

The search for peace, love, cooperation and mutual existence in the world has made the research on Martin Luther King Jr's principle of nonviolent revolution an imperative. The aim of nonviolent revolution, as practised by King, is to build a beloved community, where love holds sway. In this beloved community, the ethic of love stands out. That is why in the midst of human exploitation, brutality, extreme poverty, social injustice, economic oppression, political intimidations, war and racism, King seeks reconciliation through love and forgiveness. The work considers whether King's concept of love when applied can restore peace and harmony in the contemporary society. It also considers whether Luther's concept of beloved community through the power of love is achievable in this postmodern society of extremely calculated and inflicted poverty, hatred, war and racism. The researcher, furthermore, analyzed whether King's concept of love can stand as a unifying principle in the midst of Boko Haram, Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra and Indigenous Peoples of Biafra in Nigeria, Fulani herdsmen, Niger Delta militants, Islamic militants, Arab Spring in the Middle East, and other conflict-ridden situations that trouble the postmodern world. The work questions if a general application of King's concept of love is possible. Using an analytic method, this dissertation seeks to examine and think of King's concept of love carefully to see if it is still relevant in the contemporary society, especially, Nigeria. This dissertation finds out that the best option for peace and harmony in the world is to build a community of love, a brotherhood amongst nations - a beloved community. It discovers that despite the inconsistencies one may notice in Martin Luther King's approach in solving the problem of hatred, racism, war and other forms of social evil or injustice, his ideals, if applied conscientiously, will help to bring peace and harmony in Nigeria and the world at large. The work, recommends that the nations of the world should work together to promote peace management and conflict resolution amongst nations, and at the same time encourage dialogue, unity and solidarity among individuals and nations. It also suggests that the United Nations Organization and other peace-keeping organizations (like Non-governmental Organizations) saddled with the responsibility of harmonizing the world should do more to promote love among peoples and nations. It concludes that since the primary law of nature is preservation of human life, all nations of the world should work together to promote, preserve and protect human life by respecting the fundamental human rights, freedom and equality of all human races. And all these can only be achieved through love.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Love and hatred are seen as two opposite concepts, but love is often desired more than hatred due to the negative impact of hatred and the pains it has inflicted on humanity. As a result, love seems to be desired more than hatred because it ties humanity together and it leads to mutual co-existence among people. But the problem facing humanity is that as human beings desire to be loved, to live together as brothers and sisters, so does love elude them. And they are faced with

extreme hatred, violence and war. But why is it so? Why is it difficult to make the whole world a paradise of peace, a loving community?

The concept of love could be taken to be a theological, ethical or moral concept. It seems more a theological than a philosophical concept. Also, frequent usage of the concept, *love* hinges on its emotional or psycho-therapeutic measures to human redemption. This aspect of the term, *love*, is acknowledged in this study. But the Christian ethic of love remains paramount with regard to Martin Luther King Jr's concept of it. King gave the term, *love*, a philosophical view. With this, love may no longer be seen as a mere concept of emotional affection for him. It becomes a tool for restoration of equality, freedom and justice. It becomes a tool for a shift from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man into the bright daybreak of freedom and justice.¹

Thus, being aware of this fact, this work intends to study the intrinsic nature of love; not love as a theological concept, but *love* as a philosophical-ethical apparatus for reconciliation and redemption of humanity; as an ontological tool to be used against hatred, human exploitation, racial oppression, war, terrorist activities and extreme poverty caused by the negligence of the voiceless in the world and Nigeria in particular.

It is against this backdrop that this study takes recourse to Martin Luther King Jr's concept of love as seen in his nonviolent revolution. King, in *An Experiment in Love*², states:

I have come to see early that the Christian doctrine of love operating...through the Gandhian method of nonviolence was one of the potent weapons available to the Negro in his struggle for freedom. Nonviolent resistance has emerged as the technique of the movement, while love stood as the regulating ideal.³

This suffices to say that love is the foundation of nonviolent revolution in Martin Luther King Jr. That is to say that without love, there could be nothing like nonviolent resistance. King, in his fight against racial caste, his opposition to war, his struggle for justice for the poor and his pursuit of the beloved community, sought to carve, out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope.⁴ He argues thus: “Our aim is not to defeat the white community, not to humiliate the white community, but to win the friendship of all the persons who have perpetrated this system in the past.”⁵ This aim, he states, presupposes the possibility of converting some of the racist segregationists of the past into potential integrationists of the future and turning former aggressors into potential advocates (of nonviolence, peace and love).⁶

It is against this backdrop that this dissertation seeks to study Martin Luther King Jr's concept of love to see if it could stand against the waves of hatred, racial oppressions and tribal sentiments in contemporary society.

1.2 Statement of Problem

There seems to be an extreme division among individuals and nations of the world due to selfish-interest. This has created a lot of hatred among peoples and nations. And this hatred amongst individuals or nations has been the most outstanding obstacle to peace and harmony in the world. The problem facing humanity is that as human beings desire to be loved, to live together as brothers and sisters, so does love elude them.

In Nigeria, the Boko Haram, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Niger Delta militants' quagmire stand out. Cases of man's inhumanity to man: oppression, humiliation, dehumanization, social injustice, post modern slavery, economic exploitation, political intimidation and other forms of social ills remain obvious to all.

Therefore, this work sets out to tackle the problem of hatred, racial oppressions as well as tribal fanaticism which are considered as the root of division among communities, states or nations, especially among the constituent parts of Nigeria.

1.3 Purpose of Study

This dissertation sets out to find a solution to war, social injustice, extreme poverty and terrorism which lead to political and economic crises in Nigeria, Africa and the entire world. As regards this quest for solution, recourse is made to Martin Luther King Jr. Studying King's concept of love as an integrative apparatus can be said to stand as a better option for peace and development in Nigeria, Africa and the world at large. This research work, if applied well by those who work for peace and unity in their local communities, will help in the eradication of community conflict, war, terrorism and poverty caused by man's inhumanity to man.

Furthermore, the study is meant to re-emphasize the assumption upon which is built the saying that, "all men are created equal", and as such, human equality, dignity, freedom and unity should be given a primary importance. These basic principles, as King believed, stand as the foundation of socio-economic, political development, mutual co-existence and bilateral relationship among the nations of the world.

Lastly, this work also seeks to study the contemporary relevance of King's concept of love in order to see whether King's philosophy of nonviolence as centred on love can still remedy the current problems of war, terrorism and poverty in the world.

1.4 Scope of Study

The scope of this dissertation is Martin Luther King's concept of love as seen in his nonviolent revolution.

1.5 Significance of Study

This research is significant in the sense that it will study the basic principles of human society with regard to national and international relations, namely: human equality, freedom, solidarity and unity which are embedded in King's nonviolent activity, and use them to tackle the problem of dehumanization, exploitation, racial oppression and economic and political intimidation prevalent in the contemporary society.

This project will serve as a reference material to researchers and political philosophers on peace and conflict management and resolution.

1.6 Methodology

The dissertation employs the analytic method to study Martin Luther King Jr's concept of love. This method is used bearing in mind the point of departure which is to establish that King's concept of love is an integrative tool for peace and conflict resolution in the contemporary world, especially, Nigeria. As the dissertation argues, it is proper to understand that King's nonviolent revolution is a contextual philosophy. Also, using the analytic method, this work will critically analyze the original works of Martin Luther King Jr, which serve as its primary source. These works will give us a direct information on King's actions. Again, other pieces of information on *love* are collected from other scholars' commentaries, the internet and library.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which includes the background, statement of problem, purpose, scope, and significance of the study. It also contains the methodology and definition of terms used.

Chapter Two centres on the review of related literature. Only the works that deal on Martin Luther King Jr and his concept of love are reviewed.

In Chapter Three, the exposition of King's love is made. Here, the life and times of Martin Luther King Jr, the basis of King's concept of love, and the methods used to implement or actualize his philosophy are examined.

Chapter Four is the background of King's advocacy for love. Here, the pre-conditions of King's conception of love are discussed. The pre-conditions that necessitated the formulation and articulation of King's philosophy such as war, terrorism, poverty, slave trade, racism, colonialism are examined and analyzed. This chapter will also help us to understand why King's philosophy is formulated, and why "love" is the central theme of his philosophy of nonviolence.

Chapter Five is the evaluation and conclusion of the study.

1.7 Definition of Terms

It is necessary to define some of the terms used in this work to avoid confusion and ambiguity.

The terms include: *concept* and *love*.

Concept: Concept is an idea or principle that is connected with something abstract. A "concept" is said to be a general idea of something in the loose sense. It may also be understood simply as an idea or principle that is connected with something abstract. A "concept" is an abstract idea representing the fundamental characteristics of what it represents. Concepts arise as abstractions or generalizations from experience or the result of existing ideas.⁷

Love: Love is defined as a strong feeling of deep affection for someone or somebody, especially a member of one's family or a friend. Love means different things for different people. However, it could be understood from many perspectives: love as a feeling, an attitude, a state; love as virtue, as affection, and as compassion. Ancient Greeks have four forms of love, namely; kinship (*storge*), friendship (*philia*), sexual (*eros*), and divine love (*agape*). Love plays a vital role in interpersonal relationships. Hence, for Helen Fisher, "Love may be understood as a function to

keep human beings together against menaces and to facilitate the continuation of the species."⁸

The work is concerned with love as agape.

Endnotes

1. M. L. King Jr, "Nonviolence, Racial Justice", in James Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), p.9.
2. M. L. King, Jr in K. T. Gines, "Martin Luther King, Jr. and Frantz Fanon: Reflection on the Politics and Ethics of Violence and Nonviolence", in Robert E. Birt (ed.), *The Liberatory Thought of Martin Luther King Jr.*, (Maryland: Lexington, 2012), p.246.

3. Loc.cit.
4. M. L. King Jr in Floyd W. Hayes III, *Hope and Disappointment in Martin Luther King Jr's Political Theology: Eclipse of the Liberal Spirit*, p.299-318.
5. M. L. King Jr, The Power of Nonviolence, in James Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), p.12.
6. Loc.cit.
7. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concept>, access date 30/3/2017
8. Helen Fisher, *Why We Love: the nature and chemistry of romantic love*, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love>, access date 30/3/2017.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, we shall focus on the works written on Martin Luther King, Jr, especially his concept of love. In doing this, we may not be able to separate completely King's concept of "love" from his nonviolent revolution. The reason is that his idea of love stands at the centre of the principles of nonviolent action. We will also review in a loose sense what some authors say on his concept of love.

With regard to this, Kathryn Gines, in “Martin Luther King, Jr and Frantz Fanon’s Reflection on the Politics and Ethics of Violence and Nonviolence”, states that given the racist and violent history that has shaped black American experiences, King calls for nonviolent resistance to racial oppression. King’s nonviolent philosophy, she says, is explicitly guided by a Christian ethic of love.¹ Gines seems to agree that the concept of love, as seen in King’s philosophy of nonviolence, may not be treated differently from his nonviolent resistance or civil disobedience. Gines states further that King acknowledged the dual influences of Christianity and Gandhian pacifism in his work, “An Experiment in Love” in 1958. Commenting further, she states that ‘nonviolent resistance has emerged as the technique of the movement, while love stood as the regulating ideal. In other words, Christ furnished the spirit and motivation, while Gandhi furnished the method.’² This suffices to say that the underlying principle of nonviolent resistance is “love.”

James M. Washington, in his account, shows the influence of Christian concept of love in "Agape and Eros."³ He points out that King “overlooked critical discussions of Nygren’s interpretation (of love) and actually misinterprets his (Nygren’s) view at a number of points”.⁴ Washington contends that identifying three words for love in the Greek language, namely; *eros*: aesthetic, romantic love; *philia*: reciprocal love between friends; and *agape*: selfless love, King explained that agape love “means understanding, redeeming good will for all men, an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return.”⁵ He opines that King christianized the notion of agape love, claiming “you begin to love men not because they are likeable, not because they do things that attract us, but because God loves them and here we love the person who does the evil deed while hating the deeds that person does”.⁶

Going further, he states that King asked us to love our friends as well as our enemies, imploring us to have love for our enemy neighbour from whom we can expect no good in return, but only hostility and persecution. Ethic of love, coupled with several guiding promises, is central to King's writings and speeches on nonviolence. As we can see, Washington and Gines confirm that *love* is the foundation of nonviolent revolution in Martin Luther King Jr.

From Washington, we can also observe that love, as agape, originally has no Christian origin. It is a word of its own, but was given a Christian interpretation by King to suit his ideas. We may reject Washington's view regarding King's Christianization of love- agapic love. But in as much as we reject Washington's view on King's derivation of agape love, we can, to some extent, question King's excessive application of love in his nonviolent action and civil disobedience.

Showing the impact of love in King's civil disobedience, Christina Richie, in "*The Racial and Economic Theories of James Cone and Martin Luther King Jr, Illuminated by the Sermon on the Mount*", sees Martin Luther's adoption of civil disobedience as instrument of enthroning racial and economic justice for African-Americans. She identifies Martin Luther King Jr's background as a Christian theologian, which she also sees as the major factor that influenced Luther's engagement. Richie writes that in engaging in the struggle of civil disobedience, Martin Luther King sought to put into practice the philosophical teachings of Jesus Christ on the "Sermon on the Mount". Richie says: "The nature of Jesus' ethical teachings – on non-retaliation, love of the enemy, stewardship of wealth and so on, presuppose some significant interval during which his disciples would have to confront all of the problems of ordinary living."⁷

In explaining the nature of civil disobedience adopted by Martin Luther Jr, Richie argues that as instrument of black liberation, Martin Luther King Jr sees civil disobedience as a "...pacifistic

stance against oppressor, ... full integration through a nonviolent example.”⁸ Thus, Luther King’s nonviolent approach was compared with Cone’s black power approach. Richie submits that black power was predicated on separatist philosophy, aimed at using everything within the black man’s power to liberate him. The process could as well mean black changing places with whites, and becoming the new powers, if possible. Against this background, Martin Luther King’s approach is projected as that which targets integration and unification of the races. Indeed, King did not aspire that the black should take over the position of the white oppressor in the society. What he promotes is a just society where black men and white men would live together and share mutual love with one another.⁹

At the economic level, this integration of the African-American can be achieved through a complete overhauling of the American financial system which has repressed the black person. Thus, what is called for is a full employment of the black population. King saw this as the only way of ensuring economic justice. Richie argues that unlike most other writers who were concerned with the plights of the downtrodden, King did not opt for communism as an economic system. He was merely convinced that the way to success lies in the hearts of men and women. If they change the way they perceive the black person, the society would be better.

As a Christian preacher, King drew heavily from Biblical teachings. Richie holds that he construed racial segregation as a product of sin. As such the only... solution for racial equality was to eradicate sin through the deontological ethic of love, by nonviolent protest.... It was only when the light of God illuminated human works and was implemented in daily life that issues of discrimination surrounding race could be eliminated.¹⁰

Commenting on the idea of the beloved community as posited by King, Richard A. Jones, in *Martin Luther King Jr's Agape and World House*, states that "the utopian ideal for 'beloved community' through agape in the *world house* is a highly philosophical trope that serves to remind us that ...where there is no vision, the people perish."¹¹ The beloved community, as seen in King, could be seen as a vision. Jones contends that King is also a "philosopher" - a 'Philosopher King' - who transcends the narrow disciplinary boundaries of what it means to be a philosopher...In the current postmodern era where dystopian futures or 'No Future' and the end of history reinforce Marxian alienation, Nietzschean *nihilism* and King's positive vision for a future is as important as Plato's *Republic*, Kantian *Perpetual Peace* or Rousseau's *Social Contract*. Stressing further, Jones asserts that "Professional Western analytic philosophers need to reevaluate King, as he was and is an important social philosopher. King's social, political, and axiological philosophies should assume an important place in graduate seminar as they have, more importantly, in the praxes by which they inform a world."¹²

Jones refers to Martin Luther King Jr as a prescient the thinker and sees his ethic of love as the basis of the beloved community, and as pertinent to the ethical and social issues of our time. He argues that the social, political and personal fragmentations could only be overcome by a transvaluation of values in community imbued with agape.¹³ He points out that, "...agape love is one that transcends love of self, family, tribe, race, class, or nation. It is rooted in a philosophical vision of the organic interconnectedness of all life."¹⁴

Explaining further, he states that this concept of the interconnectedness of life and interrelatedness of the universe largely informs King's understanding that poverty, racism, and war are related, and that they are triple 'headed monster', and these are seen as direct results of exploitative economic and political interests.¹⁵ As some scholars do not appreciate King's

philosophical prowess, and even do not regard him as a philosopher, Jones argues that King's philosophical legacy, with his vision of universal human community as 'World House', is becoming more important than the reasons he is celebrated as a civil right leader.

