

Malcom X was a man who held many strong beliefs and posed numerous persuasive arguments. Many of these arguments are presented by Malcom X in his autobiography. The told events of his life provide the evidence for the arguments he makes. One of his contentions is that women are inferior to men. Malcom's perception of women and his basis for this argument develop through out his life. His experiences with women provide efficient evidence for the argument he makes, but there are some counter-examples which contradict his argument.

Malcom grew up watching his father beat his mother. As a young boy he lived in a society where women were considered less significant than men. When Malcom moved to Boston, he gained knowledge about women by the examples of his friends who used women as status symbols. His experiences with his own status symbol, Sophia, further lead him to believe that women were inferior to men. These conditions shaped Malcom's views on women. It was through Malcom's experiences with his family, his friends in Boston, and the women he knew that lead him to believe women were "nothing but another commodity (155)." Malcom did have models of proud and self-reliant women through out his life. However, these women did not seem to affect his overall opinion.

Malcom's father was often physically abusive to his mother. Malcom was subjected to witnessing his father's actions. Malcom observes that a possible reason for his father's violent outbursts was the fact that his mother "had a pretty good education (6)." His father would not tolerate being corrected by a woman which presented Malcom his first example of women's inferiority to men. These violent outbreaks and his mother's passive reactions taught Malcom that women could be treated in any harmful and shameful way without consequence.

Moving to Boston exposed Malcom to a different culture. Boston's urban setting clashed with the rural areas where Malcom was raised. The friends he made in Boston were hustlers who operated in a fast paced and manipulative world. They believed that being seen with a white woman was the ultimate establishment of reputation. Not only did Malcom witness the white women being used for status by his friends, he understood that "...those white women had no more respect for those Negroes... (140)." He knew that the white women were using them for pleasure and escape from the security of their marriages.

These experiences taught Malcom that women were to be regarded as nothing more than trophies. The lack of respect given to the women and the lack of which they gave provided evidence that women did not deserve to be appreciated.

Malcom had his own white woman to parade around town to the clubs and bars, Sophia. Sophia succumbed to anything that Malcom demanded. She surrendered all of her money to him and would appear at his beck and call. Malcom would abuse her just “to keep her in line (156).” It became Malcom’s belief that “some women love to be exploited (156).” Malcom exploited the submissive Sophia because she allowed him to do so. Malcom was surrounded by meek and subservient women which lead him to believe women like to be treated in such a harsh manner.

Malcom was acquainted with a few very highly regarded women. “The first really proud black woman” Malcom had known was his sister, Ella (39). Ella was a woman of great achievements. Malcom “had never been so impressed with anybody (39-40).” Another impressive woman who impacted Malcom’s life was the wife of his boss. She was educated and had business abilities which Malcom respected. Malcom regarded these women much differently than the others he knew like Sophia, however, his inferiority-of-women attitude was not changed by these decent women.

The mistreatment and abuse of women that Malcom witnessed and acted out guided his beliefs about women and where they stood in society. Malcom’s perceptions of women and his argument about gender relations are clearly connected with his raising. His evidence of these views and arguments give good reason for him to accept them as true. His gender relations argument does not take into consideration the few, but highly upright, women that did take part in his life, though. The fact that he did experience relationships with women whom he did not consider inferior conflicts his argument.