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Civil Rights Activism in the United States of America: Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X: the Influence of Internal and External Factors on their Psycho-Emotional Development
by

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Abstract

The recent history of US racial relations has been marked with the imprint of two prominent personalities who carried historic responsibilities in the struggle against racism, racial segregation, and for social justice: Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Minister Malcolm X. They devoted most of their lifetime to the trying task of breaking the yoke of racial injustice off the necks of African Americans and emerged as the foremost spokesmen of the fight for civil liberties and social change in the United States from the mid-50s to the late 60s. They pursued the same goal, defended the same cause, but were starkly divided on the means to achieve social reforms. Martin Luther King, Jr., developed an integrationist and nonviolent approach, while Malcolm X advocated separatism and Black Nationalism attitudes. As a matter of fact, the psycho-emotional outlooks of the two activists during the US civil rights struggle were the symbolic reflections of their respective social backgrounds, educational and religious experiences.

The objective of the present study is to work out the fundamental rationales behind the leadership patterns of both characters in line with the internal factors and external factors that influenced their fighting strategies. These different ways interacted with one another to shape the respective personalities of King and X. They are the relevant, original premises upon which public opinion should objectively rest.

Key Words: black nationalism, integrationist approach, nonviolence, separatism, civil rights.

Résumé

L'histoire récente des relations interraciales aux États-Unis a été marquée par l'empreinte de deux éminentes personnalités qui ont assumé des responsabilités) historiques dans la lutte contre le racisme, la ségrégation raciale et la justice sociale: le pasteur Martin Luther King et le ministre Malcolm X. ont consacré la plus grande partie de leur vie à la tâche difficile qui consiste à briser le joug des injustices raciales des Afro-Américains et sont devenus les principaux porte-paroles de la lutte pour les libertés civiles et le changement social aux États-Unis à partir du milieu des années cinquante jusqu'à la fin des années soixante. Ils poursuivaient le même objectif, défendaient la même cause, mais étaient divisés sur les méthodes de réaliser des réformes sociales. Martin Luther King, Jr., a développé une approche intégrationniste et non violente, tandis que Malcolm X préconisait le séparatisme et le nationalisme noir. En fait, les perspectives psycho-émotionnelles des deux militants au cours de la lutte pour les droits civiques aux États-Unis étaient la réflexion symbolique de leurs origines sociales respectives, de leurs expériences éducatives et religieuses.

L'objectif de la présente étude est d'analyser les principes fondamentaux des schémas de leadership des deux personnages en fonction des facteurs internes et des facteurs externes qui combinent et interagissent indirectement entre eux pour façonner les personnalités respectives de Martin Luther King et de Malcolm, fonctionnant comme: les prémisses pertinentes et originales sur lesquelles l'opinion publique doit reposer objectivement

Mots-clés: Nationalisme noir, approche intégrationniste, non-violence, séparatisme, droits civiques.

Introduction

Slavery set aside, remarkably from the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1st, 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln and actually by the 13th Amendment of 1865 down to the twentieth century the history of the United States of America has been loaded with the scent of racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans. Every feature of life in the South of the country until the mid-60s was labeled with terms such as white or colored, a clear allusion made to skin color out of racist bias. As such, there was, in the South by virtue of the law, a white America and a black America with separate and unequal social standards: public conveniences were separate based on the racial backgrounds of the citizens.

This situation went along until the struggle for racial equality and social justice saw the emergence of two racial activists, the most prominent flag bearers and unflinching spokespersons of the oppressed black people of the United States: Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968), and Minister Malcolm X (Malcolm Little; later El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz).

Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., was ushered onto the scene of the fight for universal civil rights for African Americans on the evening of December 1st, 1955 by the act of civil disobedience of one of his parishioners, Mrs. Rosa Louise McCauley Parks.

His counterpart, Minister Malcolm X (May 19, 1925–February 21, 1965) emerged by the mid-50s as a faithful member of the Nation of Islam and became their foremost spokesperson and preacher nationwide. Though they pursued the same goal, that is, freeing their people from the shackles of segregation, racial discrimination and social injustice, the two iconic leaders of the US civil rights cause would use opposite approaches to the struggle. Meanwhile, King recognized the justness of X's analysis of the racial issue in the North and the relevancy of racial pride as expressed by the Black Power movement, and turned radical on issues such as poverty and the Vietnam War.

