

Type a prominent figure, not a family member or loved one, but someone who was for a moment (brief/ long-term, present/past) that inspires you. Inspires you in life, your career, your faith, your humanity... But just overall inspires you to change.

I apologize for the amount of talking I do in this presentation, however, as I said to Keith last class, there are presentations and discussions, at times, that just require patrons to listen. Sometimes, we just need to be taught and shown, and nothing more. This will be one of those.

As I am about to take on this, my last course presentation in my graduate degree, ever, I have to embrace a change in me that I am blessed to experience. For the first time I am engaging in an evaluative presentation of my knowledge driven by the intrinsic motivation of purely sharing knowledge, and not for marks. I am finding myself currently in an auspicious position perhaps be the first person to ever share the legacy and impact of a man that is considered one of the most prolific human beings of the 20th century when it comes to the acquisition of human rights and proponents for freedom and equality for the disenfranchised and oppressed. I tread very lightly and with a great sense of humility. My goals are not to make this person a pivotal figure in your lives as well, but my hopes are that you hear of him, engage in acquiring more knowledge of him, and hopefully be touched by a characteristic or quality within him that you can embed in the tapestry that is you and your sense of humanity as well.

Prior to commencing this presentation, I would like all of you to bring yourselves into a mindset or paradigm that will foster a seed of interest or care for this topic. First, as if we are all walking into a rehabilitation centre, I ask that we all empty our “pockets” of any preconceived notions we have. Some suggested areas: Please check your views of Malcolm X, himself. You may have opinions or subjective views of him, and many have them in comparison to Martin Luther King during the Civil Rights Movement. Both men are respectfully delegated their role in history, and as often as they are compared, they deserve to be seen as parallel forces. Check your views of Muslims and the religion of Islam as well, please. Be it you have acquired your understanding of the Muslim faith through North American media or passive travels in Muslim majority countries, I ask that you please understand that your understanding, with all due respect, may not necessarily be factual or accurate. Finally, please make a solid attempt to temporarily check any views of colourblindness or views of race as a non-issue as well, for the time of the presentation. We live in an extremely racialized world, and have an inexplicably racialized history, both in Canada and the United States, and if we look at the events of the past through the lenses we currently have, the full understanding of people’s motives, actions, and points of view can not be fully understood. For lack of better words or phrases, the conditions for a potential change within you, the listener, could not properly occur if we don’t, for a brief period of time, suspend from any of the previous three items I mentioned.

For those who may not be familiar with Malcolm X, he was an African American civil rights leader in the 1950s and 60s who gained prominence as a strong intellectual but highly feared force for the Black Liberation Movement just from his ministerial sermons, press releases, and public and university debates. His legacy is highly controversial, as I saw in the 2008 US presidential campaign when Fox News made it heavily seen as a negative and possible threat to security and Caucasian Americans to elect a president (Obama) who said that Malcolm X's "repeated acts of self-creation" spoke to him. However, regardless of the media, Malcolm X does have an overwhelmingly positive legacy that is both amazing and transformative. Much of this is due to Malcolm X's 1965 autobiography, a text that Time magazine listed as one of the 10 most important non-fiction texts of the 20th century, Spike Lee's 1993 academy award nominated film, "X", and much of urban and hip hop culture in America.

To explain the background of this person, one must go to the time of his life, and speak of the times that developed him.

In the following slide I will be talking quickly about the times of Post WWI and WWII America in the point of view of life for Black Americans, and the development and creation of the Nation of Islam.

As you can see listed on the slide, the number of items that occurred on the left was a reality to America during that time. However, in all times of hardship, from it, to endure, extreme outcomes and movements may come. To cope with the disenfranchisement, and to mobilize Black Americans to a better, more proud existence, the formulation of the Nation of Islam was assembled. I speak of this group in detail during this presentation for they played a major role in the change that occurred in America during the Civil Rights movement, and they were the group that brought Malcolm to prominence.

