

Famous African Americans - Malcolm X

by ReadWorks



In 1925, a boy was born in Omaha, Nebraska. His name was Malcolm Little. At his birth, no one realized that he would grow up to be one of the most influential African American leaders of all time. The little boy would become an important defender of African American rights.

Malcolm was inspired by his father and by his own experiences. Malcolm's father was heavily involved in fighting racism. In 1931, he was found dead on some streetcar tracks. Malcolm strongly believed that his father was murdered by white racists.

After his father's death, Malcolm's mother couldn't cope. Eventually, she was committed to a mental hospital. He was forced to spend the rest of his childhood in foster homes.

In his late teens, Malcolm moved to Boston and New York. He turned to a life of crime. When he was twenty, he was put in prison for stealing.

While in prison, Malcolm found his calling in life. He joined a group called the Nation of Islam. This meant he became a Muslim. He decided to fight for the rights of African Americans. He read all he could to educate himself about the world.

Malcolm was released from prison in 1952. He adopted the last name "X." The "X" stood for the unknown African names of his slave ancestors. From then on, he was known as Malcolm X.

Malcolm spent the next 13 years fighting to end racism. He remained a Muslim, but left the Nation of Islam. This caused problems with the group's leaders. On February 21, 1965, Malcolm was assassinated. His death was mourned by many people around the country.