

The autobiography of malcolm: the story behind the man



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The Autobiography of Malcolm X is a first-hand account of one of history's lasting figures in the long-standing struggle for racial equality. Throughout the honest and unfiltered autobiography, we are given a chance to peer into the mind and heart of a man who earnestly tried to find his place in a white-dominated world, only to realize that violence was the only way to both live and die for what he believed in as he joined the puritanical movement of the Black Muslims. This realization, however, is less about outright rejection of societal norms, and more about the transformation that took place in a man who saw the true root cause of inequality in his country. Ultimately, the autobiography offers readers an opportunity to discover more about their own views on race and mankind through the eyes of a man who gave a voice to forgotten African-Americans, while demonstrating self-respect, hope, and boldness even in the face of mounting liberal hypocrisy and black racialism.

It seems that Malcolm X already knew his fate long before his assassination in 1965. "It has always been my belief that I, too, will die by violence," he said. "I have done all that I can to be prepared." This solemn yet hopeful tone courses throughout his autobiography, offering both nobility and humility in his words. It seems that he knows from the beginning that he will be a fighter for a cause that he would not see the end of before his own death. What further preserves his place in history is the earnestness with which he thought and attempted to fix the psychological ailments that plagued African-Americans all around him. His aim was never fame or glory, or even raising the black man above the white. His goal was to honor truth, "no matter who tells it." It was to honor justice, "no matter who it is for or against." And it was for serving "whoever or whatever benefits humanity as

a whole.” His contributions to the civil rights movements go beyond isolated actions and events, and moves into the heart of a man who saw injustice as a direct violation of every man’s innate rights as a human being. Rather than trumpet the status of the black man as being above whites, he demonstrated a willingness to integrate the two, if such integration was possible. It was only after he had tried and failed countless times that he acknowledged the immovable roadblock that prevented him from seamlessly integrating. “ I know from personal experience,” he writes, regarding his attempts to commingle peaceably with the white men who shunned him. We see that much of the portrayal of Malcolm X as an angry and militant racist who wanted to bring down whites is propaganda, in and of itself designed to prevent people from understanding that they, too, have the power to make a difference if they are humble, respectful, and earnestly fight for what they believe in.

The unapologetic manner with which Malcolm X dissects the reality of the eurocentrism that still remains until this day garners not only credibility due to his humility, but allows every reader to deeply look into his or her own hidden notions about race and equality. Only when we realize that there are concealed beliefs within every person that we often too easily ignore, are we able to accurately assess where we stand as a country in terms of racial equality and acceptance. It is one thing to acknowledge that racism still exists in every corner of the world; it is another to witness what this racism feels like to the person being discriminated against. By the time Malcolm X is in prison, we see that his story is not predominantly about why he is deservedly angry at the rampant racial injustice of the world. We learn more

about his inner transformation into a man who understands that white-dominated culture is not a direct result of the white people themselves but rather an offshoot of American culture as a whole.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X remains an important piece of history that tells the truth about a man who is often too quickly dismissed as simply a radical anti-racist. We see that he was a man who simply understood that the deepest fears for African-Americans—namely, the inability to change built-in racism through traditional means—may very well be a reality. The harshness of this truth is less about direct condemnation, and more about an expansion of one's perspective in order to more effectively lead a life that can begin to subtly but surely alter the course of American racism. The book remains a gift to the world, as it shows a man who was both a thinker and a leader who shifted from blatant condemnation to platforms of acceptance that would raise the dignity of all men.