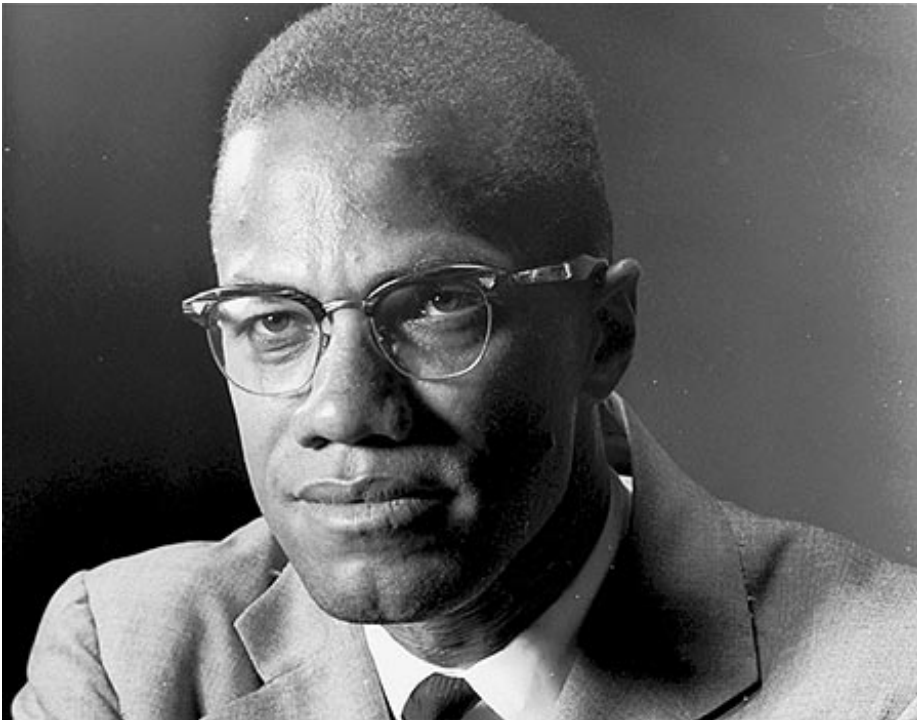


Telling out story: our activism ancestors

Contributed by [Abigail Hurwitz](#)

Source:



Malcolm X, the activist and outspoken public voice of the Black Muslim faith, urged followers to defend themselves against white aggression “by any means necessary.” Born Malcolm Little, he changed his last name to X to signify his rejection of his “slave” name. Charismatic and eloquent, Malcolm became an influential leader of the Nation of Islam, which sought to encourage and enfranchise disadvantaged young blacks searching for confidence in segregated America. Malcolm lost his parents at a young age, had little schooling and grew into a life of crime. He ended up in prison and spent his time there reading and educating himself about the world. After Malcolm X’s death in 1965, his bestselling book *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* popularized his ideas, particularly among black youth, and laid the foundation for the Black Power movement of the late 1960s and 1970s.