

## **MALCOLM X'S PHILOSOPHY OF VIOLENCE: A PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGM FOR SOCIAL LIBERATION OF THE BLACK RACE TOWARDS CONFLICT RESOLUTION, PEACE AND EQUALITY.**

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### **Abstract:**

Malcolm X's advocacy of violence for the liberation of the black race in America has been a recondite and rare contribution in the paradigm of conflict resolution, peace and equality. the uniqueness of his proposal and reliance on violence in American social and political history has been hinged on unalterable conditions and creative restrictiveness upon which the black Americans were conscripted to live within this ambiance of dehumanized conditions. Malcolm X's philosophy was truly understood as a paradigm for struggle and revolutionary. Intentions for oppressed masses who were mainly blacks were traumatized by the actions and intentions of white American authorities. In this paper, we intend to show that Malcolm X's mission was to overcome the white American Supremacist tendencies and sermons were the black Americans who were continuously compelled to live within these enslaved conditions. And his vision was to create and extol black virtue, pence and equality in American society. Within these frames of his mission and vision, it is apparent that most times violence could be an assertive paradigm for conflict resolution, peace and equality of all human race.

**Keywords:** Violence, Social Liberation, Black race, Peace, equality and conflict resolution.

## **Introduction**

Malcolm X's theory of violence in conflict resolution can be captured through his autobiography and his life history. A traversal of his speeches, writings and engagements reveal that his commitment to the black race was because of the oppression and enslavement of the blacks occasioned by the whites. Interestingly, Malcolm's family had experienced severe violence inflicted upon them by the whites, especially the Klu Klux Klan organization which is well known for engaging in acts of violence and terrorism.

Malcolm X's theory of violence at first shows disapproval of the inhumane treatment of the black community in America (Cone 2001). In retrospect, he x-rayed what occasioned the enslavement of the blacks. He saw nothing good in the separatist actions of the white racists because of their disregarded and utter contempt of the blacks whom they regarded as an inferior race while upholding their race as superior.

In another perspective, Malcolm X saw religion as a source of conflict, this made him discard Christianity as a religion of the white. He thought that though Christianity preached brotherhood, white Americans could not deliver it to the "people of colour". Based on this fact, Malcolm advocated that

Islamic religion ought to be the preferred option because he found in it solace peace, equality, justice and brotherhood for the black man and the human race in general (Terrill 2010). Thus Malcolm x all through his life and mission, rising from the devastating depths of oppressive ghetto life, came to symbolize an uncompromising resistance to racism and oppression which were the characteristics of the whites Americans against the black Americans. Malcolm X had a strong belief that with violence the black race can attain peace, equality and resolve racial and social conflict.

## **MALCOLM X'S THEORY OF VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Malcolm's childhood was characterized, by the teachings of his father, who stressed Black Nationalism and significantly by the violence committed against the black minority. Malcolm spent only a brief time in his native home in Omaha, Nebraska (Watts 2019). Much of his early life was spent in Lansing, Michigan and later in the growing ghettos of Detroit, Boston, and New York. He was a young African American who grew up in poverty, vice and violence. Malcolm as a young child

was a troubled spirit who was forced to cope with the trauma of the murder of his father. He equally witnessed the travails and tribulations of his mother who struggled against terrible odds to keep the family together within a racist and oppressive society.

Malcolm X turned to the streets where he was nick-named “Detroit Red” (Corrigan 2017). He became a hoodlum, a drug pusher and a hustler. He became violent within a system that breeds violence and thrives on violence. It is within this socio-economic and political context that the full meaning of Malcolm's evolution and development and its significance to the resolution of conflict can be understood. Malcolm's life of crime eventually landed him in prison. While in prison Malcolm to study in the prison library and took it upon himself to break the psychological and cultural chains that had bound him, he became transformed, from an agent of oppression to an agent for the liberation of black people.

While Malcolm was still in prison, his brother introduced him to a quasi-religious, black nationalist organization called “the Lost-found nation of Islam in the Wilderness of North- America”, which later became known in the mass media as the “Black

Muslims” (Corrigan 2017). He was glad to know that the black Muslims rejected white values and its place affirmed black history, culture and African heritage. Thus, to free himself from the white man's influence and religious deception he devoted himself to the religion of Islam. When he was released from prison he met Elijah Muhammad the leader of the theoretically organized black Muslims. Elijah made a deep impression on Malcolm by his gentle and conservative style of behaviour and leadership.

