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**CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVISM IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:
A NEW INTERPRETATIVE AND CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF
THE PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL CHARACTERS OF
MARTIN LUTHER KING, Jr., AND MALCOLM X.**

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DEDICATION

To God Almighty
To my beloved parents and relatives

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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 responsibility 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 reform. Martin Luther King, Jr., developed an integrationist and nonviolent approach, while Malcolm X advocated separatism and black nationalism. 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. Indeed, American and even international public opinion pays one activist a more honorable tribute than it does the other as a result of their overall reactions to the racial context; then King appears to enjoy a lasting popularity while X scarcely ever comes to memory in mainstream America and beyond US borders. The present study has striven to work out the fundamental rationales behind the leadership patterns of both characters in line with the internal factors and external factors that combined and otherwise indirectly interacted with one another to shape

the respective personalities of King and X, functioning as the relevant, original premises upon which public opinion should objectively rest.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1. Statement of the problem

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. These were pejoratively referred to as Niggers by virtue of Jim Crow. 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. The social atmosphere then was one in which white people believed themselves to be superior to black people in right, dignity and social status; a feeling which survived the bygone days of the peculiar institution: slavery (1619-1865). 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. Entire communities, suburbs and neighborhoods were ruled by color bar. The black citizens were often charged with breach of the law and frequently jailed, lynched, hanged, murdered, or in some notable cases, burned alive. Meanwhile, in the North they were confined to filthy ghettos and heavily exploited economically by brazen greedy white property

owners and profit-thirsty white store owners (mostly Jews) in an atmosphere of hypocritical integration. In most northern states, they still were denied access to white city sections unless as house workers and were forced to do menial jobs if any, or generally turned to vice to make both ends meet.

Indeed, the bulk of African Americans were hard hit by dire poverty, rampant unemployment, inadequate housing, unhealthiness, poor literacy, and were denied most fundamental constitutional rights such as the voting right enjoyed by white people, except poor white people who were the other ironical underdogs of the American Dream. Crime was rife among the black minority as a result of the above-described atmosphere. 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, the intrepid icons of the American civil rights campaign: Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., a.k.a. MLK, and Minister Malcolm Little, publicly known as Malcolm X.

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. This devoted seamstress who was exhausted after a grueling work day turned down an order by a bus driver to relinquish her seat to a white passenger and was arrested instead paving the way for 382 days of boycott of public transport in Montgomery, Alabama successfully led by young

Dr. King. This laid the foundations of the new generation civil rights struggle fought with tear and blood by scores of African American generations through the nonviolence strategy to recover their constitutional rights, civil liberties and freedoms, restore their dignity by standing up for social reform across the country.

His counterpart, Minister Malcolm X, 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. However, X would later review his stance in the evening of his life by rejecting separatism and leaning toward collaboration with the civil rights movement after a pilgrimage to Mecca that revealed much about what racial relations were then outside of the United States. 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.

Martin Luther King, Jr., of black middle class background, was born and raised in a Christian family where his great-grandfather, grandfather, father, his uncle, and his only brother had been/were Baptist pastors. He was surrounded by loving parents and relatives keen on teaching the little child to abide by the godly principles of unconditional love and forgiveness of the enemy. During his

study years at Morehouse College, the Crozer Theological Seminary and Boston University respectively, he was later introduced, through reading, to the teachings of Henry David Thoreau, the advocate of civil disobedience, and Mohandas Gandhi, a.k.a. Mahatma Gandhi, the late Indian independence activist who successfully led his country to independence from the British through nonviolence and pacific resistance. This very doctrine that advocates quenching the sulfurous fire of violence and injustice with the overwhelming power of love and justice would later on become his strategic weapon in the struggle for universal civil rights in the United States of America until his death on April 4th, 1968.

Malcolm X, on the other hand, was born to a Baptist preacher and a mulatto housewife, the seventh child of a family of eight. Malcolm X has day in day out been haunted by violence and social injustice from the maternal womb on. Indeed, one night when his mother was pregnant with him, as he would be told later, the window panes of their house were shattered in the middle of the night by a party of hooded members of the Ku Klux Klan. These were looking for his father, who was accused of causing trouble among the good Negroes by spreading word of Marcus Garvey's movement but was then away on a preaching assignment. The family moved house and settled a few miles away in Milwaukee and a bit later this other house was set on fire, with the whole family stumbling out half-naked in the open in the middle of the night and with, ironically, white firemen watching in utter indifference as the house burned

down to ashes. Malcolm was only four years old then. As a child he learned earlier on that four of his father's six brothers had been killed by white men, including one by lynching. Of the remaining two, one has later been shot by northern white police. One morning at age 7 Malcolm X got news of his father's death, apparently at the hands of the white supremacy (the Black Legion) with his head crushed in, and his corpse laid across the railroad. In the aftermaths of his father's death, the family lived in utmost poverty and financial insecurity and his mother was forced to work desperately as a homemaker for a while, carrying alone the burden of the bread winner but was repeatedly fired by racist employers whenever it was found out that she had a drop of black blood in her veins. Louise Little suffered a severe cerebral breakdown due to the moral persecution and harassment of rude social assistance agents and became mentally insane, unable to communicate with her own offspring in a clear language and to take care of the messy household. She eventually landed in a psychiatric center, cut off from her own children for twenty-seven years before passing on. Meanwhile, X and his siblings were placed against their mother's will into foster families to be educated. At school, the young boy would one day be disappointed by his English teacher who would advise him to do carpentry instead of dreaming of becoming a lawyer, despite the fact that he did better than every white classmate in that specific subject. After dropping out, X drifted towards urban Boston in the quest of a professional career and was instead trapped into ghetto vices of every kind: drug trafficking, steering clients to

prostitutes, robbery, and ended up in jail where his siblings would later introduce him to the teachings of Mr. Elijah Muhammad, the notoriously famed leader of the Nation of Islam whose philosophy was based on the belief that Islam was the only true religion that could lead African Americans to actual freedom and redemption, and heal the centuries-long wounds left by slavery, racism and segregation, the belief in the superiority of the black race over the white race and that white man was the arch enemy of the African American, the utter representation of evil, not to say the devil itself. This is the turning point where X started to consider the racial issue more earnestly, turned unflinchingly radical and believed that the best solution to racism and for improving the fate of the black American people was radical separation from white America and defensive, not offensive, violence in words and in deeds through active Black Muslim militancy.

As a result of the above situation with regard to their social legacies relative to the opposite and fundamentally contradictory ideologies, strategies and approaches that they developed during the civil rights campaign, each of the two activists has greatly influenced public opinion within and outside of the United States, Martin Luther King, Jr., more so than his counterpart, Malcolm X. Indeed, evidence based on polls data and ordinary public opinion suggest that the overwhelming majority of people are more supportive of the leadership pattern of Martin Luther King, Jr., than they are of the model that was developed by Malcolm X. But such public opinion is based solely on some hypothetical

soundness and efficiency of these ideologies, approaches and strategies both leaders stood for throughout the struggle, making believe as they generally do that King has been a better and more effective leader than X, and causes prejudice by leaving out relevant factors such as their respective social backgrounds and other key experiences and milestones that helped shape their psycho-emotional personalities with respect to the racial atmosphere in the United States.

2- Objective of the paper

With respect to the above, the present paper is an academic endeavor with the aim of 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. In other words, it aims at researching the grounds or the abstract roots of their individual emotional characters that have affected their psychology, philosophy and social demeanor during the civil rights struggle, and interpreting them in light of and in contrast to received public opinion for a better knowledge and understanding of the real roots of their psycho-emotional personalities. As such, my study will, to the body of knowledge, contribute a deeper and more accurate understanding of their individual outlooks throughout the civil rights campaign.

Additionally, the paper is expected to potentially be an accessible material to students of psychology as well as individual scholars concerned with the two

most renowned civil rights leaders in twentieth-century American history applied to racial relations. As a matter of fact, I intend, here, to introduce people to the fundamental ways in which one's family, social, educational and religious backgrounds as agents inherent to one's individual identity can potentially affect one's overall psycho-emotional outlook and social legacy.

3-Scope of the subject

Though it can be viewed as a descriptive study of both characters in essence, that is, King and X, the present study is by extension meant to provide an overall rationale for their emotional legacies through a contrastive analysis of the relevant factors that affected their psycho-emotional development, and to provide contemporary and future generations of academia, scholars, researchers, students, and the general public with not just a classic portrait of each leader but a vivid presentation of the deep and subtle driving forces underlying their psycho-emotional outlooks and leadership patterns. Thus, the paper has focused on the experiences, whether negative or positive, that influenced King and X and helped shape their respective psycho-emotional attitudes and their leadership patterns during the civil rights struggle.

4- Overview of chapters

The layout of the paper features an introduction that sets the context of the study, presents its purpose and significance and the thematic components (internal factors and external factors) upon which the whole development

hinges. Next, it presents and assesses study-related literature and existing developments outlining different approaches on the topic while also announcing the overall structural articulation. The paper unfolds over eight chapters. Chapter One introduces the whole work whereas Chapter Two reviews existing scholarly works associated with the topic under consideration. Chapter Three explains the methodology adopted for the paper while Chapter Four highlights the internal and external agents that significantly impacted the psycho-emotional development and public outlooks of King and X. Chapter Five elaborates on the impact of the internal and external factors on the psycho-emotional development and leadership patterns of King whereas the next chapter brings X into focus, with both chapters representing a transition towards Chapter Seven which stands as the analytical core of the paper featuring a contrastive rationale of the impact of the internal and external factors on the psycho-emotional development of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X. Chapter Eight synthesizes the entire work.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1-Lewis V. Baldwin and James H. Cone

Lewis V. Baldwin (an assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Vanderbilt University, United States) is one among various scholars that have devoted their pens to articles, books and publications on the comparative study of the public personalities of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X during the civil rights struggle based on their respective social, religious, educational, ideological and philosophical backgrounds. In his book entitled *King*, Baldwin has devoted an entire section to the particular relationship that existed between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., as opposed to the wrong image the media has created, and beyond the classic view that public opinion has often held about the two leaders, which is the fundamental reason behind my undertaking of the present work aimed at bringing to light and explaining the actual, abstract roots of the personalities of both leaders with respect to the influence of relevant experiences in the racial atmosphere then in the United States.

In the section of the book entitled *Malcolm X and Martin Luther, Jr.: A Reassessment of the Relationship Between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Baldwin emphatically points out that Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., are perceived as having stood at opposite ends on the spectrum of Black

leadership, representing profoundly different organizations and political-religious perspectives. As he observed, the disagreements of King and X concerning love and hate, violence and nonviolence, separatism and integration, and the relevancy of the Christian faith in the Black freedom struggle not only prevented them from becoming closely connected by friendship or association, but were also of considerable importance in determining how they viewed and related to each other. “Such disagreements,” writes Baldwin, “have left many with the impression that Malcolm and King were adversaries in a great Manichaeian contest, the forces of light against the forces of darkness, with the future course of black protest at stake.”¹ This image has been created in the public imagination by the American mass media and reinforced in the writings of misinformed scholars, and, therefore, must not be taken seriously by those who wish to understand the true nature of Malcolm’s and King’s relationship, as well as their meaning and significance for the black struggle. Baldwin postulates that despite their many differences – religiously, philosophically, politically, and organizationally – Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, both ministers, were drawn together in a dialectic of social activism by the nourishment they shared in the Black folk tradition, by their common devotion to the liberation of the oppressed, by the ideas and convictions they shared, by the personal admiration

¹ Baldwin, James. “*Malcolm and Martin.*” *Esquire*, LXXVII (April, 1972). Print.

and respect they had for each other, and by the impelling moral, spiritual, and intellectual power they received from each other.

