

READER'S GUIDE  
2017 - 2018

Presented by

**MICHIGAN  
HUMANITIES  
COUNCIL**

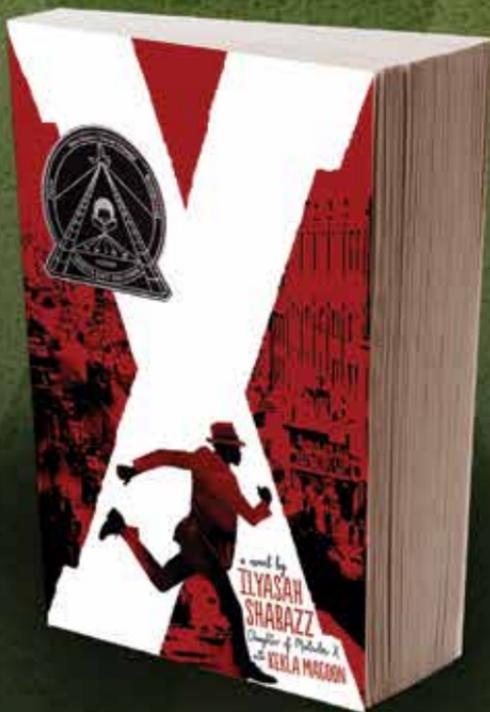
**GREAT  
MICHIGAN  
READ**



**X: A Novel**

*Ilyasah Shabazz with Kekla Magoon*

"MALCOLM, MY SON,  
YOU CAN BE AND DO ANYTHING  
YOU PUT YOUR MIND TO."



# WHAT IS THE GREAT MICHIGAN READ?



## Great Michigan Read: One title, one state, and thousands engaged in literary discussion

### WHAT IS THE GREAT MICHIGAN READ?

The Michigan Humanities Council's Great Michigan Read is a book club for the entire state with a focus on a single book – *X: A Novel* by Ilyasah Shabazz and Kekla Magoon. The program is intended for young adults to senior citizens with broad goals of making literature more accessible and appealing while also encouraging residents to learn more about our state and individual identities.

### WHY *X: A NOVEL*?

No life is set in stone. Malcolm was a young man with boundless potential but with the odds stacked against him. Losing his father under suspicious circumstances and his mother to a mental health hospital, Malcolm fell into a life of petty crime and eventually prison. Instead of letting prison be his downfall, Malcolm found a religion, a voice, and the podium that would eventually make him one of the most prominent figures in the burgeoning Civil Rights movement.

The 2017-18 Great Michigan Read, *X: A Novel*, is a tale of reinvention and redemption. Written by Ilyasah Shabazz, Malcolm X's third daughter, and Kekla Magoon, *X* is a young-adult novel with a writing style and message that will appeal to readers of all ages. Join us as we work to explore the Michigan roots of one of the most influential leaders of the twentieth century.

### HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

Pick up a copy of *X: A Novel* and supporting materials at your local library, your favorite bookstore, or download the e-book. Read the book, share and discuss it with your friends, and participate in Great Michigan Read events in your community and online.

Register your library, school, company, or book club and receive copies of reader's guides, teacher's guides, bookmarks, and other informational materials at no cost. Nonprofit organizations—including schools and libraries—may apply for discussion kits which include free copies of *X: A Novel*.

For more details, including a calendar of events, additional resources, and to register your organization, visit [www.michiganhumanities.org](http://www.michiganhumanities.org).

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**A SPECIAL THANKS:** The Michigan Humanities Council would like to give a special thanks to Jennifer Rosseter (Image Creative Group), Bill Castanier, Carol DeBoer, Maureen Derenzy, Sean Henne, Susan Patterson, Linda Pride, Cathy Seblonka, Terri Tomaszek, and Kay Wejrowski.

# X: A NOVEL

## AND AUTHOR ILYASAH SHABAZZ



Ilyasah Shabazz. ©Phillip Van Nostrand

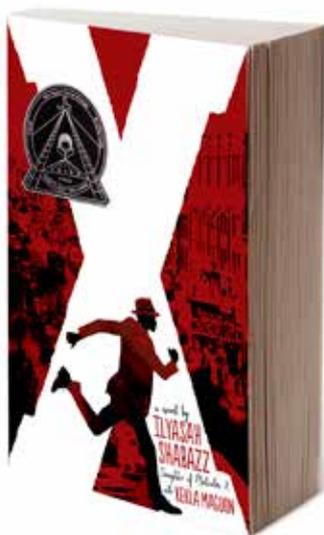
**ILYASAH SHABAZZ:** Ilyasah Shabazz, third daughter of Malcolm X, is an activist, producer, motivational speaker, and the author of the critically acclaimed *Growing Up X* and the picture book *Malcolm Little: The Boy Who Grew Up to Become Malcolm X*.

