

Malcolm X Liberation University ^[1]

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by Nahal Toosi, 2006

Malcolm X Liberation University (MXLU), an experimental institution of higher education focusing on [African American](#) ^[2] history and life, opened in [Durham](#) ^[3] in October 1969. Named for slain black leader Malcolm X (Malcolm Little), the school was established after black students at [Duke University](#) ^[4] protested the absence of a black studies program. MXLU moved to [Greensboro](#) ^[5] in 1970.

The leader of MXLU was [Howard Fuller](#) ^[6], a controversial black activist who later changed his name to [Owusu Sadaukai](#) ^[7]. Sadaukai, who went by the title "Head Nigger in Charge," said the purpose of MXLU was "to provide a framework within which black education can become relevant to the needs of the black community and the struggle for black liberation." In Durham, a two-story building on Pettigrew Street-in the heart of the black community-housed MXLU. The school began with a staff of about 12 members and 40 students, all of whom were black. Its two-year program aimed to help all interested blacks, from those who never finished their secondary education to those who already had attended institutions of higher education. Students in their first year at MXLU studied subjects such as African civilization, [slavery](#) ^[8], and colonialism. Second-year students received technical training in order to enter a profession that involved "working with black people" to help them become liberated.

MXLU's funding sparked controversy, since a sizable portion-about \$45,000-came from the [Episcopal Church](#) ^[9]'s Urban Crisis Program. The money, which drew both support and fire from Episcopal leaders, was investigated by a federal grand jury in 1969. In 1973, three years after moving to Greensboro, MXLU was forced to close due to the lack of funding. Afterward, Sadaukai stated that the school had been hampered by its overemphasis on Africa as an important factor in the lives of blacks in the United States.

Additional Resources:

Oral History Interview with Howard Fuller, December 14, 1996. Interview O-0034. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007). Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/O-0034/menu.html> ^[10] (accessed October 25, 2012).

"Photo Gallery - 1960s." Durham Civil Rights Heritage Project. 2010. <http://www.durhamcountylibrary.org/dcrhp/misc.php> ^[11] (accessed October 25, 2012).

Belvin, Brent H. "Malcolm X Liberation University: An Experiment in Independent Black Education." Master's Thesis in History, North Carolina State University. October 6, 2004. <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.16/563> ^[12] (accessed October 25, 2012).

Wilson, Rebecca. "Education for Liberation: Malcolm X Liberation University." Bachelor of Art's Thesis in History. University of North Carolina at Asheville. http://toto.lib.unca.edu/sr_papers/history_sr/srhistory_2008/wilson_rebecca.pdf ^[13] (accessed October 25, 2012).

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Authors:

[Toosi, Nahal](#) ^[20]

Origin - location:

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[Greensboro](#) ^[22]

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[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[23]

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