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2025  
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EDITION

# HISTORICAL ICONS





# From the editor

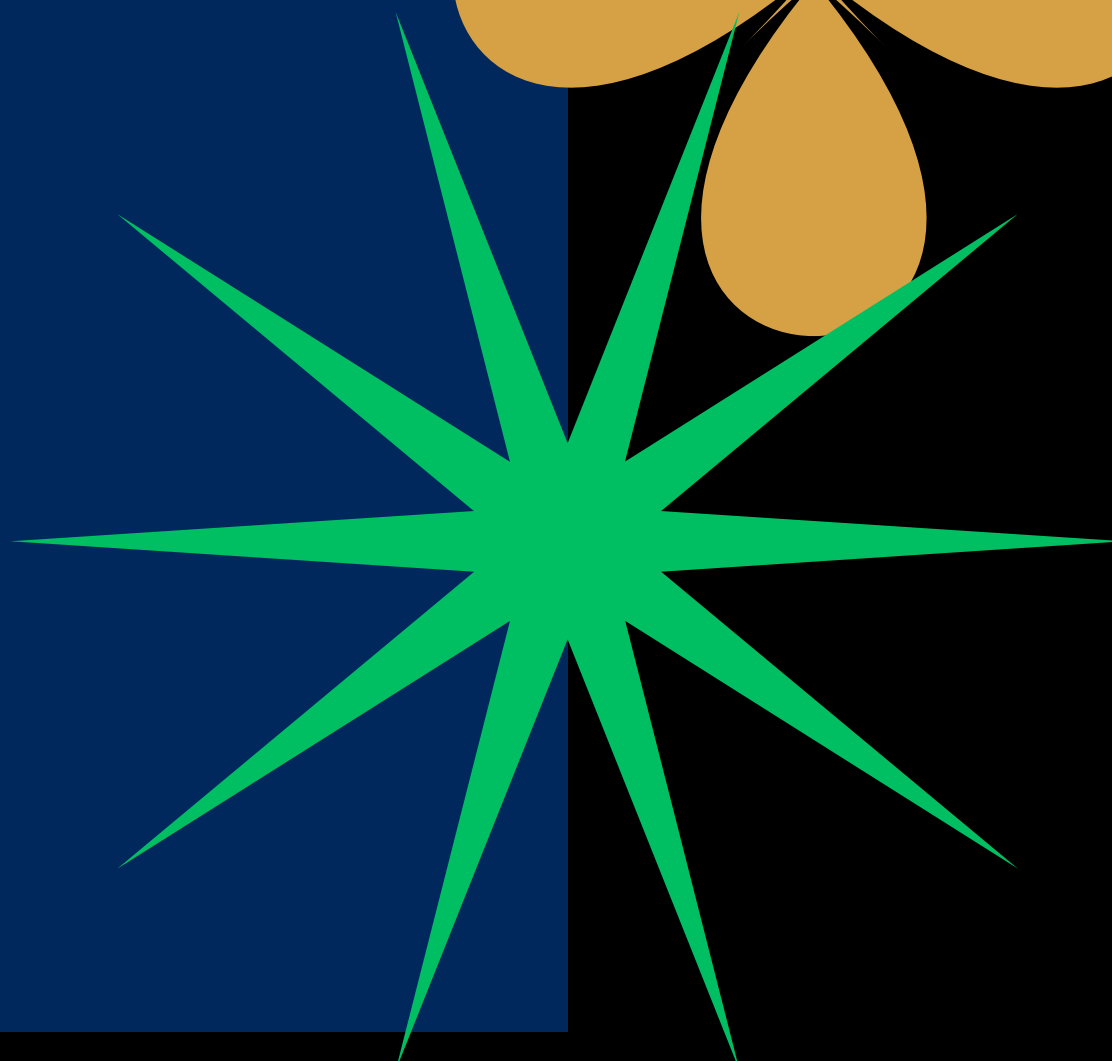
History is shaped by individuals—by their thoughts, actions, ambitions, and the legacies they leave behind. In this edition of HuMag, we delve into the lives of six figures who, for better or worse, left an indelible mark on the world. From emperors to revolutionaries, each of these individuals shaped the course of history, influencing the societies we live in today.

But what does it mean to be 'iconic'? Does it mean leading millions toward a new vision? Challenging the status quo? Changing the course of a nation's fate? Many of the figures in this edition fit these descriptions—Mahatma Gandhi led India to independence through nonviolent resistance; Qin Shi Huang unified China and laid the foundations of an empire. Yet, history is rarely black and white. For every moment of greatness, there is often controversy. Napoleon Bonaparte was a military genius who reshaped Europe, but was also a conqueror whose ambitions led to war. Benito Mussolini ignited nationalist fervor but also introduced one of history's most oppressive regimes. Malcolm X, a fierce advocate for black empowerment, evolved from a divisive figure to a symbol of transformation and resistance.

This issue challenges us to think critically about the figures we often revere or condemn. What makes someone 'great'? Can a leader's achievements ever be separated from their flaws? By exploring these historical icons, we hope to foster a deeper understanding of the complexities of leadership, power, and legacy.

We hope you enjoy reading!

Sincerely,  
Sara T.