### Also by Ilyasah Shabazz

*Growing Up X: A Memoir by the Daughter of Malcolm X* (2002)

*Malcolm Little: The Boy Who Grew Up to Become Malcolm X* (2013)

**“You alone have the power to accomplish what you will. To accomplish every goal. Clear every obstacle. Win every challenge. You have the gift of an indomitable Spirit. Stay strong, focused, and determined.”** ILYASAH SHABAZZ



# Q&A

## WITH ILYASAH SHABAZZ

### Why did you choose to make *X: A Novel* a work of fiction?

It was important for me to ensure my father's young life was documented and accessible to a teen audience. I wanted to shape my father's adolescence into an inspirational story, to fill in the missing information and provide a more accurate story of my father's youth. I also wanted to give credence to his parents for instilling specific values of compassion, care, literacy, and accountability that enabled their son to grow into one of the most brilliant human rights strategists worldwide.

### What events in your father's life were the most thought-provoking to write about?

My father was born from the loving union of two young activists during the Jim Crow and Great Depression eras of our country. His family was separated and torn apart—his dad was lynched

for his activism when Malcolm was six years old, and his mom was placed in an institution when he was thirteen. Despite the evident pain, Malcolm still excelled academically and socially. When his favorite teacher advised that he shouldn't aspire to be a lawyer because he was just a Negro, his young spirit was crushed. When our children are discouraged and indirectly told that their lives do not matter, they often live their lives in a self-destructive manner.

### What is the story's most compelling lesson for today?

My hope is that, like my dad, young people will be able to find the individual power that each of us possesses to shed light on truth and justice. And I hope that smart, forward-thinking adults can understand the necessity of our roles in the village of raising our children to live more purpose-driven lives. If there ever was a time for us to come together, it is now.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ILYASAH SHABAZZ PLEASE VISIT:**  
[www.ilyasahshabazz.com](http://www.ilyasahshabazz.com)

# X: A NOVEL

## AND AUTHOR KEKLA MAGOON



Kekla Magoon © Kerry Land

**KEKLA MAGOON** is the author of eight young adult novels, including *The Rock and the River*, *How It Went Down*, *X: A Novel*, and the *Robyn Hoodlum Adventures* series. She has received an NAACP Image Award, the John Steptoe New Talent Award, two Coretta Scott King Honors, The Walter Award Honor, and been long listed for the National Book Award. She also writes non-fiction on historical topics. Kekla conducts school and library visits nationwide and serves on the Writers' Council for the National Writing Project. Kekla holds a B.A. from Northwestern University and an M.F.A. in Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts, where she now serves on faculty.

### Also by Kekla Magoon

*Shadows of Sherwood (A Robyn Hoodlum Adventure)* (2015)

*How It Went Down* (2014)

*Fire in the Streets* (2013)

*37 Things I Love (in No Particular Order)* (2012)

*Camo Girl* (2011)

*Today the World is Watching You: The Little Rock Nine and the Fight for School Integration, 1957* (2011)

*The Rock and the River* (2009)

**“Malcolm spent his teen years running from that history, but he eventually found his way back. He finally became the person he was raised to be. This book explores the time during which he was running, and it’s such a crucial piece of his story.”**

KEKLA MAGOON

(excerpt from *Diversity in Ya*, 2015)

# Q&A

## WITH KEKLA MAGOON

### How did you approach writing a book with two authors?

We worked to combine our strengths to create the perfect balance of history/biography and novelistic storytelling. Ilyasah brought a deep familiarity with her father’s life story, and a clear vision for how his early experiences could shape an inspiring narrative. As an accomplished novelist, I was well-positioned to help bring this vision to life.

### What kind of research did you do when writing *X: A Novel*?

I read a lot of Malcolm’s own writing, including *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Ilyasah presented me with several of her favorite books about her father, and I studied them closely, in addition to other biographical texts that discuss his life and work. When possible, I studied archival videos and transcripts of Malcolm’s speeches. I visited several library and museum archives that contained collections related to Malcolm, where I viewed photographs and ephemera. All of these influences helped me to draw closer to him as a character.

