Thank you very much. The title of my lecture tonight is Martin, Malcolm, and black theology. I want to talk about Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X and their relationship to each other and their impact on the rise of black theology. And in them, as a way of beginning you might say, that Martin King put the theology in black theology and Malcolm X put the black in black theology. And we want to look at them tonight and I want to begin with quotations from each one. "Freedom is not free." Martin King. "The price of freedom is death." Malcolm X. "A person who won't die for something is not fit to live." Martin King. "Respect me, or put me to death." Malcolm X. "If physical death is the price I must pay to free my white brothers and sisters from a permanent death of the spirit, then nothing could be more redemptive." Martin King. "It is a time for martyrs now. And if I am to be one it will be for the cause of brotherhood. That's the only thing that can save this country." Malcolm X.

In February 1965, Malcolm X's voice was silenced when a team of assassins shot him as he started to speak to a crowd of blacks at the Autobahn ballroom in Harlem, New York. In April three years later, Martin King, standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee, was shot by a lone assassin. Both Martin and Malcolm were thirty-nine years old at the time of their death. Both, though mentally and physically exhausted, were still fighting and searching for the freedom that America had promised, but never delivered. Since his assassination, Martin King has been immortalized as a great American leader by blacks and whites alike. During the third Monday of each January, America celebrates his birthday as a national holiday with many tributes and speeches recounting his contribution to this nation. Similar events are held during the first week of April to mark his assassination. 250,000 people returned to Washington D.C. to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the march and the dream. A day, according to the Washington post, "that all took the nation." Again, on the twenty-fifth and the thirtieth anniversaries of the great march on Washington, Martin King was celebrated and at that event, celebrations were held. Still another commemoration was held on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Selma march. Still others march and celebrate King. President Clinton attended and spoke at the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Selma march.

Currently, a bust of Martin Luther King Jr. is being prepared to be placed in the nation's capital, to be placed among the pantheons of American leaders like Lincoln and Washington. The possibility that there were serious shortcomings in King's perspective on black freedom seems to have escaped most black and white Americans as we continue the frequent rituals, our celebrating his contributions to the nation, especially in the African-American community. Saints have no major weaknesses, only minor lapses in their judgment to remind us of their humanity. Now in contrast to Martin King's public acclaim, until recently Malcolm X was almost forgotten by most Americans. Only a few blacks and fewer whites celebrated his birthday on May 19th or even remembered his assassination. Spike Lee's film Malcolm X created some popular interest in him, but unfortunately, when Malcolm is remembered his significance is
primarily defined as a black leader as if he made little or no contribution to the nation as a whole. There have always been a small group of Malcolm X's devotees who resented the inordinate attention given to Martin King and the obscurity of their hero. And in their indignation they often make similar excessive claims about Malcolm, as if his thinking is self-sufficient, and in no need of a compliment or correction from anybody, especially not from integrationists like Martin.

As was true during their lifetime, it is the Martin and the Malcolm enthusiasts, the cult worshippers, who exaggerate their differences and individual accomplishments and thereby succeed not only in misrepresenting their significance for the fifties and the sixties, but even more importantly, misrepresent their meaning for us today. The admirers of Martin and Malcolm must be willing to consider their limitations. Just as their critics must be willing to acknowledge their contribution. Only then can we gain a reasonable and a usable picture of them. Uncritical admirers and unkind critics of Martin and Malcolm have one thing in common: they have not seriously studied either person. Much of what they say about them is misinformation usually derived from the popular myths about them. For if, they had carefully reflected on Martin's and Malcolm's life, and thought the they could easily see that the greatness of each as an African-American leader is best received through an acknowledgement of their humanity.

Therefore, to understand their meanings for the black community and for America generally, we must not romanticize or denigrate them, but rather must see them as they saw themselves and as they saw each other. Namely, as real human beings with assets and liabilities that characterize all great leaders. In this lecture tonight, I want to emphasize Martin's and Malcolm's convergence toward each other. Neither can be fully understood or appreciated without serious attention to the other. Each spoke a truth about America that cannot be fully comprehended without the insights of the other. Indeed, if Americans of all races intend to create a just and a humane society they must include in their reflection and analysis Martin and Malcolm. The most important similarity between Martin and Malcolm was the goal for which they fought, namely the unqualified liberation of African-Americans from the bonds of segregation and discrimination to set determination as a people from a feeling of inferiority and nobody ness to an affirmation of themselves as human beings. To be sure, Martin's and Malcolm's great difference in historical and social origins influenced them to choose different paths in which to fight for freedom. Yeah, it is important to emphasize that they were from the very beginning of their ministries, fighting for the same goal and their methods for achieving it though different, yet complemented, and corrected each other.

