

# Malcolm X

Malcolm X remains one of the most influential and controversial people of the 20th century.

Born *Malcolm Little* in Omaha, Nebraska on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1925, he saw his family's house set afire by members of the *Ku Klux Klan* and his father killed in a suspected car accident.

Malcolm Little was an excellent student but quit school soon after a teacher told him that his aspirations of being a lawyer were "no realistic goal for a *nigger*".

Malcolm then moved to Harlem, New York, where he firstly found work as a shoeshiner, but soon he began selling and using drugs. As a consequence, in 1946 he went to prison for 10 years. There Malcolm quickly converted to Islam, and started reading hundreds of books, thus enlarging his culture.

Soon after his release, Malcolm decided to change his surname to "X", explaining that he refused to have a slave surname, given to his ancestors by a White Master. The X was also the brand that many slaves received on their upper arm.

Malcolm then became one of the best orators of all times and his speeches started to become more and more famous among black people from all over the country. He then decided to make his pilgrimage to Mecca, where he saw Muslims of different races act as equals and started to believe that Islam could be the solution to racial problems.

But back home tensions increased dramatically and on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1965 while delivering a speech in Manhattan, three black men stood up in the audience and shot him.

After his death, Dr Martin Luther King, declared that "Malcolm X fought and died for what he believed to be right. He will have a place in the palace of martyrs."

Malcolm's ideals and fights survived him, as proved in the *X* movie released in 1992 by black director Spike Lee, which was recognized as one of the 10 best of the decade.



Figura 1: X shakes hands to Dr King

Now answer these questions

1. Who was Malcolm Little?
2. How and why did he change his name?
3. Why did young Malcolm quit school?
4. What did young Malcolm do in New York City?
5. How long did Malcolm stay in a penitentiary and why?
6. What did Malcolm do during his stay in a penitentiary?
7. Why was the visit to Mecca so important in X's life?
8. What atmosphere did Malcolm find in the USA when he returned from Africa?
9. What do Malcolm X and Martin Luther King have in common?
10. Have you seen the *X* movie by Spike Lee? What do you think is the condition of Black People nowadays in the USA? Speak about famous black people and explain why you like them or not.