The present paper aims at identifying, bringing forth and expounding the fundamental reasons underlying Martin Luther King and Malcolm X's psycho-emotional outlooks and leadership patterns during the American civil rights struggle. It has provided an overall rationale for their emotional legacies through a contrastive analysis of the relevant factors that affected their psycho-emotional development. So this work is not just a classic portrait of each leader but a vivid presentation of the deep and subtle driving forces in connection with their psycho-emotional attitudes and leadership forms during the civil rights movement.

I- The Impact of The Internal and External Factors on the Psycho-Emotional Development of Martin Luther King, Jr.

1. The family background (This part seems to be just like an affirmation or how a similar family could probably impact positively or negatively on kids living in. In addition, this part is very short with only one illustration)

Saying that Martin Luther King, Jr., was born into a family flowing with milk and honey would be much less an overstatement than saying he was born with a silver spoon in the mouth! Born into a materially blessed black middle class family in the late twenties on the verge of the Great Depression which was to spread its disastrous tentacles into every corner of the United States for over a decade, little King enjoyed a life most black children of his time were not entitled to due to the economic confinement their families were reduced to. According to Professor of history C. CARSON (1998, p. 5), Martin Luther King Jr. can say:

I have never experienced the feeling of not having the basic necessities of life. These things were always provided by a father who always put his family first. [...] The first twenty years of my life were very comfortable years. If I had a problem I could always call daddy. Things were wrapped up for me in a Christmas package...

Martin Luther King Jr. was spared the anxiety, melancholy and mental strain which would have been the lot of most black children of his time. His was a community in which no one was in the extremely poor class. The people of that community were rather of average income. That economic condition made it possible for his parents to always adequately cater to the needs of their son and as a consequence the latter could enjoy a stable mental balance, since he was in such a material comfort that all his needs could be promptly satisfied hence his psycho-emotional balance was secured. Also, this comfortable environment would have provided for King's moral stability as a growing child as it would have prevented him from turning to vices such as theft, covetousness, waywardness, insubordination to parental authority or rebelliousness, delinquency or crime.

2. The impact of religious education

Martin Luther King was son to two devout Christians who offered their children a wonderful family environment with all needed ingredients for a healthy life mentally, emotionally and spiritually, and in an overall atmosphere where parents and close relatives were always at hand as references on the moral plane to channel the child towards the development of a wholesome character. In spite of the

fact that they earned an average income, King's parents were hard-working and provident enough to organize their resources so that their offspring could enjoy all conveniences possible, being conscious that financial hence material security was a means to earn respect and consideration from the white community, and wanted to instill into their children the feelings of self-respect, human dignity, racial pride and equal standing with the white people in a southern environment where segregation was the law and racial discrimination its end. This mental attitude on the part of his parents, coupled with their deep commitment to the Christian faith in a family atmosphere where love and tenderness were ever present undoubtedly had a contagious impact on the morale of Martin Luther King Jr. from the outset. Even in this southern social environment heavily packed with racial tensions bred by segregation Martin Luther King Jr. was always lovingly urged by his parents not to hate the white people who were discriminating against his race, but to love them instead. C. CARSON (1998, p. 7) insists on this attitude of Martin Luther King Jr.'s family in the following words:

We were at the dinner table when the situation was discussed, and for the first time I was made aware of the existence of a race problem. I had never been conscious of it before. As my parents discussed some of the tragedies that had resulted from this problem and some of the insults they themselves had confronted on account of it, I was greatly shocked, and from that moment I was determined to hate every white person. As I grew older and older this feeling continued to grow. My parents would always tell me that I should not hate the white man, but that it was my duty as a Christian to love him: How could I love a race of people who hated me and who had been responsible for breaking me up with one of my best childhood friends? This was a great question on my mind for a number of years.

Thus, from the beginning, even as he and his parents had had a set of painful experiences on account of segregation and racial discrimination, Martin Luther King Jr. was often objectively, rationally and realistically made aware of the prevailing social atmosphere in light of his Christian faith. He understood that the arch enemy of his race's real emancipation was the white-man-established social order and not the white man himself, who was blinded by racial hatred to which he was a proverbial victim. So King was to hate the system, not the white people who were manipulated by the system.

3- The impact of external factors that influenced Martin Luther King Jr.

