

Fight for Tomorrow



Comparing the African American struggle for civil rights by the black nationalist approach led by Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali to the non-violent approach led by Martin Luther King Jr and rethinking the strategic significance of both in the success of the Civil Rights Movement.

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¹ Simone Sebastian, 'Don't criticize Black Lives Matter for provoking violence. The civil rights movement did, too.' Washington Post photo illustration, accessed November 17, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/10/01/dont-criticize-black-lives-matter-for-provoking-violence-the-civil-rights-movement-did-too/>.

ABSTRACT: This thesis compares the non-violent approach led by Martin Luther King Jr. to the violent approach led by Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali and proves the strategic significance of the latter to the success of the 20th century Civil Rights Movement in the United States. The thesis shows that violence was not only key in the success of non-violence, but also that the three actors were increasingly connected and shifted towards aligning with each others goal at the very end of the movement. MLK by radicalizing in his pressure on the government, and X and Ali by deradicalizing and becoming more accepting of the idea of integration of the non-violent approach.

KEY WORDS: Civil Rights Movement, Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, Martin Luther King Jr., non-violence, violence.

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Chapter 1: Introducing the thesis

Introduction

It has been over a century since the thirteenth amendment was enacted, and slavery was abolished in the United States. The thirteenth was followed by the fourteenth and fifteenth amendment, which were ratified to preserve the civil rights of any American citizen, regardless of their race. One would think that this would be the start towards progression for the now freed African American community in the United States, yet history has shown us that it has only been followed by an intense struggle, as tensions increased between white and black communities. Not soon after these Civil War amendments were installed, there came push back from the white American community that attempted to undermine these amendments. And it worked, Jim Crow laws were enacted. Jim Crow laws legalized the segregation of black and white communities if they would both be treated equally; this was the birth of the ‘separate but equal’-era in the United States. In reality, these laws were anything but equal and only legitimized white supremacy as just and lawful. These laws clearly targeted the African American community and attempted to disadvantage them; from taking away their rights to vote, to inciting violence directed at black people, to racial profiling by the police. The African American community that realized how unjust these laws were started protesting these, gathering under the name of the ‘Civil Rights Movement’ to non-violently protest racial discrimination and the legalized segregation under the Jim Crow laws. The Civil Rights Movement era started in the mid-fifties and were signalled to have ended with the enactment of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Bill. However, the struggle to even reach that point is not something that can be simplified as is done above, yet often the Civil Rights Movement gets simplified just like that.²

Despite the fact that the United States has seen the abolition of slavery, followed with the Civil Rights Movement claiming successes through their enactments of civil rights laws, in current day there is yet another civil rights movement active: the Black Lives Matter movement. The Black Lives Matter movement focuses on battling the system of white supremacy that they believe is deeply ingrained in American society and aim to make a society where black people do not have to live in fear of having their lives compromised in any way, as per the official website of the BLM movement.³ Since I started writing this thesis,

² Aldon D. Morris, ‘A Retrospective on the Civil Rights Movement: Political and Intellectual Landmarks’ *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1999), 517-539.

³ Black Lives Matter, ‘*Black Lives Matter; About*’, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.

there have again been multiple cases of black deaths in the news that have been related to hate crimes or racial profiling. Ahmaud Arbery was shot to death while jogging in his neighbourhood after being chased down by white men⁴, Breonna Taylor was murdered in her home by police despite having no criminal past⁵, and recently horrific videos have been spread of a police man kneeling on George Floyd's neck as he pleads that he is unable to breathe and is hurting⁶. And these are just a couple of cases out of many—and that does not include the deaths of those that did not gain media attention and may have been covered up. What makes these cases even more problematic is that often the murderers in question have not been immediately arrested (in fact, often they are protected), with some of the murderers even being acquitted after they have been indicted. And this is what the Black Lives Matter movement fights, they fight the system that protects these white men and the police that racially profile and can get away with the murder of a black person under the protection of the government. The Civil Rights Movement (CRM) only happened a little over sixty years ago, yet the existence of the Black Lives Matter movement proves that racial discrimination is still deeply embedded into not only American society, but also the American system of justice.

This thesis will research into the Civil Rights Movement and the two popularized approaches that it had: the non-violent and the violent or radical approach, with a heavy focus on the last approach. The CRM is known for its success through non-violence, but this thesis will delve deeper into the violent approach and the contributions and effects it had on the Civil Rights Movement. The reason being that there is a lot of study on the non-violent approach, but less on the violent approach. This thesis aims to analyse the contributions the violent approach had towards the success of the CRM, and open further discourse and research on this approach and how it may contribute in understanding current movements. With recent developments with new protests in the United States firing up, this thesis aims to re-read important historical figures to the civil rights struggle to contribute to current discourse on the struggle to equal civil rights.

There will be three key characters in this research, and they are as followed: Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK), Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali. The latter two are considered to be

⁴ Bridget Read and Claire Lampen, 'What We Know About the Killing of Ahmaud Arbery', accessed June 2 2020, <https://www.thecut.com/2020/05/ahmaud-arbery-shooting-georgia-explainer.html>.

⁵ Richard A. Oppel Jr., 'Here's What You Need to Know About Breonna Taylor's Death', accessed June 2 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/breonna-taylor-police.html>.

⁶ Anthony Zurcher, 'George Floyd death: Lawyer calls it 'premeditated murder'', accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52869504>.

siding the radical (violent) approach, and this thesis will research into whether that is true by highlighting differences and similarities between these three figures and their approaches. Malcolm X is chosen because he is often villainised in history as the polar to MLK, and Ali as a figure that is often not even deemed a notable figure to the CRM despite his many contributions. This research aims to revisit the black struggle for civil rights with a key focus on the violent approach that is often either deemed unsuccessful or ignored in favour of the successful 'non-violent' approach. Through providing an analysis of the struggle for civil rights from the 'alternate approach', this thesis aims to provide a better understanding of the civil rights struggle from those that have been silenced or deemed too violent to provide anything of worth to this movement. With current events unfolding in the United States, and the many BLM protests all over the country, this thesis aims to reread an alternate perspective to provide alternate insights to this century old struggle. For that reason, the main research question of this thesis is as followed: *What are the different approaches to the Civil Rights Movement, and how does the concept of violence affect these?*

Thesis set-up

The thesis is set up in four parts detailing different aspects and aims to provide a comparative analysis of the three actors. The first part is focused on providing a historiography to help fully understand the civil rights struggle and the system they are fighting against; this will provide the basic knowledge required to understand the events that unfold in the Civil Rights Movement, and details events directly mentioned by the CRM leaders themselves. It will detail the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement itself and the Vietnam War (mainly focusing on its connection to the CRM). The second part will focus on the three actors that have been named: Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali. The main question of this chapter is: Who were these civil rights activists prior to them becoming active politically? This part will detail the circumstances of their personal lives prior to becoming active in the march for civil rights, and whether these have affected their choice in approaches. The third part will discuss their contributions to the CRM and how their approaches differ from each other and may even align at points. As is mentioned in the introduction, their approaches are often split under the two main approaches, the violent and non-violent approach, but this chapter will detail their personal approaches rather than simplifying it into two separate approaches. It will also detail the interactions these figures have had, and how these interactions have influenced their approaches. The fourth and final

part will focus on the concept of non-violence and violence in their approaches, and how the three key figures used this strategically. It will introduce the Black Power movement as well, which is seen as a continuation of Malcolm X's approach after his death, and how it continued the legacy of the violent approach nearing the end of the CRM.

With the findings of these four parts combined, I will answer my research question; "What are the different approaches to the Civil Rights Movement, and how does the concept of violence affect these?" in the conclusion. Finally, I will end with a short epilogue on the Black Lives Matter movement which inspired this thesis.

Methodology

This thesis will mainly be a qualitative research with focus on analysing speeches, news articles, autobiographies and interviews given by the actors involved. First, I will be analysing different historical movements and how they approached their struggles towards what I ultimately believe is the same thing; the end of the American system that protects white supremacy. This research will also analyse the discourse regarding three prominent actors in the CRM and how their words affected the black community in their times but also the opposers of the struggle. Non-violence is often seen as key to the success of the CRM under lead of King, however this minimizes the effect of the concept of 'violence' during this struggle. For that reason, I have chosen to focus on two great leaders of the 'violent' movement, Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali, to provide insights on the success they booked as leaders of the violent movement. To do this, I will analyse primary sources coming from the three actors I have chosen. These are mainly their (auto)biographies and speeches and interviews held by them that are directly related to the topics chosen in their respective parts. The obstacles that this does bring is that I will have to read against the grain to provide a full understanding of the words said by the actors, which is however based on my own interpretation. To maintain an objective view, I will be locating the viewpoints of other scholars on these same actors to compare and provide a more precise analysis.

Theoretical framework

The main theoretical framework of this thesis will be the Critical Race Theory (CRT). This theory is best understood through the book 'Critical Race Theory' by Richard Delgado and

Jean Stefancic. The choice mainly falls on the author Richard Delgado, who is one of the founders of the Critical Race Theory school. This movement initially came up after the Civil Rights Movement, deeming the proclaimed success of it not the end of the civil rights struggle. Although in current day CRT is used as an umbrella term for many different movements dealing with discrimination or racism, the key concepts of this theory remain relevant for the thesis. The general idea behind the CRT is that it looks at invisible patterns in society and the justice system that help support a racist system, and ultimately a racist world order. The CRT differs from other theories in the belief that it not only wants to understand the social system through their theory, but to also *actively* change this social system by dismantling it and thus it takes on an activist approach. One of the aims of this thesis is precisely this, to understand the system the chosen civil rights activists are fighting against, and how they wanted to actively change this system through their contributions.⁷ The ‘system’ being the liberal world order. Critical Race Theorists believe that the liberal system is based on the idea of universalism, which assumes the equal treatment of every person and feeds into so-called colour-blindness. This colour-blindness largely ignores that racism is deeply embedded in legal and social structures, under the belief that everyone is equal when in reality this is not true.⁸ This is later comparable to ideas of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism raised by the violent approach.

CRT aim to counter mainstream storytelling by highlighting storytelling from people of colour to present alternative perspectives or ignored realities. CRT believes that mainstream storytelling is often in the best interests of the dominant groups, and thus provide a story that aims to put the dominant group in a positive light. In terms of the CRM history, this means telling the story that African Americans fought for civil rights through non-violence and achieved success through non-violent means, and this is how equality has been achieved. Of course, this leaves out a lot of nuances, and this is done on purpose to benefit the dominant group by erasing their violent history. CRT calls this interest convergence, which means that people choose to believe what benefits them, and thus conveniently ignore and silence the affected persons. CRT wants to fight this by highlighting the narratives of those that have been silenced and ignored. Through narrating the stories of oppressed groups, CRT believes that this aids in contextualising problems of oppression and discrimination faced and helps counter mainstream narratives. CRT believes that the problem of the current day liberal

⁷ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory* (Third Edition, New York, 1995), 1-18

⁸ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory* (Third Edition, New York, 1995), 26-31.

system is that there is no proper vocabulary to address problems, so there is no solution for it to be found in the liberal system. Thus, the aim of the CRT is to contextualize, highlight and counter mainstream narratives, which will be fundamental in deconstructing the current liberal world order which assumes universalism.⁹

Another important concept that comes from the CRT is the concept of ‘intersectionality’ which is highly relevant regarding the figures Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali. Intersectionality deals with discussing how single persons can experience multiple forms of oppression. This is possible due to an individual being able to fall into different disadvantaged categories. For X and Ali for example, this would be them being African American but also Muslim. Intersectionality is something that has still not been completely addressed in the legal system and CRT highlights that this not being added to the vocabulary of the legal system is yet another problem of the liberal system failing due to assuming universalism, and continuing to not provide solutions for current-day problems.¹⁰

This thesis, just like the CRT, aims to research into an ‘alternate reality’ which is the ‘violent’ or black nationalist approach led by Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali. It aims to reposition the importance of this approach in the success of the CRM, and how this continues to influence the civil rights struggle in current day. To solve the problems the African American community continues to face today, it is first important to properly address these problems by looking into the history of them and properly researching into the oppressed side, rather than accept the sugar-coated history and assuming the problems have been solved.

Innovative aspects of the research

The CRM is a movement that has already been widely discussed by the public, media, and scholars alike. There are well over thousands of books and articles on this movement. However, what is lesser known is Malcolm X’s strategic significance to the non-violent approach as the ‘villain’ and Muhammad Ali’s importance to this overall movement and how he contributed to it as a symbol of pride for the black community. Ali’s contributions on matters of the Vietnam War are especially essential, and the findings during this research highlight that. The Vietnam War and its connections to the success of the CRM, and vice versa, itself is under researched, which is likely why Ali’s contributions to the CRM are not as

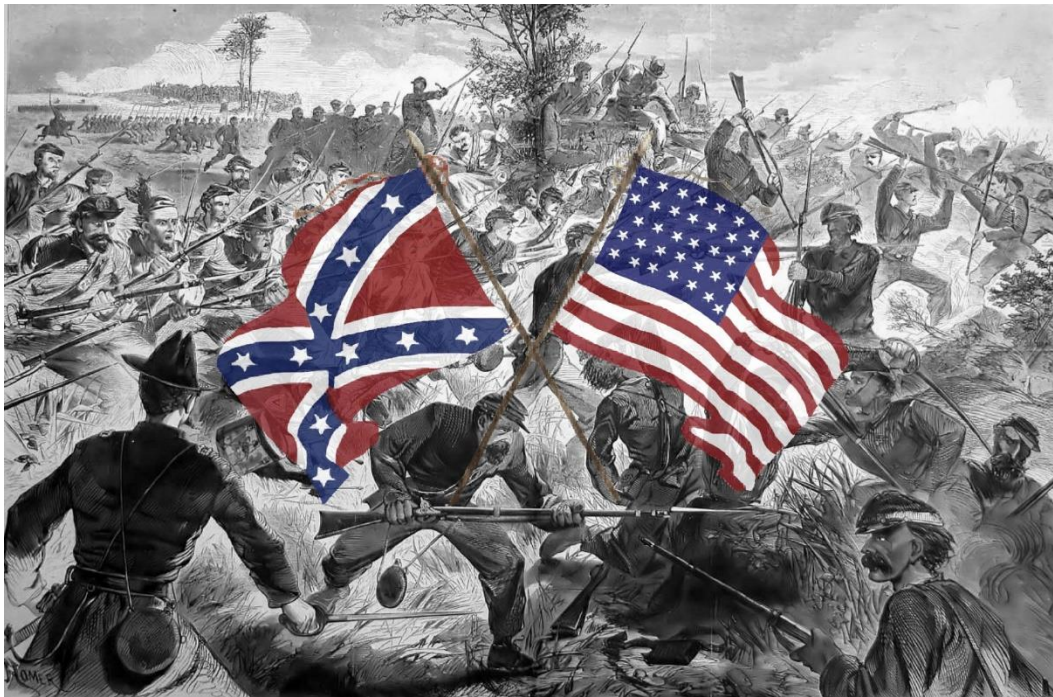
⁹ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory* (Third Edition, New York, 1995), 46-49.