Susan Hacker's *Violent and Nonviolent Approaches to Revolution: A Cross National Study* considers the historicity of Martin Luther King's nonviolent approach to the liberation of African-Americans. According to Hacker, the adoption of nonviolence by Martin Luther King and other African-Americans can be attributed to a number of factors: psycho-political and economic factors. The psycho-political factor emphasizes that the adoption of nonviolence by Martin Luther King was not an isolated phenomenon. Hacker holds that the choice of nonviolence by Martin Luther King was influenced by his Southern American background. She emphasizes what she calls the "natural "spirituality" of the Southern African-Americans. It is the possession of this spirituality that disposes the African-Americans of the South to nonviolence. Most scholars have emphasized the psycho-political factor to the detriment of the other factors. Hacker argues that it is erroneous to attribute the adoption of the nonviolence method to the spiritual background of the Southern African-Americans as doing so would fail to "...explain why an upsurge of militant activity took place at this time."¹⁶

She elaborates that certain structural changes taking place within the American economy was also responsible for the adoption of nonviolent approach by Martin Luther King Jr. Hacker lists such structural changes to include the ending of the 'open door' immigration policy in the 1920s which ensured that Southern blacks would be the last set of immigrants to move into the northern industry, the growth of Negro buying-power during and after the Second World War, and the extension of the franchise.¹⁷

What Hacker seems to emphasize can be interpreted from two angles. First, these structural changes emboldened the African-Americans to demand for more and with the conviction that if the afore-mentioned could be achieved, more could be achieved. Second, the gradual absorption into the American economic system had made the African-American stakeholders in the American society believe that adopting any other means that was nonviolent would truncate the gains so far achieved. From this perspective, nonviolence becomes a reasoned, organized and persistent approach adopted because of its considered practicality and workability. What Luther clamoured for was the assimilation of the African-Americans into the mainstream of the American system.

On this note, Hacker compares Luther King's approach to civil disobedience with Malcolm X's violent approach. She writes that Malcom and the black Americans of the North, who were incidentally Muslims, built their approach on total rejection of the American system. Whereas King and his group sought assimilation and integration, Malcolm X sought to conquer the whites. This quest to conquer made the choice of violence inevitable. She sees Malcolm's choice of violence as a mere theoretical tool which was seldom used in practice. What Malcolm X achieved in practice was the isolation of the African-Americans from the mainstream of American system. His idea was to construct a massive 'ghetto' where African-Americans would live without interference from the white Americans.¹⁸

If Hacker sees a big difference between the adoption of violence by Malcom X and nonviolence by Martin Luther King Jr as opposed to each other, J. Angelo Corlett's *Terrorism: A Philosophical Analysis* considers the matter differently. For Corlett, the only difference between Malcolm's violent approach and Martin Luther King's nonviolent approach lies in the fact that both of them involve different types of threat. While Malcolm's approach involves physical

threat, Luther King's approach involves a psychological threat. Corlett holds that civil disobedience as embarked upon by Luther King Jr entails threats and intimidation. He argues that previous commentators of civil disobedience have often presented it as a neutral practice that targets only the social structure of society. Corlett writes that contrary to the prevalent view, civil disobedience affects certain individuals negatively as it dislodges them with intimidation and threat.

To buttress his point about civil disobedience and nonviolent protest undertaken by Martin Luther King Jr, Corlett invokes history and gives the example of Mrs Rosa Parks, the African-American woman whose action triggered off the now famous boycott of the mid-1950s. He writes that:

By refusing to relinquish her seat on the bus, Mrs Parks says, in effect, 'Go ahead and arrest me (or have me arrested)... But if you do arrest me (or have me arrested) my friends will intensely and adversely publicize your action, fundamental laws, and lifestyle, something which will shame you in the eyes of the world.'¹⁹

What Corlett emphasizes is the fact that civil disobedience as embarked upon by Rosa Parks and King was intended to coerce and force some people into actions that they have not freely chosen. From this perspective, civil disobedience is seen more as an act of blackmail whose aim is to affect the manner in which a people is perceived by the public. For Corlett, the realization that public's perception of a group as discriminatory, repressive and oppressive will affect the image and public standing of such group is turned into a tool of racial emancipation by Martin Luther King Jr. He holds that acts of civil disobedience force such a people into taking one of the two possible actions. The first possible action for them is to come out to the public domain and justify their oppressive actions.

The second option is for them to publicly renounce their actions as something deplorable. This fact of bringing the persecutor to the public arena, according to Corlett, also shows a major similarity between nonviolence and terrorists' violence. The argument here is that a coercive nonviolent approach will achieve the same and exert the same effect as a coercive violent approach. What Corlett argues is that since civil disobedience is justified because the threat it exerts makes possible the consideration of a people's grievances, violence can also be justified whenever it aims to achieve the same result.²⁰

Corlett also goes further to argue that there are cases in which violence will be more justified than civil disobedience. He writes that certain acts of violence do not target the personality of persons. They only seek to do harm to people's property and structures of society whereas civil disobedience harms people directly by destroying their public image.²¹ If we are to go by Corlett's view, we would not fail to understand that peace achieved through violence is war postponed. It is better to achieve peace through psychological means than through physical violence. This dissertation does not support the later view of Corlett that there are cases in which violence will be more justified than civil disobedience. He opines that certain acts of violence do not target the personality of persons, and that they only seek to do harm to people's property and structures in the society, whereas civil disobedience harms people directly by destroying their public image. But then, given an option to choose between violence and nonviolence, this dissertation would choose nonviolent revolution rooted in love for humanity as against war, racism and terrorism. The reason is that nonviolent action remains the only option that encourages peace and unity among men.

Robert Birt's *King's Radical Vision of Community* explores King's radical critique of the social order. According to him, King's vision of freedom and social justice is inseparable from his

vision of community,²² and this social vision entails a transcendence not only of racism but of the entire socio-economic order that breed racism, economic injustice, acquisitiveness, imperialism and war. The integral community is the primacy of the human person, the inalienable dignity of every human being, and also the idea that the human person as a unique individual can only exist as person-community,²³ and not as a disconnected atom of aggressive self-interest revered by the tradition of “rugged individual.”²⁴ He argues that personhood and community are inseparable ideas in King’s moral and social philosophy. This constitute, the moral basis of King’s critique of racial caste, economic exploitation, militarism, and the corrosive obsession of a consumerist culture that values possession over person.²⁵ Explaining further, he argues that King’s ethical ideal of community also forms the basis of his commitment to nonviolence, and his call for a “revaluation of values” in order to transform our ‘thing-oriented’ profiteering society into a person-oriented cooperative society. King’s radical critique is grounded in the prophetic moral tradition within the Judeo-Christian legacy and humanistic strains in Western philosophical idealism.²⁶ King’s beloved community expressively is the community of love, and in it, King advocates for cooperation and mutual co-existence among the members. His beloved community transcends not only racism, but also economic and political exploitation. This work seems to concur to Robert Birth’s view on King’s radical vision of community which tends towards communal living.

King’s critique against the Vietnam War could be understood from the angle of his idea of love and community living. Explaining King’s position on this, Gail M. Presbey, in her work entitled, “Martin Luther King Jr on Vietnam: King’s Message Applied to U.S Occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan,” asserts that King was against the use of militarism as an alternative to war, or rather, in solving violent ridden problems. She notes that King advised the American society to

rethink on her entire order of values as well as her practice regarding war and militarism. King's critique of the Vietnam War was at once moral critique of militarism and of American neocolonialism in particular. King's first message to the Americans is that there was a "crisis of values,"²⁷ while the second message explores the use of militarism as a solution to social crisis.

Further, Presbey states that King recalls the geopolitical and corporate market-driven profiteering interests as motive that is behind militarism and at once calls for a revaluation of values that would transform a materialistic, consumer-oriented society into a peaceful person-centred community. She shows also the contemporary relevance of King's moral critique in the current crisis in the Middle East. As such, the conclusion we can draw from Presbey's essay is that King rejected the use of militarism as a better option to conflict resolution. As we can see, this dissertation seems to agree with Presbey's view, but from a different angle.

Simon Wendt's *They Finally Found Out That We Are Men: Violence, Nonviolence and Black Manhood in the Civil Rights Era* explores Martin Luther King's civil disobedience from the point of what it has achieved. According to Wendt, Luther King's organized nonviolence demonstration "... exposed the viciousness of southern racism. Pictures of peaceful black teenagers being felled by high-powered streams of water and of demonstrators being bitten by snarling police dogs shocked the United States and the world."²⁸ He holds that white masters had used violence to suppress their black servants, and indeed, to deal with most men of colour. In that context, violence was construed as an instrument of racial control and subjugation. Wendt argues that the white master equated his ability to use violence against his black slaves and servants with his manhood. Thus, the extent to which he was able to apply violence against blacks, to that extent he considered himself male. Craig Friend and Lorri Glover lend credence to this point when they write that "...from the point of view of whites, enslavement equals

emasculation”²⁹ of the black males. Wendt argues that the practice of equating violence against blacks with manhood did not stop with the end of slavery.

Although the end of the Civil War marked the end of the ‘peculiar institution’, white violent oppression continued. In the aftermath of the war, racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan launched a reign of terror that echoed the brutality of ante bellum slave patrols. Gail Bederman’s research has shown that middle-class white men at the turn of the twentieth century construed such violent symbols of white supremacy as a reflection of white male power.³⁰

Wendt examines two patterns of African-American reaction to white man’s violence. The first was the attempt to urge and also equate black man’s retaliatory violence against the white man with his own masculinity. This was mainly the practice in the 19th Century and up to the mid-20th Century. Giving example with the writings of Du Bois, Wendt argues that most black activists of the period were mainly advocates of violence to counter racist violence against the black men and women by the white men.

The second attempt, which before Martin Luther King Jr was merely theoretical, considered nonviolent resistance as a way of countering white man’s violence against the African-Americans. He holds that groups like Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) copied Mahatma Gandhi’s nonviolent resistance and championed nonviolence as a way of countering violence from the Whiteman. However, the failure of CORE and similar promoters of nonviolence to recruit members shows that, at first, the African-Americans were not favourably disposed to nonviolent mode of resistance. Writing as lately as 1946, James Farmer expresses the difficulty he encountered in urging African-Americans to adopt the nonviolent approach of civil

disobedience. He holds that people considered a misnomer his suggestion that violence could be met with love and compassion which nonviolence approach entails.³¹

Wendt argues that despite the initial objection to it, the adoption of nonviolent approach championed by Martin Luther King in the 1950s and 1960s was actually what achieved success and racial emancipation for the black Americans. He writes that his adoption of nonviolent approach by black Americans was followed by the thinking that a connection can be made between manhood and nonviolence as was made between manhood and violence. In this circumstance, nonviolence was similarly equated with manhood. Wendt writes that Martin Luther King's approach was different. According to him, King emphasized love for the oppressors as the essence of his nonviolence.³²

Herbert Warren Richardson gives Martin Luther King Jr's nonviolence philosophy a theological interpretation. He contends that Martin Luther King Jr was a theologian, and as a result, he propounded a theology of nonviolence. According to him, Martin Luther King Jr is the most important theologian of our time, not because of his creative proposals for dealing with the structure of evil generated by modern relativism, but due to the ideological conflict. Over and above this understanding of social evil, King created not only a new theology of nonviolence which gears towards reconciliation, but also a new way of piety, and new style of Christian living.³³

For Richardson, King was not just a theologian. He tried to apply these theological principles such as love and nonviolence to the critical condition in which the black race found themselves in America. He argues further that in the context where racism and segregation destroyed the common good of mankind and fragmented their intellectual and spiritual life, King comes out boldly to oppose the separation of man from man. In the course of doing so, he becomes the most

important proponent of nonviolence because he developed this nonviolence principle into a new method of effecting social change.³⁴ He affirms that Martin Luther's method was a faith which affirmed reconciliation in opposition to the relativism that denies its possibility. He, therefore, concludes that King is a brilliant and mature theologian who deserves our head and our heart.³⁵

Andrew Young's *Martin Luther King as a Political Theologian* represents King as the theologian of the old testament prophetic tradition, who in the midst of suffering, assured his people that God is in their midst doing something for their liberation. Commenting on King's nonviolence philosophy, he declares that King's nonviolent revolution is a response to the leading of God in the midst of a dramatic social situation. So, in his effort to deal with this dramatic social situation, Luther King forges a very powerful political theology and political methodology that was characterized by a simple quest for freedom and justice without violence.³⁶ King's nonviolent action, for Young, is the integration of God's message into human affairs for social change, with love as its centrality.

In the same line of thought, James P. Hanigan, in *Martin Luther King Jr and Foundation of Nonviolence*, argues that Martin Luther King's espousal of nonviolence and voluntary suffering is rooted in his understanding of God and His Christ, and his basic willingness to let God's will set the agenda for human action.³⁷ He points out that as a committed follower of Christ, Luther King suffered and felt the pain as much as any other human being in his position could feel it. He felt very strongly that he would eventually be killed in the course of his struggle against racism and segregation.

Further on this, Hanigan asserts that Luther King naturally wishes to avoid trouble and live longer, but his Christian faith assured him that unmerited suffering, and even death, endured for the sake of love, is redemptive. For this, it must be made clear that Martin Luther King's

nonviolence did not accept suffering for the joy of it. But as a nonviolence advocate, he took suffering as a way to break the vicious circle of enemy and violence.³⁸ It is proper, therefore, to understand that nonviolence and suffering, as advocated by Martin Luther King Jr are inseparable.

Time Lake's *Martin Luther King Jr: Toward a Democratic Theory* looks at King's values for political philosophy. He underscores the democratic theory located within the work of Martin Luther King Jr. He gives special attention to King's conception of human psychology, Christian identity and appreciation of Marxist social analysis. His conclusion is that King understood the expansion of democratic practices to be the best hope for humanity. That is, democratic values and procedures, at their best, are a moral corrective and institutional safeguard against the human propensity for evil.³⁹

John Odey, in *Racial Oppression in America and the Nonviolent Revolution of Martin Luther King Jr*, argues that Martin Luther King's nonviolent revolution is an explosive challenge to the claims of other nonviolent activists. King, he states, gave a new meaning to the philosophy of nonviolence which made it a way of life and infused it with a moral force that made it difficult for anybody, both friend and foe, to ignore the justice of their cause and the urgency of their demand.⁴⁰

He argues further that Martin Luther King Jr revitalized the American society that had found itself in a moral lull by condoning racism and segregation, and made it a prophetic voice that once more became relevant to both the spiritual and temporal needs of the oppressed. Therefore, in the face of an explosive racial hatred and violence, King insisted that the blacks must love the whites who made life difficult for them because the problem they confronted was ultimately not

a problem between black and white skins but a problem between good and evil, light and darkness, justice and injustice. By so doing, Martin Luther King Jr in a way made nonviolent revolution effective in America and indicated that it can work anywhere in the world where people are ready to make the sacrifice. It involves being nonviolent in a violent world.⁴¹ Odey points out that nonviolent resistance to social oppression is one of the greatest and most effective appeals to God's will and human conscience. Again, he opines that the ever-increasing threat of violence in the world today makes an honest study of and commitment to nonviolence as a means of resolving human conflicts an imperative.