Baldwin claims that despite the enormous differences between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King relative to their levels of education, statuses, and achievements, they were unified in terms of their essential quality of caring and in their commitment to the struggles of the oppressed. He postulates that the philosophies of both leaders were essentially the same in terms of their belief in and devotion to the human community and that for this reason their contributions and their legacies cannot be evaluated and appreciated separately. In other words, one cannot truly honor King without also honoring Malcolm. But for the ordinary people, Baldwin's appraisal of the relationship that existed between Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X potentially makes believe that the two civil rights activists almost shared the same philosophies, sought to collaborate sometimes or if not most of the time, and mutually cared for each other's interests on several issues or occasions. But this image also bluntly contrasts with most of their biographical accounts through which one clearly realizes that a line was drawn between both leaders on the racial issue, though with a perceptible loosening of X's stance near the end of his life that otherwise suggests a one-way reconciliation between them: X perceptibly bent towards King, never the other way around. According to me, however, even though their aim was the same, they were not only socially divided but also ideologically, philosophically, and strategically opposed in nature. So from my personal

analysis, the only common feature they shared was their genuine, unflinching dedication to the black cause, but from completely diverging, diametrically opposed, contradictory perspectives. Therefore, while it points out notable commonalities shared by King and X, the loophole in Baldwin's development lies in his excessive insistence on what brought both protagonists together in the freedom struggle, rather than also realistically spelling out the black spots that posed a constant challenge to their cooperation or collaboration as regards the racial issue.

The Black American theologian James H. Cone is another scholar who has made substantial contribution to understanding the driving forces behind the personalities of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X during the civil rights struggle. *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare* is a book that takes an in-depth look at Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, their ties to each other and what they meant to the American society. According to him, before we can understand why Martin and Malcolm developed such varying views on civil rights, we must first understand the details of the social and economic lifestyles that each man was raised in. Cone explains that through their personal backgrounds, Martin's stable family and financial security where he was protected from racism as opposed to Malcolm whose family was broken and economically deprived are what caused one to become an integrationist and the other a nationalist. He claims that their religious backgrounds shaped their opinions on the American society. He shows that his Christian background and

its teachings to love everyone, including enemies formed Martin's concepts such as “the dream”, “nonviolent protest”, and love of the enemy. On the other hand, Martin's ideas were shaped by the emphasis of the Black Church and their comparison of themselves to the Hebrews of the Old Testament and their past as slaves. Their belief that God would deliver them and lead them to a Promised Land gave King the inspiration to preach of an “American dream” for black people.

Cone's discussion involves the religious background that shaped Malcolm's theories and ideas, the reasons why Muslim beliefs were so easy for him to accept. He also explains how these two leaders' religious beliefs and varying theories began to shape the African Americans' view on which way freedom could be best achieved in the 1960s. The different social and economic backgrounds are what led these two men to practice their respective religions and what would lead them to develop their very different philosophies on America and how freedom for African Americans could best be achieved. Cone's major premise is that both Martin Luther King's and Malcolm X's philosophies were shaped by their respective social and religious backgrounds. To prove his point, Cone delves back into both men's early beginnings to explain why one man would later believe in African Americans having a future in America while the other believed that they should begin their own country. By discussing the early lives of Martin and Malcolm, he tries to show why one man was led to Christianity and the other to the Nation of Islam. From this, Cone

builds his argument that each man's approach to civil rights was influenced greatly by their personal backgrounds. In my opinion, his argument is very convincing but it is also very true. Our family backgrounds and experiences do affect which religion we choose to participate in. Therefore, Cone's argument is very acceptable that both Martin's and Malcolm's philosophies were developed from personal experiences and their respective religions.

Indeed, Cone describes the Nation of Islam of the 1960s as a religion that appealed to the African Americans who lived in the North and dealt with a more hidden type of racism than in the South. It appealed to those Blacks that felt nothing but hopelessness and were surrounded by nothing but ghettos, prostitution, drugs, jail and death. It also appealed to the African Americans that saw nothing good in the American society and felt as though they would never be accepted by the white society.

Nation of Islam beliefs such as the African race being the chosen people of God and meant to rule their own country, as well as the fact that the white man was a devil that would eventually be destroyed were something that appealed to the inner city African American. Drugs, jail, and the ghettos were situations that Malcolm could relate to, which Cone explains were the reasons why Malcolm became such a loyal follower of the Nation and of Elijah Muhammad.

Cone's description of Christianity in the 1960s showed a religion that appealed to those African Americans that faced racism that was more open in

the South than in the North. As a matter of fact it appealed to those Blacks who had a strong faith that all of their problems would eventually be worked out. It also appealed to those who believed that America was a land where they could succeed. Christianity also taught, Cone explains, that by loving the enemy as Jesus did when he was oppressed, only then would the oppressor be converted into believing that segregation was unjust. His explanation of Christian beliefs shows that it appealed to the optimistic African American. He also shows that this optimism as well as this strong belief that God would deliver was instilled in King from the time he was born. King was raised in a family of renowned Baptist ministers and activists, so he had always been taught that African Americans could make it in the American society. Cone shows that because of the atmosphere King was raised in, Christianity and optimistic beliefs such as integration and freedom were an easy transition for him.

At a further level, Cone's portrayal of both religious groups is also very objective. He shows how these two religions influenced both King's and X's thinking. He discusses the lives and religions of these two men and objectively looks at their philosophies as well. Never once does he compare one man's belief or philosophies to each other, nor does he offer any more or any less on either man. He does not criticize their views but instead offers each man's position with an unopinionated tone. Cone does not portray any of the two protagonists as being more effective or praiseworthy than the other in terms of their ideologies, methods, strategies, achievements or legacy but instead he offers a

realistic insight into the two most important American civil rights leaders of the past century.

In the end, according to me, one may consider Baldwin's and Cone's contributions to the understanding of the respective personalities of King and X and of their overall leadership patterns as being complementary. While Baldwin focuses his analysis on the relationship between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Cone considers the different agents (whether social, economic, educational or religious) that influenced their psycho-emotional development, their character patterns, public outlooks, leadership approaches, strategies to achieve social reform, and, at least in X's case, their choice of a religion. Baldwin highlights the fallacious media-generated portraits of both leaders and shifts to a flat, objective exposure of the differences and commonalities that both civil rights leaders shared in earnest. Cone, on the other hand, points to their various experiences with the racial environment that remarkably influenced their religious perspectives thus setting the tone of their ideologies, leadership models, and strategies throughout the freedom struggle.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on an analytical, interpretative and contrastive approach that consisted in the collection, analysis and interpretation of textual facts, data, and notes related to the circumstances, events and experiences in their respective immediate and remote social environments that affected or influenced the psycho-emotional development of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X with regard to segregation and racial discrimination in the United States. These helped to shape their psycho-emotional outlooks and the types of personalities they displayed during the civil rights struggle, and also how these consequently influenced their respective approaches, strategies and stances with regard to the racial problem. Indeed, the aforementioned approach proceeds from comprehensive reading, analysis and interpretation of various topic-related works, especially the autobiography of each protagonist, that provide critical information on specific experiences, events or circumstances inside or outside of their respective family circles that have impacted their psycho-emotional development with regard to the racial context. In the process, I have paid many visits to the library of the American Cultural Center in Cotonou where I borrowed various books (the two major ones being the respective autobiographies of King and X) and other side resources dealing with or related to the topic under development. As an additional source, I have tapped into the

Internet not only to download, view and analyze various articles related to King and X but also to collect and process relevant facts that accurately document the topic under consideration. Primarily, however, excerpts from the respective autobiographies of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X featuring the internal and external factors that have affected or may potentially have affected the psycho-emotional attitudes of King and X towards the racial environment have been analyzed, interpreted and highlighted. On the other hand, the descriptive, interpretative and contrastive study has mainly emphasized the fundamental elements upon which the psycho-emotional personalities of King and X are built, and has contrasted these elements in the seventh chapter to provide overall rationales of their respective psycho-emotional characters with respect to classic public opinion.

CHAPTER FOUR:

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS

As I have realized through the reading of their respective autobiographies, much happened in the lives of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X that has affected their psycho-emotional development as children, teens and youths with a far-reaching influence on their public outlooks and leadership approaches to the civil rights struggle in the United States. These are abstract elements often left unconsidered by public opinion that have to do with events and experiences within and outside of their respective inner circles which had a remarkable impact on their psycho-emotional development. For clarity reasons such experiences have been referred to respectively as the internal and the external factors within the framework of the present study.

As a matter of fact, the internal factors as mentioned earlier on in the abstract to this paper are agents related to the family background and/or childhood environment (inherited social background, the moral, emotional and spiritual inputs of parents and other third parties from the own family, etc.), and include the experiences related to the family environment which have played a significant role in the formation of the psycho-emotional character of the individual leader. They are so termed because they emanate from the inner circle of each protagonist, King and X for instance, and stand for the primary modifiers of their respective personalities. They interfere with and influence the

trending behavioral outlook of a child or young person by making it steadily into an overall pattern that is to a significant extent very much likely to determine their future character, though in the case of King and X some milestones occurred in young adulthood that left an indelible impact on their psycho-emotional attitudes. In short, the trending character of the individual as a child or young person relatively accurately pre-indicates their future personality as a grown up or adult. In other words, the environment in which a person has lived and the circumstances under which he has evolved during his childhood or prime youth account for much of his/her future moral disposition, emotional makeup, behavioral pattern and life ethos. In the case study, as will be explained further below, it is important to note that King and X formed their respective approaches to the struggle for racial justice and social reform not at their adult ages when they already were at leadership positions, but rather in their respective childhood, teenage and early youth when critical experiences opened their eyes to the established social order and to the racial environment. In fact, the internal factors (as much as the external ones) act as stimulating agents exerting an unconscious pressure on the psychic nomenclature of an individual by influencing and/or stirring their behaviors, urges, and drives, and by placing their mind into a given thinking framework as a reflection of the influence of all the past experiences and present circumstances associated with them, thus making the individual develop a potentially predictable character that is likely to produce a future personality along the lines of that early character which, in

essence, is unique to the individual. As seen throughout the paper, those elements have left an indelible mark in the psycho-emotional outlooks and leadership patterns of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X as civil rights activists and leaders on the racial agenda of their era.

The external factors, on the other hand, are those outside of the inner circle of the protagonist. They are to be seen in the outer world, the social environment, any events or circumstances, any educational, intellectual, religious or spiritual experiences, encounters with moral persons, either abstract or concrete, who have had a substantial influence or played a remarkable role in framing the character pattern and psycho-emotional personalities of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X as civil rights activists later in life. In other words, both King and X had been substantially influenced by experiences in their youth outside of the family environment which account a great deal for their character patterns and personality outlooks as activists and leaders of the American civil rights struggle. These experiences are related to the prevailing social atmosphere, to what race relations were then in the United States while also applying to any educational, intellectual, and/or spiritual influence they had come under while growing up.

In light of the foregoing, the overall goal of the present paper is to bring forth the relevant elements that have fundamentally influenced the psycho-emotional development of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X respectively, and had an impact on their emotional personalities and leadership patterns as

civil rights activists from the mid-50s to the late 60s in the United States of America. The approach has also consisted in contrasting these elements analytically with ordinarily received, much spread opinions about both leaders for a better knowledge and understanding of their psycho-emotional outlooks during the civil rights campaign. Thus, the outcomes of this academic elaboration are twofold and are viewed in terms of the contribution that they may potentially bring and the challenges that they may pose to classic opinions about the personalities and leadership styles of King, Jr., and X during the freedom struggle. They can be stated as follows:

- I- The root factors which have affected the psycho-emotional development of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, and that are relevant for an accurate understanding of their psycho-emotional outlooks have been clearly exposed, thoroughly highlighted and are better known to scholars as well as the general public.
- II- These factors have been effectively contrasted with respect to received opinions about both activists to provide a sound rationale of their impact on the emotional outlooks of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X during the civil rights struggle.