¹⁰ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory* (Third Edition, New York, 1995), 58-76.

known but rather seen as a contribution to *just* the anti-Vietnam War movement. But this thesis will focus on Ali and X's contributions to the CRM, rather than delving too deep into the Vietnam War due to the limitations of this research. Another innovative aspect is that the thesis aims to not only provide a research into the interconnectedness of their approaches towards the end-goal of the CRM, but also the connection between the three key figures to each other on a personal level and how this may have influenced their political approaches.

This thesis aims to show that there is a historical pattern present in the struggle to civil rights. Through rereading the three actors chosen, this thesis aims to contribute to current discourse regarding the civil rights struggle by providing new insights on the success of violence in non-violence, and specifically the importance and success of the black nationalist movement.

Chapter 2: The Civil Rights Movement



The American Civil War of 1861 to 1865 ending with the abolition of slavery had left many thinking that this would signal a new era, a beginning towards equal human rights for all American citizens, namely the African American community. The existence of the Civil Rights Movement in the 50s and 60s however shows that the struggle towards equal human rights was far from over. And one may argue that the existence of the Black Lives Matter movement currently continues to prove that there still is a long way to go before the African American community in the United States can truly achieve equality. To understand the current problem, it is important to trace the roots of these to show what has changed and improved since then, but also to point out what has not changed. This chapter will be split in two parts; the first pertaining towards the American Civil War, the second will focus on the Civil Rights Movement. Through this chapter I aim to provide a framework and context under which my research question will be investigated. The Civil War and the Vietnam War will be of relevance to understanding the Civil Rights Movement and its goals, so basic knowledge of these are necessary to take the next step in this research.

¹¹ Unknown, 'Did All Chicagoans Support The Civil War?', accessed June 2, 2020, interactive.wbez.org/curiouscity/civil-war/.

The Civil Rights Movement may not have existed if the Civil War had ended up ‘successful’. Instead, the war ended up strengthening the existing racist social and political system in the United States. The American political and social system that protects racism is something that has constantly been challenged, starting at its roots in the Civil War, to the Civil Rights Movement, to currently the Black Lives Matter movement. Despite changes being made through every period of struggle, this system has somehow continued to persevere. Through the rereading of these historical processes of struggle, this research hopes to find similarities in these struggles and the divergences that can explain current society better.

2.1 American Civil War: The North and the South

Although the American Civil War is argued to have many different causes, one of the main causes revolved around the enslavement of black people. This Civil War was fought between the Northern and Southern states of the United States that could not come to an agreement over the abolition of slavery. The Northern states that were for the abolition of slavery formed the ‘Union’ to deal with this issue, while the Southern states upholding slavery called themselves the ‘Confederacy’ and attempted to separate themselves from the North. The Confederacy was never officially recognized as autonomous by any other state or country. The war took place between 1861 and 1865, ending in the victory of the Union.¹² The difference in the areas are vital in understanding civil rights discourse made by leaders of the movement.

The South

The main (self-proclaimed) reasoning behind wanting to uphold slavery for the Southern states was that they believed that the abolition of it would cause an economic collapse for them. Governing bodies of Southern states believed that slavery was the basis of their society as they *needed* large amounts of slaves to provide labour on their large fields and plantations. Without these masses of slaves providing cheap labour, how could they possibly continue to produce products necessary for a booming economy? Another issue that kept the

¹² James L. Huston, ‘The Experiential Basis of the Northern Antislavery Impulse’ *The Journal of Southern History* 56 no. 4 (1990), 609-640.

Southern white Americans in fear, is that they believed that the freeing of slaves would cause a violent reaction, as there was already a growing number of revolts amongst slaves which had ended up in murders of white Americans.¹³ Despite the insistence of the South to keep slavery lawful, only a very small percentage of the South was actually a slave owner. Despite slave owners being a minority in the South, majority in the South saw slavery as a basis of their society, and as the reason the South was flourishing. Southerners also aspired to own slaves and saw it as a symbol of wealth and success despite only a low percentage ending up owning slaves. The wealthiest Southerners were almost always slave owners, and the number of slaves owned often reflected your social standing in the South. Slavery was also used as a weapon to control the (what is now called) African American community, as they would outnumber the White Southerners if they were given freedom.¹⁴

The North

The North in contrast held a completely different view, though it is important to note that this was due to different circumstances, rather than different personal beliefs. The North was all about big cities and big factories compared to the South which mostly relied on agriculture for their economy and did not see the need to industrialize like the North because of it. For agriculture, (cheap) slaves were deemed necessary to work on fields and plantations, while for the industries in the North the need for slaves was non-existent as the North instead relied on cheap immigrant labour. Despite the North being anti-slavery, this did not mean that the Northerners were inherently less racist than Southerners. The main reason why the North wanted to abolish slavery was not due to their sympathy towards slaves/black people—Keegan claims in his book ‘The American Civil War’ that there was still ‘undoubtedly so negrophobia in the North’¹⁵, it was rather the shame the political leaders and slowly the general public felt as one of the the greatest countries in the world still using outdated institutions with increased (international) media backlash on the institution of slavery. Through the widespread use of media, many started preaching how slavery was against the constitution that the United States was so proud of and was seen as hypocritical after the war the Americans faced against the British to escape their clutches and claim autonomy. Another important thing to note is that due to Northerners not owning as many slaves, they were not as

¹³ Winston S. Churchill, ‘*The American Civil War by Winston S. Churchill*’ (New York, 1961), 19-24.

¹⁴ John Keegan, ‘*The American Civil War: A Military History*’ (New York, 2009), 1-40.

¹⁵ Keegan, *American Civil War*, 13-16.

heavily in contact with the African American communities like the South. Therefore, it is important to note that the North was not any less racist, as is proven when the African American community attempts to integrate in the North after the Civil War.¹⁶

2.2 The Civil War and its after-effects

The Civil War broke out in 1861 with Abraham Lincoln being elected as president. There was already a lot of tension between the North and South prior to this, but with him becoming president, the South wanted to separate into the Confederacy believing that he would bring changes to slavery.¹⁷ Although the United States lacked trained military, neither of the regions lacked manpower due to the size of the United States' population. The North had promised large sums of money to those that joined their army, while in the South many of the poorer men had no choice but to join to provide a sort of income towards their household. This war had one of the highest lethality rates in any wars the United States had fought up till that point.¹⁸

The war ended in 1865 with the South surrendering as they had exhausted all their resources and were unable to continue war. In the same year president Lincoln abolished slavery by adding the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. And in the next year the Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which gave Civil Rights to African Americans. This was further pushed in the approval of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1869, which protected the rights of all citizens as equals under the jurisdiction of the United States. In 1869 came the Fifteenth Amendment, which protects the rights of every citizen to vote regardless of race or skin colour. The abolition of slavery was not met with open arms in the South, in fact many had grown increasingly hostile (even more so than before) towards the now freed slaves. Many of these freed slaves had protested the existing social hierarchy based on skin colour, and this was not taken lightly by the white Southerners. Many of these Southerners struggled to accept that the abolition of slavery meant that they had to view slaves as human beings, rather than people inferior to themselves. The North did not fare any better, as predominantly white communities watched as there was an increase of freed African Americans attempting to occupy their space. While Southerners were used to black slaves,

¹⁶ Keegan, *American Civil War*, 1-40.

¹⁷ Robert Cook, *'Civil War: Making a Nation, 1848-1877'* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 114-155.

¹⁸ John Keegan, *'The American Civil War: A Military History'* (2009), 32-47.

Northerners had little to no contact with black people, and the sudden increase in African Americans seeking jobs in the North brought a lot of tension between the white Northern community and the black community. Douglas A. Blackmon argues in his book 'Slavery By Another Name' that the end of slavery only helped heighten tensions between these communities (of whites versus blacks) due to it forcing the white Americans to answer the big question: Can they see slaves, and thus African Americans, as autonomous human being deserving equal rights? The institution of slavery was built on the idea that the white American was superior to the (black) slave, simply based on their skin colour. The black slave was often seen more as a commodity that had no other goal (or passion) than to provide labour for the (white) owner. But with the abolition of slavery, these slaves were no longer commodities working under a white owner, they were supposed to receive rights just like their owners. The institution that gave white Americans superiority over the slaves had fallen, and with that a part of the white identity.¹⁹

The Civil War had ended up determining that the South still belonged to the Union, as part of the United States, and so denied the Confederacy its legitimacy. But the war had not solved the question regarding the now freed slaves in the United States, and what was to become of them. Could the white and black community live alongside each other as equals rather than as the original master-slave relationships? There were many different responses to them, but most of them were still built on the idea that the black American was lesser than the white American. Many Southerners were forced to comply with the abolition of slavery, but instead of making the African American provide labour under the definition of slavery, they instead opted to 'manage' the African Americans. Sure, they were not animals, but they were still not humans either. Southerners used civil law in cunning ways; creating laws that would make it so that if African Americans were not under the 'protection' of a white man that they could be arrested. Some Southern states had passed laws that would make it so freed slaves could not simply quit their jobs and take new ones, they needed an official permit from their previous employer before they could do so. Many of these freed slaves thus remained enslaved, but now under different definitions. Beyond their civil rights being denied, these freed slaves also faced violence from white Americans through increased organised crime from hostile white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). White supremacist groups often assaulted and harassed African Americans, whether it was those attempting to

¹⁹ Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans From the Civil War to World War II* (New York, 2008), 17-57.

live their life peacefully with no confrontations or those that were trying to actively regain their rights. Members of these white supremacist groups even murdered African Americans but were often protected by corrupt governing bodies and thus not prosecuted.²⁰

In the 1890s there were movements from these Southerners to slowly strip the African American community from the rights they had gained from the addition of the three Civil Rights amendments. They pushed to pass laws that were called the 'Jim Crow laws'. These laws were carefully worded and aimed to start excluding the African American first on political areas, and later in social areas. Voting rights were taken away from the African American community by passing laws that added requirements to be eligible to vote that were clearly aimed to exclude the African American masses from voting. Jim Crow laws were further pushed by creating laws that segregated races under the notion of 'separate but equal'. Notable forms of segregation are the segregation of education, public transports, and public accommodation. The idea was that white and black facilities were equal, assuming that the governments funded them both equally. However, in reality this was never the case and only helped push the African American community back by taking away their opportunities to equal education, job positions and so on. And due to this, a large majority of the African-American community was unable to vote as they would never be able to become eligible with their inability to secure quality education, or decent jobs to fund their own communities.²¹ In the backdrop of the passing of the Jim Crow laws was also the Southerners use of media to portray the African-American community as vile and inferior. Many fabricated stories of African Americans criminal endeavours took spotlight in media, and further increased fear and anger towards the African American community. There was also a rise of imperialism in the US, which was justified by the US as the 'white man's burden' of civilising the rest of the world. All these factors combined created the idea of 'white supremacy' as synonymous with the society of the United States.²²

2.3 The Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement does not have a clear starting point as it is a continuous struggle by the African American community. It is however a movement that is often periodized as

²⁰ Blackmon, *Slavery By Another Name*, 62-82.

²¹ Christopher M. Richard and Ralph E. Luker, *History of the Civil Rights Movement* (Maryland, 2014), 1-49.

²² Richard and Luker, *History of the Civil Rights Movement*, 1-49.

something that occurred in the 40s till the late 60s. Many connote the start of this movement in 1954 with the famous story of Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat in a bus to a white man, whom had demanded the seat claiming that she was sitting in the white section of a segregated bus. Although she was not the first to do so, she was the chosen face by the movement, believed to have an appearance that would not frighten the white community. What followed was the Montgomery Bus Boycott, protesting segregated seating in public transport. This boycott also is seen as the beginning of Martin Luther King Jr. becoming the face and leader of the Civil Rights Movement.²³

Another big moment that helped push the Civil Rights Movement into action was the so-called *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case in 1954. Here the Jim Crow notion of separate but equal was fought against in the Supreme Court. This case started due to a young black girl not being able to enrol into a public school in her neighbourhood due to segregation rules, which would force her to go to a school that was not in her neighbourhood. To summarise shortly, with pressure from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), public opinion and the federal government, the Supreme Court ruled that the Jim Crow laws were unconstitutional. This ruling would override the previous ruling in the Supreme Court (*Plessy v. Ferguson*) that justified and legalised the ‘Separate but Equal’ notion. Initially it was impossible for African Americans to protest in any way, as they were pushed out of political actions through the Jim Crow Laws and feared protesting on the streets due to white violence. But once the Supreme Court ruled in their favour that the laws were unconstitutional; they started receiving economic aid to help rebuild their communities, protests were able to happen with military support against the threat of white violence, and public accommodations and transport became widely available again. This all slowly started the rebuilding of the African American community in the United States with them slowly using the public resources finally available to them. With the belief that justice was on their side, as proved by the Supreme Court ruling, this was considered an inspiration for African-Americans to protest for their equal civil rights now one of the shackles holding them down was removed, or rather loosened.²⁴

²³ Dennis B. Fradin, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott (Turning Points in U.S. History)* (2009), 15-29.

²⁴ Michael J. Klarman, *Brown v. Board of Education* (Oxford, 2007), 213-231.