As we learned in Roger's Diffusion of Innovations, where one is introducing a change strategy, under compatibility, NAMING OF THE INNOVATION or change movement can be a component that leads one to think something that is not necessarily true. I use this to describe the title, NATION OF ISLAM. Though some may describe it as a religious movement, maybe because of its name, it is not. Devoid of any political involvement, mobilization for a segregated separate piece of land in or outside of America as a full nation, there was nothing to dignify this group of strong willed and devout followers as a Nation. And furthermore, aside from the use of names, some traditions and customs, The tenants of this movement are vastly different, and monumentally blastfamous from those of the Islamic religion. To speak definitively, the Nation of Islam was more or less a cult movement. I don't use that term lightly. It focused on the teachings of a benevolent being who was currently alive, having him seen as the being who intercedes with God, his wage came from contributions made by all members who followed, an unquestioned adherence to the faiths framework was paramount, and severe disciplinary methods were exercised. As it claims to have lineages from the Abrahamic faith, its entire

movement lies on the tenant that one race is loved by God while another is akin to the devil. As many of you could guess, it was in the tenants of this movement that those of the white race were all devils, and those who are black are the most loved. To know a bit about this group is necessary to understand the change agent that Malcolm X was to be remembered as.

The history of a man that this whole change inquiry narrative is revolved around is one that I have great challenges grappling with. In preparation of this paper, I read the recently released, and exhaustive 600 page biography by the late Dr. Manning Marable of Columbia University, who worked on this book for 15 years, and died two days before its publication and release. To narrow down a history of such a figure is of great challenge to me, but here I go in trying.

Born Malcolm Little, in Omaha, Nebraska, Malcolm endured a very difficult childhood with several full and half siblings, his father Earl Little, and Canadian-Grenadan mother Louise, moved from state to state fighting racial oppression, they often endured in financial transactions and real estate dealings. Malcolm's father was murdered in 1931, and due to the strain and mental anguish from the murder of her husband and the threat of having the children taken away by social services due to the lack of funds to support all the children, Louise suffered a massive nervous break down winding her up into a hospital for the mentally ill for the remainder of her life. All children dispersed to different foster homes, Malcolm attempted to endure in the foster homes he entered, and in the school system. Voted a class president for his strong oratory skills, and high grades, he was told by his teacher to have more realistic visions of a future career. Telling his teacher, who he highly regarded, that when he grows up he wants to become a lawyer, his teacher emphatically responded a lawyer is just not a "realistic goal for a nigger". Extremely disenchanted, Malcolm would coast through high school up until his teen years.

Finally venturing out to visit his half-sister Ella in Boston, Malcolm soon fell in love with the nightlife and the Black bourgeoisie in Boston, Detroit, and Harlem, and took jobs that would allow him to be mobile between those cities. Eventually finding himself in petty and serious crimes such as drug pushing, prostitution, and illegal laundering and gambling, Malcolm X soon found himself in jail for eight years breaking and entering. Though it is highly probable he got a much longer sentence for when he was caught he was engaged in sexual acts with a white woman who spoke ill of him when she took the stand for the prosecution.

In jail is where Malcom's first transformation occurred. Living among already converted Black Muslims in the prison system, and his siblings who were converting to the nation of Islam theology started to mail him letter and have deep conversations with him. He was enthralled with this faith and its tenants. Reading almost addictively in the jail library, Malcolm educated himself to rank his intellect to that of a scholar. Furthermore, in jail, he corresponded directly to Elijah Mohammed, the self proclaimed prophet to the Nation of Islam. When he was

released from jail, he was invited by Elijah Mohammed himself, and soon became a member, and quickly rose to prominence in the group as an oratory powerhouse.

CHANGE

All aspects of change for Malcolm in the early parts of his life prior to the Nation of Islam were to give his life both meaning and prominence. So often, in his childhood, that was being robbed from him. From the evictions from legally purchased homes, demoralization from his teachers, he just needed to be the one that people didn't demoralize. He needed to ascend to a prominent position, and just claim some sense of dignity and importance. One could see this being sought out while engaging in his life of crime.