3.1 The social context

Even though his family enjoyed a stable financial condition and a consistently peaceful home situation, it was surrounded by a social atmosphere heavily poisoned with segregation and racial discrimination that had left a vivid impact on Martin Luther King Jr.'s conscience both as a child and growing teenager. His early experiences related to the racial issue were perhaps among the most striking any young Negro boy could have in the segregationist South of the United States of America until the late 60s

Indeed, as a child who was born and raised in the South of the United States at a time where segregation and discrimination had set racial tensions at their peak, King, Jr., went through much in his childhood that opened his eyes to the social environment and challenged his emotional attitude towards the white race. If any words could best describe his early feelings towards the system of segregation, these certainly would be shock, indignation, and frustration, bitterness, near revenge or retaliation, and the like. His very first encounter with the racial problem occurred in his early childhood when he had a white playmate roughly his own age. This discovery appears early in King's life. According to C. CARSON (1998, p. 7), it took place when he was still in primary school:

From the age of three I had a white playmate who was about my age. We always felt free to play our childhood games together. He did not live in our community, but he was usually around every day; his father owned a store across the street from our home. At the age of six we both entered school - separate schools, of course. I remember how our friendship began to break as soon as we entered school; this was not my desire but his. The climax came when he told me one day that his father had demanded that he would play with me no more. I immediately asked my parents about the motive behind such a statement.

This eye-opening incident alarmed Martin Luther King Jr. to such an extent that he could not help wondering why his playmate would have made such a statement. It struck his mind to the deepest

and sent him wondering why such a strange and rather brutal separation with his playmate could have occurred after all. Perhaps King at some point tried to figure out the motive behind it, linking it somehow to skin color, and that could be the reason that he urged his parents to help understand the situation, given that he might have many other black playmates in his native Negro neighborhood with whom such an experience certainly never before had occurred. Further, if the little white boy had been asked by his father to part with his black fellow, one could imagine that things had not been left at that simple stage. His father ought to have clarified the reasons for his instruction with allusion presumably made to skin color and all the social implications in terms of the relationships existing between both color groups. On the other hand, one can assume that the separation happened, and of course was bound to happen, since the educational system itself was racially divided by virtue of Jim Crow. Thus, sooner or later, like King, any other black child would have their own story to tell about when, where, and under what circumstances the experience occurred. At any rate, the experience was brutal, grave and appalling enough to sound an alarm in the mind of little King.

3.2. Boston University (1954-1955)

King's studies in Boston had introduced him to the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, a politician and spiritual leader in India. He heard a sermon on Gandhi's life and philosophy by Mordecai Johnson, President of Howard University. Then he read several books on him which soon restored his original faith in the power of love. In the process, King came to realize that when love pervades nonviolence methods, far from being a symptom of weakness, it is a potent force for social transformation.

In his book entitled *Stride Toward Freedom* and published 1958 by Martin Luther King Jr., he explained that he had discovered a profound significance in Gandhi's central concept of 'satyagraha' as a way of life. The term 'satyagraha', which derived from Gandhi, means holding on to truth hence truth-force. 'satya' means truth and 'graha' is derived from 'sat' which means 'being', and Gandhi affirmed that nothing exists in reality except truth. For him, truth is the most important name of God. Gandhi affirmed that Jesus and Mohammed were supreme artists because they saw and expressed truth, whence Gandhi considered truth to be soul or spirit. He then called 'satyagraha' soul-force. On the other hand, he understood 'ahimsa' to mean a renunciation of the will to hurt, kill or damage. This philosophy is explained by J. J. Ansbro (1982, p. 105) in the following words:

... we are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of one and the same Creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world.

Gandhi understood 'ahimsa' to also mean a rejection of the inner violence of the spirit: "Not to hurt any living thing," he said, "is no doubt a part of ahimsa." J. J. Ansbro (1982, p. 105). Gandhi admitted that he had to struggle continuously to follow the law of nonviolence, yet he could claim that as he succeeded on almost all occasions in keeping his feelings under control, his struggle served to endow him with greater strength. In 1928 Gandhi could claim that for forty years, due to a long course of prayerful discipleship, he had learnt to love everyone. However, in the same statement he proclaimed that he could and did hate the system of exploitation established by the British in India and that he hated the evil system that the Hindus supported. While refusing to hate the British and Hindus, he recognized that 'ahimsa' could not allow for toleration of their evil systems. Accepting these evil systems would not have demonstrated love for those who administered these systems, since it would have permitted them to continue in their error. 'ahimsa' requires to attempt to reform evildoers by active opposition to their practice. King was similar to Gandhi in that he consistently declared that his nonviolent protests were directed against the forces of evil work in the unjust systems. According to him, violence solves no social problem but rather creates new and more complicated ones.