2.4 The Vietnam War

The Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement are often treated as separate events due to them being key events in American history. But both are interconnected and have heavily influenced each other. The Vietnam War had officially begun in 1955 in the backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement. The Vietnam War is one of the many consequential wars of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, it was considered a battle against the spread of communism across the world. When the Vietnam War initially broke out in 1955, many Civil Rights leaders had chosen to stay quiet on the fact—believing that the war and American foreign policies had nothing to do with the movement itself as it was considered a domestic affair. There were some that did speak out against it in the early periods of the war, but quickly silenced and some even deemed communist. And communism was a word that was considered taboo for the white and black community alike as it opposed the core values of America. The CRM considered the communist label harmful for progress in their struggle and thus many in the CRM denounced communism.²⁵

There was a belief that African Americans were close to achieving equal civil rights, so having any opinions on the Vietnam War could end up taking that away from them and thus silence was necessary to protect themselves. One of the important reasons of that is President Lyndon B. Johnson. He was highly revered by the African American community for actively pushing for equal civil rights legislation and being in close contact with civil rights leaders (including MLK). So when he chose to go to war in Vietnam, many of these African-Americans also supported him, not only because they believed he would do the right thing but also fearing that anti-war statements coming from the African American community would mean that he would stop supporting the CRM. What followed was that thousands of African American men had enlisted in the Vietnam War. Many African-American men did not have the education or funds necessary to go to college (instead of to war) or the requirements to take up higher roles in the military hierarchy, so often they chose to enlist and were tasked with the most dangerous battles in Vietnam. Many still chose to go to war, believing that this would show the public at home that African Americans were not inherently communist, but proud Americans fighting for their home country and their beliefs of democracy. The ultimate act of patriotism, they believed. Thousands of African American men died because of this war, more than any other race fighting this war. The black soldiers that managed to survive

²⁵ Daniel S. Lucks, *Selma to Saigon: The Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War* (Kentucky, 2014), 1-37.

came home with not only battle scars and trauma, but also returned to a society that still had not changed and was increasingly hostile towards them, war veteran or not. They still came back to a society that looked down on African Americans, despite their efforts to prove this wrong. And this is where the Civil Rights Movement had to start acknowledging how black lives were thrown away in the Vietnam War as fodder almost, with not even respect at home being a return from it. And with the Vietnam War escalating in 1965, the Civil Rights Movement had halted on the political agenda while the Vietnam War took forefront. Soon, the hypocrisy of pushing for democracy and freedom abroad while it was not fully attained by every citizen of the United States became apparent for many African Americans. Instead, African Americans related with the innocent civilians in Vietnam being killed and started seeing them as victims of oppression by the United States, just like the African Americans at home. The CRM and its leaders had to take on the difficult task of navigating this issue of anti-war protests and civil rights protests, knowing that take sides on anti-war protests would inevitably affect the civil rights protests in a negative manner as well.²⁶

2.5 Conclusion

Through this first chapter, I have attempted to provide a framework before I delve deeper into the chosen leaders in the Civil Rights Movement in the next chapter. The Civil War had led to the abolition of slavery, yet we see that the addition of Civil War amendments had ended up increasing tensions between the white and black community. What followed were the Jim Crow laws which had legally justified segregation between the white and black community under the notion of separate but equal. Yet in practice it is shown that this was anything *but* equal. There were differences in incomes based on colour, differences in funding for public accommodations and transport, there was an increase of violence with Jim Crow laws being used as justification, there were loopholes found in laws to take voting power away from the black community, and so on. All these consequences of inequalities are what had spurred the Civil Rights Movement into action, with Martin Luther King Jr. at the forefront of it as the leader. What followed were two long decades of African Americans protesting racial segregation and discrimination. Although the movement is famous for using non-violent protests to achieve equality, this thesis will research the relevance of the violent approach and the paradox of violence in non-violence.

²⁶ Lucks, 'Selma to Saigon', 141-247.

To do this, the thesis will focus on three essential leaders: Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali. King is seen as the leader of non-violent protests, while Malcolm X is often polarised against him as the leader of the 'violent protests'. Muhammad Ali plays an interesting role as he is not considered a major leader in this movement, but this research aims to analyse his contributions to the CRM and where his stance on violence or non-violence falls. The next three parts will detail these three actors and their differing approaches.

Chapter 3: The Early Years

Part two of this thesis will detail the personal lives of the three chosen actors: Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and Muhammad Ali. This chapter will begin with a focus on detailing the circumstances and influences three figures had dealt with prior to becoming politically active to provide context into what may or may not have influenced their decision-making as an adult. To do this, I will be analysing the autobiographies written by and for these men and take out the most relevant information. With relevant information I consider any form of political, religious, and private influences and events that may have impacted them growing up. After detailing their pasts, I will compare these to each other and see whether there are differences or perhaps similarities that may explain future decisions and paths they take. To research into the past and how these may have shaped them, I have chosen to use autobiographies written by the men themselves. This is done to provide insight on how they portrayed their circumstances growing up. One of the problems this does bring however, is that these autobiographies are often written in retrospect. This means that they will actively remember what they *want* to remember and choose to share us memories that they deem relevant to their causes as political actor or perhaps even just in the commercial success of the books. This problem is further explored in each section of this chapter.

Analysing their recollection on their personal lives can provide insights on why they ended up becoming politically active, and why they ended up taking diverging paths in the CRM itself. Which is why this part of the thesis is dedicated to delving deeper into their pasts to find possible key turning points in their lives, and figures that have inspired them. The main question of this chapter will thus be; *Do the past circumstances of these three actors explain their diverging paths?* The answers to this question will be tied together with the other parts as one of the possibly significant, or insignificant, factors in their diverging approaches to the Civil Rights Movement. I will attempt to find a correlation between their youths and how it has impacted their future choices in politics, or perhaps not at all.

3.1 Malcolm Little

Malcolm Little was born in Omaha, Nebraska (a midwestern state) in 1925 as one of the seven children of Louise Helen Little and Baptist preacher Earl Little. Malcolm Little

devotes little time to religion in the early chapters of his autobiography. Both of his parents were avid followers of Pan-African activist Marcus Garvey and played significant roles in the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). This association was formed by Marcus Garvey and is based on the idea that anyone with African heritage should work together towards their shared destiny, in Africa and abroad. In America, this association worked to instil African/black pride in their community.²⁷ Earl Little was an important leader in this movement. Malcolm X claims in his biography that his father had favoured him over his other siblings, which he assumed was because of his lighter skin. Because his father had favoured him, he was often taken along with him to these UNIA meetings. Malcolm X recalls not quite understanding what his father was preaching about regarding shared African identity, having believed the imagery of Africans as savages and cannibals which was taught to them from an early age in American schools.²⁸

Most of Malcolm X's retelling of his early years happened when his family had moved to Lansing, Michigan (a Northern state). When they moved there, the Little family was constantly harassed by followers of the Black Legion (a white supremacist group) that were suspicious of Earl Little's activities as the leader of the UNIA. At age 6, Malcolm Little's father was killed in what was deemed a roadkill accident by local authorities. However, many of the African American community believed it to be a murder planned by white supremacists, and this is what young Malcolm Little kept hearing around him and thus believed, especially as local authorities refused to investigate the accident nor helped seek justice. This part is where Malcolm X sees the beginning of a downwards trend for his family, as he watches his mother slowly lose her mind and he and his siblings struggle to provide for their basic needs. As widower his mother was supposed to receive insurance and financial funds, however the government claimed that Earl Little's cause of death was a suicide to make sure she would receive as little monetary help as possible. Malcolm Little watched as the government not only refused to seek justice for his father but caused the mental breakdown of his mother *and* took away the funds their family needed to survive and stay together. Eventually Little and his siblings were rehomed as the government deemed his mother mentally unfit to raise her children.²⁹

²⁷ Marcus Garvey, 'Declaration of the Rights of Negro Peoples' in *Negro World* (1920).

²⁸ Alex Haley and Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, 1965).

²⁹ Haley and X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 79-102.

A vivid memory X recalls is when he was in high school in Lansing, he was one of the best ranking students and extremely clever for his age. His teacher had asked him what his aspirations were, and when Little answered that he wanted to be a lawyer. He recalls being told that “A lawyer—that’s no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you can be.”³⁰ X does not believe that his teacher actually had any malicious intent towards him, but that this was simply how white Americans had thought the world worked. They did not believe that black men could have any decent careers, regardless of intellect, and naturally believed they would be stuck in dead end jobs. This proves to be a key event in shaping his views on the white community, believing them to be inherently racist.³¹

In his late teen years to his young adult years Little had moved to New York with his sister Ella. This is where Little had quickly started getting involved in criminal activities as he met a man named Shorty with endless connections. Through these connections Little had tried to make as much money as possible and quickly he became involved in acts of; gambling, selling and- using drugs, stealing, and even pimping. Eventually Little was caught by authorities and sentenced to jail for eight to ten years. X claimed in his autobiography that white men would only receive two years of sentence for the same crime, and that he believed that most of his sentence was related to him taking away white women from white men. At the time, Malcolm was known to flirt and get into relationships with white women, claiming that he saw it as a form of ‘racial conquest’.³²

Malcolm X ends this chapter of his life by describing that he told the whole, ugly truth of what he did to showcase what the white man’s society had done to him, pushed him down rock bottom. He ends chapter nine of his autobiography by saying that jail had completely changed his life, as this is where he found Allah and the religion of Islam.³³ The most important parts to be taken from the retelling of Malcolm X’s early years is that he had been raised by Garveyites. He admits that as a young child he did not quite understand what his parents were preaching about, but these influences reappear in his later speeches after he has seemingly reflected on these memories. The other key part of his past is the many incidents and fatalities he had endured from white supremacists. From his white teacher telling him he will not amount to much, to the harassment and murders of his family members by white supremacist groups, to the government refusing to fund his broken mother which led to him

³⁰ Haley and X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 118.

³¹ Haley and X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 103-120.

³² Haley and X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 121-243.

³³ Haley and X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 242-243

moving. One may argue that it can only be seen as natural that Little was pushed into a specific role by what he called the white man's society. Of course, the case is then to be made that his other siblings were living 'normal lives' in comparison. His sister Ella in particular, with whom he moved to New York.

3.2 Michael King Jr

Michael King Jr was born in Atlanta, Georgia (a Southern state) in 1929 as one of the three children of Reverend Michael King Sr and Alberta King. King recalls most of his youth as good, claiming himself to be lucky that nature was good to him. Despite mentioning that he was born after the Great Depression, he claims that his parents always provided his basic needs without much struggle. The community he grew up in also was fairly crime free, and he deemed the community rather ordinary. He also proudly shares that he had grown up in a loving home with his parents *never* arguing, which he thinks explains his peaceful and loving nature as well and his love for his religion.³⁴

All this already contrasts with Malcolm X who had been moving multiple cities with his family, and in each city had been dealing with harassment from white supremacists. His family also had struggled to make ends meet, his parents were often fighting, and his father had no qualms hitting his children to discipline them, Malcolm X's last memory of his late father was even one of him arguing with his mother. Another big contrast between the two is how King recalls his mother explaining racism and segregation to him, and how his mother had made sure that he knew he was important and not inferior to anyone.³⁵ Malcolm X had parents that were part of the UNIA which promoted the black identity proudly to black children especially, yet it did not seem to provide any defining moment for Malcolm X. In retelling most of his early years he focuses on recalling how he felt inferior and how the white society made sure he was shown his place in their hierarchy, and that this is why he ended up rebelling to find a place for himself.

King's first encounter with the segregation issue was already at the young age of six. His childhood best friend was a young white boy, and the father of this boy had forbidden him of seeing King after they had to go to separate schools. Confused, King had asked his mother

³⁴ Martin Luther King Jr and Clayborne Carson, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr* (New York, 2001) 'Early Years'.

³⁵ King and Carson, *The Autobiography of MLK Jr* 'Early Years – Mother Dear'.

why his best friends' father would not let them see each other. When explained segregation, King claims this started his hatred and resentment for the white men. Yet his parents only told him that it was his *duty* as a Christian to love others. King also recalls seeing other acts of the segregation act, such as having to stand in buses with his fellow African Americans or walking alongside roads where African Americans were lynched. However, in contrast to X, he recalls these events as shaping his hatred towards the system of segregation while X had always focused on blaming the white society, and the white man. It is not that King never held any hatred towards white men, it is that his religion believed this hatred was misplaced and that helped him diverge from this hatred.³⁶ This also explains yet another key difference between the two. King places a lot of emphasis on how religion shaped him as a person, and how it continued to be important to him even as he went to university. Malcolm X barely mentions religion at all in his early years despite all the people around him being devout Christians, with his father being a Reverend just like King's father.

Both autobiographies have clear goals in mind. King attempts to write it as a reflection piece that helps explain how he became the nonviolent person he is today. In the chapter about his college years, he even goes as far as claiming that these were the defining years for his approach of nonviolence. For Malcolm X he uses the retelling of his earlier years to show how all the wrongs that were done to him had shaped him to hate the white society that constantly was tearing his family and him apart. Interestingly though, King has a chapter dedicated to the late Malcolm X in his autobiography in which he acknowledges that the past had shaped Malcolm X into the 'violent man' he is today that could not let go of the violent things that had happened to him and his family.³⁷ And this is the key difference between the two. King admittedly had grown up in circumstances that were more loving, allowing him to pursue higher education. Malcolm X in comparison encountered the wrong persons after a childhood full of trauma and was ridiculed for dreaming of higher education.

3.3 Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr

Muhammad Ali was born as Cassius Marcellus Clay in Louisville, Kentucky under a Christian family in the year 1942. He grew up amidst segregation still running strong and had vivid memories of being denied facilities because of his skin colour which he claims in his many (auto)biographies helped him shift towards Islam. His family in contrast described his

³⁶ MLK, *'The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.'*, Early years – Daddy up till chapter 2.

³⁷ MLK, *'The Autobiography of MLK Jr'*, Early years – Daddy up till chapter 2.

childhood as peaceful. They lived in a segregated neighbourhood, but the crime rates were low, and they had the means to survive and provide a moderate to good living for themselves. It is mentioned that they would be called racial slurs and had been told to leave areas where only whites were allowed, but generally they were not harassed so they considered themselves lucky. Ali claims that he always wanted to be an activist the black community could be proud of from a young age on. Ali first started boxing at the young age of twelve but made his professional debut at the age of eighteen.³⁸

In 1962 Ali had met Malcolm X, who introduced him to the Nation of Islam and helped him convert to Islam. Ali believed that the Christian community was too submissive in fighting the white status quo, while the Muslims were bold in their fight against white supremacy in the United States which eventually attracted him to the religion. Initially, he followed X' pattern and renamed himself 'Cassius X Clay', but later he had Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam, rename him to Muhammad Ali. Muhammad Ali claims that changing his name was like unshackling the bonds of slavery on himself, as Cassius Clay was the name given to him by the slave owners that owned his family. This however was not taken lightly by the media, opponents, and sports fans alike, as everyone refused to call him by his 'new' name. As a fighter it even affected his career. He was not allowed to enter arenas to fight if he refused to be introduced as Cassius Clay. And Muhammad Ali was firm in his beliefs and refused to let anyone tell him otherwise. Many times, Ali was forced to walk out the ring with the crowd booing him. Throughout his entire lifetime Muhammad Ali was incredibly proud of himself as a successful black Muslim male.³⁹

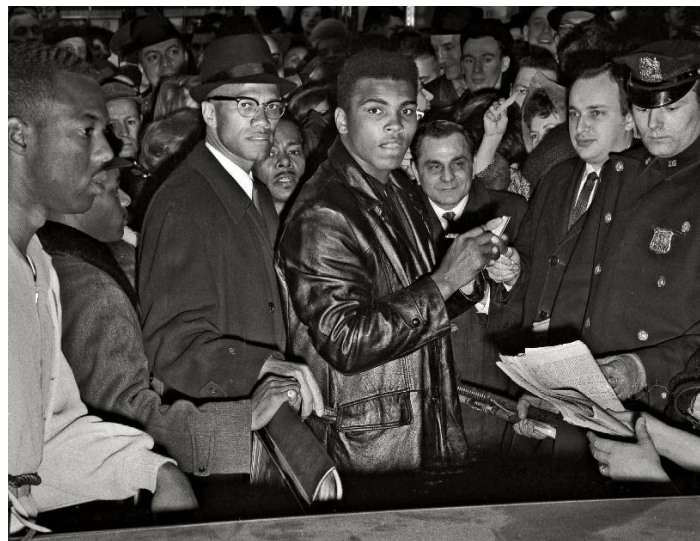
Malcolm X and Cassius Clay

Ali is significantly younger than the other two actors, and in his youth, he was able to meet the newly reformed black Muslim Malcolm X. This meeting can be seen as the starting point of Ali's shift towards black nationalism, and his conversion to Islam. Malcolm X is the one that introduced Ali to the Nation of Islam. X's wife, Betty Shabazz, claims Malcolm X loved Ali like he was his own brother. This coincides with the statement from Ali's trainer who claimed that the two were like extremely close-knit brothers, to the point that they

³⁸ Muhammad Ali and Thomas Hauser, *'Muhammad Ali: His life and Times'* (New York, 1991), 1-18.

