

**Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission**  
**\*Authorized in Revised Statutes of Nebraska 72-724**

**Wednesday, July 20, 2022, 6:00 p.m. CST**  
**Revive Center, 2402 Lizzie Robinson Ave., Omaha, NE 68111 (24th and Lake)**  
**Congressional District 2 / Public Hearing Minutes**

**MINUTES**

*Times are estimates only, and the Hall of Fame Commission may take items out of order. Chairperson reserved the right to waive time limits. Minutes are paraphrased and summarized, but not comprehensive due to audio technical difficulties. Contact information as well as a recording is available upon request.*

**PRELIMINARY BUSINESS**

Ron Hull, Chairperson

6:00 p.m. Chairperson Hull called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. and referenced legal notice and that we are in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. He reviewed time allotted for nominators and support testimony and waived the time limit to 3 – 5 minutes for support testimony. He asked for introductions from the Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Rod Bates, Sara Crook, Jill Dolberg, Tim Heller, Ron Hull, Jim McKee, Aaron Wyatt

Not Present: None

**NOMINATOR PRESENTATION / DISTRICT 2**

6:06 p.m. Presentation on Calvin Chapman, Teresa Geer-Teater

Tim Heller read a statement from Teresa Geer-Teater's daughter, Tanya Hernandez, into the record. This statement is available upon request.

Chairperson Hull asked if there is further testimony regarding Calvin Chapman.

6:11 p.m. Presentation on Malcolm Little (aka Malcolm X, El Hajj Malik El Shabazz), JoAnna Nicole LeFlore-Ejike, Malcolm X Foundation

Statement:

Greetings to the committee and the residents of Omaha present today for this special hearing. My name is JoAnna LeFlore-Ejike and I am a resident of North Omaha and a dedicated human being who represents the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation as the inaugural Executive Director. Founded by Rowena Moore in 1971, our mission as an organization "is focused on preserving the human rights legacy of Malcolm X (El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) while prioritizing self-reliance & determination through radical movement building."

We are open to the public on a weekly basis executing that mission through our educational tours teaching visitors both locally and internationally about the legacy of Malcolm Little being born in Omaha, Neb. In fact, last year we participated in the Visit Nebraska Passport program where approx. 3400 statewide travelers visited us from various counties across the state.

When you get a tour, you are asked "*who is the most famous person from Omaha, Neb.?*" While some might say Warren Buffett with ease, they quickly learn that the most obvious answer is Malcolm X. Moreover, they learn about his transformational life from childhood as Malcolm Little into El Hajj Malik El Shabazz. We openly

discuss during tours the rough patches of Malcolm's childhood, the environment of racism in which he was born, the journey out of Omaha to Lansing, Michigan, then Boston where he was known as "Detroit Red"; We openly discuss how the media conveniently tried to portray him as a violent man during his travels and interviews; in addition to his years of enlightenment after his pilgrimage from Mecca. During our tours, we are honest and transparent. We do not shy away from conversations about racism and injustices or inequities that prevent simple measures of well-being for the Black community both historically and present day. These are the same inequities and behaviors based in racism that drove Malcolm's family out of Omaha just 18 months after he was born. If it were not for this behavior, Malcolm probably could have had a decent life here in Nebraska. Even so it didn't stop him from returning after being invited to speak on June 30, 1964 while on a speaking tour after his Hajj or pilgrimage. While visiting he had a respectful trip meeting honorable delegates such as Charles Washington and Ernie Chambers.

However, past his death aside from the efforts of Rowena Moore, the City of Omaha nor the state has taken the opportunity to fully recognize this man's contribution to the civil rights movement. If it were not for community residents quickly jumping into an annual Malcolm X birthday celebration held on May 19 since 1968, generations may not know who this influential human being is. Other states make it a priority to involve the name of Malcolm X in their civil rights educational programs better than we do. But this is not the responsibility of the Nebraska Hall of Fame singularly. It is the entire Omaha community's responsibility.

Nevertheless, Malcolm is still celebrated far more in other regions of this nation than he is in his birthplace. Wherever you find highly populated Black communities especially, there is a street or park or educational institution named after him; Not to mention the countless notations of influence in the arts, cultural events, research and scholarship. Malcolm X boulevard exists both in Harlem & Brooklyn in New York; another in Dallas Texas. Add a couple more Malcolm X streets in Lansing, Michigan and our nation's capital near the Malcolm X Park in Washington DC. There is Malcolm X College and Shabazz charter School in Chicago; plus another Shabazz Public School Academy in Lansing. Even a public library in San Diego was recently named after him. Are you catching the trend? Soon, Omaha should have the opportunity to finally recognize Malcolm X and teach others about him through the Neb. Hall of Fame.

