

## South Africa's historiographic conflation: Comparing and contrasting the memories of King and Malcolm X with Luthuli and Mandela

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### Introduction

This article examines the relationship between Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm X and correlates it with the relationship between Albert John Luthuli and Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.<sup>1</sup> It explores the extent to which the memory of Malcolm X is subsumed by the memory of King and the memory of Luthuli is subsumed by Mandela. Furthermore, the disaggregation of King and Malcolm X's conflated memories in North American historiography can assist the disaggregation of Luthuli and Mandela's conflated memories in South African historiography.

Biographical contexts reveal rural/urban and religious/secular divides separating Martin Luther King, Jr and Albert Luthuli from Malcolm X and Nelson Mandela. When interpreting the historical roles played by King, Malcolm X, Luthuli and Mandela in their respective struggles for equality, it is crucial to highlight the strategic means by which they fought. Primary and secondary sources reveal three "common denominator" subjects upon which the two pairs of icons comment: pan-Africanism, violence and communism. Fortunately, sufficient sources substantively reference these three subjects, at times even revealing how each icon described himself in direct relation to his respective antagonist.

### Conflated historiographies

In his book *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, Manning Marable inspires a reflection on the relationship between Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela by analysing the relationship between Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm X. Marable laments:

There is now a tendency of historical revisionism, to interpret Malcolm X through the powerful lens of Dr Martin Luther King, Jr: that Malcolm was ultimately evolving into an integrationist, liberal reformer. This view is not only wrong, but unfair to both Malcolm and Martin.<sup>2</sup>

Marable further reflects on literature about Malcolm X during the 1990s:

I was struck by its shallow character and lack of original sources. Many Malcolmites had constructed a mythic legend to surround their leader that erased all blemishes and any mistakes he had made. Another version of "Malcolmology" simplistically equated Martin Luther King, Jr, with Malcolm, both advocating multicultural harmony and universal understanding.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Malcolm X's full name is El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz.

2. M. Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (Penguin Books, Johannesburg, 2011), p 482.

3. Marable, *Malcolm X*, p 490.

A similar historiographic dynamic to that which Manning Marable identifies, wherein Malcolm X is grafted to Martin Luther King, Jr., is found within South African nationalist mythology taught in curricula, museums and spaces of public memory.<sup>4</sup> A sanitised and inaccurate history is told wherein “Nelson Mandela convinced Albert Luthuli of the need to embark upon the armed struggle” and Luthuli thereafter supported it.<sup>5</sup> Archival research reveals that the opposite occurred; Luthuli was *not* convinced and he argued publicly against the armed struggle after it was launched, well into 1962 until he was silenced, if not by his own liberation movement, then by the apartheid regime’s Sabotage Act.<sup>6</sup>

Following Nelson Mandela’s death in December 2013, the world mourned his passing and rightfully paid him homage for his laudable and extraordinary efforts toward reconciliation in South Africa during the 1990s.<sup>7</sup> Many such tributes to Mandela in Europe and the United States were historically inaccurate or incomplete. Bill Keller characterised the eulogies as “sanitised” and as a result he sought “personal refuge from the canonisation”: “Sweet Jesus’, lamented one of my cohort in an e-mail. “I’ve had to stop looking at the TV”. So much of the coverage celebrated the saint but missed the man”.<sup>8</sup> The media and pundits reasonably revered Mandela for his reconciliatory stance, but played down the fact that he was the former commander in chief of an army – Umkhonto we Sizwe, or MK, also known as the Spear of the Nation and the armed wing of the African National Congress. The media dwelt on his facilitation of “a peaceful transition”, yet neglected to consider, for instance, that South Africa’s liberation from apartheid came in the midst of a low-intensity civil war between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) wherein thousands of Blacks died.<sup>9</sup> South Africa’s liberation certainly did not come free of carnage.

Ubiquitous hagiographies of Nelson Mandela repeat the claim that he emulated Martin Luther King, Jr and Mohandas Gandhi although he ideologically and strategically disagreed with them. The following is a quintessential example of the hagiographic claim:

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4. For a long itemisation of these types of remembrances, see S. Couper, “Bound by Faith: A Biographic and Ecclesiastic Examination (1898–1967) of Chief Albert Luthuli’s Stance on Violence as a Strategy to Liberate South Africa”, PhD dissertation, School of Anthropology, Gender and Historical Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, November 2008, pp 159–167, pp 172–200 and pp 214–215.
  5. “Approached by Mandela, Luthuli agreed to the armed struggle”. Exhibition at the University of Fort Hare, Howard Pim Africana Library, ANC Archives, Nelson Mandela Foundation, viewed 9 July 2008.
  6. S. Couper, ““An Embarrassment to the Congresses?”: The Silencing of Chief Albert Luthuli and the Production of ANC History”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 2, 2009, pp 331–348.
  7. John Mahama’s “He Taught a Continent to Forgive” and Zakes Mda’s “The Mandela I Knew”, are examples of these hagiographic tributes. *New York Times*, Op-Ed, 6 December 2013.
  8. B. Keller, *The New York Times Magazine*, 29 December 2013, pp 8–9.
  9. “Nelson Mandela”, *New York Times*, 6 December 2013.
- Race categorisations are social constructs and thus are inaccurate. Nonetheless, for the purpose of writing history, they must be reluctantly used. Therefore, this paper refers to “Blacks” and “Whites” as proper nouns when used as racial groupings. When used as adjectives, “black” and “white” are improper nouns (for example, “black students” and “white supremacy”). I use the term “African-American”, which is synonymous with the antiquated term used in the 1960s, “Negro” and “Afro-American”, for Blacks in North America.

Mandela's stature as a freedom fighter against apartheid ... and a seeker of peace with his enemies was on par with that of other men he admired: American civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr and Indian independence leader Mohandas K. Gandhi.<sup>10</sup>

Mandela's role in the formation and launching of MK and the civil war between the ANC and the IFP are not necessarily to Mandela's discredit, but he did not espouse non-violence as a means to achieve liberation as did Gandhi, King and Albert Luthuli. Mandela stated in his autobiography that he specifically did not agree with Gandhi's strategic philosophy, especially within the South African context:

I was raising the issue of violence so soon after the Treason Trial, where we had contended that for the ANC non-violence was an inviolate principle, not a tactic to be changed as conditions warranted. I myself believed precisely the opposite; that non-violence was a tactic that should be abandoned when it no longer worked.<sup>11</sup>

The grafting of Nelson Mandela to Martin Luther King, Jr and Mohandas Gandhi is neither isolated nor only recent. The same messy conflation occurred in a 2007 commemorative brochure published by the Premier's Office of the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government that recognised the 40th anniversary of Albert Luthuli's death. Therein, a message from James Orange honoured Luthuli by associating him with King and Gandhi (together, the "trinity"). Yet the tribute oddly included Mandela who neither harboured a "non-violent philosophy" nor initiated a "non-violent fight".

It was because of this that Chief Luthuli, as Secretary-General of the ANC, got his inspiration to fight a non-violent fight. This non-violent philosophy made it possible for Gandhi to receive the Nobel Peace Prize and it would set the foundation for Chief Luthuli, Dr King and Nelson Mandela to have the same honour bestowed upon them.<sup>12</sup>

The same "shallow character" of biographies conflating King and Malcolm X can be found in the above tribute that fuses Luthuli, King and Gandhi to Mandela.<sup>13</sup> Orange did not mention Frederik de Klerk, who received the Peace Prize jointly with Mandela. Mandela and de Klerk received the Prize, *not* for their use of non-violent methods to achieve liberation, but rather for their efforts to engender *reconciliation* after a violent war initiated by the National Party regime and eventually responded to in kind for 30 years by the ANC. Mandela cannot be historically amalgamated with Gandhi, Luthuli or King concerning non-violent resistance to white supremacy because since at least June 1961, Mandela did not support the strict use of non-violent tactics as the primary means by which to liberate South Africa.

