

Bro. Minister Malcolm X

Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little on May 19, 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska.

His mother, Louise Norton Little, was a homemaker occupied with the family's eight children. His father, Earl Little, was an outspoken Baptist minister and avid supporter of Black Nationalist leader Marcus Garvey. Earl's civil rights activism prompted death threats from the white supremacist organization Black Legion, forcing the family to relocate twice before Malcolm's fourth birthday.

Regardless of the Little's efforts to elude the Legion, in 1929 their Lansing, Michigan home was burned to the ground, and two years later Earl's mutilated body was found lying across the town's trolley tracks. Police ruled both accidents, but the Little's were certain that members of the Black Legion were responsible.

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Louise had an emotional breakdown several years after the death of her husband and was committed to a mental institution. Her children were split up amongst various foster homes and orphanages. Malcolm was a smart, focused student and graduated from junior high at the top of his class.

However, when a favorite teacher told Malcolm his dream of becoming a lawyer was "no realistic goal for a nigger," Malcolm lost interest in school. He dropped out, spent some time in Boston, Massachusetts working various odd jobs, and then traveled to Harlem, New York where he committed petty crimes. By 1942 Malcolm was coordinating various narcotic, prostitution and gambling rings. Eventually Malcolm and his buddy, Malcolm "Shorty" Jarvis, moved back to Boston, where they were arrested and convicted on burglary charges in 1946. Malcolm placated himself by using the seven-year prison sentence to further his education.

It was during this period of self-enlightenment that Malcolm's brother Reginald visited and discussed his recent conversion to the Muslim religious organization the Nation of Islam. Intrigued, Malcolm studied the teachings of Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad. Muhammad taught that white society actively worked to keep African-Americans from empowering themselves and achieving political, economic and social success. Among other goals, the Nation of Islam fought for a state of their own, separate from one inhabited by white people. By the time he was paroled in 1952, Malcolm was a devoted follower with the new surname "X." He considered "Little" a slave name and chose the "X" to signify his lost tribal name.

Intelligent and articulate, Malcolm was appointed a minister and national spokesman for the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad also charged him with establishing new mosques in cities such as Detroit, Michigan and Harlem, New York. Malcolm utilized newspaper columns, radio and television to communicate the Nation of Islam's message across the United States. His charisma, drive and conviction attracted an astounding number of new members. Malcolm was

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largely credited with increasing membership in the Nation of Islam from 500 in 1952 to 30,000 in 1963. The crowds and controversy surrounding Malcolm made him a media magnet. He was featured in a week-long television special with Mike Wallace in 1959, *The Hate That Hate Produced*, that explored fundamentals of the Nation of Islam and Malcolm's emergence as one of its most important leaders. After the special, Malcolm was faced with the uncomfortable reality that his fame had eclipsed that of his mentor Elijah Muhammad. Racial tensions ran increasingly high during the early 1960s. In addition to the media, Malcolm's vivid personality had captured the government's attention. As membership in the Nation of Islam continued to grow, FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) agents infiltrated the organization (one even acted as Malcolm's bodyguard) and secretly placed bugs, wiretaps and cameras surveillance equipment to monitor the group's activities.

Malcolm's faith was dealt a crushing blow at the height of the civil rights movement in 1963. He learned that Elijah Muhammad was secretly having relations with as many as six women in the Nation of Islam, some of which had resulted in children. Since his conversion Malcolm had strictly adhered to the teachings of Muhammad, including remaining celibate until his marriage to Betty Shabazz in 1958.

Malcolm refused Muhammad's request to keep the matter quiet. He was deeply hurt by the deception of Muhammad, whom he had considered a prophet, and felt guilty about the masses he had led into what he now felt was a fraudulent organization.

When Malcolm received criticism after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy for saying, "[Kennedy] never foresaw that the chickens would come home to roost so soon," Muhammad "silenced" him for 90 days. Malcolm suspected he was silenced for another reason.

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In March 1964 he terminated his relationship with the Nation of Islam and founded the Muslim Mosque, Inc. That same year, Malcolm went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The trip proved life altering, as Malcolm met "blonde-haired, blue-eyed men I could call my brothers." He returned to the United States with a new outlook on integration. This time, instead of just preaching to African-Americans, he had a message for all races.

Relations between Malcolm and the Nation of Islam had become volatile after he renounced Elijah Muhammad. Informants working in the Nation of Islam warned that Malcolm had been marked for assassination (one man had even been ordered to help plant a bomb in his car).

After repeated attempts on his life, Malcolm rarely traveled anywhere without bodyguards.

On February 14, 1965 the home where Malcolm, Betty and their four daughters lived in East Elmhurst, New York was firebombed (the family escaped physical injury).

At a speaking engagement in the Manhattan's Audubon Ballroom on February 21, 1965 three gunmen rushed Malcolm onstage and shot him 15 times at close range. The 39-year-old was pronounced dead on arrival at New York's Columbia Presbyterian Hospital.

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Fifteen hundred people attended Malcolm's funeral in Harlem on February 27, 1965 at the Faith Temple Church of God in Christ (now Child's Memorial Temple Church of God in Christ). After the ceremony, friends took the shovels from the gravediggers and buried Malcolm themselves. Later that year, Betty gave birth to their twin daughters.

Malcolm's assassins, Talmadge Hayer, Norman 3X Butler and Thomas 15X Johnson were convicted of first-degree murder in March 1966. The three men were all members of the Nation of Islam.

The legacy of Malcolm X has moved through generations as the subject of numerous documentaries, books and movies. A tremendous resurgence of interest occurred in 1992 when director Spike Lee released the acclaimed Malcolm X movie. The film received Oscar nominations for Best Actor (Denzel Washington) and Best Costume Design.

Malcolm X is buried at the Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale, New York.

### A Few Quotes From Bro. Minister Malcolm X

"I am not a racist. I am against every form of racism and segregation, every form of discrimination. I believe in human beings, and that all human beings should be respected as

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such, regardless of their color."

Malcolm X.

"You don't have to be a man to fight for freedom. All you have to do is to be an intelligent human being."

Malcolm X.

"It is a time for martyrs now, and if I am to be one, it will be for the cause of brotherhood. That's the only thing that can save this country."

Malcolm X, February 19, 1965 (2 days before he was murdered by Nation of Islam followers).

"I believe that there will ultimately be a clash between the oppressed and those that do the oppressing. I believe that there will be a clash between those who want freedom, justice and equality for everyone and those who want to continue the systems of exploitation."

Malcolm X.

"I for one believe that if you give people a thorough understanding of what confronts them and the basic causes that produce it, they'll create their own program, and when the people create a program, you get action."

Malcolm X.

"We are nonviolent with people who are nonviolent with us."

Malcolm X