



## MALCOLM X

Malcolm X was a fierce critic of the oppression of blacks by white Americans. Accused of preaching violence and racial hatred, he was the most outspoken, feared, and revered black man of his generation.

Malcolm, one of seven children, grew up with his family in Omaha but left after the Ku Klux Klan burnt their house down. The family moved to Lansing, Michigan where Malcolm was fully integrated with white children in the neighbourhood. His father, a follower of the doctrine of Marcus Garvey, was branded an 'uppity nigger', and the Klan, 70,000 strong in Michigan, burnt their house down once again. Not long after this, Malcolm's father's body, severed almost in half, was found on the outskirts of the town. Malcolm was brought up in foster care, the only black in his class, but he excelled at school, was an A-grade student, and became class president.

But Malcolm didn't go to college. He moved first to Boston, and then to Harlem where he hustled, supplying whisky, drugs, and girls. He later moved back to Boston where, at age 20, he was arrested for burglary and sentenced to 8-10 years in prison. While in prison, Malcolm studied history, religion, and philosophy; read Shakespeare, Socrates, and Gandhi. His family introduced him to Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam. He joined the prison debate team and competed against teams from Harvard and MIT; his fame spread, people wanted to hear the word of the tall, athletic, electrifying young firebrand.

After six and a half years in prison, he was released and accepted into the Nation of Islam. Within two years, his passionate zeal saw him named minister of the most important temple on the east coast, Harlem's Temple No. 7. He joined the street orators of Harlem on 125th St. and 7th Avenue and quickly became the Nation's most visible and eloquent spokesperson. In the unrest which followed the 1957 beating of a Muslim in police custody in Harlem, Malcolm X held the community completely in his sway, and from that point on the extent of X's power became obvious to Elijah Muhammad, the police, and to politicians.

Malcolm X's preaching went far beyond that of any other black leader of his day. This was the era of the civil rights movement. Dr Martin Luther King fought for equal rights, preached a policy of non-violent civil disobedience, and believed in the possibility of a