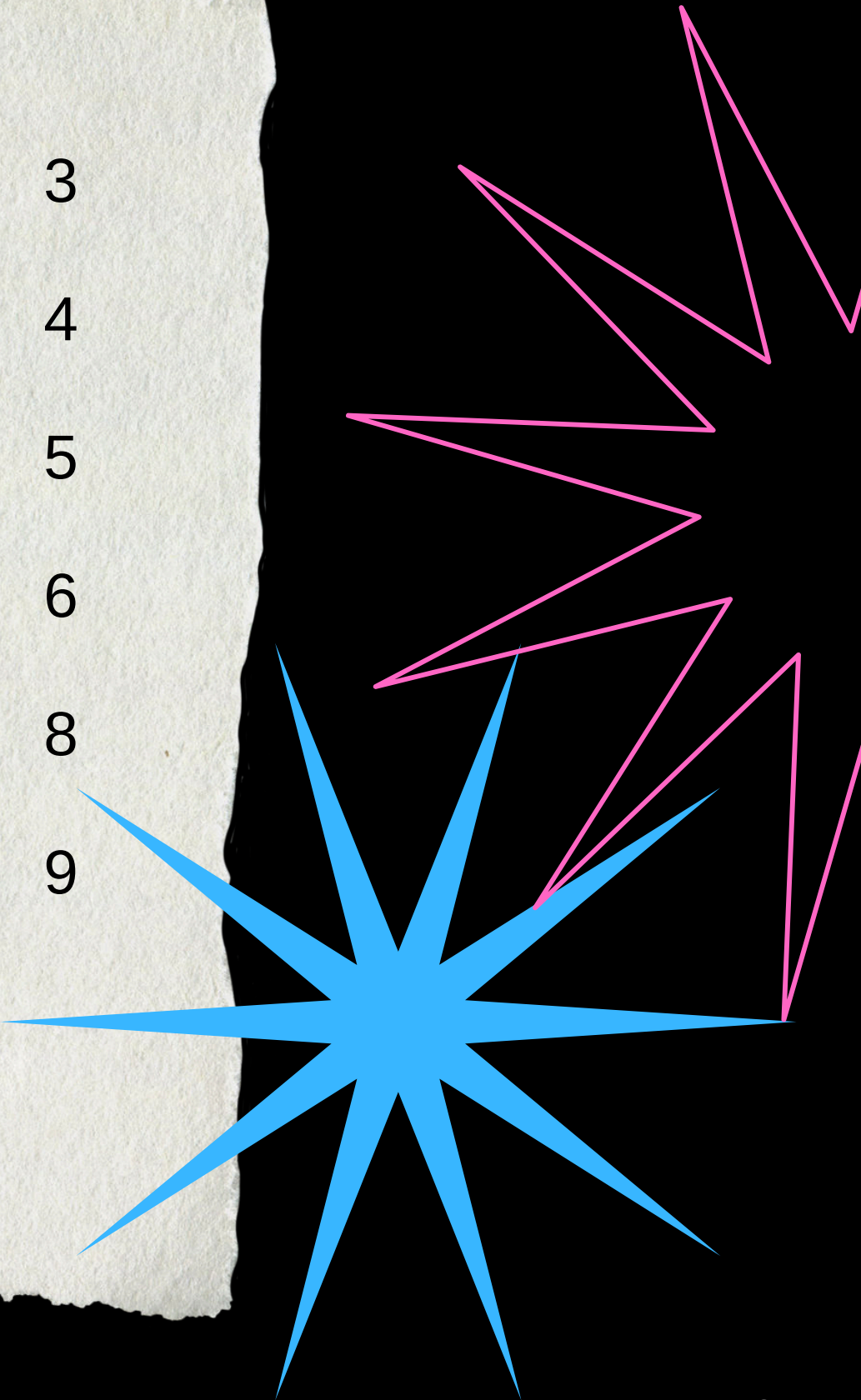




Malcolm X addressing a rally at Lenox Avenue and 115th Street in Harlem. New York, 29 June 1963 (Source: Swann Galleries)

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# QIN SHI HUANG

## The tyrant who unified an empire

By Ariel G.

Qin Shi Huang was born on the 18th of February 259 BC, as the son of King Zhuang Xiang of the Qin Dynasty. At the age of 13, he was crowned king following his father's untimely death and later became China's first Emperor. After assuming full control of the country at the age of 22, he led a powerful army to conquer the six other kingdoms, unifying China in 221 BC and ending the constant wars between them. Due to his unification of China, Qin Shi Huang was referred to as "The King Where It All Began," "King of Men," and "The Greatest King."

### Positive Impacts of the Qin Emperor

Qin Shi Huang was an autocratic ruler with absolute power. Before his reign, different regions of China had their own languages, coin systems, and laws. To centralise authority under his control, he implemented various reforms. For example, he reduced the influence of the lords by abolishing the feudal system, which divided society into three categories—emperors, nobles, and commoners—often leading to corruption.

Additionally, Qin Shi Huang standardised key aspects of Chinese society. He introduced a uniform currency system, which facilitated trade and economic stability. He also reformed the writing system by standardising the Chinese script, improving communication and further unifying the nation.

### The Great Wall of China

Qin Shi Huang's strict rule was evident in various ways, one of which was his ambitious plan to build a massive wall for national defence. After unifying China, he initiated the construction of "Wan Li Chang Cheng," known today as the Great Wall of China. This was a



*Terracotta Army: The Dead Army of Qin Shi Huang (Source: Natural Gemstone Jewellery Blog)*

series of walls and fortifications that would continue to be built by later dynasties over the next 2,000 years. To construct the wall, he mobilised massive armies of soldiers and workers, using harsh methods to force millions of Chinese people to provide labour and resources. Although the Great Wall was not fully completed until the Han Dynasty, by the end of the Qin Dynasty, it already stretched approximately 5,000 kilometres and was regarded as a great achievement in Chinese history.

### The Qin Emperor's Tomb (Mausoleum)

The tomb of Qin Shi Huang is one of China's most famous historical sites, located in the Lintong District of Xi'an. It was first discovered on 29th March 1974 by a farmer named Yang Zhifa while digging a well.

The mausoleum is renowned not only for the fascinating figure of Emperor Qin Shi Huang himself but also for the incredible Terracotta Army buried with him. This army, made entirely of clay, consists of thousands of life-sized soldiers, horses, and chariots placed underground to accompany him in the

afterlife. The figures vary in height and posture, standing about 5.8 to 6.2 feet tall, including their headdresses. Each soldier has unique facial expressions and is arranged in ranks, including officers, archers, crossbowmen, and foot soldiers.

The figures were primarily made using moulds but feature hand-carved details. Originally, they were painted in vibrant colours, with some holding real bronze weapons. Qin Shi Huang ordered the creation of these clay warriors because he believed in an afterlife and wanted to maintain his power beyond death. However, the construction of the Terracotta Army also reflects his fear of threats in the afterlife due to his ruthless rule.

### Conclusion

Although Qin Shi Huang's harsh methods demonstrated the dangers of a highly centralised government—leading to the collapse of the Qin Dynasty shortly after his death—his unification of China left a lasting legacy. His reign laid the foundation for one of the world's oldest continuous civilisations, marking a significant chapter in Chinese history.



# NAPOLÉON BONAPARTE

## Revolutionary leader or brutal dictator?

By Caspar R.