³⁹ Muhammad Ali and Thomas Hauser, *'Muhammad Ali: His life and Times'* (New York, 1991), 62-99.

appeared romantically involved.⁴⁰ X told his wife that he wanted to support Ali and help him gain confidence, and he wanted to make sure that others would not exploit his talent when he first met the young boxer. That is why he introduced the Nation of Islam and Archie Robinson to Ali to help him manage his boxing career. The family of X all are convinced that he did this not to exploit Ali's talent for his own gains, but because he wanted to set up a family of connections for the young boy to feel at home. Betty Shabazz adds that X never wanted Ali to go public about his religion, as he felt like it was a private matter for him. However, this appears to contradict with what Archie Robinson says of his encounters with both figures. Robinson claims that he was told by X to help Ali because he believed that Ali would be a successful fighter in the future, and having a successful Ali under the Nation of Islam would be huge in terms of gaining popularity and support from the public. Regardless of intentions, what all does connect in the stories retold by X's family members and mutual friends with Ali is that X had incredible belief in Ali's career and supported him, even when others believed Ali would not get far. Malcolm X worked hard on helping Clay's career surge, and Ali adopted many of his ideologies.⁴¹



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3.4 Conclusion

⁴⁰ Peter Louis Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* (Illinois, 1997), 223-227.

⁴¹ Muhammad Ali and Thomas Hauser, *Muhammad Ali: His life and Times* (New York, 1991), 62-99.

⁴² Jack Kanthal, 'Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali in 1964'

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/20/books/review/blood-brothers-the-fatal-friendship-between-muhammad-ali-and-malcolm-x.html> accessed 29/06/2020.

What X and Ali have in common, and what differentiates them from King, is them not only being African American but also being Muslim (while King was of Christian faith). While the CRM mostly focuses on the race issue at hand, there was also an incredible fear for Islam rampant in the United States, as Muslims were considered radical. This fear came not only from the white community, but the African American community alike. This meant that the two outspoken men would receive harsh criticism from not only the white community that they believed oppressed them, but also from the black community they were part of due to differing religious beliefs. This plays into the concept of intersectionality introduced earlier on in the thesis from the Critical Race Theory school.

What differentiates X from Ali and King both is the rough circumstances he grew up in. The neighbourhood he lived in was plagued with white terrorist attacks on black families. His own father was murdered which ended up spiralling his family into struggling to find the finances to survive, his family ended up scattered, and while trying to pursue higher education to get himself out of this downwards spiral, the young X was ridiculed. All of this led to a deep resentment for the white community from X. MLK and Ali both had a relatively peaceful and religious upbringing, with families that were able to provide for them with no difficulties. They did have encounters with racial segregation which led to their passion to speak up on the issue of racism, but generally they were free from the harm of targeted racial attacks, especially compared to X. The difference between Ali and MLK then is that Ali converted to Islam with the belief that Christian faith was too submissive towards the racist status quo. His choice in converting may be related to the harassment Ali endured as a public figure and successful black athlete. Due to his choice of career he had faced a lot of direct racism from viewers, fighters, and organizers of fights alike.

This chapter has described the different personal circumstances of the three men prior to becoming active on the political field, and how these have affected their religious and political choices. Through doing so, this chapter aims to provide a deeper understanding of these characters and what may have driven them towards the political actions and statements they make. The next part will discuss their contributions to the civil rights struggle as active political agents.

Chapter 4: The Movement and Them

When it comes to the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), there are two major names attached to it. The first and most known being Martin Luther King and the second being Malcolm X. The two are often polarized against each other for having different approaches to the movement, but both had the same end goal in mind despite differing opinions on how to reach that end goal. King preached for non-violence during the CRM, even if they would face violence from the government itself for peacefully protesting. Malcolm X in contrast was heavily against this notion of non-violence. While he is usually portrayed as someone that was for mindless violence, implication being that he wanted to use violence for no reason on white people due to his initial hatred for the white community, he was mostly for violence in self-defence which he constantly reminds is the right of every American citizen. In fact, he claims; “Concerning non-violence: it is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks.”⁴³ While King is known for his speech regarding his hopes of the American dream, Malcolm X in contrast uses the term American nightmare to describe the American experience for a black person⁴⁴. The two seemed to constantly disagree, with Malcolm X never once failing to criticize King, while King in contrast often distanced himself from X’s statements to protect the progress his movement made. Muhammad Ali is the third actor chosen to research in this thesis, who becomes more relevant towards the end of the movement and has personal ties to both of these characters and has supported both of the men in certain points of his life. Although Muhammad Ali is not seen as a leader of the violent nor non-violent approach, he has significant contributions that this thesis highlights. His involvement in the anti-Vietnam War movement specifically is key here, which will be delved into deeper in his section.

This third part of this thesis will focus on these three actors and their contributions to the CRM. This chapter aims to compare these three approaches and highlight the differences and the similarities. It also aims to analyse the (personal) connections these actors have, and how they may have influenced each others’ approaches in the movement. This will be further explored in the next, and final, part of the thesis which will focus on the use of the concept of violence and non-violence by these actors. Different sources will be used to provide an accurate comparative analysis of their approaches. The autobiographies, their speeches, and their interviews provide the best insight on what their approaches were and what they

⁴³ Malcom X and George Breitman, *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements* (1965).

⁴⁴ Malcolm X, 'Addressing Policy Brutality', Los Angeles, May 20, 1962.

themselves believed their ideologies to be. Another part of this analysis will be comparisons made by other scholars on these actors, and whether these coincide or differ from my analysis. Because of the problem of personal interpretation on the first part of the analysis, I will use secondary literature to provide insight from other scholars to provide a possible alternate view on what their approaches are thought to be by other academics beyond my own interpretation, to combine them into a more objective analysis of these actors.

4.1 Martin Luther King Jr.

To detail Martin Luther King Jr.'s approach of non-violence, I have chosen three specific biographies, excluding his own. The first is 'Ring Out Freedom' by Frederik Sunnemark, released in 2003. The second is 'Extremist for Love' by Rufus Burrow Jr., written in 2014 which makes it a fairly new biography in the many that are available of MLK. The third and final choice is 'The Sword and the Shield' by Peniel E. Joseph, who specifically makes a comparison between the biographies of Malcolm X and King, which is relevant to the comparative nature of this thesis.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s approach to the Civil Rights Movement is explained in a unique way in the book 'Ring Out Freedom' by Frederik Sunnemark. Sunnemark believes that King's rhetoric on the CRM is discerned in three dimensions: past (materialistic), present (idealistic) and the future (religious). These have a hierarchy, with religion being in the highest order, but they are all interconnected. King believes that the move towards the CRM comes from 'materialistic' reasons, according to Sunnemark. The CRM came to be due to the worldwide fight against colonialism and imperialism. This in turn had made it so that the 'freed slaves' of the South would start moving from plantations into urban life (in the North). This is where African Americans started coming into touch with modern means to survive, rather than living committed to a plantation or landowner. The present struggle is then explained by King in idealistic manners. King describes the CRM struggle as the restructuring of society into a new one, from segregation into integration. The final dimension is King's idea of future, which is based on religion and ultimately the most present one. King believes that the authority of God will make it so that the African Americans will ultimately overcome their struggle and achieve equal rights, because God is overseeing their struggle.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Frederik Sunnemark, '*Ring Out Freedom: The Voice of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement*' (Bloomington, 2003), 11-79.

Sunnemark continues by discerning four areas of discourse in the CRM which affect King's rhetoric which is explained above. These four areas are as followed: reality, man and society, history, and morality. King describes the 'reality' of the CRM as a struggle of good values against evil values, not one of race. King's approach of nonviolence best showcases this. King believes that there is a need to change the values of society, and by showing that the protestors are peaceful—King hopes to show that those that follow 'evil values' will come to realize that they are on the wrong side. The second area is that of what King believes 'man and society' is supposed to be. This is simply explained as how both should ideally involve concepts of equality and democracy. The third concept is that of 'history'. King believes that history is a continuous pattern towards liberation, and that this liberation (and thus struggle) must be supported. The final area is that of 'morality', which is simply explained as the dichotomy between good and evil. And the belief that King is on the good side.⁴⁶

What Sunnemark has shown through his careful analysis of King's rhetoric and his driving factors is that King always holds his idealistic belief that the struggle would be won due to the authority of God. And because of this absolute faith he was able to paint the CRM as not a race struggle between white and black, but a struggle to reorganize society that has been tainted by bad values. This further explains his non-violent approach, as he did not want to commit to 'bad values' (violence) but rather believed that the 'good values' would show those that were resisting change that they were on the wrong side and needed to reorganise.

The second book 'Extremist for Love' by Burrow also asserts the importance of religion in his biography and stresses the importance of the concept of 'beloved community' by MLK. His 'beloved community' was based on his belief that the humanitarian values from Jesus Christ should be embedded into the social order. This is not to be confused with making Christianity compulsory for all, it is only values of human rights that he is taking from his religion. King believed that this 'beloved community' could only exist if the government acknowledged the needs of all citizens, including the poor African Americans, and he pressured the government through his call for non-violent actions. Burrow also provides a deep analysis of the influence Mahatma Gandhi had on MLK and his non-violent approach. Initially, in the early phase of the CRM, MLK had also preached for self-defence like Malcolm X, even acquiring a gun permit for himself as means of protection. Burrow believes this changed when King started studying Gandhi after being inspired by a lecture on said man

⁴⁶ Frederik Sunnemark, *'Ring Out Freedom: The Voice of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement'* (Bloomington, 2003), 44-79.

by Howard University president Mordecai Johnson. Although Burrow notes that King has not made any direct references on his approach centring the ideology of Gandhi, he makes a careful analysis of how King's ideology aligns with Gandhi's principles. King began training his followers to participate in the non-violent approach; in which he calls for public disobedience through peaceful and non-violent protests. The training centred on teaching his followers to *not* react to violent incited by the opposers of their protest, and to simply endure. However, Gandhi and MLK did not believe that the call for non-violence meant that there was no need for self-protection. During the trainings on non-violence, protestors were taught how to best endure violence to receive as little harm from it as possible, such as crawling into a foetal position when being hit. Just like Gandhi, King believed that responding with violence to violence was self-defeating and defeated the purpose of the integration that MLK sought. Non-violence he believed to be key in persuading the government and the white community alike towards their ideas of integration, and violence and intimidation would only continue to disrupt the process towards his idea of the 'beloved community'.⁴⁷

In Peniel E. Joseph's book 'The Sword and the Shield', he provides a dual biography of X and King both. The book itself is also quite new, having been released in the same year as this thesis. Due to the author showing no clear bias against or for either side, I have chosen this book to highlight King's shift towards a more critical approach in his final years. With critical approach is meant his choice to become more political by pushing and criticizing the American government to do more in regards to the black struggle, which he had refrained from doing previously, fearing that if he pushed the government too much, he would have to start all over. Although this book attempts to explain both sides, the author attempts to interlink the two actors constantly. As Joseph believes that King's shift towards 'political radicalism' conveniently begins with the death of Malcolm X. King used the rise of public unrest coming from a now rising Black Power movement (or rather, black nationalist) as leverage to push the government under president Johnson, to accept the Voting Rights Act of 1965, with success. However, this happened in the backdrop of increased tensions in the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War had King rethinking his position on the black freedom struggle and had him changing his ideology towards a more all-encompassing human rights struggle. In 1967, King decided to publicly make a statement criticizing the American government for going into war in Vietnam. He not only criticized the government for the use

⁴⁷ Martin Luther King and Rufus Burrow Jr., *'Extremist for Love: Martin Luther King Jr., Man of Ideas and Nonviolent Social Action'* (Minneapolis, 2014) 221-294.

of excessive force overseas, but also criticized the government for using the lives of black youth like fodder to wage war in Vietnam, when they were still not treated as equals at home. This was also his break with President Johnson, who he had initially remained close with in hopes of using him as means to secure the success of the CRM. Joseph details in his book how this marks the moment of King's transition from a civil rights leader that focused on domestic affairs, to a political human rights activist. Joseph mentions that this also marks the moment where King had taken on the role Malcolm X had prior to his assassination, the role of the African American leader criticizing and condemning the American way of imperialism and racism. Joseph does detail, that despite taking over X's supposed role—the major difference was King continued to believe in true American democracy as just, while X had always been critical of the American justice system as inherently racist. This moment also was the beginning of the Black Power movement becoming welcoming of King, and the two choosing to work together in terms of the black struggle, and human rights issues. King continued to criticize the government under President Johnson following his shift towards radicalism, with support of Carmichael Stokely (the leader of the Black Power movement), up till the day of his assassination in April 1968.⁴⁸

Malcolm X

Malcolm X's contributions to the civil rights struggle start when he first joined the Nation of Islam in prison. The Nation of Islam under Elijah Muhammad was a movement that advocated for black separatism by improving the financial status of black Muslims. The NOI had an extreme belief in orthodox Islam and all their followers are expected to preach this. The extreme beliefs were that Elijah Muhammad was a Messenger from Allah himself, and thus was to be followed without question. What caused many to see them as militant black supremacist group was their belief that black people were inherently good while white people were 'blue eyed devils'.⁴⁹ Under the NOI, X was extremely radical and firm in his hatred for white people. Although X as a charismatic speaker and leader gathered a lot of support for the NOI, he also received a lot of criticism from the white community and the CRM leaders such as MLK and the NAACP due to his militant, black separatist beliefs and his ideas on black

⁴⁸ Peniel E. Joseph, *The Sword and the Shield: The Revolutionary Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.* (New York, 2020), 246-327.

