

Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X: A Common Solution? Quotations

Martin Luther King, Jr. Quotes

"There is a magnificent new militancy within the Negro community all across this nation. And I welcome this as a marvelous development. The Negro of America is saying he's determined to be free and he is militant enough to stand up."—*King, 1963*

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."—King

"Don't let anybody frighten you. We are not afraid of what we are doing... We, the disinherited of this land, we who have been oppressed so long, are tired of going through the long night of captivity."—*King, 1955*

"I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."—King

"Black men have slammed the door shut on a past of deadening passivity."—*King, 1968*

"We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies."—King

Malcolm X quotes

"You can't separate peace from freedom because no one can be at peace unless he has his freedom."—*Malcolm X, 1965*

"Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone; but if someone puts his hand on you, send him to the cemetery."—
Malcolm X

"I believe in human beings, and that all human beings should be respected as such, regardless of their color."—*Malcolm X, 1965*

"If you're not ready to die for it, put the word 'freedom' out of your vocabulary."—Malcolm X

"I am for violence if non-violence means we continue postponing a solution to the American black man's problem just to avoid violence."—Malcolm X

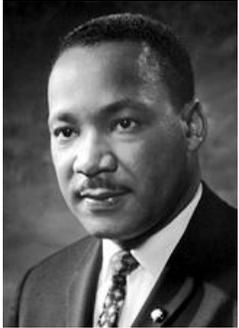
"It is a disgrace for Negro leaders not to be able to submerge our "minor" differences in order to seek a common solution to a common problem posed by a common enemy."—*Malcolm X, 1963*

"I have been convinced that some American whites do want to help cure the rampant racism which is on the path to destroying this country."—*Malcolm X, 1964*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

As the unquestioned leader of the peaceful Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was at the same time one of the most beloved and one of the most hated men of his time. From his involvement in the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 until his untimely death in 1968, King's message of change through peaceful means added to the movement's numbers and gave it its moral strength. The legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. is embodied in these two simple words: equality and nonviolence.

King was raised in an activist family. His father was deeply influenced by Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa Movement in the 1920s. His mother was the daughter of one of Atlanta's most influential African American ministers. As a student, King excelled. He easily moved through grade levels and entered Morehouse College, his father's alma mater, at the age of fifteen. While he was pursuing his doctorate at Boston University, he met and married Coretta Scott. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1955, King accepted an appointment to



the Dexter Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

After his organization of the bus boycott, King formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which dedicated itself to the advancement of rights for African Americans. In April 1963, King organized a protest in Birmingham, Alabama, a city King called "the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States." Since the end of World War II, there had been 60 unsolved bombings of African American churches and homes. Boycotts, sit-ins and marches were conducted. Later in 1963, he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech to thousands in Washington, D.C.

After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, King turned his efforts to registering African American voters in the South. In 1965, he led a march in Selma, Alabama, to increase the percentage of African American voters in Alabama. Again, King was arrested. Again, the marchers faced attacks by the police. Tear gas, cattle prods, and

billy clubs fell on the peaceful demonstrators. Public opinion weighed predominantly on the side of King and the protesters. Finally, President Johnson ordered the National Guard to protect the demonstrators from attack, and King was able to complete the long march from Selma to the state capital of Montgomery. The action in Selma led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Early in the morning of April 4, 1968, King was shot by James Earl Ray. Spontaneous violence spread through urban areas as mourners unleashed their rage at the loss of their leader. Rioting burst forth in many American cities.

But the world never forgot his contributions. *Time* magazine had named him "Man of the Year" in 1963. In 1964, he won the Nobel Peace Prize and was described as "the first person in the Western world to have shown us that a struggle can be waged without violence." In the 1980s, his birthday became a national holiday, creating an annual opportunity for Americans to reflect on the two values he dedicated his life to advancing: equality and nonviolence.

Malcolm X

When Malcolm Little was growing up in Lansing, Michigan, he developed a mistrust for white Americans. Ku Klux Klan terrorists burned his house, and his father was later murdered—an act young Malcolm attributed to local whites. After moving to Harlem, Malcolm turned to crime. Soon he was arrested and sent to jail.

The prison experience was eye-opening for the young man, and he soon made some decisions that altered the course of his life. He began to read and educate himself. Influenced by other inmates, he converted to Islam. Upon his release, he was a changed man with a new identity. Believing his true lineage to be lost when his ancestors were forced into slavery, he took the last name of a variable: X.

Wallace Fard founded the Nation of Islam in the 1930s. Christianity was the white man's religion, declared Fard. It was forced on African Americans during the slave experience. Islam was closer to African roots and identity. Members of the Nation of Islam read the Koran and worship Allah as their God. Mixed with the religious tenets of Islam were Black Pride and Black Nationalism. The followers of Fard became known as Black Muslims.

The Nation of Islam attracted many followers, especially in prisons, where lost African Americans most looked for guidance. They preached adherence to a strict moral code and reliance on other African Americans. Integration was not a goal. Rather, the Nation of Islam wanted blacks to set up their own schools, churches, and support networks. When Malcolm X made his personal conversion, he was soon made him a leading spokesperson for the Black Muslims.

As Martin Luther King preached his gospel of peaceful change and integration in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Malcolm X delivered a different message: whites were not to be trusted. He called on African Americans to be proud of their heritage and to set up strong communities without the help of white Americans. He promoted the establishment of a separate state for African Americans in which they could rely on themselves to provide solutions to their own problems. Violence was not the only answer, but violence was justified in self-defense. Blacks should achieve what was rightfully theirs "by any means necessary."

Malcolm X electrified urban audiences with his eloquent prose and inspirational style. In 1963, he split with the Nation of Islam; in 1964, he made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Later that year, he showed signs of softening his stand on violence and even met with Martin Luther King Jr. to exchange remarks. What direction he might have ultimately taken is lost to a history that can never be written. As Malcolm X led a mass rally in Harlem on February 21, 1965, rival Black Muslims gunned him down.