During the last year of his life, the year of independence, Malcolm was explicit in identifying his work with Martin King. "Dr. King," he said, "wants the same thing I want: freedom." For both Martin and Malcolm, freedom meant black people are firm in their humanity and demanding that whites recognize them as human beings. "We declare our rights on this earth to be a human being," Malcolm said, "to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society on this earth in this day which we intend to bring into existence by any means necessary."

According to Malcolm, the concepts of integration and separation were merely different methods in which blacks employed in their struggle for freedom. Whites often used these terms, he said, to divide blacks, labeling the ones they disapproved of, like Malcolm, as separatists, or segregationists. The ones they approved of like Martin King as integrationists, and moderates. Malcolm, however, was adamant in his rejection of these labels. "No," he said in his famous speech "The Ballot or the Bullet," "I am not for separation and you are not for integration. What you and I are for is freedom. Only you think integration would get you free. I think separation will get me free. We
both got the same objective. We just got different ways of getting at it." Malcolm was relentless in this point as he sought to bridge the gap that separated him and Martin King and other civil rights activists. "It is not the case of our people wanting either separation or integration," he said, the use of these terms actually clouds the real picture. Black people do not seek either separation or integration. They seek recognition and respect as human beings." Respect as human beings was the central theme of both Malcolm and Martin in the black freedom struggle. Initially Malcolm believed that this respect was found primarily through cultural identity. Affirming blackness, Africa, and rejecting whiteness, which he identified with America. By contrast Martin King, though he believed black peoples' cultural identification with Africa was important, he contended that respect could be achieved only by acquiring social and political power here in America as Americans.

The difference between Martin and Malcolm's approaches was due partly to geography. Each developed a strategy for freedom that was appropriate for the region in which they worked. They complimented each other in that they spoke to different groups of people in their community. King addressed his message primarily to Southern black Christians. Malcolm addressed his message to blacks who were either indifferent to Christianity or were alienated from it. The non-violent direct action approach strongly orated toward Christianity was an ideal method for challenging legal segregation in the south. In an able, politically powerless black people to resist racism and thereby let the world know that they would no longer tolerate the daily violation of their humanity by the dominant white majority. Their religious faith bestowed upon them the feeling that they were children of God. Thus, just as precious in God's sight as anybody else including the whites, the belief that God created them for freedom instilled a rebellious spirit in black Christians, empowering them to fight non-violently and even to risk death for their right to be treated as human beings. Using the Jewish-Christian idea of the sacredness of human personality as his central religious claim, Martin King galvanized southern blacks to take a stand for justice. Fifty-thousand black Americans followed him in 1955 and '56 in Montgomery, Alabama, and even more than that after that successful stride toward freedom.

Now they did not follow King because he held a PhD degree or because he was a follower of Gandhi, Thoreau, or liberal Protestant theologians. Black people were not going to risk their lives for something that King had learned in graduate school. Martin King could motivate blacks to follow him because of the faith he lived and preached and communicating God's life-given power to the least of these. Through prophetic preaching of the gospel of Jesus combined with fearless civil rights activity Martin King inspired ordinary blacks, maids, cooks, and janitors. He inspired them to believe in themselves as human beings, to stand up to white bigots and to demand that the law recognize their humanity. Substituting tired feet for tired souls, they in Montgomery, Martin King and the blacks there, gave birth to what became called, "the new Negro", and that spirit of resistance in Montgomery spread throughout the black communities in America. Now demanding the right to ride at the front of the bus or to eat at a lunch counter or to drink water from a white fountain may not sound radical today especially for people who are unacquainted with the Jim Crow culture of the south in the `40s and `50s and `60s.

