



## MALCOLM X

Hard Version

Source: <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAmalcolmX.htm>

See also: <http://www.brothermalcolm.net/>

Malcolm Little, the son of an African American Baptist preacher, Earl Little, was born in Omaha, Nebraska, on 19th May, 1925. Malcolm's mother, Louise Little, was born in the West Indies. Her mother was black but her father was a white man.

Earl Little was a member of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and a supporter of Marcus Garvey. This got him into trouble with the Ku Klux Klan and after the family were threatened they moved to Lansing, Michigan. Little continued to make speeches in favour of UNIA and in 1929 the family house was

burned down by members of the Black Legion.

In 1931 Little was found dead by a streetcar railway track. Although no one was convicted of the crime it was generally believed that Little had been murdered by the Black Legionnaires. Malcolm's mother never recovered from her husband's death and in 1937 was sent to the State Mental Hospital at Kalamazoo, where she stayed for the next twenty-six years.

Little moved to Boston to live with his sister. He worked as a waiter in Harlem and after becoming addicted to cocaine, turned to crime. In 1946 he was convicted of burglary and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. While in prison he was converted to the Black Muslim faith.

After his release from prison in 1952 he moved to Chicago where he met Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Nation of Islam sect. He changed his name to X, a custom among Muhammad's followers who considered their family names to have originated with white slaveholders.

Malcolm soon became a leading figure in the Nation of Islam. He went on several speaking tours and helped establish several new mosques. He was eventually assigned to be minister of the mosque in New York's Harlem area. Founder and editor of *Muhammad Speaks*, Malcolm rejected integration and racial equality and instead advocated black power.

Malcolm was suspended from the movement by Elijah Muhammad after he made a series of extremist speeches. This included his comments that the assassination of John F. Kennedy was a "case of chickens coming home to roost".

In March 1964 Malcolm left the Nation of Islam and established his own religious organization, the Organization of Afro-American Unity. After a pilgrimage to Mecca, Malcolm rejected his former separatist beliefs and advocated world brotherhood. Malcolm now blamed racism on Western culture and urged African Americans to join with sympathetic whites to bring to an end.

Malcolm X was shot dead at a party meeting in Harlem on 21st February, 1965. Three Black Muslims were later convicted of the murder. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, based on interviews he had given to the journalist, Alex Haley, was published in 1965.

## Easier Version

Early life Malcolm X was born in 1925 in the USA. His father was a Baptist preacher who lived in the south of the USA and spoke out against racism. One night soon before Malcolm was born, their family home was surrounded by the Ku Klux Klan (white racists) armed with guns and they were told to leave or be killed. The family moved to Michigan in the north which was thought to be less racist. His father kept preaching against racism in the north and their house was burned down one night by racists when Malcolm was only four years old. His father was killed when Malcolm was about six in 1931 and his mother suffered from mental illness. She eventually had to go to an asylum for many years.

Malcolm moved to Boston to live with his sister but he got involved with crime and drugs and was sent to prison. While he was there he became a Muslim and decided to get his life together.

Vision & values After he was freed from prison Malcolm joined a black people's organization called the Nation of Islam. He made lots of public speeches. He wanted black people's rights and thought they should live separately from white people because he found American white people too racist to live with. He wanted a separate country for blacks. He believed that black people had the right to defend themselves using violence and wanted an armed revolution to gain true freedom from white racism. He thought non-violence was just weakness and claimed that it failed to achieve any genuine improvements for African Americans. He was shot dead in 1965.