

American history x vs. malcolm x

[History](#), [American History](#)



The movies American History X and Malcolm X both tackle critical social issues evident in the past as well as in the present. These issues revolve around race and culture, which is well related to issues like freedom, individuality, discrimination, and social acceptance. In both the films, these issues were not really highlighted at the very beginning. Both Malcolm X and American History X showed a socially negative start, like the involvement of Edward Norton in a White supremacist group, or Denzel Washington's portrayal of Malcolm X's criminal past.

But despite this, the film rebounded on the positive light through the realizations of the main characters at some points in the film. These realizations or moments of truth were life changing experiences for Edward Norton and Denzel Washington, as they portray the turning points in the life of the characters that they play in their respective movies. In American History X, Edward Norton's moments of truth occurred to him when he was sent to prison, after murdering a black man who tried to rob him. At first, the murder wasn't really a big deal to him, since his principles dictate that it was the right thing to do.

As a white supremacist, he sees himself as a better person than the person he killed, and that his deed was that of good will. He was even grinning when he was arrested (Kaye). When he was sent to prison, he realized that life was not only black and white. He was able to see the wrongs of what he thought was right, and because of that, he slowly distanced himself from the brotherhood and the beliefs that he catered for a long time. He began associating with people from other races, though it was hard for him, as he had to suffer the harsh ways of the people he turned away from.

Despite all these, he became a changed man, and eventually desired to live a better life with his brother. On the other hand, Denzel Washington had his moments of truth in the film *Malcolm X*, in the same manner as that of Norton in *American History X*. During his youth, Denzel Washington lived a life of crime in the streets. He was a member of gangs which had dealings with illegal activities. He was arrested for robbery at one time, and was then sent to prison (Lee). It was the life in prison that changed him personally.

He met a man who introduced him to the Nation of Islam, and also motivated him to move away from a life of vices and crime. He stopped drinking and smoking, and eventually succumb to the Islamic ways that was introduced to him. After prison, he continued to live a clean life, and opted to influence others of his newfound strength. He also realized that race should not be an issue in society. Both the films realized the truth through their experiences. It was not only based on the words or the influences of others, but also on the accompanying actions that they experienced.

The lives they lived previously were not good at all, but it served as a comparison for them when they decided to live away from hatred and discrimination (Cyrus and Fiske-Rusciano). It was their experiences and acquaintances in prison that made them realize the truth about their lives. They shunned away discrimination, dominance, and hatred, and embraced a life of acceptance and freedom, despite the dire consequences that they faced at the end of the movie. The truth that they found proved to be very ironic in the end of the films.

In *American History X*, Norton's brother was shot dead by a black gang member. On the other hand, *Malcolm X* was assassinated before giving a
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speech for the masses. Despite these, the truth that they found was not at all fragile. If they decide to revert back to their old selves and exact revenge on those who did them wrong, the cycle of hatred would just continue. Norton realized this in a hard hitting manner. He had killed somebody before, now it is returned to him when his brother was killed. Malcolm X led a criminal life in his youth, and in the end, he was assassinated.

The truth that they found was cemented by these events. There is a need for a social acceptance in order to stop the cycle of hatred and violence. This is the truth. Edward Norton and Denzel Washington learned this truth the hard way. Works Cited Cyrus, Virginia, and Roberta Fiske-Rusciano. Experiencing Race, Class, and Gender in the United States. Third Edition ed: McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages, 2000. American History X. 1998. John Morrissey, October 23. Malcolm X. 1992. Preston L. Holmes, et al. , November 18.