II- The Impact of Internal and External Factors on the Psycho-Emotional Development of Malcolm X (May 19, 1925–February 21, 1965)

1. The impact of internal factors

1.1 The family background

Malcolm X had a life experience strongly marked by internal and external factors which from the beginning have been a continuous chain of negative, ill-fated influences that have combined to funnel his psycho-emotional character into an overall personality that adopted a sharp approach to the civil rights campaign in the United States from the early 50s to the early 60s. As a matter of fact, Malcolm X's early life was of a particular kind, one where the central theme that dominated the family atmosphere was violence. Malcolm X's parents would have arguments quite regularly before their children. Earl and Louis Little tough-handedly raised their children, not sparing any opportunity to whip them to wisdom and good sense. Both parents would usually settle their disputes openly and most often through violence in front of the children. These situations left in Malcolm X some sour memories of non-advisable behaviors on the part of his parents. A. HALEY (1964, pp. 6-7) refers to this attitude in the following words:

After that, my memories are of the friction between my father and mother. They seemed to be nearly always at odds. Sometimes, my father would beat her. It might have had something to do with the fact that my mother had a pretty good education. Where she got it I don't know. But an educated woman, I suppose, can't resist the temptation to correct an uneducated man. Every now and then, when she put those smooth words on him, he would grab her. My father was also belligerent toward all of the children.... The older ones he would beat almost savagely if they broke any of his rules - and he had so many rules it was hard to know them all

It is generally acknowledged that parents' attitudes and behaviors often relatively rub off on the psychology and emotional balance of their own children as a result of the unconscious influence these parental attitudes and behaviors exert on the subconscious of the children over time, whether the parents consciously display those attitudes and behaviors in a particular fashion or not. However, with a careful observation of the accounts contained in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Alex Haley, I have realized that of his two parents X's heart went to his father, and more so because his mother would often come down hard on him to whip every sense of color-associated superiority out of his mind, because X somehow believed himself to be of a higher status than his siblings owing to his lighter complexion, and because his father would always have him as his favorite child owing to that same skin color and never beat him. But since his mother hated that very complexion, being herself nearly white-complexioned as a result of a rape crime committed by her unknown and much hated white father on her mother, she was ready to put it the other way round in her son's mind. Not so with his father who enjoyed going around exhibiting him as an element of pride. A. HALEY et al. (1964, p. 7) have corroborated such idea when they mention:

Nearly all my whippings came from my mother. I've thought a lot about why. I actually believe that as anti-white as my father was, he was subconsciously so afflicted with the white man's brainwashing of Negroes that he inclined to favor the light ones, and I was his lightest child. Most Negro parents in those days would almost instinctively treat any lighter children better than they did the darker ones. It came directly from the slavery tradition that the 'mulatto', because he was visibly nearer to white, was therefore 'better.'

As far as his siblings are concerned, however, they exerted a catalytic influence that proved to be the second most important milestone of his entire life, and this happened in 1947 when he was serving his term in prison. Indeed, his siblings' influence on Malcolm X was an indirect transmission of that of the teachings of the leader of the Nation of Islam on the latter. Thus, the influence of Malcolm X's brothers and sisters which is an internal factor at first can also objectively, here, be referred to as an indirect external factor bearing the mark of the chain effect of the teachings of Mr. Elijah Muhammad as carried over to X in prison.

As a matter of fact, in the risky life he led in Harlem, Malcolm X was involved in hustling from head to toe. He was a smart ring leader who was able to involve white females

into burglary operations. But things fell apart when one day he got lured into a trap in a jewelry shop where he had put a stolen watch for repair. Malcolm X was arrested, tried and sentenced to ten years in prison in his early twenties, but would only serve seven years instead. While in prison, according to A. HALEY et al. (1964, p. 169) he was introduced by his own family to a would-be redemptive religion, the so-called “natural religion for the black man”, the one that could free and save the black race from centuries-old ordeals and social injustices in the United States. The news about this new religion came to him the following way:

One day in 1948, after I had been transferred to Concord Prison, my brother Philbert, who was forever joining something, wrote me this time that he had discovered the ‘natural religion for the black man.’ He belonged now, he said, to something called “the Nation of Islam.” He said I should pray to Allah for deliverance. [...]

When the letter from Reginald arrived, I never dreamed of associating the two letters... Reginald's letter was newsy, and also it contained this instruction: ‘Malcolm, don't eat any more pork, and don't smoke any more cigarettes. I'll show you how to get out of prison.’

Reginald eventually visited Malcolm in the Concord Prison where he talked to him about God the omniscient whose real name was Allah, and about the true identity of the black man, and about how this identity has been hidden or stolen from him in every sense by the white man, whom he referred to as the devil according to A. HALEY et al. (1964, p. 173):

He told me that this God had come to America and that he had made himself known to a man named Elijah-‘a black man, just like us’. This God had let Elijah know, Reginald said, that the devil's ‘time was up.’