The outcomes above carry the potential of bringing about a renewed and perhaps more informed psychological awareness of the primary socio-economic agents that channeled the psycho-emotional development of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X. Seen from that angle, these agents are critical clues to

getting a primordial, accurate overview of the emotional personality of each leader. Moreover, they help to get a flawless understanding of the ideological, philosophical and strategic motivations of both activists during the civil rights struggle, and can additionally serve as good starting points to efficiently assess their respective leadership style and social legacy with respect to the comprehensive impact of the internal and external factors on their psycho-emotional development. With that in mind, the paper is projected as an eye-opener assigned with the specific purpose of helping the general public and other third parties to rearrange their often unfounded, misconceived ideas, views and opinions about the public outlooks and personalities of King and X. It is intended to simply help them be better informed about and have a realistic picture of the ideologies, approaches, strategies, leadership patterns and social legacies of King and X with respect to their early experiences as well as their social, economic and religious backgrounds.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS ON THE PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (JANUARY 15, 1929-APRIL 4, 1968)

5.1.1-The family background

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:

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...²

King 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

²Carson, Clayborne. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York & Boston. IPM: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Grand Central Publishing, 1998. Print. 5.

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. Thus, the material weakness of his parents could have induced a potential moral weakness that otherwise would have made them unlikely to have control and authority over the moves of their growing child to some significant extent, as is sometimes the case in poor or extremely poor families. As a matter of fact, these vices can be seen as symptoms of moral deficiency often caused by material insecurity which was the lot of most African American families during that dark episode in the history of the United States. These conditions could have rubbed off on King's mind as a young child had he been born therein. So King's material comfort was a byword for psycho-emotional health in supplement of his natural endowments:

From the very beginning I was an extraordinarily healthy child. [...] I hardly know how an ill moment feels. I guess the same thing would apply to my mental life. [...] So it seems that from a hereditary point of view, nature was very kind to me.³

By the same token, as opposed to most black neighborhoods where crime and insecurity were often rife, King grew up in a relatively safe environment where close interaction with neighbors and easy socialization (except for a

³Ibid. Print.2.

couple of isolated incidents with the white community as a result of segregation) were further made possible and permanently nurtured by shared Christian faith and devotion: “Crime was at a minimum, and most of our neighbors were deeply religious.”⁴ Such was the social background that King inherited as a young child, which played an important role in shaping his psycho-emotional character as a rather moderate activist and leader even in the face of adversity and violence. But the influence of his close neighborhood on King was practically an outgrowth of the enjoyable, traditional Christian family environment in which he was raised.

Martin Luther King, Jr., was born into a Christian family whose genealogical structure had a substantial bearing on his spiritual education as a whole. This genealogical structure provided the ideal framework for his spiritual development and considerably influenced his decision to become a minister, thereby predisposing him to later adopt a much softer approach to the civil rights campaign:

Of course I was religious. I grew up in the church. My father is a preacher, my grandfather was a preacher, my great-grandfather was a preacher, my only brother is a preacher, and my daddy's brother is a preacher. So I didn't have much choice.⁵

His family structure relatively had the same influence on King's vocational choice to work as a minister as it did on his psycho-emotional

⁴Ibid. Print.2.

⁵Ibid. Print.2.

attitude as a young person. At five, King was introduced to Sunday school along with his sister as was the custom in the Baptist Church. He was a faithful and assiduous student often sitting on the front seats in order to be directly exposed to the teachings and stand out in the audience, a behavior which can be interpreted as a show of dedication and commitment. But at that level as a child King was certainly unconscious of what was taking place in his life. With time, however, he started to develop a rather uncommon (unlikely because of his young age then) aspiration to resemble Jesus Christ. Quite often he would hum his favorite song *I want to be more and more like Jesus*. As a matter of fact, his early religious experiences in a great proportion wielded much influence on his spiritual development and on his psycho-emotional character as a child aspiring to emulate the Christ. King wanted to take after Jesus in all aspects, especially in that which could be said to be one of the most challenging of the Christian faith and to human relations as a whole, that which advocates unconditional love and forgiveness of the enemy. Resembling Jesus Christ and applying his recommendations concerning the Christian doctrine of love would then become the central concern and the driving force of his non-violence strategy, and the reason that he adopted this approach to achieve social reform during the civil rights campaign: “Christ had furnished the spirit while Gandhi had provided the method.”⁶

⁶Ansbro, Jon J. *Martin Luther King, Jr., The Marking of a Mind*. New York. Library of Congress, 1982. Print. 150.

On the other hand, when he was on the frontline of the civil rights movement his Christian background as a minister put King in a rather challenging situation as a spiritual authority and a moral person, and as such he would not have been allowed to drift away from the principle of unconditional love and choose violent confrontation instead had he personally considered that path. In fact, it would have been a rather controversial option and would have jeopardized his career both as a minister and as an activist bearing the hopes of freedom and social justice for millions of African American citizens and other underprivileged sections of the American population, because then it would have caused dissent among white liberals, sympathizers and fellow white clergy(white clergy eventually questioned his good faith with regard to his demonstrations during the Birmingham campaign) who would have questioned his commitment to social peace and racial cohabitation motivated by the abovementioned golden rule of the Christian faith that recommends forgiveness and endurance of unearned suffering. King, by principle, believed that there could be no solution to segregation and racial discrimination but a peaceful one. In a sermon at the Riverside Church in New York City in 1967 and on another public occasion he would much later reaffirm his commitment to follow that doctrine regardless of adversity: “We will return good for evil. We will love our enemies. Christ showed us the way and Gandhi showed it could work.”⁷ The preceding statement, which features King's commitment to genuine love in

⁷Ansbro, Jon J. *Martin Luther King, Jr., The Marking of a Mind*. New York. Library of Congress, 1982. Print. 215.

human relations transposed into the freedom struggle well shows that even though the nonviolent approach that he advocated and adopted in the struggle to achieve universal civil rights for African Americans was an undisputable token of Gandhi's influence, Jesus' spiritual authority over him as a Christian was a far greater one and by far the most significant element, the motivating factor, the driving force of his career as an activist. As a matter of fact, the influence of the spiritual figure on King's psycho-emotional life and character pattern traces back to his early childhood's aspiration to take after Jesus. In short, Jesus was the bedrock upon which his stance was grounded, the cornerstone on which his nonviolence ideology hinged, and this was the impact of his religious education.

5.1.2-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 King from the outset. Even in this southern social environment heavily packed with racial tensions bred by segregation King was always lovingly urged by his parents not to hate the white people who were discriminating against his race, but to love them instead:

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.⁸

Thus, from the beginning, even as he and his parents had had a set of painful experiences on account of segregation and racial discrimination, King was often objectively, rationally and realistically made aware of the prevailing social atmosphere in light of his Christian faith, and 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

⁸Carson, Clayborne. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York & Boston. IPM: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Grand Central Publishing, 1998. Print. 7.

he was a proverbial victim. So King was to hate the system, not the white people who were manipulated by the system. He was to show genuine love that softens the hardest of hearts, breaks racial ego and dismantles social injustices of all kinds, not hatred that breeds even more hatred in an endless chaos-cycle of violence, retaliation and isolation. By virtue of his Christian faith, he was to show forgiveness, peacefulness and reconciliation that re-unite a nation divided against herself and against her own children, black and white alike, and not fire back or retaliate whatever the blow of the enemy may be. This was a scriptural recommendation based on the Christian doctrine of love. For that very reason fundamentally King would apply an integrationist approach to his social crusade against segregation and racial discrimination by not excluding membership of white people in his public demonstrations and rallies to achieve social reform, believing as he did that the racial problem was primarily a spiritual matter and had to be addressed as such rather than through force and violence which would only broaden the racial and social chasm and add to the miseries of the African American population which would then only meet a disproportionate and overwhelming counter wave of oppressive measures from the segregationists. In this context, any chances for the African American community to win substantial victories and get their cause across against white America were potentially mere illusions, and were perhaps in the ratio of one to seven or two to ten, taking into account the size of the black population at that time. Thus, using violence was (would be) counterproductive according to King, and could

not help the cause of the oppressed. He had to change the mentality of the enemy in order to change their behaviors. He had to change their hearts so that their evil deeds could change. He had to change the spirit positively in order to expect a positive disposition of the body.

Meanwhile, talking of the role that King's parents have played in shaping his emotional attitude towards the racial atmosphere, as a general rule, it can be argued that to a relatively considerable extent, children are the products of the combined influences of their parents as moral, emotional and spiritual role models, and this is a determining factor which has greatly contributed to King's stable mental attitude and to his emotional balance as a child born and raised in a typical Christian environment where love was the central theme that cemented relationships, and later as a civil rights activist:

My home situation was very congenial. I have a marvelous mother and father. I can hardly remember a time that they ever argued (my mother happens to be the kind who just won't argue) or had any great falling out. These factors were highly significant in determining my religious attitudes. It is quite easy for me to think of a God of love mainly because I grew up in a family where love was central and where lovely relationships were ever present. It is quite easy for me to think of the universe as basically friendly mainly because of my hereditary and emotional circumstances. It is quite easy for me to lean more toward optimism about human nature mainly because of my childhood experiences.⁹

King's mother, Alberta Williams King, the daughter of A. D. Williams, a successful minister, was raised in a comfortable family environment comparable to that of King himself. As a single child, she was treasured by her parents and all of her needs were provided for. "She attended the best available schools and

⁹Ibid. 2-3.

college and was, on the whole, protected from the worst blights of discrimination in the segregationist South.”¹⁰ But even as she grew up under relatively comfortable circumstances, Alberta King did not tolerate the social system of segregation and made it a personal moral commitment and a daily assignment to instill a sense of human dignity and self-respect in her children, including King, from the outset:

My mother confronted the age-old problem of the Negro parent in America: how to explain discrimination and segregation to a small child. She taught me that I should feel a sense of ‘somebodiness’ but that on the other hand I had to go out and face a system that stared me in the face every day saying you are ‘less than,’ you are ‘not equal to.’ [...] She tried to explain the divided system of the South - the segregated schools, restaurants, theaters, housing; the white and colored signs on drinking fountains, waiting rooms, lavatories - as a social condition rather than a natural order. She made it clear that she opposed this system and that I must never allow it to make me feel inferior. Then she said the words that almost every Negro hears before he can yet understand the injustice that makes them necessary: ‘You are as good as anyone.’ At this time Mother had no idea that the little boy in her arms would years later be involved in a struggle against the system she was speaking of.¹¹

The quote above gives us an overview of which part King's mother had played in shaping his mind and consciousness about the racial issue. In his early childhood, King, as said previously, was made conscious of the system of segregation and its corollary of racial discrimination as suggested by the last sentence of the quote, and was encouraged to put on a complex-free mental attitude that banished self-consciousness as a black person seen as a sign of racial inferiority, an attitude that defied the established system of segregation

¹⁰Ibid., 3.

¹¹Ibid., 3-4.

and racial discrimination and featured a bold claim for dignity and equal standing both as a person and as a full citizen endowed with the same rights and privileges as provided by the Creator, and as a human entity entitled to every opportunity society offers. As a consequence, King would be encouraged to reject the inferiority complex and uncompromisingly put himself on the same footing with any white person. This would give him a sense of worth or somebodiness and open up his mind to seeking actual expression of human dignity in his social sphere, and of rightful indignation against racial discrimination as a whole. This attitude on his part was a rather moderate tendency taken down from his father's much dreaded outward mood.

Martin Luther King, Sr., son of a sharecropper, was a man of very strong physical build. His interest in civil rights earned him the chairmanship of the N.A.A.C.P. (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in Atlanta and he had always fought against racial discrimination and for social change. Even before King was born, his father had refused to ride the city buses after witnessing a brutal attack on a group of Negro passengers. He led the fight in Atlanta to equalize teachers' salaries and was instrumental in the elimination of Jim Crow elevators in the courthouse. He was an outspoken person firsthand and a very courageous individual who never feared the autocratic people and brutality in the white community. He would not accept any insulting or degrading words from anyone be they from the white community. His outspokenness commanded astonishment, respect and even fear from white

people, even though he was but a black fellow. Being adamant to fight segregation and racial discrimination, he had a somewhat revolutionary mindset towards the social order and would bluntly make it known to anyone who would lend their ears. This attitude on the part of Martin Luther King, Sr., towards the racial context had had a considerable influence on the mindset and consciousness of his son:

The thing that I admire most about my dad is his genuine Christian character. He is a man of real integrity, deeply committed to moral and ethical principles. He is conscientious in all of his undertakings. Even the person who disagrees with his frankness has to admit that his moves and actions are sincere. He never hesitates to tell the truth and speak his mind, however cutting it may be. This quality of frankness has often caused people to actually fear him. I have had young and old alike say to me, '[I'm scared to death of your dad].' Indeed, he is stern at any point.¹²

By way of illustration, a few incidents have been used to document the above-mentioned attitude of King's father.