In the worst case scenarios, HATE can be very empowering. In jail, the constitution of his hate was against the white race. He had no incursions with anyone who was white, all his life, that were positive and not malicious. From the killing of his father, whom all fingers point to the Klu Klux Klan, his teachers and racism in the public face, politicians, and the white women he fell for that eventually dooped and tricked him. Furthermore cops, lawyers, judges, and an all white jury. He changed to hate a highly oppressive hegemonic power that has made his life meaningless, and in that hate, he broke free of dependence or reliance on them for him to determine his future, and he officially took control over who is going to be. However, from that hate came a love that he planted in his heart to gain the minds and determinations of Black people, a people who went through and may be going through hardships just like him.

THESE WERE THE INSULAR CHANGES HE CREATED.

However, the large changes he made were far more enduring and prominent to the masses.

Malcolm X (and this is where I adhere to his doctrines and theories) he is the voice, tone, expression, and articulation of the exhausted. A voice that has had enough, who can take no more, and won't wait for change to come, they are to demand it; and if it were to not come to them, they shall seize it. And what change they are asking for is not changes to experience prosperity, to gain wealth, or even superiority and prominence. All that was being asked for was adherence to the law, human rights, justice, dignity, the end of segregation that was NOT EQUAL but separate, inhumane and random acts of violence against blacks, and furthermore the ghetto-ization of black neighborhoods and cities. Some call him the necessary evil, because for lack of better words, he scared the hell out of the masses. He spoke so inexplicably clear, with such evidence, that reporters and politicians would find themselves dumbfounded. His character and mannerisms were so impeccable, that while being surveilled, which he was for most of his adult life, by the FBI and CIA, that he could not be indicted or legally accountable for anything. Nor could he be lured. He did not smoke, drink, fornicate, steal, or lay a finger on anyone or thing.

Where some called him violent, he just spoke as a human – if someone tries to kill you, hurt you, kidnap your family, firebomb your home, you go at them with the same force not in retaliation, but at that point in time, right there, for self defense. This is a point I felt, the pacifist non-violent movement fell short of understanding; it is not violence if it is in self-defense, and furthermore it was time for the American blacks to stop fitting into the quaint passive mold that the American government wanted to see most of the 22 million blacks in; heard but not “in the way or threatening”. Malcolm embodied the voice of a fet up Black movement, and made it quite clear that if things don’t change in America, it WILL be a threat to the American Society. Metaphorically, he clenched his fist to let them know that he (Black Americans) were ready to punch, but they would never punch for the violence that would break out would be detrimental, and America would know the power of who they are dealing with. When America had no clue how strong or powerful they were, it was just the government that then remained in a state of fear and discomfort. It is that fear and discomfort that does, at the governmental level especially, create change.

As many of you can read on the slide, he eventually realized the cult-like framework of the group he once loved so dearly was Corrupt, deceitful, jealous, and backwards. It led Malcolm to break-free from the NOI, and retransform himself once again. In his visit to the Hajj and his travels to Arab and African nations after his departure, he had an epiphany, and that was the realization of racial unity being the key to mobilize a change in the United States. To end the injustice that was going on. While doing so and getting notoriety around the world from world leaders, and a great deal of admiration from prominent Muslims around the world, he posed a threat to American Global Interests and prominence, and was also infuriating members of the Nation of Islam who simply hated his existence. For reasons that are still not understood in their full breadth, perpetrated by some who have been convicted and some who are still to be brought to justice, Malcolm X was assassinated in front of supporters and his pregnant wife and four children at the Autobahn Ballroom on February 21, 1965.

When compared to change theories:

I humbly believe from my research the NOI is an organization built-up by and founded by a charlatan, and it could have no way kept the membership and faith of a person of Malcolm’s magnanimity. Malcolm on the other hand underwent a profound change himself, from his journey to Mecca, during the Hajj. The experience and epiphanies he endured by observing the brotherhood of all races, outside of the American context, unfroze and propelled him. He unfroze and provided the momentum of his movement virtually on his own, and brought others to see and agree with him. Malcolm was taken off the earth too soon to personally engage, as a leader, in the refreezing period. However, the refreeze period has been continuous, obviously started when he returned from his travels, then in the mid-late 1960s following the release of his autobiography. Interestingly, the change he started then

experienced a revival in the early 1990s with the release of Spike Lee's "X", and may see another revival with the recent 600 page biography by Manning Marrable. Ideally, Malcolm X posthumously satisfies the criteria of Lewin's *refreezing* phase. I find this incredible. It truly speaks to the strength of his message and legacy.

