Unions (BSUs) as a way to organize, support, and encourage fellow students.²⁰ At Dartmouth, the creation of AAS occurred at the moment the College admitted its largest contingent of black students yet. Members focused on the need to advance opportunities for not just black students but black people in general. As AAS chairman Woody Lee, Class of 1968, later noted, students who had not come with a black consciousness acquired one because of the moment in history they occupied. They became representatives of the movement on campus.²¹ While black students progressed in their black consciousness, activists off campus took note of the part Dartmouth students played. In a poem that *Ebony* magazine featured in 1969, one observer spoke to the College's black students: "Don't git caught up in the enemy's camp, eatin' his food, thinkin' his thoughts." The poet claimed that the students were "bein' cool. Acting rationale. Playin' the role" when members of the black community suffered in urban ghettos.²²

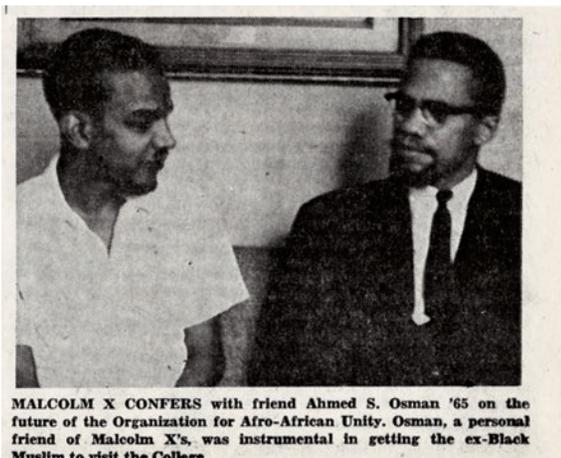
Recognizing the privileged position in which they found themselves, AAS members demanded that Dartmouth do more to recruit black students. The College faced severe challenges in recruiting black students in large part because of its location. As higher numbers of urban black students sought to attend predominantly white institutions, those schools located in areas where the black population was low found themselves at a marked disadvantage. Dartmouth resided in a state with a black population of less than 1 percent, and in a location quite removed from the nearest urban center.²³

Such isolation for black students was also troublesome in that it limited dating options (if the students at the all-male school preferred dating black women) and access to black culture. In an age that heralded the arrival of Black Power, Dartmouth activists felt the need to create their own movement. As part of their campaign to achieve Black Power, black students exposed their schoolmates to the Black Arts Movement. AAS was able to attract jazz musicians like Don Cherry to teach a course and playwrights like LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) to run his play “The Dutchman” on campus.²⁴

AAS moved into a position of distinct power after the April 4, 1968, assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. As did so many other black student groups, AAS demonstrated directly after King’s death, but in addition to protesting, AAS began negotiations with Dartmouth’s Board of Trustees. When so many other student groups struggled to gain access to the powerbrokers of their institutions, Dartmouth black students had already set about making changes to suit their circumstances. The trustees put together the Committee on Equal Opportunity, which longtime trustee John R. McLane chaired, to gather information on the black experience at Dartmouth. This was an extremely unusual position for students of the era because so many institutions gave little credence to the voice of students. As a result, students at other institutions took over campus buildings and demonstrated to gain a say in policy decisions. In this case, black students were able to employ their collective voice to achieve Black Student Power—that is, students using their status, as well as the tactics and methodology of the Black Power Movement, to achieve goals on behalf of the larger black community.²⁵ For AAS, that meant pursuing higher numbers of black students, establishing a Black Studies program, and creating a space where black people could feel comfortable to express themselves. By the

end of the 1960s, AAS had achieved the first two of these goals. Further, in negotiating and appealing to the trustees, AAS was able to acquire space for a black cultural center in Cutter Hall. Upon occupying the edifice in 1971, AAS began referring to (and Dartmouth recognized) the building as the El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Temple.²⁶

To make Cutter Hall their own, the members of AAS commissioned Florian Jenkins to paint murals on the inner walls. Jenkins, who came from Newark, was well aware of the struggles with poverty and racism that black people faced daily in the United States and especially in urban centers. In the late 1960s, American cities exploded with racial tension as disillusioned African Americans violently rebelled against police brutality and their own bleak circumstances. In his home city of Newark, Jenkins witnessed urban rebels burning white-owned



MALCOLM X CONFERS with friend Ahmed S. Osman '65 on the future of the Organization for Afro-African Unity. Osman, a personal friend of Malcolm X's, was instrumental in getting the ex-Black Muslim to visit the College.

Fig. 2. Ahmed S. Osman '65 (left) and Malcolm X as pictured in *The Dartmouth*, January 28, 1965. The original caption reads: “Malcolm X confers with friend Ahmed S. Osman '65 on the future of the Organization for Afro-African Unity. Osman, a personal friend of Malcolm X's, was instrumental in getting the ex-Black Muslim to visit the College.” Copyright 2014 The Dartmouth, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

institutions and businesses. Those city residents may have been acquainted with Shabazz’s admonition to white America that black people could only be pushed so far before reacting to their oppression. In his murals of Shabazz, Jenkins attempted to capture the mood of the black masses to which Shabazz spoke. The images also portrayed Shabazz in contemplation and various groups of black people listening to their leader. Other panels showed people laughing and dancing, which helped to express the totality of black people, Jenkins explained.²⁷ AAS’s decision to commission the muralist to complete a work depicting Shabazz highlighted the students’ ties to the Black Arts Movement and the Black Freedom Movement in general. As AAS chairman Ron Copeland, Class of 1973, noted in 1972, the murals were “reflective of the thinking of Black students on campus.”²⁸

