

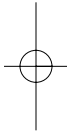
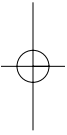
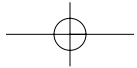
The Angriest Black Man In America

MALCOLM X (May 19, 1925–Feb. 21, 1965)

HIS FAME: One of the greatest activists and black leaders of the twentieth century, Malcolm X rose from a small-time pimp, drug dealer and burglar to becoming a leader of the Nation of Islam and Pan-African spokesman. Famous as “the angriest black man in America” at the time of his assassination in 1965, he is now remembered as perhaps the most enduring symbol of black nationalism.

HIS PERSON: Characterized by the massive shifts and identity overhauls, Malcolm X’s life was a study in extremes. Born Malcolm Little to a Baptist preacher and follower of Marcus





Garvey, he survived the murder of his father by whites and the subsequent insanity of his mother, fostering an extreme hatred of white society. In order to survive, Malcolm Little became “Detroit Red,” a street hustler, drug dealer and racketeer. The “Red” moniker came from Malcolm’s hair, which carried a reddish tinge—his maternal grandfather was white, which meant that Malcolm also had a light-skinned complexion, a fact that he was initially proud of but later grew to passionately resent. Sent to Massachusetts State Prison in 1946 for burglary, he subsequently converted to the Nation of Islam and found a surrogate father in the movement’s leader, Elijah Muhammad. After prison he changed his name to Malcolm X and by the sixties had become the most prominent leader of the movement after his mentor. In 1964, when it was revealed that Elijah Muhammad indulged in multiple extramarital affairs, despite the fact that such affairs were expressly forbidden by the Nation of Islam, Malcolm left the movement and founded Muslim Mosque, Inc., emphasizing black nationalism instead of the Islamic unity preferred by the Nation of Islam. During and after pilgrimages to both Mecca and Africa, Malcolm laid the groundwork for international pan-African connections, founding the Organization for Afro-American Unity. Always a fiery, vitriolic speaker, Malcolm was tagged early by the FBI as a radical and classified as mentally ill. After his split with the Nation of Islam, he also made violent enemies within the movement. On February 21, 1965, Malcolm was shot 16 times in the chest at the Audubon Ballroom in Manhattan; three men were charged and convicted.

SEX LIFE: Malcolm’s iconic autobiography was written as object lesson of how he learned from hard life lessons; how he overcame a lowly street life consorting with pimps, living with prostitutes, selling drugs and numbers and other mob rackets. After having a lengthy affair with a married white woman, Malcolm came to believe it was the result of self-hatred of his own black skin, and transformed himself into an advocate of Islam as a result.

Malcolm married Betty Sanders (who subsequently took his last name of X) in Lansing, Michigan, in 1958. The marriage produced six daughters, including twins who were born after Malcolm’s death. According to a biography published in 1991, Bruce Perry’s *Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America*, Malcolm worked as a male prostitute from the age of 20, and at one point was employed as a butler for William Paul Lennon, a rich bachelor in Boston, who he was also paid to sprinkle with talcum powder and then service, giving him hand relief until orgasm. Friends have related many stories of Malcolm’s youthful sexual encounters, including with a local boy he discovered masturbating and then ordered to give him a handjob before performing oral sex on him, as well as a transvestite named Willie Mae with whom he had an affair in Flint, Michigan. Biographer Bruce Perry surmises that his homosexual activities may have functioned as a release valve, without the risk of becoming overly entangled with women, which the young man may have viewed as making him that much less effective. It is this discomfort with