

## Malik Al Nasir

### Author

Malik Al Nasir is an author, a performance poet, filmmaker and an award-winning academic from Liverpool, whose remarkable life has been the subject of much media attention internationally. Born in Toxteth in the mid '60s, Malik grew up facing a range of hardships that saw him enter the care system in the '70s and following his release back on to the streets of post-riot Toxteth in the '80s, he encountered the legendary poet and civil rights activist Gil Scott-Heron. This chance encounter was to be life changing for this traumatised and semi-literate street kid, when Gil took Malik under his wing and mentored him from semi-literacy to a master's degree through poetry.



Malik's body of work from that time entitled 'Ordinary Guy' (Fore-Word Press 2004) was published under his former name 'Mark T. Watson' and dedicated to Gil, with a foreword by legendary grandfather of rap Jalal Nuriddin (The Last Poets). Jalal introduced him to Islam and named him Malik, and as Malik grew to produce music and film, he recorded with both Gil Scott-Heron and The Last Poets, who feature on his double album 'Rhythms of the Diaspora Vols 1 & 2' by Malik & The O.G's (Mentis Records 2015).

Malik has produced and appeared in several factual documentaries with footballers Mark Walter and Graeme Souness; poets Gil Scott-Heron, The Last Poets and Benjamin Zephaniah; also rap artists Public Enemy, Ice T and many others. Gil once described Malik as his 'protégé'.

Malik has also written two memoirs; one about his life in the care system and his remarkable relationship with Gil Scott-Heron 'Letters to Gil' (William Collins 2021) and another about his roots quest back to the slave plantations of Demerara 'Searching for My Slave Roots' (William Collins 2025).

Malik started tracing his roots back through slavery over 20 years ago, and has made some remarkable discoveries, with links to - among others - Prime Minister Gladstone, which have featured on the BBC, as well as in The Times, The Daily Mail, The Guardian, and The Wall Street Journal. Malik's pioneering research has been recognised by Sir Hilary Beckles (Chair of the CARICOM Commission for slavery reparations), historian Prof. David Olusoga, as well as The

University of Cambridge, where Malik completed a PhD in history in 2025, having been awarded a full scholarship in recognition of the significance of his research.

**Malik Al Nasir was announced as the University of Cambridge's 2023 winner of the Vice-Chancellor's Global Impact Award and the 2024 winner of the Cambridge Society for the Application of Research (CSAR) award. Malik was a consultant on and appeared in the BBC Scotland documentary 'Mark Walters in the footsteps of Andrew Watson' which won a Royal Television Society (Scotland) Award in 2024. He also partnered with the National Library of Scotland on the pioneering FITBA Research Club - Andrew Watson's sporting legacies - which won the SLiC (Scottish Libraries and Information Council) Award 2024.**

Malik is a co-founder of the policy making initiative '[Black Academia - Lifting the Barriers](#)' whose policy reports have been disseminated in Parliament and at the UN.

## Agents

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## Publications

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### Non-Fiction

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Publication Details	Notes
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**SEARCHING  
FOR MY SLAVE  
ROOTS**

2025

HarperCollins

Malik Al Nasir was born in Liverpool to mixed parentage, with a white mother and a black father. Bemused by childhood memories of racist shouts for him to 'go back to where you came from' – he came from Liverpool after all – he began to look into his father's ancestry.

This resulting book charts the twists and turns of his journey into the past and explores an untold chapter in both Black and British history. As Malik investigates his roots, he reveals a new history of the transatlantic slave trade and the role of Scottish, Dutch and English merchants.

Largely set between Liverpool and Demerara, in what was British Guiana, this is a story of sugar and of the barbaric transportation and abuse of human beings that facilitated our insatiable desire for the sweet stuff.

In Guyana, he discovers ancestors that had been both enslaved Africans and prominent white slaveholders. He finds himself part of a complex lineage linking slaveholdings to high sheriffs, mayors, a British Prime Minister and bankers, whose companies formed major modern-day financial institutions, some of whom have yet to acknowledge their connections to the slave trade.

Announced by the University of Cambridge as the winner of the Vice-Chancellor's Global Impact Award for his research, *Searching for My Slave Roots* unravels not just the legacies of slavery but also plantation economics and the wealth of a slaveholding dynasty and that he himself was a descendant of thiers and those they had enslaved. A major theme of this history is the nuanced ways that trauma plays down through generations of the enslaved, and how wealth and privilege plays out across generations of slaveholders and their descendants.

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**LETTERS TO GIL**

2021

HarperCollins

'A searing, triumphant story. A testament to the tenacity of the human spirit as well as a beautiful ode to an iconic figure' IRENOSEN OKOJIE

*Letters to Gil* is Malik Al Nasir's profound coming of age memoir – the story of surviving physical and racial abuse and discovering a new sense of self-worth under the wing of the great artist, poet and civil rights activist Gil Scott-Heron. Born in Liverpool, Malik was taken into care at the age of nine after his seafaring father became paralysed. He would spend his adolescence in a system that proved violent, neglectful, exploitative, traumatising and mired in abuse. Aged eighteen, he emerged semi-literate, penniless with no connections or sense of where he was going – until a chance meeting with Gil Scott-Heron.

*Letters to Gil* will tell the story of Malik's empowerment and awakening while mentored by Gil, from his introduction to the legacy of Black history to the development of his voice through poetry and music. Written with lyricism and power, it is a frank and moving memoir, highlighting how institutional racism can debilitate and disadvantage a child, as well as how mentoring, creativity, self-expression and solidarity helped him to uncover his potential.

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