The Shabazz Temple and the Jenkins Murals did not just point up the ties that black students had made to the movement. They illustrated tangible and cultural victories for black freedom. Those victories allowed black students to be themselves in a space where those of their race numbered so few. In addition, the victories of black students made it possible for white students, staff, faculty, administrators, and other officials to enhance the Dartmouth educational experience. The consciously black students of the 1960s and 1970s gave the College the opportunity to boast that Dartmouth is one of the first and few white educational institutions in the nation to have an edifice named after Shabazz that features such artwork. Furthermore, Dartmouth can proudly state that, with the assistance of students, the College was able to improve life for black people. That is something to which every American institution should aspire.

Stefan Bradley is Director of African American Studies and Associate Professor of History, Saint Louis University.



(a)

The Temple Murals

Florian Jenkins

The murals were begun June 15, 1972, and completed October 15 in the same year. The medium or paint used was acrylic, a plastic-based, water-soluble paint. Though water soluble, this paint dries to a rock-hard finish, which can only be broken down by chemical solution. The paintings were done on linen canvas in the causeways. All canvases were treated as a paper-hanging problem; that is, they were glued to the wall before paint was applied. Once painting was completed, the murals were coated with an acrylic co-polymer matte medium finish. This medium serves two purposes. It acts as a protective agent against natural elements of wear and tear, and also reduces the glare produced by the natural [illegible] of the paints. These paintings can be washed with a mild soap solution and warm water. With proper care, they will retain their brilliance for years.

Conception

The concept and design for these murals were developed for the purpose of accentuating the Afro-American Society's dedication to the principles exemplified via the life of El Hajj Malik El Shabazz (Malcolm X), in whose honor the building, El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Temple, was named. The themes were developed jointly with the students and the images serve to reflect the nature of the struggle they have identified and are committed to.

The Leader (a)

The first mural I completed was *The Leader*. The base inspiration, at least in form, comes from Orozco's first panel in Baker Library on the Dartmouth campus. Here, Man is moving towards his future. The leader is

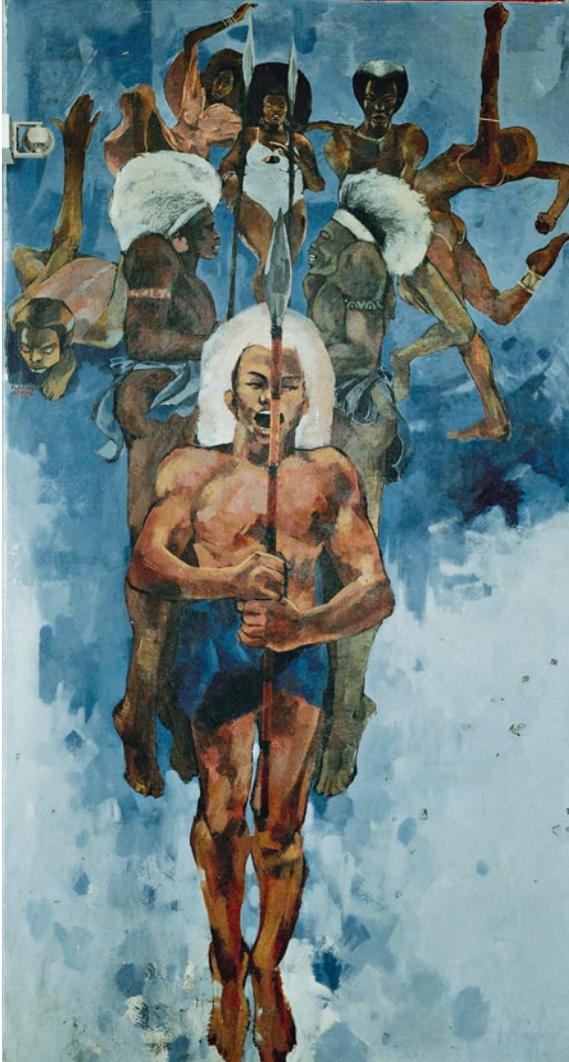
concerned with the future of his people. This composition is based upon a series of triangles; the largest being the Leader himself: the man who points the way for others to follow. The men beside him look to the future with determination and dignity. The little brother directly below the woman looks to the future with curiosity, under the protection of his elders. The woman, in a sign of wonder, stands beside the Leader, alone. And in the corner, near the bottom, is the individual personality, who walks his own path. But this is his moment of turning around.

Tribes (b)

Tribes is my tribute to the vast wealth and variety in the nations of Black people. I have used the map of Africa as a Horn of Plenty, which pours forth Tribe after Tribe. I have shown our masks and motifs representing the



(b)



(c)

Dance (c)

I didn't include the word "the" in the title because I wanted to say something about our joy, our music, our good times, our Saturday nights. Black peoples work hard and carry a great weight while they do. The one great balm is Dance. A shucking loose of the weight. Ishmael Reed chronicles dance, in his book *Mumbo Jumbo*, and names it "jes grew." Time will pass; the what will change; the how may shift; yet nonetheless we joy and grow strong in *Dance*.



