

Malcolm X- Film Review

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The Film "Malcolm X" starts with a speech from Malcolm X that depicts a powerful message of his stance on white people and white America. This first speech sets the stage of the movie because this speech describes his pain, anger, and frustration of his life experience as a child and how the white people had treated his family. Malcolm X's hatred for the white people ran parallel to how the white people treated black people. Malcolm X was initially named Malcolm Little. He was born on May 19, 1925, in Omaha, Nebraska, of the parents of Earl and Louisa Little. Malcolm was the fourth of eight children of his parents. Malcolm X's father was a preacher and follower of Marcus Garvey, a leader who believed that white people would never accept black people.

Malcolm X has his first encounter with racism before he was born. When his mother was pregnant with him, Malcolm X's father had to run the Klu Klux Klan off with his shotguns his property when they made several visits to his home. The harassment continued at the age of four when the Klan broke the family windows out of the house. Earl Little protected his family by moving his family from Omaha to Milwaukee in 1926 and Michigan in 1928. The Klan later murdered Earl Little and they had burned down his family house. After Malcolm's father's death, the insurance company refused to pay the insurance policy; they stated he committed suicide. His mother was unable to support her children (financially and other necessities), which the state child services broke the family up and sent Malcolm to a foster home.

As a child, he became a bright student who had the ambition of becoming a lawyer. His teacher informed him that he was a "Nigger" and that "Niggers" could not be a lawyer and that he had to find a job with his hands. The teacher stated this statement because, in the '20s, black's jobs were limited to manufacturing, railroad, cooks, etc. Malcolm experience as a youth were

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reflections of his families involvement with the Klan were traumatic throughout his life. Spike Lee, the filmmaker, depicts the hurt and pain for the white society that was experienced by Malcolm X. Spike Lee paints the picture of how his broken family and lack of fatherly direction causes Malcolm to make the choices that he makes throughout his life as a young man before his adulthood.

As Malcolm became older, he met a young man named Shorty, and they became close friends. One of his vast experiences with Shorty was getting his hair straightened/conk. According to (Lapham & Attree, 2011), Malcolm's experience of having his hair straightened was the following steps:

- "Shorty made me sit down, and he tied the string of the new rubber apron tightly around my neck and combed up my bush of hair."
- "Then from the big Vaseline jar, he took a handful and massaged it hard all through my hair and into the scalp."
- "He also thickly Vaseline my neck, ears, and forehead."
- "Shorty warned me, When I get to washing out your head, be sure to tell me when you feel any little stinging."
- "At first the congolene (lye) just felt warm when he started combing it in. But then my head caught fire".

Malcolm was a man of fashion, which consisted of straightening of the hair and zoot suits, running the streets, visiting clubs, talking to women, and entertaining. Malcolm met West Indian Archie introduced him to drugs, prostitution, and gambling (running numbers). Malcolm's loyalty to Archie was only for a short

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time as he bamboozled Archie out of \$600 due to a lie that he did not win the numbers. "Drugs, prostitution, and crime become his way of life from 1941 until 1946 when, at the age of twenty-one, Malcolm is convicted of burglary and sentenced to eight years in prison" (Krieg, 2001). The fourteen counts of burglary charges were due to a scheme comprised of Malcolm, Rudy, Shorty, and two white women.

The court system during the 20 through the early 60s consisted of white judges, and they leveraged the maximum sentences to black males to remove them from society. They punished black males severely when they were in relationships with a white female because the law prohibited these relationships in the United States. The justice system was not fair to blacks due to state and government laws. The police officers arrested selected people; for example, Shorty, Malcolm, and the two ladies were arrested for the burglary; however, Rudy was not arrested. Also, when the black people were arrested, there were times when they were not cared for medically within the cell. Blacks did not have the right to call or press charges against other white people, just like Malcolm's dad could not press charges on who set their home on fire.

While Malcolm was in prison, he was radical to which he did not obey the white officers. Malcolm did not like the prison system in which inmates were referred by a number and not their name. Therefore, a man name Baines saw him and encouraged him to read about Islam and was able to relate to how the Muslims viewed white people. Malcolm X joined the Nation of Islam while serving a prison term in Massachusetts on burglary charges. Shortly after his release in 1952, he became a minister under Elijah Muhammad. Malcolm X Muslim name was el-Hass Malik el Shabazz.

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Malcolm met Betty Sanders (Shabazz) while working with the Nation of Islam. Betty Sanders taught the women during the movement of the Nation of Islam. Malcolm and Betty developed some time getting to know each other through talking, and one day Malcolm asked Betty to marry him via the telephone. In 1958 Malcolm and Betty Shabazz were married and later had six daughters. Malcolm was a respectful and loyal husband and father.

"Under Elijah's leadership, Malcolm would become an agent of Allah's new age, or at least that was the way Malcolm viewed himself through the spring of 1963 (Krieg, 2001).

Malcolm X was an African-American leader and prominent figure in the Nation of Islam, who articulated concepts of race pride and black nationalism in the early 1960s.

"When in the winter of 1964, Malcolm severed his ties with the Nation of Islam and shifted his life story of experiences and beliefs; later that which was under the Nation of Islam" (Krieg, 2001). Malcolm discovered that there was a different belief based upon him visiting Mecca, which he was able to view diverse people worshipping on one accord. "Malcolm returned from Mecca in late May and announced that Malcolm had rejected the "racist teachings" of Elijah Muhammad and converted to orthodox Islam" (Krieg, 2001). The change has caused the assignation at a meeting that he was holding. His wife and four children were present during this very tragic assignation.

Conclusion

Malcolm X was a man from a disjointed family, which he experienced loss from his father, mother, and siblings. Malcolm X did not have many friends as a child because, as a foster child, and he had to live in different homes. Malcolm X was the only black student in his class and recognized that he was more intelligent than the white race. According to Malcolm, white

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America has broken up our race (removal from Africa), families, and oppressed (jails, prostitution, and drugs) us with injustice. He became furious about the experiences that he had to endure from the white people that left him at a point of unforgiveness from the time of his youth to his pre-Mecca experience.

He was not connected to other leaders during the time of segregation because Malcolm X did not depend on other people's advice outside of Islam. Malcolm's experience with the white people and prison helped him to correlate with the Islam belief of how the white people treated black people. "Malcolm directed his actions to work tirelessly for Elijah, to propagate, "the truth" in black communities in the United States" (Krieg, 2001). Malcolm was able to revolutionize the black community because he was an example of how blacks had been misrepresented, mistreated, oppressed, and institutionalized.

Malcolm X's journey had minimal advice and guidance from others due to his life trials and circumstances. Due to the conditions of the era of segregation, Malcolm X was not able to find other enlightenment or strategies that would promote the type of equality of white and blacks. Elijah Muhammad is an example of his father, Earl Little, that advocated against the treatment of white people. Malcolm X considered Elijah Muhammad inspirational until he learned about the allegations of Elijah Muhammad's deceit and deception. Malcolm decided to embrace a different perspective about people of different races, including white people, which cost him his connection to the Nation of Islam and his death.

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