I didn't know what to think. I just listened.

‘The devil is also a man,’ Reginald said.

‘What do you mean?’

With a slight movement of his head, Reginald indicated some white inmates and their visitors talking, as we were, across the room.

‘Them,’ he said. ‘The white man is the devil.’

He told me that all whites knew they were devils – especially Masons.

Again the quote above is key to understanding how and why X's stance towards the racial problem became radical, especially through the medium of his own siblings. In the scenario above as in the preceding excerpt, one clearly sees at first glance the influence of Elijah Muhammad's teachings on the Littles who were by far an emotionally broken and spiritually thirsty family in search of an ultimate opportunity to treat the soar wounds of racism, and the prophet of the N.O.I. (Nation Of Islam) comes in as both an emotional and a spiritual painkiller. In the end, of course, X himself confessed to the impact that such an experience had had on him. He was now set to face the racial issue based on the new discoveries he had made according to A. HALEY et al. (1964, p. 175) and this would definitely condition his thoughts and emotions, that is, his psycho-emotional character even as an activist:

Reginald, when he came to visit me again in a few days, could gauge from my attitude the effect that his talking had had upon me. He seemed very pleased. Then, very seriously, he talked for two solid hours about ‘the devil white man’ and ‘the brainwashed black man.’

When Reginald left, he left me rocking with some of the first serious thoughts I had ever had in my life: that the white man was fast losing his power to oppress and exploit the dark world; that the dark world was starting to rise to rule the world again, as it had before; that the white man's world was on the way down, it was on the way out.

1.2 The impact of the external factors: the social context

The spectrum of events which fall under this section as part of the external factors that have affected the psycho-emotional character of Malcolm X spans from his fetal life in the maternal womb to his early twenties when he was arrested for larceny. Ever since the

proclamation of the Emancipation by President Abraham Lincoln, some white people unhappy about losing the racial superiority status conferred to them under slavery founded what became notoriously known as the Ku Klux Klan, the Black Legion, The Sons of the South, the Knights of the Black Cross, The Knights of the White Camelia, to mention but a few. They constituted themselves into white supremacist sects constantly and overtly wreaking havoc with hateful violence and unbridled terror among the black community, with impunity. They posed a permanent, dreadful threat to both individual and corporate freedoms, and to the overall social improvement and advancement of the black people, often denying them access to particular public facilities, threatening, abducting, lynching or murdering them or even seizing or destroying their properties. In this context, any black person or group of black people that stood out as enlightened enough to awaken the numb conscience of the black race was a *de facto* quick target. Reverend Earl Little, Malcolm X's father was being accused of spreading trouble among the Blacks and frequently warned by the Klansmen. But one night, the warnings seemed to have matured into deliberate oppression that threatened to put a sudden end to his days. A. HALEY et al. (1964, pp. 3-4) accounts for it in these words:

When my mother was pregnant with me, she told me later, a party of hooded Ku Klux Klan riders galloped up to our home in Omaha, Nebraska, one night. Surrounding the house, brandishing their shotguns and rifles, they shouted for my father to come out. My mother went to the front door and opened it. Standing where they could see her pregnant condition, she told them that she was alone with her three small children, and that my father was away, preaching, in Milwaukee. The Klansmen shouted threats and warnings at her that we had better get out of town because 'the good Christian white people' were not going to stand for my father's 'spreading trouble' among the 'good' Negroes of Omaha with the 'back to Africa' preaching of Marcus Garvey. [...] Still shouting threats, the Klansmen finally spurred their horses and galloped around the house, shattering every window pane with their gun butts. Then they rode off into the night, their torches flaring, as suddenly as they had come.

The quote above portrays a scenario typical of those days when the fearsome Klansmen were known for using force and violence to curbe the zeal of any black American individual or group of black Americans that stood against their racist interests.

III- CONTRASTIVE RATIONALE OF THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS ON THE EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, Jr., AND MALCOLM X

The psycho-emotional development of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X has not been influenced by their parents to the same extent. Malcolm's parents have faced nightmarish experiences and been constantly exposed to the ills of racism, racist violence and injustice, and consequently developed bitter and reactionary psycho-emotional attitudes (not deliberately but rather by survival instinct) in order to accommodate the racial environment and uphold their racial pride and human dignity, which, logically, left impacts of bitterness and racial hate in their son and rather radicalized his psycho-emotional development with regard to the prevailing atmosphere.