(d)

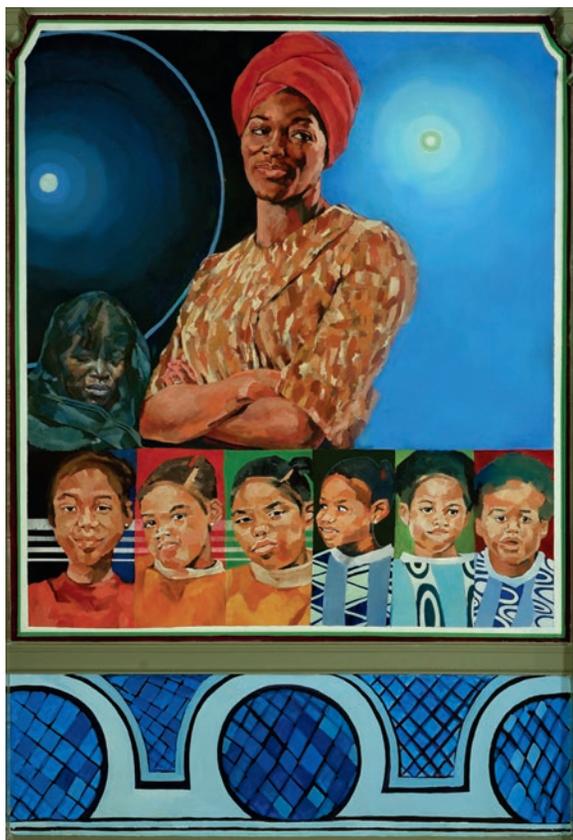
artistic life of the Tribes. In some cases, these masks and motifs are shown in the area in which they were produced. *Tribes* takes the eyes sweeping back and forth across the painting, like waves upon the sea . . . separate, yet whole. And beneath the surface: the individual personalities. Summer school was in full gear at the time, and many faces portrayed in this work were students living on campus during the summer of '72. The Leader points in the direction of Tribes. Perhaps he sees our answer in this.

The panel limited a large treatment of the theme because of its size. So figures were constructed upon verticals and horizontals, or like a fat "T." Watusi dancer, graceful in the air; young people flank the beginning of the crossbar [of the] T. Young men and women leap, bend, and twist into impossible positions. And, of course, the individual personality. *Dance* is facing the recreational room and was designed to keep tempo with the downstairs area.

The Assassination (d)

The lounge is a room that is designed for quiet contemplation. In the center of the south wall, around the doors, *The Assassination* [hangs]. Students on campus felt very strongly about this. The left panel portrays the assassins. As the story is reported, Malcolm was speaking at the Audobon Ballroom on February 21, 1965, in New York City. Two men in the audience jumped up during Malcolm's speech and began arguing about pick-pocketing some money. Money, in my interpretation, is shown as a force that pushes from behind. Malcolm's bodyguards

stand in front of the podium surveying the crowd (as portrayed in the center section of the right panel) [and] whirl around in time to see a third man calmly step up to the front, pull from his coat a sawed-off shotgun, and fire point-blank into Malcolm's chest. This is that moment



(e)

of killing I wanted to capture. The moment of devils in the height of their power: guiding the killer; of Black men moving against themselves; of spectators hung in that moment of horror; as a wealth of dreams are cut off in their prime. Above the doors is the speed and the hate of that horror, and there, to the right, Malcolm, himself, saddened, and then dying.

Betty Shabazz (e)

To the left on the north wall is a portrait of Betty Shabazz, Malcolm's wife and mother to their six children. The two youngest were never seen by their father. Mrs. Shabazz

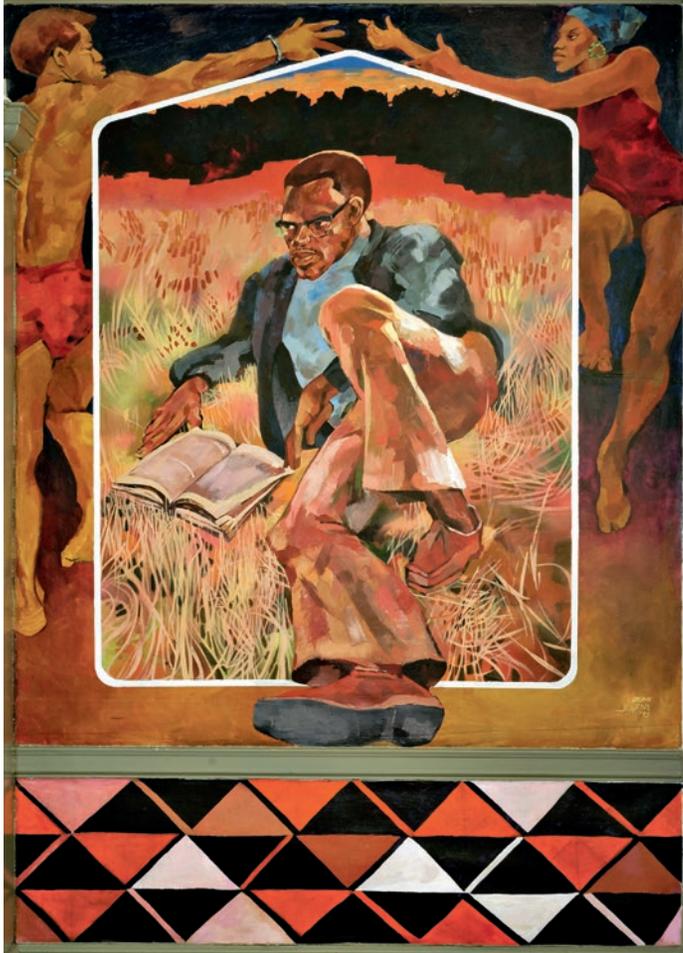
is standing, arms folded, with a smile, as she looks off into her own distance. To her right, we see her again in mourning veils. Above her, the moon hangs lonely in the midnight sky. To her left is the endless sky of a cloudless sunlight day. Endless and empty of a husband and father for her six lovely daughters pictured below. Betty Shabazz is within the tradition of generations of strong black women, a tradition at peace in a smile.