Already at an early age Martin Luther King, Sr., was not one who would mince his words. When he was young, his parents had their home in a little town named Stockbridge in Georgia. While working on the plantation with his father he angered the boss by keenly observing that the latter was cheating his father out of some hard-earned money.

Besides the above, a couple other incidents happened involving King, Sr., which had influenced Martin Luther King's attitude towards the racial issue from his childhood on. These incidents will be addressed later in the paper as part of

¹²Carson, Clayborne. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York & Boston. IPM: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Grand Central Publishing, 1998. Print. 4-5.

the external factors which influenced King's mind. However, it is worth referring to them under this section as they also provide substantial information about the internal factors in terms of the influence of the emotional character of Martin Luther King, Sr., on his son's psycho-emotional development as a child and much later in his career as an activist.

One day as they went into a shoe store and were sitting on the first empty seats, King and his father were somewhat politely asked by the attending clerk to move to the back seats until they were catered to, and when they declined, the clerk insisted, whereupon his father flatly retorted: "We'll either buy shoes sitting here or we won't buy shoes at all."¹³In a move to express his anger at the humiliating system of segregation, Martin Luther King, Sr., took his son by the hand and walked out of the store, murmuring as they were walking down the street: "I don't care how long I have to live with this system, I will never accept it".¹⁴This rather common experience at that time opposing a black fellow to a white racist clerk in a segregationist store drew a blunt and forceful reaction from Father King, which in most cases was quite unpredictable and would seem quite unconceivable to most Negro children of his time, but for King, it was rather edifying insomuch as it opened his eyes to the fact that even his own father was firmly opposed to the system, which, as one can imagine, had

¹³Carson, Clayborne. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York & Boston. IPM: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Grand Central Publishing, 1998. Print. 8.

¹⁴Ibid., 8.

profoundly touched his conscience and challenged his perception of the established order. King undoubtedly also challenged the order from within:

That experience revealed to me at a very early age that my father had not adjusted to the system, and he played a great part in shaping my conscience.¹⁵

From the foregoing, it is obvious that King's conscience regarding the racial issue was already formed, most remarkably along the lines of his father's which was merely motivated by a claim for human dignity and equal treatment regardless of skin color. In other words, King's father's attitude towards segregation and racial discrimination was motivated by a claim for social justice which meandered into and exerted a considerable influence on his son's mind. Meanwhile, it could possibly be argued by inference that King first inherited part of his civil disobedience philosophy from his father as a result of witnessing such incidents, and this should have been a rather direct but unconscious process as illustrated by the above incident, much as children learn to speak by first listening to their parents or adults, unconsciously memorize speech sounds and then try to reproduce them verbally in turn to express themselves, whether consciously or unconsciously. Moreover, an interpretative consideration of this quote suggests that King himself was against the different discriminations inflicted upon his people, a fact that could equally be seen as a direct consequence of his father's attitude on his psycho-emotional development. Another point of equal significance is that even under those circumstances,

¹⁵Ibid., 8.

although he was utterly angered, King, Sr., did not react aggressively, or curse, or breed hatred against his oppressors to his son's knowledge, and this would come forth in King's psycho-emotional development as an individual of moderate, stable and balanced mood. King, Sr., was in for the recognition of his rights as a full human being, and beyond as a full American citizen. Thus, instead of experiencing frustration and giving in to resignation, inferiority complex, self-pity and admitting the status quo, or even breeding racial hatred, he put forth a bold show of racial pride and human dignity as a black citizen equal in right and status to every white fellow. He chose courage over cowardice. He chose boldness and character strength over submission and guilty complacency. He chose defiance over compromise. He knew that he was on the right side fighting ruthless foes, that is, segregation and racial discrimination. He championed social justice and equity, and was ready to die for them rather than condone or surrender to institutionalized injustice. He viewed equality and rejected inferiority and second-class citizenship. He claimed respect over humiliation, as documented below by another incident of almost similar nature:

[I remember riding with him another day when he accidentally drove past a stop sign. A policeman pulled up to the car and said:

‘All right, boy, pull over and let me see your license.’

My father instantly retorted: ‘Let me make it clear to you that you aren't talking to a boy. If you persist in referring to me as boy, I will be forced to act as if I don't hear a word you are saying.’

The policeman was so shocked in hearing a Negro talk to him so forthrightly that he didn't quite know how to respond. He nervously wrote the ticket and left the scene as quickly as possible].¹⁶

¹⁶Carson, Clayborne. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York & Boston. IPM: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Grand Central Publishing, 1998. Print. 8.

When all is said, however, it is important to note that the verbal rhetoric of King, Sr., was one element which clearly had not been passed on to King, Jr., who mixed outspokenness with verbal moderation. As such, King's words or speeches on any occasion had had no sarcastic tone or retaliatory or deliberately harmful implication for the enemy. On the contrary, they carried the mark of lawful protest, objection, conviction and reconciliation. The overall influence of King's parents in the development of his psycho-emotional character can be summarized as follows:

In my own life and in the life of a person who is seeking to be strong, you combine in your character antitheses strongly marked. You are both militant and moderate; you are both idealistic and realistic. And I think that my strong determination for justice comes from the very strong, dynamic personality of my father, and I would hope that the gentle aspect comes from a mother who is very gentle and sweet.¹⁷

5.2- The impact of the external factors

5.2.1-The social context

Even though their family enjoyed a stable financial condition and a consistently peaceful home situation, the Kings were surrounded by a social atmosphere heavily poisoned with segregation and racial discrimination that had left a vivid impact on their son's conscience both as a child and growing teenager. King's 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. Here was a nation that

¹⁷Carson, Clayborne. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York & Boston. IPM: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Grand Central Publishing, 1998. Print. 3.

claimed to be the showcase of modern democracy and the melting pot, a haven to freedom, social emancipation and human rights yet shamelessly treated some of her minorities as worth less than full citizens, as human beings of second rank, or worse, in some notable cases, as worth less than cattle: racist mobs would often brazenly abduct, brutalize, lynch, beat to death, hang or murder colored people out of blind racial hate. White citizens would burn colored people's houses, illegally seize their properties, plot to throw them into jail without evidence for claiming equality and justice, deny them access to the ballot and to most basic public conveniences, sow terror in black neighborhoods (The Ku Klux Klan was a nightmare to African Americans as well in the South as in the North), abuse and downgrade black people in public, all with the guilty nodding of local authorities, the hypocrisy of law makers, the conspiracy and partiality of law enforcers. It was a racially acid, hostile and ruthless environment that offered black people and other poor sections no tangible opportunity for social emancipation, as the white people saw such perspective rather as a threat to their blind and unrealistic self-imposed sense of racial superiority, unrealistic with regard to the very provisions of the preamble to the United States' Declaration of Independence¹⁸.

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

¹⁸Armento, Beverly J., et al. *A More Perfect Union*. Houghton Mifflin Social Studies, 1991. Print. 656.

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. But the main emotion that ruled his entire life then was anger at and hate of white people, even though with time and experience, and spiritual awareness, this gradually slipped into a mild expression of indignation through organized and voiced protest. In other words, these experiences had had a deep impact on his psycho-emotional life and at first prompted him to breed hate and swear protest. As provided below, a few outdoors incidents had contributed to shaping King's consciousness about the racial problem which durably affected his psycho-emotional attitude with respect to the racial environment. His very first encounter with the racial problem occurred in his early childhood when he had a white playmate roughly his own age:

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.¹⁹

This eye-opening incident alarmed King to such an extent that he could not help wondering why his playmate would have made such a statement. It

¹⁹Carson, Clayborne. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York & Boston. IPM: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Grand Central Publishing, 1998. Print. 7.

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. In fact, King simply woke up to another world, the strange and cruel world of segregation, not having a clue yet what the future still held in stock for him. He had now been initiated, so to speak, to a social tradition, a cultural standard in that part of his country, the Deep South. In fact, the social order in the segregationist South of the United States then was a real-life, every day theater with a white master

band performing live upstage and a weary black choir downstage resounding with the old funerary song, the Negro people's song which day in day out had been sung to isolation, indignation, frustration, resignation, distress, anger, bitterness, destitution, unprovoked and unearned violence, humiliation and injustices of all kinds mounting from millions of broken hearts with an outcry to redemption and justice for a race which had neither asked nor wanted to be deported to then New World, a race that had long set its eyes on the freedom its oppressors had so shamelessly and mercilessly confiscated for centuries, a race that simply wanted to be freed from the manacles of color bar, subjugation and inertia. As a general tradition in southern black families, King, one evening, was sung the eerie song and went to bed to ruminate on the unpalatable facts eating up his young mind.

For many years it had been difficult for King to admit the facts that had been presented to him by his parents that evening, even as they would often call his attention to unconditional love and forgiveness of the enemy, the white man in this case, as a Christian. Yet from that time on, as a child King would develop a strong resentment towards the system. He even went through a few other experiences, some with his father, another involving his mother, and a couple others of similar nature, all at a young age. There are two particular incidents outside of his family circle that had influenced and helped shape his consciousness about the racial issue, even though his parents had been involved. As a collateral victim, he undeniably had approved of and shared his father's

indignation at the system as could be seen later through his emergence as a civil rights activist to fight the same system. Furthermore, as far as his mother was involved, Martin Luther King, Jr., had had a rather disconcerting outdoors experience with a striking degree of brutality that one can barely imagine of such a young, innocent soul:

When I was about eight years old, I was in one of the downtown stores of Atlanta and all of a sudden someone slapped me, and the only thing I heard was somebody saying, ‘You are that nigger that stepped on my foot.’ And it turned out to be a white lady....I finally told my mother what had happened, and she was very upset about it. But the lady who slapped me had gone, and my mother and I left the store almost immediately.²⁰

Seeing his mother upset at such a cruel behavior on the part of a white lady, one can objectively imagine what the victim boy was feeling inside of himself and how he could possibly feel towards the system afterwards. It can be argued that he definitely hated the system. As he has explained in his autobiography, he did not retaliate at any point and said he would not dare retaliate when a white person was involved, meaning that he actually had felt anger and some urge to retaliate but tried his best to repress it through self-control.