Above all, Odey asserts that one of the most remarkable things about Martin Luther King, Jr which cannot be denied by any unbiased observer is that while people may disagree as to whether he was a theologian, an eclectic, or an ordinary religious preacher, he was certainly a man of action who blended theory with practice in a way that is rare in our own time. His application of his faith and the practice of what he believes was best for humanity was turned into a unique action that spoke louder than many voices. If he was a philosopher, he was a Socratic type, who, with love, fearlessly exposed the ills of his society and died in the process. If he was a theologian, he was, and still is, a model for all liberation theologians. He believed that evil must be opposed and the oppressed liberated. And he refused to subscribe to the principle that a good end can justify immoral means. For him, the principle of such liberation must be grounded in nonviolent directed action.⁴²

Robert Michael Franklin, in *Liberating Vision: Human Fulfillment and Social Justice in African-American Thought*, contends that Martin Luther King Jr was one of those remarkable thinkers who comfortably combined liberal philosophy, biblical evangelical faith, insights from the human sciences and his own black cultural tradition to change man's inclination to injustice. His

was an intellectual eclecticism with integrity forged through activism. This account of King's extraordinary and broad appeal through the nation and the world was aimed at bringing different peoples to the point where they could understand that we all are brothers and sisters. It was as eclecticism which expresses a deeper theological conviction about the interrelatedness and solidarity of human family.⁴³

Hans A. Baer's *Revolution of Conscience: Martin Luther King Jr and the Philosophy of Nonviolence* maintains that King is widely regarded to have been prominent as a minister, orator, and civil rights activist. He argues that King was a significant philosopher who has, all too often, been ignored by Eurocentric philosophers. Despite all these, King's published writings and speeches articulate a powerful analysis of human condition in love. For him, Martin Luther King Jr's philosophy of nonviolence is rested upon the notion of equality, social structure, direct action, justice, and love.⁴⁴ Although America has been founded upon the notion that all men are created equal; Martin Luther King Jr in this thought and action confronted white Americans in a contradictory manner in which this concept has been applied. He asserts further that nonviolence directed action invokes public demonstrations of suffering in order to reveal injustice.

Thus, whichever way or position one takes about Martin Luther King Jr, what matters most is what he did with his life. If one considers him as a philosopher, as a theologian or as an eclectic, it depends on one's view of him and his actions, but as we can see, King can be said to be both a philosopher and a theologian just like other philosophers. He sets out to search for a principle that would restore human dignity, human freedom, social justice, and respect and equality of all men. This principle which underlies his nonviolent philosophy is love.

From the scholars reviewed, it is obvious that none of them seems to have studied King's concept of love as an integrative tool for peace and conflict resolution in the contemporary

world, especially Nigeria. Many of them gave it more theological than philosophical discourse. Therefore, it is from this backdrop that this dissertation chose to do an exposition of Martin Luther King's concept of love. This will help to address the obvious problem of "isolationism" in the world, and as well make it clear that the fundamental principle of peace in the world remains mutual understanding and cooperation rooted in love that stands against war, poverty, terrorism, and racism.

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CHAPTER THREE

3.0 BACKGROUND OF KING'S ADVOCACY OF LOVE

One can never understand the in-depth nature of love in King's thought without first and foremost understanding the situation or condition upon which King advocated for love beyond the American society. It is only after we have understood the situation under which King advocated for love that we can begin to either appreciate or disregard his idea of love. Let us examine the conditions upon which Martin Luther King Jr started to speak of love among men, and among the nations of the world. King made us to understand that "injustice anywhere is threat to justice everywhere."¹

Obviously, it was King's understanding of white's injustice that precipitated his existential, religious and political importance of fighting against it through theological, ethical and political reflection and practical approach towards that. This grows out of his own personal experiential context. Therefore, it is this experience that espouses his philosophical and theological doctrine of personalism, a doctrine that is indispensable to understanding his conceptualization of human dignity, prior to a conceptually rich nature of white's racism as a site of marking and dehumanizing the so-called other. As Yancy asserts:

For us to understand the concept of love in King's thought, it is important to get a sense of his lived situation, a sense of his embodied encounters with white racism and how such encounter functioned as sites of interpellation, hailing him as a nobody, an ontological cipher.²

As we can see, the question of love in Luther King did not emerge from nothing. It was influenced by various conditions that trampled the freedom and dignity of the blacks in Africa and the world, and most intensely in the United States of America. And we cannot understand

King's idea of love without first and foremost understanding the negative impact of slave trade/slavery, racism, segregation and colonialism in Africa, which coincided with Martin Luther King, Jr's racial experience in the United States of America. And then in the next chapter, under evaluation, we shall evaluate, strictly speaking, more philosophical issues that gave birth to King's understanding of love. With this in mind, let us turn to slavery or slave trade as a determinant factor in Martin Luther King's concept of love.

3.1 Slavery

Equality, liberty and the pursuit of happiness had been considered as the basis of the Constitution of the United States of America. During the United States Declaration of Independence in 1776, it was written thus: "there are certain natural and inalienable rights, including 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'"² Despite this declaration, African-Americans in the United States, and other places in Europe were not humanely recognized and treated due to their origin, colour, race, etc.

The Atlantic slave trade saw to the "exportation" of Africans (blacks) to Europe and America. Some of those people taken from Africa who were fortunate to reach Europe suffered and died. King recognises the historical emergence of slavery when he writes thus:

Negroes were brought here in chains long before the Irish decided voluntarily to leave Ireland or the Italians thought of leaving Italy. Some Jews may have left their home in Europe involuntarily, but they were not in chains when they arrived on the shores. Other immigrant groups came to America with language and economic hardships, but not with stigma of colour.⁴

The above statement shows that blacks came to the shores of America with the stigma of colour, bound in chains and were forced against their "*wills*" to suffer. Their journey to America and

Europe was against their wish. They were forced to leave their native land to an undetermined destination. With this, they were in a way bereft of personhood or humanhood. Slave trade shatters personhood and dignity, and at the same time, psychologically and sociologically affected Africans and African-Americans. Expressing the psychological effect of slavery, Ayittey states that, "It was probably this, rather than the physical and economic damage of the slave trade, which wrenched the heart from the inner psyche of blacks, and assailed the very cultural soul of their existence."⁵

For Ayittey, psychological effect of slave trade wrenched the heart from the inner psyche of the blacks. Not only that it wrenched the heart from the inner psyche of the blacks, but also assailed the very cultural soul of existence. When one is placed under this heinous situation, then, what is left of his existence? It is highly pathetic. Further, describing the movement of the slaves from the community, along the road in Africa, to where they were shipped to Europe was also pathetic and dehumanizing. In his account, W. Rodney states that: "They walked in long pathetic line, yoked together, carrying on their heads elephant tusks, bundles of cloth, beads and grains with raiders marching beside them with ready whip for the weary and ready to sword down those who could not match any more."⁶

In line with this, Alpers writes: "Adults were usually fastened to each other by means of the infamous heavy wood sticks or by metal collars and chains. Children were normally tied together with ropes."⁷ This colour stigma, over the years, has followed Africans down to the United States. Joseph Leonard put the problem more succinctly when he writes:

This all goes to show that the Negro races, by universal consent of the civilized world, are considered a separate and distinct race of beings, suited only to their own peculiar state and

condition. Their freedom is nothing but a name, an unmeaning sound; they are by nature totally incapacitated to enjoy the rights and privileges of freedom, except in secluded communities of their own kindred blood, which ever have been, and ever will be, sooner or later, when left to themselves, in a state of barbarism. Their condition among the whites is necessarily that of pupilage and dependence.⁸

The condition of slaves during the slave era was such that they were regarded as subhuman, or beings without soul.⁹ For whites, a black has no soul. As a result, blacks were subjected to excruciating suffering and pain. They were meant to suffer and to die, nothing else. With this understanding, the white slave masters invented the theory of racial inferiority and biological inequality of the blacks. As regards this, George Sawyer, in defense of slavery, posits that the black was a slave and should remain a slave because he is incapable of managing himself.¹⁰

Another reason why Sawyer defended or supported slavery is based on racial pride. He writes:

Not only does Negro slavery elevate the character of the master; and where the master is free, render his devotion to liberty a high and holy feeling, but where, as in our country, the slave is of a different and inferior race, marked and set apart by his colour, physical and mental characteristics, it elevates the character, but of all the individuals of his own race who wear colour and distinguishing characteristics of freedom. With us, colour, not money, marks the class; black is the badge of slavery, white the colour of freedom; and the white man, however poor, whatever be his occupation, is inspired with the just pride of a freeman, a sovereign.¹¹

So the history of the black people can never be written without mentioning slavery or slave trade experience, subjugation, inhuman treatment or forms of cruelty meted out against Africans. However, this problem also obtains in many nations of the world today. In some nations, there exists among the leaders, at present, the tendency to be tyrannical, unjust and reckless in

dispensation and management of human and natural resources. There appears to be two worlds or classes of people in every nation, especially in most African states now. The wind of discrimination is blowing across religion, tribe, tongue, class and race. The rich grow richer and the poor get poorer. The hope of the poor as regards better living and progress is very dim.

In this regard, Wendt argues that the practice of equating violence against blacks with manhood did not stop with the end of slavery. He writes:

Although the end of the Civil War marked the end of the 'peculiar institution', white violent oppression continued. In the aftermath of the war, racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan launched a reign of terror that echoed the brutality of antebellum slave patrols. Gail Bederman's research has shown that middle-class white men at the turn of the twentieth century construed such violent symbols of white supremacy as a reflection of white male power.¹²

Slavery or slave trade ended around the nineteenth century with the declaration of freedom in the United States of America. But we need to contend with this poser: Did the declaration of freedom of slaves end racism or segregation? King asks: Why should I love those who treated me like slave over the years? How do I love them? This is in a bid to establish a philosophical foundation. The answers to these questions remain crucial in the thoughts of King. Now, the work will turn to racism or racialism to see how it affected the African-Americans all over Europe and America and then move on to discuss more philosophical foundation of the meaning given to *love* by King.

3.2 Racism

Related to the problem of slave trade or slavery is racism. What is racism? And how did racism pre-determine King's thought on love? Before we forge ahead, it would be wise to examine the

term, *race*, from which we derive the terms, *racialism* and *racism*. Just like slave trade or slavery, racism is a historical issue or problem. Racism created an epidermal difference between the whites and blacks in Africa, and the world at large. According to Dublin, the term, *race* is said to have entered the English language around the nineteenth century.¹³ The term, *race*, designates a class of people or things.¹⁴

As years went by, some emerging sciences like Zoology and Botany, adopted the term, *race*, to mean the existence of natural sub-groups of organism within a species. These sub-groups differ geographically, ecologically or physiologically. The difference between races and species is that races can inter-breed; yielding fertile progeny, but species cannot.¹⁵

In recent times, the term, *race*, has been adopted to describe human differences that are based on skin colour. As Oyebola would say, in race classification, emphasis is usually placed on variations in the externally physical characteristics. So, race implies the existence of groups which have certain physical similarities which are perpetuated according to the laws of biological inheritance.¹⁶ Hence, based on this understanding of race, people are currently classified under the following five races depending on their skin colour and their geographical locations, and they are as follows: the Caucasoid (Europeans), Negroid (Africans), Mongoloid (Asians), Americanus (American Indians), and the Australoid (Australian Aborigines).¹⁷ The term, 'race' in itself is not a negation of other races. It is a neutral concept. Its derivative, 'racism' made it fanatical.¹⁸

In this respect, Aschcoft would define racism "...as a way of thinking that considers a group's unchangeable physical characteristics to be linked in a direct, causal way to psychological or intellectual characteristics, and which, on this basis, distinguishes between 'superior' and 'inferior' racial groups."¹⁹ According to Obijekwu, *racism* involves the classification of people

based on the physiological features of the individual, namely, skin colour, height, size and other biological traits, while racialism is all about the tribe or geographical base of the person in question which also has to do with already mentioned physiological features or biological traits.²⁰ The fact of racism has both epistemological and psychological implications in Africa or wherever it is being practised in the world. It is against this background that the philosophical racism also thrived. And there is need to discuss it.

3.3 Slavery and Racism in Philosophy

The root of philosophical racism is obviously seen in philosophical thoughts of some ancient, medieval, modern, and even among the contemporary philosophers. In the ancient era, Plato's *Republic* became a reference point. Heretofore, Plato is regarded by some people as the originator of philosophical racism. Although Plato might not be conscious of this fact when he was postulating his theory of the three parts of human soul or the three divisions of human society, but many scholars believe that racism is embedded in his postulation.

As it were, Plato had divided the people in the world into three according to their natural capacities. According to him, some people have the natural tendency to trade and do menial jobs, these he called the artisans, others have the natural tendency for bravery, these he called the soldiers, another group has the natural tendency to rule others, these he called the philosopher-kings. These three classes of people in the society correspond to the three parts of the human soul. The artisans correspond to the appetitive part of the soul which is governed by the desire for pleasure, money, food, sex, and drink. The soldiers correspond to the spirited part of the soul which is naturally courageous. The philosopher-kings correspond to the rational part of the soul. In the gradation of these three types of persons in society according to their worth, Plato holds that the philosopher-kings are the superior members of the society. The soldiers take the

intermediate position whereas the artisans represent the inferior members of the society. Plato, directly or indirectly, racially structured the human society. He writes thus:

Take the quality of passion or spirit; — it would be ridiculous to imagine that this quality, when found in States, is not derived from the individuals who are supposed to possess it, e.g. the Thracians, Scythians, and in general the northern nations; and the same may be said of the love of knowledge, which is the special characteristic of our part of the world, or of the love of money, which may, with equal truth, be attributed to the Phoenicians and Egyptians.²¹

From the excerpt, Plato's view of Phoenicians and the Egyptians could be regarded as one of the earliest known racist view against Africans. But despite Plato's position above, the ancient world did not take race seriously. Indeed, the ancient Romans held slaves and regarded people of other cultures as barbarians but it must be noted that the Romans did not consider barbarity as an intrinsic quality possessed by any group of people. By adopting the culture of the Romans, a barbarian could become cultured and admitted into the Roman world.

Racism against Africans is most likely an outcome of the slave trade and colonialism. In Eric Omazu's view, one of the earliest racist view against the Africans could be traceable to P. Camper. Thus, he employed the facial angle in the study of apes and human beings. Camper had concluded that the facial angle of Africans came nearer to that of apes rather than that of Europeans. This forms the basis of the assumption that Africans are physically and intellectually inferior to Europeans. Other works like Lucien Levy- Bruhl that followed viewed the African as sub-human.²²

P. Camper's work referred to above was fashioned as a necessary scholarship to oppose abolition of slavery. The intention was to show that the Africans are inferior to the whites and, therefore,

suited for slavery. However, following the inability of such writings to prevent the abolition of slavery, proponents of racism found a way to maintain and enshrine the inferiority of the African as a major ingredient of western domination and expansion.

The impact of racism made the people to be sub-grouped geographically, economically, politically, culturally and socially. Lucien Levy-Bruhl “...devoted his entire life and career to the demonstration of the radical disparity between the nature and quality of mind of the European, and what he called primitive mentality” of the African.²³ Africans, in his perspective are still on the level of pre-reason or pre-logical. Levy-Bruhl also came out with another form of exploitation. He denied the African person his rationality with his idea of ‘primitive mentality.’²⁴

Hegel, in his *Lecture on the Philosophy of World History*, bluntly writes, “We shall therefore leave Africa at this point, and it needs not be mentioned again. For it is an unhistorical continent, with no movement or development of its own.”²⁵ Hegel further states that:

The characteristic feature of the Negroes is that their consciousness has not yet reached an awareness of any substantial objectivity—for example, of God or the law—in which the will of man could participate and in which he could become aware of his own being. The African, in his undifferentiated and concentrated unity, has not yet succeeded in making this distinction between himself as an individual and his essential universality, so that he knows nothing of an absolute being which is other and higher than his own self.²⁶

But we can see that this is pure prejudice. Saying that the Negroes have not yet reached the awareness of any substantial objectivity is a direct way of saying that Africans cannot reflect or discover the truth.