Malcolm: A Lifestyle (f)

On the south wall of the lounge is *Malcolm: A Lifestyle*, or *Roots* (my own personal name). The problem was



(f)



(g)

to create something all-inclusive about Malcolm. The idea itself became the idea. That is, the visual images portrayed represent the ideas for a [illegible] freedom. A thrust for life.

Beginning in the lower left, we see Malcolm as a spirit growing out of and into the roots of the ghetto. Our eyes travel up, through the tenements, the windows, the glassed-in city that reflects the life about it. A great sun pours light into an early morning window onto a pregnant woman. The beginning of the freedom thrust. Just below the woman are two young boys. Perhaps friends or brothers surveying you as you examine this wall. He is portrayed again and again in the various stations of his life. The large head to the right of these positions represents a great influence in his life, Betty Shabazz. Directly below this we see Malcolm looking to the east. And below, the idea gaining maturity, a youthful maturity in the faces of a young man and woman, overshadowed by a finger of destiny issuing forth a kaleidoscope of color. And to the far right edge, The Spirit of the East, as portrayed by the Black woman. Her face we see hinted in the eastern moon; whose figure blends through the night into the white alabaster mosques. Her feet pointing to the red, black, and green lights of liberation. Finally into the bottom panel, Malcolm's African roots as symbolized in a Shango's eye (Yoruba motif).

The Way of Malik (g)

The last panel to be completed was the far right side of the north wall. The problem was to do a portrait of Malcolm in a room that already portrayed important attitudes in his life. I show him relaxing. We think of him often, at least I do, as busy, moving, teaching, and preaching . . . but the man had to relax sometime. I offer you this field or meadow, with a book and a man lost in thought. Perhaps planning some event or strategy in the war against

oppression. Some final victory, so that black men and women might touch each other in Freedom. The sun is setting in this scene; arched over by third-world symbols of love.

A Word (see figs. d, e, and g)

In regard to the bottom panels of the north wall, the motifs I used are all Bushongo, which reflects my preference in African Tribal designs. I chose designs that complemented the movement in the accompanying walls. I take credit for the treatment only.



Cutter-Shabazz Academic Affinity House.
Photo by Jeffrey Nintzel.

Florian Jenkins

The Temple Murals: The Life of Malcolm X

Crishuana Williams

While the rest of the country burned with racial tensions during the 1960s, Dartmouth College, quietly tucked away in New Hampshire's Upper Valley, only simmered until 1968, when the admission of larger classes of black men transformed the College's lily-white campus. Dartmouth had a long history of admitting African Americans—the first, Edward Mitchell, graduated in 1828—but black students had never exceeded more than five per class. Then, with funding and full support from the admissions office and the Tucker Foundation, men from the Class of 1965 led a direct effort to visit inner-city schools around the country and hand-pick black talent from traditionally overlooked communities. Afros and bell-bottoms abounded as more than ninety black students arrived at Dartmouth. In the late 1960s, these students formed the Afro-American Society (AAS), officially recognized in 1969. Immediately, they shook up what had been a comfortably insulated population. They brought a new political activism to the campus, energizing existing groups like Students for a Democratic Society and the Dartmouth Christian Union's Political Action Committee who were fighting for change on campus and abroad.

Upon the devastating assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, the College committed to pushing forward in regards to diversity. Within a year of founding the AAS, members met with Dartmouth administrators to present a list of eighteen demands they believed would “amplify the diversity of the college’s resources and to facilitate the various problems of adjustment to the college faced by the black student and to provide the black student with the materials necessary to recreate

elements of their root culture not indigenous to the college community” (fig. 1). These students insisted that it was not enough simply to bring them to the hills of Hanover; the Dartmouth culture itself needed adjustment.

While pressing for a more inclusive College culture, black students also recognized their need to maintain a space of their own on campus. The students had been living at the Lord house on 41 College Street, acquired by the College in 1944 from the family of

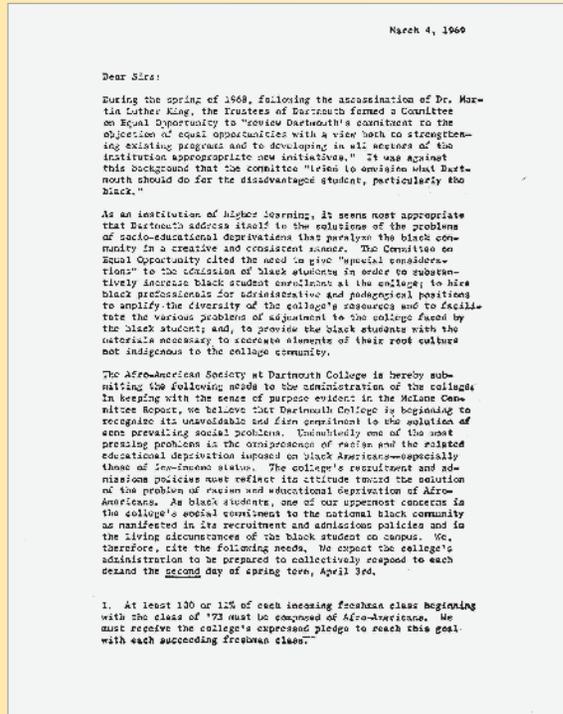


Fig. 1. Page one of the letter from Afro-American Society leaders to College administrators outlining eighteen demands for a more welcoming campus for black students, March 4, 1969. Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library.