It cannot be denied that Napoleon Bonaparte, once a lowly Corsican, had an incredibly significant impact on history. His period of dominance is one steeped in the annals of time, his route to power is the stuff of legend and yet the question arises – was he the saviour of France or a brutal dictator rising out of the ashes of a revolution?

The brief nature of this article's exploration of his rise to power necessitates a main focus: legacy. We start Napoleon's journey during the gruelling French Revolution, a series of events that resulted in the mob murder of thousands, including the beheading of King Louis XVI, as well as a total death toll of between 600 thousand to 1.3 million. Whilst this anarchy was taking place across France, a Corsican artillery commander was climbing the ranks. After a victory at the siege of Toulon in 1793, Napoleon once more rose through the ranks. A few years later, he took part in the artillery defence of a royalist uprising on 5th October 1795 (known as the 13 Vendémiaire) – another victory that helped his rise to power, especially gaining him favour



*Napoleon (1769-1821) in his Study, by Paul Delaroche (Source: Students of History)*

amongst the new French government officials. From here, he led a tumultuous journey, including a famed expedition to Egypt that eventually led to the Coup of 18 Brumaire on 9th November 1799 – the fateful armed takeover that led to his rise to First Consul.

Some argue that Napoleon's time in the consulate was one of "soft despotism", control, and dictatorship, and some elements of this are true. As stated in John Denton Carter's Interpretation of the Career of Napoleon Bonaparte, 'the liberty of the press, established and consecrated as one of the rights of the nation, has been constantly subjugated to the arbitrary censorship of his police'. Napoleon's censorship of the news, closing all but 13 newspapers in Paris, and removal of independent newspapers shaped a propaganda program that promoted his image and stopped most criticism at the time. Speaking of such criticisms, many critics of his regime were expelled from the empire, and any attempts of rebellion was brutally crushed. Not only was he ruthless, but he enlisted a secret police

force led by Joseph Fouché, who prevented rebellions, detained enemies of the state (without trial) and paid informants to spy on citizens. Therefore, it is evident that Napoleon led an empire of strict control and censorship – but were there positives?

Famed for his revolutionary military leadership and hailed as one of the best tacticians in history, off of the battlefield, he had some positives during his reign. We can start with his changes to the law: his rule saw the Napoleonic code implemented into France, a system still in place today (although heavily edited). It introduced principles such as equality before the law and protection of property rights, as well as influencing law across Europe for generations to come. Furthermore, Napoleon's educational reforms laid the groundwork for a layered education system – he abolished the revolutionary schools, replacing them with secondary schools teaching reading, writing, mathematics, Latin, and more subjects. Finally, the Napoleonic reforms promoted ideas of meritocracy, weakening aristocratic privileges and seeing talent recognised.

While this hasn't covered everything that Napoleon did, both good and bad, I hope this has allowed you to now decide on the chief question of this article; was Napoleon a revolutionary leader or brutal dictator, and what do you make of his legacy?



*Napoleon Crossing the Alps (Source: HISTORY)*

### Discussion Questions

Did Napoleon's reforms truly benefit the people of France, or were they a means to consolidate his own control?

Can Napoleon's censorship and secret police be justified in the context of maintaining order, or were they fundamental violations of freedom?



# MAHATMA GANDHI

## Inspirational activist or flawed icon?

By Aurelia S.

In the early 1960s, British filmmaker Richard Attenborough began researching what would become his 1982 film, *Gandhi*. When, as part of his investigation, Attenborough asked India's prime minister how he should portray his late colleague, Jawaharlal Nehru famously responded that Mahatma Gandhi was "a great man, but he had his weaknesses, his moods and his failings". He pleaded with Attenborough not to portray Gandhi as a saint - he was "much too human".

However, to millions in the 21st century, Gandhi is not only considered "a great man" but the human personification of moral righteousness and is one of the most influential and revered activists of the 19th and 20th centuries. Gandhi is best known for his crucial role in the Indian independence movement, but his influence has stretched far beyond the confines of India. As of 2019, over 100 countries had installed statues of Gandhi, including several in very prominent locations, such as the Union Square Park in New York City. In the USA alone, a country Gandhi never even visited, there are more than two dozen statues and memorials dedicated to him. TIME Magazine's 1999 edition listed Gandhi as a finalist for the Person of the Century award, listed alongside Albert Einstein and F.D. Roosevelt.

### Gandhi's early life

Mahatma Gandhi was born in October 1869 in Porbandar, India, to a Hindu merchant caste family. His father was a local politician, and his mother was deeply religious, influencing Gandhi's later values of political non-violent protest and his focus on simplicity of living as a crucial part of his philosophy. At the age of 19, Gandhi travelled to London to study law and jurisprudence, initially struggling to adapt to British



*Mahatma Gandhi using a spinning wheel to make cloth (Source: The Hindu)*

customs but later embracing various aspects of the culture. Gandhi became deeply influenced by vegetarianism and joined the London Vegetarian Society where he engaged with like-minded progressive thinkers. After qualifying as a lawyer, he moved to South Africa in 1893 where his experience of racial discrimination had a profound impact on his interest in racial politics and on the development of his philosophy of Satyagraha (nonviolent resistance). After 20 years of fighting for Indian rights in South Africa, Gandhi finally returned to India in 1915 to lead the independence movement for which he is best known.

### Colonial rule in India and the desire for change

By the late 19th century when Gandhi began his activism, British colonial rule (officially established in 1857) had taken its toll and India was in dire need of reform. Economically, India's wealth was exploited, with ordinary citizens burdened with oppressive laws and high taxation, such as the wildly unpopular salt tax. Politically, Indians had little say in governance, and acts of protest were

frequently met with brutal crackdowns, including the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919. Finally, India was a nation divided by a strict discriminatory caste system and religious tensions.

### Gandhi's activism in the Indian Independence Movement

Mahatma Gandhi played a pivotal role in securing Indian independence largely thanks to his successful leadership of mass movements and insistent advocacy for non-violent resistance. Gandhi displayed an extraordinary flair for bringing together individuals from differing backgrounds in pursuit of a common goal, transcending the barriers of differing social classes, religions, castes, and regions to further the movement. Gandhi led campaigns such as the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920, and the Salt March of 1930 which posed a direct challenge to British authority, and his philosophy of Satyagraha (non-violent protest) inspired millions of Indians to peacefully resist British oppression. His efforts, including the Quit India Movement of 1942, finally pressured Britain into granting India independence in 1947.