It is here that I just personally feel, that for all the change theories we studied, nothing really can explain the change Malcolm underwent, and furthermore what keeps his memory and spirit alive, transforming and changing people all the time.

To conclude, I want to explain the change that has occurred and is occurring within me due to the studying I have done of this person and his force for the past 20 years.

At this point in my existence, I see my life in three large spheres that coincide with one another quite like a Venn diagram. Those three spheres represent: who am I as a man, who am I as a Muslim, and who am I as a professional (educator). What I have learned from the life that Malcolm lived and the transformative changes he went through can be seen as one of the ingredients that formulates the nucleus in the centre of each of those (cell-like) spheres.

First, as a Muslim, Malcolm defined to me that true Islam is not inherent, nor can it be taught by one entity. It's the summation of a lifetime of trials and errors, journeys to find the truth, and conversations that occur between the heart and mind. In a secular society, a great deal is at a grasps reach, but it can be toxic for your development. Rely on your beliefs and seek out the ramifications of all your actions before you partake in them. He led me to understand that being a Muslim is hard, and always will be. Not because of the strict regiment or guidelines, but because to do and believe in what you feel is true is not always easy. Jihad is a concept that has been vilified by the media, but what it actually means is an internal struggle, and that is what life is. As much as Malcolm is a hero to me, his life was nothing short of an endless struggle, and what I can take from that is I am apart of a religion that

does not fool me. Life will always be a struggle, and I have to endure. Malcolm was by no means a prophet, however, as my professor Maurice Digiuseppe stated in a conversation with me (2012), he was “prophetic”, and the opinions he had, perspectives he shared, and takes on human kind he are applicable to my life today. I do not idolize the man, nor should anyone, but he is quite possibly the most honest depiction of a North American Muslim who in his struggle to become a complete and well-rounded Muslim, died trying to bring freedom and justice to a people he loved.

As a man, I don't really know where to begin. From the strength one has when he has a clean, pressed appearance, to the mammoth power he had in his oratory skills, Malcolm taught me how do you ascend yourself and catch the attention of others simply by the way you look and speak. I emulated that even at a young age. I always spoke with passion, and attempted to dress dapperly and with dignity at special occasions. Those traits are superficial. What I am still grappling with, but no doubt believe, is that everyone has to live with and have something in his or her lives that they are willing to die for, or at least stand up for in the face of strong opposition. It seems to me to be the definition of what a man is. You need to have something you live for, and then in conclusion, will die for as well. What is mine? Perhaps my faith, but I will never know because my life is currently not in limbo because of my faith. Malcolm lived nearly a decade in that state. That takes great strength and assurance in what you are living for. He loved his people so much that he was willing to take on all of the United States (metaphorically) to get them their freedom.

Finally, as an educator, Malcolm compels me to always learn more. Ascend to the high ranks of a society you don't see yourself in, and be a dynamic conduit of

change. Do not be just another somebody. Live your life to equalize the imbalance in power, give voice to the voiceless, and connect with all levels of society. Malcolm X, though only later was able to relate to the middle-class, was the voice for the most downdraught of society, gave hope and brought change to some who were lost in sadness, substance abuse, or the way of the world. As fierce as he was at a podium, he was sweet in his discourse in a one-on-one situation. He respectfully disagreed with another while embracing them as his friend, and patiently listened while he was verbally cut-up and disrespected by those who disagreed with him. I feel, for the sacrifice he made for all people who are disenfranchised, I have an obligation to ascend to a position of influence. I have in my heart, with no question, the goal to ascend to a Director position be it either in the board of education or the ministry. I must diversify what is a very monocultural cabinet of influential people, to enlist change that will meet the needs of all learners. I don't think I would have that drive if I never knew of Malcolm X, I really don't. Change is both spiritual and within, but it has to occur socially and politically as well if you want that change to spread beyond just yourself. I may not be one who wants to be in the sphere of popular politics, but I can definitely do it under the banner of education.

And if there were something I wanted to leave as my legacy at the end of my last graduate course presentation, that is it.