

Malcolm x – leader a black nationalist movement



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This research paper is about the background of Malcolm X and how he came to lead a black nationalist movement in the 1950's. He and his family were threatened by racism when he was young. This lead him to feel something less than white people.

His father handled it by supporting a black nationalist group, and his mother ultimately broke and was admitted to a mental hospital. Malcolm, similar to his father, became a black nationalist leader. He went through many difficulties throughout his life that taught him about whites and the white supremacy groups. This is what led him to be strong and inspirational to others, but this is also why he said Blacks need to defend themselves by any means necessary.

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Malcolm X was born on May 19th 1925, in Omaha, Nebraska. His birth name was Malcolm Little. He considered Little a slave name and chose the X to signify his lost tribal name(2015, Biography). Malcolm was one of eight kids from his father and mother, Earl Little and Lois Little respectively. Earl Little was a baptist minister who was a supporter of black nationalist leader Marcus Garvey. Marcus Garvey was a leader of pan africanism. He founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association, a group of black nationalists who believed in a separate but equal status for African Americans. Marcus Garvey said If you want liberty you yourselves must strike the blow. If you must be free, you must become so through your own effort. Until you produce what the white man has produced you will not be his equal. This became a core belief that Malcolm X advocated during his career as a black

nationalist himself. Since his father was getting heavily involved with black nationalist, many threats started coming his way. These threats were coming from white supremacist and the Klu Klux Klan. Before Malcolm turned four, he and his family had to relocate many times because of the threats. One of the houses they relocated to was burned down. The police ruled it as an accident but Malcolm and his family believed it was the Klu Klux Klan or white supremacist. Malcolm experienced violence due to racism at an early age. His father was found lying across trolley tracks with his head beaten in, which was also ruled as an accident by the police. Malcolm X's family found it hard to cope with the cruel death of his father. This caused his mother to have a mental breakdown throughout the years, and eventually was put in a mental hospital. His siblings were relocated to foster homes and orphanages.

Malcolm Little attended West Junior High school in Lanster but was expelled due to a disobedience behavioral record and an offense to one of his teachers. This caused him to start going to Mason Jr high school in Mason, MI. He was living in a detention home ran by the Swerlin family, the ones who sent him to Mason Jr high school. In Mason Junior High school, Malcolm experienced a lot of discrimination since the majority of the students were white. A few of his teachers would make n***er jokes and mock African American history. For example, a teacher said that blacks were lazy in one of their lessons, talking about the African community. This offended Malcolm because he worked very hard in school, succeeding in all his classes and even some sports. Malcolm did not like math because there was little room for him to argue his solution. On the other hand, he enjoyed English. There was one teacher who Malcolm adored the most. His name was Mr. Ostrowski,

which was Malcolm's English teacher. He wanted everyone to strive for success, no matter what stands in your way, giving advice about how to become something in life (The Autobiography of Malcolm X, 30). His eyes were opened up after a honest talk with his favorite teacher, the conversation showed him that no matter how hard he worked he will always be looked at as a n***er. The conversation ended with the teacher saying you have got to be realistic about being a n***er basically ridiculing Malcolm for wanting to be a lawyer because he didn't think that blacks were capable of becoming such a thing. Whether it was because he thought they were dumb or because he thought the white supremacist would never allow it.

Malcolm dropped out after middle school and became a drug dealer in boston. He did a few other things throughout his teenager years, but he got caught in 1946 at the age of twenty for robbery. This is when Malcolm Little became Malcolm X during his jail time. Following in his father's footsteps, Malcolm X began his path as a leader in the Pan-African movement during his jail sentence. In jail he developed his reading and writing skills by reading every philosophy, literature, history, and science book in the prison library. Also during his sentence, Malcolm's siblings visited him and would tell him about the Nation of Islam group that they were a part of; so, he joined the Nation of Islam and claimed to have felt truly free while in jail. Malcolm X was half Muslim, therefore his original religion was Islam making him have a lot of faith and admiration for the group. Once Malcolm X was released from prison he met Elijah Muhammad in Chicago, who was one of the leaders in the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad led the group Nation of Islam from 1934 till his death. During this time Elijah became Malcolm's mentor. He even

made Malcolm X a minister at two temples. Malcolm X showed his passion for the group and other blacks and Muslims by putting in hard work to become a influential spokesperson. Because of this, he gained many followers; he become popular around the world. The Nation of Islam was known for its teachings combining elements of traditional Islam with black nationalist ideas(Nation of Islam, Britannica). This group advocated that blacks are separate from whites and wanted black supremacy. Malcolm X became the spokesperson for the Nation of Islam.

The NOI (Nation of Islam) rejected the white America, its christian beliefs and its values in a violent way. They did not agree with the ways of the non-violent resistances such as Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights. Malcolm X completely rejected the civil rights act. The civil rights act was a way for blacks to attempt to demand equality and no more discrimination in a nonviolent way. This contained many riots and marches to try and stand up to the whites and white supremacy groups to get laws and justice systems changed. During this period many blacks were hurt and treated horribly. Many were sent to jail, beaten, and had threats sent to them, but Martin Luther King Jr. insisted on being nonviolent. The civil rights act, though it strived for equality, led to black people remaining subordinate to white people.