In closing, by inducting Malcolm Little into the Neb. Hall of Fame, you are not necessarily celebrating a controversial history but rather consider it a celebration of a man who transformed four times over. What began as humble beginnings in the early 1920's as Malcolm Little and ending as El Hajj Malik El Shabazz, a name that reverences cultural pride and leadership among the people. Malcolm X is a monumental international figure who's aim was to see Black people liberated and supported as human beings across this nation and the globe. Should you travel soon after this hearing and take a survey of the question, "who is the most famous person from Omaha, Neb.?" be sure to inform others truthfully about the inspiring name of Malcolm X respectfully.

6:20 p.m.      Testimony for Terri Crawford, Member of Malcolm X Foundation, Omaha

Terri noted the deep south and activism during the civil rights movement, and where Malcolm X was assassinated. He noted Reverend Sholdsworth and Rosa Parks. Malcolm X had the most influence in the 1960's and shaped debate and strategies. Terri noted the Juneteenth celebration.

Testimony for Yusaf Kafelle, Benson in Omaha

He referenced countries in Africa and grew up in the movement, Malcolm said parents came to Omaha as pan Africanism, and he was reinforced in Islam, and he had the nurturing of parents in Omaha. He noted Malcolm X's trip to Mecca. The world thinks Malcolm X is important.

Testimony for Schmeeka Simpson, Omaha

Schmeeka referenced Malcolm X and his birth city, and the need to recognize and heal and reconcile. People send cards and they send information that they are blessed. It crosses racial bridges and heals, and everyone else in the world. It is time for Malcolm X to be recognized.

Testimony for Leo Louis, Board President of Malcolm X Foundation

Due to technical difficulties, this testimony is not replicated, but a recording is available upon request.

Testimony for Shamari Higgins, Omaha

She referenced the black president and that Malcolm X learned every word in the dictionary. How can you associate him with violence when he says “peace”? He represents fatherhood, education and communities. Pray that he goes into the Nebraska Hall of Fame.

Testimony for Yshall Davis, Heartland Workers Center, Omaha

Due to technical difficulties, this testimony is not replicated, but a recording is available upon request.

Chairperson Hull noted that in fairness of the other candidates, to be cognoscente of the time limitations.

Testimony for Franklin Thompson, Omaha Community Foundation, Omaha

Malcolm was seen as a radical activist with a sharp critiques of whites. Many of those means were non-violent. Give me liberty or give me death or self-determination by any means necessary. Why do we demonize him? With regard to Martin Luther King, they met and made peace. Malcolm had to get creative to help Martin. He went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. We always want the safe and soft answer. We like the Malcolm who changed, but it is a constant evolution. He is a paradigm shift – from skin color to the abuse of power and privilege and skin color to humanity issues. Are we playing games with each other? He came from nothing and became one of the best role models. His mother was in a mental institution. He grew up on street. The profile says they should grow up to be losers, but somehow they grow up to be winners. We carried to the streets the revolution. Senator Chambers appreciates if you are angry – he said to use your mind and get an education – to use that to fight the system. A lot is based on self-reliance and self-sufficiency. He represented treating women with dignity. What are we waiting on? He represented fatherhood. Malcolm is the role model we need, representing resiliency and self-reliance. Black boys and girls get an education. Put aside the negative and grow towards the possible. Malcolm X said not to use curse words, as it is the lowest power hanging off the tree. Be better and higher.

Testimony for Nature Medicine Song – Villegas, Lincoln

Nature noted to bring youth back to roots or introduce for the first time. She works for restorative justice. Malcolm X taught us what community was, and when we talk restorative, when we mention education, we didn't all start out like that. She talked about returning citizens from prison. She came from Miami, Florida (Gage County) and has done festivals, and events for Malcolm X. She has travelled the world. Malcolm woke us up and reminded us of who we really are. She emphasized being that child and relating to his childhood story. She remarked on diligent work and owing to the community and future generations. She noted to plant seeds for seven generations to come. She emphasized restorative justice work and to carry on his legacy and teachings. She also emphasized the mind and not the fist, and a green thumb, and still sowing for the next generation. She imparted knowledge of the

self, art spaces, and brothers and sisters when they are brought to the presence of Malcolm X. Silence is a trail that is failing the world. She noted how misconstrued his legacy is with regard to civil rights. He is more human. She emphasized characteristics of the human race: kindness, mercy, and sympathy. Courage, self-awareness, and equality. She emphasized making history and changing the narrative with all power to the people.