Mahatma Gandhi became a figure synonymous with not only the Indian independence movement, but also with wider political activism, going on to have a lasting impact with many later activists citing him as their role model, including the likes of Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Malala Yousafzai.

### Controversy

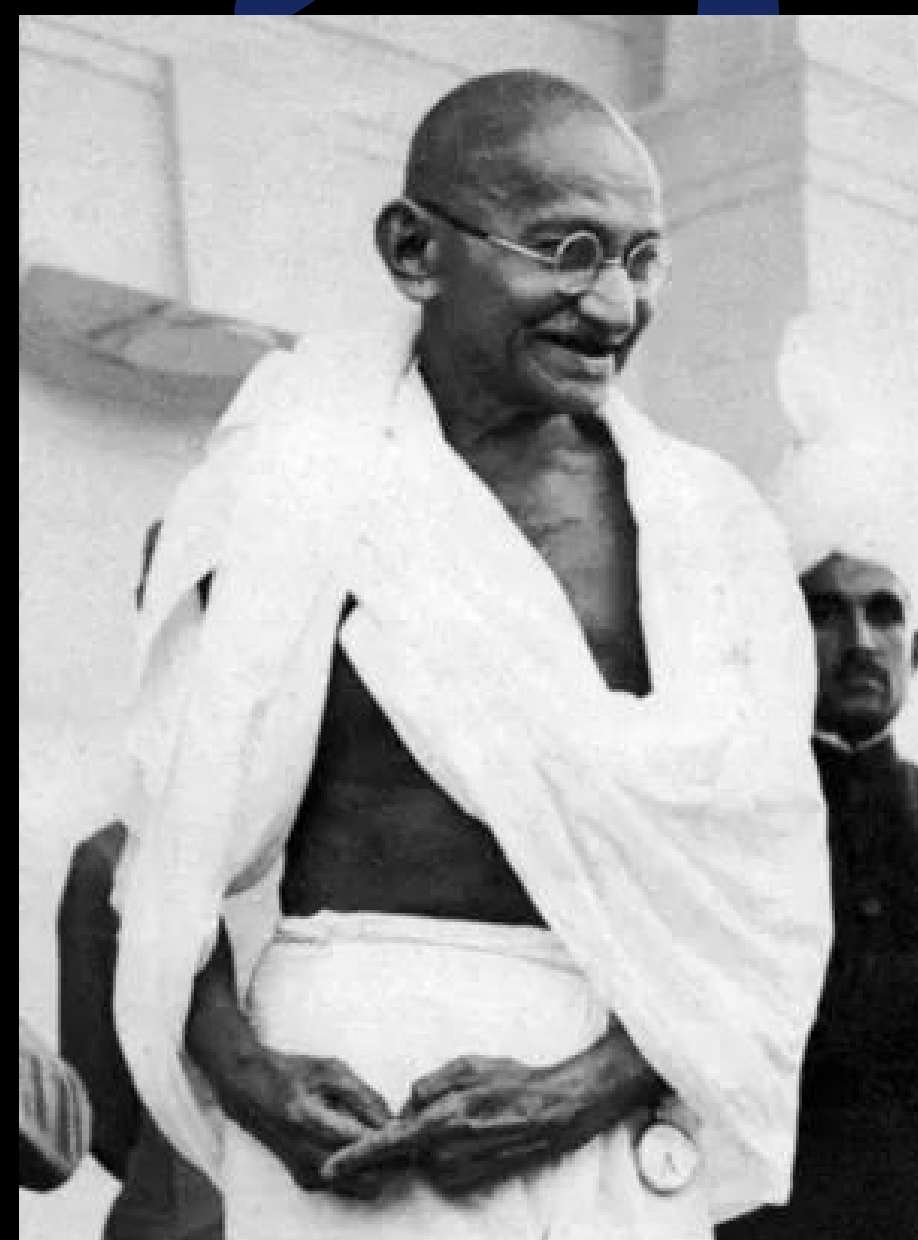
While Gandhi is celebrated for his influential work as an activist of social justice, his views were not without their share of controversy, many of which would likely be deemed as socially unacceptable in the 21st century. Firstly, during his time in South Africa, Gandhi expressed prejudiced views towards Black South Africans, referring to them as 'Kaffirs' (a derogatory term) and opposing their rights being equal to Indians'. Some historians argue that his views evolved over time, but Gandhi's early writing remain a point of contention. Gandhi also held controversial views on sex and women, harbouring strict celibacy rules on himself and his followers, including perverse experiments which included sleeping naked next to young women (including his grandniece, Manuben) in order to 'test' his self-control. Gandhi discouraged contraception and argued that women should remain chaste instead of using birth control, a view that would have been largely unpopular with modern day Western politics and

labelled old-fashioned. Additionally, some historians criticise Gandhi's aims at caste reform. One of Gandhi's main focuses was the uplifting of the social group known as the Dalits, or 'Untouchables', within Indian society through the provision of education and hygiene. Critics argue that this upheld the caste system rather than dismantling it, which should have been Gandhi's aim. Furthermore, Gandhi's relentless pursuit of Hindu-Muslim unity during a time of rising tensions can be seen as idealistic and naïve, especially in the context of the Partition of India in 1947 which divided British India into India and Pakistan.