Like Martin King, I was born and reared in the south and still regard it as my home. I know what it meant for blacks to insist on being recognized as human beings among whites who thought of them as nothing but menial servants. Whites routinely referred to black adults as boy and girl, uncle and auntie, while the blacks were required to address them as Mr. and Mrs., yes sir and no sir. Whites insisted that the black bestow upon the white race a kind of respect that black
people are most universally regarded as humiliating and insulting. The last thing white southerners could stomach were the uppity Negroes who violated the southern way of life by insisting that they should be treated as being equal with the whites. Only crazy people, communists and outside agitators could be so bold as to suggest such an outrageous idea. That was why the civil rights leaders' most reasonable demands, especially a bi-racial committee of blacks and whites, this kind of committee or demand were almost bitterly rejected and resisted by the whites. Why? Because masters do not sit down at the table of equality and discuss their differences with their slaves. Because whites control the economic and the political power in the south, including the state and the local police forces, non-violent protests was the only practical alternative for a minority black population. For blacks, to advocate the use of violence or even self-defense in public demonstration would almost create a blood bath, and blacks would do most of the bleeding. Many blacks and a few whites too suffered and died in the southern civil rights movement led by Martin King. Far fewer in twelve years of intense struggle than the many who died in the urban riot whose duration was only a matter of days.

During the 1950s and throughout the sixties the only creative method available to the blacks in the south to protest segregation was the one the Martin King adopted, non-violent, direct action. Martin King infused Gandhi's and Thoreau's ideas about non-violence with the spiritually of the black church and he thereby aroused blacks to assert their humanity. "Christ furnished the spirit and the motivation," Martin King said, "while Gandhi furnished the method." Baynard Ruston, an advisor and an astute observer of Martin King, referred to Martin King as a spiritual intellectual. Now I do not know whether you have spiritual intellectuals here or not, but I want to tell you what Baynard Ruston meant by calling King a spiritual intellectual. This is what he said, "What Dr. King delivered to blacks there in Montgomery, was far more important than whether they got to ride home in the bus or not. It was the absence of fear, the ability of people in the same way that the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto knew that they couldn't win, but knowing that they were going to die they said, 'Let's go down expressing our humanity,' which was to fight back. So Dr. King," says Ruston, "had that tremendous facility for giving people the feeling that they could be bigger and stronger and more loving and courageous than they ever thought they could be."

Fearlessness, which Martin King embodied and communicated to black Christians, that fearlessness was derived from the faith of the black church. Belief that the god of Moses and Jesus was greater and more powerful than the forces of captivity. When poor blacks heard Martin King tell the story of how the Biblical God delivered Israel out of the land of Egypt, Daniel in the lion's den, and the three Hebrew children in the fiery fern, that was all they needed to deliver and affirm their faith. The belief that he who helped his brothers and sisters to be aware that they could indeed fight back against the oppressive structures of racism and persecution.

There are moving eyewitness accounts, audio and video tapes of Malcolm's rallies in Harlem. One can see and hear the response blacks give when they hear him speak. You can see the impact that he made upon the blacks who heard him. Like Martin who stood fearless before the racist sheriffs in Birmingham and Selma, Alabama, Malcolm stood unafraid before the white cops of Harlem with his searing, almost sneering taunts and bold statements about the law and order troops in their midst, and he leveled against them. They had the artillery of scorn and ridicule. Harlem blacks called Malcolm "our sage and our saint" as he delighted black audiences with his diary. Harlem blacks loved Malcolm for his courage to speak the truth bluntly and without compromise. They loved the power and the
magic of his speech. His sense of drama, the exquisite humor he could invoke to let the people know
that they must stop being frightened of goons who could only justify their existence with Billy Club
Vanduns. Malcolm inspired blacks to walk the streets with dignity and to be prepared to die for it.
"Treat me like a man" he said, "or kill me," and blacks knew that he meant it. "No one ever called
Malcolm a nigger" they said with pride, as the public defender of black humanity and the witness for
the prosecution against white America, Malcolm in debates with black and white intellectuals before a
variety of different audiences and the title that . . . Arsy Davis bestowed upon him in his eulogy: "our
own shining black prince."