For Hegel, reason moves history. Reason is the sole determinant of world development and cultural transformation. According to him, history is a process of change. Through the intervention of reason, man knows and transforms his reality in a continuous dialectical manner. In this transformation, culture is born. This culture is itself in constant dialectical motion through the conflict of contradiction. As Hegel discussed the movement of the world, he compared the geographical basis of world history and as well compared their contributions. Within this framework, he rated Africa low in everything. Culture is born out of the unfoldment of reason in the world history, and where there is no reason, there is no culture. Thus, he concluded that since Africans have no reason, they have no culture. According to Hegel, life in Africa is not a manifestation of dialectical reason but of a succession of contingent happenings and surprise; no aim or state exists whose development could be followed. They are unconscious of themselves just like in the state of Biblical Adam and Eve. They are in the state of innocence.²⁷

John Locke's polarization of the substance into primary and secondary qualities also gave credence to the relegation of Africans. In considering Locke's import, Ramose writes thus:

Locke, I contend, is a pivotal figure in the development of modern racism in that he provides a model which permits us to count skin color as a nominally essential property of men. This comes about because, in the course of his formulations of theories of essence and substance it emerges that the essential properties of men are computed like those of gold. What appears to be a simple system of classification based on tallies of observed properties in fact facilitates counting colour, sex, language, religion, or IQ as "essential." Indeed, there is no mechanism within the Lockean model to rule out counting skin colour as the "essential" property of men.²⁸

There is an overview of superiority and inferiority paradigm in human relationship and this question the ontological and the epistemological components of Africans and African-Americans. Hume was another prominent philosophical racist. He writes:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes(Africans), and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient GERMANS, the present TARTARS, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men.²⁹

In making clearly his racist position, Hume states that their colonies negroes have never had any symptom of ingenuity in them. They had lived without education and never competed with the Europeans. In his words, he asserts:

Not to mention our colonies, there are NEGRO slaves dispersed all over Europe, of which none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; they are low people, without education, will never stand up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In JAMAICA indeed they talk of one Negro as a man of parts and learning; but 'tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishment, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly.³⁰

As we can see from the above quotation, every form of equality, freedom, value, ingenuity, originality and creativity were denied Africans.

Hume and Hegel did not just propound these theses. Their views were anchored on the misinterpretation of Aristotle's definition of man as 'a rational animal'. Aristotle, in his

philosophical discourse, noted that some people were naturally born to serve others, and that all men are not equal by nature. Based on this, Aristotle supported human inequality, that is, slavery in the world (the slaves and the slave owners, the ruled and the rulers). The foundation of African predicament can be said to be racism.³¹ Racism seems to have brought about the African loss of identity, personhood, personality or history. It was due to racialism that the European and African world were classified as superior and inferior, civilized and uncivilized, human and non-human, rational and irrational.

It is under this phenomenon that racialism thrived. Africans were seen as racially inferior and culturally uncivilized. It is against this that King states that “...all prejudice is evil, but the prejudice that rejects a man because of the colour of his skin is the most despicable expression of man’s inhumanity to man.”³² Racism till the time of King still manifested itself in the American society. So, years of the blacks’ existence in Africa, and outside the walls of Africa, like United States and Europe, may be considered as years of anguish and suffering, both intellectually, philosophically, psychologically and otherwise. There could not be a better working material than this for Martin Luther King Jr. He had to catch in on this philosophical foundation.

3.4 King’s Experience of Racism

In America, as discussed earlier, racism was institutionalized and legalized. It was the norm and citizens were punished for not being racists. This made life difficult for the African-Americans, and they could not associate well with those they call their brothers and sisters. The economic, political, social and legal structures of America were planned in such a way that African-Americans were segregated from the system. In fact, the system could be described as an unjust system despite the existence of the so-called Declaration of Human Rights by Thomas Jefferson in 1776. In a letter he wrote to George Washington in 1784, Jefferson remarked that the

constitutional basis of the United States was "the natural equality of men".³³ Even within this context of equality, racism thrived. As a result, the African-Americans were jailed, maimed, murdered and brutalized in the context of purported constitutional equality. Racism was the highest of Martin Luther King's difficulties in the United States, and this has existed over centuries before him. Racism questioned his personhood in the midst of the people he took as his brothers and sisters.

As a child, King Jr witnessed some forms of discrimination against the African-Americans, and he must have overheard his father discuss the inherent dangers of racism. On one occasion, King was slapped when he was about eight years old by a white racist lady. In narrating the encounter, he writes: "When I was about eight years old, I was in one of the down town stores of Atlanta and all of a sudden someone slapped me, and the only thing I heard was somebody saying, 'You are that nigger that stepped on my foot.' And it turned out to be a white lady."³⁴

The statement, "You are that nigger that stepped on my foot", shows that the issue of stepping on the white lady's foot did not happen there and then, but something that happened moments ago before King was slapped. Even the white lady might not be sure of who stepped on her foot. King might not be the one who stepped on her foot, but he was slapped. When King told his mother what happened, two of them left the store. The fact is that, as Yancy states, white America had already granted white ladies permission to slap a black child or adult. Even at this, King did not retaliate. King was aware of the racist rule or race relations in Atlanta, Georgia. Blacks were assaulted and dehumanized. The appellation 'nigger', he says, truncated his being, and identified him as guilty, as violable with impunity.³⁵

King also witnessed his father's boycott of city buses which discriminated against African-Americans. But what left the greatest mark on him was being separated from his childhood

playmate on account of colour. Another reason was the experience of being confined to the back seat in the bus with other African-American boys while the front seats were reserved for the white boys on their way, to and fro school. All these show that racism did not start with Luther King. King also recalled the time when he had an inseparable friendship with two white boys who lived close to him. King began to notice that when he went to play with them their parents said that they could not play. He notes that the parents were not hostile, but that they 'just make excuses.'³⁶

Generally, racism thrived on the claim that African-Americans had 'diminished cognitive and moral capacities' compared to Europeans and Americans.³⁷ King's understanding of white racism effectively shifts a critical gaze toward the action of white people. He writes: "To find the origins of the Negro problem we must turn to the white man's problem, and ... the dilemma of white America is the source and cause of the dilemma of Negro America."³⁸

Richie discusses at length the economic implication of the practice of the prison system. Thus:

Punishment against Black crime was a way to prevent men from earning full wages. If a man was in prison, he could not make a fiscal living. Black men in prison had a ripple effect on the economic system of the Black household. The result of this was that many dependent women and children were forced to live in poverty. With the primary breadwinner put away in prison, the mother had to choose between entering the workforce or living in squalor. This led to children going without essentials, and many of them growing up without the prospect of a reasonable education. This, in turn, led to fewer job opportunities, even if a company was willing to hire an "African American".³⁹

In the vocational system, black people were discriminated against in matters of employment. Richie analyses the economic implication of the vocational discrimination on the life of the African American:

They could not make money, and therefore they could not move themselves out of the ghetto even if there was no housing discrimination... Discrimination led African-Americans to be employed in only the least-paying and most difficult jobs, when they were employed at all. The economic system also denied them membership in work unions.⁴⁰

On the social level, the African had his place mapped out. He is restricted from visiting certain places and enjoying certain amenities. In the United States, especially in the southern states, a whole series of racial segregation laws and restrictions on black voting reduced African-Americans to lower-class status. Designed for economic exploitation and societal disenfranchisement, the goal of America's ... segregation was the complete separation of the black and white races from all social interactions from birth to death. Racial domination was maintained and exercised through public lynching and other forms of brutal and deadly intimidation, often with tacit, and sometimes official encouragement by the state. Ramdin reports that "African-Americans were also denied access to public places, including swimming pools, public walkways, public parks, white schools and stores."⁴¹

King debunked slave trade, slavery and racism under the following: his understanding of personhood, human equality and freedom. Knowing the impact of slave trade and racism on blacks, he writes:

And, with a spirit of straining toward true self-esteem, the Negroes must boldly throw off the manacles of self-abnegation and say to himself and to the world, 'I am somebody. I am a person. I am a

man (woman) with dignity and honour. I have a rich and noble history. How painful and exploited the history has been. Yes, I was a slave through my fore-parents and I am not ashamed of that. I'm ashamed of the people who were so sinful to make me a slave'. Yes, we must stand up and say, I'm beautiful, and this self-affirmation is the black man's (woman's) need, made compelling by the white man's crime against him.⁴²

From the above, King says that "...the Negroes must boldly throw off the manacles of self-abnegation and say to himself and to the world, 'I am somebody. I am a person. I am a man (woman) with dignity and honour. I have a rich and noble history.'⁴³

Now, let us examine some of the factors that made King to debunk racism and slavery, and the reason he took love as an instrument of work and not a mere theological concept.

3.5 Degradation of Human Dignity

King's understanding of personhood or human personality forced him to debunk slave trade, slavery and racism. For him, racism is a philosophy based on contempt for life. Racism, for a racist, is considered as the centre of value and object of devotion to which other races must kneel in submission. Racism is total estrangement. It separates not only bodies but minds and spirit. It decides to inflict spiritual or physical homicide upon the other group.⁴⁴ For King, racism destroys the real nature of human being and tears him apart from others around him. This shows that racism located the very essence of man in the colour of his skin and the texture of his hair and not the texture, content and quality of his soul. This way, the soul is scared and personhood or personality distorted. Little wonder King conceived racism as the myth of inferior people meant to contradict and qualify the American democratic ideals. It is a 'tenacious evil', which might feed the egos of underprivileged white but not their stomach.⁴⁵ So, since racism depends on the

dogma that the hope of civilization lies in the elimination of the inferior race, its ultimate logic is genocide.⁴⁶

And so, if one man claims that another man, simply because of race, has no right to a good, to eat at a public restaurant, to have access to certain hotels and other public facilities, to live next door to him, to attend the same school with him and so forth, that person is by implication affirming that that man does not deserve to exist. He does not deserve to exist because his existence is a concept and defective.⁴⁷ The whites' claim that the blacks have no destiny is disproved by King. For him, racism is a theological problem. It is a denial of the sacredness and the inherent dignity of the human personality. By that, he meant that man is the image of God.... And every human being has etched in his personality the indelible stamp of the creator. Every man must be respected because God loves him. Thus, he writes:

Since God created man in his image, the dignity, the worth, and the sacredness of human life is derived from God. This further makes nonsense of any attempt to divide human beings along racial, social, religious, intellectual, and colour lines, particularly when such division involves the victimization of one another. Human worth cannot be subject to the whims of anybody or any race because it lies in relatedness. An individual has value because he has value to God. Failure to recognize this fact jeopardizes the concept of personality and the brotherhood of all mankind.⁴⁸

3.6 Deprivation of Human Equality

Another effect of racism and slavery is denial of human equality. The problem of slavery, racism and segregation questions the idea of equality as stipulated in the 1776 declaration of independence and enshrined in the Constitution of the United States of America. This is what King described as hypocritical declaration of human equality or freedom. He echoes:

For years the negro has been taught that he is nobody, that his colour is a sign of his biological depravity, that his being has been stamped with an indelible imprint of inferiority, that his whole history has been soiled with the filth of worthlessness. All too few people realize how slavery and racial segregation have scarred the soul and wounded the spirit of the black man. The whole dirty business of slavery was based on the premise that the negro was a thing to be used, not a person to be respected.⁴⁹

With the above statement, King saw Thomas Jefferson's declaration that "...all men are created equal" as an empty rhetoric and hypocoristic form of 'humanism.'"⁵⁰ Therefore, it is under this dreaded conditions of man's inhumanity to man; under the condition of extreme poverty, racism, war and massive oppression of the blacks; under the condition of dehumanization, brutality, exploitation of blacks in Africa, Europe and America; under the condition of slave trade or slavery of the African-Americans in the United States; under the condition of philosophical, cultural, political, social and psychological exploitation, oppression and intimidation that Martin Luther King Jr advocated for love. It is true that one may begin to wonder whether love is possible under these conditions of man's inhumanity to man. How is love possible under the condition of war of all against all? Even King himself, on one occasion, asked: "How could I love a race of people who hated me?"⁵¹ And yet he developed his concept of love in the midst of all these questions boggling his mind and begging for answers.

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CHAPTER FOUR

EXPOSITION OF KING'S CONCEPT OF LOVE

4.1 Life and Time of Martin Luther King Jr

Martin Luther King, Jr was born in January 15, 1929. By the time of his birth, his father was a minister in the local Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, and his mother was serving as a local teacher in the community school. It was in the parish house of Ebenezer Baptist Church that Martin Luther King Jr grew up. This was the same place where his mother, Alberta Williams, the only child of Rev. A. D. Williams was trained. Many scholars hold that Luther King Jr's background as the son of a preacher, brought up under strict Christian education, more than anything else, influenced the path he trod later in life. Cristina Richie, for instance, writes that:

As a son of a preacher, and eventually a minister himself, King could not escape the influence of biblical ethics, which were taught by the church and his parents, who gave "social consciousness and a sense of social responsibility" to their children.¹

One of Martin Luther King's earliest recollections of his childhood was the long queue of people who awaited their turn to have a share of the daily bread distributed to the poor to cushion the effect of the great depression of the 1930s in America.²At the tender age of five, protected from the harsh reality which other children suffered, on account of his father's position as a minister, Martin Luther King Jr found a voice to ask "why". The recollection of the answer he received was not as important as the fact that quite early in life, he had developed the ability to raise questions concerning social conditions. As a child, King Jr witnessed some forms of discrimination against the African-Americans. He must have overheard his father discuss in hush tones, the disparity between his mother's pay as a teacher and that of her white colleagues. He must have also witnessed his father's boycott of city buses which discriminated against African-

Americans. However, what left the greatest mark on him was being separated from his childhood playmate on account of colour. Another factor was the experience of being confined to the back seat in the bus with other African-American boys, while the front seats were reserved for the white boys on their way to and fro school.

King Jr had his secondary school at Booker Washington High School. He also attended Morehouse College, where he graduated in 1948, with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology. It was while he studied in Morehouse College that King Jr came in contact with Henry Thoreau's book, *Civil Disobedience*. This book would later be a big influence in his latter struggle as a human rights' activist. When King left Morehouse, he joined his father as a minister in Ebenezer Baptist Church, having been ordained few months before his graduation.

King had worked for some months when he enrolled again at the famous Crozer Seminary, Chester, Pennsylvania for a course in Theology. He was one of the eleven black students in the midst of about one hundred white students. It was while in Crozer Seminary that Luther King Jr came in contact with other thinkers whose social and ethical theories would later influence his outlook in life. It is important to mention the influence of Walter Rauschenbusch, whose *Christianity and the Social Crisis* provided him with the understanding that the teachings of the Bible were not only about personal salvation but also about social emancipation. In the month of May, 1951, Martin Luther King Jr graduated from the Crozer Seminary with a Bachelor's Degree in Theology.

Martin Luther King Jr's quest for education continued after his graduation from Crozer College. To assuage this, he registered for a postgraduate degree in Boston University. Boston meant so many things to him. It was in Boston that he met his wife, Coretta Scott, a music student who

had hoped to develop herself into a concert singer. They were married in 1953. He also came in contact with leading scholars of his time, Edgar Brightman and L. Harold De Wolf. He received a Doctorate Degree in Systematic Theology from Boston University in 1955. The same year, he was offered a pastorate in the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. He accepted the position, and thus, began his life as a preacher.

