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# The fight for justice and racial freedom by Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and Marcus Garvey

## Extinguishing the Flames

Martin Luther King Jr., Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X are three very well known social activists. They had one main purpose, to fight for racial freedom and justice in the 1960's when racism was at it's all time high. Especially in many small southern towns such as Birmingham, AL. These men were unlike many others, they were brave and able to stand up to The Man. In this case, The Man is considered the white people who dominated the black race. King, Garvey and Malcolm were especially brave because not too many people would've spoken up due to a fear of the consequences. These men spoke out in hopes to create a racial freedom and justice.

Martin Luther King, Jr. is a very well-known recognizable man. He was a Baptist minister and a social activist, fighting for racial freedom and justice. King wanted one thing, to create an equality amongst the races. Rather than fighting fire with fire, he ensured that his protests would be nonviolent and considerably peaceful. While in the Birmingham City Jail, King wrote, "I came across your recent statement calling our present activities 'unwise and untimely'" (Letter from Birmingham Jail). During this time, a majority of the people thought it was unnecessary for the protests. They were seen as a "waste of time." The only reason why it was seen as a waste is because the white men and women had no racial setbacks. They lived in a world that catered to them. The protests only affected their daily lives. They were being nothing but selfish. Throughout King's letter he addresses the reader with the steps in which a non-violent campaign will be successful. They are, 'collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive, negotiation, self-purification, and direct action.' Martin proposes the idea of nonviolent protest. He believes that it will take time, but one day it will suddenly "click" with the white men and women, that what they're doing is wrong. "We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands" (Letter from Birmingham Jail).

Marcus Garvey had established the idea of founding The Universal Negro Improvement and Conservation Association and African Communities League. This occurred on August 1, 1914. Few of his objectives were, "To reclaim the fallen of the race, To establish Universities, Colleges and Secondary Schools for the further education and culture of the boys and girls of the race, To promote the spirit of race pride and love." Essentially these objectives were to create a sense of pride for one's race rather than to lose your self-confidence. Garvey wanted the fallen race to be lifted again and feel equal. "Now, understand me well, Marcus Garvey has

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entered the fight for the emancipation of a race; Marcus Garvey has entered the fight for the redemption of a country” (Garvey’s Last Speech Before his Incarceration). Garvey wanted to unite the races.

Malcolm X was a man who had qualities similar to Martin Luther King Jr. Being an African American leader and common figure in the Islamic Nation, he expressed his views on racial pride. Rather than fighting peacefully and with words, Malcolm fights back with violence. He feels as if the only way to speak your mind is to act out and draw attention, whether it is unwanted or wanted. “The white man is too intelligent to let someone else come and gain control of the economy of his community. But you will let anyone come in and take control of the economy of your community, control the housing, control the education, control the jobs, control the business...” ( The Ballor or the Bullet). When Malcolm addressed this speech to the public on April 12, 1964 in Detroit he needed to address what was wrong within the society. Being an African American in the 1960’s he didn’t feel like “home” was actually “home.” The color of skin that each individual had, depicted what kind of lifestyle you would live. White-mainly wealthy, or at least made a good living; Black-forced into slavery or hardly given any rights.

“And because these negroes, who have been mislead, misguided, are breaking their necks to take their money and spend it with The Man, The Man is becoming richer and richer, and you’re becoming poorer and poorer” (The Ballor or the Bullet). Malcolm later on explained how The Man was mistreating the Black men and women. The money that they had worked so hard for, was either not given to them or their pay was less than deserved. These people worked too hard for what they received in return. Malcolm wanted to protest to cause a change, however, he didn’t believe singing songs and using words (like Martin Luther King Jr. had been doing), would do anything to change the current situation. Every other race that had received their independence had gotten it through nationalism. Before he proposes his plan he makes sure that the listeners know that if you aren’t willing to go into this all in, then why even bother. The only way to make the change is by choosing ‘Liberty or Death.’ “Join any kind of organization, civic, religious, fraternal, political, or otherwise that’s based on lifting the black man up and making him master of his own community” (The Ballor or the Bullet). Towards the end of his speech, he delivers the message stating that more black men and women need to get out into their own community to stand up and spread the word. Rather than sitting back, if they express their mind and join organizations/ clubs, rather than feeling excluded, the African Americans will slowly be accepted more and more.

I agree with Martin Luther King Jr. the most. I feel as if although he was trying to protest and “disturb the peace,” as some may say; he approached it in a non-violent, peaceful way. He didn’t like how the African men and women were being treated, because it wasn’t fair at all. They were being treated the way that they were because of their skin color, not because of who they were as an individual. I especially liked how he had a dream so he took the steps in

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becoming a leader in hopes for some type of change. Most people would keep their mouths shut and just let the wrong behavior keep occurring, in fear of what could possibly happen. King knew what could happen, but didn't let that stop him. He was a brave and respected man. I disagreed with the other two because they approached the whole situation in a more violent way that I wouldn't agree with. Sure, Malcolm and Marcus were trying to stand up for the races and bring about a freedom and justice however, they just fought fire with fire. Yes, it could eventually change something but honestly in my opinion fists hurt more than words. There was no need to sink down to the level of the very judgmental society. That only makes Malcolm and Marcus as bad as every other racist human being that are bringing a disturbance to the community.

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