President Emeritus Rev. Nathan Lord.¹ As plans for the construction of the Sherman Fairchild Science Center progressed, the home would have to be moved in 1972 to its current location at 16 North Park Street.² Thus, among the eighteen demands put forth by the AAS in 1968 was number 15 (fig. 2): “We demand that a new site be found for an Afro-American center to replace the present 41 College Street site soon to be eliminated for college expansions before the present site is eliminated.”

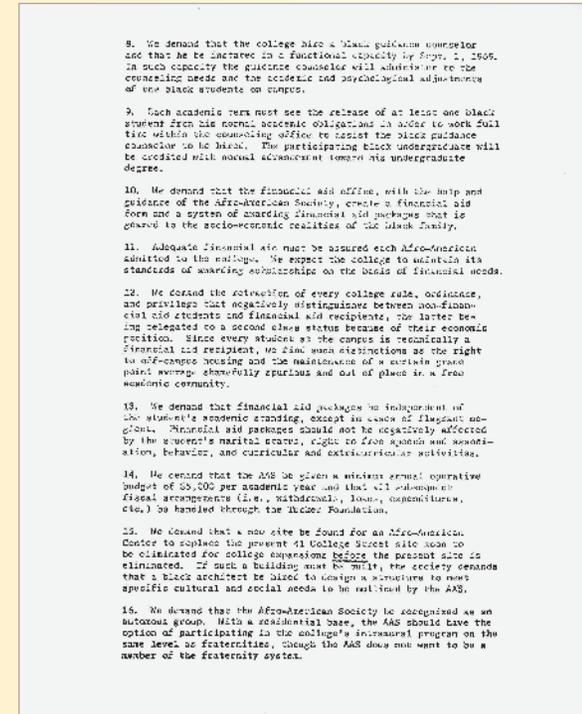


Fig. 2. Page three of the letter from Afro-American Society leaders to College administrators, including number 15 (see text above). Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library.

Dartmouth responded by offering Cutter Hall, located at 1 North Main Street, originally acquired in 1953 from the Clark School. The space had held failed experimental living-learning communities housing faculty with students. Members of the AAS promptly took ownership, both intellectually and physically, of this space on a campus that had been slow and unsure of how to include the newly enlarged black population. In 1971, the Society dedicated the hall El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Temple after Malcolm X, who had spoken at Dartmouth in 1965, shortly before his assassination. Malcolm's name invoked "Freedom, Justice, and Equality," principles they strove to live by daily. The AAS almost immediately commissioned muralist Florian Jenkins to execute a series of panels honoring the life of Malcolm X throughout the ground floor of Shabazz Temple. Known today as Cutter Shabazz Academic Affinity House, the building continues to house the Afro-American Society offices and carry out a mission "to enhance the intellectual and cultural milieu of the Dartmouth College campus, with particular regard to those issues which pertain to the historical and contemporary experiences of people of African descent."³

The Artist: Rev. O. Florian Jenkins

In the press release for the official community unveiling of the Temple Murals, the chairman of the Afro-American Society in 1971, Cleveland Webb, Class of 1971, commented, "I felt the need for us, as a body, to create and to unite. [The commission] was created to set up a demand within the community to move towards racial consciousness. The consciousness of El Hajj Malik Shabazz Temple is a burning spirit. The man [Florian Jenkins] did exactly what he wanted to do. May the spirit live on forever."⁴ When Jenkins first arrived in Hanover, he was modest and relatively young, though already quite accomplished. He identified as a muralist, but was also proficient in portraiture, design and commercial printing

procedures, photography, and easel painting, and regularly gave artist lectures. He was director of his own gallery, Mid-Block Art Service in East Orange, New Jersey, and had exhibited in galleries from Paris to Newark, but *The Temple Murals* would be one of his signature works. The piece was not only a testament to his talent, but also to his sense of purpose.

Jenkins belonged to the tradition of community art rooted in self-pride and self-sacrifice. Using his skills as a portraitist, Jenkins incorporated the faces of many Dartmouth students into his mural design—not simply to provide a way for black students on campus to see themselves literally on walls of the ivory tower, but also to represent their role in the larger struggle for black equality and the commitment they had made to their communities at home by entering into this elite environment. The murals were to be a reminder of their responsibilities as black citizens of the nation and the world. Dartmouth's cozy isolation would be no excuse for disengagement and certainly not a refuge for them politically.