Malcolm's power was derived from the African heritage of blacks and not from the faith of
Christianity. "Our forced impartation in this country," he said "was not the beginning of our heritage,
but a rude interruption. The worst crime," he continued, "that the white people have committed was to
teach us to hate ourselves, destroy our paths, and making us think that our fore-parents did nothing but
pick cotton." For many years Africa was dominated by the Europeans who projected it in a negative
light: jungles, savages, cannibals. Nothing civilized there except Tarzan, who was white, so blacks
began to hate it. "We didn't want anybody," Malcolm said, "telling us anything about Africa, much
less calling us Africans, and in hating Africa," Malcolm continued, "we ended up hating ourselves
without even realizing it. Because you can't hate the root of the tree", he contended "and not hate the
tree. You can't hate your origin and not end up hating yourself." Malcolm believed that the self-
confidence to live as free human beings can only be achieved through a people's knowledge of their
past. "Just as a tree without roots is dead," Malcolm said, "A people without a history or cultural roots
also become a dead people." Malcolm ridiculed blacks who said, "I ain't left nothing in Africa." "Why
you left your mind in Africa," he retorted. As Martin contributed to the development of the new Negro
in the south, Malcolm helped to resurrect the dead Negro in the north, and he created a proud, angry
black; one ready to die in the defense of black humanity.

Northern blacks already possessed the political rights that the southern brothers and
sisters were fighting for to achieve down there, but the northern blacks were not any better off
than their southern brothers and sisters. Malcolm even said that their plight was worse, Why?
Because of the tricky white liberals, who claimed to be the friends of the Negro, Malcolm said,
supporting the civil rights movement, but in fact, were the ones responsible for the ghettos in the
north. As Martin King exposed the brutality of the southern white bigots to the world and put
them on TV, Malcolm X revealed the hypocrisy of the white liberals and he identified them
because of their hypocrisy as it works in it as a freedom. "Yes," Malcolm said, "I will pull off
that liberal's halo that he spends such effort cultivating. The north liberals," he continued, "have
been for so long pointing an accusing finger at the south and getting away with it, that they have fits
when they are exposed as the world's worst hypocrite. I believe my own life," Malcolm says,
"mirrors this hypocrisy. I know nothing about the same God that delivered Moses and Daniel and the
Hebrew children would also deliver them from the Klan and from white hate groups. Faith in the
god of the bible as revealed in the black religious experience. Cast out black Christians' fear of
the whites and it enabled them to take that long courageous walk toward freedom, singing
enthusiastically, walk together children, don't you get weary there's a great camp meeting in the
Promised Land.

The significance of Martin King's religious faith in his civil rights activity has often been
overlooked, and misunderstood. In times of crisis, Martin again and again, returned to the faith
that he'd learned as a child at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, and the one that he
appropriated for his own life for his civil rights activity. According to Martin King's advisors and co-workers, they say King's faith in God was central to his understanding of the struggle. According to Baynard Ruston, Martin King really believed that if you do the right thing, you must leave the rest to God. Ruston and other advisors did not always see the relevance of Martin King's faith in their debates with him regarding what was most appropriate political strategy in the movement. And often conflict and frustration between them resulted, but Martin King would usually say, "It is not for me to say or for you to analyze whether I can win or not. My obligation," King would say, "is to do the right thing, as I am called upon to do it as a minister of God. The rest is in God's hands." Now why Martin King's secular advisor did not always appreciate his reliance on God when they were trying to create some political strategy, poor black Christians understood the logic of his faith. For they too had a similar religious conviction, believing that the God who had sustained them through trials and tribulations in this unfriendly world of the south, as white brutality and injustice increased, so did the strength of their belief that God had not left them alone in suffering. Living daily under the threat of death, King often told blacks that there was no greater honor than to suffer, and to even die for in the cause for justice. That is why Martin King said, "If physical death is the price I must pay to free my white brothers and sisters from a permanent death of the spirit, then nothing could be more redemptive".

The bible and the spirituality of the black church, these were the key sources of Martin King's faith. His black audiences loved to hear him talk about it nearly as much as he loved to preach. And one of his most dramatic expressions of this faith is the one he often used in closing out so many of his sermons, and I quote it now: "Centuries ago Jeremiah raised the question, 'Is there no bomb in Gilead? Is there no physician? He raised it because he saw the good people suffering so often and the evil people prospering. Centuries later," says King, "our slave grandparents came along and they too saw the injustices of life and had nothing to look forward to, morning after morning, but the rawhide whip of the overseer, long rows of cotton and the sizzling heat of the sun, but they did an amazing thing. They looked back across the centuries, and they took Jeremiah's question mark, and they straightened it out into an exclamation point and they could say, 'There is a bomb in Gilead' to make the wounded home. 'There is a bomb in Gilead' to heal the sin-sickened soul." Now this is the theology part of black theology taken from Martin King.

