**Similarities that Malcolm X and Curtis Share**

At first glance, Curtis and Malcolm X share virtually no similarities. We learn the story of Malcolm X from the very beginning, we know what he was like in his youth and learn about his many troubles throughout his life. With Curtis however, we are introduced to him as an adult. We learn about each of their worlds and on the surface both seem simple, Curtis lives on a train and Malcolm lives in a racist and segregated world (Haley, 1965). Both live a life in a world where they are the lower class and there is seemingly no escape from it. Both characters have a dark past, they are marked by the tough lives they have led and become unlikely leaders and figureheads for change. As their journeys progress we are introduced to an older figure that has great influence over them and helps to shape and guide them to the person they become. For Malcolm X this person was Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam, and for Curtis this was Gilliam, the leader of the rear train car. In both stories, the betrayal of their closest advisor causes a paradigm shift that forces them to question everything at their core.

Our first glimpse of Curtis he is seated on the train floor and he is counting seconds preparing for his time to strike. In Curtis’ world, the Earth has frozen and the only living people are on a train. Everything and everyone in the world are on that train. His train has a social hierarchy with the wealthy elite in the front of the train, the middle class in the middle cars and he and his lower-class companions segregated to the final car. Gilliam is the leader of the rear car and the leader of the resistance (Snowpiercer, 2013). Curtis is Gilliam’s right-hand man and has been planning the next revolt for many months. Curtis cares about his people, he feels that the people in the rear car have just as much right to the better food and better treatment he knows others receive.

In Malcolm X’s world he lives in the southern United States where racism is still very real and he is judged and segregated for the color of his skin. The white people are seen as a higher class and the black community is forced to live their lives the best they can with their oppression. Due to his circumstances, Malcolm X turns to a life of crime to make money and ends up in prison. While in prison, Malcolm finds religion and a pen pal in the leader of the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad. When his prison sentence is over, Malcolm X is already heavily enraptured by the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and eager to learn more. The Nation of Islam becomes his calling and he starts to spread the teachings. Similarly, Curtis is engulfed in a train that offers the only hope to life (Snowpiercer, 2013). Curtis is segregated and positioned in the lower-class tail-section of the train but he rebels against the elite of the front of the train. Therefore, as Malcolm was fighting racism in the society, Curtis was fighting class discrimination in the train.

Both Malcolm and Curtis portray huge similarities in regards to leadership traits.

Both of them were born leaders because they possessed exceptional skills that offered them the opportunities to lead. For instance, Wallace Fard saw Malcolm’s leadership prowess and elected him for the spokesman position (Haley, 1965). Similarly, Curtis was a born leader because he managed to stand out and defy class segregation. More so, he beat all odds inside the train that included eliminating predators and betrayers. He also ensured that the low class population had access to basic necessities such as air. Though betrayers tried to finish his leadership by manipulating channels of attaining ranks, they never outdid Curtis who led the population until the end of the film where he managed to save the last surviving humans.

**Differences**

The betrayal stories of the two individuals also differ greatly considering that they were staunch leaders of religious groups but latter fell out. In regards to Malcolm’s case, Elijah-Mohammad had vetted Malcolm as the spoke person for the Black Muslim group immediately he converted to Islam while in prison. However, a betrayal was looming and Malcolm was extremely hurt to find out that Elijah Muhammad had sired several children out of wedlock (Haley, 1965). The act violated the strict morals that the movement created by both leaders held. For this reason, Malcolm’s faith towards Elijah Muhammad and his teachings took a blow. The betrayal was so drastic because it went as far as pushing Malcolm out of Islam religion.

Unlike Malcolm who was betrayed by his leader, Curtis was betrayed by his juniors. The blow of his betrayal is evident at the climax of the film when he finds out that Wilford and Gilliam had actually been pretending the whole time and cooked up the idea of revolution as a way to acquire ranks from the back-of-train proletariats. Thus, unlike Malcolm’s who was betrayed by his leaders characters, Curtis was betrayed by his colleagues manipulation that went as far as killing Wilford old friend killed in order to slow Curtis’ roll.

Secondly, a great difference is seen that while Curtis advocated and fostered for togetherness as a way of keeping balance in the train, Malcolm’s expectation fell off balance. Curtis ensured that necessities such as air, water, food supply, needed by the population were always being kept in balance. On the contrary, Malcolm’s ambition to stand out and lead the black people away from white supremacist religion and ideology fell out even before the population gathered the required momentum (Haley, 1965). The betrayal fostered by Elijah Muhammad pushed Malcolm to lose focus on the leadership of Black Muslim group and sought to following his own path.

The other difference among the two is that they existed in two different worlds because while Malcolm’s word was realistic, Curtis’s world was edited through a film. Another evident difference is that Malcolm is fighting for racism which pushes him to conclude that African Americans are descendant of ancient laves and such biological attachment conjured up feelings of self-hatred and inferiority in a racist society. On the contrary, Curtis is fighting demons in form of people who betray and kill passengers who try to defy inequity. Thus, while Malcolm believed that institutionized racism in the larger society was the core concept that triggered the sense of depersonalization, Curtis failed was trying to eliminate class segregation in the train. Therefore, while Malcolm fully exposes instituinised racism, Curtis offer a different perspective of inequality

The aftermath of the two individuals also differ greatly because at the end of the film, Curtis knocks out the betrayer named Wilford and manages to rescue Tammie from the machinery. In the process, Curtis loses his arm but still manages Timmy and Yona from the blast. Though it is not indicated what happened to Curtis, it is evident that if he managed to come out of the wrecked train alive, he lived a better after life because life existed outside the train (Snowpiercer, 2013). On the contrary, Malcolm’s ending was a sad one because he was assassinated by being shot in 1965 as he delivered a lecture at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem. His death is attributed to influential members of the Nation of Islam group.

References

*Snowpiercer*. (2013) RADiUS-TWC.

Haley, A. (1965). *The autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Grove Press.