**“In his own writings and speeches, he emphasized that he didn’t come from nowhere. He went through trials, tribulations, struggles, and doubts. For me it was really interesting to get to the individual behind the legacy.”**

KEKLA MAGOON

(excerpt from *School Library Journal*, January 5, 2015)

### What were the challenges in writing a book about such a prominent historical figure?

The main challenge is finding the balance between historical accuracy and shaping a narrative. It was important to represent Malcolm’s true story, and yet also draw readers in with a strong plot and a compelling flow of action. We made choices about which periods of his life to focus on, and when to make leaps in time to stay close to the relevant action. The novel’s opening, in particular, flashes forward and backward in time, focusing on the moment when Malcolm leaves home to begin his coming-of-age journey through trauma and toward self-discovery.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON KEKLA MAGOON PLEASE VISIT:  
[www.keklamagoon.com](http://www.keklamagoon.com)



# AUTHOR'S NOTE

## FROM *X: A NOVEL*

“

I am my father's child. I consider it an honor and a privilege to tell the story of his life and work, and I proudly accept responsibility for doing so, not because he is my father but because I believe that accurate information about him and his life's journey will empower others — especially those fatherless children searching for their purpose and their identity — to achieve their highest potential.”

*Ilyasah Shabazz*

When world-renowned and eventually martyred human-rights activist El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz— Malcolm X — came walking through the front door of our home in the evenings, he was simply Daddy. I imagine that as a child, Malcolm felt the same about his dad, my grandfather, Earl Little. At the age of six, young Malcolm could not have fully understood the broader significance of his father's life and death. He knew that Papa Earl went away, and although he heard the whispers about the Ku Klux Klan's Black Legion, years would pass before all the pieces came together as a meaningful understanding of his father's martyrdom — that he was killed while serving his people. Malcolm would endure years of turmoil and discontent before understanding that Papa Earl lived and died committed to the cause of securing freedom, justice, and equality for disenfranchised African Americans.



*Courtesy of Author*

Those were long and difficult years for Malcolm. Grief, pain, and confusion prevented him from seeing his father's footsteps, which were paved for him to follow. Had Papa Earl lived longer, Malcolm might have found a more direct path to becoming the human-rights advocate his father wanted him to be — but in that case, Malcolm almost certainly would not have become the icon the world remembers today.

My father and I have a great deal in common, including being a middle child and the loss of our fathers to assassination at an early age. Though he passed away when I was not quite three years old, my father's voice, his beliefs, and his lessons remained a vital part of my childhood and my evolving identity. As a result, I have grown to become a proud African-American Muslim woman. My mother, Dr. Betty Shabazz — much

like my grandmother Louise Little— raised a houseful of children alone, and she taught my five sisters and me all about our father, our extended family, our ancestors, and our history. She, too, sacrificed personal freedom to the cause of securing liberty and justice for all. I will always be inspired by her admonition,

**“Ilyasah, just as  
one must drink water,  
one must  
give  
back.”**

*Dr. Betty Shabazz*

I share this story to remind myself and others that there is hope for each one of us. No matter where we have been, no matter how many doubts we hold, and no matter what mistakes we have made, we have the ability to rise above our current circumstances — especially when we are inspired by the lessons in our past. Each one of us possesses the power to change our present condition and become the best that life offers.

I have always been proud to be my father's child. And an important part of my journey has been to accept the part of myself that is my father. It is a privilege to carry his work and his legacy forward. I will always strive to walk in his footsteps and become the best person I can, and I invite you to do the same. Thank you for reading his story.

