

**MLK Design Seminar**  
Reflection on a speech by Malcolm X

It is very interesting to me that religion was the device that Malcolm X used to connect and divide people. This use of religion is very similar to the method of Martin Luther King. The boycotts and social movements that MLK spearheaded were directed from the pulpit, and churches were often used as meeting places to discuss and vote on actions to be taken.

One of the statements that Malcolm X made regarding Islam, his religion, was that it was part of the culture of American Muslims to dress well. This piqued my curiosity, as it associated religion with certain characteristics and cultural influences that are not referred to in holy texts. Considering this incorporation of external influences as part of the distinguishing characteristics of the religion, it makes sense that these civil rights leaders used religion as the foundation to launch social change. It's easier to locate a large group of people who will rally around a cause if they believe that it part of a religious obligation and they have divine support.

Another thing that Malcolm X mentioned was that he felt that those like MLK, who promoted non-violent action, were weakened by their stance. He seemed to think that non-violent protesting was akin to not protesting at all. I think this is a unique and contradictory stance considering some of the things he mentions earlier in his speech. He says that Islam is a non-violent religion and that he is a strong believer, yet he calls for actions that do not adhere to its teachings. Given his contradictory ideals, I think it would be interesting to see how he validated himself in the context of his religion.

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