

Martin luther king, "i  
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X ...

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## **Martin Luther King, “ I have a Dream” and “ The Ballot or The Bullet” by Malcolm X Essay Sample**

Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X were raised in different environments.

King grew up in a safe middle-class family, while Malcolm X came from a poor home. Despite the different upbringings, they were both black and had a dream, but unfortunately never lived to see it become true. However, both men had become high images in the current African-American culture and had indeed a great influence on Afro-Americans in 1960's. One was a great peaceful man who spoke to all humanity, marched peacefully around, and wanted the blacks to achieve full equality with whites. His popular speech goes like this: “ I have a dream, a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed... that all men are created equal.” (Martin Luther King).

The other man was Malcolm X, who spoke of a violent revolution, which would bring about essential change for the black race. “ Anything you can think of that you want to change right now, the only way you can do it is with a ballot or a bullet.” (Malcolm X). Anyhow, I am going to elaborate more on these two great men and their speeches (I Have a Dream by M. L. King and The Ballot or the Bullet by Malcolm X) by comparing them and writing what the similarities and differences in these two texts are.

The first text I am going to deal with is Dr. Martin Luther King's speech “ I Have a Dream”. The speech was delivered on August 28, 1963 before more than thousands of people in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D. C. The speech became a huge success and a great piece of rhetoric in

American History. The speech was about the desire for a future where blacks and whites would coexist peacefully as equals. The speech contained the dreams, which Martin Luther King wanted to see come true years back when the Emancipation Proclamation was signed. Martin Luther King was a Baptist Minister who non-violently fought to free all people from the bondage of separation and injustice. In his speech, he said that the Blacks had to gain their rightful places but not by wrongful deeds – “not by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred” (p. 20, l. 65).

He wanted to fight on the plane of dignity and discipline. However, regardless of the problems and frustrations he and the black population had been through during the segregation and fighting against segregation, he says that he still has a dream. “I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.”...“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.” (p. 20+21 line. 20-30) He says with this faith, he will return to the South, and with this faith the blacks will stand up for freedom together – by knowing that one day they will be free and equal as the whites. He says let freedom ring from everywhere in USA. By achieving the freedom, one day everyone will join hands and say “Free at last” “Free at last!” “Thank God almighty.”

The speech is structured on high rhetorical level also high level of language; hence, the words that are used in the speech are words, which are not any “everyday” word. The reason Martin Luther King has chosen difficult words

might be that he wanted to show the world that a black man could also be capable of using big words and be as good as a white. There has also been much imagery (metaphors) such as; "Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst... by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred." (P. 20, line. 63) meaning that let's not choose the way of violence and meanness, and there is another example "...America has given the Negro people a bad check..." (P. 20, line. 37) meaning that the promise which America gave the blacks was not good enough, now they have to "re-cash the check" i. e. do something about it.

Apart from that, there are also many repetitions of some words, which make the speech more of a rhythmical speech e. g. (I have a dream, Now is the time, or let freedom ring..), one of the reasons for this could be that Martin Luther King is a minister, and ministers do rhyme their words, when they deliver a speech etc. He talks to people's Ethos (Credibility), hence he has good argumentations and worth to listen to, he also uses Pathos (Emotional) – because he brings some metaphorical phrases where he appeals with the audience's feelings. At last Logos (Logical), thus, he gives examples of hundred years back, when the blacks were promised freedom and equality, yet there has not been any sign of it.

The other text we are dealing with is the speech by Malcolm X, entitled "The Ballot or the Bullet". Malcolm X was born in 1925. Later in his youth, he joined a Negro separatist movement called Nation of Islam, and converted to Islam where he became the spokesperson. In this speech, he explains how the Blacks should fight for their civil-rights in America. He emphasizes that voting is the solution for ending discrimination against Blacks. Malcolm X

says that either “the ballot or the bullet” will come next in the civil rights struggle. By this, he means that government should allow Blacks to lawfully vote (Ballot) or else violence (Bullet) will be their means to influence government. He says the other solution to the civil rights struggle is; “to expand the level of civil rights to the level of human rights...” (P. 18, l. 30). This would allow Blacks to take their case to the United Nations. He says “then our African brothers can throw their weights on our side...” (P. 19, l. 10). He also urges the blacks to not do business with a white man, neither should they take their money out and spend it in a white society, thus their society gets richer while the black’s society becomes more of a ghetto.

For improving the black society’s business and in order to become richer the blacks need to re-educate themselves in order to know how to help the black community and business. However, Malcolm X argues for these solutions from a Black Nationalist perspective. Black Nationalism is anti-assimilation, meaning that it is not their goal to fully integrate into white American society; Blacks should own their own businesses and have their own politicians in their communities. However, his choice of language differs from Martin Luther King’s speech. He has used the everyday way of words. He also repeats some of the words in his speech, perhaps to make sure the audience has the message. E. g., on page 16, the last line and line 36th where he repeats “You and I” a couple of times. He also uses the least amount of figurative language, thus makes the speech more direct and easy to understand. He talks to people’s feelings and senses. He uses pathos and logos.

Both X and King spread their message through influential, rough speeches. Even so, their goals were represented in different styles and purposes. King was a non-violent leader who also advised non-violence to his followers. He reminded his followers that all people are God's children and that hopefully one day all Americans can join together to sing (On P 21, line. 75) "

My country tis of thee, Sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing...". King wanted the black and whites united while on the other hand, Malcolm X, for the most part, believed that non-violence and integration was a trick by the whites to keep blacks in their places. He dreamt of a separate nation for the blacks. (On P. 19 l. 35) " I think separation will get me freedom". He also mentioned that whites were inherently enemies of the Negroes and that integration was impossible without great bloodletting.

Albeit the difference of addressing their messages about black respect and pride, they both had the same goal in mind. That goal was to achieve equality between all races. Their methods are perceived as slightly different. Other than the fact that they were different in some ways, they also had many similarities that people admired, in both belief and speech. Both tried to bring hope to blacks in the United States. They shared a common ground, a common dream, the ground which would get the blacks their freedom and equality. A dream that one day their people would be able to be free from the bondage of prejudice and racism. This feeling lay so deep within their souls, that it drove them to speak out to a country whose people were not ready to hear such words. Martin L. King and Malcolm X were both assassinated, but were destined to be legends for all and forever.

The method Dr. King was using, was the best method, according to me, hence it was a peaceful way where the ideology of non-violence was practiced. We must follow the peaceful way in order to get a peaceful result. However it requires a great amount of time, but if you are patient and believe in what you are doing, then you would definitely reach your goal. However, if you use the violent way, many people would be killed, innocent children, women etc. would suffer and yet you would not get any good result out of it. Anyhow, we must seek to show we are right through peaceful, not violent means. Love must be the ideal guiding of our actions.