

Martin luther king vs malcolm x – assignment

[History](#)



During the civil rights movement there were two key leaders in the black community, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. So often these two are compared and so often people come to the conclusion that they were for the same thing, but went about achieving it in different ways. This however, is not the case, Martin and Malcolm were two very different people with two very different ideologies, and had many different distinctions and characteristics that made one, a leader for equality and justice and another for revenge and supremacy.

In 1955 the African American Civil Rights Movement begun, from this emerged two leaders for the black community, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Martin, a church preacher turned civil rights leader, was for equality fairness and rights for all races. He was considered as the unifier of races and restorer of peace and desegregation amongst the races. Malcolm was also a preacher, only of Islam, he too turned into a civil rights leader and was the voice for black outrage against the racism that had been endured by the blacks for so long. He was viewed as a racist radical black supremacist and was about revenge and so called justice for the black community. He viewed violence as a just and necessary means to be successful with his plans. Both men's purpose in life was to gain rights for the black people, but they did this in very separate ways.

Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X grew up in very different worlds. Martin was raised in a comfortable middle-class family where education was very important. On the other hand, Malcolm came from and poor dysfunctional home, lacking in guidance and structure. Because of this Malcolm taught himself most of everything he learned, and received little schooling. His success was due to his own intelligence and determination, not that of <https://assignbuster.com/martin-luther-king-vs-malcolm-x-assignment/>

outside influences. Martin Luther King was born into a family who was well known in the Atlanta area. Despite all of the segregation at the time, Martin Luther King's parents made sure that he was safe and content. Malcolm was born in 1925, in the Depression era, and was raised in a completely different atmosphere than Martin, an atmosphere of fear and anger where the beginnings of his bitterness and hatred began. When the Klu Klux Klan burned down his family's home and murdered his father, Malcolm's mother suffered a nervous breakdown and the family was split up. This early traumatizing experience stuck with him for most of his life, and helped develop his hate for whites. From then on, he was driven by hatred and a desire for revenge. However whites were not the only ones responsible for Malcolm's violent hate filled attitude during his childhood. Malcolm suffered not only from abuse by whites, but also from domestic violence. His father beat his mother and both of them abused their children. His mother was forced to raise eight children during the Great Depression. After his mother's mental breakdown, the children were all placed in separate foster homes. Malcolm's resentment was increased as he suffered through the ravages of integrated and black segregation schooling. Although an intelligent student who shared the dream of being a lawyer with Martin Luther King, Malcolm X's anger and disillusionment caused him to drop out of school. He started to use cocaine and set up a burglary ring to support his expensive habit. Malcolm's hostility and promotion of violence as a way of getting change was well established in his childhood. Martin lived in an entirely different environment. He was a smart student and skipped two grades before entering an ivy league college at only the age of 15. He was the class valedictorian with an A average. Martin paraded his graduation present in a

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new green Chevrolet before his fellow graduates. He was raised in the perfect environment where dreams and love were generated. Martin's home was almost dream-like. He was raised in a comfortable middle-class home where strong values nurtured his sense of self-worth.

The early years of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King were largely responsible for their distinct different takes on American racism. As a result both men ultimately became leaders in African-American culture and had a great affect on black America. However, Martin had a more positive attitude than Malcolm, believing that through peaceful demonstrations and arguments, blacks would be able to achieve equality and justice. Malcolm's despair about life was reflected in his angry, pessimistic belief that equality was impossible because whites had no moral conscience. He was souly angry at whites for what they had done to his life and his goal was to exact revenge, and thus was never able to agree with Martin in a world of equality and unity. As the New York Times said, " he was an extraordinary and twisted man, who turned many true gifts to evil purpose and that his life was strangely and pitifully wasted." (Wikipedia) Martin on the other hand adopted an integration philosophy, where he felt that blacks and whites could be united and live together in peace. Malcolm, however, promoted a nationalist and separatist doctrine, in which blacks and whites lived separate and blacks had the power. For most of his life, he believed that only through revolution and force could blacks attain their rightful place in society. Both Martin and Malcolm spread their ideals and message through powerful, hard-hitting speeches and sermons. Even so, their intentions were taught using different styles and ideas. Malcolm, for the most part, believed that non-violence and integration was a trick by whites to keep blacks in their place. He was furious

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at white racism and encouraged his followers to rise up and protest against their white enemies and dictators. In his early days Malcolm's speeches were heavily influenced by the teachings of Elijah Mohammed and this was why his message was so radical, violent, and racist. His message toned down later when he moved away from Elijah and this was reflected in his more moderate speeches.

There are many who have admired Malcolm X and Martin Luther King for the way that they preached. However, they also had many differences that people admired, both in belief and speech. Malcolm, in many ways, was known to many as an extremist or radical. For most of the time that he spent as an Islamic minister, he preached about separatism between blacks and whites. He also preached about black nationalism, and as some would call it, black supremacy. Martin on the other hand taught an ideology of love and unity. As quoted after a trip to India where he met with Gandhi he said, "Since being in India, I am more convinced than ever before that the method of nonviolent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for justice and human dignity. In a real sense, Mahatma Gandhi embodied in his life certain universal principles that are inherent in the moral structure of the universe, and these principles are as inescapable as the law of gravitation." (Wikipedia) Martin used this ideology as a base for his movement and the way to go about it. From this he worked toward his dream, a dream which was for a world without segregation and equality amongst the races. His fight was for rights and fairness, and this strategy ultimately took a hold and worked.