Malcolm X Essay, Research Paper

Evan Dumas Dr. Davis

The Legacy of Malcolm X

As far as influential black leaders go, Malcolm X would most definitely be in the topmost group of individuals. Right alongside Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Gen. Colin Powell, and Homey the Clown. However, his methods differed greatly from the methods of those two, but he was greatly influential nevertheless. He increased racial tension, whereas Martin Luther King attempted to decrease it, and preach equality. This is probably the main reason that we celebrate Martin Luther King Day, and not Malcolm X Day, even though they both tragically died….(there’s something to think about)

What set Malcolm apart ?

Undoubtedly, he had first-hand experience with oppression and racial inequality, but his methods varied immensely from that of those previously mentioned. His checkered background, marred with drugs, violence, family problems, financial problems, promiscuity, robberies, and prison-time are what makes Malcolm X so dynamic, being able to rise up from the troubled youth he started out as, to the man he would later become.

Why was Malcolm X so influential ?

Malcolm X was probably the most influential African-American in the 1960’s. This was the result of his inseparable connection with the average African-American. He led the life that many young black men have led. This enabled the public to really relate with him. They knew exactly what he was talking and preaching about, because they faced the same exact thing themselves.

What did Malcolm X preach?

Unlike the preachings of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X’s sermons were quite different. M.L.K. Jr.’s speeches were about equality, both civil and racial. He wanted to have the same rights as the white man, as was guaranteed under the United States Constitution. Whereas, Malcolm X believed that the black man was superior. This was the result of the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the “Nation of Islam” in North America. Which incidentally was the religion that changed Malcolm’s last name from Little to “X”, until God himself returned and gave him a Holy Name from his own mouth, as opposed to the white slave owner’s last name that he imposed to the slave. In fact, even Malcolm’s grandfather was white. This is what gave him his light, reddish-brown complexion. He once said that he hated every ounce of white that he had in him, and was glad that neither he, nor his mother ever laid eyes on him. With Malcolm’s elaborate speeches he was able catch the minds and heart of many African-Americans living in the 1960’s. Some of the things included in his sermons, were as follows, “….It has historically been the case with white people, in their regard for black people, that even though we might be with them, we weren’t considered of them….He may stand with you through thin, but not thick; when the chips are down, you’ll find that as fixed in him as his bone structure, is his sometimes subconscious conviction the he’s better than anybody black…” “The white man’s Christian religion, not the true religion of the black race, taught the “negro” that black was a curse. It taught him to hate everything black, including himself. It taught him that everything white was to be admired, respected, and loved….This white man’s Christian religion further deceived this “brainwashed negro” to always turn the other cheek, and grin, and scrape, and bow, and be humble, and to sing, and to pray, and to take whatever was dished out at him by the “devilish white man”; and to look for his pie in the sky, and for his heaven in the hereafter, while right here on Earth, the slavemaster white man enjoyed his heaven.” “Unless we call one white man, by name, a ‘devil’, we are not speaking of any individual white man. We are speaking of the collective white man’s historical record. We are speaking of the collective white man’s cruelties, and evils, and greeds, that have seen him act like a devil toward the non-white man. Any intelligent, honest, objective person can not fail to realize that this white man’s slave trade, and his subsequent devilish actions are directly responsible for not only the presence of this black man in America, but also for the condition in which we find this black man here….” “…because it is as this collective mass of black people that we have been deprived not only of our civil rights, but even of our human rights, the right to human dignity….” He would also strike out at the ignorant “brainwashed negroes” to open their eyes. “I must be honest. Negroes-Afro-Americans-showed no inclination to rush to the United Nations and demand justice for themselves here in America…..because America’s negroes, especially the older ones–are indelibly soaked in Christianity’s double standard of oppression.”

How effective were they, and what impression did he make?

I felt it was necessary to include as many quotes as I did, in order to grasp the effectiveness of his influence. I noticed that he never used the word “I”, it was always “we”. This showed his firmness in his beliefs that if the negroes in America would join together, then they would be far better off. He gave a wake up call to all the African-Americans during that time, a reminder of their natural heritage, not of this artificial one created by white slave owners. He left a giant impression on America, and the World for that matter, because of speeches like this. This is the true Legacy of Malcolm X.

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