In his biography of Malcolm X, Manning Marable challenges what he perceives as Alex Haley (who wrote Malcolm X's autobiography) and Bayard Rustin's (Malcolm X's antagonist in debates and Martin Luther King Jr's ideological mentor) posthumous distortion of Malcolm X. Marable charges that

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10. C. Torchia (Associated Press), "A Father Lost", *Indian River Press Journal*, 6 December 2013, p 1B.
  11. N. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (Abacus, London, 1995), pp 321–322.
  12. Couper, "Bound by Faith", pp 199–200. Couper cited "Commemoration of Chief Albert Luthuli, 2007", Launch Edition, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, Office of the Premier, printed booklet, February 2007, p 12.
  13. Luthuli was the president general, not "secretary general" of the ANC. Gandhi never received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Haley and Rustin manipulated the collective memory of Malcolm X by reconfiguring him from a revolutionary to a pragmatic liberal.

Rustin, like Alex Haley, discounted the effectiveness of black nationalism as a potential force in challenging racial inequality. Both men misinterpreted Malcolm's last frenetic year as an effort to gain respectability as an integrationist and liberal reformer, which was not an accurate or complete reading of him. Rustin's characterisation of Malcolm was designed to deny the militancy and radical potential of "field Negroes", the black ghetto masses ... It was a vision that Haley shared, which is why the *Autobiography* does not read like a manifesto for black insurrection, but much more in the tradition of Benjamin Franklin's autobiography. This may help to explain the enormous popularity of the *Autobiography* and its adoption into the curriculum in hundreds of colleges and thousands of high schools.<sup>14</sup>

The same dynamic is observed in the remembrances of Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela. Concerning Mandela, Alexander Beresford points out:

This discourse not only ignores the ambiguities, contradictions and tensions within Mandela's leadership, ideals and agency: it cherry picks certain elements of Mandela's leadership that reify the ideological hegemony of Western liberalism.<sup>15</sup>

A similar dynamic occurred with Mandela's 1994 autobiography and Anthony Sampson's 1999 authorised biography which were based primarily on autobiographical manuscripts written in the mid-1970s.<sup>16</sup> James Myburgh discerns:

In both *Long Walk to Freedom* and the *Authorised Biography* there appears to be extensive "scrubbing" from the original manuscript of passages pointing to Mandela's support for the Soviet Union and his fervently expressed belief in Marxist-Leninist ideology. This is important as these two books were foundational in cementing the West's understanding of Mandela and the ANC.<sup>17</sup>

Mandela's ubiquitously stocked autobiography "liberalises" him; it is the story of a militant turned into a dove and an apostle for inter-racial harmony and is thus in part a "feel good" biography for North American, European and South African Whites.

One can discern contrasts between Martin Luther King, Jnr and Malcolm X's relationship and Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela's relationship. Nonetheless, there are numerous similarities that allow for substantive commentary. Of course, one also has to qualify biographical statements in context, understanding that few if any historical figures have static philosophies. It is precisely the change in philosophies that give commentators some degree of freedom in remembering and interpreting icons' lives. That being said, King and Luthuli advocated consistent philosophies and strategies. During Mandela's long life, he emphasised various philosophies: non-violent resistance, military revolution and gracious reconciliation. Manning Marable rightly points out that Malcolm X's political philosophy toward the end of his life was almost in chaos, and thus his

14. Marable, *Malcolm X*, p 466.

15. A. Beresford, "Nelson Mandela and the Politics of South Africa's Unfinished Liberation", *Review of African Political Economy*, 2014, p 299.

16. S. Ellis, "New Light on Nelson Mandela's Autobiography", *PoliticsWeb*, 13 January 2014. [www.politicsweb.co.za/politicsweb/view/politicsweb/en/page71619?oid=509092&sn=Detail&pid=71619](http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politicsweb/view/politicsweb/en/page71619?oid=509092&sn=Detail&pid=71619), accessed 11 July 2014.

17. J. Myburgh, "The Meaning of Mandela's Prison Manuscript", *PoliticsWeb*, 15 January 2014. [www.politicsweb.co.za/politicsweb/view/politicsweb/en/page71619?oid=510821&sn=Detail&pid=71619](http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politicsweb/view/politicsweb/en/page71619?oid=510821&sn=Detail&pid=71619), accessed 11 July 2014. A. Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorised Biography* (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1999).

advocacy was confused if not contradictory. Mandela and Malcolm X's later, more "soft", philosophical outlooks are remembered to a much greater extent than their earlier more militant stances and the public often becomes "supercessionist" when interpreting and evaluating the entirety of Mandela and Malcolm X's political trajectories. By examining how King and Malcolm X are inaccurately remembered, an analysis can be made of the manner in which Luthuli and Mandela are also inaccurately remembered.

### Dialectical relationships

Martin Luther King, Jnr and Malcolm X were conterminously active politically from 1955 (when King led the Montgomery Bus Boycott) to 1965 (when assassins killed Malcolm X). Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela were conterminously active politically from 1945 (when Luthuli joined the ANC) to 1962 (when Luthuli and King issued the "Appeal for Action against Apartheid"). Therefore, the two pairs were conterminously active politically from 1955 to 1962. All four icons spent time incarcerated. Three of the four won Nobel Peace Prizes. All four icons "wrote" autobiographies – or rather, "as told by" texts; that is, all four produced autobiographies through amanuenses. Charles Hooper wrote Luthuli's; Clayborne Carson wrote King's; Alex Haley wrote Malcolm X's; and Richard Stengel heavily edited Mandela's.

Martin Luther King, Jnr and Malcolm X met only once, for a few minutes in March 1964. Geography and bannings limited Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela's personal contact with one another. As ideological and strategic rivals, Malcolm X undermined King and Mandela undermined Luthuli. The pairs were rivals in terms of their mutual contestation over constituencies. In practice (and in private), King honoured Malcolm X and vice-versa. Alex Haley believed Malcolm X possessed a "reluctant admiration" for King.<sup>18</sup> Luthuli and Mandela shared the same grace with one another. In practice (and private), Luthuli honoured Mandela and vice-versa. Nonetheless, all four possessed very strong convictions and though they respected each other as ideological foes, they defended their positions vociferously and hence undermined one another.

The primary contextual vantage through which Martin Luther King, Jnr and Albert Luthuli operated was rural. Malcolm X and Nelson Mandela's primary contextual vantage was urban. This urban and rural divide provides some perspective when evaluating each icon's degree of militancy.<sup>19</sup> A rural vantage would be considered, more often than not, more conservative than an urban one. King and Luthuli appealed to a greater extent to a rural, faith-based and socially conservative constituency, whereas Malcolm X and Mandela appealed to an urban (township and ghetto), secular and socially liberal constituency. Manning Marable reflects on a 1961 address Malcolm X gave at Howard University in which he highlighted the urban and rural divide amongst North American leaders:

Malcolm's address that was especially effective in appealing to civil rights organisers and leftists was proletarian appeal. He claimed that Muhammad and the Nation represented Blacks who were unemployed, impoverished and angry. The majority of urban Blacks were confined to the ghetto, where they were subjected to police brutality; indeed, law enforcement authorities functioned like an occupying army

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18. Shabazz, El-Hajj Malik, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Ballantine Books, New York, 1999), p 406.
  19. B. Freund, "Obituary: The Shadow of Nelson Mandela, 1918–2013", *Review of African Political Economy*, 41, 140, 2014, p 292.

under colonial conditions. In effect, Malcolm was using the analogy of postcolonial Africa to define the political *conflict between leaders* in the United States (emphasis added).<sup>20</sup>

Such a commentary suggests a similar rural and urban divide also existed in South Africa's leaders, notably, between Luthuli (rural) and Mandela (urban).