*X. Copyright © 2015 by Ilyasah Shabazz. Reproduced by permission of the publisher, Candlewick Press, Somerville, MA.*

**“Each one of us possesses the power to change our present condition and become the best that life offers.”**

ILYASAH SHABAZZ

*Ilyasah Shabazz  
with her father.*



*Courtesy of Author*

# CHRONOLOGY OF MALCOLM IN MICHIGAN

1920-1930

**MAY 19, 1925:**  
Born in Omaha, NE

**1926:** Family briefly moves to Milwaukee, WI, to escape the KKK

**1929:** The Littles move to Lansing, MI

**NOVEMBER 1929:**  
A racist mob sets the family house on fire; the Littles move to the eastside of Lansing

**1931:** Malcolm is enrolled in Pleasant Grove Elementary School

**SEPTEMBER 28, 1931:** Earl Little is found dead on the street car tracks in Lansing

**1938:** The Swerlin family enrolls Malcolm in Mason Junior High School

**JANUARY 1939:** Louise Little is institutionalized at Kalamazoo State Hospital

1940

**1940:** Malcolm moves to Boston to live with his half-sister, Ella



Wikimedia Commons

**NOVEMBER 1942:**  
Malcolm moves back to Michigan and begins to work at Shaw's Jewelry Store as a porter-messenger

**DECEMBER 1942:**  
Malcolm moves to Flint, MI

**MARCH 1943:**  
Moves to Harlem in New York City and begins dealing drugs



Wikimedia Commons

**1945:** Malcolm moves back to Michigan and works at Capitol Bedding making mattresses, cleaning at the Reo Motor Car Company, and working as a waiter at the historic Coral Gables

**1945:** Malcolm returns to Boston

**1946:** Along with Malcolm "Shorty" Jarvis, is arrested while picking up a stolen watch

**FEBRUARY 1946:** Malcolm is sentenced to 8-10 years in prison for larceny and breaking and entering. He begins his sentence at Charlestown State Prison



**1948:** Begins correspondence with Elijah Muhammad, then-leader of the Nation of Islam

1950

**1950:** Malcolm begins signing his name as "Malcolm X"

Wikimedia Commons

**AUGUST 1952:** Malcolm is paroled and leaves prison moving to Detroit, MI

**MAY 1953:** Malcolm moves to Inkster, MI for about a year



Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

**JUNE 1953:** Named assistant minister of the Nation's Temple Number One in Detroit, MI

**MAY 1955:** Malcolm holds a Nation of Islam meeting in Lansing

**1956:** Malcolm meets Betty Sanders through the Nation of Islam and the two begin courting

**JANUARY 14, 1958:** Malcolm and Betty are married in Lansing

1960

**1962:** Malcolm meets Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali) in Detroit.

**JANUARY 23, 1963:** Malcolm X gives a speech at Michigan State University in the Erickson Kiva

**1963:** Malcolm and his siblings arrange for Louise Little to be released from the mental hospital

**OCTOBER 22, 1963:**  
Malcolm X gives a speech at Wayne State University in Detroit.



© Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University

**NOVEMBER 10, 1963:**  
Malcolm X delivers his "Message to the Grassroots" speech at King Solomon Baptist Church in Detroit.

**1964:** Malcolm ends his relationship with the NOI and journeys to Mecca on a holy pilgrimage



1964. © Library of Congress

**FEBRUARY 14, 1965:**  
Malcolm's home in East Elmhurst, NY is firebombed

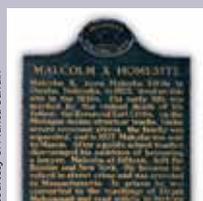
**FEBRUARY 21, 1965:**  
Malcolm is shot and killed at the Audubon Ballroom in Manhattan.

**FEBRUARY 27, 1965:**  
Malcolm X's funeral attracts over 1,500 mourners

**SEPTEMBER 1965:** Twin daughters Malikah and Malaak are born and named in their father's honor

1970-2017

**1975:** A historic site marker is set up at the location of Malcolm X's childhood home



Courtesy of Marisa Sundin

**1995:** El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz Academy in South Lansing is named after Malcolm X



Malik El-Shabazz Academy

**2003:** A portrait mural of Malcolm X located in Mason High School is dedicated to him in 2003



Kirstin McConnell

**2011:** A 3-mile stretch of Main Street in Lansing is officially renamed Malcolm X Street



Stephanie Archambeau

**2016:** Students at Lansing Community College and Reach Art Studio collaborated on creating a life-size mosaic statue of Malcolm X; it remained on display in the Lansing Community College library through February of 2017 before being permanently installed at El-Shabazz Academy in March



Ken Palmer/Lansing State Journal

## MALCOLM'S LANSING



Courtesy of Station Hill Press

“

I am Malcolm.  
I am Malcolm Little.  
I am my father's son. But to be my father's  
son means that they will always come for me.  
They will always come for me, and I will  
always succumb.”