Now that you heard the theology part; now it is time to hear the other part. What Martin King did for poor, black Christians in the south, Malcolm X accomplished for ghetto blacks in the north. He empowered them to take a stand in the defense of their humanity, affirming their blackness, Black self, Black action, Black culture, and Black paths. Now although, this part was never completely absent in Martin, his faith, and southern middle-class origin did not equip him to understand the depth of black deprivation in the urban centers, the urban ghettos of the north. Grass roots blacks in the north were the children of Malcolm, and Martin King knew it. Malcolm climbed out of the pit of the prison and dope dealing and street hawking of hot goods to become a Daniel for his people. A hot, angry, and eloquently persuasive prophet, I am a creation of the northern white man and of his hypocritical attitude toward the negro.” Long before the eruption of the riots in the urban cities of America, Malcolm warned that these riots were coming and he pointed his accusing finger at the white liberal who was the one to blame. "Actually," quoting Malcolm again, "America's most dangerous and threatening black is the one that has been sealed
up by the northerner in the black ghetto, northern white power structure's system of keeping, of
talking about democracy and freedom while keeping black people out of sight somewhere
around the corner in the ghetto." Malcolm spoke for a group of northern blacks who had lost all
hope of Christianity in America. "The ones deepest in the mud," as Malcolm liked to say, with
street wise and truth-telling oratory emphasizing their revolutionary and African side of African-
American history, Malcolm inspired urban blacks to take a good, long look at themselves in the
mirror of his analysis. He then transformed them by giving them a true knowledge of who they
were, and who they are the children of power and mighty African people, southern black Christians
and northern grass roots blacks, southern white bigots and northern white liberals.

These respectively were the primary audiences and enemies of Martin and Malcolm. Both
the audiences that they wanted to empower and the white enemies that they wanted to expose
influenced what they said and how they said it. Now no one could unmass the great danger of
the white liberals' participation in the movement like Malcolm X. While civil rights activists
uncritically accepted their contribution and even overrated it, Malcolm X said that the northern
white Christian liberal who grins with his teeth had more integration problems than they did in
Mississippi. On the other hand, Martin King felt deceived by many white liberals as he later
realized understood far better than Malcolm X the white bore colors and Jim Clarks, the southern
white bigots much better than Malcolm. Using the media, Martin King made them reveal their
brutality as the world looked on in utter belief of what they saw. A Malcolm macho approach
emphasizing self-defense would have led to a disaster in the southern civil rights movement.
Martin King was right. White racists knew how to deal with violence, and they would have
welcomed it as an excuse to kill law-abiding blacks indiscriminately.

Martin and Malcolm knew their own limitations and they knew also that the limitations
of one were the strengths of the other. There is no reason to pit them against each other, debating
which one of their methods was most appropriate for the achievement of black freedom, of black
dignity, integration, of separation, nonviolence, of self-defense, up to a point both methods were
effective in the regions in which they were employed. You need both, Martin and Malcolm.

Martin and Malcolm represented the two sides of W.E.B. Dubois' double identity,
American and the African. The two warring ideas, struggling to makes sense out of our
involuntary presence in North America, doing the early part of their participation in the black
freedom movement, Martin's and Malcolm's answer to the Dubois' question "What am I?" was
clear emphatic, yet opposite. "American" was Martin King's answer to that question, "What am
I?" and "African" was Malcolm X's answer to that question. The battle between them, to a large
extent, was fought in the white media which portrayed them as adversaries, but they were not.
On the contrary, they were like two peas in a pod, two soldiers fighting their enemies from
different angles of vision, complementing their blind spots and correcting their errors. They
needed each other, for then, and for now, because they represent the yin and the yang deep in the
soul of black America. There is a little bit of Martin King and Malcolm X in all African
Americans.