With qualification, a religious and secular divide can be discerned between Martin Luther King, Jnr and Malcolm X. King's primary constituency was always primarily Christian. Malcolm X's political views were initially theologically motivated, though mediated by Elijah Mohammad's "cult of personality". However, as Malcolm X in time realised, the Nation of Islam was heretical. Though Malcolm X can be described as religiously "devout", the sect he served and led was superficial theologically by the standards of orthodox Islam. The Nation of Islam promoted a culture or ideology (black nationalist, under the guise of Islam) rather than a religion or spiritual movement.<sup>21</sup> Malcolm X's constituencies primarily appealed only to the Nation of Islam and secularists.

A similar religious and secular divide existed between Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela. Luthuli primarily appealed to faith-based communities, whereas Mandela appealed to secularists. Winnie Mandela recalled an occasion when Luthuli visited her home in Johannesburg:

On this occasion Chief Luthuli arrived with ["Comrade Madiba", Nelson Mandela], Walter Sisulu, JB Marks, Moses Kotane and Dan Tloome ... I served dinner, but before they would eat Chief Luthuli would say a prayer. I will not mention which of the other men felt uncomfortable during this, for they too had their beliefs.<sup>22</sup>

Mandela was likely uncomfortable with Luthuli's strong faith-based politics. Mandela's unpublished autobiography, smuggled from prison in the 1970s, indicates his antipathy of religion stemmed from his "unhesitating embrace of dialectical materialism".<sup>23</sup> In Mandela's autobiography, he articulates his agnostic, if not atheist, beliefs:

In this regard dialectical materialism is a mighty weapon which puts me in a strong position to realise all my aspirations as a nationalist and as a member of the human race ... dialectical materialism excludes belief in the existence of a supernatural world and rests on the principle that all causes are capable of scientific explanation. It demands that our actions should be based on facts that can be verified through observation, research or experiment. It rejects anything beyond the realm of experience and in particular the existence of a supreme being directing the course of human affairs. For this reason, many people who otherwise would accept the correctness of a materialist approach feel outraged when they realise that belief in dialectical materialism clashes with their religious views. Those ... who have been brought up in religious homes, educated in missionary schools, prayed regularly and modelled their lives on religious principles are grieved when scientific truth forces

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20. Marable, *Malcolm X*, p 187.

21. Malcolm X's brand of black nationalism advocated racial segregation. In contrast, Martin Luther King, Jnr, Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela advocated racial integration.

22. N. (Winnie) Madikizela-Mandela, "A Person of Immense Dignity and Noble Bearing", *Umrabulo: Special Edition, A Tribute to Chief Albert Luthuli*, August 2007, p 28.

23. N. Mandela, "Nelson Mandela's Autobiography", [www.nelsonmandela.org/images/uploads/LWOM.pdf](http://www.nelsonmandela.org/images/uploads/LWOM.pdf), accessed 30 June 2014, p 104. The document, written between 1974 and 1977, is a 627 page manuscript released by the Mandela Centre of Memory. In August 1977, Mac Maharaj smuggled the manuscript out of Robben Island and handed to Yusuf Dadoo, chairman of the South African Communist Party.

them to abandon established beliefs and to allow new forces to channel their beliefs and aspirations in a totally different direction.<sup>24</sup>

Mandela's beliefs are in direct contrast to those of Luthuli, who felt ultimately accountable to his faith, as evidenced in his autobiography *Let My People Go*.<sup>25</sup> Luthuli never relinquished his Congregational mission theology, whereas Mandela adopted historical dialectical materialism. Mandela stated in his 1970s autobiography ["scrubbed" from its 1994 version and from the 1999 authorised biography<sup>26</sup>]:

To reject the co-operation of a party [the SACP] with such a good record can only be due to the influence of our own background and of missionary education, to many years of anti-communist indoctrination by the propaganda agencies of the enemy and to inability to think for ourselves in this regard. Anti-communism is a social disease most people educated in western schools have inherited and as long as community leaders are trained only in such schools the *ridiculous spectacle* of freedom fighters who are chained to the patterns of thought current in the enemy camp will continue to play havoc with our own minds (emphasis added).<sup>27</sup>

### Pan-Africanism

Martin Luther King, Jr and Albert Luthuli retained a greater "exceptionalist" perspective throughout their political careers than did Malcolm X and Nelson Mandela. Exceptionalists viewed the challenges and solutions to the oppression of people of colour primarily (not exclusively) within the context of their national boundaries. Because King and Luthuli were exceptionalists to a greater degree than Malcolm X and Mandela, they were less attracted to internationalist coalitions and thus made fewer links with pan-African allies.

Martin Luther King, Jr's domestic vantage mirrors the American civil rights movement as a whole. African-Americans viewed themselves as Americans who happened to be Black and thus sought redress primarily from within the United States' borders. African-Americans preoccupied themselves with federal and state policies that curtailed harmonious race relations.<sup>28</sup> King's exceptionalism was predicated on the reality that unlike other subjected populations in African colonies, for example South Africa, African-Americans were a minority population. Perhaps the best example of King's resourcing of the "American" experience to justify the future dream of racial equality can be found in his commencement address entitled "The American Dream" at Lincoln University in 1961. By no means does King's exceptionalism make him an isolationist. King spoke eloquently of universalism, civilisation and international solidarity. Nonetheless, as

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24. Mandela, "Nelson Mandela's Autobiography", pp 103–104. There is evidence that Mandela held these views until 1985 when he stated, "Personally, I am a socialist and I believe in a classless society". See V. Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow* (Mayibuye, Bellville, 1999), p 278. Given that Mandela withheld disclosing his SACP membership until his death, there is little reason not to conclude that he also failed to disclose his atheism/agnosticism until his death. Despite Anthony Sampson's "scrubbing" of these embarrassing (post-1989) sentiments, he concludes that dialectical materialism led Mandela to abandon his Christian beliefs. See Myburgh, "The Meaning of Mandela's Prison Manuscript", p 2. Myburgh cited Sampson, *Mandela*, p 65.
  25. S. Couper, "When Chief Albert Luthuli Launched 'Into the Deep': A Theological Reflection on a Homiletic Resource of Political Significance", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 130, 2008, pp 76–89 and pp 108–111.
  26. Myburgh, "The Meaning of Mandela's Prison Manuscript", p 2.
  27. Mandela, "Nelson Mandela's Autobiography", p 363.
  28. Marable, *Malcolm X*, p 484.

seen below, King primarily used nationalist resources to persuade white North Americans prone to patriotism:

For in a real sense, America is essentially a dream, a dream as yet unfulfilled. It is a dream of a land where men of all races, of all nationalities and of all creeds can live together as brothers. The substance of the dream is expressed in these sublime words, words lifted to cosmic proportions: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness".<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to Martin Luther King, Jnr, Malcolm X understood African-Americans as Blacks who happened to be in America and thus sought solidarity from around the globe. In July 1959, from March to April 1964 and from July to November 1964, Malcolm X toured Europe (England and France), the Middle East (Saudi Arabia and Lebanon) and Africa (Egypt, Nigeria, Ghana and Tanzania). To his international audience, Malcolm X argued: "Racism in America is the same that it is in South Africa".<sup>30</sup> The *New York Times* reported Malcolm X as arguing that the United States should be placed "in the same category as South Africa as a violator of human rights".<sup>31</sup> To the Ghanaian parliament Malcolm X asked: "How can you condemn Portugal and South Africa while our black people in America are being bitten by dogs and beaten with clubs?"<sup>32</sup> At a press conference in Ghana, he advocated for support from abroad by drawing parallels between South Africa and the United States:

All of Africa unites in opposition to South Africa's apartheid, and to the oppression in the Portuguese territories. But you waste your time if you don't realise that Verwoerd and Salazar, and Britain and France, never could last a day if it were not for the United States support. So, until you expose the man in Washington, D.C., you haven't accomplished anything.<sup>33</sup>

In Ghana, at a Chinese Embassy dinner, Malcolm X related the South African and North American contexts:

Now, dance! Sing! But as you do – remember Mandela, remember Sobukwe! Remember Lumumba in his grave! Remember South Africans now in jail! ... You wonder why I don't dance? Because I want you to remember twenty-two million Afro-Americans in the US (emphasis original).<sup>34</sup>

After his Hajj to Mecca, in May 1964, upon his arrival at John F. Kennedy Airport, Malcolm X held a press conference. He stated:

... the American black man needed to recognise that he had a strong, airtight case to take the United States to the United Nations on a formal accusation of "denial of human rights" – and that if Angola and South Africa were precedent cases, then

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29. M. King, "The American Dream", in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. J. Washington (HarperCollins, New York, 1991), p 208.
  30. MXC-S, box 14, folder 5, Address to the Organisation of African Unity, 17 July 1964; and MXC-S, box 5, folder 14, Travel Diaries, 17–21 July, 1964. Cited by Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 361 and 544.
  31. M. Handler, "Malcolm X Seeks UN Negro Debate", *New York Times*, 13 August 1964. Cited by Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 362 and 545.
  32. Shabazz, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p 363.
  33. Shabazz, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p 361.
  34. Shabazz, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, pp 364–365.



there would be no easy way that the US could escape being censured, right on its own home ground.<sup>35</sup>

In Albert Luthuli's writings, one observes some pan-African sympathies, most notably in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. Luthuli embodied these sympathies through his traditional African dress when accepting the prize. Nevertheless, though not an isolationist, Luthuli was an exceptionalist. His exceptionalist stance was predicated on the reality that South Africa, unlike most other African countries, had experienced a "settler", rather than an "administrative" form of colonialism for four hundred years. In 1958, Luthuli increasingly articulated his belief that the white minority would ultimately surrender to constructive pressure given their default rationality and malleability to moral persuasion. Four times in his third ANC president-general acceptance speech, Luthuli expressed that "the manner in which freedom lovers in the white community have come out openly and boldly to champion the cause of making the Union a true democracy for all ..." encouraged him.<sup>36</sup>

Like Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela sought solidarity outside his country's borders. In 1962, he illegally departed South Africa and toured the African continent. Mandela travelled to present day Botswana, Tanzania, Ghana, Ethiopia, Egypt, Morocco, Mali, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Senegal. Mandela had many objectives for his 1962 international tour. First, Mandela felt he had to diminish the influence of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) by arguing that it was not the primary or most influential liberation movement in South Africa; yet in doing so, he believed that the ANC had to become more "Africanist" in its approach.<sup>37</sup> Second, after launching MK, Mandela felt he needed to be trained to lead the liberation movement's war. He underwent some military training. Much of it seemed not to be in English and it was cut short by a premature recall to South Africa, likely caused by the collapsing of the liberation movement at home following MK's launch.<sup>38</sup> Mandela received hardly enough training to be a recruit, let alone the commander-in-chief of an army. Third, Mandela sought financial and military support for the ANC and its armed movement. In Algeria, one liberation struggle leader cautioned Mandela not to neglect political for military matters because "international public opinion is sometimes worth more than a fleet of jet fighters".<sup>39</sup> Upon his return to South Africa, Mandela met with Albert Luthuli, who disagreed with Mandela's suggestion to make the ANC more like the PAC, even if only from a "cosmetic" perspective.<sup>40</sup>

Martin Luther King, Jnr and Albert Luthuli's lack of extensive international travel and their exceptionalist perspective limited their advocacy efforts primarily to their respective domestic constituencies. Malcolm X and Nelson Mandela's greater exposure to the African continent and international revolutionary movements led them to seek pan-African solidarity to a larger extent than King and Luthuli. Malcolm X and Mandela largely abandoned domestic legislative efforts to reform white supremacy and increasingly looked to wider political instrumentalities such

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35. Shabazz, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p 368.

36. University of Cape Town, Manuscripts and Archives Department, Legal Collections, Thornton Collection (BC 930), African National Congress (A5), Albert Luthuli, Presidential Address to the 46th Annual Conference of the ANC, 13–14 December 1958, p 2 (also pp 1, 4 and 9).

37. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, pp 245–346 and p 361.

38. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p 363.

39. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p 355.

40. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p 370.

as, for Mandela, the Pan-African Freedom Movement for East and Central Africa (PAFMECA) and, for Malcolm X, the United Nations. While hindsight is twenty-twenty, seismic shifts caused by domestic constituencies within the icons' borders proved more influential in changing their respective countries' laws, and thus the conditions of people of colour, than international coercion.

## Violence

Martin Luther King, Jr and Albert Luthuli articulated and implemented a Gandhian (*satyagraha*) position against the use of violence as a means of resisting oppression.<sup>41</sup> Neither King nor Luthuli were pacifists, and stated such on numerous occasions. However, for moral and strategic reasons, both implemented pacifist tactics to resist white supremacy. In contrast, Malcolm X and Nelson Mandela, though not inclined toward violence, believed that violence should be employed in self-defence or a means to engender revolutionary change designed to correct societal injustices. In short, for King and Luthuli "the means justified the ends" and for Malcolm X and Mandela "the ends justified the means".

As it concerned the use of violence as a means of liberating people of colour from oppression, Martin Luther King, Jr disputed with Malcolm X on both moral and practical grounds. King argued:

In the event of a violent revolution, we would be sorely outnumbered. And when it was all over, the Negro would face the same unchanged conditions, the same squalor and deprivation ... Thus, in purely practical as well as moral terms, the American Negro has no rational alternative to non-violence.<sup>42</sup>

King's confidence in methods of non-violent civil disobedience is well known and documented. He wrote numerous treatises on the efficacy of non-violent methods: "Non-Violence and Racial Justice" (1957); "The Power of Non-Violence" (1958); "The Social Organisation of Non-Violence" (1959); "Pilgrimage to Non-Violence" (1960); "Non-Violence: The Only Road to Freedom" (1966); and "Showdown for Non-Violence" (1968). For moral and tactical reasons, King believed resistance to white supremacy with non-violent methods, even when provoked or attacked, was the best strategy to achieve human rights for African-Americans. He subscribed to pacifist *tactics* within the United States civil rights movement. King critiqued Malcolm X's position on violence when he argued:

I have talked with many persons in the ghettos of the North who argue eloquently for the use of violence. But I have observed none of them in the mobs that rioted in Chicago. I have heard the street-corner preachers in Harlem ... but in spite of the bitterness preached and the hatred espoused, none of them has ever been able to start a riot. ... these violent eruptions are unplanned, uncontrollable temper tantrums brought on by long-neglected poverty, humiliation, oppression and exploitation. Violence as a strategy for social change in America is non-existent. ... I am convinced that for practical as well as moral reasons, non-violence offers the only road to freedom for my people.<sup>43</sup>

Malcolm X primarily advocated violence only as a means of self-defence (outside the Nation of Islam and within the North American context). Malcolm X

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41. S. Couper. "'But Let Us Remember Him Then and Never Forget ...' – The Dilution of Satyagraha in South Africa", *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 31, 2013, pp 90–115.
  42. M. King, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson (Warner Books, New York, 1998), p 266.
  43. King, "Non-Violence: The Only Road to Freedom", in *A Testament of Hope*, p 55.

advised his followers, “Do nothing unto anyone that you would not like to have done unto yourself. Seek peace, and never be the aggressor – but if anyone attacks you, we do not teach you to turn the other cheek”.<sup>44</sup> Malcolm X explained his stance on violence for self-defence purposes:

I feel that if white people were attacked by Negroes – if the forces of law prove unable, or inadequate, or reluctant to protect those Whites from those Negroes – then those white people should protect and defend themselves from those Negroes, using arms if necessary. And I feel that when the law fails to protect Negroes from Whites’ attack, then those Negroes should use arms, if necessary, to defend themselves.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the above moderate stance, Malcolm X would on occasion break into fits of fervour and approve of movements that adopted more proactive violent tactics. For example, to a London-based magazine read by people of colour in Great Britain, Malcolm X railed in February 1965: “King and his kind believe in turning the other cheek ... Their freedom fighters follow rules of the game laid down by the big bosses in Washington, D.C., the citadel of imperialism. ... Mau Mau I love”.<sup>46</sup> Such rhetoric contradicts that which the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X advocated for African-Americans, that is, armed self-defence – not revolt or revolution.<sup>47</sup>

Malcolm X’s militant views justifying the use of violence in self-defence had many supporters in the continent of Africa. When Malcolm X toured Africa, press reports celebrated his presence and “fight back” rhetoric. For example, one account of his visit following his departure from the Nation of Islam read: “Malcolm X’s decision to enter the mainstream of the struggle heralds a hopeful sign on the sickening dismal scene of brutalised, non-violent, passive resistance”.<sup>48</sup> Malcolm X preached in 1964:

Well, I believe it’s a crime for anyone who is being brutalised to continue to accept that brutality without doing something to defend himself. If that’s how “Christian” philosophy is interpreted, if that’s what Gandhian philosophy teaches, well, then I will call them criminal philosophies.<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, a press statement issued by Muslim Mosque, Inc., an organisation Malcolm X founded after his departure from the Nation of Islam, declared “Concerning non-violence: it is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks”.<sup>50</sup>

Though Malcolm X’s assassination cut short his ascension, one could argue that as non-violence seemed impotent against dogs, water hoses and lynchings,

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44. Shabazz, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p 218.

45. Shabazz, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p 373.

46. S. Clark (ed.), *February 1965: The Final Speeches* (Pathfinder, New York, 1992), pp 42–44. Cited by Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 413 and 550.

47. Marable, *Malcolm X*, p 412. It can be argued that Malcolm X never really actually *did* anything – he only *spoke* militantly. This is one major criticism that one cannot direct at Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr or Albert Luthuli. For all of Malcolm X’s verbal bluster, his ideology and strategy when allied with the Nation of Islam was apolitical and conservative. Malcolm X never actually committed any revolutionary act, civil disobedience, violence (outside the Nation of Islam) or ordered others to do so, even in self-defence when provoked.

48. Shabazz, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p 359.

49. Shabazz, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p 374.

50. MX FBI, Memo, New York Office, 13 March 1964. Cited by Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 298 and 536.

he gained influence at Martin Luther King, Jr's expense. While in London, England in November 1964, Malcolm X examined and commented on revolution within the African contexts and then related how the same dynamic occurred in the United States. Concerning the African context, Malcolm X might well have had in mind Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela when he found fault with King:

The older generation of Africans ... have believed that they could negotiate ... and eventually get some kind of independence. The new generation rejected gradualism: "If something is yours by right, then you fight for it or shut up. ... [Whites] should say thank you for Martin Luther King, because Martin Luther King has held Negroes in check up to recently. But he's losing his grip; he's losing his control".<sup>51</sup>

The *New York Times* printed the following viewpoint in 1964:

Malcolm X is going to play a formidable role, because the racial struggle has now shifted to the urban North ... if Dr. King is convinced that he has sacrificed ten years of brilliant leadership, he will be forced to revise his concepts. There is only one direction in which he can move, and that is in the direction of Malcolm X.<sup>52</sup>

King's influence waned as many felt that non-violence was proving ineffective. Malcolm X's militancy gained him allies, even among moderates. In March 1964 while the Civil Rights bill was stalled, close aides of King, such as James Bevel, warned that "people are losing faith ... in the non-violent movement".<sup>53</sup>

After touring Africa and advocating pan-Africanism, Malcolm X sought allies among diasporic and oppressed coloured people in England. Once while interviewed by the liberal South African newspaper *Sunday Express*, Malcolm X encouraged South African Blacks to employ violence "all the way ... I don't give the [South African] blacks credit in any way ... for restraining or confining themselves to ground rules that limit the scope of their activity".<sup>54</sup> Malcolm X went so far as to specifically dismiss Albert Luthuli as "just another Martin Luther King, used to keep the people in check".<sup>55</sup> Malcolm X highlighted Nelson Mandela and Robert Sobukwe as South Africa's "real leaders".<sup>56</sup>

Since 1948 when he gave a lecture in the United States dedicated to Mohandas Gandhi, Albert Luthuli subscribed to Gandhi's *satyagraha* philosophy and tactics. In the early 1950s, as president of the ANC in Natal, Luthuli led non-violent protests during the Defiance Campaign. Luthuli disputed with Nelson Mandela the utility of violence on both moral and practical grounds. Before, during and after the decision to form MK in July 1961 and to launch it in December 1961, Luthuli spoke vociferously against the use of violence.<sup>57</sup> For example, Luthuli unambiguously argued:

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51. Clark (ed.), *February 1965*, pp 46–65. Cited by Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 414 and 550.
  52. Shabazz, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p 425. Alex Haley did not cite the *New York Times* article quoted.
  53. D. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (Vintage, New York, 1986), p 319. Cited by Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 301 and 536.
  54. Clark, *February 1965*, 69-72. Cited by Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 415 and 550.
  55. Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 415 and 550.
  56. Clark (ed.), *February 1965*, pp 69–72. Cited by Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 415 and 550. Although Robert Sobukwe did not advocate or implore violence, even in self-defence.
  57. In *Long Walk to Freedom* and *Conversations with Myself*, Nelson Mandela exacerbates the confusion concerning Albert Luthuli's stance at the launch of MK. In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela states concerning the decision to form MK that "The policy of the ANC would still be that of non-violence". Three sentences later, Mandela states: "This was a

Even for practical reasons non-violence is the only course we can follow. Direct attack by an unarmed public against the fully armed forces of the government would mean suicide. *There are no responsible persons among us in the African National Congress who advocate violence as a means of furthering our cause* (emphasis added).<sup>58</sup>

Although not a pacifist, Luthuli was prone to articulate pacifist sentiments. After Mandela launched MK in December 1961, Luthuli published the following in his weekly *Golden City Post* column:

When we strive for the same goal through non-violent methods, the government visits us with more and harsher laws to suppress – if not completely destroy – our liberation efforts. IS THIS NOT INVITING THE OPPRESSED TO DESPERATION? NONETHELESS, I WOULD URGE OUR PEOPLE NOT TO DESPAIR OVER OUR METHODS OF STRUGGLE, THE MILITANT, NON-VIOLENT TECHNIQUES. SO FAR WE HAVE FAILED THE METHODS – NOT THE METHODS US (emphasis original).<sup>59</sup>

The archive has not revealed statements or actions by Albert Luthuli supporting the armed struggle, although ANC mythology argues that he did.<sup>60</sup> Since the day Luthuli died, the ANC has been at pains to ubiquitously graft Luthuli's outlook to Nelson Mandela's stance on violence. The following myth, told by Jacob Zuma, is so often repeated that it is assumed to be true.

