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Temple #7 Restaurant

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**TEMPLE NUMBER SEVEN.** For his organizational and proselytizing successes at Temple Eleven in Boston and Temple Twelve in Philadelphia, in June 1954 Malcolm X was appointed minister of Temple Number Seven in Harlem,\* New York City, replacing Sultan Muhammad,\* who had fallen out of favor with Elijah Muhammad.\* When Malcolm took control of Temple Seven, it was little more than a storefront building located at West 116th Street on the corner of Lenox Avenue. New York's five boroughs contained over a million black people in 1954, but Malcolm noted that there were not enough Muslims\* in Harlem to fill a city bus. "Fishing"\* in Christian storefront churches and at competing black nationalist meetings, Malcolm immediately began to increase the membership of Temple Seven. Branches of Temple Seven were established in Brooklyn and Queens, and he continued to minister the Philadelphia mosque as well. Indeed, from his New York headquarters Malcolm fanned out nationally, establishing new temples and serving Elijah Muhammad as the national spokesperson.

In 1956, Malcolm's future wife, Sister Betty X (eventually Betty Shabazz\*), joined Temple Number Seven. She was a nursing student, and Malcolm quickly tapped her expertise for the temple; he assigned her to teach hygiene in the Muslim girls' and women's classes. Muslim temples are organized around daily events, including the training of the Fruit of Islam (FOI),\* the group's elite paramilitary force; a Unity night, which promotes socializing among temple members; a day that concentrates on Student Enrollment and Islamic teaching; Muslim Girls' Training\* and General Civilization night where females are taught proper domesticity; a Civilization night when classes are devoted to teaching the proper relationship between the sexes; and Sunday temple services. Malcolm reenergized these functions as minister of Temple Seven.

The famous Johnson X (Hinton)\* incident benefited Temple Seven and its members tremendously in respect and adulation from their fellow Harlemites. Malcolm quelled the potentially explosive affair resulting from the police beat-

ing and jailing of Hinton, which made the news of many of the major African American newspapers, including the *New York Amsterdam News*.\* Temple Seven's fame was heightened even further in 1959 when Mike Wallace\* and Louis Lomax's\* televised piece "The Hate That Hate Produced"\* introduced Malcolm X's and the Nation of Islam's (NOI)\* views to the general American public. Temple Seven, Malcolm, and Elijah Muhammad became hot copy for weekly white magazines and other publications.

Eventually, Temple Seven became the place where Malcolm would have to wrestle with his congregation vis-à-vis Elijah Muhammad's moral digressions, where he became aware of traitors in his midst, and where he was "silenced" by Elijah Muhammad for impolitic remarks about President John Kennedy's\* death. He was even forbidden to teach at Temple Seven, the mosque that he had done so much to build and develop though his eloquence, magnetism, and organizational ability.

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*Malik Simba*

**TEMPLE NUMBER SEVEN RESTAURANT.** Originally a storefront, Harlem's\* Temple Number Seven\* was a four-story building located on 116th Street and Lenox Avenue. Putting Malcolm X in charge of it in 1954 demonstrated Elijah Muhammad's\* early confidence in him. Its restaurant was just around the corner.

Malcolm's ministry at Temple Seven grew tremendously, a result of his immense energy and dedication to Muhammad and the Nation of Islam (NOI).\* As his national reputation and popularity rose, Muslim\* and non-Muslim alike (especially the media) sought him out for counsel and interviews. Many of these meetings took place in the confines of the restaurant. It was in the restaurant where Malcolm met and scared a white Harvard University\* co-ed who had heard him speak at the university. The young student who wanted to know if Malcolm really believed that all whites were bad left the restaurant in tears, emotionally torn over Malcolm's answer that she could not do anything for black equality.

The restaurant's proximity to the temple made it a natural and popular hang-out where Malcolm regularly visited and ate the standard Muslim fare of fish and bean dishes. Occasionally, Malcolm held audiences with important dignitaries at the restaurant as he did with emerging poet Maya Angelou.\* More than a simple eating place, the restaurant, a part of the NOI vast economic and business empire, was a mecca for social gatherings, and Malcolm's presence enhanced its popularity.

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