Malcolm was fascinated by the discipline, the obedience and the strong sense of community responsibility that the members of the black Muslims showed, and he soon became one of Elijah's most devoted followers. For the first time in his life, Malcolm felt important and was treated with dignity and respect. He, therefore, developed his last name 'little’ which he regarded as a slave name and took “X” to be his surname, symbolizing his lost identity. Malcolm was ordained a minister and he soon began to deliver lectures to the people living in the slums. In his teachings, he maintained that ...The white man wants black men to stay immoral, unclean and ignorant. As long as we stay in these conditions we will

keep on begging him and he will control us. We never can win freedom and justice equality until we are doing something for ourselves (Eyo & Essien 2017, pp. 62-74).

The message Malcolm disseminated found a massive audience in the ghetto. He bitterly condemned the Caucasian race for being the common enemy of the non-white people, and therefore, within the framework demanded a separate territory to build up a nation wherein blacks could govern themselves and control the various institutions of the black community. With the heritage of abuse, degradation, exploitation and oppression, Malcolm urged African - Americans to further their education, to give dignity and respect to black womanhood, and to create pride in the African heritage.

Malcolm X went ahead to advocate for self - defence accordingly he argues, “seek peace and never be the aggressor, but if anyone attacks you, we do not teach you to turn the other cheek” (Harris 1992, pp. 313). Malcolm felt a deep commitment to the freedom of his people and rejected every type of oppression which African- Americans have experienced in the period of slavery, colonization and segregation he enjoyed talking to his own people and teaching them the truth about themselves. He was, therefore,

often accused by whites of being a racist, separationist and an extremist. Malcolm on one occasion replied to his critics saying,

It's not a case of being anti-white or anti - Christian. Were anti-evil, anti-oppression, anti-lynching You can't be anti - those things unless you are also anti - the oppressed and the lynched. You can't be an anti-slavery and pro-slave master, you can't be anti-crime and pro-criminal... what I want to know is how the white man with the blood of black people dripping off his fingers, can have the audacity to be asking black people why do they hate him. That takes a lot of nerves (Malcolm & Haley, 1968, pp. 56).

Malcolm's devotion to the leader of the black Muslims Elijah Mohammed was unalloyed. He saw Elijah Mohammed as a prophet of God (Allah), this could be vividly seen in the words of Malcolm when he argued that:

The messenger has seen God. He was with Allah and was given divine patience with the devil. He was willing to war for Allah to death with this devil. the rest of us black Muslims have not seen God. We don't have this gift of divine patience with the devil. The younger black Muslim wants to see some action (Malcolm X speaks to ill a

black man, (Malcolm & Haley, 1968, pp.105).

However, conflict(s) soon broke out between Elijah Mohammed and Malcolm X, as a Result of Elijah Mohammed having adultery. Malcolm was shocked for he had always trusted him totally as an infallible prophet of God who was predicted by the Christian Holy Scriptures to bring the lost nation back to him. After the murder of John F. Kennedy, which Malcolm maintained was a case of “chickens coming home to roost”, Malcolm was cautioned and silenced for ninety days by the organization for making such remarks which in reality was misunderstood (Dabscheck & Gottheimer 2004). When it occurred to Malcolm that his suspension was not temporary and those certain members of the organization did their best to keep him from becoming active again, Malcolm gave a press conference and announced his break with the black Muslims. He went ahead and founded a new organization, the Muslim mosque, Inc. Indeed, this was another turning point in the life of Malcolm X.

In April 1964, soon after he left the Nation of Islam, he made his holy pilgrimage to Mecca and there he took on the Islamic name of El-Haj Malik El-Shabazz. He experienced a deeper transformation, being accepted and treated as a human being. The

friendliness and respect he received made a lasting impression on him. Accordingly, he argued in his autobiography,

The colour blindness of the Muslim world's religious society and the colour blindness of the muslim world's human society: these two influences had each day been making a greater impact, and increasing persuasion against my previous way of thinking (Gillespie 2005, pp. 81).