⁴⁹ Jason Eric Fishman and Ana Belen Soage, 'The Nation of Islam and the Muslim World: Theologically Divorced and Politically United' *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), 59-68.

supremacy. For example, when an airplane had crashed in France resulting in the death of over 120 white people, Malcolm X had spoken in pure joy of the fact. He believed that this was proof that God was punishing white people for the atrocities they committed.⁵⁰ The media and the CRM condemned him for his words on a tragedy and the CRM distanced themselves from him, and X reacted shocked by the response. He could not understand why he was not allowed to be happy over this ‘tragedy’, when America could cheer when thousands of Japanese civilians were murdered in Hiroshima.⁵¹ However, the NoI was not exactly happy with X’s political statements and his involvement in civil rights issues. They wanted him to steer clear of bad publicity and not involve himself with political matters, the most important matter should be religion according to them. To add, in the background there was a belief that Elijah Muhammad feared that X would eventually overtake him as leader if he gained more political influence and following. While initially X had attempted to stay clear from political and civil rights matters, he eventually started speaking again as he evolved his ideas on race. The best example of this is his speech called ‘The House Negro and The Field Negro’. In this speech he talks about how the ‘house negro’ did his best to please his (white) master so he could continue to live well, this would include sacrificing field negroes. ‘Field Negroes’ in contrast were doing the harshest jobs while living in poverty, they hated their masters and constantly prayed on their demise. X concludes this speech by claiming that these two types still exist, the ‘House Negro’ as the Uncle Tom’s and himself as an example of the ‘Field Negro’.⁵² Around the time of this speech, Malcolm X became more vocal on the African identity and destiny being the same as the African American one. He believed that Africans and African Americans are one and should work together towards the emancipation of black people, as they could only count on each other. He started preaching for African Americans to be proud of their African heritage and history and used this to create a sense of community that would unite African Americans. It is to be noted that X did not separate himself from other black people as a black Muslim, he believed that a Muslim was for *any* black person regardless of faith, ethnicity, or political beliefs. With him increasingly preaching for black nationalism, he also continuously criticized the non-violent approach the CRM took and its ideals of integration. With his newly evolved belief in black nationalism, also came his increase in criticism towards imperialism and colonialism. He believed that those were used

⁵⁰ Peter Louis Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* (Illinois, 1997), 97-100

⁵¹ Peter Louis Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* (Illinois, 1997), 97-100

⁵² Malcolm X, ‘The Race Problem’ Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 23 January, 1963.

to oppress and colonize brothers overseas, while the black community was treated as a colonised entity in the United States.⁵³

After the assassination of President JFK, Malcolm X reacted with a controversial statement that had incited joy, he believed that JFK had it coming for him. The NoI whom had frequently warned X to not be political did not take it well and proceeded to suspend Malcolm X from his status as minister in the NoI. What followed was an intense power struggle between X and Muhammad, although this was very one-sided as X continued to believe in Muhammad. Muhammad believed that X had become too powerful as a leader and believed that this was the perfect moment to bring X's influence in the NoI down. Around this time, X had met boxer Cassius Clay whom he believed would become a world-renowned boxer that could become a symbol of pride for black Muslims, specifically the NoI. With that in mind, X cheered Cassius Clay on in fights and did all he could to provide for Clay so he could succeed. And Clay succeeded to great degrees, he started gaining fame rapidly and X became known as his mentor, the man that stood by his side when he won fights. Elijah Muhammad was not pleased with this, believing that the two together could break the NoI apart. Tensions rose, and X became aware of the NoI plotting his assassination. Soon, X had chosen to split from the NoI (or was rather chased away). He believed Ali would have joined his cause, but Ali had quickly rejected him and chosen to stay with Elijah Muhammad. Throughout the autobiography it is evident that X had truly believed in Elijah Muhammad up till the very end, so he was deeply shaken to find out that Muhammad had become so hostile of him.⁵⁴

Following his split with the NoI came a completely new period in the life of Malcolm X, where his thoughts ended up evolving. He had accepted that he was no longer just a follower of Elijah Muhammad, but that he himself would have to become a leader. For that reason, he created Muslim Mosque, Inc. and decided to first go on what he had always wanted to do as a Muslim, the holy pilgrimage to Mecca. This pilgrimage ended up showing Malcolm X what 'true Islam' is, and how the orthodox Islam preached by the NoI was not right. He also met many different African leaders and leaders of Muslim countries. Because of this, his ideas on civil rights at home started changing. He no longer saw the white man as a blue-eyed devil, he believed that any person regardless of skin colour could be good, and that brotherhood between races was indeed possible. In fact, he realized that the American racial system is what turned the white man evil, not the white man himself. And so, we see in his

⁵³ Manning Marable, *A life of Reinvention Malcolm X* (New York, 2011), 158-265.

⁵⁴ Manning Marable, *A life of Reinvention Malcolm X* (New York, 2011), 267-300.

final years that X starts leaning more towards an approach of integration, accepting that he could work together with the CRM. He did still believe that a black man should be allowed to use violence as a means of self-defence, or to demand rights if the white man takes them away. He continued preaching black nationalism, but he accepted that the white man could be an ally that he could trust. Instead, he started fighting the system that was built on colonialism and imperialism that plagues not only the United States, but people all over the world. In the final chapter of his autobiography titled '1965', Malcolm X discusses how after his holy pilgrimage to Mecca he had changed his mindset and attempted to change the direction of his speeches to his followers. Despite that, he noticed that the white media continued to assert that he was a violent man that preached black supremacy, despite his many attempts to showcase that his stance on the white man had changed. He continues to assert that he always called for violence only in reaction to violence, as a means of self-defence.⁵⁵

A lot of what is written above is taken straight from Malcolm X's autobiography 'as told to Alex Haley'. This was done to provide an interpretation of the ideology of Malcolm X from himself and how he saw himself as a person in the movement. However, there has been a lot of criticism on the nature of the book. Part of it is X's motives regarding the book, and whether he had changed his memories and experienced to fit how he wanted the public to view him. Malcolm X was a man that was incredibly aware of the way he wanted to be seen by the public, and how his choice of words would be interpreted by his followers and opposers alike, so it is no surprise that there can be questions made regarding the way he has set up the book to present himself to the public. He mentions multiple times through the book that he is aware that the way he formulates himself in the book will be distorted by the media, so he was incredibly conscious of the way he presented himself. This was also noted by Alex Haley, who continuously pressured X to speak more on personal matters. The second form of criticism lies in the participation and influence of Alex Haley himself. As is told by Haley himself in the book, the two often struggled on compromising on what they wanted to write about. Haley wanted to tell a compelling story that would engage readers and would be a commercial success, while Malcolm X had more political motives, with him initially wanting to write a book to praise the NoI and Elijah Muhammad in particular.

To share a more nuanced view on Malcolm X, I have chosen to highlight the book 'Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X' by Michael Eric Dyson, written in

⁵⁵ Malcolm X, 'The Autobiography of Malcolm X', 396-501.

1994. In this book he attempts to provide a critical portrayal of Malcolm X through rereading his words and works on him and how they affected people, and compiling criticism on the way people write about Malcolm X. Although Dyson is clearly impressed by Malcolm X and his legacy, he attempts to portray a more accurate reading of the man through this book, believing that X is an incredibly complex person with sometimes contradicting ideologies deserving of criticism. Dyson dissects the many ways different scholars and authors use X to benefit their own interests while writing about him. He notes that black nationalists (namely, the Black Power movement) often selectively ignore that Malcolm X had started aligning more with MLK's views of integration in his last years, believing that his move towards integration was detrimental towards his life as black nationalist. Dyson believes that initially a lot of Malcolm X followers fell in the hole of 'hero worship', in which they do not criticize his career, believing that it would be an attack to his ideas of black unity. However, Dyson asserts that it is ultimately a disservice to X to not criticize him and portray an accurate picture of the complex man he was.⁵⁶



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X and MLK

According to Manning Marable, author of 'A life of Reinvention Malcolm X', the big difference in following between X and MLK was their geographical origins. He describes MLK as being identified as someone from the rural South. While X in contrast was seen as a

⁵⁶ Michael Eric Dyson, 'Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X' (1995), 21-38.

⁵⁷ Universal Images Group, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. in 1964, <https://www.vox.com/2015/2/21/8078739/mlk-malcolm-x-telegrams> accessed 29/06/2020

representative of the modern ghetto in the North, and that is where most of his support came from. X spoke of modern issues that plagued the urban side of black communities who were constantly in confrontation with racial segregation.⁵⁸ This coincides with X's ideas in his speech 'Message to the Grassroots', where X aligns himself with the field negroes whom he calls current day slave-rebels, while he believed that MLK was an Uncle Tom who tried to please the white man to get what he wanted and would throw the field negroes under the bus for it.

Returning to the earlier mentioned author Dyson, he often finds himself comparing MLK and X in his book 'Making Malcolm'. He believes that both were equally popular in their times and posed two opposing approaches to the CRM. However, he does believe that the two of them converged in terms of their criticism on capitalism. Both criticized the American capitalist system and economic policies that kept the lower class African American poor. However, Dyson criticizes how neither of their approaches and strategies deployed had any success in elevating the working class African American. Instead, he calls out the irony of how their approaches have heavily benefitted middle and- higher class African Americans, while the lower class African American reaped in the failures of the movements. Dyson specifically calls out the irony of black nationalism, as it claims to diverge from the approach of integration to push for the success of black unity—yet this only resulted in success for the privileged black people (black intellectuals and artists in particular), while the working class was left with the failures of this approach. However, Dyson asserts that despite the failures of their movements to support the poor working-class black American in their time, that the ideologies of both remain relevant to address current day problems. He claims that rereading MLK's and X's criticism on capitalism and their criticism on economic policies are essential in addressing the problems the poor working-class African Americans continue to face currently but does not delve into too much detail regarding this topic.⁵⁹

Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali's approach to the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) is different compared to the men mentioned previously, especially as he was not an activist for the movement in the same sense as them. Although, like Malcolm X, he was seen as a major symbol of Black Power

⁵⁸ Manning Marable, author of 'A life of Reinvention Malcolm X', 1-11.

⁵⁹ Michael Eric Dyson, 'Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X' (1995), 98-106.

during the CRM, his contributions to it are on a different platform than King and X both. Ali played a huge role in defining black nationalism and supporting this movement, by promoting it amongst black youth as a popular and successful athlete but also by providing financial means to support his ideology. His actions became more political with his refusal to be drafted in the Vietnam War. In the next paragraph, I will detail Ali's contributions to the movement starting with the creation of Main Bout, Inc. followed by his refusal to draft for the Vietnam War. To do this I will make use of his autobiographies, and carefully selected interviews and boxing fights relevant to the topic, and an important contribution by Ezra Michael regarding the importance of Main Bout, Inc. In the final part, I will analyse Ali's relations to X and King, respectively.

As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, Ali only truly started making use of political actions after meeting Malcolm X, initially refraining on being political. X introduced Ali to the Nation of Islam, which not only saw his conversion to Islam but also a radical shift to black nationalism for the rising star. While the rising star was an athlete first and foremost, he did not refrain from making political statements siding the NoI's radical approach which aimed to support the black community while demonizing the white community. One of the goals of the NoI was to provide economic support to the black community.⁶⁰ Ezra Michael argues in his article 'Main Bout, Inc., Black Economic Power, and Professional Boxing: The Cancelled Muhammad Ali/ Ernie Terrell Fight' that Ali had used his position as a world champion boxer to create Main Bout, Inc. which aimed to give black Muslims relevant job positions that were not simply for show, but actually involved them and paid them adequately. Main Bout, Inc. was a company that handled Ali's boxing promotions and received the fees that these fights produced. The company mostly consisted of black Muslims as per Ali's wishes, majority of them being members of the NoI. The goal of Main Bout was to use the earnings of Ali's fights to create opportunities and support funding for businesses founded and run by African Americans. Michael argues that this is a show of black economic nationalism as Ali had used his position of power to create jobs for black Muslims (the Nation of Islam in particular).⁶¹

The existence of Main Bout did not go without scrutiny, initially from the white community and sports media who believed that the NoI was violent and radical, and aimed to

⁶⁰ Peter Louis Goldman, 'The Death and Life of Malcolm X' (Illinois, 1997), 223-227.

⁶¹ Michael Ezra, 'Main Bout, Inc., Black Economic Power, and Professional Boxing: The Cancelled Muhammad Ali/ Ernie Terrell Fight' *American Multicultural Studies Department* (2002), 1-25.

take over the boxing industry. While their attacks on the company and Ali's character were vicious, this only took an even harsher turn when Ali was drafted for the Vietnam War and refused to participate in that war. Ali believed that the Vietnamese people were innocent and had done nothing to attack him, or his people, so why should he go to their homes and terrorise them? He considered them Black Asians, and thus of his own kind. It went against the principles he was taught as Muslim to go and murder these innocent people. He took it one step further when he challenged the white majority that demanded he fought for the war, asking why he should fight for *them* abroad when *they* would not fight for *him* at home.⁶² Needless to say, his refusal was not taken lightly and spurred on an intense smear campaign on him, his company Main Bout, and the Nation of Islam. At the time, Ali was scheduled for one of the biggest fights in his life against the heavyweight champion boxer of that time, Ernie Terrell. Many media outlets and sports spokesmen alike believed that the fight would be cancelled due to Ali's political commentary which led to local governments refusing licenses to host any fights with Ali in them. This was taken a step further when broadcasts refused to televise fights with Ali in them, which took away a big source of income from Main Bout and slowly starting the financial decline of Main Bout. This is when Main Bout started looking for fights abroad, where licenses could be attained, and fights would be televised for financial gains. This turned out to be an incredible success as Ali had fights in Europe, that were televised in Europe, America, and Africa alike. Slowly, American cities changed their attitudes and let Ali return to fight in their cities as Main Bout had a financial resurgence. However, this all ended when Ali was officially charged for draft evasion in 1967 and had his boxing license revoked *and* his passport invalidated. This meant that Ali and Main Bout could not use the same strategy of fighting overseas, and that Ali's career was essentially ended early while Main Bout had no choice but to disband.⁶³ Michael argues in his article that many scholars overlook the economic importance of Main Bout and instead focus on the political actions of protest coming from Ali. He believes there should be more focus on the black economic power and control that the existence of this company created in the period it existed. That despite the opposition from white media and politicians alike, Main Bout managed to find ways to be incredibly successful and reel in thousands of dollars without budging to the demands of the politicians and media alike. According to Michael, Main Bout

⁶² Muhammad Ali, 'NBC News – Muhammad Ali on not going to war' accessed June 3rd, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6JDM4MY71G4>

⁶³ Michael Ezra, 'Main Bout, Inc., Black Economic Power, and Professional Boxing: The Cancelled Muhammad Ali/ Ernie Terrell Fight' *American Multicultural Studies Department* (2002), 1-25.

showcased that political and economic struggle is thus prevalent in more than protests in the CRM, but even in other areas such as the entertainment/sports industry.⁶⁴

So why is it that Muhammad Ali is not one of the names mentioned when it comes to the Civil Rights Movement in particular? He outlived King and X both and had significant contributions to the movement and was deemed a symbol for the community at that time as showcased in the paragraphs above. His statements on the Vietnam War especially were iconic when it was ongoing, yet when rethinking either the Vietnam War or the Civil Rights Movement it is unlikely that Muhammad Ali will be mentioned by media, historians, and the public alike. While researching into the Civil Rights Movements for this thesis, it is apparent that his name is rarely mentioned in most literature on the movement, even in books dedicated to give every overlooked CRM actor and their contributions the spotlight. The few times that he has appeared in books and academic articles alike is often in relation to his encounters with Malcolm X. He is thus often reduced to a side piece in the journey of X when it comes to the CRM. The people mostly know of him as the famous boxer, not as the well-versed man who stood up for his beliefs and religion regardless of the continuous attacks from media and public alike.⁶⁵ Sam Hamod claims that there are multiple reasons for this. The first reason he lists is that he *believes* that other black leaders were jealous of Ali's success and attempted to hide his success/popularity. The second reason he lists is that media simply wanted to cover up and pretend they did not partake in the harassment he endured when he chose to speak up about the Vietnam War atrocities abroad, and his calling out of the hypocrisy of the government fighting for democracy abroad while institutionalized racism was still overlooked at home, And finally due to him being an outspoken, proud black Muslim when this was considered career suicide back then.⁶⁶

Media back then also did not take athletes and fighters seriously and saw them purely as entertainment figures. Most fighters at the time only strictly talked about matters relating to their career, never once had they been political. In times like that. So, Thomas Hauser the writer of his autobiography claims that because of that they were shocked to see a figure as outspoken and strong as Muhammad Ali who was not scared to be political. Especially on matters of not only his religion of Islam, which already had negative connotations, but also to be of African descent, which was deemed inferior. Muhammad Ali was a symbol of the rising

⁶⁴ Michael Ezra, 'Main Bout, Inc., Black Economic Power, and Professional Boxing: The Cancelled Muhammad Ali/ Ernie Terrell Fight' *American Multicultural Studies Department* (2002), 1-25.