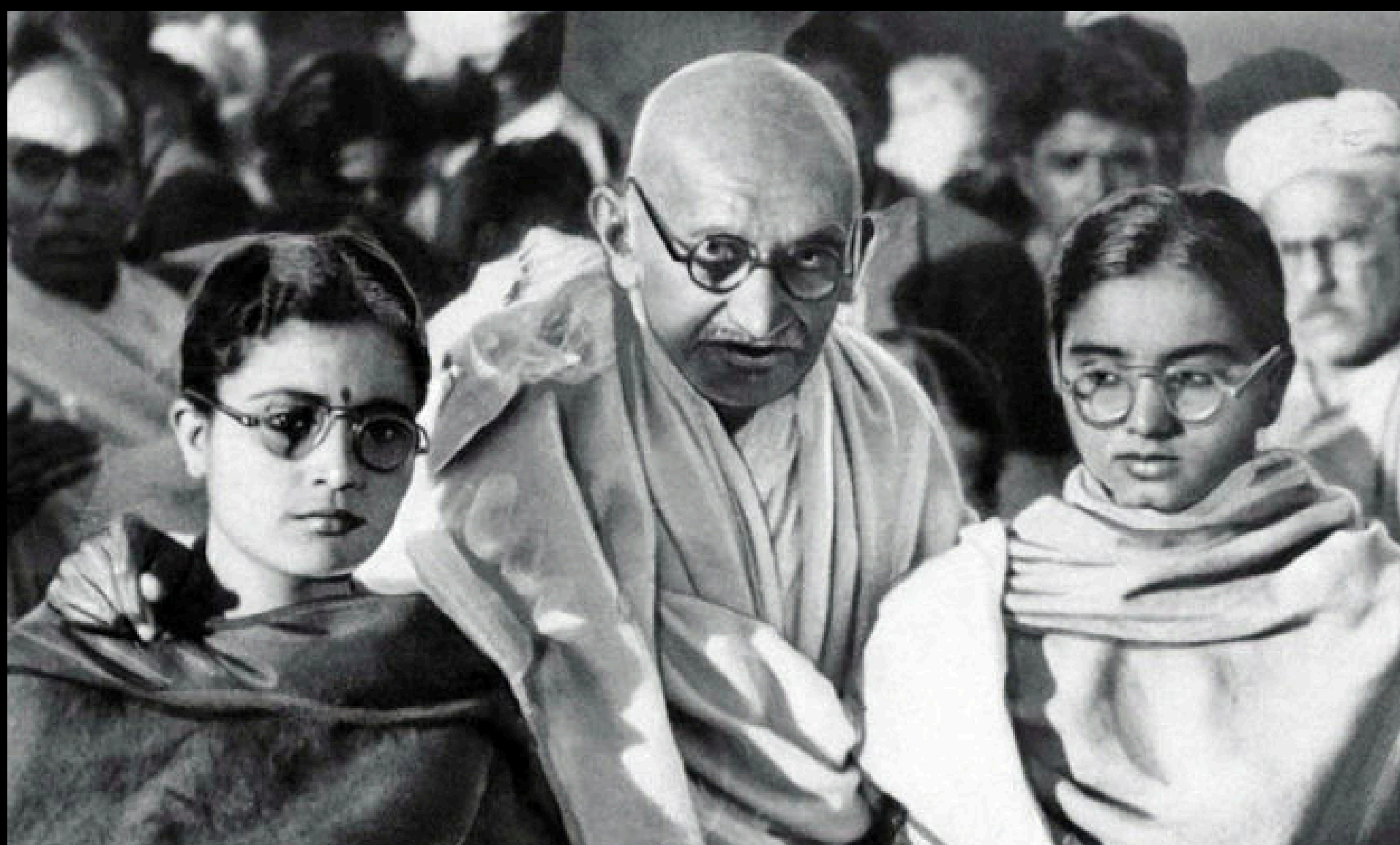
### My view

In conclusion, I believe that we should not impose modern political views and social expectations on the characters of historical figures who lived in entirely different eras, especially when considering controversial issues such as sexuality and race where the mainstream narrative is constantly evolving. Gandhi is a prime example of this; a man who is upheld for his virtue and idealism can still be found at fault, posing the question of whether it is at all realistic to expect historical figures to conform to our modern-day definition of what is 'morally right'. French noblewoman Madame Cornuel once said that "No man is a hero to his valet", and I think this phrase perfectly

captures the sentiment that all humans are inherently flawed by nature, and that this is very evident when one's character is examined closely, no matter the magnitude of their achievements. I would argue that future generations will likely judge our own beliefs and actions just as harshly as we may judge Gandhi's. Even within the space of a decade, laws can change, protest movements start, political figures rise and fall, and belief systems dismantled. As the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus once said, "Change is the only constant in life", and this applies just as much to our moral perspectives as to any other aspect of our lives.



Mahatma Gandhi (Source: Britannica)



Mahatma Gandhi with his grand-nieces, Manuben (right) and Abha (left) (Source: India Today)

### Discussion Questions

Should Gandhi be judged by today's moral standards, or should his actions be viewed within the context of his time?

If Gandhi had taken a more aggressive stance against British rule, would Indian independence have been achieved sooner?

Should controversial aspects of Gandhi's life be more widely discussed, or does this risk undermining his positive impact?



# BENJAMIN DISRAELI

## The first Jewish prime minister of the United Kingdom

By Akwasi A.

Benjamin Disraeli was one of the most reputable politicians in the history of Britain. He laid the foundations for the conservatism of the 19th and 20th centuries and revolutionised the Conservative Party from the former pragmatic ideology of Robert Peel to the refreshed ideology of One Nation Conservatism. To become the Earl of Beaconsfield, Disraeli was born to a Jewish father and Italian mother, but was baptised after his father had a dispute with his childhood synagogue.

In work as a young man, he was considered to be a failure as he lost ample amounts of money gambling on South African mining stock, debts he would not recover from until the pinnacle of his political career. Disraeli also faltered in his attempt to become a tabloid journalist as his involvement in the Representative was an utter disaster. In conjunction with these ventures, he was a keen writer and published several books which were often based on real life experience.

A failure in journalism and mass amounts of debt, Disraeli looked to politics as his final attempt to mount a resurgence – he stood to become a member of parliament for

Buckinghamshire in 1832, High Wycombe twice in 1832 and once in 1835, coming up short every time. Despite this, Disraeli showed rigour and, at the fifth attempt, was elected as the member for Maidstone in 1837. Never one to use a sentence when a paragraph was due, his lengthy maiden speech was shouted down by surrounding parliamentarians – succumbing to the embarrassment his diatribe had caused, Disraeli ended the speech by saying, “I will sit down now, but the time will come when you will hear me.”

Snubbed as a member of Robert Peel's parliament in 1841, Disraeli became a persistent agitator of his party's ideology while in government, describing their policy base as mundane and out of touch with the affairs of the British people at the time. This led to Disraeli inspiring and leading a young group of Conservative MPs who were nicknamed ‘Young England’ which lobbied policies of an aristocratic, idealistic nature. This group included Alexander Baillie-Cochrane (to become Baron Lamington), George Smythe (to become Viscount Strangford), Lord John Manners (to become the Duke of Rutland), and Henry Thomas Hope – all alumni of both Eton College and Cambridge University, exemplifying the leadership qualities of Disraeli as he was the only member who had not attended private school nor university.