#### Testimony for Andrea Joy Pearson, Opera of Omaha, Omaha

Malcolm X is an inspiration and legacy. He is a person that lived. He represents a transformation in a nation and the world. He represents three things: Self-determination, Self-love, and Empowerment. What can it mean for history? She moved to Omaha last year for her role at Opera of Omaha. She did research on Omaha and the history. How do we instill pride in the people, create opportunities that are unique, and how does the legacy still create transformation in more time? We need to find out more. She co-produced the Life and Times of Malcolm X. He walked and created change for civil rights. How do we judge people in real time? The legacy that has been built. The co-production is nationwide (Chicago, Seattle, etc.). The space that is quite slow to change – we see the importance of this man’s life and wanting to tell the story. The story begins in Omaha, Nebraska. It is beautiful and ravishing to see his transformations. It can be done after today or when we take a vote – we exchange, grow and learn. It has to matter. Live inspired lives and leave a legacy behind.

#### Testimony for Preston Love, Jr., Omaha

Preston is a professor, author, and columnist for the Omaha World Herald and a native of Omaha. He graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1965. If not Malcolm now, when? He is 80 years old. He does not want to be angry, but he is. It is time. Malcolm X was bigger than all of us. Nebraska has taken too long on this. He represents North Omaha. He does not want this to be construed as Critical Race Theory. He also noted there should be many other African Americans in the Nebraska Hall of Fame.

#### Testimony for Ellen Platte, Omaha

Ellen noted the book and life and times. Malcolm is fit to honor. The bust should be displayed in the central hallway at the State Capitol. Ellen has deep respect, appreciation, gratitude and profound humility. Malcolm X was a giant and needs to be in the Nebraska Hall of Fame.

#### Testimony for Jose Garcia, Mexican American Historical Society of the Midlands, Omaha

Jose is a former trustee of Mexican American Historical Society. He was 20 years old when Malcolm X was assassinated. He has listened to all skin colors talk about Malcolm X. he noted the reign of terror on black people. Malcom X is respected and belongs in the Nebraska Hall of Fame.

#### Testimony for Kathy Bigsby Moore, Omaha

Kathy expressed pride and embarrassment regarding Malcolm X. Omaha does not have the same black history as other national cities. Nebraska has an opportunity to step forward and do the same. There are horrible memories of the 60’s and we are experiencing some similarities in time. We need to carry this person’s legacy forward.

#### Testimony for Kene Okigbo, Omaha

Kene was born in Nigeria. He referenced a wave in North Dakota, and forced separation. Malcolm X experiences are not shared. He noted to tell the story. He looks forward to the decision of the Committee.

#### Testimony for Shari Thompson, Omaha

She referenced Malcolm X as a father, and Vietnam, and how he said to keep on the straight and narrow. Be like Malcolm X, get an education, and be an advocate. There are not a lot of black Americans that know Malcolm X was from Omaha. There is an opportunity to join the board, to volunteer. Why wouldn't he already be in the Nebraska Hall of Fame? Why does a man of such great presence not have that?

Testimony for Barry Thomas, Social Studies Teacher, Omaha Public Schools, Omaha

Barry was a Political science major, but had no heart for politics. He read a book of Malcolm X, and it changed how he saw the world. He understood the significance, so he changed to social science and taught for 19 years about black history. He has journeys as an educator. How many other educators decided to be teachers after autobiography of Malcolm X. In Brooklyn, Miami, Haiti, and Chicago he is recognized and there is a school named after Malcolm X. He has international recognition.

Testimony for Paul Feilmann, Omaha

Paul noted that Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X both knew they were going to die, They had willingness to sacrifice their lives. He mentioned a helpful book, The Sword and the Shield that came out in 2020 regarding Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. and how they worked with each other and knew each other's efforts.

**PUBLIC COMMENT AND TESTIMONY / OTHER DISTRICTS AS NEEDED**

7:15 p.m. Public Comment and Testimony

Testimony for Eileen Wirth, Creighton University, Omaha

Eileen stated her support for Malcolm X and Emma Louise Pound. She is an amazing woman for all seasons, a lifelong resident of Lincoln, an incredible professor, she refuted discrimination. She went all the way to Germany to get her PhD, learn German and came back and taught linguistics and folklore in Nebraska. There are only five women in the Nebraska Hall of Fame. Her brother who taught at Harvard is in the Hall of Fame, but she is not. Consider everything she did for women at the University. Society was structurally opposed to people doing athletics. She is a woman for all seasons.

Testimony for Randy Moody on behalf of Jim Leeke

Jim Leeke, due to time, will submit his testimony on Monday, July 25<sup>th</sup> in Holdrege.

Testimony for Randy Lukasiewicz, Omaha

Randy supports Grover Cleveland Alexander. He grew up in a small town in. He is an inspiration, legacy, and symbolism. With 40 communities across the state, he is recognized as a symbol. He wants to recognizing the person, and pull out the book. At the Nebraska State Capitol, there are three individuals who created the building. An author, poet, and scholar. There is a sports figure in the mosaic at the Capitol. He was an alcoholic, and shell shocked and lost his hearing (deaf in one ear). He lost his career and had epilepsy. He had 26 wins during his rookie season. With the power of sports, look beyond what really seen.

