

Man denies author's claim that he killed Malcolm X

by [Amy Ellis Nutt](#) and [Barry Carter](#)

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NEWARK, N.J. (RNS) For 46 years, the chief assassin of slain civil rights icon Malcolm X has been hiding in plain sight in Newark, according to a major new biography of the African-American leader released Monday (April 4).

Al-Mustafa Shabazz is a 72-year-old Muslim who is married to a community leader who owns a boxing gym in Newark. A new book, "Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention," by Columbia University historian Manning Marable, argues that Shabazz was behind Malcolm X's 1965 assassination.

Marable, who died unexpectedly Friday (April 2) after a long illness, claimed to have evidence that Shabazz was once known as William Bradley, whom many people over the years have placed at the shooting in New York City.

Marable writes that he confirmed that the two men are one and the same through multiple sources inside the black Muslim community.

New Jersey Department of Corrections records list Bradley's alias as Al-Mustafa Shabazz, and East Orange Police Sgt. Andrew Di Elmo also confirmed that the mug shot accompanying the record belonged to Bradley, aka Shabazz.

William Bradley was accused of being one of the killers more than 30 years ago in a sworn affidavit by Talmadge Hayer, one of the three men convicted of Malcolm X's assassination.

In his book, Marable also credits Abdur-Rahman Muhammad, a historian who writes for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, with linking Bradley's name to that of Shabazz.

Attorney J. Edward Waller, who is representing Al-Mustafa Shabazz, disputed the claim on Sunday, saying, "I've spoken to him (Shabazz) and he categorically denies he was involved in the assassination of Malcolm X."

Shabazz is married to Carolyn Kelley Shabazz, a prominent civic leader in Newark, who said her husband did not have any association with the killing

"As God, Allah, is my witness, there's no way my husband could have had a negative thought in his head about Malcolm X," she said Saturday, before Waller began speaking for the couple. "My husband is no more guilty about what happened with Malcolm than you or I."

In the book, Marable claims "Willie Bradley" was just 15 feet away from Malcolm X in the auditorium where he was about to speak on the afternoon of Feb. 21, 1965, when "he elevated his sawed-off shotgun from under his coat, took careful aim, and fired ... This was the kill shot, the blow that executed Malcolm X."

Clement Price, a history professor at Rutgers University-Newark, said he and Marable come from the same generation of professionally trained black historians, and while he had not yet read the new biography, the historian's scholarship is impeccable.

"Manning Marable was a very conscientious historian, a masterful researcher, and an interpreter of complicated truths," Price said. "It would be out of character for him to not be duly diligent in this very important matter of Malcolm's assassination."

Since Muhammad accused Bradley last year of being "the man who fired the first and deadliest shot" at Malcolm X, not only Marable, but others, including investigative journalist Karl Evanzz and documentary filmmaker Omar Shabazz, have named Bradley.

"There's never been a question that William Bradley pulled the trigger. This information is well-established. The only question has been, who is Bradley and where does he live?" said Muhammad.

According to state Department of Correction records, "William Bradley, aka Al-Mustafa Shabazz," served time in prison for charges including threatening to kill three people. He was released in February 1998.

Marable and Muhammad claim some of the plotters accused in the killing came from Newark's Mosque No. 25, where Bradley was a member.

Newark City Councilman Ron Rice said speculation about the Newark mosque's role in Malcolm X's assassination had been circulating for as long as he could remember.

"There has been a long belief in the underbrush, argued by some, disputed by others, that a number of Malcolm X's alleged murderers came out of Number 25 -- the Newark mosque," Rice said. "But I've never heard the rumor of Carolyn's husband being associated."

Rice said the group had once fostered a reputation for militancy and had called for the death of Malcolm X, who had publicly split from the Nation of Islam.

"The Newark mosque was seen as a radical mosque or extremist mosque. That's always been alleged," he said.

When asked Saturday whether her husband was Bradley, Carolyn Shabazz did not deny it, but said, simply, that legally his name is Shabazz.

"We are not going to take this lying down. They are looking for a scapegoat," she said. "Nobody has to take this character assassination."

(Amy Ellis Nutt and Barry Carter write for The Star-Ledger in Newark. Staff writers Aliza Appelbaum, Jessica Calefati, David Giambusso, Tom Meagher and Stephen Stirling contributed to this report.)