In 1852, he became chancellor of the exchequer under Lord Derby. However, in December of that year, Disraeli's budget was poorly received, leading to the Conservatives being ousted by William Gladstone and the Liberals. After years of alternating between minority governments and opposition, Disraeli became prime minister following

### Discussion Questions

Did Disraeli's perseverance in politics reflect true leadership qualities, or was it simply political opportunism?

To what extent did Disraeli's personal relationship with Queen Victoria influence his success as a leader?

Lord Derby's retirement. Upon assuming the role, he famously declared, "I have climbed to the top of the greasy pole." Disraeli lost to Gladstone in an election the same year and set a precedent for the prime minister resigning after losing an election (but before Parliament met once again). Over the coming years, the two statesmen would duel at the dispatch box, polarising the positions of their parties. Disraeli strongly defended the monarchy and the House of Lords as pillars of political stability, opposing what he saw as radical liberal reforms. His second premiership as prime minister began in 1874 as the Conservatives won a stable majority over the Liberals. Able to leverage his personal relationship with Queen Victoria, who had disliked Gladstone, Disraeli's administration was a success. During his time in the government, Disraeli passed landmark reforms such as the Public Health Act and the Climbing Boys Act. As the weight of his old age settled upon him, the queen offered him a peerage that he may govern from the House of Lords, making him the Earl of Beaconsfield in 1878. From this time on, foreign policy became his main issue, notably the Eastern Question. In 1880, Gladstone returned and won another election over Disraeli.

A year later, Benjamin Disraeli died of bronchitis. The Queen came days after his burial to lay a wreath at the tomb of her favourite prime minister.



A portrait of Disraeli as a young man by Francis Grant (Source: National Trust Images)



# BENITO MUSSOLINI

## Should his fascist monuments be preserved or erased from Italy's streets?

By Pietro M.



Benito Mussolini (Source: Britannica)

The Italian peninsula has experienced many complications and controversies throughout its history, from the Roman Empire to the Renaissance, Austrian invasions, and finally, its unique integration. However, the one period in modern history that surely affects the present day the most is Mussolini's fascist dictatorship.

Born in the heart of Emilia Romagna and coming from humble beginnings, Benito Mussolini excelled in his young career as both a journalist and a politician. The expression of his socialist ideology swiftly became popular in northern Italy at the beginning of the 1900s. During the outbreak of the First World War, Mussolini sided with the neutralists. He wanted to change the reputation of his own party by writing a controversial centrist piece, however the assembly of the socialist party rejected this and he then got expelled from the party. In 1919, he founded the 'Fasci di Combattimento' which then developed into Fascism. The key values he promoted included extreme nationalism, the use of violence to defend and promote political views, and a deep

aversion to the democratic state. Supported by a large part of the population, he rose to power as a result of the 'March on Rome' and just a week later was given the direct orders by the King to form a new government.

Mussolini is therefore considered the founder of fascism and right-wing extremism. Although Italy was initially developing into a stronger country with innovative infrastructure, booming industry, and safer cities, Mussolini's rise to power through extreme acts of violence put common values such as freedom and democracy at risk. As a result, Mussolini's 21-year dictatorship left a lasting trauma on the Italian population, which persists to this day.

All of the most fascinating masterpieces built during the era of Fascism can still be found in Italy today. From Milan's train station to the 'Eur' neighbourhood to Rome's unique 'Foro Italico', nothing has ever been replaced. Is it controversial to still have Fascist architecture in our cities?

Italy's political divide is still as separate

and brutal as ever, from hard left protests against the current government to neofascist gatherings in Brescia's centre and in Rome's outskirts. Regardless of political beliefs, Fascist architecture and infrastructure are extremely useful to Italy in modern day. The Italian government would have to spend on substituting many of our sport facilities, train stations, justice buildings and an entire Roman neighbourhood. However, should decorations and art work, which have no real use, be kept on Italian streets?

There are two main views. On one hand, a segment of the Italian population argue that the Fascist epoque was part of our past and our roots, just like the Roman empire. Therefore, they believe that just like the colosseum, all Fascist monuments should still be kept and looked after, protecting the memory of twenty years of Italian history. On the other hand, many Italians may feel that they would prefer to 'erase' the presence of a fascist dictatorship from our history. Such trauma caused by this period has essentially caused many to want to forget this part of our past. As a result, they feel more inclined to favour removing such monuments from our streets.



Foro Italico (Source: Wikimedia Commons)



# MALCOLM X

## How did Malcolm Little become Malcolm X?

By Sara T.