However, many blacks, especially the ones among the middle class, are reluctant to
reveal that Malcolm X is part of our self especially when we are around whites. We push
Malcolm down. We push him down below our consciousness and sometimes we forget that
Malcolm is a part of us. Whites usually are not prepared to listen to the harsh truths of Malcolm
X. They like Martin King because they can recognize themselves in King. That is why they made
King's birthday, along with a few blacks and do a national holiday. Now you do not have to worry; there is no possibility that they would do the same for Malcolm X. Most whites want blacks to choose between Malcolm and Martin and to choose Malcolm over Martin, but we blacks and other whites, Americans and other Americans interested in justice should never celebrate Martin King without giving equal due to Malcolm X. We should not listen to Martin King's "I have a dream" speech without also listening to Malcolm's answer in his message to the grass roots. "While Dr. King was having a dream," Malcolm said, "the rest of us Negroes are having a nightmare." Now without confronting the American nightmare that Malcolm bore witness to we would never be able to create that beloved community articulated so well by Martin King. How can we overcome racism if we do not admit how deeply this cancer is embedded in American history and culture? We need both Malcolm X and Martin King for an understanding of racism and its consequences in the land.

So let us create an America. Not just for Martin but for Malcolm too. Not just for whites but for blacks, for Hispanics, Indians, Asians, and for every culture and faith in this land. When we can do that then we can say what Martin King said at the march on Washington quoting that slave spiritual, "Free at last, free at last, thank God o mighty, we are free at last". Thank you.