Malcolm grew up in a family atmosphere permanently ruled by household violence and contempt of whatever stood for the white race, with no hope whatsoever for a peaceful cohabitation or reconciliation with the white people, hence later as a civil rights activist he was more inclined to champion separation as opposed to integration. As such, it is not surprising that Malcolm has entitled the very first chapter of his autobiography *Nightmare* in reference to the set of appalling memories recalling the atrocities that he and his family had gone through in his early days and how these various experiences affected his psycho-emotional development. On the contrary, even though they faced scores of the common ordeals of racism and segregation in various ways, King's parents (and kin) enjoyed relative

peace and were not exposed to any death or physical threats or bloody violence whatsoever on the part of the Whites, even as the Ku Klux Klan was a nightmare to most black communities in the segregation-plagued Deep South. In addition, the Kings afforded a secure socio-economic standing, thus earning the respect of most white people, although racial skirmishes occasionally occurred in their community. They never experienced open household violence, but instead developed a healthy relationship in a family environment conducive to the expression of tenderness, mutual affection and love. Most remarkably, the Kings confessed the Christian faith, as did most of their predominantly black neighborhood, and as a result, even though at times they were at odds with the white people because of racism and the ills of segregation, they adopted an attitude of understanding, love and forgiveness, knowing they were dealing with a system, not with the people who were products of the system. Martin Luther King, Jr., has persistently borne witness to all this in his autobiography, pointing to how his parents frequently urged him to forgive and love the white people. On the whole, this provided the ideal ground for him to be raised in a healthy way and develop a balanced psycho-emotional character as opposed to Malcolm X who was fundamentally radical. As a matter of fact, the primary elements that have influenced the psycho-emotional development of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X are their respective family backgrounds as shown above.

King was born in a black middle-class family where everything was handy and graciously provided by his hard-working and loving parents. Malcolm X, on the other hand, was raised in a poor family that went through hard times of famine and starvation as a result of the brutal death of his father at the hands of white racists, and lived under the torment of knowledge of the rape of his grandmother by his unknown white grandfather, an incident that earned him and his mother a much hated near-white complexion. Malcolm and his mother would often curse the unknown white man for every drop of his blood they had in their veins, an emblematic indicator of the overall contempt and aversion they felt against the white race as a whole.

In other words, Malcolm X was constantly exposed to scenes of anger, household violence, hate from and towards the enemy (the white people), and even before he was born, he suffered violence firsthand in his mother's womb as a result of racists' threats made on the lives of his parents. As documented by their autobiographies, Martin Luther King, Jr., was constantly urged by his parents to display, neither an attitude of tolerance nor one of hate towards the white racists and segregationists, but to show love and forgiveness as a Christian by virtue of his faith while X's parents frequently cursed and despised the Whites before their son as a result of the humiliating and life-threatening experiences they were often subject to, which had a contagious effect on the latter as he was growing up. Let's also note that during their teenage, both protagonists experienced critical milestones that prepared them to develop psycho-emotional attitudes and responses that were antagonistic by nature, one being moderate in his stance and adopting an integrationist approach to the racial problem while the second went the other way around advocating radicalism, black nationalism, separation, self-justice or self-defense in the form of revengeful, defensive violence in retaliation to racist aggression whenever and wherever federal law-enforcement failed.

Before he joined college, young Martin Luther King, Jr., was prepared to hate and fight shy of white students when he realized that in fact many of them sympathized with the black cause and stood ready to assist their colored fellows. As a matter of fact, Martin Luther King, Jr., received a broader education on the racial issues through the open discussions that liberal faculty challenged the students to engage in so as to find solutions to the race issue. From then onward King was convinced that not all the Whites were racist and that the Blacks could actually collaborate with those Whites who stood on their side and shared their cause, and this inspired him to consider adopting an integrationist approach to the civil rights

struggle, a stance Malcolm slightly shared near the end of his life. In addition, Martin Luther King, Jr., was introduced to time-proven pacifist ideologies that bore fruits in the past. Among others, King read works by the late Indian independence leader and activist Mahatma Gandhi who applied non-violence to effectively fight imperialism and achieve social change, and Mr. David Thoreau, a lifelong abolitionist who long before Gandhi stressed civil disobedience as a way to challenge socio-political oppression, arbitrary and injustice. The first method was inspired by the scriptural recommendations of Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount and laid the foundation for his strategy of creative suffering which included peaceful demonstrations, marches and rallies, and the endurance of unearned violence while the second provided the moral ground for the highly dramatic sit-ins, wade-ins, swim-ins, jail-ins, freedom rides, etc. that attracted public attention nationwide and overseas thus challenging the US government to take action and pass historic legislation in favor of the black minority. As can be seen, these different influences favored by his Christian background combined to channel Martin Luther King, Jr., towards displaying a moderate psycho-emotional attitude throughout the civil rights struggle, even though he became a bit radical near the end of his career, especially on issues of national interest such as the Vietnam War, and with consistent pushes for comprehensive social reforms in behalf of the poor and of all minorities left behind by the American Dream. Such actions alienated the US government and liberal sympathizers and cast on Martin suspicions of communistic activism and conspiracy.