He influenced his church members to join the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP). The NAACP is reputed to be the oldest and largest civil rights organization in the United States of America. He was already a member of the NAACP executive, and he used his positions both as an executive member and a preacher to organize his first nonviolent demonstration in 1955.

This was followed by the popular bus boycott that was triggered by the arrest and detention of Mrs Rosa Parks. A local seamstress and active member of NAACP, Mrs Rosa Parks had violated the law by refusing to vacate a seat for a white passenger in the bus she was travelling. This happened on 1st December, 1955. By the 5th day of December, King Jr with two other activists, Rev. Ralph Abernathy and E. D. Nixon, mobilized African-Americans in Montgomery to boycott bus services. Speaking as a spokesman of the boycott which he played, King held that he was influenced by two circumstances: “In accepting this responsibility, my mind... was driven back to the Sermon on the Mount and the Gandhian method of nonviolent resistance.”³ The exercise lasted for 382 days during which King and his family were threatened and his house was bombed. He was arrested. At the end of it all, on December 21, 1956, the American Supreme Court outlawed bus segregation, and thus King Jr won his first social crusade.

In his social engagement as an activist, he made up his mind to be guided by the principles of nonviolent resistance advocated by Mohandas Gandhi of India. He visited India in 1959 to explore avenues for a better study of the principles of nonviolence. He returned from India and became more determined about his chosen path. One of the ironies of King's life was that while he espoused nonviolence, he was visited with more and more violence. He was jailed many times, stabbed by Izola Ware Curry on September 20, 1958 and stoned in the course of passing across the message he carried.

Despite the attacks he received from some quarters, King's effort did not go unnoticed in the world. In 1964, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for peace. Besides the Nobel Prize, he also received other awards from other institutions.

King did not limit his course to fighting for the blacks alone. His concern was to help eliminate injustice and human rights abuse wherever they existed. This informed his engagement with the politics of American occupation of Vietnam. In one of his major speeches, *Beyond Vietnam; Time to Break Silence*, he argues that the American occupation of Vietnam was intended to serve imperial purposes. Martin Luther King Jr was shot dead on April 4, 1968 by James Earl Ray while standing on the second floor balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee.

4.2 King's Concept of Love

The concept "love" is a determining factor in Martin Luther King's nonviolent revolution and civil disobedience. One can say that the philosophy or ethic of love is the foundation of King's nonviolent resistance or civil disobedience. As a result, it is proper to embark on conceptual exposition of the word, "love" and its place in nonviolent revolution or civil disobedience as embarked upon by Martin Luther King, Jr. Basically, the idea of love seems to have stemmed

from King's immediate family experience of love, and then Jesus' and Gandhi's philosophy of love. King confirms this when he asserts that:

It is quite possible for me to think of a God of love mainly because I grew up in a family where love was central and where (loving) relationships were ever present. It is quite possible for me to think of the universe as basically friendly mainly because of my uplifting hereditary and environmental circumstances. It is quite easy for me to lean more towards optimism than pessimism about human nature mainly because of my childhood.⁴

The fact remains that King's early childhood and influence helped to shape his idea of human relationship. One cannot ignore the fact that King's concept of love has both philosophical and theological undertones. As a preacher and theologian, he derived most of his ideas from the gospel of love. In *Loving Your Enemies*, according to Anagwuonye, King expresses that, "It's so basic to me because it is a part of my basic philosophical and theological orientation of the whole idea of love, the whole philosophy of love."⁵ Referring to the gospel of Saint Mathew, he says:

We read these very arresting words flowing from the lips of our Lord and Master 'Ye have heard that it has been said, 'Thou shall love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy, but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.'⁶

As King observes, the love advocated by Jesus is an expression by the Greek word *agape*, defined as unconditional, disinterested goodwill toward all men. Therefore, *agape* for him, aims to "preserve and create community."⁷ Thus, King explains:

In the Greek New testament are three words for love. The word *eros* is a sort of aesthetic or romantic love. In the Platonic dialogue *eros* is a yearning of the soul for the realm of the divine. The second word is *philia*, a reciprocal love and the intimate affection and friendship between two

friends. We love those whom we like, and we love because we are loved. The third word is agape, understanding and creative, redemptive goodwill for all men.⁸

According to Jones, one can put King's categories of love in parallel with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* regarding friendship and community.⁹ In Aristotle's argument, there are three kinds of friendships: a. self-interested; b. reciprocally exploitative; and, c. disinterested. In the first category, friends are used as means to the ends; in the second category, there is mutual means in friendship; and lastly, in the third category, the equals recognize one another and can never employ them as means to an end. The disinterested type, as we can see, is equivalent to King's categories, which he called *agape*. For him, agape is *understanding and creative, redemptive goodwill for all men*,¹⁰ and this is where King hinged his concept of redemptive love. Aristotle's categories of friendship is used to express the type where this friendship invoked political community.¹¹ Jones asserts that King's reasoning on the role of love, in its various forms from erotic, through filial, to personally disinterested, is Plato's upward from the *symposium* and Aristotle's evolution of the polis.¹² Aristotle's *polis* evolves from a Greek word *Koinonion* meaning "community living."¹³

From the categories of love explained above, we can say that King is not interested in the erotic and *phialial* love but rather in the agapistic love. As a result, agape love becomes a central theme in his political and social thoughts, and with this, love becomes a socio-political apparatus or instrument in fighting social injustice in the American society. King confirms the power of love when he says that:

Love is the most durable power in the world. This has been the chief quest of ethical philosophy. This was one of the big questions of Greek philosophy. The Epicurean and the Stoic sought to answer it,

Plato and Aristotle sought to answer it; what is the summum bonum of life? I think I have found the answer. I have discovered that the highest good is love. This principle is the centre of the cosmos. It is the good unifying force of life. God is love.¹⁴

Gandhi also described love as a weapon in the hand of the oppressed. He writes that:

...what made the supreme sacrifice of the cross possible is God's love. Hence, love alone, not hate, can transform the world into something better. Unless we understand and try to live this message Jesus lived and died in vain if he did not teach us to regulate the whole life by the eternal Law of Love.¹⁵

The word *Ahimsa* which means the Law of Love was used by Gandhi to describe love. He described *Ahimsa* as "soul-force", and the soul is imperishable, changeless and eternal.¹⁶ In line with this, King describes love as a unifying principle or as an integrative apparatus. And there, he states, lies the togetherness of humanity; and thus, love also is at the centre of cosmos. Gandhi's Satyagraha remains paramount in King's thought. King expresses that "...the whole Gandhian concept of Satyagraha (*Satya* meaning truth which equals love and *graha* meaning force; Satyagraha thus means truth-force or love-force) was profoundly significant to me."¹⁷

Just as Gandhi described love as a weapon in the hands of the oppressed, King describes agape as:

A willingness to go to any length to restore community. It doesn't stop at the first mile, but it goes the second mile to restore community. It is a willingness to forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven to restore community.¹⁸

The idea of love in Martin Luther King Jr is that love that lifts man beyond the boundaries of racism, poverty and war. It opens up the boundaries of human relationship. It ends Nietzsche's nihilistic epoch. Love, for King, is a call for worldwide fellowship. King writes thus:

This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighbourly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all mankind. This oft misunderstood; this oft misinterpreted concept, so readily dismissed by Nietzsche of the world as a weak and cowardly force, has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man.¹⁹

In the excerpt above, King refuted Nietzsche's view of love as a slave morality. For King, it is a powerful instrument for the restoration of the misinterpreted and misunderstood image of God. Even in the midst of tyrants, militants, oppressors, etc., the social idea of love could be seen as something that unites humans and makes all-embracing unconditional love for all mankind.

4.2.1 Love Against Fear and Hatred

King described hatred as an anti-thesis to love. According to King, hate is rooted in fear, and the only cure for hate is love. He opines that:

Our deteriorating international situation is shot through with the lethal darts of fear. Russia fears America, and America fears Russia. Likewise China, India, and the Israelis and the Arabs.²⁰

And this fear ranges from the fear of nation's aggression, scientific and technological supremacy and economic power. For King, fear deepens hatred. In the case of war, the problem is not that of war or quarrel, it is not that one country hates another but because they fear each other, and with this they believe that building sophisticated nuclear weapons will cast out fear. Instead, they produce greater fear. As regards this, King maintains that "Perfect love casteth out fear...not arms, but love, understanding of good faith, will make mutual trust a reality."²¹

In likemanner, King related the struggle of African-Americans against racism in the United States as the struggle against fear and hatred. He states that "our own problem of racial injustice

must be solved by the same formula. But what is that formula? It is simply love. King made it clear that racial segregation is buttressed by such irrational fears as loss of preferred economic privilege, altered social status, intermarriage and adjustment to new situation. And he also believed that through sleepless nights and haggard days numerous white people attempt to combat these corroding fears by diverse methods. He states:

Following the path of escape, some seek to ignore the question of race relations and close their minds to the issues involved. Others, placing their faith in such legal manoeuvres as interposition and nullification, counsel massive resistance. Still others hope to drown their feet by engaging in acts of violence and meanness toward their Negro brothers.²²

But how futile are all these remedies! For him, all these approaches, instead of eliminating fear, instil deeper and more pathological fears that leave the victims inflicted with strange psychoses and peculiar cases of paranoia. Hence, neither repression, massive resistance, nor aggressive violence will cast out the fear of integration, only love and goodwill can do that.²³

Most of the world's problems like war, violence, social injustice, tribalism or ethnicism could be predicated on hatred of one region, ethnic group, race, tribe or class against another, even among individuals. Among these also are pride, greediness or the desire for domination of the weak by the strong, or rather, the ideological domination of superiority and inferiority; civilized and uncivilized; rationality and irrationality; developed and underdeveloped that have existed and thrived among the races, nations, tribes or cultures. All these are seen by King as the factors that polarized the human society and increased hatred among the people. In all, King believes that love has an answer to all these problems of humanity. He recognizes this when he says that

“hatred and bitterness can never cure the disease of fear; only love can do that. Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illuminates it.”²⁴

4.2.2 Love in Nonviolent Revolution

Why did King reject violence and opt for nonviolence? The answer is simply “for love”. Nonviolence, as practised by King, confirms the practicality of the philosophy of love. King echoes:

In this nonviolent movement, you’ve got to love this white man. And God knows he needs our love, And when you rise to love on this level... you love those that you don’t love, you love those whose way are distasteful to you. You love every man - because God loves him.²⁵

In reference to Gandhian concept of Satyagraha (truth-force or love-force), King writes:

The principle of nonviolent resistance seeks to reconcile the truths of two oppositions- acquiescence and violence - while avoiding the extremes and immoralities of both. The nonviolent resister agrees with the person who acquiesces that one should not be physically aggressive toward his opponent; but he balances the equation by agreeing with the person of violence that evil must be resisted. He avoids the non resistance of the former and the violent resistance of the latter. With nonviolent resistance, no individual or group need submit to any wrong, nor need anyone resort to violence in order to right a wrong.²⁶

Nonviolence, for King, is not a method of stagnant passivity; it does resist. The nonviolent resister is just as opposed to the evil against which he is protesting as the person who uses violence. It is true that this method is passive or aggressive in the sense that the nonviolent resister is not aggressive physically toward his opponent, but his mind and emotions are always active, constantly seeking to persuade the opponent that he is mistaken.²⁷

Black communities unanimously agreed that they should embark on nonviolent resistance by boycotting the buses; walking, not taking cabs and sharing rides. As this was happening, King Jr gave the words of admonition and caution to his people on the need to continue to stick to nonviolence. He beckons:

Our experience and growth during this past year of nonviolent protest has been such that we cannot be satisfied with a court "victory" over our white brothers. We must respond to the decision with an understanding of those who have oppressed us and with an appreciation of the new adjustments that the court order for them... we must act in such a way as to make possible a coming together of white people and coloured people on the basis of a real harmony of interest and understanding. We seek an integration based on mutual respect – we must evince calm dignity and wise restraint. Emotions must not run wild. Violence must not come from any of us... let us be loving enough unto a friend. We must move from protest to reconciliation.²⁸

He gave them this advice so that the African-Americans should maintain their nonviolent stance through the power of love. King went further to tell them that "...we have committed ourselves to a way of nonviolence ... avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man but you refuse to hate him."²⁹

With the idea of love in the practice of nonviolence, King seems to have convinced the blacks that nonviolence is the best option if the African-Americans want to succeed and live in America. He concludes that he does not see the unjust system as a problem existing merely between blacks and whites but between justice and injustice, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness and between good and evil.³⁰

Martin Luther King Jr built a philosophical edifice as a means towards achieving his objectives. He carried out a nonviolent resistance that may be said to be legal. Therefore, his understanding

of violence made him elbow out any act of violence in his nonviolent resistance. He embraced nonviolence as the best method to achieve social change.

4.2.3 Love and Civil Disobedience

The case of Mrs Rosa Parks on December 1, 1955 spurred all the black communities in America. She was believed by some people to be the first person to carry out civil disobedience in the American society during Martin Luther King's era. She was arrested and jailed. Her "crime" was that she bluntly refused to give up or surrender her seat in the bus to a white commander as required by Alabama State Segregation Law. With this, King Jr, a fearless and dynamic leader, steered and channelled it to a successful nonviolent revolution. It is against this background that for the first time in the history of that struggle, the black people in America were galvanized into formidable, persistent, creative and active nonviolent resisters.

King embarked on civil disobedience in love. He did not mean to destroy the peaceful co-operation, which he believed should have been existing among men despite the racists' attitude to the African-Americans. In contrast, Henry David Thoreau was alleged to believe that civil disobedience should destroy the government or the political system. As regards this, he asserts that honest men should withdraw their support from the government. Regarding this, he calls for rebellion and revolution. He says: "I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize". Thoreau's civil disobedience was also an individualistic approach or a sort of passivity. For him, "...it is not a man's duty to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous wrong, but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands off it."³¹ He further states that "...he came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad."³²

But King's civil disobedience was not against the government or individual but specifically against the laws that are propagated by the government that degrade human personality. Unlike Thoreau, Gandhi and King's civil disobedience was neither individualistic nor violent. King has hatred for violence. For him, violence is improper and immoral. Both were community minded. Gandhi carried out a protest march against the British government based on the law that prohibited the Indians from collecting salt from the ocean – the Salt Law. ” To this account, Gandhi writes:

We shall march your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We shall meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will, and we shall connive to love you. We cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws, because non co-operation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is co-operation with good. Throw us in jail, and we shall still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our community at the midnight hour and beat us and leave us half dead, and we shall still love you. But be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. One day we shall win freedom, but not only for ourselves. We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win you in the process and our victory will be a double victory.³³

Thus, civil disobedience as was practised by Martin Luther King was through nonviolent technique in love. Love was its base as against hatred and violence. He holds that:

We intend to keep these things in fronts. We know that violence will defeat our purpose. We know that in our struggle in America and in our specific struggle here in Montgomery, violence will not only be impracticable but immoral. We are outnumbered; we do not have access to the instruments of violence. Even more than that, not only is violence impractical, but it is immoral; for it is my firm conviction that to seek to retaliate with violence does

nothing but intensify the existence of evil and hate in the universe.³⁴

King contends that the weakest point of violence is that it is prone to generating turbulent steams that eventually leave the oppressed more hopeless than ever. It does not stop there. It substitutes one evil for another. It cannot appeal to the conscience of the oppressor, but merely leaves him less ashamed of his crimes against the oppressed. He conceives violence as the antithesis of creativity and wholeness. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It is a self-defeatist approach which "...will end up with solutions that don't solve, answers that don't answer and explanation that don't explain."³⁵ King sees civil disobedience as an instrument of power and persuasion aimed at the integrity and conscience of the society.³⁶