-X: A Novel

*X: A Novel* explores Malcolm X's formative years in Michigan, the life experiences that molded him into one of the most prominent leaders of the twentieth century. Moving to Lansing in 1929, the Little family had a grim beginning in their new city. The first family home in the north Lansing Westmont Subdivision was burned to the ground by local racists. In his autobiography, Malcolm described the night of the fire as his first vivid memory, awakening “into a frightening confusion of pistol shots and shouting and smoke and flames.”

After the fire, the Little family moved to the eastside of Lansing where they were victims of further harassment before finally building and settling in a new house in what was then rural south Lansing. Sadly, not long after tragedy struck again for the Little family when on the night of September 28, 1931, Earl Little was found dead on the trolley tracks on the eastside of Lansing. Earl Little's death was ruled an accident but inconsistencies with the crime scene led many to believe that he was murdered by the white supremacist group the Black Legion.

As portrayed in *X: A Novel* the Little family fought determinedly, during the heart of the Great Depression, to remain together as a family. Despite their best efforts, however, the struggle was too great and in 1939 Malcolm's mother, Louise Little, was sent to the Kalamazoo State Hospital where she would spend

the next twenty-four years of her life. The Little family was broken apart and Malcolm ended up in a detention home in nearby Mason, Michigan.

At Mason High School Malcolm excelled academically, was at the top of his eighth grade class, and was nominated class president. Despite his success, while in Mason Malcolm had what he described in his autobiography as “the first major turning point of my life.” The pivotal moment is recounted in *X: A Novel*, when Malcolm tells his favorite teacher his aspirations and is in return told to stop dreaming.

**“I suppose I've been thinking I'd like to be a lawyer.” (said Malcolm)... Mr Ostrowski's reddish cheeks puffed outward as he smiled. “Now, Malcom,” he said, “you know that's not likely to happen.”**

-X: A NOVEL

**LIFE DURING THE DEPRESSION**

The Little's struggle to remain together as a family was made all but impossible with the onset of the Great Depression. Across the country steady jobs were becoming nonexistent and for many families putting food on the table was a daily struggle. In his autobiography, Malcolm recalls “times when there wasn't even a nickel and we would be so hungry we were dizzy.”



Station Hill Press



Wikimedia Commons

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**HOW?**

**In *X: A Novel*, how does Malcolm's relationship with his family change over time?**

**Have you ever had a teacher or authority figure dismiss your ambitions? How did it make you feel?**

**A TOUR OF MALCOLM'S LANSING:**

After years of neglect, more recently efforts have been made to recognize Malcolm X's legacy in his hometown of Lansing. In 2015, Michigan State University students created the website *Malcolm's Lansing*, a comprehensive geographical exploration of Malcolm's time and legacy in mid-Michigan. The website is an excellent way to tour Malcolm's hometown on the Internet:

[projects.leadr.msu.edu/malcolmxinlansing](http://projects.leadr.msu.edu/malcolmxinlansing)



Courtesy of Menica Sunadin

“The website “Malcolm X in Lansing” was created in the Fall of 2015 by a class at Michigan State University's Residential College in the Arts and Humanities (RCAH) in conjunction with MSU's LEADR Lab and the digital humanities resources of the MSU Library. Correspondence can be directed to RCAH's John Aerni-Flessner. AerniFL1@msu.edu.”



Courtesy of Kalamazoo Public Library

The Kalamazoo Psychiatric Hospital where Louise Little was admitted in 1939.

Malcolm Little (top row, center) pictured in a class photo in Lansing, MI.

## A FAMILY OF ACTIVISTS



© Library of Congress

“

Pay attention, Malcolm. One day you will preach and teach like I do.”

—X: *A Novel*

Riding along in his father's car to and from meetings across mid-Michigan, young Malcolm was exposed to social advocacy at a very young age. As *X: A Novel* illustrates, Malcolm X came from a family of strong leaders and activists. Louise and Earl Little met in Montreal and were both active participants in that city's nascent chapter of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Their work with the organization led them to Omaha, Nebraska where they were tasked with building a new UNIA division. In Lansing, the Little's continued their work for the organization with Earl holding meetings throughout the region.