Another routine experience was the one that King would face any time he got on the bus to cross from one side of his hometown to attend high school. Even before he emerged as the leader of the Montgomery bus boycott, King from the very beginning has considered protest as a means to challenge and

²⁰Carson, Clayborne. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York & Boston. IPM: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Grand Central Publishing, 1998. Print. 8.

change the segregated bus system that prevailed in the South, especially in Atlanta, Alabama. Perhaps except one first experience nine months prior to the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956) when a 15-year-old high school student, Claudette Colvin was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a public bus in Montgomery (On March 2, 1955), Alabama to make room for a white passenger, if Rosa Parks had not refused to relinquish her seat to a white passenger on that cold fall day, Thursday, December 1st, 1955 thus igniting a general boycott of the city's bus system, King would personally have carried out the protest sooner or later, for he had so intended:

I remember another experience I used to have in Atlanta..., but every time I got on that bus I left my mind up on the front seat. And I said to myself, 'One of these days, I'm going to put my body up there where my mind is'.²¹

The quote above shows that King was against the system and was protest-minded even before he emerged later as an activist. As a matter of fact, there is no such devastating idea for King than living in a country with one federal government and yet two diametrically opposed social systems when you move from one specific state to another. Every African American from the Emancipation Proclamation to the early 50s would potentially have felt less than a human being down in the South by virtue of Jim Crow and perhaps a half American citizen up in the North in a context of hypocritical integration. It was like living in two opposite worlds. By analogy, when travelling southward

²¹Carson, Clayborne. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York & Boston. IPM: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Grand Central Publishing, 1998. Print. 9.

during the time King was growing up, some black people from the North strangers to Jim Crow would perhaps have felt like live fish outside of water, or perhaps Jews in Nazi Germany ghettos and concentration camps, or even native South Africans in Apartheid townships. With racial segregation on South-bound buses which had to cross a virtual systemic border, King felt that his very soul, his entire being, and self, was at stake:

Just before going to college ... After that summer in Connecticut, it was a bitter feeling going back to segregation. It was hard to understand why I could ride wherever I pleased on the train from New York to Washington and then had to change to a Jim Crow car at the nation's capital in order to continue the trip to Atlanta. The first time that I was seated behind a dining car, I felt as if the curtain had been dropped on my selfhood. I could never adjust to the separate waiting rooms, separate eating places, separate rest rooms, partly because the separate was always unequal, and partly because the very idea of separation did something to my sense of dignity and self-respect.²²

From what precedes it is clear that King was at a discomfort with the system, and it could be inferred that his move to challenge or fight it was only a matter of time. In the scenario above, he had already portrayed a hostile attitude towards the system and that can particularly be considered as a prelude to his career as a civil rights activist. Moreover, in 1942 at the young age of thirteen King revealed to the world the comprehensive understanding that he had of the inequities and ordeals that his Negro people was burdened with, and he did this by participating in a speech contest that he eventually won. The very topic of his speech was *The Negro and the Constitution*. Indeed, the speech shows the

²²Carson, Clayborne. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York & Boston. IPM: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Grand Central Publishing, 1998. Print. 11-12.

overall impact of the social environment on his mind as a young boy and can be considered as a roadmap for his future career as an activist:

We cannot have an enlightened democracy with one great group living in ignorance. We cannot have a healthy nation with one-tenth of the people ill-nourished, sick, harboring germs of disease which recognize no color lines - obey no Jim Crow laws. We cannot have a nation orderly and sound with one group so ground down and thwarted that it is forced into unsocial attitudes and crime. We cannot be truly Christian people so long as we flout the central teachings of Jesus: brotherly love and the Golden Rule. We cannot buy goods. So as we gird ourselves to defend democracy from foreign attack, let us see to it that increasingly at home we give fair play and free opportunity for all people.

Today thirteen million black sons and daughters of our forefathers continue the fight for the translation of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments from writing on the printed page to an actuality. We believe with them that 'if freedom is good for any it is good for all,' that we may conquer Southern hate, that if the franchise is given to Negroes, they will be vigilant and defend, even with their arms, the ark of federal liberty from treason and destruction by her enemies.²³

5.2.2-Education

5.2.2.1- Morehouse College (1944-1948)

His professors at Morehouse College, especially Dr. Benjamin Mays, President of Morehouse College and one of the great influences in his life, and Dr. Georges Kelsey, a professor of philosophy and religion, had had a significant influence on King's spiritual development as a young student. Other teachers such as Lucius M. Tobin and Samuel L. Williams also influenced his response to the call to go into ministry.

²³Carson, Clayborne. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York & Boston. IPM: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Grand Central Publishing, 1998. Print. 9-10.

Overall, Morehouse College was an ideal framework for free debates over the racial ills plaguing the South as professors could openly bring racial issues into discussion without the fear of federal persecution. They encouraged their students to actively search for a peaceful and positive solution to the racial problem. Soon enough, the influence of his professors would become evident and fan King's quest for a comprehensive strategy to address the racial and economic injustices that black people were faced with. As he wrote in his autobiography, during his student days, King read scores of works which had a profound effect on his attitude about the way to solve the racial problem as a social concern for colored people. An essay by Henry David Thoreau entitled *On Civil Disobedience* was an eye-opening instrument that came out as a response to King's quest for an effective strategy to fight segregation.

In this courageous New Englander's refusal to pay his taxes and his choice of jail rather than support a war that would spread slavery's territory in Mexico, he made his first contact with the theory of nonviolent resistance. Fascinated by the idea of refusing to cooperate with an evil system, he was so deeply moved that he reread the work several times. As a result, King became convinced that noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. Soon upon entering college, however, King also started working with the Intercollegiate Council, an organization that was trying to make racial justice a reality. The wholesome relations they had in the Intercollegiate Council convinced him that the colored people had many white persons as sympathizers,

particularly among the younger generation. King had been ready to resent the whole white race, but as he got to see more of white people, his resentment faded and a spirit of cooperation took its place. This is most probably where King first started to view integration as an effective means to change and win the hearts of racist white people. Moreover, given that many white people supported the civil rights movement openly and sometimes at the risk of their own lives and suffered the same humiliation and persecution as the colored people, it would be unwise, counterproductive and self-destructive for the movement to not channel their energies and resources towards adopting a holistic approach to their campaign by welcoming cooperation of well-minded white people into their ranks. At first, King was very pessimistic about any solution to the racial issue that could have both races work together towards social change, but he eventually saw these support from and collaboration with white people in the Intercollegiate Council as an opportunity. In fact, that state of affairs helped wipe away any doubts and misconceptions he had of good white people, mindful of justice and ready to stand up and defend a fellow race against their own kind.²⁴

5.2.2.2-Crozer Seminary (1948-1951)

The theological course of Professor Walter Rauschenbusch at the Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester had had a great influence on the spiritual and

²⁴ Boni Albert, YAYI. *The Nonviolence Philosophy of Martin Luther King and the Radicalism of Malcolm X: A Comparative Study of Two Methods of Fight for the Liberation of African Americans*. Abomey-Calavi, 2002. Print.

psycho-emotional development of King. When he wrote *Stride Toward Freedom* in 1958, he acknowledged that *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, by Rauschenbusch, left an indelible imprint on his thinking by providing him with a theological basis for the social concern that he had developed as a result of his early experiences. Rauschenbusch studied at Rochester Theological Seminary and adopted the belief that the primary task of the church was to lead individuals to seek their personal salvation. The study of Rauschenbusch's theory gave King more strength to fight for the liberation of his people. The Holy Bible was also a continual source of inspiration for his struggle for social justice. In his references to the prophets, King most frequently quoted Amos's statement: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."²⁵

King contended that even as Amos did not approve of the injustice of his day, neither did he intend to accept the evils of discrimination, segregation, religious bigotry, militarism and violence. He stressed that Amos was seeking social change, and called on ministers to imitate the prophet by speaking out for righteousness. Moreover, Jesus Christ exerted the most important spiritual influence on King which had a constant bearing on his approach to the racial issue, as seen through quotes such as "Turn the other cheek"²⁶ and "Love your enemies,"²⁷ and laid the foundation for his nonviolence philosophy. His

²⁵Ansbro, Jon J. *Martin Luther King, Jr. The Marking of a Mind*. New York. Library of Congress, 1982. Print. 201.

²⁶Molla, Serges et al. *Les Idées Noires de Martin Luther King*. Genève. Labor and Fides, 1980. Print. 199.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 79.

aspiration to resemble Jesus softened him in the face of adversity and violence and he understood that there was no need for violent confrontation of segregation and racial discrimination, and believed the evil that was being done to the black people to be out of ignorance, as seen through Jesus' ultimate plea to his father to forgive sinners, since they do not know what they do. But although King was convinced that love of all men must permeate every successful crusade of nonviolent resistance, he had to experience an intellectual and emotional crisis before he could reach the point where his belief proved to be the dominant force of his life.

King also read Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals* and *The Will to Power* which contained vehement attacks on Christian ethics. Nietzsche contended that Christianity, with its active pity for everything, was more harmful than any vice. Nietzsche distinguished three elements in Christianity: the oppressed of all kinds who struggle against the political nobility and its ideal, the mediocre of all kinds who fight against those who are spiritually and physically privileged, and the discontented of all kinds who oppose the natural instinct of the happy and the sound. Confronted with this critical analysis of the value of love for social good, King while still a student at the seminary, had concluded that Jesus' ethical message of "turn the other cheek" and "love your enemies" is effective only in conflicts among individuals, but is not useful in resolving conflicts among racial groups and nations. Because of this, he had, at first, despaired of the power of love for solving social problems. But in the midst

of this crisis, he met a famous figure of nonviolent resistance for the liberation of oppressed people: Indian independence leader Mohandas Gandhi who by then had been the most famous figure in modern history to ever use nonviolence to successfully achieve independence of a country as large as about six times the size of France.²⁸

5.2.2.3- 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 *Stride Toward Freedom*, King 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

²⁸Boni Albert, YAYI. *The Nonviolence Philosophy of Martin Luther King and the Radicalism of Malcolm X: A Comparative Study of Two Methods of Fight for the Liberation of African Americans*. Abomey-Calavi, 2002. Print.

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:

... 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.²⁹

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.”³⁰ 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.

Having indicated the basic meaning of ‘ahimsa’, Gandhi identified it with a positive and active state of love. This love is the means to the end of truth. For him, anyone can fulfill the supreme duty of this. Truth will encounter injustice, exploitation and oppression, but we must pursue truth by doing good even to the evildoer: “satyagraha means truth even against cunning, nonviolence against violence, forbearance against anger, and love against hatred.”³¹ According to Gandhi we do not practice nonviolence if we love only those who love us. He insisted that in the practice of ‘ahimsa’ he had to apply the same rules to the

²⁹Ansbro, Jon J. *Martin Luther King, Jr. The Marking of a Mind*. New York. Library of Congress, 1982. Print. 105.

³⁰Ibid., 216.

³¹Peake, Thomas R. *Keeping the Dream Alive*. New York. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1987. Print. 85.

wrongdoer who was his enemy or a stranger to him as he would apply to his father or son when they did wrong.

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 us to attempt to reform evildoers by active opposition to their practice.

As a matter of fact King admired Gandhi's doctrine of nonviolent resistance to oppression and adopted his belief in ‘satyagraha’, and he began to put these principles into action. When the Supreme Court decision integrated the Montgomery buses in 1956, King addressed his followers: “Be loving enough to absorb evil and understanding enough to turn an enemy into friend.”³²

King was also similar to Gandhi in that he consistently declared that his nonviolent protests were directed against the forces of evil work in the unjust systems. He declared that violence solves no social problem but rather creates new and more complicated ones: “To meet with retaliatory hate would do

³²Peake, Thomas R. *Keeping the Dream Alive*. New York. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1987. Print. 67.

nothing but intensify the existence of evil in the universe...”³³ He also referred to St. Augustine who said: “Hate the sin, but love the sinner.”³⁴ Thus he stressed that there would be victory for justice and defeat for injustice. Further, King shared Gandhi's vision of the value of unearned suffering. Moreover, he identified with Gandhi's insistence that nonviolence should include the eternal nonviolence of the spirit. In 1959, he reemphasized the necessity for nonviolence of the spirit when he had to repudiate the attempts of some hate groups in the black community to preach a doctrine of black supremacy. While expressing his awareness of the patience of most black persons with the brutality of lynch mobs and with the constant oppression by unjust southern courts, he still challenged his people to accept hate with love and confront physical force with soul-force. King stated that his study of Gandhi's philosophy caused him to recognize for the first time that “the Christian doctrine of love, operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence, is one of the most potent weapons available to an oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.”³⁵ This description preserved the central role of Christian love in King's philosophy and coincided with his claim that Christians must avoid any form of violence to overcome social injustice.³⁶

³³Molla, Serge et al. *Les Idées Noires de Martin Luther King*. Genève. Labor et Fides, 1992. Print. 98.

³⁴Gitlin, Todd. *The Sixties, Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. New York: Bantam Books, 1987. Print. 255.

³⁵Ansbro, Jon J. *Martin Luther King, Jr. The Marking of a Mind*. New York. Library of Congress, 1982. 108.