In an interview for a student article written two decades after the official completion of the murals, one alumnus, Nelson Armstrong, Class of 1971, recalled his first reaction to Jenkins: "I was floored by the sight of this small man who turned out to be capable of such a large work. His work was bold and impressionistic. Yet, I remembered him as small and soft-spoken. He made his presence felt by giving his time when students bothered him. El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Temple was a testament to his life."⁵ When Jenkins returned to the Dartmouth campus to mark the fortieth anniversary of the murals and also of the founding of the Black Alumni of Dartmouth Association, he glanced excitedly over his murals, eager to speak about them again. The artist reflected on the experiences and ambitions of the students for whom he created the murals to encourage their intellectual pursuits. He remembered vividly their determination, which

had so passionately inspired him: "I was impressed with the students. I was really impressed with them and their sense of adulthood, their sense of purpose. Up here, so far away from their centers and urban areas that they had come from, but to be so dedicated, to be so focused in terms of where they wanted to go."⁶

People's Art and Spiritual Dynamics

It is tempting to assess the significance of Jenkins's work for the Dartmouth community through comparison with the famed Orozco murals in Baker Library, but this approach overlooks the salient fact that the Orozco commission came from the College administration, whereas Jenkins's murals represent the will of students struggling for a place in the College community. Black public muralists in the late 1960s and early 1970s were far from the Mexican muralists of the 1930s, even if their themes and social commentary could be similar, for the latter worked on behalf of and within formal institutions. In contrast, the community-based mural movement was driven by artists working "unofficially" within their respective communities who produced hundreds of large-scale wall paintings in the United States and in some parts of Canada. The "Wall of Respect" organized by William Walker in Chicago in 1967 is often cited as one of the earliest works in the People's Art movement. Walker and his artists believed in the ideal of participatory democracy, or actively exercising one's citizenship. Additionally, they believed that activist art could have a long-term social impact not only within their communities, but also on society as a whole.⁷

Walker and similar artists were rethinking the process of collective memory-building. It wasn't simply the amassing of official documents in a government archive. African American memory was living and breathing. It was shaped through blacks' active efforts to memorialize and celebrate their own collective existence because the rest of the country would not do it for them. For these



Fig. 3. Florian Jenkins working on the Tribes panel, 1972. Unknown photographer. Courtesy of the artist.

community artists, history was visual. Prose was not the only necessary tool to express personal frustrations, to make social commentary, or to reinvigorate pride into a beaten-down and tired community. Their work suggested that a message could be understood without explicit verbal communication. In fact, at some level, it can be argued that through his work, Jenkins actually challenges what it means to be “explicit.” He boldly objects to the notion that one must “speak” to speak up. Nowhere is this more in evidence than in the *Malcolm X* murals. Ultimately giving black students a sense of ownership of their newly claimed space, Jenkins’s murals epitomize the text inscribed above Walker’s original Wall of Respect:

“The Wall was created to Honor our Black Heroes and to beautify our community.”

In dialogue with the Black Arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the murals were commissioned in June of 1972 to be “reflective of the thinking of Black students on campus,” as proclaimed by Ronald Copeland, Class of 1972, chairman of the Afro-American Society that year. Jenkins worked with students in various meetings, interviews, and group discussions to identify a community theme that would connect Malcolm to the Dartmouth community. Through Jenkins’s collaboration with students in the construction and planning of his *Temple Murals*, the mural became a form of collective

memory-building and community engagement beyond his own personal artistic interpretations. As noted above, Jenkins frequently depicted the faces of students he saw meeting in the lounge as figures in the murals (fig. 3).⁸ This was especially significant for a number of the students who were there attending the early years of the Dartmouth Bridge Project, a college student development program for academically disadvantaged high school students. The Bridge Project, started by black students and primarily directed by recent graduates with some help from faculty, would become a loose foundation for the A Better Chance (ABC) program, which continues to advance educational opportunities for students of color nationwide.

The murals took Jenkins about four months to complete, from June to October 1972. In the press release announcing their debut, the artist explained that his purpose was to “accentuate the Afro-American Society’s dedication to the principles exemplified via the life of El Hajj Malik El Shabazz.”⁹ After his wife negotiated the terms of the commission with the AAS executive council, Jenkins met with the students to discuss what they were looking for and view the space. He then made some preliminary drawings and, after reaching an agreement with AAS members, prepared for the project. Jenkins brought his linen canvas to Hanover and found a local hanger to stretch and prepare the canvas. Working in two- to three-week stints, he slowly crafted the mural panels beginning with *The Leader* (see fig. a), a composition of triangular series that represents the responsibility of the leader to guide his people by looking to the future with determination and dignity. The second panel, *Dance* (see fig. c), currently housed at Dartmouth’s Hood Museum of Art,¹⁰ highlights the Pan-African connection of dancing styles from Soul Train to the Watusis, demonstrating how black American dance traditions grow out of African roots. Similarly, the *Tribes* panel (see fig. b) ties Dartmouth’s black

community to the breadth of global experience. Jenkins next completed *The Way of Malik* (see fig. g), *Malcolm: A Lifestyle* (see fig. f), and finally *Betty Shabazz* (see fig. e) to highlight Malcolm's commitment to intellectualism, his connection to his urban roots, and the tradition of strong black womanhood, respectively.

The mural's last panel, *The Assassination* (see fig. d), was deliberately located in the main room of Shabazz Temple, a room for contemplation. The subject of this particular panel raised strong concerns from the students at the time it was proposed due to its controversial nature. Jenkins revealed that he saw money, greed, and jealousy as the cause of Malcolm X's death. Later, at the fortieth anniversary of the murals, he commented on viewing the *Assassination* panel, "And he fell in a rush of hatred. It wasn't the bullets. It was ignorance. It was hatred and the apathy from many people that just didn't care. That really hasn't changed a lot. People still don't care. There's still a lot of apathy."¹¹ The unity so sought after by the Afro-American community, he contends, is as vulnerable from destruction from within as from without.