King Jr embarked on a powerful civil disobedience that turned the whole of United States around. He decided not to subject his conscience to any unjust system or unjust laws that have no regard for human dignity, human freedom and equality of all. Above all, King's civil disobedience was as a result of his personal contact or experience of racial segregation. And with this, he vowed not to subject his conscience to laws that degrade the human person. According to Thoreau,

...if an existing injustice is of such a nature that it requires one person to be its agent to another person, then, there is a moral obligation to break the law that approves of such injustice. What I have to do is to see, at any rate that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.³⁷

"The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right."³⁸

Against this backdrop, King chooses not to cooperate with any law or policy that supports racism and segregation. Here, it is pertinent to note that all these divisions were created by the unjust system or unjust laws of the United States. These laws made it difficult for blacks to interact with

the whites both in social, political and economic life. However, personal relationship is also made difficult. King contends that all the laws in America should acknowledge the inherent worth, the dignity and the sacredness of human personality. He cites Frederick Douglas thus:

Even the Declaration of Independence which subscribed to the same universality of the sacredness of the human personality, its language is 'We the people; not we the white people, not even we the citizens, not we the privileged class, not we the high, not we the low, but we the people, we the human inhabitants: and if Negroes are people they are included in the benefits for which the constitution of America was ordained and established.'³⁹

Furthermore, King's civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance were not to cause societal commotion or to destroy individuals, rather to eradicate and to clear up unjust system and unjust laws in the American constitution, not the individuals. He made it clear when he says:

There is something else one seeks to defeat, the unjust system rather than individuals who are caught in that system. And that one goes on believing that somehow this is the important thing, to get rid of the evil system and not the individual who happens to be misguided, who happens to be misled, and who was taught wrong. The thing to do is to get rid of the system and thereby create a moral balance within society.⁴⁰

However, as King talked of unjust system, he also laid emphasis on the unjust laws. He went further to differentiate the two types of law - a just law and an unjust law. According to him, a just law is a law that squares with the moral law. It is a law that squares with that which is right, so that any law that uplifts human personality is a just law. The law which is out of harmony with the moral law and which does not square with the human personality is an unjust law.⁴¹

Therefore, it implies that any law that supports racism and segregation should not be obeyed. It should be discarded. For instance, King decided to disobey the Federal Court's decisions in his

organized protest march from Selma to Montgomery in January 1965. Coretta Scott King, King's wife, in her book, *Life With Martin Luther King* said that "King agonized over the decision to go ahead with the march contrary to the court order, 'because it was against his principles to flaunt federal law..." she quotes King saying that after he had decided to break the court order, that it was better to die on the highway than to make a butchery of his conscience.⁴²

The emphasis here is that 'love' is the determinant factor in both King's philosophy of nonviolence and civil disobedience. And it is this centrality of love that he thinks can make the building of the beloved community possible.

4.3 Love and Community

The idea of the beloved community rings a bell in King's construction of community. What does King mean by the beloved community? The idea of community is all-encompassing in King's thought. Community, for King, embraces all races. Obviously, the postmodern era desires peace in individual communities, and in the world at large. The United Nations Organization and other non-governmental organizations have been touring the world preaching peace. Currently, one can study Peace and Conflict Resolution in the university as a course so as to learn the skills for conflict and peace management. This will tell us how deeply the postmodern society desires peace among men, societies and nations. As Jones says, "As the twenty-first century begins, community has become the regnant ideal for reconstructing a 'new world order'".⁴³

Zygmunt Bauman, a Sociologist, also concurs to this when he says that,

...thus postmodern, the age of contingency *fur sich*, of self-conscious contingency, is for the thinking person also, the age of community: of the lust for community, search for community, invention of community, imagining community.⁴⁴

King asserts further:

If community, by definition, is the manifestation of people overcoming their separateness to live together in harmony, then, it's their love for one another - rather than the power they can manifest in collective conquest by domination - that creates the possibility of this miracle of human closeness.⁴⁵

King sees community life as an invitation of all human race to come together irrespective of their race, tribe, language, etc. He confirms this when he writes that,

The call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighbourly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for all-embracing and unconditional love for all mankind. This oft misunderstood, this oft misinterpreted concept, so readily dismissed by Nietzsche's word as a weak and cowardly force, has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man.⁴⁶

As it were, the concept of the beloved community is proved to be fundamental in King's nonviolence and civil disobedient action, especially when he talks of "to get in" or "social integration". This means to bring blacks and whites into this particular community – a community of love and forgiveness. This community is what he calls a large-house or world-house. He postulates:

All life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. "...We have inherited a 'large house', a great 'world house' in which we have to learn to live together - black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and Hindu- a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace."⁴⁷

Being a theologian, King's concept of beloved community is centred on the interrelatedness with God. For him, God is the head of this community. For Kenneth L. Smith,

the concept of beloved community was the organizing principle of all King's thought and activity and that his writings and his involvement in the civil rights movement were expressions of and footnotes to his fundamental preoccupation with the actualization of an inclusive human community.⁴⁸

In his proposal of the beloved community, King rejects war, poverty, racism, conflict, violence or anything that could tear humanity apart and cause harm to its members. Martin Luther's mid-twentieth-century philosophical ideals for a worldwide community, Jones says, averse to poverty, war, and racism, by products of capitalism - remains architectonics for hope.⁴⁹ We can say that the idea of the beloved community could be seen as a communalistic vision, which ultimately is against Nietzschean nihilistic epoch. Nietzsche predicted that human beings would endure one hundred years of nihilism and it would require yet another century before the rancorous pall dissipated.⁵⁰ The past events in the world like nerve gas trenches of the First World War, atomic explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Kamir Rouge killing fields, and machete-mangled corpses of Rwandan genocide,⁵¹ and we can still add, Boko Haram bombing and killings in Nigeria and the Fulani herdsmen's destruction of lives and properties, seem to make real Nietzsche's prediction. And this prediction has entered the 21st century in the postmodern ironies of an American unipolar military world. Even at this time, the effort of U.S military power to create a new world order seems to be impossible. So, King's beloved community, based on agape, remains the social ideal for ending the Nietzschean nihilistic epoch.

4.3.1 Basis of the Beloved Community

It is pertinent to observe that the course of Martin Luther's campaign was to build a community of friendship and brotherhood. It is a community where human dignity, human freedom, human equality and social justice are recognized and respected. His struggle is expressed in such statement: "No Cross, no Crown". If not for his fearlessness, perhaps, the African-Americans would have remained in perpetual servitude till now. As Frederick Douglas would say:

If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favour freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without ploughing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle, and power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will - Men may not get all they pay for in this world, but they must certainly pay for all they get.⁵²

From the above, Frederick Douglas made clear the nature of the struggle. But King decided to follow the moral side because he knows his goals. At this point, it is necessary to examine the basis of the struggle which includes: restoration of human dignity, restoration of human freedom, restoration of social justice, peace and love.

4.3.2 Solidarity and Social Integration

The struggle Martin Luther King Jr embarked upon in the cities of United States of America is not a struggle for national independence of the black people unlike Mahatma Gandhi, who set out to fight for the independence of India. Martin Luther King struggled for social integration of blacks and whites. It was a struggle to "get in", to make those blacks 'fit in' in a state they found themselves. Expressing further, he says:

The American racial revolution has been a revolution to “get in” rather than to overthrow: we want a share in the American economy, the housing market, the educational system, and the social opportunities. This goal itself indicates that a social change in America must be nonviolent.⁵³

He wanted to build a community of peace and social justice, a community where human dignity, human freedom, human equality are recognized. He believed that this struggle would surely be a reality. He made it explicit when he wrote:

I am convinced that we shall overcome because the universe is long but it bends toward justice. We shall overcome because Carlyle is right when he says; No lie can live forever. We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right when he says, Truth crushed to earth will rise again. We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell was right when he proclaimed Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne, yet the scaffold sways the future.⁵⁴

More still, he asserts:

If we will get out with this faith and with this determination to solve these problems, he said, we will bring into being that new day and that new America. When that day comes, the fears of insecurity and the doubts clouding our future will be transformed into radiant confidence, into glowing excitement to reach creative goals and into an abiding moral balance where the brotherhood of man will be undergirded by a secure and expanding prosperity for all. Yes, this will be the day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands all over this nation and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.⁵⁵

Without doubt, we can observe that King's effort was to build a community of brothers and sisters of all men irrespective of religion, race or tribe. Now, let us turn to King's effort to restore human dignity.

4.3.3 Restoration of Human Dignity

In the history of the African-Americans, it is self-evident that human dignity is questioned. The problem of racism and segregation raised a serious question: Are all human beings equal? The height of abuse and treatment meted out against the black as they were used as worthless household property for over three centuries can be seen as the highest degree of man's inhumanity to man. Thus, King's effort was to restore black's dignity as well as their constitutional rights. He made this clear in his famous speech, "I have a dream", key note address, during the march on Washington, and before the Lincoln Memorial on the 28th of August, 1963. He declares:

I have a dream that one day – sons of former slaves and sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood – a state sweltering with the heated injustice and oppression will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice...my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by content of their character- little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. Every valley shall be exalted- every hill and mountain – low, the rough places – plain and the crooked places – straight.⁵⁶

Here, Martin Luther King emphasized the equality and brotherhood of all men. The valley, hill, mountain, rough and crooked places depicted and represent the racist and segregationist tendencies as well as the political and socio-economic injustices prevalent in America. All these, King said, made human equality and brotherhood impossible.

On July 4, 1776, Thomas Jefferson issued the declaration of independence in which he said. “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.”⁵⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr set out to restore this American founding fathers’ declaration on equality of all men.

4.3.4 Restoration of Human Freedom

Some of the white scholars tried to defend the superiority of the whites over the blacks. By so doing, they stripped the sense of freedom from the blacks in order to justify their philosophy of racism. George Sawyer, one of the defenders of the status quo, argues:

This all goes to show that the Negro race, by universal consent of the civilized world, is considered a separate and distinct race of beings, suited only to their own peculiar state and condition. Their freedom is but a name, an unmeaning sound; they are by nature totally incapacitated to enjoy the rights and privileges of freedom, except in secluded communities of their own kindred blood, which have been, and ever will be, sooner or later, when left to themselves, in a state of barbarism. Their condition among the whites is necessarily that of pupilage and dependence.⁵⁸

By implication, Sawyer meant that blacks are incapacitated to exercise their own freedom. Their own freedom would have meaning only if they are left to be under the American society. His effort is to keep the blacks as slaves. Sawyer states that:

Not only does Negro slavery elevate the character of the master, and where the master is free, render his devotion to liberty a high and holy feeling, but where, as in our own country, the slave is of a different and inferior race, marked and set apart by his colour, physical and mental characteristics, it elevates the character, not only of the master, the

actual owner of the slaves, but all the individuals of his own race who wear the colour and distinguishing characteristics of freedom. With us colour not money, marks the class: black is the badge of slavery, white the colour of freedom, and the white man, however poor, whatever be his occupation, is inspired with the just pride of a freeman, a sovereign.⁵⁹

The above statement forced Gandhi to ask: “Why some people could derive some joy from the humiliation of others.”⁶⁰ Martin Luther King wrote that “...the greatest blasphemy of the white to the ugly process was that the white man ended up making God his partner in the enslavement and exploitation of the blacks.”⁶¹

For the freedom of African - Americans from enslavement and racial segregation Martin Luther King asserts:

The deep rumblings of discontent from Asia and Africa are at bottom a quest for freedom and human dignity on the part of the people who have long been the victims of colonialism and imperialism. The struggle for freedom on the part of oppressed people in general and American Negro in particular is not suddenly going to disappear. It is sociological truth that privileged class rarely gives up their privileges without strong resistance. It is also true that once oppressed people rise up against their oppression, there is no stopping point short of full freedom. So realism impels us to admit that the struggle will continue until freedom is a reality for all the oppressed peoples of the world.⁶²

This implies that King's advocacy for freedom was not restricted to blacks in the United States, but all over the world. His speech on the United States occupation of Vietnam testifies to this fact.

4.3.5 Restoration of Social Justice

Martin Luther King's struggle is also for restoration of social justice, peace and love in the American society. The Jim Crow's Segregation Law implanted another dimension of racial instability in America. Before Jim Crow's segregation Law, Abraham Lincoln has set the black free by courageously signing the Emancipation proclamation on January 1, 1863.⁶³ In his statement, he opines:

You and we are different races. We have between us a broader difference than exists between almost any other two races. Whether it is right or wrong I need not discuss, but this physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both, as I think your race suffer very greatly, many of them by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence....There is an unwillingness on the part of our people, harsh as it may be, for you free coloured people to remain with us. It is better for us both to be separated.⁶⁴

Though Abraham Lincoln helped to emancipate blacks from the shackles of slavery, but his statement was interpreted to be the offshoot of Jim Crow's segregation law, that restricted the blacks' movement in America. According to Daniel Stevick, The Emancipation proclamation freed the slave but ignored the Negro.⁶⁵ Subsequently, there were several amendments of the American constitution in order to accommodate the blacks.

On April 9, 1866 the American Congress passed a Civil Right Bill which conferred citizenship on the blacks and gave them the same right in every state and territory as enjoyed by the white citizens. Then, the Fourteenth and the Fifteenth Constitution Amendment were also effected on March 30, 1870 and July 21, 1878 respectively. The Fourteenth Amendment of the constitution ratified this and states:

No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States, nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of laws.⁶⁶

The Fifteenth, however, states, “The rights of the citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, colour, or previous condition of servitude.”⁶⁷

All these constitutional amendments are clear to Martin Luther King, Jr. He believes strongly the proclamations of the American founding fathers before he started to oppose all the laws that enslaved the blacks. He had already studied the American constitution to know the dos and don'ts of the law. In these laws, he identified the hope of the blacks for a brighter future. These laws, sent cold fear down the nerves of white racial bigots, who then looked for ways and means of circumventing the law in order to keep the blacks in their servile position.⁶⁸ Lerone Bennett wrote that when the true test came, the law became a dumb ass, making more than enough from the predominance of segregation. How and why was it possible that the law, in order to humiliate the blacks, became a kingdom divided against itself?