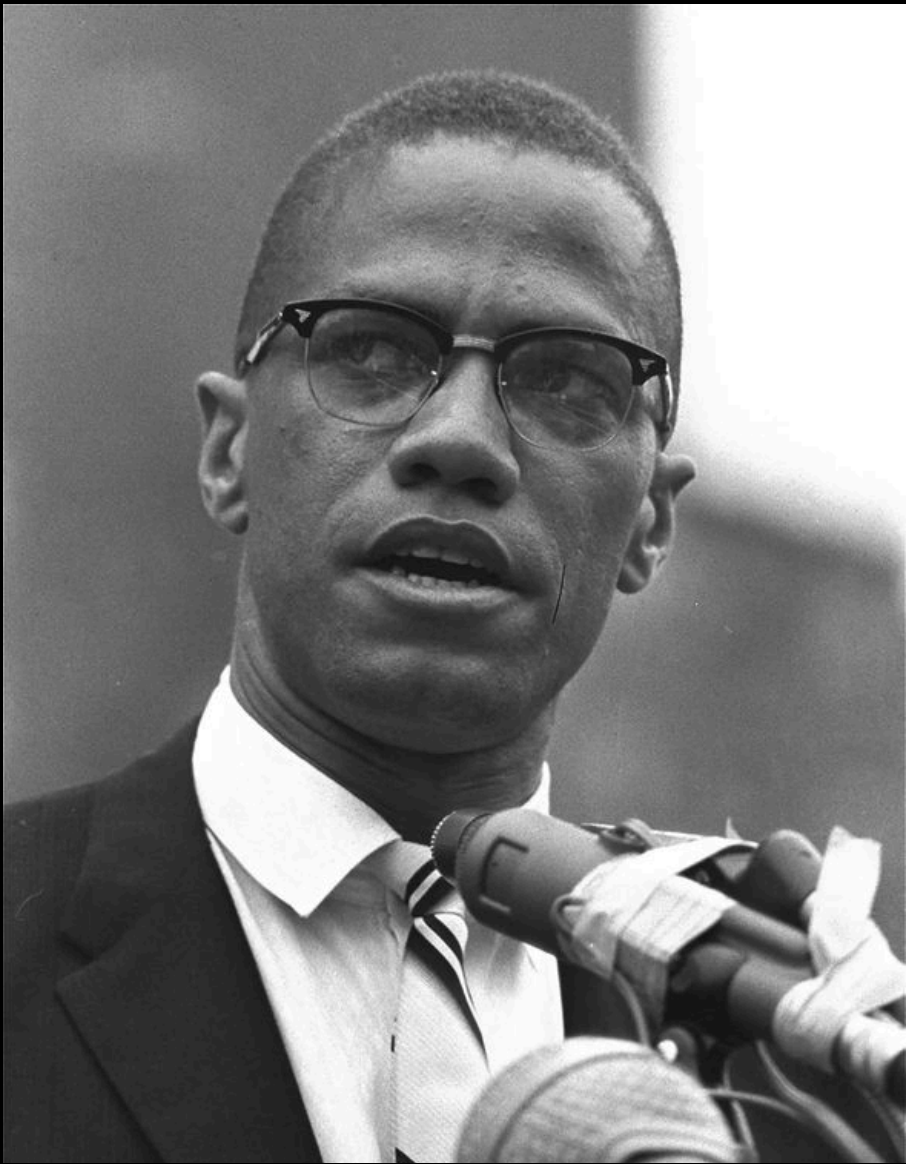
Few figures in modern history have undergone a transformation as radical and profound as Malcolm X. Born as Malcolm Little in 1925, he would rise from a troubled past of crime and imprisonment to become one of the most influential voices in the fight for black liberation. Until today, Malcolm X is hailed revolutionary in America; he was the spokesperson for the Nation of Islam (NOI) for 12 years, and a vocal advocate for black empowerment in the USA. His journey was not just one of personal growth, but of ideological evolution—one that remains both inspiring and controversial. How does a man transition from a street hustler to a civil rights icon? And can the complexities of his past ever be separated from the power of his legacy?

### A Troubled Beginning

Malcolm Little’s early life was marred by hardship and tragedy. His father, Earl Little, was a Baptist minister who preached black unity and political self-determination, as well as an outspoken supporter of Marcus Garvey’s Pan-African movement. This caught the attention of the Ku Klux Klan, of whom Malcolm X believed were responsible for his death in 1931. However, the official ruling by the Lansing coroner stated that he died accidentally after being struck by a streetcar. His mother,



Malcolm X mugshot, 1946 (Source: The University of Chicago Press)



Nation of Islam leader Malcolm X, 1963. (Source: Britannica)

Louise, struggled to support the family and was eventually institutionalised, leaving Malcolm and his siblings to be separated and placed in foster care.

Despite being a bright student, Malcolm’s aspirations were crushed when a teacher told him that his dream of becoming a lawyer was unrealistic for a black boy. Disillusioned, he dropped out of school at 15 and drifted into a life of crime. He moved to Boston, where he became deeply involved in drug dealing, gambling, and burglary. He was only 26 years old when he was arrested for theft and sentenced to ten years in prison in 1946. But what seemed like the end of his road would instead mark the beginning of his transformation.

### From Prison to the Nation of Islam

Prison, for many, is a place of despair. However, for Malcolm, it became a place of awakening. It was here that he was introduced to the teachings of the Nation of Islam (NOI), a black nationalist and religious movement led by Elijah Muhammad. The NOI preached that

black people were the original people of the world and that white oppression was a systemic force that needed to be resisted.

Eager to shed his past, Malcolm embraced the movement with intensity. He abandoned his surname, ‘Little,’ which he saw as a relic of slavery, and adopted the name ‘X’ to symbolize the unknown identity stolen from his ancestors. Was this shift merely ideological, or was it also a way to reclaim power over his own narrative? Whatever the case, it was clear that Malcolm X was not the same man who had entered prison.

### The Rise of a Revolutionary

Upon his release in 1952, Malcolm quickly rose through the ranks of the Nation of Islam. His charisma, intellect, and fiery rhetoric made him a powerful speaker and one of Elijah Muhammad’s most trusted ministers. He condemned white supremacy in the harshest terms, arguing that black Americans needed to separate from white society entirely. Unlike Martin Luther King Jr., who championed nonviolence, Malcolm X promoted self-defense, famously stating, “Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone; but if someone puts his hand on you, send him to the cemetery.” His public speaking and media appearances also contributed to increased awareness and interest in the NOI; in fact, Malcolm X is largely credited with the increase in NOI membership from 500 in 1952 to 30,000 in 1963. He became the national representative of the NOI and frequently spoke at rallies, universities, and public forums, including a widely covered debate at Harvard Law School in 1961, where he challenged racial integration and argued that black people needed their own institutions. He also played a



key role in the establishment of Muhammad Speaks, the NOI's newspaper, which became one of the most widely read black publications in the country. His speeches at events like the New York rally in 1962, following the police brutality incident at the NOI mosque in Los Angeles, drew national attention and demonstrated his ability to mobilise people against racial injustice.

His message resonated with many African Americans who felt that the slow pace of the civil rights movement was ineffective. But it also made him a deeply polarising figure. To some, he was a beacon of empowerment; to others, he was a dangerous radical. Was he truly a voice of liberation, or was he fueling division? The answer, as with many historical figures, is not so simple. His impact extended beyond the United States, particularly after he broke from the NOI in 1964 and embarked on a transformative trip to Africa and the Middle East. During this period, he spoke at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) conference in Cairo, where he urged African nations to bring the plight of black Americans before the United Nations. He also met with world leaders, including Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and Egypt's Gamal Abdel

Nasser, to discuss strategies for global black liberation. Upon returning to the U.S., he founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), a secular group dedicated to black empowerment and international solidarity. Through this organisation, he advocated for voter registration drives, economic self-sufficiency, and political education, laying the groundwork for a broader black nationalist movement that would influence later figures like the Black Panthers.