The murals' merging of styles captured not only the faces of the black student community or what Malcolm X meant to them at the time, but also their experience in a larger diasporic context. This interconnectedness is represented by a technique Jenkins developed called "spiritual dynamics." When the murals were officially unveiled at 8:00 p.m. on November 11, 1972, Florian gave a lecture entitled "My Dartmouth Experience and the Concept of Spiritual Dynamics to the Artist in Black Society," which focused on his time as a resident artist at the College as well as his technique for vivid coloring combined with Bushongo African tribal design. In Phoebe Wolfskill's essay on the Jenkins murals for *Modern and Contemporary Art at Dartmouth: Highlights from the Hood Museum of Art*, she describes *Tribes*, a panel that expresses the concept of "spiritual dynamics" with particular strength:

In *Tribes*, one of the entryway murals, a delicate outline renders the continent of Africa, while African masks, patterned textiles, an image of Malcolm X and the faces of individual students in Dartmouth's Afro-American Society spill from the continent's borders. The overlapping, multicolored faces and masks illuminate the richness and continuity of African and African diasporic cultures. Using a cubist compositional structure, Jenkins eliminates coherent space and depth to suggest a melding of people across time and geographic regions.¹²

Jenkins envisioned a strong young core of blacks dedicated to "the struggle" in the tradition of Malcolm X. The struggle for social and economic equality and self-determination is expressed in the passionate faces of the various young men and women depicted in the murals. In the artist statement that accompanies the work, Jenkins explained, "the images serve to reflect the nature of the struggle they have identified and are committed to." Ultimately, Jenkins's spiritual dynamics conveyed the idea of the collective that is rooted in individual personalities: multifaceted but whole.

Conclusion

Forty years after their execution, Jenkins's murals of black people still demonstrate what he considered to be profound aspects of the black American experience, namely its united strength and sense of greater purpose. In his own words: "The overall result is a visual feast that addresses itself to a wider understanding of Black Art as a social statement and the unending struggle for communication between people."¹³ The murals weave together multiple generations, and indeed this kind of community art has always expressed the continuity of modern Blackness across time and place. The late photographer Gordon Parks once reflected on his images of black people

in the 1930s, saying, "People in millenniums ahead will know what we were like in the 1930s and . . . the important major things that shaped our history at that time. This is as important for historic reasons as any other."¹⁴ Similarly, the murals tie contemporary viewers to a moment in history they did not experience, yet still feel the effects of. In this way, Jenkins positions today's residents of Cutter Shabazz House, members of the Afro-American Society at Dartmouth, and viewers of the murals as individual strands within a larger cloth.

To understand Florian Jenkins's *Temple Murals*, one must comprehend both the artist's passionate idealism and his pessimism. In demonstrating the transient nature of Afro-diasporic identity, Jenkins's use of Bushongo tribal designs and vivid colors allows viewers to connect Malcolm X's life experiences and the experiences of black Dartmouth students in the 1960s and 1970s with the full global diaspora. The walls of Cutter Hall, where the students' isolation from their communities and the larger diaspora threatened their interconnectedness and commitment to activism, must have seemed to him the perfect location for this statement. He demonstrated his skill as a muralist while advancing an unambiguous social message that urges the Dartmouth community—black or otherwise—today as in the 1970s to find strength in their cultural roots while heeding the power of ignorance. On viewing the murals in 2012, Jenkins observed, "I just look at them for what they are and they stand for what they are. They really speak for themselves. Art has to speak for itself. You can't stand there and explain it. If it doesn't say what you intended it to say, then you've failed. So if it communicates the idea to the viewer, then the artist has succeeded."¹⁵

Crishuana Williams is a graduate of the Dartmouth College Class of 2012.

Notes: Bradley

1. "JBHE Chronology of Major Landmarks in the Progress of African Americans in Higher Education," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 53 (Autumn 2006): 77.
2. "Dedication of Shabazz Temple Murals," Dartmouth College Press Release (Hanover, N.H., 1 November 1972).
3. Vincent Remini, *Daniel Webster: The Man and His Times* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 352.
4. Charles Widmayer, *John Sloan Dickey: His Presidency of Dartmouth College* (Hanover, 1991), 275; Dartmouth News, "The Wheelock Succession of Presidents," <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~news/features/succession/dickey.html>, accessed 18 April 2014.
5. See the Papers of the Presidential Committee on Civil Rights 1946–47, Dartmouth College Library, Hanover, N.H.
6. C. K. Wolfson, "Brief Encounters: Julian K. Robinson—Picture Perfect," *The Martha's Vineyard Times*, 7 February 2008, <http://www.mvtimes.com/calendar/2008/02/07/julian-k-robinson.php>; Peter Maas, "Here's to You, Mr. Robinson," *New York Magazine*, 3 March 1969, 8–9; Bernard W. Harleston, "Higher Education for the Negro," *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 216, no. 5 (November 1965), 139–43; Linda M. Perkins, "The First Black Talent Identification Program: The National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students," *Perspectives on the History of Higher Education*, vol. 29 (December 2012): 173–86.
7. Widmayer, *John Sloan Dickey*, 216–17.
8. David Dawley, *A Nation of Lords: The Autobiography of the Vice Lords* (Garden City, 1973).
9. "He Thinks He's Ready for the Ivy League," Blacks folder, Dartmouth College Library; James R. McLane Jr., et al., "Dartmouth College Report of the Trustees' Committee On Equal Opportunity, December 1968," The Papers of Errol G. Hill, folder 6-6, Dartmouth College Library, hereafter referred to as McLane Report.
10. John Adam Moreau, "1,000 Miles from Lawndale, the Good Life Beckons Eddie," *Chicago Sun Times*, 19 September 1969; "Vice Lords Offer Scholarship Here," *Chicago Daily Defender*, 23 September 1968; "Lawndale from White to Black," <http://gangresearch.net/cvl/cvlhistoryfinal/pep.html>, accessed 18 April 2014.
11. More black students (89) enrolled in the fall of 1968 than ever before in Dartmouth's history. "Dartmouth," *Bay State Banner*, 5 September 1969.
12. Lerone Bennett Jr., "Confrontation on the Campus," *Ebony* (May 1968), 28.
13. Christopher Langley, "Wallace Arrives Today for Speech; Harvard Visit Marred by Incident," *The Dartmouth*, 5 November 1963; Dan Dimancescu, to the editor, *The Dartmouth*, 9 October 1963;