Malcolm X, meanwhile, lived outside of his native family circle during most of his childhood and teenage as a result of the sudden death of his father, away from motherly affection after being separated from kin by racist harassment and humiliation at the hands of social assistance agents, and a federal judge, a sad episode that took a huge toll of the mental life of his mother. Upon dropping out precociously on the heels of racist comments on his career dream to become a lawyer, he turned to the underworld and lived on hustling until he was arrested for larceny and put in jail following a racially-biased court decision. While in prison, Malcolm often fumed with rage at the social order that had walked him in there, so much so that he was nicknamed "Satan". He also made for his academic lateness through thorough reading of history books recounting the horrors of slavery and the glories and great achievements of the ancient civilizations of Africa. Thus, he regained a sense of racial pride, if not of racial superiority running contrary to what he had ever seen, thought and been brainwashed to believe about the Negro. This prompted him to enter the prison debate scene with a rather rebellious and revolutionary mindset to challenge white inmates' misconceptions about the Negro with very sharp and articulate language. During his stay in penitentiary, his siblings visited and introduced Malcolm to the teachings of The Hon. Elijah Muhammad, the charismatic leader of the black nationalist movement known as the Nation of Islam (N.O.I.), who taught among others that the white man, 'the devil', would continue to politically control and oppress the Negro, economically exploit him and culturally erase his mind, and was consequently worth better living apart from. At this point, Malcolm discovered an ideological framework that revived his latent inner resolve to rebel against and fight the established order, and that so perfectly matched the reality he had lived in so far as a Negro in America. As a consequence, he quickly bought the radical ideology by readily converting to Islam. Later during his preaching and outreach programs as the leading minister and spokesperson of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm, being influenced by such a chaotic background would stress separation, revolution, retaliation to violence by violence (the law of retaliation) through Black Muslim militants' self-advancement programs and self-defense squads known as the Fruits of Islam, which will earn him the reputation of a racist, demagogic and violent activist. But in spite of the controversies raised by their respective leaderships, attitudes and public outlooks with regard to the racial problem, King and X held and still hold prestige and renown by their outstanding and honorable achievements and legacies.

On the one hand, Martin Luther King successfully led the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955) which ended with the United States District Court ruling in the *Browder v. Gayle* that ended racial segregation on all Montgomery public buses. He founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (1957) that helped African Americans make substantial strides ahead to achieve, among others, the right to vote, desegregation, labor rights and other basic civil rights. Most of these rights were successfully enacted into the law of the United States with passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Moreover, he led many peaceful marches and demonstrations such as the Birmingham Campaign whose goal was to promote civil rights for African Americans and by the end of which Connor lost his job, the 'Jim Crow' signs came down, and public places became more open to Blacks. Moreover, King successfully organized the ever famous March on Washington, D.C., for Jobs and Freedom (1963) with his electrifying 'I Have a Dream' speech which is regarded, along with Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg and Franklin D. Roosevelt's Infamy Speech, as one of the finest speeches in the history of American oratory. Overall, Dr. King was awarded at least 50 honorary degrees from colleges and universities in the U.S. and elsewhere. Besides winning the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, in 1965 King was awarded the American Liberties Medallion by the American Jewish Committee for his 'exceptional advancement of the principles of human liberty'. He was also awarded the Pacem in Terris Award, named after a 1963 encyclical letter by Pope John XXIII calling for all people to strive for peace. In 1966, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America awarded King the Margaret Sanger Award for "his courageous resistance to bigotry and his lifelong dedication to the advancement of social justice and human dignity." He posthumously received the Marcus Garvey Prize for Human Rights by Jamaica in 1968 and the Grammy Award for Best Spoken Word Album for his *Why I Oppose the War in Vietnam* in 1971. Six years later, the Presidential Medal of Freedom was awarded him by President Jimmy Carter. King and his wife were also awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2004. He was second in Gallup's List of Widely Admired People in the 20th century and was named Time Person of the Year in 2000, voted sixth in the Person of the Century poll by the same magazine, and elected third in the Greatest American contest conducted by the Discovery Channel and AOL. More than 730 cities in the United States have streets named after King. King County, Washington rededicated its name in his honor in 1986, and changed its logo to an image of his face in 2007. The city government center in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, is named in honor of King. King is venerated as a saint by the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (feast day April 4th), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (feast day January 15th). In 2012, scholar Molefi Kete Asante listed Martin Luther King, Jr., on his list of 100 Greatest African Americans. Source: *Wikipedia: Martin Luther King, Jr.*

