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**Malcolm X Versus John Lewis**

Both Malcolm X, and John Lewis are renowned fighters for the African Americans’ rights, specifically the struggle to have equal rights with their White counterparts. It can be argued that the two had first-hand experience of the events witnessed in the course of the racial segregation era when the Jim Crow anti-black racism laws were in use. Concerning Malcolm X, he was born in a family that struggled economically and moved several times as a result of racist violence, whereas John Lewis had a great childhood although he had to work hard so as to assist his sharecropper parents (Lewis 19). Even though the two were from different backgrounds and accessed education in completely diverse ways, they played a significant role in the civil rights movement.

Regarding the Jim Crow's laws, they can be said to have affected both Malcolm X and John Lewis in almost a similar manner even though they had more devastating effects on the family and life of Malcolm X. Jim Crow adversely affected Malcolm X’s family in that he ended up losing not only his father but also four uncles all of whom were murdered by the Whites (Dyson 44). Nonetheless, considering that Jim Crow promoted the discrimination of the Blacks, against the Whites, the two faced the wrath of being treated as inferiors during their school life and had to attend segregated schools. John Lewis was somehow lucky in that with the encouragement of his parents he progressed with his studies until he joined American Baptist Institute, as well as Fisk University where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Religion and Philosophy. Unfortunately, on the contrary, Malcolm dropped out of middle school while he was only aged fifteen years after a white teacher commented that he couldn't realize his dream career of becoming a lawyer considering that he was a black person. Malcolm ended up reading more about religion, philosophy, and history while in prison after been jailed for ten years as a result of involvement in burglary.

It can be argued that their educational achievements influenced them in almost the same manner. This is because it ignited a strong desire in them to fight for the rights of African Americans and the abolishment of all forms of segregation. On the side of Malcolm, upon learning about Black Muslims (which was an Islamic religious organization under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad) while in prison, he became a strong believer of Muhammad's teachings (Redmond 34). In particular, Malcolm became a great supporter of Muhammad's proposal that the ideal course for the blacks was to emancipate themselves from the white civilization. On the side of John Lewis, it was while in school and still a teenager that he got inspired by the Martin Luther King, Jr.'s and Rosa Parks's courageous defiance such that he had a strong desire to have Troy State College (presently Troy University) desegregated but his parents dissuaded him from taking such action (Barbaro 12).

Although education sensitized them about the need to lead the war against racial discrimination, they had a different approach to activism and advocacy for civil rights. Malcolm held the view that the Blacks had to defend themselves against the white violence, and fight for their freedom ‘by any means necessary’ (Dyson 48). By making such an assertion, Malcolm differed with the other major civil rights movement figures that had advocated for the use of non-violent means in the struggle for equal rights. Differently from Malcolm, Lewis was an ardent supporter of the use of non-violence in the fight against the discrimination of the blacks by the whites (Lewis et al. 19). It can be said Lewis advocated for such a strategy because he had studies nonviolent protest. In that respect, Lewis was actively involved within sit-ins at lunch counters, in addition to other segregated public places.

Overall, making a comparison of the two, one can assert that their lives were relatively similar. Their family's faced the wrath of racial discrimination and segregation that was being advanced by the Jim Crow laws. Besides, in their school life, they had a firsthand experience of the discriminatory acts that the people of color underwent at the hands of the whites. Additionally, it is upon receiving education that the two developed a strong desire to lead their people in the struggle for freedom. The only notable difference between the two was the manner in which they thought the fight against racial discrimination had to be undertaken. While Malcolm X advocated for the use of any means inclusive of violence, John Lewis held a contrary opinion as he believed that non-violent means, specifically peaceful demonstrations, and sit-ins at public places would lead to the realization of freedom and end to racial discrimination.

Comparing the life experiences of Malcolm X and John Lewis to those of mine, I can consider myself lucky to have been born and schooled when the days of blatant racial discrimination had come to end. Even though some forms of concealed discrimination remain prevalent in society, the efforts of the civil rights movement bore some fruits considering that incidents such as the establishment of segregated schools or any other facilities are a thing of the past. From another perspective, the two are great role models of how education expands one's thinking and enables him or her to develop strategies of actualizing a certain vision. All in all, in my opinion, the ideal way of pushing for one’s right is through the use of any means possible inclusive of violence just as it was advocated by Malcolm X. Either way, even if the aggressed opt to be non-violent, those denying them their rights will definitely try to contain them through the use of violence thus whichever the means, blood has to be shed.

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