By way of answering this question, white supremacists did not see anything wrong with the law itself. They reasoned that the legal status of the blacks was questionable.⁶⁹ As the years continued to unfold, the Laws continued to be reverted. The blacks were being drawn back to the previous state. Slavery took another dimension. The whites began to make effort to use any available means to wipe out the blacks from America. For instance, in 1890 in Alabama and Mississippi, their constitution was revised just to ebb the blacks from their constitutional rights

or privileges. Carter Glass told the Virginia State Assembly that the Virginia constitutional convention was meant precisely for discrimination:

To discriminate to very extremity, a permissible action under the limitations of the Federal Constitution, with a view to the elimination of every Negro voter who can be gotten rid of legally, without materially impairing the numerical strength of the white electorate.⁷⁰

Hitherto, all the rights accorded to the blacks in the constitution were gradually removed. And slavery was replaced with segregation, the ideology of white supremacy and black inferiority was fully established. With political power stripped from the Negro, it became easier to establish complete white control and justify that control in terms of inherent dissimilarities presumed to exist between the races. An intensive propaganda of Negrophobia, race chauvinism and white supremacy prepared the South, if not the nation, for constitutional disenfranchisement.⁷¹ With this constitutional elimination of the blacks' right, the blacks' condition became deplorable. They began to fight for their rights. Different associations were formed such as the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Students Christian Leadership Conference, the Black Power Movement, etc. All these associations have one objective, and that is:

To promote equality of rights and eradicate caste or race prejudice among the citizens of the United States; to advance the interest of coloured citizens; to secure for them impartial suffrage; and to increase their opportunities for securing justice in the court, education for their children, employment according to their ability, and complete equality before the law.⁷²

King, as courageous as he was, came out fully to defend these objectives of the associations despite the heinous atmosphere of the American State. His course towards the establishment of social justice, peace and love made him to be adamant and determined to disobey all the laws that supported segregation and racism. It is a moral obligation or duty to do that. But as he went out for it, he was mindful of the common good of all. King considered segregation to be rationally inexplicable and morally unjustifiable. He could not adjust himself to it. Early experiences with racism and the dehumanizing effects of segregation made him to be deeply conscious of the varieties of injustice in America.⁷³

For King, however, one thing was certain. The social justice should not be achieved through violence, but nonviolence. Thus, in his question on social justice, peace and love, he states:

Breaking these obligations, spelled out on thousands of pages in law books, has filled numerous prisons. But unenforceable obligations are beyond the reach of the law of society. They concern inner attitude, genuine person-to-person relations, and expressions of compassion which law books cannot regulate and jails cannot rectify. Such obligations are met by one's commitment to an inner law, written on the heart. Man-made laws assure justice, but a higher law produces love. No code of conduct ever compelled a father to love his children or a husband to show affection to his wife. The law court may force him to provide bread for the family, but it cannot make him provide the bread of love. A good father is obedient to the unenforceable.⁷⁴

To eradicate social injustice and achieve social justice, peace and love, King states that a positive programme is needed, and that is nonviolent resistance. And this entails nonviolent resistance to all forms of racial injustice, including state and local laws and practices, even when this means

going to jail; an imaginative, bold, constructive action to end the demoralization caused by the legacy of slavery and segregation, inferior school slums and second-class citizenship. This nonviolent struggle, if conducted with the dignity and courage already shown by the Montgomery and the children of Little Rock will, in itself, help end the demoralization, but a new frontal assault on the poverty, disease and ignorance of the people too long ignored by the American conscience will make victory more certain.⁷⁵

Above all, love remains paramount as King fights for social integration of the blacks in the United States. Man-made laws assure justice, but a higher law produce love. No code of conduct ever compelled a father to love his children or a husband to show affection to his wife. The law court may force him to provide bread for the family, but it cannot make him provide the bread of love. So, in the philosophical mind of King, love remains paramount for harmonious life and cooperative existence in the world.

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CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Evaluation

Can we say that *love* as conceptualized by King is an utopia, and can never exist as far as the human nature is concerned? If the answer is in the affirmative, what then can be the obstacles to its realization? Or put differently, what are the factors that would make it impossible? Can the whole world really live like brothers and sisters? Can there ever be peace, a near-perfect peace in the world? These and other related questions, should come to one's mind as one reflects on King's philosophy of love as conceptualized in his nonviolent revolution. With this question, the beloved community seems to be more of a vision. Actually, one should consider King's ideal community before passing a judgment as either to reject or accept it. The issue here is whether King's concept of love as conceptualized in his beloved community is realizable in the contemporary society.

Some of King's critics have argued that he seems to have succeeded in America due to the liberal mind of the American authorities. If it were in the time of Hitler, so they argue, he would not have seen the light of the following day. But is it true? Perhaps, that is not the question now. The question is between love as rooted in nonviolence and civil disobedience and hatred as rooted in violence, for love has the possibility of saving humanity from the threshold of destruction? Which of them seems to have the tendency to bring everlasting peace in the world if heeded to by the community of nations?

There is no doubt that *peace* has, over the years, eluded and continues to elude the world till date. As it stands now, there are waves of poverty, war, terrorism and racism in almost every part of the world. Many people are fleeing their homelands and countries and becoming refugees

in Europe, America and other parts of the world. In Europe, Australia, Africa, America, Asia, especially the Middle East and some other Asian countries, there are wars and rumours of wars. There is poverty caused by bad leadership and discrimination (or segregation) as a result of racial, religious, cultural or traditional affiliations. In Nigeria, the case is the same. The Boko Haram militants and the Niger Delta Avengers have made life and community living extremely difficult. All these constitute some of the major problems many people are passing through today in the world. Some of these problems could be orchestrated on the social and economic structures as seen in different societies, especially the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor in the society. Other related problems are the socio-economic and political exploitations, bourgeoisie and proletariat conflict, which Karl Marx held would still be haunting human and international relations. But how do we tackle these problems that have made cooperative existence impossible? How can we build a kind of society that respects human equality and dignity, and at the same time, respects individual rights and freedom? All these are the central issues in the philosophy of love as advocated by Martin Luther King, Jr. These questions are predicated on the rate of violence in the world today.

Moreover, King's rejection of violence and adoption of nonviolent philosophy stands as a better option for him. Knowing fully well that violence can never give solution to the above questions, King advocated for nonviolence rooted in love. However, as we evaluate King's love against violence, let us evaluate the effectiveness of nonviolence. Some civil right activists, protesters, human right activists, etc. have tried to interpret King's nonviolence based on their individual manners. And in doing so, many of them seem to have deviated from King's personal understanding of nonviolence that was deeply rooted in love. For King, defining nonviolence is to constrain its meaning and powers. In his view, nonviolence is not a passive acceptance of evil,

but a way of life. It is a way of life that has to be embraced and lived without primarily asking for immediate results because it is the only way that is true in keeping with the dignity and the moral responsibility of all mankind. It involves extreme courage and strong-will. It requires physical and spiritual discipline of the highest degree, preparation and self-sacrifice.¹ That is why King holds that:

By living through the actual experience of the protest, nonviolence became a commitment to a way of life. Many of the things that I had not cleared up intellectually concerning nonviolence were now solved in the sphere of practical action.²

Suffice it to say that for one to embark on civil right activity, one should understand or study the rudiments of King's thought, especially his idea of love, and at the same time understand the primary aim of nonviolence. In this regard, he says, "...good means must be employed to achieve good ends". Nonviolence is not a functional alternative to violence. King adopted the principle of nonviolence and civil disobedience to fight social injustice, segregation and man's inhumanity to man, and in fact, he used it to fight every law that degrades human personality.

With this idea of nonviolence, King embarked on a mission of peace and harmony among the white and black people in United States of America in the midst of racism, economic exploitation and dehumanization. In doing this, he rejected violence. He believes that we cannot achieve peace by violence. Hence, he proposes the building of a beloved community. He says that returning violence for violence does nothing but intensifies the existence of violence and evil in the universe. Those who advocate violence do so because of their conviction that violence is the better way to resolve social conflict.³ For him, violence tears apart both the physical and psychological status of the human person.

From the negative effects of violence, which is counterproductive to nonviolence, as seen in King's thoughts, one could understand why he embraced nonviolence as the better option in resolving social conflict such as war, racism and poverty. In it also, one has to understand his principles inherent in the worth of every individual as well as his faith in the brotherhood of all mankind. The end of nonviolence, as it were, is to bring about redemption, reconciliation and the creation of a community or brotherhood which he called the beloved community.

In fact, the relevance of King's beloved community in contemporary society can never be disputed. As a matter of fact, peace, cooperative existence and community living have remained the desire of every man. And, indeed, it is for no other reason that the African-Americans in the United States, and the community of nations, or rather, United Nations Organization, are seeking peace in the world. Currently, the rate of poverty, war, terrorism and racism around the globe has made the emergence of the "beloved community" desirable. Even before King's active involvement in the quest for world peace and harmony, other civil right activists have seriously engaged in propounding their individual theories with regard to communal unity of all men irrespective of age, race, culture, religion, colour, etc, while some others continued to applaud and appreciate King's outstanding and active involvement in seeking world unity and peace.

Robert Birth, in "King's Radical Vision of Community", explores King's radical vision of community. According to him, King's vision of freedom and social justice is inseparable from his vision of community⁴, and this social vision entails a transcendence not only of racism, but of the entire socio-economic order that breed racism, economic injustice, acquisitiveness, imperialism and war. The integral community is the primacy of the human person, the unalienable dignity of every human being, but also the idea that the human person as a unique individual can only exist as person-community⁵, and not as a disconnected atom of aggressive

self-interest revered by the tradition of “rugged individualism.”⁶ He also says that personhood and community, inseparable ideas in King’s moral and social philosophy, constitute the moral basis of King’s critique of racial caste, economic exploitation, militarism, and the corrosive obsession of a consumerist culture that values possession over person.⁷ That is to say that King dealt with the practical condition of man in the world.

Again, the experiences of the First and the Second World Wars, as well as the Cold War, have compelled some of the contemporary thinkers and the human right activists to shift a bit from the dominant spirit of neocolonialism, colonialism and imperialism to the spirit of “World House” or “brotherhood” of all men. Martin Buber’s idea of community and Mahatma Gandhi’s philosophy of nonviolence were another humanitarian discourse one cannot forget to mention as one thinks of building a community, a common house for human beings, a community of love, a brotherhood. Martin Luther King, Jr’s idea of beloved community could be linked to some of these philosophers or thinkers, especially Martin Buber’s *I & Thou*. Nevertheless, King in a way made his thought more profound and philosophical than Buber.

Buber, in his work, *I & Thou* writes thus:

Man is free, creative, and fully human only to the extent that he possesses, in action and suffering, in his own life, a relationship which bind him completely with other; the primary word *I-Thou* can be spoken only with the whole being. Concentration and fusion into the whole being can never take place through my agency, nor can it ever take place without me. I become through my relation to the *thou*; as I become *I*, I say *thou*. All real living is meeting.⁸

Going further, he explains that the aim of relation is relation's own being, that is, contact with the *Thou*. For through contact with every *Thou* we are stirred with a breath of the *Thou*, that is, of eternal life. He asserts:

He who takes his stand in relation shared in a reality, that is, in a being that neither merely belongs to him nor merely lies outside him. All reality is activity in which I share without being able to appropriate for myself...for where there is no sharing, there is no reality.⁹

From Buber's idea, one can derive the idea that true community does not necessarily arise when people merely have feelings for one another, but primarily when they take their stand in living mutual relation with a living centre and when they are in living mutual relation with one another. "Living mutual relation includes feeling, but does not originate with them. The community is built up out of living mutual relation, but the builder is the living effective centre."¹⁰ Buber contends that,

Inner reality'exists only if there is mutual action. The most powerful and the deepest reality exists where everything enters into the effective action, without reserve, the whole man and God, the all-embracing- the united *I* and the boundless *Thou*.¹¹

King's love as seen in his idea of the beloved community is rooted in his understanding of brotherhood. This is where one discovers the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all mankind. He believes that all mankind belongs to one large family which he describes as a "large house". In this large house, God is the Father. And it is the centrality of God in King's life as the Father of all mankind that in turn moulded his message of nonviolence. Being a loving Father, God cannot at the same time endorse hatred, violence and strife among his children. God wants his children to live in peace and harmony. Anything that makes attainment of peace impossible,

negates that will of God and, thus, strikes at the root of human community.¹² King, in his speech, "Ethical Demands for Integration", asserts that:

Man is by nature a social creature who has been working from the beginning at the great adventure of community, and when the primitive man put aside his stone axe and decided to cooperate mutually with his cave-man neighbour, it marked the most creative turn in the history of existence.¹³

He states further that, "this seemingly elementary decision sets in motion what we know as civilization. And at the heart of all that civilization has meant and developed is "community", the mutually cooperative and voluntary venture of man to assume a semblance of responsibility for his brother. The universe, he says, is so structured that things do not quite work out rightly, if men are not diligent in their concern for others. And the self cannot be self without other selves. For "I cannot reach fulfillment without *Thou*."¹⁴ From King's speeches and writings, one can find out that his effort was to build a beloved community. To do so, Christian religion, theological perspectives and personalists' thoughts provided him with the raw materials upon which he built his philosophical edifice, while he applied nonviolent revolution as a method towards achieving his goals. Robert Michael Franklin holds that:

This quest for the beloved community of all mankind is what made King an "integrative person", who embodied the virtues of liberal Christianity, black folk culture, and the American political tradition of human rights....a man for all seasons and peoples, who managed to combine his African-American culture and political agenda with his quest for an inclusive, universal human identity.¹⁵

He says that the blacks were to use peaceful boycott and other techniques that could challenge the false sense of superiority of the white segregationists. But he warned that “the end is reconciliation, the end is redemption, the end is creation of the beloved community”. So King’s beloved community is both the integration of theological, philosophical and ethical foundation of his thoughts. Theologically, he writes:

The cross is the eternal expression of the length to which God will go in order to restore broken community. The resurrection is a symbol of God’s triumph over all the forces that seek to destroy the black community. The Holy Spirit is the continuing creating reality that moves through history. He who works against community is working against the whole of creation.¹⁶

From the above, it is clear that whoever causes destruction of life or property of others, as King said, works against community. Using violence as a means of settling social conflict is one of the ways through which anybody can work against the community.¹⁷ To respond to hate with a reciprocal hate or violence with a reciprocal violence, will only intensify and quicken the total destruction of a community already approaching its death through lack of love and forgiveness. The only way to close the gap in a broken community is by meeting hate with love. He says, “If I meet hate with hate, I become depersonalized, because, creation is so designed that my personality can only be fulfilled in the context of community.”¹⁸

King made it clear that we are all under the creative and loving care of a personal God. We are, therefore, a community of God’s children. If this community must live and function well, the members have to be united in love, freedom and goodwill.¹⁹ He holds that freedom allows each person to grow and develop fully his unique personality. Love and goodwill towards other members of the community remind each person that all life is interrelated and that the best way

to achieve moral goals is to serve the interest of the community. Since all life is interrelated, it follows that when one person suffers, all life suffers and vice versa. The agony of the poor impoverishes the rich; the betterment of the poor enriches the rich. We are inevitably our brothers' keeper because we are our brother's brother.²⁰

Under this approach, King's love and the principle of social solidarity went beyond the American society. It started with the blacks, extended to some parts of the American society, and then, the whole nation and finally, almost the entire world. All men are brothers irrespective of their race, colour, creed and culture. What affects one affects the other, and what violates one violates the other. He asks for the abidance of universal brotherhood when he writes:

We have inherited a large house, a great 'world house' in which we have to learn to live together-black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Moslem and Hindu- a family duly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace. However deeply American Negroes are caught in the struggle to be last at home in our homeland of the United States, we cannot ignore the large world house in which we are also dwellers.²¹

Meanwhile, there is no doubt that Martin Luther King's beloved community is a 'community of love'. Love, as observed in King, is not any kind of love, but the agape love or what we may call "Kingian agape". He describes agape as "...a willingness to go to any length to restore community. It doesn't stop at the first mile, but it goes the second mile to restore community. It is a willingness to forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven to restore community."²² He further states:

Love is the most durable power in the world. This has been the chief quest of ethical philosophy. This is one of the big questions of Greek philosophy. The Epicureans and the Stoics sought to answer it; Plato and Aristotle sought to answer it. What is the *summum bonum* of life? I think I have found the answer, America. I have discovered that the highest good is love. This principle is at the center of the cosmos. It is the great unifying force of life. God is love.²³

In agape love, King sees the ontological unity of all men. In it, also, he sees the interconnectedness of humanity. Bearing in mind that the beloved community is a community of love and justice, a community which promotes goodwill, mercy and forgiveness, King insists that integration is more than what he called “negative peace.”²⁴ Robert Michael Franklin postulates:

This quest for the beloved community of all mankind is what made King an “integrative person”, who embodied the virtues of liberal Christianity, black folk culture, and the American political tradition of human rights ... a man for all seasons and peoples, who managed to combine his African-American culture and political agenda with his quest for an inclusive, universal human identity.²⁵

King believes that peace achieved through conflict or violence is war postponed. Baldwin states that, 'World House' is used to capture the idea of a totally integrated world based on love, justice, and equality of opportunity- a world in which loyalties to race, class, sex, tribe, religion, philosophical orientation, political differences, ethnicity, and nationality would be transcended in the interest of total human community.²⁶

Another thing to consider here is the rationality of King's love. Recent studies regarding King's philosophy of love have portrayed him a controversial scholar. King's personality with regard to his philosophy of love has been a controversial debate between the African-American thinkers

and white racists. There have been arguments and counter arguments on this particular issue for decades now. Some white intellectual racists argued that King was not a philosopher, rather, a preacher. Others see him as a theologian, and those who recognize him as a philosopher, tag him a black philosopher. All these are meant to exclude him from among the western philosophers. With regard to this argument, Lewis Gordo argues in his work entitled *Disciplinary Decadence*, that:

If racial prejudice were suspended, to this pantheon we could easily add, for example, a lawyer an anthropologist (Antenor Firmin), a historian and sociologist (W. E. B. Du Bois), a literary scholar (Anna Julia Cooper), and a psychiatrist (Frantz Fanon)... Martin Luther King, for whatever, he was and is now, has not been included in the philosophical canon. At best, he is relegated to introductory philosophy courses and a brief discussion of his "Letter from Birmingham Jail.".....as black philosopher and philosophy has been systematically marginalized to the basement of the World House.²⁷

Whichever way King's philosophical prowess was judged, one can still say that he is a philosopher. The reason for this is because philosophy is not restricted to a particular race. Its universality is not racially constrained. And every philosopher has a point of departure, a particular experience that spurs him or her, and King is not left out here. Therefore, the question of whether King is a philosopher or not has no philosophical justification. It is true that we cannot deny the fact of theological influences or idea of God, evil and the world. Moreover, the ethical (or moral) basis of his thoughts stand out in nonviolent resolution.

