

# Malcolm x and civil rights movement



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Civil Rights Movement in America in 50s-60 is the landmark of the American history. It was the period, when American was courageous enough to fight for their individual's rights, freedom and liberty. Further on, we will focus our attention on the most striking episodes of the civil rights movement in America, in order to evaluate events of that period and compare them with the events happening nowadays. The most interesting conclusion is that the events of the civil rights movement contributed much to the modernity and the modern democratic processes. There are many outstanding personalities of this period. Malcolm X is one of them. His autobiography is one of most interesting. Alex Haley was a famous journalist who helped Malcolm X to create his autobiography. Alex Haley also created an epilogue for the writing after Malcolm's death where he told about the last days of his hero's life. The given paper is based on The autobiography of Malcolm X and will discuss the life and struggle of Malcolm X.

### The Life and Mission of Malcolm X

Some scholars are convinced that Socrates' trial and punishment resemble those of Malcolm X, since, Malcolm X was a popular figure and used the masses as the source of inspiration and knowledge. The main purpose of his life was "... expos[ing] any meaningful truth that will help destroy the racist cancer that is malignant in the body of America..." (Malcolm X, and Haley, Alex 289). Racism and segregation transcend the entire history of democracy and statehood in America. Since the first years of the American state, racism and segregation had been the most serious political and social challenges faced by citizens. The Civil War led to the abolition of racism in the American continent, giving millions of Black some hope to reestablish

themselves in the American society. Those hopes were soon dissolved by the growing antagonism between Black and White citizens. Malcolm X stood out of the crowd, sending the message of a profound mental and cultural change. He surrendered himself to the ideas that common people tried to communicate during their lives. Even though, the death of Socrates was the product of legitimate trial, the assassination Malcolm X's was the result of a lynch-law, both punishments were the acts of human stupidity, by means of killing talented leaders and making positive change virtually impossible. Malcolm X was the prominent leader and lost his life as a result of his natural striving toward justice and fairness, away from the political manipulation and deception.

Malcolm X became an outstanding civil rights leader and a changed man because he had inner guts and skills to lead. The Autobiography of Malcolm X tells the story of the young man's conversion to Islam and exposes the tragedy of assassinating talented and spiritually rich people. Malcolm X stands out of the crowd and seeks to communicate his message to people. He claims that human rights are " the rights that are recognized by all nations of this earth" (Malcolm X, and Haley, Alex). He became the victim of their ideas while he was striving to improve the lives of thousands of people. In prison, he wrote: " I had to force myself to bend my knees. ... Again, again, I would force myself back down into the praying-to-Allah posture. When finally I was able to make myself stay down--I didn't know how to pray" (Malcolm X, and Haley, Alex 179). Malcolm stood in front of the crowd when death stroked him: thus, he died while holding a meeting with his followers. Even though, Malcolm's X assassination was merely an act of the lynch-law,

this punishment reflected human stupidity and blindness, leading to the loss of talented leaders. It is public opinion that defined the fate of both men.

### The Principles and Ideas of Malcolm X

Malcolm X was not only a political leader, but he is also famous by his writings.

... unable to do anything else, I began writing to people I had known in the hustling world, ... I never got a single reply. ... What certainly went on the Harlem and Roxbury wires was that Detroit Red was going crazy in stir (Malcolm X, and Haley, Alex 172-174).

The leader was sure that even the cruelest criminal comes across challenges. He reflects his reminiscences about his realization of the important role of education and language in the life of an individual. He was greatly impressed by a numerous quantity of words. He is too sincere, when he claims,

You couldn't have gotten me out of books with a wedge. Between Mr. Muhammad's teachings, my correspondence, my visitors... and my reading of books, months passed without my even thinking about being imprisoned. In fact, up to then, I never had been so truly free in my life" (Malcolm X, and Haley, Alex).

It is incredible, that a severe criminal feels free only because of power of words he experiences. These words are remarkable for the readers because they show that language norm should be followed by the members of the society.

In general terms, Malcolm's X had a clear intention: to underline the important social role the language plays in the lives of people. It does not matter who you are and which social status you have, there is a need to confirm the social norms. For Malcolm X, language is a means connecting people; it is a means to widen our horizon and opportunities in the global society.

