

Malcolm X Autobiography (as told by Alex Haley)

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Before I remark on this book I want to comment on the movie, which I watched immediately after finishing the book. I thought Spike Lee absolutely killed it in the direction he took with the movie. It struck me after reading the book the truly colossal feat Spike (idk bro like that but it feels more normal to call him Spike as opposed to “Lee”) was tasked with in capturing a life as dense / filled with meaning + purpose as Malcolm X’s was and bringing it to film. I was really curious before the film started how Spike would go about artistically interpreting + showing Malcolm’s character development, “awakening,” and life on the big screen. It struck me during the scene in which Malcolm first arrives to jail how talented Spike Lee is as a director. There’s a slow pan over the cells and the men occupying them and finally the camera rests on a defiant Malcolm X, with murmurs from his cellmates “satan” (his nickname in prison for his anti-religious rants in his cell). In such a short span, Spike Lee was able to incorporate testimony from the book and do it in such an aesthetically grabbing and powerful way. This probably isn’t making sense without the accompanying scene but for some reason in that scene and movement I really respected the artistic vision in which Spike Lee did justice to Malcolm X’s life with his film and his artistic rendition of it. Just wanted to commend Spike Lee and the Malcolm X movie (also Denzel for his incredible performance) before I got into what the book meant to me.

I found this book to be the single most inspiring piece of writing I have ever read in my life. It made me question my thinking, morals, and duty as a human being on this earth. I do not at all mean this in the performative infographic way that people posted about during the height of the BLM movement, but rather in a way that after finishing this book I was filled with the urge and thirst to *understand* and *learn* about the workings of our world. Not only in a racial lens, but in terms of class, religion and more. To feel a man’s conviction and passion to find solutions to the wrongs of this world so potently through the pages of a book that is decades old was really incredible to me. It is, to me, Malcolm X’s fiery passion that (not to overuse the word) inspires me to want to learn and understand more, through media, books, and conversation how the world

really works and who it works against. For example, he describes having a “thirst for knowledge.” This is something I’m 100% taking with me and to me what makes Malcolm X such an amazing man is his conviction and ability to light a spark under others ass not only to rally to a cause but to want to understand the root of issues at such cause and of the world as a greater whole. Not everyone can be the leader and face Malcom X was, but anyone can educate themselves on the realities of our world and use this knowledge of how the world really works (exploitation + cruelty) to send waves of good out in their immediate circle + to those around them. A lot of this probably sounds like token performative talk and I can understand that for sure but I can genuinely say this book altered my view of the world and made me want to be less of a passive person existing in the back seat along for the ride and at least become someone who is aware of like I said how the world works. You have to become aware and begin to understand your enemy if you are going to fight it.

Less related to what I was saying above but I never have read a story about a man's life that was genuinely such a page turner. I’ve had this book sitting around for a minute but never started it because subconsciously I think I equate autobiography = boring, regardless of who the autobiography is about. I was as engrossed in reading this book as I am reading any of my favorite fiction. Part of it is due to who Malcolm X was as a person, but another factor is that the events that took place in this man's life were nothing short of unbelievable. I remember getting to the part of his story where he was truly hitting rock bottom and having to leave New York because if he didn’t he would’ve been killed by other hustlers and just one being enthralled by the story and two so curious how he was going to get from there to the public figure and man he is known as today. Side note again shoutout Spike Lee the scene when Malcolm X goes back to see West Indian Archie after prison. That was a really emotionally moving scene and extremely well depicted on screen he captured the emotional weight of that interaction really well.

Obviously Malcolm X’s specific actions and mission he undertook are incredibly important and moving, but what I really got from this book personally was the message to educate yourself and stand on 10 toes for what you believe in with PASSION!!!