8:03 p.m. Chairperson Hull explained the process of and next steps as well as the next hearing located at Phelps County Historical Society in Holdrege, Nebraska, the 3rd Congressional District Hearing. The Commission meets on Friday, August 12 at the State Capitol, Room 1507, in Lincoln at 2:00 p.m. CST to select 3 finalists and then on Monday, September 12 in the same location and time to select the winner to the Nebraska Hall of Fame.

## Testimony for John Royster, Omaha

### Statement:

Good Evening -I am John Royster. I am a professional landscape architect. My private practice is located here in Omaha. Tonight, I'm testifying in District #2 for Ernst Herman Herminghaus, Nebraska's first professional landscape architect. In the next few minutes, I will communicate to the Commission the reasons why I believe that Ernst H. Herminghaus is deserving for nomination and induction into the Nebraska Hall of Fame. Ernst Herminghaus' birth, significant professional accomplishments, and contributions to arts and culture of Nebraska all took place while he lived in Nebraska. Mr. Herminghaus was born in 1890 in Lincoln, the son of German immigrants. University of Nebraska is where he earned first college degree. His experiences at NU set the stage for him to make his later contributions to Nebraska's arts and culture.

Let me share two examples of how being from Nebraska, and of Nebraska, influenced his contribution to the arts and culture of Nebraska. The Nebraska landscape and its people had a great influence on the works of Ernst Herminghaus. The subtleness of the Nebraska landscape is reflected in the design of the Nebraska State Capitol landscape and courtyards. The simple tree plantings surrounding the building's somber limestone exterior contrasts with the colorful shrub and flower plantings within its protected courtyards. The effect is not unlike a walking from the prairie into a wooded glade along the Missouri River full of spring wildflowers. The Nebraska landscape is often composed of large open spaces, which are defined by tree lines. This occurrence is celebrated in the design of the grand spaces within Lincoln's Pioneer Park. Herminghaus used linear tree plantings to create long narrow spaces which direct the visitor to see the tower of our State Capitol in the distance. The same plantings also focus the visitor's attention to the bright blue Nebraska sky above. Both designs reflect the essence of Nebraska and came about because of Ernst's deep understanding of our land and people.

After WWII, Herminghaus led the Lincoln Parks Department, before returning to private practice to consult on projects locally, nationally, and internationally. After retiring, he traveled extensively for his last ten years.

Let me spend my few remaining minutes testifying from my heart and head on why I personally believe that Ernst Herminghaus deserves this unique honor.

For the past 20 years, I have been the preservation and restoration landscape architect for the Nebraska State Capitol. My research and design work follows earlier work by Dr. Richard Sutton of UNL. Richard testified Monday evening in District #1 in Lincoln regarding Herminghaus' design training and significant projects. The brilliance of Ernst Herminghaus became apparent to me through study of the landscape drawings, sketches and notes he prepared to guide development of our Capitol's grounds. It is equally apparent in the landscape design he created. Records show that that landscape was installed during the 1930s. However, much of it was allowed wither and die during the Dirty Thirties and Great Depression.

Bertram Goodhue, architect of the Capitol, and Ernst Herminghaus, landscape architect of the Capitol, shared the vision that the building when viewed from outside would project Nebraska's strength as well as the importance of the activities that occur within the building. Within the building, Goodhue envisioned a broad collection of art exhibiting the culture of Nebraska. That interior art collection has been added since the building's completion.

Both architects envisioned the courtyards as havens for retreat from intense activities occurring in the building's judicial, legislative, and executive functions. Herminghaus' courtyard design with its seasonal changes of flowers, flowering shrubs and trees, and rose beds carries the colors and visual diversity of the interior artwork to the outdoors. The four courtyard fountains, installed in the past few years, completed Herminghaus' desire, to bring the "refining influence of flowers" to the seat of our state government and instill an appreciation of arts and culture to the citizens of our fair state.

Ernst H. Herminghaus represents all the best of Nebraska. A son of immigrants, he valued education and had a broad range of interests. He chose to remain in his home state and share his talent to improve the art and culture of his state. I ask the Commission to consider and then select Ernst Herman Herminghaus as Nebraska's next inductee to the Nebraska Hall of Fame.

Thank you.

Chairperson Hull asked if there was any further testimony.

### **ADJOURN**

Chairperson Hull asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Sara Crook, Second by Tim Heller

Yes: Rod Bates, Sara Crook, Jill Dolberg, Tim Heller, Jim McKee, Aaron Wyatt

No: None

Motion adopted

The Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission adjourned at 8:20 p.m. CST