³⁶Boni Albert, YAYI. *The Nonviolence Philosophy of Martin Luther King and the Radicalism of Malcolm X: A Comparative Study of Two Methods of Fight for the Liberation of African Americans*. Abomey-Calavi, 2002. Print.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS ON THE PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF MALCOLM X (MAY 19, 1925–FEBRUARY 21, 1965)

6.1-The impact of the internal factors

6.1.1-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. Even though the terms internal and external have been used earlier on to refer to the factors inside and outside of the family environment which have exerted a significant influence on the outlooks of the two protagonists in this paper, some events referred to as such here in the case of X would better qualify for adjective extensions such as direct or indirect. Thus, even though the first section of this chapter deals with the impact of the internal factors that influenced X's psycho-emotional development over roughly two thirds of his lifetime, a couple of events or incidents included therein may objectively be phrased as indirect internal or external factors based on the context.

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. X's parents would have arguments quite regularly before their children. Being thus frequently exposed to such scenes, the little boy's subconscious would have been much troubled by the controversial images his parents cast on him. Earl and Louis Little tough-handedly raised their children, not sparing any opportunity to whip them to wisdom and good sense. On the other hand, both parents would usually settle their disputes openly and most often through violence in front of the children, and arguably to some extent they would never have called that attitude into question as a way to assess the influence it was having on the children's psycho-emotional health. These situations left in X some sour memories of non-advisable behaviors on the part of his parents:

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.³⁷

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

³⁷ Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 6-7.

consciously display those attitudes and behaviors in a particular fashion or not. But in X's case, no signs of such an influence of parental attitudes and behaviors associated with household violence have come to light in my study of his autobiography as part of the present work (For instance, in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Alex Haley I have found neither any trace nor any explicit or implicit indicator showing that X had ever beaten or frequently beat his wife). However, with a careful observation of the accounts contained in that autobiography, 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, by contrast often beating up Malcolm's siblings whenever they did something 'wrong'. 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:

“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.'³⁸

Most undeniably X's father was a very strong motivational factor behind his dedication to active militancy among the ranks of the Nation of Islam later in life. Earl Little was a faithful militant and activist of Marcus Garvey's movement spreading word among the Negroes from one place to another on his preaching assignments. Quite often he would take little Malcolm to secret meetings, and this visibly exerted a strong attraction on the boy. Malcolm said of his father:

I remember especially his favorite sermon: [That little 'black' train is a-coming'... an' you better get all your business right!] I guess this also fit his association with the back-to-Africa movement, with Marcus Garvey's 'Black Train Homeward'.³⁹

One of the reasons I've always felt that my father favored me was that to the best of my remembrance, it was only me that he sometimes took with him to the Garvey U.N.I.A. meetings which he held quietly in different people's homes...But in these meetings both they and my father were more intense, more intelligent and down to earth. It made me feel the same way.⁴⁰

The quotes above are evidence of the influence of X's father on him as seen in the latter's militant leaning and his activism in Marcus Garvey's movement as a dedicated organizer. One of his most remote memories goes back to those olden days when his father would so passionately champion the cause of colored people across his sermons, stressing a return to Africa and pride in the glories of her past civilizations, and her potential for cultural, economic, and social development when she stood on her own. Put another way, as Garvey's faithful follower Earl Little stressed that the black Americans would

³⁸Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 7.

³⁹Ibid., 7.

⁴⁰Ibid., 7.

never experience real emancipation and advancement as a minority beside a racist white America unless they withdrew and settled back in their homeland, and reclaimed their African kinship, not just in words but also in deeds by actually taking steps culturally, politically and economically to get ready with eyes resolutely set on the ultimate departure by an imaginary train. Such a metaphorical verbal elaboration had a profound impact on listeners and sparked nationalist passion in the hearts of millions of black Americans who had lost hope in the American Dream as a result of racism, segregation, racial prejudice, hypocritical integration and large-scale social injustice. Earl Little would often use this metaphorical style to idealize his dream of and hope in a better future for the black people back in the land of their forefathers.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, X was so much fascinated by the mood of the secret meetings with his father and other followers of Garvey that he literally identified with them, foremost with his own father. Thus, it could be argued that X somehow had, so to speak, as though by contamination, genes of active militancy in his veins from the outset. Further, I have observed that Earl Little was anti-white firsthand and this attitude that he constantly displayed affected the thinking and emotional attitude of his son to a considerable extent. In his early childhood, X was made conscious of the gravity of the ordeals and enormous challenges facing his race in America, and undeniably childhood is a critical period in life when behavior, habit and character are best able to be passed down to offspring. In fact, I can assume here that Malcolm, though still a

young child, was in strong agreement with the words and deeds of his father as a full-time activist involved in Garvey's nationalist movement to advance the cause of the black race. Thus, as a result of being frequently exposed by his father to the nationalist ideology with all the potential weight of the filial bond involved, Malcolm X would later advocate separation and Black Nationalism as an approach to the racial issue in the United States:

Why black nationalism? Well, in the competitive American society, how can there ever be any white-black solidarity before there is first some black solidarity? If you will remember, in my childhood I had been exposed to the Black Nationalist teachings of Marcus Garvey- which, in fact, I had been told had led to my father's murder.⁴¹

In contrast to the foregoing, there is no apparent trace of the influence of Malcolm X's mother on him to be seen in his psycho-emotional attitude as a civil rights activist in his adult age other than the fact that she hated her white complexion which was the result of the criminal act of a white rapist and, of course, those emotions of hers have been smoothly passed down to X who was equally very light-skinned as an extended result of that old rape crime:

Louis Little, my mother, who was born in Grenada, in the British West Indies, looked like a white woman. Her father 'was' white. She had straight black hair, and her accent did not sound like a Negro's. Of this white father of hers, I know nothing except that she had never seen him. I remember hearing her say she was glad that she had never seen him. It was, of course, because of him that I got my reddish brown 'mariny' color of skin, and my hair of the same color. I was the lightest child in our family. (Out in the world later on, in Boston and New York, I was among the millions of Negroes who were insane enough to feel that it was some kind of status symbol to be light-complexioned - that one was actually fortunate to be born thus. But still later, I learned to hate every drop of that white rapist's blood that is in me.)⁴²

⁴¹Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 410.

⁴²Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 4-5.

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 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 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, he was introduced by his own family to a would-be redemptive religion, the so-called “natural religion for the black man”⁴³, the one that could free and save the black race from centuries-old ordeals and social injustices in the United States:

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

⁴³Haley, Alex, et al. The Autobiography of Malcolm X. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 169.

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.’⁴⁴

The quote above is another clear indicator of the influence that X's inner circle exerted on him as an indirect consequence of the teachings of the leader of the Nation of Islam. In a move to convert their brother to their newfound religion which they had been made to believe was the ultimate remedy for the problems facing the black people in the United States, Philbert and Reginald Little, then Nation of Islam converts, wrote and visited him in prison and introduced him to the Islamic doctrinal and dietary law of avoiding pork. Through their letters and visits X was made to believe that there was a natural religion set apart for the black man and that this was the only faith that could yield actual redemption and the only one through which the black man could effectively work his way out of the American racial inferno. These words gradually found anchor in a desperate heart that has long suffered the burns of the raging fire of racism that left deep wounds in a spirit then prompted towards rebellion. Indeed, no words could be more enticing than the last few ones to spark the hope of freedom in the heart and mind of an anguished prisoner. In his reflections after reading Reginald's letter, X saw both membership of the Nation of Islam and the observance of the dietary instructions as a means to achieve freedom, reason why he could not wait to see the end of the story, especially the “show you how to get out of prison”.⁴⁵ In a sense, these words stood for a wily

⁴⁴Ibid., 169.

⁴⁵Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 169.

bait to win X's heart to the new faith, since later on, as was strategically planned by the family, Reginald would visit Malcolm X again in person to set forth with what the Littles had already began through frequent mails.

As a matter of fact, even though X has been freshly spoken to about Islam in prison and expressed a stern indifference at first to the words of his brothers, their letters subtly triggered some rather favorable, unconsciously spontaneous reaction in him as seen in his refusal to eat some meat, allegedly pork, even though he was not sure what type of meat it was:

I wasn't even thinking about pork when I took my seat at the long table.[...] When the meat platter was passed to me, I didn't even know what the meat was; usually, you couldn't tell, anyway - but it was suddenly as though don't eat any more pork flashed on the screen before me.

I hesitated, with the platter in mid-air; then I passed it along to the inmate waiting next to me. He began serving himself; abruptly, he stopped. I remember him turning, looking surprised at me.

I said to him, "I don't eat pork."⁴⁶

Ironically, even when he turned down the meat as pork, which would have been a mark of the regular conscientious objection of a devote Muslim as an outward sign of the profession of Islamic faith, Malcolm was not yet ready to accept the words of his siblings about the Nation of Islam as of then. But as indicated earlier on, the latter worked out a smooth plan to circumvent his initial uncouthness and eventually managed to bring their message home to him:

My brothers and sisters in Detroit and Chicago had all become converted to what they were being taught was the natural religion for the black man of which Philbert had written to me. They all prayed for me to become converted while I was in prison. But after Philbert reported my vicious reply, they discussed what was the best thing to do. They had decided that Reginald, the latest convert, the one to

⁴⁶Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 170.

whom I felt closest, would best know how to approach me, since he knew me so well in the street life.⁴⁷

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:

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.⁴⁸

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, a whistle blower who shed light on the roots of the racial plague affecting the bulk of black Americans in the richest country of the world that claimed to be the torch-bearer of modern democracy, the melting pot, the cradle

⁴⁷Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 171.

⁴⁸Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 173.

of racial and social integration. By then, this influence was making its way into the psycho-emotional structure of Malcolm X. In a sense, even though he had always had a relatively unfavorable picture of the social fate of the Blacks in the American society, Malcolm X never really formed a personal opinion about it but rather desperately lived by the status quo in hustling until he was brought down to earth in prison by his kin. This is the most important milestone that caused X's emotional life to undergo a sharp and unflinching radicalization until his experience in Mecca testified to the contrary of the tough view he previously held. Indeed, the most striking point in the quote above is the mention that was made by Reginald of the white man as the devil, with a further insistence highlighted by the use of the exclusive pronoun “all” applied to the noun “whites”, meaning not excluding any, and this was enough to send an electroshock down X's spine and hit his mind as a thunderbolt that ran instantly through his memory. This was the eye-opener, and this is also where X would be overwhelmed by waves of thoughts and emotions, a real flashback, and get a close up of the whole racial issue through his set of negative experiences with the white race and later through the regular letters and mail that he exchanged with his convert brothers and sisters and their spiritual leader as mentioned in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, pages 173 through 183. 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

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.⁴⁹

6.2-The impact of the external factors

6.2.1-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

⁴⁹Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 175.

social improvement and advancement of the black people, often denying them access to particular public facilities (schools especially, in order to keep them unlettered and unfit to challenge white America intellectually, professionally and culturally, and under the yoke of economic exploitation, and to the ballot in order to prevent them from ever being able to wield any political power whatsoever to change their conditions), 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:

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.⁵⁰

⁵⁰Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 3-4.

The quote above portrays a scenario typical of those days when the fearsome Klansmen were known for using force and violence to curb the zeal of any black American individual or group of black Americans that stood against their racist interests. To a reasonable extent, one can imagine the psycho-emotional state of a pregnant woman alone at home with her three little children, awoken in the middle of the night by roaring horse treads and hateful shouts in knowing that her husband was an urgent target of blind, wanton, racist execution. At some point, the mere sight of those people on horseback in a strange attire going around her house with their guns trigger-ready and their curses and shouts hanging in the air could have sent chills down her spine, and even more, the crackling of the window panes being shattered with the gun butts could have heightened her blood pulse and been cause for precocious uterine contractions and subsequent miscarriage, with her man away. So, the unborn child was already facing a risk of potential death. At another point, the woman in a delicate condition should have had a foreboding of her man's imminent death, and the prospect of losing her husband, a source of both financial and social security for her and her little ones, should have plunged her into a mixture of cerebral and emotional depression which, as one can imagine, would not have spared frail, unborn little Malcolm. Obviously, in connection with that rather disconcerting incident some emotions must have overwhelmed Louis Little that were carried over to unripe little Malcolm in the amniotic fluid through the afterbirth, and, as one can also imagine, none of these should have been gay.