Malcolm became a devout Sunni Muslim, traveling through many African countries, meeting several important African leaders and leaving an important and enormous impact on Africa. His views concerning the relation to white people and the black race had changed, and he had drastically modified his views on black separatism. Again, to attract people who did not want to become active on a religious base, he founded the organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). He also urged blacks to be active by registering to vote and joining other organizations. Thus he maintained that,

When you go to church and you see the pastor of that church with a philosophy and a program that's designed to bring black people together and elevate black people, join that church!..join any kind of organization - civic, religious,

fraternal, political or otherwise that's based on lifting the black man up and making his master of his own community (Marie 2018, pp. 354).

It could be observed that Malcolm's ultimate belief was now in the brotherhood of human beings irrespective of tribe, tongue, religious and Cultural difference. Equally, the resolution of conflict and attainment of peace was centered upon the upliftment of the black race and the human race in general. Malcolm vigorously maintained in his speech entitled by any means necessary that,

We declare our right on this earth, to be a man, to be a human being, to be given the might of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring by any means necessary (Foley et al., 2019, 56).

Malcolm had undergone many changes, in the *New York Times* of February 22, 1965, he was quoted as saying:

I feel like a man who has been asleep somewhat and under someone else's control. I feel that what I'm thinking and saying is now for myself. Before it was for and by the guidance of Elijah Muhammad (Paul & Wolfenstein 1982, pp. 67).

Malcolm's love for blacks and his deep insight and apprehension of the horror of the

black condition, not only in the united states but across the whole world, and the reasons for it, and his absolute determination to work on the hearts and minds of the black race, so that they would be enabled to see and understand their condition and change it themselves by any means whatsoever, led invariably to the internationalization of the struggle, which he described as a world problem. Malcolm, became the foremost American public enemy when he chose the road to national and international struggle, and the road of anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism.

Malcolm in his bid to bring justice to the African American people charged the United States of America before the United Nations for the denial of human rights and committing genocide against the African American people, suffered a major - set back when his house was bombed, and a week later he was assassinated.

### **Evaluation of Malcolm X's theory of violence in Social Liberation of the Black Race Towards Peace Equality and Conflict Resolution.**

Malcolm, it ought to be understood never advocated the initiation of acts of violence against other people, rather, he was firmly committed to the principle of self -

defense. He did not believe that African Americans were obligated to be “non - violent” in the face of violent attacks against African American people by white racist elements or oppressive authorities in the united states. Indeed he advocated for the resolution of conflicts by any means necessary, hence the oppressed, exploited and traumatized black people should use whatever strategies and tactics that would produce a relational and positive result, including dialogue, non-violent demonstrations or armed resistance. Eyo and Francis (2017), Eyo and Essien (2017) assert that at times violence often brings peace and equality but the strategy of its usage must be carefully implemented. .

Malcolm understood clearly that conflict resolution is a necessary skill to develop in any society that desires to achieve a high level of tolerance. He was convinced of the fact that before humanity can attain the lofty goal of a peaceful society; we must first prove that we can view each other without fear or prejudice. Thus, he was of the opinion that the resolution of conflict must begin with our individual initiative and our ability to inculcate the masses of people with our morals and values which must have undergone humanitarian tests and thus being universal, is capable of producing a triple

effect that would touch every aspect of the society. (Eyo & Ojong 2008).

Malcolm X, most especially in his later years as a Sunni Muslims, believed that to resolve conflicts we ought to be willing to respect the viewpoints of those who oppose them, and also, to be tolerant of other groups that we come in contact with, except on the grounds of provocation, where it becomes necessary to defend oneself using any means within ones reach. Hence, by building consensus in this way, we will be readily able to handle conflicts in our midst. This will equally bring about the enhancement of the quality of our lives when our ideals as far as a just society are concerned to have been implemented. Consequently, conflicts based on race, religion, gender or sexual orientation will become a thing of the past.

Malcolm's views on the methods or means of conflict resolution began to change when he became a Sunni Muslim and after his trip to Mecca, and more especially when he toured Africa and hold discussions with many African revolutionary leaders. (he began to regard the sincere white men, whom he termed well-meaning and good white people who are not racist). However, he continued to speak bitterly against racism. He believed that is non-violence meant the continued postponement of a variable



solution to the plight of the African American then he would rather advocate violence as a counter-measure in the resolution of conflicts within the Racist American society.