**“Mom was always teaching us new things, telling us stories that we repeated to one another until we knew them by heart.”**

—X: *A NOVEL*

Many of the Little family followed Earl and Louise's footsteps as leaders and activists in their own right. It was Malcolm's siblings that first introduced him to Islam and the teachings of the Nation of Islam (NOI). Malcolm's oldest brother, Wilfred, would serve as a NOI minister in Detroit and his brother, Philbert, was a NOI minister in Lansing. Malcolm's half-sister, Ella Collins, was also a distinguished civil rights leader and played a pivotal role in Malcolm's life. As portrayed in *X: A Novel*, Ella was an early role model for Malcolm and she would continue to play a major role throughout his life and career. After his death, Ella took over Malcolm's recently founded Organization of Afro-American Unity and would later go on to found the Sarah A. Little School of Preparatory Arts in Boston.



Wikimedia Commons: Marcus Garvey

Jamaican Cent Note

### Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association



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Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey was an activist and political leader who came to prominence in the United States around 1916. Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) strove for racial uplift by creating economic ventures

and political and social freedom for black citizens globally. Centered in Harlem, at its peak the UNIA, through the hard work of dedicated supporters like Earl and Louise Little, claimed thousands of local chapters throughout the world.

UNIA established

**700**

branches in 38 states  
by the early 1920s.

NATIONALHUMANITIESCENTER.ORG

**“Liberate the minds of men and ultimately you will liberate the bodies of men.”** MARCUS GARVEY

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

##### HOW?

**How do the words, “Up, up you mighty race?” impact Malcolm's activist beliefs later in life?**

**How do you think Earl Little would have responded to his son's beliefs throughout his life? Would he approve or disapprove of Malcolm's actions? Why?**

**“His (Malcolm's) parents were activists. He had that legacy within his family, but he was pulled from them by the forces of the world.”**

KEKLA MAGOON, *DIVERSITY IN YA*

# SECRET SOCIETY OF THE BLACK LEGION



Wikimedia Commons

“

Hooey may look like romance and adventure in the moonlight, but it always looks like hooey when you bring it out in the daylight.”

Detroit Free Press, *Epitaph after the death of Black Legion leader, Dayton Dean, 1960*

Stemming from the many rapid changes occurring in the United States, the 1920s saw the once nearly defunct Ku Klux Klan swell its membership numbers into the millions. The epicenter of activity of the re-emerged Klan shifted from the South to other parts of the country, with a particularly large presence in the Midwest. The contemporary incarnation of the Klan espoused policies of racial hatred, xenophobia, and religious prejudice towards non-Protestants and often used terror and violence to punctuate their message of white supremacy.

Earl and Louise's work for the UNIA coincided directly with the rise of the Klan, creating a very real danger that made their efforts all the more impressive. Beginning in Omaha, the Little's were constantly harassed by these hate groups. In 1925, while Earl was away on UNIA work in Nebraska, a large group of Klan members converged on the Little home demanding of Louise that Earl come out of the house. Learning of his absence, the members smashed all

of the windows out of the family's home before leaving. The constant harassment from white supremacist groups is one of the primary reasons why Earl Little's death remains so controversial with many people at the time believing it was carried out by the rapidly growing vigilante network of the Black Legion.

## THE BLACK LEGION IN MICHIGAN

In Michigan, as the Great Depression was setting in, a highly secretive offshoot of the Klan called the Black Legion began recruiting, meeting, and carrying out a reign of terror. Originally established in Ohio, by the early-1930s the group had a strong foothold in Michigan. Detroit was a hotbed for the Black Legion and it is

# BLACK LEGION

Starring  
Humphrey Bogart

Movie Drama 1937

*In the late-1930s, the activities of the Black Legion became part of popular culture including depictions in book, radio, and film. The most famous portrayal, the Hollywood picture *The Black Legion*, starred Humphrey Bogart in a fictionalized account of the murder that exposed the organization.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### WHAT? HOW?

**Early in the story Malcolm says “I am my father’s son. But to be my father’s son means that they will always come for me” (page 5). What does he mean by this? How does this statement foreshadow the difficulties he faces?**

**What factors do you think contributed to the Black Legion forming such a strong membership base in the Michigan?**

estimated that at their height the group had 20,000-30,000 members across the state.

Unlike the exceedingly ceremonial and very public Klan, the Black Legion was highly secretive and in turn more extreme in their use of violence and terror against African-Americans, immigrants, and religious minorities in the rapidly urbanizing cities of the Midwest. Members included law enforcement, union members, and politicians recruited through clandestine meetings and often coercion. Because of the guarded nature of the organization they were able to

operate with impunity for a number of years. In 1936, when several Black Legion members were convicted for the murder of Charles Poole, the organization began to unravel and the full extent of the Legion's activities were displayed to a shocked public.