While [Luthuli] was a profound believer in non-violent struggle, when the time came, necessitated by material conditions, for the armed struggle to be adopted as the new policy of the ANC, good judgement made him accept and believe in the armed struggle.<sup>61</sup>

Following the 1960 Sharpeville massacre and May 1961 strikes, Nelson Mandela contemplated and then espoused violence and thereby gained influence, at Albert Luthuli's expense, within the leadership of those in ANC who were also members of the SACP. Mandela made a statement in Addis Abba at a gathering of the PAFMECA in 1962, perhaps directed at Luthuli who had just published his autobiography *Let My People Go*.<sup>62</sup> Mandela's statement strongly resonates with two previously referenced quotations of Malcolm X which label the advocacy of non-violence a criminal act. Mandela proclaimed in his PAFMECA speech, "A leadership commits a crime against its own people if it hesitates to sharpen its

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fateful step. ... Henceforth, the ANC would be a different kind of organisation" (pp 323–324). Concerning a denial of Luthuli's support of the armed struggle, Mandela states in *Long Walk to Freedom*, "Nothing could be farther from the truth", and yet in *Conversations with Myself* he states Luthuli's opposition clearly, in the same context (see pp 343 and p 78, respectively). See N. Mandela, *Nelson Mandela: Conversations with Myself* (Macmillan, London, 2010).

58. *Rand Daily Mail*, "100 Brave Cold to Greet Luthuli", 12 December 1961.

59. A. Luthuli, "Our Way is Right – We Must Keep On", *Golden City Post*, 25 March 1962.

60. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p 342. Nelson Mandela claimed Albert Luthuli's memory was poor and he did not remember the decision to form MK. However, Luthuli was not upset at Mandela for MK's formation, to which he very reluctantly yielded, but rather its launch (activation), on the heels of Luthuli winning the Nobel Peace Prize. See also S. Couper, "Irony upon Irony upon Irony: The Mythologising of Nationalist History in South Africa", *South African Historical Journal*, 63, 2, June 2011, pp 339–346. S. Couper, "Emasculating Agency: An Unambiguous Assessment of Albert Luthuli's Stance on Violence", *South African Historical Journal: Special Issue The ANC at 100*, 64, 3, September 2012, pp 564–586.

61. J. Zuma, "A Visionary, a Man of Peace and a Unifier", in *Umrabulo*, August 2007, p 17.

62. A. Luthuli, *Let My People Go: The Autobiography of a Great African Leader* (Collins, Johannesburg and London, 1962).

political weapons which have become less effective ...".<sup>63</sup> Mandela even opined that Luthuli's position was unethical: "I said it was wrong and immoral to subject our people to armed attacks by the state without offering them some kind of alternative".<sup>64</sup> After MK's launching, Mandela politically eclipsed Luthuli.

In October 1961, the Nobel Committee announced that Albert Luthuli had won the 1960 Peace Prize. Many who resorted to violence within South African's liberation movement felt that predominantly white, liberal, Christian democracies used the Prize and Luthuli to dampen revolutionary fervour. Many within Nelson Mandela's circles felt that Luthuli's acceptance of the Prize "created the impression that he was a tool of the West".<sup>65</sup> Luthuli defended his integrity by retorting:

The award would defeat its purpose utterly if there was any suggestion of an ulterior motive. ... In the mind of the committee, I am sure – if one can speculate on these things – the award was given because I have always worked for peace. It is not trying to buy me for peace.<sup>66</sup>

If winning the Nobel Peace Prize did not embarrass Nelson Mandela enough, then Albert Luthuli's autobiography, *Let My People Go* did. The discomfort caused by Luthuli's autobiography did not escape Mandela, who observed that "some of his statements have been extremely unfortunate and have created the impression of a man who is a stooge of the Whites".<sup>67</sup> Mandela felt that Luthuli's autobiography "compromised the ANC".<sup>68</sup>

After the Norwegian parliament chose Martin Luther King, Jr for the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, King linked the North American with the South African context and identified himself with Albert Luthuli who won the Prize before him. King reflected:

In our struggle for freedom and justice in the US, which has also been so long and arduous, we feel a powerful sense of identification with those in far more deadly struggle for freedom in South Africa. We know how Africans there, and their friends of other races, strove for a half a century to win their freedom by non-violent methods. We have honoured Chief Luthuli for his leadership, and we know how this non-violence was only met by increasing violence from the State ... Our responsibility presents us with a unique opportunity. We can join the one form of non-violent *action* that could bring freedom and justice to South Africa, the action which the African leaders have appealed for: a massive movement for economic sanctions (emphasis original).<sup>69</sup>

Similar to Nelson Mandela's regretting Luthuli's Nobel Peace Prize, Malcolm X also regretted white liberals' (the puppet masters') awarding the 1964 Prize to Martin Luther King, Jr (the "puppet") so as to strengthen his non-violent position.

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63. N. Mandela, *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle is My Life: His Speeches and Writings 1944–1990* (Mayibuye Books, Bellville, 1994), p 131.

64. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p 322.

65. S.M. Ndlovu, "The ANC in Exile, 1960–1970", in South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, (1960–1970)*. First edition (Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004), p 433.

66. M. Lloyd, *Sunday Tribune*, "Lutuli: The Impact of a Personality", 29 October 1961.

67. T. Lodge, *Mandela: A Critical Life* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006), p 101. Lodge cites Brenthurst Library, N. Mandela, PAFMECSA Exhibit R13, Rivonia Trial Records, 1962.

68. Ndlovu, "The ANC in Exile, 1960-1970", p 433.

69. King, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, pp 258–259.

Once in November 1964 during a stay in Paris, Malcolm X attacked King and Luthuli: “How is it possible that some people are still preaching non-violence? That’s easy to understand – shows you the power of dollarism. [The] imperialists give out another peace prize to *again* try and strengthen the image of non-violence” (emphasis added).<sup>70</sup>

Manning Marable cross-pollinates the South African and North American contexts to disentangle not only Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm X, but Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela:

[Malcolm X] endorsed revolutionary violence against the apartheid regime in South Africa ... Nelson Mandela ... was a hero to Malcolm because of his identification with guerrilla attacks against white South Africa. Although today Mandela is perceived as a racial reconciliator, much like King, a half century ago the future president of South Africa largely shared Malcolm’s views about the necessity of armed struggle in Africa. So, the view that there were “two Malcolm Xs” – one who advocated violence when he was a Black Muslim, and a second who espoused non-violent change – is absolutely wrong.<sup>71</sup>

It is equally wrong to suggest that there were “two Luthulis” (one who argued against violence before 16 December 1961 and one after) and “two Mandelas” (one who advocated violence before 11 February 1990 and one after). While Malcolm X and Mandela were perhaps justified for advocating violent revolution, neither recognised as did King and Luthuli that “small transformations of individual behaviour” leading to collective systemic changes usually engender substantive and imbedded social change.<sup>72</sup>

### Communism

Due to nationalist suspicions aroused by the Cold War in North America and South Africa, Martin Luther King, Jr, Malcolm X, Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela’s antagonists accused them of supporting communism. Of the four, only Mandela had substantive ties to communism. Worthy of examination is the strategic effectiveness of communist affiliations in the context of the Cold War and its conclusion with the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall and the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) suspected Martin Luther King, Jr harboured communist sympathies because of his anti-Vietnam war pronouncements. However, accusations of King’s Communist Party membership or sympathies should not be countenanced. King repudiated communism, calling it a “misguided philosophy that would teach man that the end justifies the means, and that violence and the denial of basic freedoms are justifiable methods to achieve the goal of a classless society”.<sup>73</sup>

In a June 1950 correspondence to President Harry Truman, Malcolm X (then known as Malcolm Little) declared through hyperbole his opposition to the Korean conflict and exclaimed: “I have always been a communist”.<sup>74</sup> This

70. N. Davidson, “Alioune Diop and the African Renaissance”, *African Affairs*, 78, 310, January 1979, pp 3–11. Cited by Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 386 and 547.