⁶⁵ Muhammad Ali, '*Muhammad Ali: His life and Times*', Chapter 4.

⁶⁶ Ishmael Reed, '*The Complete Muhammad Ali*' (Quebec, 2015) 63-69.

of not just one, but *two* communities that were deemed as lesser and *dangerous* to the media.⁶⁷ In the book ‘Blood Brother’ by Randy Roberts and Johnny Smith, which will be detailed in the next section, the authors claim that his political actions during his youth as part of the NoI are often glossed over. They believe that his past is ignored as it would contradict his image as gentle, hero of social causes, that his controversial and anti-American past would be harmful in the careful corporate image created of him in his last years. He is now considered ‘one of the good Muslims’, while back then he was considered proof of why the black Muslim was bad.⁶⁸

Ali and X

It has already been mentioned in the first part of this chapter that X played a significant role in Ali’s life as a mentor figure that helped him convert to Islam. To describe the relationship between the two in further detail I have chosen the book ‘Blood Brothers: The Fatal Friendship between Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X’ by historians Randy Roberts and Johnny Smith. This is one of the most important books regarding the relationship of the two and closely detail their growing relationship, and their parting. The authors point out that autobiographies by both actors selectively ignore the close relationship the two had, and how they played a key role in each others life. The authors even criticize Alex Haley for sensationalizing the split between the two, by selectively picking what he wanted to add into the autobiography and leaving out details that did not fit that perspective. The authors provide evidence found in transcripts that Malcolm X and Ali both, despite their split, still claimed to see each other as brothers at the time—and X in particular admitting to Haley that he still supported Ali, even if he followed the wrong path. This book centres on describing the importance of Malcolm X in shaping Ali to be the legend he is today, and how X had helped turn Ali into a political actor who used his popularity to speak on politics. The book also details how important Ali had been for Malcolm X when he first started having concerns on the NoI wanting to get rid of him by taking his life. The leader Elijah Muhammad had become increasingly wary of X’s popularity, and was preparing to get rid of X. The authors detail how Malcolm X believed he would be safe from harm as long as he had Muhammad Ali by his side. X believed that the NoI would never harm Ali due to his success as athlete, which was consequently important for the success of the NoI. And so, if Ali continued to support X, then

⁶⁷ Muhammad Ali, ‘*Muhammad Ali: His life and Times*’, Chapter 4.

⁶⁸ Randy Roberts and Johnny Smith, ‘Blood Brothers: The Fatal Friendship between Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X’ (New York, 2016), preface.

X's life would remain safe. However, it quickly became clear that Ali had chosen Elijah Muhammad's side as he stopped talking to X, and he officially had his name changed to Muhammad Ali following NoI leader Elijah Muhammad's instructions. This was all X needed to know that Ali was not on his side, but chose Elijah Muhammad, and soon after X left the NoI. Muhammad Ali was centre in the safety of Malcolm X's life, and not many years after his departure from the NoI, he had been assassinated by this same organization. Following X's departure from the NoI, Ali had initially been incredibly critical of X and often depicted him as a heathen that betrayed them. But the authors note that a lot of Ali's media presence was strictly controlled by Elijah Muhammad, which they believed played a part in this publicized hatred towards Malcolm X.⁶⁹

This is confirmed in the book, when Elijah Muhammad disowns Ali after he had his boxing license revoked following his refusal to serve in the Vietnam War, which caused many to believe the end of his boxing career. Ali ended up following the path of X, by being disowned after Elijah Muhammad decided Ali was of no more use to the NoI and becoming more of a liability. The difference between the two is that Ali feared criticizing Muhammad would result into his death, so he even remained a loyal follower of Muhammad despite being disowned by the man, until Muhammad had died. Under Muhammad, Ali had feared his life, so he chose to do exactly as Muhammad told him to. The death of Elijah Muhammad ended up signalling a turning point for Ali, where he started embracing integration and declared that he no longer hated white people. Another important point noted by the authors is that later in his life, Ali had admitted that one of his biggest regrets was turning his back on Malcolm X. While reflecting, he believed that the X was always on the right side and he would have followed him now if he could.⁷⁰

Ali and King

Ali and King have a long history together where they initially were found at odds. Due to the Nation of Islam and MLK's approaches being at complete odds, Ali was sometimes found criticizing MLK, while MLK condemned the NoI as a whole. The main converging point in their approaches was when Ali had publicly declared his refusal to be drafted in the Vietnam

⁶⁹ Randy Roberts and Johnny Smith, 'Blood Brothers: The Fatal Friendship between Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X' (New York, 2016), 210-300.

⁷⁰ Randy Roberts and Johnny Smith, 'Blood Brothers: The Fatal Friendship between Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X' (New York, 2016), 302-317.

War. As mentioned before, King had initially refused to speak on the Vietnam War to protect the progress of the CRM. But after Ali had went public in his stance, King had followed and publicly professed support for Ali's choice, endorsing his actions. The two were approached by the media after they were found to be gathered at a hotel room. The media ask MLK on his stance on Ali's draft evasion, and MLK responds that they both have common interests and concerns, showing a united front, followed by professing his support for Ali's decision. The two working together on their protest the Vietnam War were key moments in their changing approaches. For Ali it was towards integration, while for MLK it was towards 'radicalization' of his approach.⁷¹

In both these pieces regarding the relationships between the three actors, we see that Ali played an important role in key moments for MLK and X both, and how these men were important in shaping his very own political actions as well. For Malcolm X, Ali played a personal role in providing safety for him. And when the two split, X had ended up meeting his untimely death. For MLK, Ali triggered MLK in speaking up about the Vietnam War and changing his stance from civil rights to a more international human rights struggle of oppression of all human beings. For Ali, Malcolm X played a huge role in shaping his identity as a black Muslim man. X provided him the support network he needed as a boxer, continuously supporting him throughout his career and helping him shape political actions that Ali even mirrored (as he once named himself 'Cassius X' after the man). MLK in contrast, played a role in Ali's shift towards a more peaceful and integrational approach following his split with the NoI.

⁷¹ AP media, Martin Luther King Jr., Muhammad Ali, 'Heavyweight champion muhammed ali got together w / civil rights leader martin luther king for a friendly chat' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOhvupjhS3U> 30/03/1967.



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Conclusion:

In this chapter, I have detailed the different ideologies of the three main actors and how these compare to each other. To begin, we see that MLK and X are easy to compare due to them being major activist leaders during the Civil Rights Movement striving for the same end goal through different approaches, especially because the two often react on each other's statements and criticize them. Ali is harder to compare to the two as his career was different from them, and his political commentary mostly was during interviews or post-boxing matches. His speeches are also not as accessible as the other two, most of the focus in literature based on Ali focus on his boxing legacy, his political career is discussed but with less detail compared to his boxing career. From what this chapter was able to research, he has a middle ground position between the two approaches and depending on the subject and time leans more towards one than the other.

What all three of them have in common, is that they all have changed their ideologies at some point of their lives. Initially X and Ali were both heavily in favour of segregation due to their shared roots in the NoI, which also formed the roots of their initial political actions during the CRM. Under the NoI, both preached for segregation and black nationalism. They believed that the white man would never support them, as they were evil, and thus believed that they had to build their own community by supporting each other based on their shared African heritage. MLK in comparison was in favour of an approach that centred on

⁷² AP, 'Muhammad Ali, left, and Dr Martin Luther King speak with reporters in Louisville, Ky., in 1967' <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/sports/boxing/2016/06/04/bob-arum-muhammad-ali-had-greater-impact-race-religion-than-mlk/85393362/> accessed 29/06/2020.

integration, and he believed this could only be achieved by protesting peacefully. He believed that violence and fights between the black and white communities would only push them further apart, so non-violence was needed for the white community to accept them. X was completely against this idea, believing that non-violence was unjust. He called on every American citizens' right to defend themselves against violence, and to demand justice from their government if they withheld rights that black people were entitled to. Because of this, X and MLK were often found disagreeing.

This changed in the last few years of the CRM. Following the departure of X and later Ali from the NoI, the two would end up turning towards a more peaceful approach. X learned to accept the idea of allying with the white community to reach equal civic rights, although he still preaches for violence if absolutely necessary and only believed in an alliance, not full integration. After leaving the NoI, Ali had openly declared to support MLK's approach of integration, following the two working together by protesting the Vietnam War. And finally, MLK himself had started radicalizing following Ali's public refusal to enlist in the army for the Vietnam War. MLK could no longer remain quiet on excessive use of violence on innocent civilians in Vietnam, *and* the use of the lives of black soldiers in the war as fodder. While he had initially remained quiet in fear of speaking costing all the progress made by the CRM, he chose to break from the government and publicly condemn the American government and its foreign policies by following Ali and publicly supporting him. While he still believed in American democracy, and believed that an equal society could be created, he believed that the Vietnam War would set America back incredibly and poison the ideals of American democracy.

Through this chapter I have described their different approaches, why they chose these approaches and what affected them, and to show that these approaches ended up converging nearing the end of the CRM. Martin Luther King Jr. is important to the CRM as the leader of the non-violent approach, Malcolm X is important to the CRM as the leader of the violent approach, and Muhammad Ali is important to it as the middle ground between them that ended up directly or indirectly converging their approaches through key events that he triggered. For X, it was Ali no longer being his safety net in the NoI which caused his departure from the NoI. For MLK, Ali was important in pushing him to radicalize, by publicly condemning the government on its actions in the Vietnam War after initially having stayed quiet.

5. Violence in non-violence

To believe the success of the Civil Rights Movement lies in the approach of non-violence and being the ‘better person’, vastly oversimplifies the struggle of the African American people. This final chapter aims to reevaluate the contributions of the ‘violent approach’ that is often undermined due to the success of the non-violent approach. This will be done by linking the three personal approaches by the three actors together, and by delving deeper into how they strategically used the concepts of non-violence and violence in their favour. King is often favoured when it comes to history writing of the CRM due to him being the leader of the non-violent approach. The idea of non-violence was deemed the success factor of this movement, and so King as the leader is often recognized as one of the major reasons the CRM was successful. Malcolm X in comparison is often deemed as a controversial and violent man, having been dubbed ‘the angriest Negro in America’⁷³, despite his own (constantly growing) popularity. Yet, the approach of non-violence could only be possible due to the existence of violence. This part aims to delve deeper into this statement and provide arguments of why violence is key in the success of non-violence. To do this, there will be a comparison made between King and Malcolm X as the two leaders of the violent approach. Second, there will be a focus on Muhammad Ali as a person, and how the concept of violence influenced his approach. Finally, I will delve into the Black Power movement which is essentially what the ‘violent approach’ turned out to be, a black nationalist movement, and how they were key in the convergence of the three approaches at the end of the CRM.

5.1 King versus Malcolm X

In King’s letter from Birmingham Jail sent in 1963, King addresses the frustrations of the African American community and the rising of support for radical groups like the Nation of Islam. In the letter MLK claims that those that oppose the CRM will be left with the choice of supporting the non-violent movement or letting the violent movement take control. He believed that if the non-violent movement would not bring change, many African Americans would turn to the radical black nationalist approach, in hopes of bringing change through taking matters in own hands. While he preaches for a non-violent approach, this clearly is a threat of violence—even if not directly from him, but from others.⁷⁴ A little less than a year

⁷³ Dennis D. Wainstock, *Malcolm X, African American Revolutionary* (Jefferson, 2008), 120.

⁷⁴ Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail* Birmingham, April 16, 1963.

after this letter was publicized, Malcolm X held his infamous ‘The Ballot or the Bullet’ speech, where he claims that African-Americans that do not get to use their ballots will have to cast bullets. In the same speech he did denounce the use of violence if not necessary, saying that one should not just go after the white man and use violence on him, violence was only necessary as a means of self-defence which is a constitutional right of every American citizen. But what most read by those opposing the CRM was that he supported the use of violence if African Americans did not get to use their rights to vote.⁷⁵ This only can be seen as in support of MLK’s threat of *having* to support non-violent approaches, or followers that align with X would take matters into their own hands with violence. X himself even personally acknowledged this dichotomy and used it strategically. Quoting X, ‘And I think that the people in this part of the world would do well to listen to Dr. Martin Luther King and give him what he’s asking for, and give it to him fast, before some other factions come along and try to do it another way.’⁷⁶ While Malcolm X remained steadfast in his radical belief of ‘by any means necessary’, it is shown that he had shifted towards integration in his last years following his departure from the NOI throughout his final speeches. He appears completely aware that him playing the ‘bad’ and ‘violent’ man was essential in the success of the non-violent approach, as the threat of his existence and influence is what made the non-violent approach appear attractive to critics of it. Alex Haley claims in the autobiography of X that when MLK’s wife asked X to keep his speech ‘peaceful’ at an event both attended, that X had responded by saying that he wanted to help, and that by offering an alternative approach the whites would have no choice but to choose MLK’s approach.⁷⁷

In Malcolm X’s autobiography (as told to Alex Haley) he calls out the media painting him as a violent, radical revolutionist man for promoting violence as a means of self-defence, as a means to demand the rights that belong to the African Americans. He calls out the hypocrisy of the United States being a nation that was born on the genocide of indigenous people, and how nobody mentions the violence that is incited against the black community which is rallying them towards this ‘violent approach’. Why is it that he is considered violent for calling for black men to protect themselves, yet the white man gets away with means of violence claiming it is for democracy? He also discusses MLK’s non-violence approach and how it highlights the evil of the white man who will attack a peaceful black man, and thus acknowledges the dichotomy of violence in non-violence in that approach. At the very end of

⁷⁵ Malcolm X, ‘*Ballot or the Bullet*’ Cleveland, April 3, 1964.

