

“The Demonization of Malcolm X and the Sanitization of Dr. Martin Luther King”

This lecture challenges the ways in which two icons of the 1960s, Dr. King and Malcolm X, are popularly characterized as rivals. Dr. Nebil Husayn argues that the two icons, in fact, represented a radical black tradition of political action that was subversive to narratives of American exceptionalism. As a consequence of myth-making and a process of collective remembering and forgetting, Dr. King is largely sanitized of this radicalism, which lingers with the legacy of Malcolm. Dr. Husayn argues that such myth-making is also apparent in how we conceive of our presidents, police officers, and to the detriment of black activists, those who devote themselves to racial justice.