Malcolm in his early years rejected non-violence as an approach in conflict resolution if it will only bring forth a delayed solution, for he likened a delayed solution to a non-solution. He believed that if it would take violence to get the black man his human rights in America, he would happily embrace the tenets and principles of violence in the defense of his God-given human rights. Malcolm thought that if violence is wrong in America, then it is wrong abroad. He argued that if it was to defend the African - American using violence, then it is wrong for America to draft blacks and train them to be violent in defense of America. On the other hand, Malcolm further stressed, if it is right for America to draft the blacks and teach them how to be violent in defense of her race then it is right for the blacks to do whatever is necessary to defend them against oppression from white America.

Malcolm, however in his later development did not embrace the concept of integration completely as a solution to the conflicts in which the African American was deeply entangled, rather he saw the cause of racial oppression in a new light. He saw it as

rooted beyond mere racial or colour differences, but as entrenched in economics, political, social and cultural exploitation. He began to assert that racial conflict and conflicts in its diverse manifestations can be eliminated by eliminating exploitation in all its ramifications. He equally began to argue that conflict is not inherent in human beings or immutable or necessarily ordained to last for all time and that it is possible that oppressed people regardless or able to march together in genuine brotherhood and fight together against their common oppressors and exploiters. (Eyo and Etta 2020) reiterated this point when they observed that most exploitation and violence on other citizens of the world arose out of ignorance and poverty. AND there is a need for the oppressors to discard violence and embrace peace and equality in conflict resolution.

Malcolm reviewed all his ideas keeping some, modifying others and casting aside still others. for example. the concept that “the white man is the enemy” which was on an essential strand in Malcolm's philosophy of conflict resolution began to give way, for he began to see the possibilities of alliances with what he called “militant white” Americans which he believed was a necessity. This led him to study the nature of the American capitalist society and world



capitalism. It was from this study that he came to the conclusion that capitalism was the mother of exploitation, the cause of racism and by implication the bedrock of conflicts.

Malcolm, following from the above submission, therefore advocated for socialism, Malcolm began to shift from the right to the left. It could be argued thus, that Malcolm in his last days became pro-socialist and by implication, anti-capitalist. Malcolm's ideas concerning how conflicts are to be resolved were incompleting before he was struck down by an assassin's bullet. Some great scholars and religious leaders had utilized violence in the attainment of peace, equality and conflict resolution. Eyo captured this point when Jesus Christ insisted that "the kingdom of God suffered violence and the violence person takes it by force" (Eyo 2019, 20) Within this frame, it is apparent and recondite to align with Malcolm X that violence should beget violence.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the foregoing, it could be argued that Malcolm's theory of violence in conflict resolution, like his thoughts and actions, were not based upon unalterable concepts and formulas, but rather upon the data provided by his study of the actual conditions and the creative development of

new situations. Malcolm, indeed, was an activist and a pragmatic social reformer who would not continue to hold onto old concepts and formulas devised based on conditions that are no longer tenable.

Malcolm X based his ideas and actions upon that he called a "proper analysis" of conditions and of interests he clearly understood that the "strikes" were not spiritual but rather material and were based on human resources, the control of land, the ownership of major means of production and its distribution on national and international levels. The colonial oppression of African - Americans helped Malcolm X to understand the deception inherent in colonialism and helped him to begin forming bonds of worldwide solidarity with other colonized people, most especially blacks against capitalist imperialism.

Malcolm initially viewed conflicts as originating from religious and racial differences, but later pointed that the source of all conflicts was based upon exploitation which was inherent in capitalism- both local and international, because African, both in the United State of America and elsewhere were and are being oppressed for economic reasons and not because of the colour of their skin or their mode of worship. This racism and religious fanaticism is a mere tool used

by capitalism and colonialism to achieve economic ends. They are therefore mere shadows that far too often diverts the attention of the oppressed away from the substance or the truth.

From the discourse so far, Malcolm X's violence advocacy becomes a leading paradigm and guide for the black race to gain social liberation which will ultimately lead to peace and equality of all men. His philosophy of violence therefore becomes a weapon of the oppressed and traumatized people of the world.

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