⁷⁶ Malcolm X, ‘*February 1965: The Final Speeches*’ (1992), 26.

⁷⁷ Malcolm X, ‘The autobiography Malcolm X’, 51.

his autobiography he acknowledges that the US must choose between the non-violent approach of MLK or his ‘violent’ approach of his to solve the civil rights problem. Despite not agreeing with the ‘violent’ term being attached to his name, it is what he inevitably accepts if this will lead to the end of the black struggle.⁷⁸

There are some scholars who have discussed this dichotomy, or paradox, as well and the next paragraph will share their insights on the matter.

African American and African studies professor August H. Nimtz is amongst scholars who have researched into this dichotomy and his stance is as followed. He believes that nonviolence only arises within the context of violence. He believes that in the context of the violent Vietnam War, the government feared the threat of violent protests by African Americans domestically. The government could not afford to battle overseas and at home. And Nimtz argues that this explains why the president had enacted the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which ensured the protection of voting rights regardless of race.⁷⁹ Scholar Greg Mileski builds into this argument of Nimtz by claiming that non-violent protestors often intentionally attempted to provoke violence from the racist order. He believes that this was done to increase tensions by showcasing how unjust the current political system was to use violence upon the non-violent protests the Civil Rights Movement had deployed. American sociologist John Asimakopoulos also has discussed this dichotomy and echoes the thoughts of Nimtz and Mileski but takes it a step further by claiming that mainstream media ‘sanitizes’ the Civil Rights Movement and attempts to portray it as non-violent to quell future protests, and setting the CRM as an ‘example’ of how protests should be held (non-violently). First, he claims that non-violent protests were only possible due to there being armed protection, the Deacons for Defense and Justice are mentioned as an example of this. Asimakopoulos also adds onto the arguments already shown above that non-violent protests always had a context of violence surrounding them. As examples he uses that a lot of protests were held in the wake of violence used an African American person (be it police brutality or murder). He also mentions that protests were often disturbed by either the police/government or white people intervening with violence to disperse the protest.⁸⁰ Most of his arguments however seem to be based on the last years of the Civil Rights Movement. Armed defence of non-violent protests were less

⁷⁸ Malcolm X, ‘The autobiography Malcolm X’, 483-496

⁷⁹ August H Nimtz, ‘Violence and/or Nonviolence in the Success of the Civil Rights Movement: The Malcolm X–Martin Luther King, Jr. Nexus’ *New Political Science* 38 (2016), 1-22.

⁸⁰ John Asimakopoulos, ‘The Civil Rights-Black Power Era, Direct Action, and Defensive Violence: Lessons for the Working-Class Today’ *Theory in Action* 3 (2010), 1-22.

prominent in the earlier years, and the violent disruptions of protests increased incredibly in the last few years due to the Cold War making the government fear trouble at home.

5.2 Muhammad Ali, the ‘violent’ boxer

Ellen W. Gorsevski and Michael L. Butterworth discuss Ali’s influence in the CRM and how his very being provided the perfect example of the paradox of the threat of violence in acts of nonviolence. They believe that due to Ali’s career as boxer and his critical remarks as a public figure, it created a possible threat towards opposition—despite Ali’s committal to non-violence. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, sports athletes often refrained, and still do, from making political statements as they do not want it interfering with their career. Ali is one of the most famous examples of sports athletes that refused to follow this norm, and had it impact his career. The first ‘political action’ Ali committed was publicly announcing that he had renamed himself Muhammad Ali, previously Cassius Clay, as a form of abandoning his given slave name. This ended up being seen as radical and revolutionary on two fronts. First, it was seen as what many had feared at the time, as him becoming Muslim and part of the radical Nation of Islam. Second, with the Civil Rights Movement in full swing it was an attack to the status quo having a strong and proud African American man leave his ‘slave identity’ behind. However, changing his name did not mean that it simply became accepted. Many taunted Ali by using his former name. And this is where the paradox of violence comes in. In one of his most famous fights, Terrell kept taunting him using his former name. This ended up angering Ali, infamously taunting: “What’s my name, Tom? What’s my name?”⁸¹, and he proceeded to unanimously win the match. Later, in his autobiography ‘The Greatest: My Own Story’, Ali explains that he was not simply taunting Terrell, but every single person that refused to call him by his chosen name.⁸² This is a great example of the so-called violence in non-violence paradox. His words in the ring were a political statement, and his violent actions in the ring showed the possible threat of him using violence on those that challenged him.⁸³ Furthermore his stance on the Vietnam War was also important to the CRM. When facing the Supreme Court, he was firm in calling out the racist system of the military, as almost twice the amount of eligible African American men was inducted

⁸¹ WBA, ‘Muhammad Ali vs Ernie Terrell (Full Fight)’ filmed 06/02/1967
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efBcVKmbLs8> 33:52

⁸² Muhammad Ali and Richard Durham, ‘*I am the Greatest: My Own Story*’ (1975) 190-192.

⁸³ Ellen W. Gorsevski & Michael L. Butterworth, ‘Muhammad Ali’s Fighting Words: The Paradox of Violence in Nonviolent Rhetoric’ *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97:1 (2011), 50-73.

compared to white American men.⁸⁴ Ali ended up having to pay a fine for evading draft and had his passport invalidated and boxing license revoked. For the years after, Muhammad Ali proceeded to hold anti Vietnam War speeches across the country. There is a certain irony in the fact that there was a fear for Muhammad Ali as the powerful, 'violent' boxer refusing to be inducted and participate in violent actions against innocent civilians.⁸⁵

5.3 The Black Power movement

During the CRM, following the assassination of Malcolm X. Another movement was created, which initially focused on criticizing the non-violent approach: The Black Power Movement. The Black Power movement centres on changing the black consciousness and teaching African Americans that they were entitled to their civil rights, rather accepting the situation as it is and hoping that the government will change (which they believed the CRM did). This movement believes that the black community can only bring change once they believe they *deserve* change. Lance Hill in his book 'The Deacons for Defense Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement' discussed how he believes that this movement was largely influenced by Malcolm X. Hill believes that X had always been concerned on changing the black identity into something to be proud of by focusing on the following aspects in his speeches: the idea of a group identity, civil rights being natural and not something gained through acceptance from the white community, and the belief that these rights should be demanded as rightfully yours without giving into your oppressor (by any means necessary). The last is specifically a call-out to the non-violent protests compromising with their oppressors. Hill describes Black Power identity as followed: pride in your own race, militancy, and belief in your own autonomy.⁸⁶ These core aspects clearly align with those of X mentioned. Previously mentioned author Joseph E. Peniel also believes that the roots of the Black Power movements are to be found in Malcolm X. Though he mentions that there are even earlier roots to be found in the Black Power movement, such as Marcus Garvey, he believes that Malcolm X is one of the most influential figures and can thus be considered the 'origins' of the movement. He believes that three areas that X preaches on

⁸⁴ John Ernst and Yvonne Baldwin, 'The Not So Silent Minority: Louisville's Antiwar Movement, 1966-1975' *The Journal of Southern History* (2007), 125.

⁸⁵ Ellen W. Gorsevski & Michael L. Butterworth, 'Muhammad Ali's Fighting Words: The Paradox of Violence in Nonviolent Rhetoric' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97:1 (2011), 50-73.

⁸⁶ Lance Hill, 'The Deacons for Defense Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement' (Chapel Hill, 2004), 283.

encompass the concept of Black Power: black nationalism, Cold War politics and internationalism.⁸⁷

The Black Power movement was often seen as response to the non-violent Civil Rights Movement. The Black Power movement focused on (racial) separatism and pride in the African identity in contrast to the CRM's focus on integration between races. Although traces of the Black Power movement can be traced back to Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X is seen as the person who truly encapsulated the ideals of the Black Power movement and pushed it to become an actual movement by the followers he had attracted. When many CRM leaders were afraid to speak up on international affairs, Malcolm X had no qualms speaking up on issues like the Vietnam War, the Cuban Revolution, and the Congo Crisis. X internationalising the black struggle is key to the concept of Black Power and what had set it apart from the CRM in its initial years. X had no shame in criticizing the CRM for refusing to speak up on the struggles of African brothers abroad or foreign policies that violated the human rights of those abroad, believing it to be proof that CRM leaders were 'Uncle Toms' that would simply watch others suffer to save themselves. X continued to heavily condemn imperialism and colonialism, believing that these systems oppressed the African-Americans domestically, but also people overseas.⁸⁸ To further expand on this, the next section will focus on detailing the Congo crisis and how that is amongst the first events that helped kickstart the Black Power movement, and the beginnings of the internationalisation of the black struggle..

Peniel marks the assassination of Lumumba as one of the starting points of Black Power movements in the United States. Lumumba was seen by Africans and African Americans alike as a symbol for African nationalism. He was not just the leader of the independence movement, but someone that was considered relatable to the common folk. He was born in a small village, with no higher education to his name, and often talked about the racism he faced when young which was an experience shared by many. Watching someone that was similar to yourself turn into a leader of independence had inspired many African(-American) people. So when he got assassinated in this 'grand game of white supremacy', this felt like a personal attack on many of these people who admired him.⁸⁹ After Lumumba's assassination, the African American community was essentially split in two halves. During the Congo Crisis, and the Cold War itself, many Civil Rights leaders had remained quiet after

⁸⁷ Joseph E. Peniel, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power era* (London, 2006), 1-25.

⁸⁸ Daniel S. Lucks, 'Selma to Saigon'.

⁸⁹ Peniel E. Joseph, 'The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power' 55-77.

threats coming from white leaders that they would use force if needed to silence those African Americans that attempt to protest the foreign affairs. Many had even condemned Lumumba protests, urging for African Americans to stay calm and quiet. Malcolm X was amongst those that still dared to speak despite the threats, and instead took lead of a new movement: what would later be called the Black Power movement. This helps explain why Peniel sees him as the roots of the Black Power movement. The difference between the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power movement is that this new movement placed Africa amongst their concerns, and eventually the centre of their concerns (and saw it as their roots) and thus moved to internationalise their struggles beyond national borders.⁹⁰

Following the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965, the Black Power movement continued to grow using his ideologies on anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism. Stokely Carmichael, later known as Kwame Ture, is one of the major figures that took on Malcolm X's ideologies and created the slogan 'Black Power' after assuming leadership of the SNCC(Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) which focused on giving young students a voice in the CRM. Despite its name, the SNCC had taken a more radical turn when the Vietnam War had been announced, being some of the very few institutions that denounced it from the very beginning. And with Carmichael as its leader, it also added a Black Power dimension to its structure and thus was considered not only an anti-war group, but also a radical/violent one. Daniel S. Lucks, the author of 'From Selma to Saigon', believes that Carmichael ended up filling the void of Malcolm X after his death for the African-American community that believed in his ideas of racial pride and anti-colonialism and that because of that he had immense popularity, through continuing X' his legacy. The struggle for CRM was then effectively split into two groups: the non-violent Civil Rights Movement and the radical Black Power movement. These two were incredibly critical of each other, but we see over time that their interests converge.⁹¹ In my previous chapter, this is shown when MLK and Carmichael eventually work together in their protests of the Vietnam War.

⁹⁰ Peniel E. Joseph, 'The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power' 55-77.

⁹¹ Daniel S. Lucks, 'Selma to Saigon: The Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War' (2014), 122-134.



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Many scholars on the Civil Rights Movement and the black struggle believe that the Black Power movement has not achieved anything of relevance, especially when compared to the ‘non-violent’ approach of Martin Luther King Jr and others. The only contribution that is often given to Black Power movements and activists is the pride it sparks the black community. Yet, that does nothing but simplify the contributions of all the Black Power activists to their struggle.⁹³ Hill argues that this is an unfair assessment to make. He believes that history attempts to paint peaceful protests as the success story, and what is necessary if one wants to succeed in any future protests. However, it glosses over the violence that was necessary to even reach that point. The violence towards non-violent protestors, and the threat of violence from the oppressed protestors who are fed up with simply accepting and acting as a martyr. He goes as far as calling non-violence a myth because of this.⁹⁴ Which is very reason this thesis aims to reread the violent approach and its contributions, to provide a more accurate retelling of civil rights history.

⁹² Bob Fitch photography archive, 'Bernard Lee, Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael & Willie Ricks enjoy a moment of levity' <https://purl.stanford.edu/sx918tg6824> accessed 29/06/2020

⁹³ Peniel E. Joseph, 'The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power' 18-25

⁹⁴ Lance Hill, '*The Deacons for Defense Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement*' (Chapel Hill, 2004), 258-273.

To conclude, the Black Power movement considers Malcolm X as its origins and can thus be seen as a continuation of the violent/radical approach after his death. ‘Black Nationalist approach’ might be a better term to use for this approach. The most important thing to note from the analysis of this movement, is that the Black Power movement put the black struggle on an international stage, by speaking up on the violence incited by the American government overseas while criticizing the silence from CRM leaders. The Vietnam War is one of the many overseas interventions that the Black Power movement protested, and we see MLK break from the American government and join the Black Power movement in their protests the Vietnam War. Mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, King and BP leader Stokely Carmichael both held multiple speeches together in 1968 to protest the American intervention in Vietnam. This signals a convergence in the paths of three actors that have been discussed thus-far. Despite Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. not being able to see eye-to-eye when they were alive, we see that MLK eventually aligns with his approach in his final year, by allying with the Black Power movement.

5.4 Conclusion

This final chapter discussed the concepts of violence in non-violence and how they interact in the CRM and showed the importance of the black nationalist (violent) approach in the success of the CRM. There are three major findings in this thesis regarding the use of violence in non-violence. The first is that non-violence does not work without violence from the oppressor. This is due to non-violent protests often being created to protest violence, think of protesting policy brutality or the death or assault of a black person. It was key that opposers of non-violent protests became violent, to show that the opposers were the bad guys and the protestors meant good. As X himself stated, non-violence only worked because it showed the public who the bad guy was—the one using violence, the oppressor. The second finding is that non-violent protests were also successful due to the threat of the ‘violent approach’ led by Malcolm X. Governors feared that this approach would increase in popularity and start another Civil War at home, which would happen in the backdrop of the increased tensions in Vietnam overseas. MLK and X both acknowledge this threat in some of their final speeches and use this to their advantage to reach their shared end goal. If the government had not feared the violent/radical approach and its increasing support. They would not be as inclined to give into the demands of the non-violent approach. The third finding revolves around

Muhammad Ali as a person, which differs from the previous two findings. Muhammad Ali's ideology regarding the CRM was not violent, and he was against the use of violence, and thus would technically fall under the non-violent approach. His refusal to be drafted in the Vietnam War was proof of his ideals of non-violence, and he instead called out the government for the use of excessive force on innocent Vietnamese civilians. However, his manner of speech was considered incredibly radical and to be violent. Due to him initially being part of the NoI, he was often found using radical speech regarding the white community and so-called Uncle Tom's. There was also his strength and ruthlessness as a boxer in the ring, which created the 'threat of violence'. In the ring, Ali had no qualms calling out racism and Uncle Tom's while ruthlessly beating his opponents, which only instilled more fear in his opposers and pushed the narrative of him as a violent man.