### Breaking Away and Evolving

By the early 1960s, cracks had begun to form in Malcolm's relationship with the NOI. He became disillusioned with Elijah Muhammad after learning of his affairs with multiple women, which contradicted the moral teachings of the movement. Malcolm was especially disturbed to learn that these affairs involved multiple women from within the NOI itself. At the same time, his own views were evolving. In 1964, he broke away from the NOI and embarked on a pilgrimage to Mecca, where he experienced a profound spiritual revelation.

Seeing Muslims of all races worshipping together led him to a new understanding

of race and unity. He returned to America with a more inclusive outlook, declaring that true Islam rejected racism of all kinds. In the same year, He founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) and began advocating for international human rights rather than just black separatism. This shift was monumental—was Malcolm now closer to King's vision than he would have admitted?

### A Violent End

Malcolm's transformation did not go unnoticed. His departure from the NOI had made him many enemies, and he was under constant surveillance by the FBI. On February 21, 1965, as he prepared to address a crowd at the Audubon Ballroom in New York, three gunmen rushed the stage and opened fire. He was shot multiple times and died almost instantly.

In that moment, Malcolm X, the man, was gone—but Malcolm X, the symbol, had been cemented in history. His assassination left many questions unanswered. Who was truly behind his death? Was it the work of the NOI, as many believe, or were government agencies involved? More importantly, what would Malcolm X have become had he lived longer?

### A Legacy That Endures

Today, Malcolm X is remembered as a complex and compelling figure. His early militancy and later transformation paint a portrait of a man in constant evolution, refusing to be confined by one ideology. His words continue to inspire movements for racial justice, proving that his influence did not die with him. So how shall we remember him? As the fiery radical who rejected integration, or as the man who, in his final years, embraced a more universal vision of brotherhood? The truth is, he was both—and that is what makes his legacy so powerful.

In the end, Malcolm X's life forces us to confront uncomfortable truths about race, power, and justice. Perhaps, that is his greatest achievement of all.

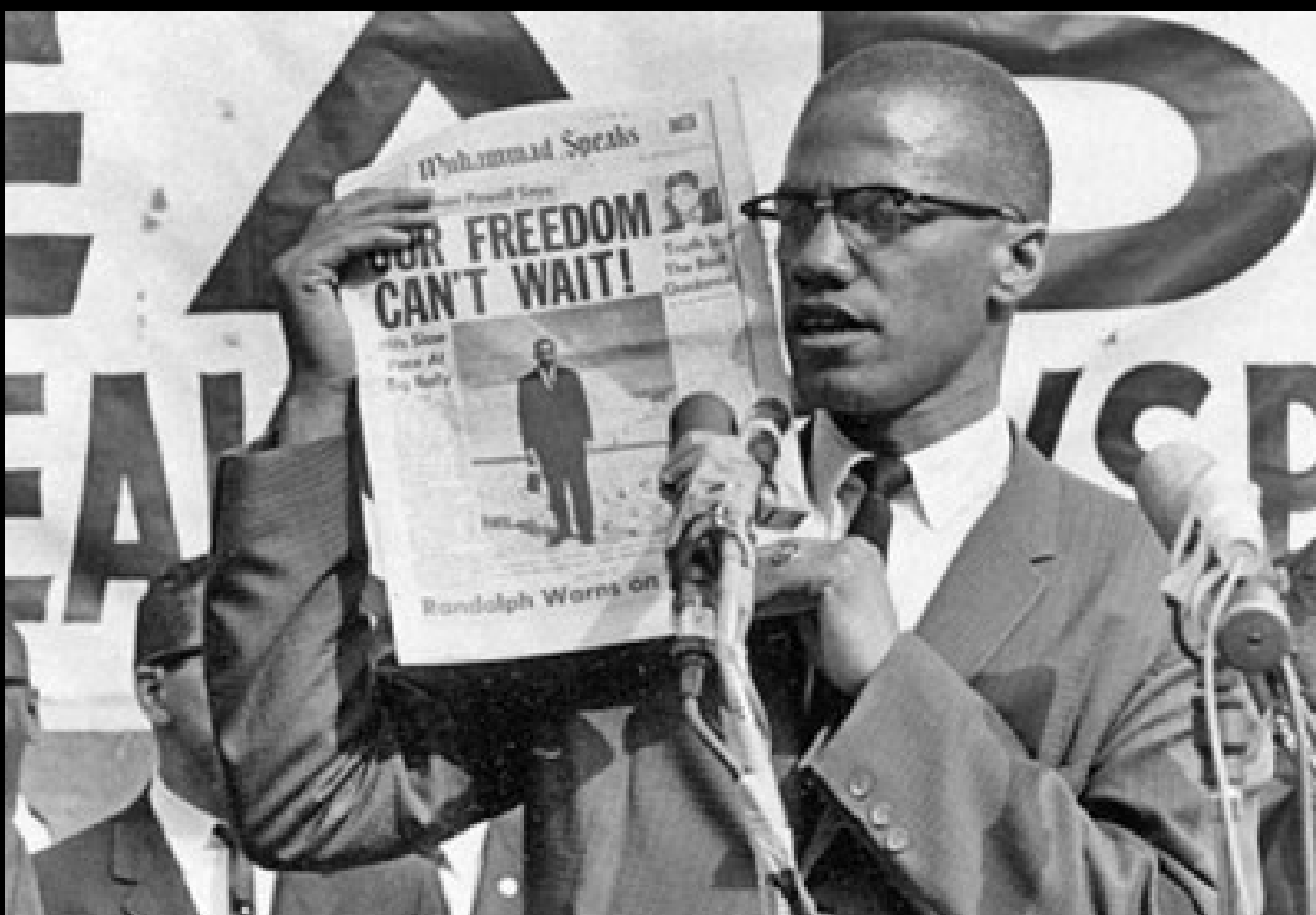


Image of video clip of "Message to the grass Roots", a speech by Malcolm X at the Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference, 1963 (Source: Zinn Education Project)