To this end, one may ask if King is a philosopher, and if he is, what type of philosopher is he or what is the content of his philosophical postulations? It is from this perspective that some intellectuals emphasized on the experience of the black people in the United States of America

during his time. It is obvious that he abhors poverty, insecurity, social injustice, human exploitation or any social activity that dehumanizes the human person and inflicts injury on the individuals. Therefore, living in a society that rejected the poor, disregarded human dignity, equality, freedom, togetherness, and encouraged segregation, brutality and other social evils, motivated him to propound a philosophy he believed could save humanity from being a thing-oriented to person-oriented society. Perhaps, the philosophy of King's love is laid on his personalistic foundation which has a metaphysical origin, that is, based on the ontological origin of human existence.

Perhaps, one can say that King's philosophical postulations, as observed in his speeches and writings, are built on the philosophical traditions of philosophers, thinkers and intellectuals of all kinds. Among them are Plato, Reinhold Niebuhr, Walter Rauschenbusch, Mohandas Gandhi, the Boston personalists, and other African-American philosophers and thinkers like W. E. B. Du Bois. All these variably shaped King's philosophical mind or outlook. But the most influential of all these thinkers is the personalists' view on human person, that is, the interconnectedness of all human beings. This understanding of human person runs through his books- *Strength to Love*, *Stride toward Freedom*, *A Testament of Hope*, *Letter from Birmingham Prison* and other works of his. King's philosophical worldview on the sacredness of human life gives credence to his vision of community. Therefore, the philosophical foundation of King's beloved community is built on his understanding of personhood and community. Robert E. Birt confirms this when he says that:

Personhood and community are essential to the very metaphysics of personalism, which King regards as his basic philosophical position. This philosophical position, which King calls personal idealism afforded him a metaphysical basis for dignity and

worth of all human personality. It also offered him a metaphysical basis for community via its idea of the interrelated structure of reality, and of the interrelatedness of the self and other. Personalist metaphysics, with its idea that reality itself "*through and through social, relational, and communal*", also holds that the individual never experiences self in total isolation. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality.²⁸

Birt concludes, therefore, that King's idea of the communal nature of reality and persons is grounded in metaphysical principle. And it is not that King was primarily a metaphysician. He (Birt) insists that King is primarily a moral (and social) philosopher, and his notion of personhood and community are moral ideals. We can, therefore, argue that King is more of a philosopher than a theologian.

Jones argues that "Martin Luther King, Jr's utopian ideal for "beloved community" through agape in the *world house* is a highly philosophical trope that serves to remind us that where there is no vision, the people perish."²⁹ The beloved community, as seen in King, can be seen as a vision. Jones extends his argument by saying that:

I will argue that King is also a "philosopher"-a 'Philosopher King'-transcending the narrow disciplinary boundaries of what it means to be a philosopher... in the current postmodern era where dystopian futures or 'No Future' and the end of history reinforce Marxian alienation, Nietzschean *nihilism*, and terrorist war against terrorism, King's positive vision for a future is as important as Plato's *Republic*, Kantian *Perpetual Peace*, or Rousseau's *Social Contract*. "Professional," Western, analytic philosophers need to reevaluate King, as he was and is an important social philosopher. King's social, political, and axiological philosophies should assume an important place in graduate seminar as they have more importantly, in the praxes by which they inform a world.³⁰

With this, Jones sees Martin Luther King Jr as a prescient thinker and his vision of beloved community as especially pertinent to the social and ethical issues of our time. According to him, King understood that the social, political and personal fragmentation could only be overcome by a trans-valuation of values in community that is imbued with agape. For him, agape love is one that transcends love of self, family, tribe, race, class or nation³⁰.

This view of King, Jones says, is rooted in a philosophical vision of the organic interconnectedness of life, and interrelatedness of the universe. This largely informed King's understanding that poverty, racism, and war are related,³¹ and are seen as direct result of exploitative economic and political interest. Jones concludes that King's philosophical legacy, with his vision of universal human community as "World House", is becoming more important as the world continues to shrink due to globalization.³²

Also, King's ethical idea of community forms his basis for his commitment to nonviolence and his call for a "reevaluation of values."³³ This is to transform our "thing-oriented", profiteering society into a "person-oriented" cooperative society.³⁴ King's critique against the Vietnam War was also as a result of his idea of community.

Gail M. Presbey, in her work entitled, "Martin Luther King, Jr on Vietnam: King's Message Applied to U.S Occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan", shows that King was against the use of militarism as an alternative to war, or rather, in solving conflict or violent ridden problems. She advised the American society to rethink their entire order of values as well as their practice regarding war and militarism.³⁵

As earlier said, King believes in personhood and community, which is built on the intrinsic nature of human person and in the interconnectedness of all being in the world. These two

concepts are inseparable in King's idea of beloved community, and here, as said earlier, lies "his philosophical position."³⁶

In *Strength to Love*, he writes:

In a real sense, all life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is interrelated structure of reality.³⁷

The above lines showcase the content of the beloved community. The background of the beloved community stems from the fight against the Jim Crow Bill that supported racism, discrimination and segregation of the black people in the United States of America. So we can see that Luther King's nonviolent revolution and civil disobedience was directed towards resolving the problem of social injustice, inequality and economic exploitation. The driving force towards this revolution was King's understanding of human nature or personhood. Among these are acts of violence which he says violate the ontological structure of a person: negligence of the poor, willful denial of person or persons of the just rights and privileges, abuse of religious freedom and practice, etc.

King's articulation of nonviolent revolution was to put to an end the sufferings of the blacks, and later was extended to cover all human suffering, caused by man's inhumanity to man. For King, nonviolent revolution is a means to resist evil. Therefore, to ignore evil is "to become an accomplice in its perpetuation."³⁸ Bernard Haring confirms this when he writes:

We are not allowed to abandon the world to evil.
And this implies that we do not abandon evil doers

to their downfall. With the armour of integrity we shall try to heal them from their blindness, shake their conscience, rescue them from hatred and enmity, and thus invite them to the banquet of the final victory of saving justice and healing love. Without this dynamic of integrity, nonviolence would perish in the emptiness of passivity. Our own wholeness and integrity are at stake. We cannot breathe peace in a poisoned environment if we refuse our cooperation in healing it.³⁹

Having come thus far, we can see that the beloved community, for King, is a community of brothers and sisters; a community that lives beyond racism, poverty of its members and war. King confirms this when he says that the call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighbourly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all embracing and unconditional love for all mankind.

King's idea of beloved community is anchored on three basic principles, namely: the sacredness or dignity of human personality, the essential importance of freedom to the very being of the human person, and recognition of the human family.⁴⁰ King's sacredness of human personality followed from the fact that human beings are created in the image of God. This seems inherent from the dignity of human person as being created in the image of God, and seen from this perspective, all men are created equal. Therefore, the equality of the human race does not lie in the materialism of the world. That is why King's idea of freedom is very imperative. As seen in the postmodern or consumerist world, where human freedom is sacrificed on the altar of capitalism or individualism, King opted for a freedom that respects cooperative existence as well as human equality.

When King talks of freedom, unlike Kant, he does not mean the "freedom of the will, which he says objectified man (human person). When he talks of freedom, he means the freedom of man,

the whole man, and not one faculty, the will.”⁴¹ Freedom, he says, is not mere property that we have, but rather the peculiar mode of being that we are. Just as Paul Tillich would say that “man is man because he is free.”⁴² Similarly, the existentialists' concept of freedom holds that the essence of man is found in freedom. For King, freedom is a real constituent of man. Depriving him his freedom is like tearing him apart as well as making him less human. In citing the existentialists, King notes that, many “existentialists say we must choose...and if we do not choose, we sink into thing-hood and the mass mind.”⁴³ King projects a kind of freedom that makes us to be accountable to others, and in a way that could only be seen in interrelationship, in the community of brothers and sisters.

Another important constituent of King's beloved community is the recognition of the solidarity of the human family. Solidarity has to do with mutual cooperation. The concept of solidarity covers so many areas in King's beloved community. It covers the areas of political, economic, social, as well as cultural solidarity. It implies the oneness of humankind, and seen as an essential aspect of community for the realization of the freedom and dignity of the human personality. In building this kind of community, King laid emphasis on love as the determinant factor. There should be no superior race or inferior race. There should be only one race, and that is the human race. Every human being, no matter his or her race, is equal in the sight of the creator.

5.2 Conclusion

King sets out to build an ideal society, a society that respects the poor, underprivileged and handicapped. The problem of the world today, perhaps, seems to be anchored on selfishness, individualism and capitalism that breeds exploitation of man by man. Many nations or individuals have deluded themselves into believing the myth that capitalism grew and prosper

out of the protestant ethic of hard work and sacrifice. The truth remains that capitalism was built on the exploitation and suffering of men by fellow men. This was the typical situation of the black slaves in America, and this has continued to thrive among the communities, the states and the nations thereby making establishment of peace impossible. Thus, the only way to end poverty is to end exploitation of the poor, and ensure them a fair share of the government's services and the nation's resources. We must recognize that the problems of neither racial nor economic injustice can be solved without a radical redistribution of political and economic power.

We may take Nigeria as an example. The agitations of the people of the Niger Delta, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra and the Indigenous People of Biafra are due to negligence by their leaders. In some places in the world, like Somalia, Syria and Libya where there is war, the cause is often as a result of political or economic related problems. Some of these problems are aftermath of colonialism. Nigeria is a typical example of this colonial imbroglio. There is a belief that the British government left Nigeria as a divided nation. Even the Boko Haram insurgence, Islamic militancy in the Middle East and Arab Spring, perhaps, make King's beloved community seem unrealizable in the world today. The beloved community is not such a community like Nigeria where selfishness, social injustice, corruption, tribalism and all sorts of social vices are the order of the day. King's concept of the beloved community is still relevant in the contemporary society or the modern world. If everyone should come together to embrace each other as brothers and sisters, the world would be a home for everyone, a home where love and peace reigns supreme.

The capitalistic attitude or individualistic attitude that upsets the world today perhaps has made it impossible for people to live in peace. Third World countries remain underdeveloped due to socio-economic exploitation and depersonalization as neocolonialism and imperialism are still

prevalent in the postmodern era. Some of these factors are the causes of conflict, war and poverty in the world. With the principle of nonviolence, King strives for community of brotherhood that respects the intrinsic nature of man. Some people may hold that it will be very difficult to arrive at the Beloved Community. Its concept may also appear idealistic. But the world can borrow a leaf from some philosophers who used Thomas Hobbes' *State of Nature* and Rousseau's *Social Contract* to develop political theories. King holds that justice is indivisible. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Despite the loopholes one may observe in Martin Luther King, Jr's vision of the beloved community, it is still suggested that the United Nations Organization and other peace keeping organizations should borrow its basic principles or ideals so as to help the world live in peace and harmony, and peace built on love remains the key that can open the way for the beloved community.

5.3 Recommendations

The best option for peace and harmony in the world is to build a community, a brotherhood (and sisterhood) amongst nations - the beloved community. So despite the inconsistencies one may find in Martin Luther King's approach in solving the problem of hatred, racism, war and other forms of social evil or injustice, his ideals, if applied conscientiously, will help to bring peace and harmony in Nigeria, and the world at large.

Having presented the foregoing, this work recommends that the nations of the world should work together to promote peace management and conflict resolution amongst nations, through King Jr's concept of love, and at the same time, encourage dialogue, unity and solidarity among individuals and nations. The work also suggests that the United Nations Organization and other peace-keeping organizations (like Non-governmental Organizations) saddled with the responsibility of harmonizing the world should work harder to promote love among peoples and

nations. They should adopt love as a working instrument. Relating to this, this work recommends that since the primary law of nature is preservation of human life, all nations of the world should work together to promote, preserve and protect human life by showing love and respecting the fundamental human rights, freedom and equality of all human races.

Also, the work suggests that a further study be carried out on Martin Luther King Jr's concept of justice and equality since we cannot talk of his Concept of love without mentioning them.

Endnotes

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2. J. Odey, *Racial Oppression In America And The Nonviolent Revolution of Martin Luther King, Jr*, (Enugu: Snaap Press, 2005), p.222.
3. Ibid., p.89.
4. R. E. Birt, "King's Radical Vision of Community", in Robert E. Birt (ed.), *The Liberatory Thought Of Martin Luther King,Jr: Critical Essays on the Philosopher King*,(New York: Lexington Books, 2014),p.158.
5. Loc.cit.
6. Loc.cit.
7. Ibid., p.8.
8. Martin Buber, *I & Thou*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p.11.
9. Ibid., p. 63.
10. Ibid., p.45.
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12. J. Odey, p.236.

13. Martin Luther King, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr*, in Washington, J. M.,(ed.), (New York: Harper-Collins publishers, 1991), p.122.
14. Loc.cit.
15. Robert Michael Franklin, *Liberating Vision: Human Fulfillment and Social Justice in African-American thought*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p.103.
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17. J. Odey, p.237.
18. Martin Luther King, Jr, *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*, p.106.
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23. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength To Love*, p.1333.
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25. Robert M. Franklin in J. Odey, p.239.

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28. R. E. Birt, "King's Radical Vision of Community", in Robert E. Birt (ed.), *The Liberatory Thought Of Martin Luther King, Jr: Critical Essays on the Philosopher King*,(New York: Lexington Books, 2014),p.158.
29. Richard Jones, "Martin Luther King, Jr's Agape and World House", in Robert E. Birt (ed.), *The Liberatory Thought Of Martin Luther King, Jr: Critical Essays on the Philosopher King*, p.136.
30. Loc.cit.
31. Loc.cit.
32. Loc.cit.
33. Robert E. Birt, "King's Radical Vision of Community", in Robert E. Birt (ed.), *The Liberatory Thought Of Martin Luther King, Jr: Critical Essays on the Philosopher King*, p.170.
34. Loc.cit.
35. Gail M. Presbey, "Martin Luther King, Jr. on Vietnam: King's Message Applied to the US Occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan", in Robert E. Birt (ed.), *The Liberatory Thought Of Martin Luther King, Jr: Critical Essays on the Philosopher King*, p.215.

36. Martin Luther King, Jr, *Stride Toward Freedom* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1968), p.100.
37. Martin Luther King, Jr, in J. Odey, *Racial Oppression In America And Nonviolent Revolution Of Martin Luther King, Jr*, pp.235-6.
38. Martin Luther King, Jr, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*, p.86.
39. Bernard Haring, *The Healing Power of Peace and Nonviolence*, (Middlegreen: St. Paul Publication, 1986), p.54.
40. Martin Luther King, Jr, *Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr*, p. 20.
41. Loc.cit.
42. Ibid, p.120.
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