Thus, the conclusion is that the concept of violence is essential when it comes to non-violence. While there may be big differences between the violent and non-violent approach of MLK, X and Ali, all sides have acknowledged that the use of non-violence *and* violence were necessary for the end goal to be reached. This chapter aimed to explain their ideologies, and to show how incredibly connected the three men were to each other. It also introduced the Black Power movement, which claims to find its origins in the ideologies of Malcolm X, and shares a lot of core ideals with Muhammad Ali. This can be seen as the continuation of the violent approach of Malcolm X, and showed the importance of the violent approach in internationalising the black struggle and protesting against violent interventions by the American government overseas. As shown in this thesis, MLK in his final year ended up allying with this 'violent movement' and held speeches against the Vietnam War together with leaders of the Black Power movement. This shows that the paths of the two different approaches had started converging towards the end of the CRM.

The success of the CRM thus cannot be fully explained without including the success of the black nationalist approach inspired and led by X and Ali. Both figures are essential in understanding the civil struggle, and the tensions in that period. The success of non-violence alone is insufficient in truly understanding the civil rights struggle in the 19th century, and so it is necessary to reposition the black nationalist approach in the success of the CRM. These approaches are portrayed as polar, yet by rereading history we see that they are not only equally important—but ended up aligning and working together.

6. Conclusion

What are the different approaches to the Civil Rights Movement, and how does the concept of violence affect these?

The Civil Rights Movement is a movement started by African Americans to end racial segregation and discrimination in the United States which was protected by its justice system. This movement has two popularized approaches; the non-violent approach led by Martin Luther King Jr., and the violent approach led by Malcolm X. In this research I focused on rereading the significance of the violent approach in the success of the non-violent approach, and ultimately in the CRM. To do so, I have focused on comparing these two actors and a third actor which connects these two together: Muhammad Ali.

First, I showed how circumstances in youth have affected the choices in approaches. To make the comparisons between the three men easier, I have put my analysis down in the tables below. The table provides a simplified summary and conclusion of their personal lives prior to becoming politically involved.

Personal lives of the three actors

MLK	X	Ali
Rural/Southerner: From a smaller village.	Urban/Northerner: In contact with the Ghetto.	Comes from Kentucky, which was a border state between the North and South
Christian upbringing	Christian upbringing, converts to Islam.	Christian upbringing, converts to Islam.
Peaceful upbringing, loving family with decent income, lived in a good neighbourhood and worst encounters with racism was getting called racial slurs or being told to leave segregated areas.	Multiple family members murdered due to white supremacists, including his father. Mother was mentally ill, him and all his siblings were put up for adoption. He started committing crimes when he moved into a bigger city, until he was jailed.	Peaceful upbringing, loving family with decent income, lived in a good neighbourhood and worst encounters with racism was getting called racial slurs or being told to leave segregated areas. He became a boxer and was under

		constant media scrutiny since.
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Through this table we can see the differences in upbringing between X and the other two, and the minor difference between MLK and Ali. Would MLK have been as peaceful and non-violent if he were not born in a good religious family, with a moderate income in a rural area? Likewise, it is possible to conclude that a lot of Malcolm X's hatred towards the white race is due to the circumstances and events that occurred in his childhood. His view on the white community only changed after he had completed his holy pilgrimage and encountered an environment that he truly believed to be equal regardless of skin colour. This shows that X was willing to accept a different reality, but he had not seen any alternative reality in the United States. Muhammad Ali's case is a bit harder to prove as most of his biographies focus on his boxing career, so the only possible conclusion to be made is that his experiences as boxer influenced his choices, rather than his circumstances growing up. But he did start boxing at a very young age, which put him in the public eye and thus made him an easy target for racial harassment.

Second, I have compared their approaches and ideologies during the Civil Rights Movement. The table below provides a simplified analysis of this.

Personal ideologies of the three actors

MLK	X	Ali
Non-violence	Violence as self-defence or to demand rights	Not clearly stated, leaning more towards non-violence but can be deemed part of the militant approach due to his 'radical' hatred for the white man that instilled fear.
Integration, Beloved Community.	Separatism, eventually separatism with possible brotherhood after Hajj.	Separatism, eventually integration aligning with MLK.
Not in the sense of X and Ali.	Black nationalist, Pan-African	Black nationalist

Initially sided with the US government in fear of losing his connections to President Johnson, but eventually spoke up and became openly anti-imperialism/anti-colonialist.	Anti-imperialist, anticolonialism	Anti-imperialist, anticolonialism
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Through my analysis of the three actors I aimed to show how heavily interconnected all three of them and their ideologies were, and how these connections were key in the success of the CRM. Although initially, MLK and X/Ali were clearly polar in terms of wanting integration versus segregation, and their thoughts concerning the use or non-use of violence to achieve their goals. This research has shown that nearing the end of the CRM, and in the last years of X and MLK, X had become more accepting of integration while MLK radicalized his approach. They both had the same end goal in mind and nearing the end of the CRM seemed to agree in terms of how they wanted to achieve that, by using each other strategically with Malcolm X accepting his role as ‘villain’ if that would aid in the success of the CRM. It can be said that X’s pilgrimage had given him hope and faith in the white community and the possibility of becoming allies with them. While MLK in contrast, nearing over a decade of struggle, had started losing hope and instead started openly pressuring the government despite initially remaining silent in fear of upsetting political leaders. Ali plays a middle ground between the two of them, he has both supported and criticized the two figures, but ended up being empathetic of both sides at the end. Ali was key in X’s departure from the NoI, which resulted in X going on the pilgrimage that changed the direction of his life. And Ali was also key in MLK’s radicalization, having inspired MLK to speak up on the Vietnam War. Likewise, both men played a role as leading figures in Ali’s political life. Malcolm X in shaping his black nationalist approach, while later Ali supported MLK’s integrational approach.

The last part discussed the importance of the concept of violence in non-violence, and how ‘non-violence’ cannot exist without violence. For example, non-violence worked due to the oppressor using violence on peaceful protestors, and thus showing society who the bad guys truly were. There was also the threat of violence from the alternate ‘violent approach’ led by Malcolm X gaining support and starting another Civil War, which the

government feared and thus saw as the worse option between the two approaches. This aided in the government choosing the 'better option', which was the non-violent approach. This chapter also discussed the irony of the American government in wanting protestors to be non-violent while simultaneously expecting African American men to enlist in the Vietnam War to commit acts of violence overseas. Especially when African Americans were not even treated as equals at home. This is highlighted by how Muhammad Ali, considered to be part of the violent approach, refused to enlist due to him not wanting to participate in the violent acts on innocent civilians overseas, to support a government that will not even acknowledge the rights of his people. Despite his insistence of non-violence, he was still considered a violent person due to his radical speech, and his successful career as ruthless boxer. He is a perfect example of the irony in the oppressor inciting violence while seeing the non-violent person as a threat.

Finally, this thesis highlighted the emergence of the Black Power movement followed by Malcolm X's death, and how they used X's ideals of Black Nationalism to continue the legacy of his 'violent approach'. It can be argued that these ideals can be found in Ali as well, who had been inspired early on by X. They both fought for the idea of black nationalism and did everything they could to bring to light the injustices the African American community faced. They believed that creating a sense of community through their shared African history and blood was the first step in the emancipation of African Americans. The most important contribution of the Black Power movement in the CRM, is them internationalising the black struggle by protesting colonialism and imperialism worldwide. This is where the thesis has shown the non-violent and violent approach ended up converging, with MLK aligning with the Black Power movement to protest together against the Vietnam War. This signalled MLK's radicalization and break from the government, and the other CRM followers followed his example. With continued pressure of both these approaches working together in the backdrop of the Vietnam War, and tensions rising after MLK's assassination, the Civil Rights Act of 1968 was signed signalling the end of the Civil Rights Movement with success.

Through this thesis I aimed to reread the Civil Rights Movement with a focus on the contributions of the violent/radical approach which are often overlooked, and how the concept of violence was equally important in the success of the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement cannot be simplified as a movement that has shown the success of 'non-violence', doing so would not provide a clear understanding of the CRM and its success. In this thesis I have repositioned Malcolm X's importance as not only the 'villain' which was the 'bad' alternative to the non-violent approach by MLK, but also as the origin of the Black

Power movement which eventually worked together with the CRM. The ‘black nationalist, violent approach’ was initially at odds with the CRM, much like X and MLK, but towards the end we see that the two of them started converging to meet their end goal, with MLK allying Black Power movement leaders. They may not agree on the ideas of violence and non-violence, but they understood the importance of both in reaching their end goal and thus worked together.

I also repositioned the importance of Muhammad Ali in the CRM, who had an approach that fell in between the two actors above and played a key role in certain aspects of their life. Muhammad Ali as a person was incredibly important in connecting all three of these actors together, which eventually influenced their personal approaches towards the CRM. As student of X, Ali was inspired by his ideology and speeches until X inevitably was forced to split from the NoI. Ali also played a key role in providing the safety of X from harms of the NoI leader Elijah Muhammad, but when Ali had sided Muhammad in the conflict, X’s guarantee of safety was removed, and he inevitably left the NoI. After X’s split from the NoI, he had gone on his holy pilgrimage to Mecca, which had ended up inspiring his change of attitude towards becoming more accepting of the approach led by MLK. He still chose to play the role of ‘villain’, knowing that it would aid in the success of MLK’s approach by being the better option. In regards of MLK and Ali, their relationship only became friendly when their position on the Vietnam War converged. Ali was one of the first to speak up against the Vietnam War, following his refusal to be drafted for it. He criticized the government for using black youth to fight their war abroad, while black people were not even assured equal civil rights at home. He inspired MLK to openly take on a more radical approach, and MLK started criticizing the government and its failures in supporting the African American community. Initially MLK had remained careful, not wanting to disrupt the progress his movement had made in ensuring connections that could ensure the success of the CRM, but the increased tensions of the Vietnam War had changed this. Ali also had started learning from MLK, by becoming a person that was open for integration, different from the man he was in the NoI whom preached for separatism.

This thesis aimed to show that the violent approach is equally essential to the success of the CRM. Although the two approaches initially had completely different strategies and were often extremely critical of the other, nearing the end we see that the two approaches and its leaders worked together to reach their shared end goal. This however would not have been possible without the three key figures I have discussed, and the connections between them

influencing their choices. To truly understand the black struggle towards Civil Rights in the 60s and 70s in the United States, one can not simply look at the non-violent aspect without also looking at the violent elements. The violent, black nationalist approach is equally important to its success and necessary in understanding the black struggle, and this thesis aimed to show that the violent approach not only has valuable contributions in the form of the Black Power movement, but also is so extremely intertwined with the non-violent approach that it is necessary to include in history writing to provide an accurate portrayal of history.

Epilogue: Black Lives Matter

Although the Civil Rights Movement is claimed to be a huge success in the black struggle to civil rights, the current existence of the Black Lives Matter movement proves that this struggle is still ongoing and far from over. The roots of the Black Lives Matter movement can be traced back to 2013, following the murder of Trayvon Martin. Trayvon Martin was just a 17 year old black boy who was on his way home from a grocery trip before he got shot by a man named George Zimmerman, who was simply a community patrol volunteer that believed Martin was in the wrong neighbourhood. News spread quickly of Martin's death and people around the country started protesting for the man to be arrested and charged for murder. However, Zimmerman pleaded that he was innocent and only acted within his rights and got acquitted for every single charge against him. This was seen as proof that the justice system was on the side of the white man who acted on racist beliefs. This is when the hashtag 'BlackLivesMatter' started spreading on social media, used to protest this justice system that would let those that murder black youth free and protect them. Martin was not a special case; he was one of many innocent black persons who have had to deal with police brutality or white supremacists taking matters in own hands while being protected by America's justice system. Martin was not the first, but he was the boiling point for many African Americans across the country who had witnessed the murders of many of their brothers and sisters go unheard. And so, was the birth of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, founded by three women of colour: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometo.⁹⁵

Although Trayvon Martin sparked the name of the movement, the movement truly gained notoriety in 2014 following the murder of Michael Brown by police officer Darren

⁹⁵ Mumia Abu Jamal, 'Have Black Lives Ever Mattered?' (San Francisco, 2017), 86-102.

Wilson in Ferguson. Brown was unable to share his side of the story nor was there any camera footage available, but Wilson claimed that Brown had refused to listen to him and was aggressive towards him and left Wilson no choice but to shoot the eighteen year old in self-defence. But that was not the end to it, the officer then left the body of the teen on the streets for others to find. What followed was the Ferguson Uprising where hundreds of people took to the streets to riot in name of Brown. Some did so peacefully, but there were also violent protests in the forms of looting areas and destroying property. Not to soon after the police became involved and used violent measures to shut down the riots. The riot persisted for a week before it calmed down, but when Darren Wilson was not indicted for the murder of Brown, believing him to have acted in self-defence, there was another wave of riots in Ferguson.⁹⁶

As we can see, the Black Lives Matter movement is one that started as a reaction to the murderers of harmless black youth being protected by the American justice system. The movement largely has its roots on social media, with it starting with a hashtag. The BLM movement believes that the American justice system is inherently racist, meaning that even if there were no racists, that the system would continue to disadvantage African Americans. As of now, June 2020, there are heavy protests going on in the United States as the African American community takes to the streets to fight for equal human rights. The system they have been fighting against has been active for over four hundred years now, the Civil War did not stop it, nor did the Civil Rights Movement bring an end to it. There have been many calls from media and oppressors alike for protestors to follow MLK's example and to be peaceful, to put an end to ongoing protests. However, these claims are incredibly disingenuous as they ignore the importance of the existence of violence in MLK's approach. Because of this it is important to reread and highlight the importance of the violent and radical approach and some of the names associated with it and what their ideas were. Through rereading characters like Malcolm X and Ali and acknowledging their importance to the CRM, their knowledge can aid in understanding current day struggle.

To return to the Critical Race Theorists mentioned in the introductory chapter, the key to solving systematic racism is to fully understand history and acknowledge the wrongdoings in the past rather than assume these problems are solved and equality has been achieved. This includes providing an accurate portrayal of history, and this thesis has shown the importance

⁹⁶ Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-First Century* (California, 2018), 54-96.

of the violent/black nationalist approach which is often overlooked to serve the interest of the dominant group to portray history as something more kind than it truly was. If problems continue to be sugar-coated, these problems cannot be fully addressed and solved. To end by quoting Malcolm X; “Education is an important element in the struggle for human rights. It is the means to help our children and our people rediscover their identity and thereby increase their self-respect. Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs only to the people who prepare for it today.” Only by educating ourselves on the complete history, instead of what is convenient, can we truly accept and progress to the next step.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Malcolm X, '(1964) Malcolm X's Speech at the Founding Rally of the Organization of Afro-American Unity

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