Seen under this angle, if any guess was to be made of the blend of feelings and emotions that crossed from one side of the placenta to the other, this would certainly imply neither joy nor delight but fright, alarm, panic, terror, horror, shock, pain, grief, anguish, self-pity, insecurity, hopelessness, and predominantly over time: bitterness, anger, swearwords, curses, urges for revenge or retaliation, (racial) hate, etc.

According to Deepak Chopra, MD, the world-renowned authority in the field of mind-body healing, best-selling author, and founder of the Chopra Center for Wellbeing, “Your unborn baby has a direct connection to your thoughts and emotions.”⁵¹ In light of this I can assume that Malcolm X, even before he was born and informed later as a child by her mother about the scary incident, received this emotional flow in the maternal womb that was being inlaid into his psycho-emotional makeup as part of the remote influence of the prevailing social environment. This being said, when he would repeatedly be remembered the incident as a child, could one imagine little Malcolm X expressing joy or happiness or even love, forgiveness or tolerance of the white people who had been so hostile to her parents on and on, and nearly killed his father or his pregnant mother? A realistic guess would suggest that the odds are non-existent. Yet, perhaps if his parents, or at the very least his father who was a Christian, and what's more, a Baptist preacher, had displayed some composed attitude with regard to that incident upon his return home by showing some

⁵¹James Goodlattle. “A mother’s Emotions Affect Her Unborn Child.” Natural Baby Pros. Kim, 25 January 2013. Print. April 14, 2015.

emotional balance (self-control) and urging his family to cold-headedly endure the unearned misfortune and forgive and show love to the enemy, this could have changed the whole story about whether to hate the white people or not. Instead, Reverend Earl Little's fury surfaced against an old, long chain of violence against his kin that didn't leave unborn Malcolm X indifferent: "My father was enraged when he returned... It has always been my belief that I, too, will die by violence. I have done all that I can to be prepared."⁵²

After this misadventure, the family moved to Milwaukee, but their oppressors soon set in again without respite and this time tried to wipe out the entire family:

As in Omaha, my mother was pregnant again, this time with my youngest sister. Shortly after Yvonne was born came the nightmare night in 1929, my earliest vivid memory. I remember being suddenly snatched awake into a frightening confusion of pistol shots and shouting and smoke and flames. My father had shouted and shot at the two white men who had set the fire and were running away. Our home was burning down around us. We were lunging and bumping and tumbling all over each other trying to escape. My mother, with the baby in her arms, just made it into the yard before the house crashed in, showering sparks. I remember we were outside in the night in our underwear, crying and yelling our heads off. The white police and firemen came and stood around watching as the house burned down to the ground.⁵³

Obviously, one can imagine how the social environment which then was characterized by such open racist hostility to the Blacks would have affected the thoughts and emotions of a young child like four-year-old Malcolm towards the white people, whom he would rather see as foes to his family, to himself in person, and to his race as a whole. Would that child ever be able to forgive, love

⁵²Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 4.

⁵³Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 5-6.

and tolerate these enemies if he didn't see his parents or other close or remote influential role models display such an attitude, or if he was not urged or challenged to? Perhaps this could happen, relatively in as much as human emotions are likely to undergo some change over time even to run contrary to what they had been in the past, through any kind of experience (including spiritual influence, as was the case with young Martin Luther King, Jr., who as a child bred hate against the white people but later on championed love, forgiveness and nonviolence as a mark of the impact of his religious education) or under possible changes in the immediate or remote social environment. At any rate, such emotional changes are quite as unpredictable as are human behaviors by nature, and X never experienced this emotional change until he died, (Even though towards the end of his life he softened his approach based on his experience in Mecca, he was still a hardliner and didn't really believe in any possibility for real integration)⁵⁴ partly because his very approach to the racial issue was too radical to quickly turn flexible and become favorable to integration, and partly because his heart must have been too much hardened by the succession of nightmarish, thorny, highly sensitive experiences he had gone through in childhood and youth, including the cruel murder of his father:

I remember waking up to the sound of my mother's screaming again. When I scrambled out, I saw the police in the living room; they were trying to calm her down. She had snatched on her clothes to go with them. And all of us children who were staring knew without anyone having to say it that something terrible had happened to our father.

⁵⁴Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 411-413.

My mother was taken by the police to the hospital, and to a room where a sheet was over my father in a bed, and she wouldn't look, she was afraid to look. Probably it was wise that she didn't. My father's skull, on one side, was crushed in, I was told later. Negroes in Lansing have always whispered that he was attacked, and then laid across some tracks for a streetcar to run over him. His body was cut almost in half.

He lived two and a half hours in that condition.⁵⁵

It goes without saying that of the different experiences I have presented so far, none was of the kind that could positively impact the psycho-emotional development of Malcolm X or contribute to a balanced psycho-emotional disposition in the little boy as he was growing up. On the contrary, these experiences and several others such as the financial insecurity and dire poverty in which his family lived following the brutal death of the bread-winner, the harsh measures forced upon them by the state people and the rude, humiliating, downgrading, racist treatments that they had undergone up to the point where Louis Little was ridiculed before her own children for refusing social assistance (in order to uphold the dignity of her family), eventually became insane and was sent to the Kalamazoo asylum with the consecutive splitting up of the family by a federal judge that put family stability in jeopardy,⁵⁶ the racist talks and comments of X's white guardians,⁵⁷ the racist suggestion of his eighth-grade English teacher who encouraged his white pupils to pursue and achieve their career dreams but advised X (a 'nigger') against ever dreaming to become a

⁵⁵Ibid., 12-13.

⁵⁶Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 13-24.

⁵⁷Ibid., 31-32.

lawyer (instead, he encouraged him to consider carpentry⁵⁸, as though he was only fit for a manual job, thus prompting him to drop out early), his experiences in the underworld,⁵⁹ his awareness of the systematic confinement and economic exploitation of poor black ghetto residents by hypocrite and unscrupulous Jewish landlords and storeowners,⁶⁰ his secret relationship with a married white girl who frequently cheated on her husband by going out and having sex with X,⁶¹ his experiences as a ring leader (involving white girls who eventually got sentenced to far less years in prison than their black accomplices by a racially-biased trial decision⁶²), the harsh treatments of the white prison guards who sometimes sold drug to convicts for a living,⁶³ the teachings of Mr. Elijah Muhammad that the white man was the devil and the root of the ill fate of the African Americans,⁶⁴ all these had injected into X's veins poisonous hormones of anger, racial hate and self-justice and prepared him to be tough-minded, radical and verbally aggressive and to look at the white people in general with jaundiced eyes, disdain, rage and an iron will to change the fate of the Negro in the United States at all costs ("by all means possible", "violence if necessary").⁶⁵ Yet, Malcolm X was neither decisively nor objectively conscious of the above-described situation with regard to the fate of the Negro in America and was not

⁵⁸Ibid., 41.

⁵⁹Ibid., 55; 101-103.

⁶⁰Ibid., 209-210.

⁶¹Ibid., 147; 160-161.

⁶²Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 165-167.

⁶³Ibid., 167.

⁶⁴Ibid., 173-183.

⁶⁵Ibid., 400-402. Also see the phrases "offensive" and "defensive" violence in the general Introduction.

determined to take action until the teachings of Mr. Elijah Muhammad opened his eyes to the social contrast posed by the racial atmosphere of the United States.⁶⁶

6.2.2-Spiritual influence:

The conversion of Malcolm X into a Muslim was discussed earlier on as an indirect external factor, the result of the indirect influence of the teachings of Mr. Elijah Muhammad. As mentioned previously, the key turning point of Malcolm X's life and dedication to work as an activist for social change and to champion the cause of the oppressed black masses of the United States and improve their conditions in general and in the American society especially was his introduction to Islam by his siblings.⁶⁷ In a gradual process that saw Malcolm X move from uncouth rejection and disbelief through confusion, doubt and incertitude across impression, seduction, vivid interest, conviction, and belief down to conversion, active militancy and dedication, he went to the top of the ladder of the Nation of Islam even to be eventually feared as the challenger of his spiritual guide and leader.

Whites, according to Muhammad, had forced the present intolerable situation on Blacks, but the black man had allowed it to continue by remaining in a land not his own. According to Muhammad, separation was the only answer to the racial issue. The separation Muhammad was talking about was not the

⁶⁶Ibid.,169-175.

⁶⁷Haley, Alex, et al. The Autobiography of Malcolm X. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964.Print.169-183.

back-to-Africa movement that Black Nationalist leader Marcus Garvey had proposed a generation previously. Muhammad was quoted as saying that what he and the Nation of Islam wanted was “some of the land our fathers and mothers paid for in nearly 300 years of slavery.” According to him, the Blacks were the original, superior race of humans on earth. The tribe of Shabazz - the black race - began when an explosion divided the earth and the moon some sixty-six million years ago. Whites, he claimed, were created by the evil magician Yakub. Yakub had rafted the weaker of two germs that exist within Blacks, and the end product of his biological experiment was the white race. As a result of their unnatural creation, the Whites were thought to be evil and degraded. Muhammad believed that the white man's reign on earth was to last 6,000 years before Allah came, at which time the white race would reach its end. The Nation of Islam views the coming of Allah as the coming of the Supreme Black Man, the Supreme Being among a mighty nation of divine black men.

As a matter of fact, Malcolm X's conversion to Islam, his active militancy in the ranks of the Black Muslims and his dedication to the Nation of Islam were the results of the determining influence of such teachings. Indeed, Elijah Muhammad has been the most prominent and influential person whatsoever whose charisma and personality have had a strong, powerful, overwhelming impact on X's psycho-emotional development. While he was in prison, Elijah Muhammad's teachings made their way to him through mouth-to-ear, persuasively oriented accounts by his own siblings:

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.
I never will forget: my mind was involuntarily flashing across the entire spectrum of white people I had ever known;⁶⁸

At first, Malcolm only light-heartedly listened in a sort of cerebral confusion⁶⁹ until the phrase "The white man is the devil"⁷⁰ hit his memories of whatever the white man had ever represented in his life.⁷¹ In fact, the sad experiences he had had with scores of white people prepared him to be a fertile land for such seeds as the teachings of Mr. Elijah Muhammad to be planted, and at this point Mr. Elijah's message could be said to have been the last straw that broke the camel's back, the spark that rekindled the dormant, latent fire of the American Negro's anger against racial discrimination. From that moment until his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1964 Malcolm X would always see all white people as the undeniable representation of the devil, the arch enemy of the Negro, hence his radical approach to the racial issue. In other words, it would be near unrealistic to assume that X (and by extension the black convict in America) wouldn't put faith in the teachings of the charismatic leader of the Nation of Islam with regard to his socio-cultural background which Mr. Elijah so clearly and vigorously exposed. So, a precedent was set:

⁶⁸Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 173-174.

⁶⁹Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 173.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 199.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 173-175.

This is probably as big a single worry as the American prison system has today - the way the Muslim teachings, circulated among all Negroes in the country, are converting new Muslims among black men in prison, and black men are in prison in far greater numbers than their proportion in the population.

The reason is that among all Negroes the black convict is the most perfectly conditioned to hear the words 'The white man is the devil'.⁷²

In light of the foregoing, I can assume that X's conversion to Islam was rather the result of prejudiced faith put in words that otherwise accurately described his situation, the fate of the black man in America, and what the entire white race stood for in the psyche of the American Negro. Stated another way, X's faith was but based on how the words he heard related to the set of bitter experiences he had had with the white man, and, as one can see, these experiences potentially applied to the overwhelming majority of the Negro masses of the United States. That is why the Islamic teachings have been so touching, so sensitive, so effective in bringing X to faith too quickly.

On the other hand, while many may tend to believe that X's approach is based upon some personal conviction or ideological background, a close analysis of the portrait of Mr. Elijah Muhammad gives some insight into the rich emotional roots of his character and personality as an advocate of racial justice.

