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means a lot to Spike Lee — so much it's hard to figure out whether Lee's upcoming movie *Malcolm X* is about the slain black leader or simply Spike Lee.

Like most Spike Lee endeavors, the film is engulfed in controversy. And as usual, Lee is at the center of the storm.

He has spent most of his time lately talking about himself and explaining why *Malcolm X* is so important to him. He has encouraged fellow blacks to skip work and school to come out and support this film. He had to take donations from celebrities to cover costs and now he can't afford to not make money — a lot of money.

But Spike Lee can take the heat. On top of that, he could care less what anyone thinks of him.

"I think of myself as a filmmaker. Other people have a perception of me. There was a time where I cared, but now I don't care anymore," he says, adding that he disregards what people think "because [it] can deter you from your work that you have to do, worrying about whether people are gonna like me or not."

What Lee does care about is that people see his film.

"What's important is that even the people who dislike me, I think, are going to see this film *Malcolm X*. All I can say is that they will not be indifferent to this film. People will definitely have opinions about this film."

Lee has had to fight — for finances and for studio support — to make *Malcolm X*, and he expects the film to have an impact on its audiences.

"We just want people to be inspired by Malcolm's life, by our depiction of Malcolm's life," Lee says. "We want people to be inspired, spiritually uplifted when they come out of the theater."

For Lee this will be no small feat considering the seemingly endless hubbub that has surrounded *X* since he took over for Norman Jewison as director several years ago. Lee started filming *X* in September 1991.

The film, largely based on the late James Baldwin and Arnold Perl original screenplay, written more than 20 years ago, has provoked a dispute among blacks, many of whom believe the life of Malcolm X will be distorted.

"You must realize that the script is based upon *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*," Lee says. "It's a loving portrayal of the man."

X may be a loving portrayal, but Lee has not been adored since he asked all blacks to ditch work and school Nov. 20 for the



opening day of *Malcolm X*.

Parents, teachers, educators and journalists across the nation have criticized Lee, saying he is more interested in profits than in the education of children.

Lee says he believes his message was misconstrued by the media.

"I think that got blown out of proportion. They make it seem like

***Spike Lee doesn't care what
you think of him, but he
needs you to see X.***

***by Jennifer Galvanek,
The Washington Square News,
New York U.***