<some guy> We have some time for questions so, ask quick. <Dr. Cone> Don't be bashful now, I won't bother anybody. I'm a nice person. <lady> I've just purchased your book .(?) . .You've probably answered a question . . . but I was very interested at the chapter "Nothing but Men" and you say in here that Martin and Malcolm will be expected to rise to state .. . research . . . (?) and they would work to the liberation of black people. Do you include women in their liberation? <Dr. Cone> Yeah, I do, I do. That's what that chapter's about. That chapter is a critique of them. As I say, you really don't understand people until you understand their limitations. And everybody is limited. And during that time, practically the whole world was limited on issues dealing with feminist thinking and before the humanity of women, and unfortunately Martin King were blind, Martin and Malcolm were blind at that part too, though Malcolm grew a lot and I try to tell a little bit about their growth and development in that chapter but they didn't grow very far cause Malcolm was assassinated in 1965 and Martin King in '68. B ...'s (?) book came out I think in '63, '61, '62 or 3 right in the early part, but the book didn't get into full steam until the beginning of the seventies and etc. So they didn't, they were not a part of their consciousness but I think people need to recognize their limitation. I think Malcolm would have transformed quite quickly, but King would have burdened with the church, that Christianity thing, he would have been slow. He's a nice person but he would have been slow. Malcolm had a rather cold transformation. He says, "My life is a chronology of changes." And you can see Malcolm changing throughout his life. In fact, Maya Angelou headed up his organization after he broke with Elijah Mohannen (?), so he was moving in that direction, Malcolm was, but he wasn't fully there. But I try to talk about that in that chapter. <guy> I noticed here that you're an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. <Dr. Cone> that's right. <guy mumbles something> <Dr. Cone> Oh, African Methodist Episcopal Church, most black churches are independent churches, that is they are not a part of the main line white dominant churches, they've created their own churches because whites did not allow blacks to be members of their churches and have rows in their churches because and so during the late eighteenth century, 1787, after blacks were forced out of the Methodist church, of St. George in Philadelphia is the church, forced out of their church in 1787, Richard Allen who was the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the one I'm a member of, walked out
and created their own church and by 1816 you had several churches that had been created and they came together to form the African Methodist Episcopal Church, but there were other churches too, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church is one that was founded in New York. And then there were many Baptists churches so Baptists were more prolific you know in terms of numbers than even this, but most of the black churches are independent. It's the one independent institution we have. If King had not had at his base the black church he could not have done what he did, because white church would not have permitted it, so King could do it because he was independent and his salary did not come from white people. In fact, that's without the church, black people could not have sustained any resistance at all because all you had to do is fire him. You know if they ain't got no job, you can't live. So the church allowed the ministers to have some independence, so it was ministers who were the dominant personality, ministers and students were the dominant . . . students don't have much money either so they don't have much to lose, so ministers and students, both black and white students were involved in the movement. They were in the movement because student nonviolent coordinating committee, called SNCC (?), that's their group, King's group was southern Christian leadership conference, and that was mostly of black ministers. <guy 2> movement . .. you've got Martin Luther King as a Methodist right? <Dr. Cone> No, Baptist. <guy 2> or .. Baptist . . and you've got Malcolm X who was Muslim and so this group (?) sat between the two and mediated their dishes (?). well it's a lot of other ones. But most of that group were with the Christian sort of stuff together. And so the AMEs, the African Methodists were Christians and so were King, the Baptists, so they were closer, they were in the same movement. But Malcolm was challenging and critiquing them and making them recognize the importance of what it means to be black and to love being black and coming from Africa and appreciating ypit heritage, that part King did not emphasize and that's where Malcolm complemented that. <lady 2> Harvey Cox (?) when I was in San Mary (?) spoke to us about Martin Luther King's legacy and his position was that about the time King died or perhaps part of why he was killed was because he was moving away from being the darling of the white liberals especially in the north and that King was beginning to address the fact that there was as much racism in the north as in the south. He was beginning to vocally oppose the Vietnam War and also to pull the whole American establishment in America's role in the global community, in terms of America being so wealthy and that indicates that in fact Martin Luther King was perhaps even coming closer to where Malcolm X was and that this is part of the legacy that has been largely ignored because and I speak as a white northerner, it was very comfortable for us to keep things in the south. <Dr. Cone> Yes, that's what I wrote about in the book is precisely that. He is exactly right about that. King's change, radical change, happened after the Selma march of 1965. See, President Johnson signed the civil rights, voting rights bill, rather, the civil rights bill in 1964 had already been signed and now the '65 he signed the voting rights bill that came out of the Selma movement in August 6, 1965, that's when he signed it. And King and most other blacks in the movement said the movement is over because we got all the rights now because we're just going to go vote, and we going to get it. Well six days later, August 11th, there was a riot in Watts in Los Angeles. King was vacationing in the Caribbean at the time that happened and he was shocked so he had to stop and go see what was happening in Los Angeles. Well thirty-four people got killed and just burned up everything, so you know the biggest riot you know of that time and King began to realize when he went to churches in the . . . (?) to talk to blacks about them they said get out of here Dr. King, we don't want to hear from you. Because they didn't think King understood them.