### FURTHER READING:

- *Terror in the City of Champions: Murder, Baseball, and the Secret Society that Shocked Depression-Era Detroit* (2016), Tom Stanton



Wikimedia Commons

Detroit Police officers display the outfits of the Black Legion.

### THE BLACK LEGION

A splinter group of the Ku Klux Klan, Black Legionnaires dressed in black hooded robes and pirate hats, adorned with skull and crossbones. Their enemy list included all immigrants, blacks, Jews, Catholics, nontraditional Protestant faiths, labor unions, farm cooperatives and various fraternal groups.



Wikimedia Commons

“Papa only knew how to stand up, how to  
**never bow down**  
Mom, too. So the white world sliced and diced them.”

-X: A Novel

## MALCOLM AFTER

**X: A NOVEL**

“

I'm not meant to be part of the things that are wrong with the world, but neither am I meant to run from them. I'm meant to fight against them. I can't hold my own in the ring, but out in the world, I do know how to fight, With Words. With Truth.”

-X: *A Novel*

© Library of Congress

*X: A Novel* concludes with Malcolm X at the beginning of the path that would establish him as a globally recognized leader and human rights activist. Malcolm was released from prison in 1952 and soon after became a minister with the Nation of Islam (NOI). Malcolm was with the NOI for over ten years, becoming the organization's most prominent spokesman and prolific recruiter.



Wikimedia Commons

**Hajj to Mecca**

*The hajj is a mandatory religious pilgrimage to Mecca, the holiest city of Islam, that must be carried out at least once in a Muslim's lifetime for those that are physically and financially able.*

After a highly controversial separation from the NOI in 1964, Malcolm's life path took yet another turn. Malcolm made the hajj to Mecca, converted to Sunni Islam, and began travelling extensively throughout the African continent meeting with numerous world leaders. Malcolm's conversion and travels were reflected in his work as he broadened his focus to a campaign of human rights and equality for all. Sadly his life was taken by assassins on February 21, 1965 before he could carry out the next phase of his work.

**“Malcolm focused on raising the attention of the most overlooked, downgraded members of society—using himself as a model for the potential to turn one's life around.”**

-X: *A NOVEL***Learn More****BOOKS**

*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965) by Malcolm X with the assistance of Alex Haley

*Growing Up X: A Memoir by the Daughter of Malcolm X* (2003), Ilyasah Shabazz with Kim McLarin

*By Any Means Necessary* (1992), Malcolm X  
-A collection of speeches and writings by Malcolm X

*Malcolm X's Michigan Worldview: An Exemplar for Contemporary Black Studies* (2015), edited by Rita Kiki Edozie and Curtis Stokes

*Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary* (1993), Walter Dean Myers  
-A biography of Malcolm X for younger readers

**FILM**

Malcolm X (1992) Directed by Spike Lee

**DOCUMENTARIES**

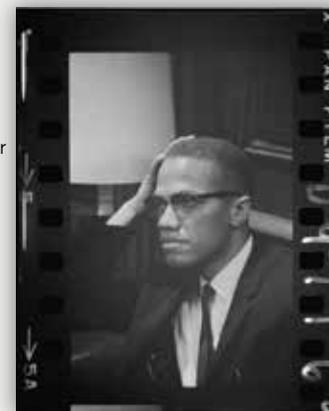
Malcolm X: Make it Plain (1994)

Malcolm X (1972)

**WEBSITES**

Malcolm's Lansing: [www.projects.leadr.msu.edu/malcolmxinlansing](http://www.projects.leadr.msu.edu/malcolmxinlansing)

Malcolm X: [www.malcolmx.com](http://www.malcolmx.com)



1964 Malcolm X waits at Martin Luther King press conference

© Library of Congress

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS****WHAT?**

**What kind of advice do you think older Malcolm would give to his younger self?**

**In what ways did *X: A Novel* help to reshape your views on Malcolm X as a historical figure?**

**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. AND MALCOLM**

*Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. meet outside a press conference in Washington, DC in March of 1964, the only in-person meeting between the two monumental leaders. Despite contrasting views and tactics, it is thought that the two leaders were working towards a middle-ground towards the end of Malcolm's life.*



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