71. Marable, *Malcolm X*, p 485.

72. Marable, *Malcolm X*, p 406.

73. King, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, p 237.

74. MX FBI, Summary Report, Detroit Office, 16 March 1954, p 6. Correspondence from Malcolm Little to Harry S. Truman, 29 June 1950. See also K. Evanzz, *The Judas Factor*:

correspondence began in the FBI's file on Malcolm X which it never closed. The United States government often saw "communist" motivations behind any subversive rhetoric or inclinations. For example, during the early 1960s the California Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities feared the Nation of Islam demonstrated "communist affiliations" because there was an "interesting parallel between the Negro Muslim movement and the Communist Party, and that is the advocacy of the overthrow of a hated regime by force, violence or any other means".<sup>75</sup> Such a parallel is absurd, since the communists were secularists at best, if not atheists, and integrationists. When questioned by the FBI in 1955, Malcolm X denied ever having been a member of the Communist Party.<sup>76</sup>

Malcolm X was not a member of the Communist Party nor did he have any allegiance to its political philosophy. If and when Malcolm X had associations with those affiliated to or supportive of the Communist Party, it was only to build coalitions and express solidarity with those fighting anti-colonial struggles within the developing world. In one famous November 1963 address entitled "Message to the Grassroots", Malcolm X declared that a true revolution was implemented by the Chinese communists. Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the Argentine revolutionary and former guerrilla leader of the Cuban revolution, visited the United States in November 1964 to speak at the United Nations General Assembly. Malcolm X resonated with Guevara's anti-imperialist stance, particularly as it concerned central Africa. But, Guevara declined Malcolm X's invitation to speak at an OAAU rally.

The South African government repeatedly accused Albert Luthuli of having an allegiance to communism despite his private and public disavowal of its tenets. The government's suspicions of Luthuli's communist sympathies were based on the dual SACP membership of many within the ANC leadership; his close political friendship with Moses Kotane; and the ANC's use of "communist" legal counsel, especially during the Treason Trial. The government's suspicions were misguided, because Luthuli held himself primarily accountable to his particular brand of Christian faith, namely Congregationalism, which instilled in him the values of democracy, education and human rights. Luthuli stated in his autobiography that communism is a "mixture of a false theory of society linked on to a false 'religion'".<sup>77</sup> Luthuli once confided in a private letter to his North American confidant, Mary Louise Hooper, "I do not like communists".<sup>78</sup>

Although Martin Luther King, Jnr, Malcolm X and Albert Luthuli's affiliations with communism are discounted, Nelson Mandela's is not. On 6 December 2014, a day after he died, the SACP revealed that "On his arrest in August 1962, Nelson Mandela was not only a member of the then-underground South African

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*The Plot to Kill Malcolm X* (Thunder's Mouth, New York, 1992), p 11. Cited by Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 95 and 510.

75. F. Knight. "Justifiable Homicide, Police Brutality, or Government Repression?: The 1962 Los Angeles Police Shooting of Seven Members of the Nation of Islam", *Journal of Negro History*, 79, 2, Spring 1974, pp 182–196. Cited by Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 206 and 525.

76. MX FBI, Summary Report, New York Office, date illegible (around mid-1955). Cited by Marable, *Malcolm X*, pp 112 and 513.

77. Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, pp 153–154.

78. University of Cape Town, Manuscripts and Archives Department, Legal Collections, Albert John Luthuli Papers, BCZA 78/46–47, Co-operative Africana Microfilm Project of the Center for Research Libraries 2914, reel #1, Correspondence from Luthuli to Hooper, 2 July 1956, p 3.



Communist Party, but was also a member of our Party's Central Committee".<sup>79</sup> For most, that Mandela belonged to the Communist Party should not have been a surprise. Many hinted at it, including Joe Slovo, Joe Matthews, John Motshabi, Hilda Bernstein and Brian Bunting.<sup>80</sup> Historians, notably Stephen Ellis, have claimed so for some time.<sup>81</sup> Probably more of a revelation is that Mandela was a member of the Central Committee, although Ellis revealed this as well.<sup>82</sup> Many social media commentaries dismiss the posthumous confession as trivial. However, it was anything but. The proof of its relevance is that the information was purposefully withheld for so many years, especially post-1994, by the SACP and Mandela.<sup>83</sup>

The reasons to conceal Nelson Mandela's SACP membership are manifold. Mandela's SACP membership calls into question the very agency of Blacks and the ANC in the liberation struggle. It calls into question whether the 1955 Freedom Charter and the armed struggle was inspired by the black nationalist ANC or the predominately white internationalist SACP.<sup>84</sup> It may reveal to what extent the liberation movement as constituted by the joint congresses was seduced by the communists to form MK on the basis of a few all-night meetings in July 1961. It may reveal the motives behind Mandela's insubordination in launching MK without Albert Luthuli's and thus the ANC's knowledge or approval.<sup>85</sup> Was it Mandela the SACP leader, not Mandela the ANC leader, who insubordinately launched the armed struggle? Finally, it may explain how in October 1962 in Lobatse, Botswana, the ANC first came to unofficially "officially" adopt a tragic and unproductive armed struggle. Such a disclosure dilutes Mandela's ANC credentials and suggests that Luthuli and the ANC were usurped by the SACP through Mandela. This *coup* placed the liberation movement within the communist and outside of the western democratic orbit and thereby, due to the Cold War, possibly delayed South Africa's modern democratic dispensation.

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79. Workers' World Staff, "Statement of the South African Communist Party on Nelson Mandela", <http://www.workers.org/articles/2013/12/06/statement-south-african-communist-party-nelson-mandela/>, 6 December 2013, accessed 30 January 2014.
80. S. Ellis, "The Genesis of the ANC's Armed Struggle in South Africa 1948–1961", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37, 4, 2011, p 667. Ellis cited J. Slovo, *Slovo: An Unfinished Autobiography* (Ravan, Johannesburg 1995), pp 175–176; Simons Papers, BC1081, 0.7.2, Minutes of SACP Africa Group Meeting, 13 May 1982; H. Bernstein, Interview with P. O'Malley, 25 August 2004. See also P. O'Malley, *The Heart of Hope*, available at <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/031v00017/04v00344/051v01461/061v01476.htm>, retrieved on 23 October 2010. P. O'Malley, *Shades of Difference: Mac Maharaj and the Struggle for South Africa* (Viking Penguin; New York, 2007), p 63, noting that other sources are embargoed until 2030. Testimony by Piet Beyleveld (1964) and Fred Carneson (1966), quoted in Coetsee Papers, PV 357, 1/M1/48, "Kampanje vir die vrijlating van Nelson Mandela".
81. I. Filatova and A. Davidson, *The Hidden Thread: Russia and South Africa in the Soviet Era* (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 2013), pp 300–301.
82. Ellis, "The Genesis of the ANC's Armed Struggle", p 667.
83. In his 1960 testimony at the Treason Trial, Nelson Mandela answered the defence counsel's question "Did you become a communist?" in a curiously evasive manner and with much qualification: "Well, I don't know if I did become a communist. If by communist you mean a member of the Communist Party and a person who believes in the theory of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, and who adheres strictly to the discipline of the party, I did not become a communist". See Mandela, *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle Is My Life*, pp 91–92.
84. Freund notes the communists as "key actors who put together the 1955 Freedom Charter". See Freund, "Obituary", p 292.
85. All of the MK operatives in Natal in 1961 were communists; one had dual ANC and SACP membership. Specific directives were given to MK operatives not to disclose MK's plans to members of the ANC. See Couper, "Bound by Faith", p 308.