- Richard Joseph, *The Dartmouth*, 9 October 1963; "Students . . ." *The Dartmouth*, 5 November 1963. As part of his presidential campaign tour, Wallace visited Dartmouth again in 1967, and he met strong resistance from the student body. Some students, after disrupting his lecture, rocked his car back and forth as he attempted to exit campus. "Police Chief Terms Riot 'Worst Seen in 22 Years,'" *The Dartmouth*, 4 May 1967.
14. "UGC Discrimination Committee Plans Study of '54 Referendum," *The Dartmouth*, 9 October 1963.
 15. Malcolm X, "The Black Revolution" and "Uncle Sam Has Failed Us," *Malcolm X Speaks Out*, eds. Nan Richardson, et al. (Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1992).
 16. Christopher Langley, "Malcolm X, Second UGC Speaker, Lectures on 'Revolution' in Spaulding," *The Dartmouth*, 26 January 1965.
 17. Widmayer, *John Sloan Dickey*, 15–19.
 18. Malcolm X, interview by Ken Sharpe, Radio Station WDCR (Dartmouth College), 26 January 1965.
 19. Langley, "Malcolm X," 1.
 20. See Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), and Ibram Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965–1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
 21. Woody Lee, telephone interview by author, 7 February 2013.
 22. Vincent Harding, "Educator's View: Black Students and the 'Impossible' Revolution," *Ebony* (August 1969), 144.
 23. The number of black people inside and outside the central cities of New Hampshire was 312 in 1960 and 600 in 1970. The total population of the state in 1970 was 737,681, with "negro and other races" making up 4,575 of the total. *U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1970: General Demographic Trends for Metropolitan Areas, 1960–1970: New Hampshire* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971).
 24. Wallace Ford II, telephone interview by author, 9 May 2012; Bennett, "Confrontation on the Campus," 34.
 25. Stefan Bradley, *Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009).
 26. McLane Report; Richard Zuckerman, "Afro-Am Center Dedicated; Informal White Visits Barred," *The Dartmouth*, 17 November 1971.
 27. Florian Jenkins, interview by Crishuana Williams, Cutter Shabazz Mural Room, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H., 27 November 2012.
 28. "Dedication of Shabazz Temple Murals," Dartmouth College Press Release (Hanover, N.H., 1 November 1972).

Notes: Williams

1. Notably, President Rev. Nathan Lord, the latter half of whose presidency had been contentious due to his strongly held views, was finally asked to resign in 1863 after taking a pro-slavery stance as the nation entered into the Civil War. See The Wheelock Succession of Dartmouth Presidents: NATHAN LORD, 1828-1863 page, Office of the President Home, Dartmouth College, <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~president/succession/lord.html>, accessed 12 June 2014.
2. Jack DeGange, "Renovating Two Historic Homes," *Constructive Images: Summer 2004*, (Hanover, N.H.: Trumbull-Nelson Construction, 2004), <http://www.t-n.com/magazine-summer04-cover.htm>.
3. See Resources page, Office of Black Student Advising, Dartmouth College, <http://www.dartmouth.edu/obsa/resources/>, accessed 1 June 2014.
4. Dartmouth College, *The Temple Murals were Sponsored by the Afro-American Society*, Press Release (Hanover, N.H., 1972).
5. Interview with Nelson Armstrong by H. Elden Hodges, *The Temple Murals* (unpublished interview, 1988), Dartmouth College Library, Hanover, N.H.
6. Florian Jenkins, interview by author, Cutter Shabazz Mural Room, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H., 27 November 2012, tape 001.
7. "The Man Behind the Wall," *Chicago Reader*, 28 August 1997, <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/the-man-behind-the-wall/Content?oid=894264>.
8. Hodges, *The Temple Murals*.
9. Dartmouth College, *The Temple Murals*.
10. After sixteen years, the murals were approved for \$15,000 of repairs in the spring of 1988. The repairs were primarily to address the loss of adhesion between the walls and the glue layer used to attach the canvas.
11. Jenkins, interview.
12. Brian P. Kennedy and Emily Burke, *Modern and Contemporary Art at Dartmouth: Highlights from the Hood Museum of Art* (Hanover, N.H.: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, 2009), 64–65.
13. Jenkins, interview.
14. Oral history interview with Gordon Parks, 30 December 1964, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
15. Jenkins, interview.



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