Malcolm X worked much on the problem of criminal justice. The trends, which are seen in relation to African American men and women in the criminal justice system in relation to their sentencing, display the tendency towards the increasing severity of punishment through the prism of racial stereotypes. The disparities between African American men and white men were obvious, and black men received more severe sentences than whites did, for the similar crimes.

The implications of the illegitimate (with no warranties) racial disparity reveal themselves through differences (dissimilarities) in treatment of different people by criminal justice, which is based on their racial features. This practice assumes that people who belong to ethnic minorities suffered in the dissimilarity treatment as compared with the whites. However, in some cases, this involved uncovered racial bias, and this was the cause of the stricter judging of those people, who represented ethnic minorities if compared versus similar crimes, which were committed by white people, who received milder punishments? Can one of the reasons of such criminal situation be related to the small number of ethnic minority's representatives in the criminal justice system? Can it be suggested that while white judges and policeman may possibly evaluate potential criminals through the

stereotypes connected with the color of their skin, the judges representing ethnic minorities may be more objective in sentencing? While from another viewpoint, is there any risk that they will be too favorable towards criminals from ethnic minorities trying to avoid bias? These were the questions Malcolm X asked. These questions are yet to be answered. However, racial bias is not apparent in all cases, and it often serves as the reasons in terms of dissimilar treatment if related to race only indirectly. Therefore, one can imply that the impact of the contemporary criminal justice legislation in terms of crimes involving ethnic minorities does not always determine the bias attitudes, and may demonstrate fairness and justice.

In one sense, we were huddled in there, bonded together in seeking security and warmth and comfort from each other, and we didn't know it. All of us—who might have probed space, or cured cancer, or built industries—were, instead, black victims of the white man's American social system. (Malcolm X, and Haley, Alex 230).

### Different Perspectives

During the Montgomery bus boycott, when African Americans in December 5, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, started fighting against racial discrimination of white drivers of the buses. When Rosa Parks, a female passenger refused in giving up her seat on a bus to a white male passenger, she was arrested, and this event initiated further boycott. This event was followed by the emergence of well known Martin Luther King Jr. He initiated protests against racial discrimination in America. Thus, southern blacks proved that segregation of whites and blacks on municipal buses was unconstitutional.

Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. were fighters against racial discrimination and segregation in America. Nevertheless, they had different manner of their protesting: Martin Luther King Jr. was born in a middle-class family and he was more tolerant and appealed for a peaceful solution with the government protecting rights of African Americans. Malcolm X was born in an underprivileged family and atmosphere of his childhood and family exerted influence on his hostile moods shown towards racial discrimination, which were reflected in his speeches. Nationalist and separatists moods were relevant to Malcolm X, and liberal and integrative approach was more natural for Martin Luther King Jr.

It is essential to answer to the rhetorical question: who killed Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X? These men were inspired fighters against the racial oppression of African Americans. They were assassinated. No one likes when the voices of the oppressed rise; no one likes when the slaves have any degree of power. Therefore, the violent death of the fighters for the rights of African Americans is the result of opponents protesting against the principles.

## Conclusion

The Civil Rights Movement in America is the greatest historical landmark of the country. It is an upheaval of the American society. It is a sign of real democratic principles establishment, which are, according to Malcolm X “ by any means necessary”. A real democracy in the country is developed on the principles of the fight for the principles of equality, elimination of racial discrimination and development of individual’s rights, liberties and freedom.

It would be fair to assume that the life of Malcolm X was a logical continuation of Socrates' philosophic mission. Malcolm X was convinced that examined life was terribly uninteresting and painful. He was extremely significant for his people and lived in advance of his time. Talented leaders are always born too early, and it takes decades and centuries before their achievements are recognized. The legacy of Malcolm X is too valuable to underestimate. His fate teaches people the lesson of short-sightedness and stupidity: people are always too quick to get rid of those, who threaten the stability of the social order, even if this stability borders on stagnation and requires positive change. Malcolm X was punished, as he was striving to change the lives of people for the better. He will be remembered for the contribution he made to the mental, cultural, and social development of humanity at different stages of its progress.