As a matter of fact, just as Elijah Muhammad was enchanted by Wallace D. Fard's tales of black history and ingenious interpretations of the Bible, so was Malcolm X by the accounts of his brother Reginald and more so by the letters he received over time from Mr. Elijah Muhammad. Indeed, at the beginning of his

⁷²Ibid., 199.

religious experience Elijah had been spell-bound by his spiritual father and leader W. D. Fard, the founder of the Nation of Islam, and Malcolm in turn was spell-bound by Elijah and soon enough his faith in the man turned to personality cult and emulation as similarly happened to Elijah himself. As in multiple other instances where he would praise and speak highly of the man through words such as “...he has been divinely taught and sent to us”, “under the divine leadership of The Honorable Elijah Muhammad”, and superlatives such as “... America's *wisest* black man! America's *boldest* black man! America's most *fearless* black man! This wilderness of North America's most *powerful* black man!”⁷³ X would later declare:

And I worshipped him;⁷⁴

My adoration of Mr. Muhammad grew, in the sense of the Latin root word *adorare*. It means much more than our adoration or adore. It means that my worship of him was so awesome that he was the first man whom I had ever feared - not fear such as of a man with a gun, but the fear such as one has of the power of the sun;⁷⁵

You can be around this man and never dream from his actions the power and the authority he has – (Behind me, believe me when I tell you, I could feel Mr. Muhammad's power).⁷⁶

But when all is said, my key point about X in the analysis of his portrait remains the psycho-emotional influence generated by the very nature of the teachings he received from his spiritual father. These teachings claimed superiority of the black race over the white race and blamed the atrocities of slavery, the cultural brainwashing of the American Negro and his desperate socio-economic conditions on the white-man-established social order:

⁷³Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print.276.

⁷⁴Ibid., 217.

⁷⁵Ibid., 231.

⁷⁶Ibid., 275.

Elijah Muhammad spoke of how in this wilderness of North America, for centuries the 'blue-eyed devil white man' had brainwashed the 'so-called Negro.' He told us how, as one result, the black man in America was mentally, morally and spiritually dead. Elijah Muhammad spoke of how the black man was Original Man, who had been kidnapped from his homeland and stripped of his language, his culture, his family structure, his family name, until the black man in America did not even realize who he was.

He told us, and showed us, how his teachings of the true knowledge of ourselves would lift up the black man from the bottom of the white man's society and place the black man where he had begun, at the top of civilization.⁷⁷

Such teachings could potentially ignite a revolutionary uprising of black America against white America, and they did encourage a rebellious mindset within a sizable section of the black population of the United States that at any given time could set social revolution apace. In a sense, this revolution had already been foreshadowed forcefully in the early twenties by the wave of cultural awareness that swept through the predominantly black population of Harlem (the poor section of New York City, in NE Manhattan) in a cultural expression historically referred to as the Harlem Renaissance. As a matter of fact, symptoms of a revolutionary attitude often came live in Malcolm X's words as a result of the influence of these teachings, even after he had been to Mecca:

Well, it may be the American black man does need to become involved in a real revolution. The word for 'revolution' in German is Umwälzung. What it means is a complete overturn - a complete change. [...] It means the destroying of an old system, and its replacement with a new system. [...]. So how does anybody sound talking about the Negro in America waging some 'revolution'? Yes, he is condemning a system - but he's not trying to overturn the system, or to destroy it. The Negro's so-called 'revolt' is merely an asking to be accepted into the existing system! A true Negro revolt might entail, for instance, fighting for separate black states within this country -

⁷⁷Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 214.

which several groups and individuals have advocated, long before Elijah Muhammad came along.⁷⁸

In the quote above, not only does Malcolm X openly consider revolution, which, to be achieved, would require violent confrontation with and military overthrowing of the overwhelming, far more powerful white majority, a high-price scenario in which thousands of black lives would be lost to gunshot and disproportionate force and violence, but he also advocates separation as opposed to integration, an ideology he took on from Mr. Elijah Muhammad, and to which he remained faithful until his last breath, though with eventual readjustments.⁷⁹ In his autobiography, Malcolm X quotes Mr. Elijah Muhammad as saying:

So let us, the black people, separate ourselves from this white man slavemaster, who despises us so much! You are out here begging him for some so-called 'integration'! But what is this slavemaster white rapist going about saying! He is saying he won't integrate because black blood will mongrelize his race! He says that - and look at us! Turn around in your seats and look at each other! This slavemaster white man already has 'integrated' us until you can hardly find among us today any more than a very few who are the black color of our foreparents!⁸⁰

All in all, the set of negative experiences he had faced in the social (racial) environment and conversion to Islam especially through the teachings of Mr. Elijah Muhammad have played a significant role in shaping Malcolm X's psycho-emotional character and his overall approach to the racial issue in the United States, while pilgrimage to Mecca brought about but a slight difference in intensity.

⁷⁸Ibid., 402.

⁷⁹Haley, Alex, et al. The Autobiography of Malcolm X. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 371-372.

⁸⁰Ibid., 278.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

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

Experts and evidence suggest that useful, positive thinking can shape the body, heal internally, and even grow a healthier child during pregnancy. A pregnant woman's thoughts have a physical connection to her unborn child. “Everything the pregnant mother feels and thinks is communicated through neuro-hormones to her unborn child, just as surely as are alcohol and nicotine,”⁸¹ states Thomas Verny, MD. Deepak Chopra, MD, the world-renowned authority in the field of mind-body healing, best-selling author, and founder of the Chopra Center for Wellbeing, agrees, saying, “Your unborn baby has direct connection to your thoughts and emotions”.⁸²

A pregnant woman's negative thoughts can be detrimental for her unborn baby. In *Pre-Parenting, Nursing Your Child from Conception*, Dr. Verny writes: “A preponderance of negative feelings may have a negative impact on your baby, while positive feelings will be life-enhancing”.⁸³

Negative thoughts are often the root cause of the negative, fear-based stress responses. Chopra states:

⁸¹James Goodlattle. “A mother’s Emotions Affect Her Unborn Child.” *Natural Baby Pros*. Kim, 25 January 2013. Print. April 14, 2015.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

Stress activates the unborn child's endocrine system and influences fetal brain development. Children born to mothers who had intensely stressful pregnancies are more likely to have behavioral problems later in life.⁸⁴

In light of the above, one clearly realizes that a pregnant woman communicates her feelings and emotions instantly to the unborn child thus making him or her later likely to develop a psycho-emotional (behavioral) pattern influenced by the very nature or quality of such remote maternal feelings, thoughts and emotions, whether positive or negative, and over time such a psycho-emotional pattern of the child will achieve a fixed trend and can potentially rule the entire psycho-emotional life of an individual from infancy to adulthood, much as any positive or negative event or experience which has marked this individual with profound impact, whether as a child, adolescent our youth is potentially likely to affect his/her psycho-emotional development, and cause it to gradually develop into a particular type of personality in the future.⁸⁵ This, to an acceptable extent, has been typical of the experiences of both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. On the other hand, a father (in fact as well and as much as the mother) is able to affect his child's emotional state in various ways through his own emotional attitudes, taking aside hereditary behavioral and emotional symptoms which are sometimes passed down genetically to the child and otherwise naturally surface later to influence and

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Haley, Alex, et al. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York. Ballantine Books, 1964. Print. 163.

determine his/her psycho-emotional and behavioral types of personality, as the saying goes: “Like father, like son” or “Like mother, like daughter.”

However, when all is said, we must admit that 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 an 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.⁸⁶

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.

⁸⁶ James H., Cone, *Malcolm X et Martin Luther King, Même Cause, Même Combat*, Labor and Fides. Print.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

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 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, a bold and famous civil rights activist of international reach, the historic redeemer of the American Negro people, while overemphasizing X's attributes as the champion of both verbal and physical violence and racial hatred against white America. But such portraits are the results of the images the American mass media has created about King and X and are in great part fundamentally flawed, rather subjective and superficial, leaving out many blind spots, since they blanket the root agents upon which the actual personalities of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X were built, namely their social, religious, economic and educational backgrounds that shaped their views on the American society, as highlighted by the Black American theologian James H. Cone in *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare*, as well as the much unknown brotherhood and philosophical closeness that both leaders entertained at some critical times in the face of issues of common and vital

interest to the black community as a whole, as pointed out by Lewis V. Baldwin in his book entitled *King*. In other words, such media-made portraits are often either solely or mostly based on the apparent effectiveness or failure of their respective philosophies, methods, and strategies to achieve social reform, their leadership patterns throughout the struggle, and on whether each leader has been successful in finding consensual solutions to the US racial dilemma by way of legacy. Thus, the contrast of the misrepresentative portraits above with the social contexts that surrounded and the circumstances that fundamentally affected the psycho-emotional development of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X has fueled my motivation to go in for a clear, more accurate knowledge and understanding of their respective personalities, and to explore and investigate the actual bases that combined and otherwise interacted with one another to influence their psycho-emotional development from their childhood up to their emergence as civil rights activists. To that end, I have identified, explained and analyzed key elements standing for the root factors that may accurately account for the psycho-emotional attitudes and character patterns of the two protagonists. In fact, part of these elements stem from the respective family and childhood environments of King and X and so have been labeled as the internal factors while others identified as the external factors include events and experiences outside of their respective family circles that have left a remarkable impact on their psycho-emotional development as children, young people, and later on their leadership patterns as civil rights activists.

King was raised in a black middle-class family where love and mutual affection were the most common and most shared virtues, and his parents of Christian confession would the oftenest emphatically teach him the Christian virtue of unconditional love of the enemy in a racial environment heavily poisoned by segregation and charged with racial tensions where colored people were legally discriminated against. In addition, he went through some serious spiritual and intellectual milestones during his education mainly through intensive reading of several works by Mahatma Gandhi whereby he discovered and espoused the nonviolence philosophy inspired by Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as a passive weapon to achieve social reform. In addition, he lighted on the doctrine of civil disobedience elaborated by Henry David Thoreau which inspired his marches, demonstrations and mass sit-in campaigns to peacefully yet actively and effectively challenge the established order across the country. Malcolm X, on the other hand, was of humble descent, born and raised in a poor family the scene of repeated household violence where his kin had been a constant target of white supremacy. They killed several of his uncles, constantly threatened his parents even as he was but an unborn child in the maternal womb; they set fire on their house when he was only four years of age, savagely murdered his father thus plunging the family into financial precariousness. Soon enough, the humiliation and harassment of rude social assistance agents caused her mother to catch a mental blackout with a consecutive falling apart of the family nucleus. X dropped out of school upon an abject suggestion made by his

English teacher on his career dream to become a lawyer and sank into the merciless underworld of the filthy ghettos of Boston and Harlem in New York where he would eventually be arrested and jailed for seven years. On top of that, Malcolm was introduced to the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, opened his eyes to the ills and injustices of racism and racial segregation and on the fate of the Negro in America, became all the more radical and saw racial separation, black nationalism, and self-defense (a somewhat defensive violence) as the only way out of the social pit. With regard to what precedes, one realizes and may infer that the character patterns and psycho-emotional attitudes of King and X and the consecutive types of leadership that they developed during the civil rights struggle were the reflections of the influence of the set of experiences they came across in their respective social environments whether in their family or through social, religious, spiritual, or educational experiences.

On the other hand, 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. Here, the issue at stake is that all too often public opinion seems to be very subjective, superficial, far more favorable to King than it is to X, causing the latter to often fall into oblivion and be counted as less popular than his counterpart based on a light assessment of their philosophies, approaches, strategies, and leadership patterns during the civil rights movement, or their legacy. In other words, such portraits are based on the

apparent effectiveness or failure of their philosophies, methods, strategies for social reform and their leadership patterns throughout the struggle, and on whether each leader has been successful in finding comprehensive solutions to the US racial dilemma by way of legacy. With regard to this situation, the contrastive analysis here is meant to open people's eyes to the fact that in order to be credible, constructive and useful, public opinion should be objectively and realistically inspired by such underlying elements as the ones that actually shaped or influenced the psycho-emotional development and consequently the personalities and public outlooks of King and X, rather than just rest upon shallow agents such as apparent popularity, social achievements or comprehensive social legacy.

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