Despite Nelson Mandela's strategic miscalculations, his "softening" or "mellowing" allowed him to be the indispensable and beloved lynchpin preventing civil war before, during and after South Africa's precarious transition to democracy. It is rightly argued that:

... the construction of Mandela as a sanctified "moderate" served the interests of the ANC as a party and also the interests of western politicians and the international business community, who stood to profit both materially and ideologically by claiming ownership of a carefully sanitised Mandela image.<sup>86</sup>

## Conclusions

Manning Marable's analysis of the manner in which North American historiography merges Malcolm X with Martin Luther King, Jr inspires an investigation of whether a similar merger of Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela can be found within South African historiography. Such an investigation assists in disaggregating Luthuli and Mandela's conflated memories and thus their contemporary relevance. A comparison of each leader's views on pan-Africanism, violence and communism assist in discussing and evaluating the degree to which their respective strategies were effective.

Martin Luther King, Jr's gradual, integrationist, exceptionalist and non-violent strategy ultimately proved progressive if the civil rights movement is credited with the gains made by people of colour in the United States to achieve greater equality. King's appeals for justice made to the United States federal government and liberal white Americans were instrumental in reforming white supremacist legislation and law enforcement. King's advocacy of Mohandas Gandhi's non-violent mass resistance enabled the civil rights movement to attain and maintain the moral high ground and thus long-term advances. King's non-violent movement motivated the federal government's armed intervention, particularly in the South, to enforce civil rights legislation.

The segregationist objectives espoused by Malcolm X, especially while with the Nation of Islam, proved un-implementable and thus unviable. Malcolm X undermined Martin Luther King, Jr's more successful strategy. Malcolm X's later pan-African sympathies and/or allegiances were tactically ineffective. African countries provided little if any substantive solidarity with African-Americans to effect accelerated legislative reforms. Malcolm X's advocacy for the use of violence, while perhaps morally justifiable, would likely have proved tactically ineffective, if not counter-productive. Violence, even only defensive in nature, would have failed strategically because African-Americans were a minority and would have suffered disproportionately to Whites in armed confrontations. Yet, while Malcolm X may have been strategically unsound, he articulated and thus instilled a philosophical ideal that provided people of colour with a great deal of existential dignity and pride that is perhaps equally efficacious as any "successful" strategy implemented by King.

During the 1980s and 1990s, trade unions, the United Democratic Front and Christian advocacy organisations such as the South African and Diakonia councils of churches implemented Albert Luthuli's non-violent tactics. "Small transformations of individual behaviour" leading to collective systemic changes created the essential domestic ingredients needed to overthrow apartheid.

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86. Beresford, "Nelson Mandela and the Politics of South Africa's Unfinished Business", p 298.

Luthuli's 1960s appeals to the western democracies, when combined with domestic fundamentals, bore fruit because they added additional international solidarity that catalysed apartheid's implosion. Luthuli's non-violent strategy and desire for a non-revolutionary negotiated settlement ultimately proved efficacious if the 1994 settlement to form a government of National Unity brokered in large part by Frederik de Klerk and Nelson Mandela is credited with the gains made by people of colour in South Africa to achieve greater equality. In the end, South Africa's first democratically elected government that today celebrates 20 years of existence and the gains made by people of colour to achieve great equality owe as much, if not more, to Luthuli than to Mandela.

Nelson Mandela's resort to revolutionary violence as implemented by MK proved unattainable and thus unviable. Mandela undermined Albert Luthuli's more successful strategy. Western democracies (notably Great Britain and the United States) were indifferent to the ANC's appeals for justice due to the National Party's commitment to fight communism. Mandela's launch of MK fostered the ANC's cooperation with communist dictatorships and thus also engendered the National Party and western democracies' continued intransigence against the liberation movement until the end of the Cold War. Ironically, Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma and a host of other Marxist/communist-aligned ANC leaders adopted, and in part fought a civil war against, the same free market economic policies that the IFP advocated. Mandela's pan-African appeals were ultimately unsuccessful as young African nations lacked sufficient political, economic or military prowess to dislodge the apartheid regime. The apartheid regime politically compromised the Frontline States and they served as a geographical buffer preventing armed incursions into South Africa by armed liberation forces. While Mandela may have been strategically unsound, he articulated and instilled a militancy and fostered a degree of agency within people of colour that was perhaps as equally effective as the non-violent strategy initially implemented by Luthuli in 1951, abandoned by Mandela in 1961, later revived by domestic and international constituencies in the 1980s and 1990s and then capitalised upon by the ANC in 1994.

### **Abstract**

Biographer Manning Marable argues that the "tendency of historical revisionism" posthumously interprets Malcolm X "through the powerful lens of Martin Luther King, Jr" and in doing so, is "unfair" to both. A similar dynamic can be observed within the South African context when Nelson Mandela is interpreted "through the powerful lens" of Albert Luthuli. The conflation is exacerbated when Luthuli is likewise "interpreted through the powerful lens" of Mandela; that for which each stood is inaccurately attributed to the other. Luthuli is wrongly portrayed as a supporter of armed revolution and Mandela is wrongly portrayed as an ideological descendant of Luthuli (of the same ilk as King and Mohandas Gandhi). King and Malcolm X differed on the tactical and moral utility of violence in the struggle for human rights as did Luthuli and Mandela. As political rivals, Malcolm X politically undermined King and Mandela politically undermined Luthuli. The author compares and contrasts King and Malcolm X's respective views to develop themes related to the efficacy of pan-Africanism, violence and communism and identifies parallel themes in Luthuli and Mandela's views. The recent revelation following Mandela's death that he held membership in the South African Communist Party and served on its Central Committee during the early 1960s adds to the relevance of further examining how these icons are remembered and what role they played in South Africa's liberation from oppression.

**Key Words:** Martin Luther King, Jr; Malcolm X; Albert John Luthuli; Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela; hagiography; historiography; African National Congress; South African Communist Party; Nobel Peace Prize; pan-Africanism; communism; violence/non-violence; apartheid.

### Opsomming

Biograaf Manning Marable redeneer dat die “tendency of historical revisionism” Malcolm X postuum interpreteer “through the powerful lens of Martin Luther King, Jr” en is hierdeur onregverdig (“unfair”) teenoor beide. ’n Soortgelyke dinamiek kan binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks waargeneem word wanneer Nelson Mandela “through the powerful lens” van Albert Luthuli geïnterpreteer word. Die samesmelting verskerp wanneer Luthuli eweneens “through the powerful lens” van Mandela geïnterpreteer word; dat dit waarvoor elkeen gestaan het, onjuis aan die ander toegeskryf word. Luthuli word verkeerdlik uitgebeeld as ’n ondersteuner van gewapende revolusie en Mandela word op sy beurt verkeerdlik voorgestel as ’n ideologiese afstammeling van Luthuli (van dieselfde klas as King en Mohandas Gandhi). King en Malcolm X het op die taktiese en morele geweldtoepassingsgebied in die stryd om menseregte verskil, soos ook Luthuli and Mandela. As politieke teenstanders is King polities deur Malcolm X ondermyn, en Luthuli eweneens deur Mandela. Die outeur vergelyk en kontrasteer King en Malcolm X se onderskeie sienswyses om temas te ontwikkel wat verband hou met die doeltreffendheid van pan-Afrikanisme, geweld en kommunisme en identifiseer parallelle temas in Luthuli en Mandela se sienswyses Die onlangse openbaring na Mandela se dood dat hy oor lidmaatskap in die Suid-Afrikaanse Kommunistiese Party beskik het en in die vroeë sestigjare in die twintigste eeu in die Sentrale Komitee daarvan gedien het, voeg toe tot die relevansie van verdere ondersoek na hoe hierdie ikone onthou word en watter rol hulle in Suid-Afrika se bevryding van onderdrukking vervul het.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Martin Luther King, Jr; Malcolm X; Albert John Luthuli; Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela; hagiografie; historiografie; *African National Congress*; Suid-Afrikaanse Kommunistiese Party; Nobel Vredesprys; pan-Afrikanisme; Kommunisme; gewels/nie-geweld; apartheid.