**Books, an opportunity to view the real world**

In his brief autobiography published in 1965 (coauthored by Alex Haley), Malcom X describes his enlightening time in his seven years of prison. Concentrating on terrifying oppression of the “white” people on the “non-white” race (Malcom, 1965), he explains how reading books opened his eyes to the real world.

Malcom’s motivation to educate himself came from a simple situation, where he was frustrated because he was unable to write a meaningful letter to Mr. Elijah Muhammad, a respected figure among the black Americans. With a dictionary to start with, he initially gained the knowledge of words from the “miniature encyclopedia” (Malcom, 1965). Using almost all of his time to read, he mentions that for the first time he felt freedom from the satisfaction of gaining knowledge. Proceeding to the history of the black race, he elaborates on Mr. Muhammad’s teachings and the ideas of various other books he read, such as Will Durant’s Story of Civilization and H. G. Wells’ Outline of History that showed him the difficulties they faced before, during and after the black slave. Further reading proved nothing but the satanic acts of white people on every non-white race in the world. Examples such as the British invasion of India and the forced opium trade in China increased Malcom’s thirst for further historical knowledge.

He concludes by mentioning books to be his source of formal education. He would use every minute of his life to read books and gain knowledge that would benefit the fight for civil and human rights for the black race in America. He strongly feels that there could have been not better place than a prison to read books and gain the knowledge that he possess now.

**References**

* Malcom, X. (1965). Learning to read. In G. Colombo, R. Cullen & B. Lisle (Eds.), Rereading America (pp. 210-218). Boston, NY: Bedfords/St. Martin's.