As for Malcolm X, today, many Blacks respect him more than during his lifetime. According to a Newsweek poll conducted in November 1992, fifty-seven percent of Blacks consider him a hero, against six percent in a poll conducted in 1964 by the *New York Times*. The proportion rises to eighty-four percent among black youths between fifteen and twenty-four. For them, strangers to the Churches, Malcolm X is more than anyone an object of admiration in black American history. Some sometimes call him "Saint Malcolm." One only has to walk the streets to feel the profound deference that his image inspires. For the young black people, he embodies their anger against white racism and black middle class, deaf to the groans of their brothers and sisters abandoned in the ghettos. He represents the brazen assertion of their color, a proud attitude. For Blacks unable to get by in a white society, to whom institutional structures tirelessly repeat that they are worthless, Malcolm X is a source of inspiration and the hope that they can be someone in the racist environment of the United States. This fever around Malcolm X in the black community has also made him interesting economically. The "X" has become a symbol of fashion, a desired product, similar to

basketball superstars like Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan. You even see Wall Street professionals wear this symbol while running in Central Park! Watch faces, fans, refrigerators and playing cards display his image. Malcolm's legacy is ongoing. Schools, colleges, and streets have been named for him. He has inspired millions in the United States and abroad.

At the end of this analysis, I understand that the personality traits displayed by King and X during the civil rights movement were the tip of the iceberg. The abstract grounds of the psycho-emotional characters of both activists actually include every experience that influenced or worked towards the development of their respective psycho-emotional characters. As such, I suggest that it would be unrealistic to base any personal or even overall public opinion about King and X's public personalities solely on the presumed popularity, effectiveness or failure of their attitudes, approaches, methods and strategies to tackle the racial issue, or even on their achievements during the civil rights movement, or on their legacy. In the end, one should rather research the abstract, hidden, primary roots that molded their respective characters and psycho-emotional attitudes as sound evidence to explain the public outlooks of their respective personalities regarding the racial issue in the United States.

CONCLUSION

Historically, the American civil rights movement reached a new and decisive phase gathering momentum starting with the bold act of Mrs. Rosa Louise McCauley Parks. This event catapulted Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., to the fore of the Montgomery bus boycott and consequently to the top of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (S.C.L.C). It heralded the beginning of the struggle for civil freedoms, racial equality and social justice across much of twentieth-century America plagued by the ills of racism, segregation and social injustice. But the enigma posed by the American racial issue especially in the North also came into focus as leaders of opinion of African descent came up with ideological options to challenge the established order. Thus, Minister Malcolm X emerged as the most prominent voice of the Nation of Islam, a religious organization that fiercely opposed racial integration and championed racial separation and Black Nationalism. As a matter of fact, the two representatives of the Negro people in the racial context of the United States worked extensively to fight racism, racial segregation, racial discrimination, social injustice and free their race from the manacles of racial hatred, chronic poverty, economic exploitation and cultural morbidity. Throughout most of their crusade, however, they have developed quite antagonistic approaches and strategies to address the racial problem, with Malcolm being fundamentally radical, rejecting integration and encouraging hate of white America and retaliatory violence by way of self-defense while Martin Luther King, Jr., displayed a moderate, pacifist attitude advocating racial equality and integration, social justice, equal opportunities, and was successful in challenging the central government to pass legislation for comprehensive social reforms with nationwide impact.

Meanwhile, for one reason or another, the U.S. and even the international audience has been far more favorable to Martin Luther King than it has been to Malcolm X, making King appear as a racial icon, a much celebrated social hero for his groundbreaking contributions to desegregation and racial integration in America. He is celebrated as a bold and famous civil rights activist of international reach, the historic redeemer of the American Negro people. At the same time, Malcolm X is categorized as the champion of both verbal and physical violence and racial hatred against white America. In short, the present paper has sought to contrast the respective backgrounds of each protagonist with classic public opinion so as to shed light on the relevant factors that decisively interacted or otherwise combined to affect their psycho-emotional development

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