And uh, that's when King realized that there was something limiting about the civil rights movement and not seeing the economic side of it, of the struggle for justice, King was concentrating on political rights. You know, what good does it do to go in there, lie(?), get a piece of hamburger when you don't have no money to buy one? That's what King began to realize, this next movement that was in 1965, then by January of '66 King was in Chicago. Marching. Well, you know he found out. Daily was there too, and if you know anything about Daily, not the one that's there now, his daddy, you know what King was up against. That's when King began to change, then by the same time he began to recognize the significance of the war and he took a stand against the war in Vietnam. And that, those two things, the economic socialist kind of a movement he was making, and also his opposition to war and that, his opposition to war is what really, really upset a lot of people at the time and he would be opposing what we would be doing right now too. <lady 3> How would you describe the progress of black theology since the death of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X? <Dr. Cone>Well you know, black theology came into being after Martin King and Malcolm X, first book on black theology was written in 1969, King was killed in '68, I remember it because I wrote that book, and I remember what I was struggling with after the assassination of King, King was assassinated in April 4 1968 and I wrote it in the summer of 1968 as a response to that and black theology has been trying to bring together Martin and Malcolm, trying to show that see, Martin King emphasized justice and showed that you can't be a Christian without fighting for justice, but King did not emphasize the importance of being black, he was negro, and he used color, so it was not that kind of emphasis for king, it was Malcolm x, so Malcolm brought a sense of black consciousness into black people, we are African Americans and black today, but we need to thank Malcolm X for that, because King denied kind of that we have black studies and we people, black theology and all, you wouldn't have that just with King. King didn't bring you black studies. He didn't bring you studying black people. King taught a course at Morehouse College when he first went to Atlanta in 1960, taught a course on social and political, on his own movement, he taught a course on his own movement, social political philosophy of his own movement, cause he was involved in the civil rights movement at that time he was living in Atlanta, so he taught this course at Morehouse college where he had graduated from and in that course I saw all the books he used, not one was written by a black person. That's kind of strange. He had Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, you know, all of them, they're all white. Now can you imagine Malcolm teaching the course? And have all white ... see you get the point now. And nobody would hardly do that today. And King, if you look in all if King's writings he always referred to himself as a Negro. But you don't have many Negroes around today. If you call blacks Negroes today they won't like it. And if they do, I want to see that one. <guy 3> From what I understand, the reason king opposed the Vietnam War is because he felt that the war placed an undue burden on poor blacks and other poor people in the United States cause they were the ones who actually have to do the fighting, so how does that apply today? <Dr. Cone> No, that's not why he opposed it. No, that was just one minor reason. He opposed us because it was unchristian. It was against humanity. He believed it was unjust. Well, we had no business going over there. Shooting, dropping bombs on people. That ain't right. Dropping bombs on people in Vietnam. On women and children. King saw, and his opposition, King believed, he was nonviolent, deep in the core of his soul he could never, never support war, never. Now King, there were many people in the nonviolent movement who only were doing it because that's the
only way a minority population could get the attention of the majority and reveal how unjust the system is, to be violent would only get themselves killed and mess up, confuse the issue. King was nonviolent to the core. King said, "If I am the last person on earth advocating nonviolence so be it I will be." King said, "One with God is the majority." Why? Because he was going to stand with nonviolence if he was the only person; that's why he opposed the war. Now he did point out that it drained (?) America's hypocrisy. That if you can fight together in Vietnam together, but when you come back over here you separate. Now he pointed out the hypocrisy borrowing it from Malcolm, but that was not why he opposed the war. He opposed it because in principle he was totally absolutely against it, because of his faith. <guy 4> So the position of black theology is that Dr. King's methods would (?) Malcolm's consciousness? See, the position of black theology is Dr. King's faith and Malcolm's blackness and black theology is an attempt to show how one can be a Christian and black at the same time. See, Christianity in America, its public meaning and purpose, its public articulation, the books that have been written, the pictures, the images of Christianity is all white and European. It's all white and European. Every time Time Magazine, Newsweek, puts Christ on the cover what color is Christ? Always white. Christ has been so white, we think, you know white people come out of the middle east like that, they don't. No they don't look like that, they look like Yassar Arafat. But we have the Europeanized Christ. It makes it difficult for people who are not white to really be Christian. So black theology is an attempt. Malcolm was not a Christian. Malcolm was a Muslim. I'm not a Muslim. But I'm black. So Malcolm gave me my blackness he told me that I could not be a human being unless I found that blackness. King taught me that you can be a Christian, put justice at the focus, now my thing is, how do I get these two people together? Cause I'm going to be a Christian, and I'm going to fight with justice. You know what I mean? And I'm going to be black. So what I want to do is to bring them together, now Martin and Malcolm that only met one time. They did not come together. I want to bring them together, that's why I wrote that book. And that's why I write black theology. <guy> Well have you ever seen Do the right thing? <Dr. Cone> Yes, I have. <guy> So you would say the position that he takes, trying to pit those two philosophies against each other is totally the wrong way? <Dr. Cone> Oh, without question, without question. First thing, Malcolm was not for violence, he was for self-defense. But Malcolm was not leading the social movement. He was talking. Now King organized people, he led them down the street, and you know if you got a whole crowd of 50,000 people you can't tell them to defend themselves if the cops come. You don't do that. That will get a lot of people killed. So Malcolm's revolution, King's revolution, was social and political. And he transformed the social and political life of America related to race, he transformed. He took the terror and the fear out of black people. Because the south and much of America was a terror for us. I mean, it was living, you didn't know when white people were going to strike at you. And so King with his movement sort of took the fuse out of that. Now so black theology is a theology that responds to that side of it, but King alone is not enough, you need Malcolm. Malcolm's revolution was in the mind. He transformed how black people think about themselves. King transformed how they lived in the society. But Malcolm transformed how we think about ourselves. You got black people thinking black now, you got them calling themselves African-Americans while Malcolm was doing that in the fifties. So he revolutionized our minds. King revolutionized the social political structure, you need both. And black theology tries to do that in religion, is both. <guy 4> Is black theology liberation theology? <Dr. Cone> It is called a black theology liberation. Did you get that? In fact, liberation, you know, is the heart of the gospel. It's at the center. And, you know, at that point was made as early as 1969 in black theology. Okay, thank you very much.