

Compare and Contrast:
Martin Luther King, Jr.
vs.
George Orwell

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Throughout history, many leaders have paved the way to freedom. Physical freedom, political freedom, mental freedom or spiritual freedoms have been the heart of their messages that have lived on through the ages. Each has a specific way that they establish the way to freedom.

The way Martin Luther King, Jr. helped to establish this freedom was through protest, demonstrations and his sermons. For George Orwell, it was through his writing. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught freedom from prejudice. He taught friendship between the races, and actively sought out that freedom and friendship. Orwell hated tyranny and communism, and as such, wrote many things to persuade the world to fight for freedom from tyranny and despotic governments. Unlike King, Orwell never actively fought against that which he was so wildly opposed.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia into a good Baptist home. He was born to a long line of Baptist ministers, and upon reaching the age of eighteen felt obligated to maintain the King tradition of ministry and was ordained a minister in his father's church. Through his faith and studies, began firmly believing in the Christian doctrine of love and of the method of non-violent force. He readily put this line of thinking into use during the protests he led against racial prejudice. Through King's non-violent boycotts and marches, the people's minds were compelled to change.

George Orwell, born Eric Blair, was born in British controlled India. His father was a British customs officer stationed in Bengal. From his birth, Orwell was taught his superiority in India. He believed that the British having control over India was not desirable, that this totalitarian thinking would quickly lead to the demise of freedom. He also believed that if totalitarianism weren't stopped, communism and dictators would eventually rule the world, that no one would be allowed to think for themselves and freedom would be lost. He despised the governments that enforced this thinking of superiority and absolute control. Despite his opposition to these governments, he enrolled to be a police officer in Burma, India, possibly to follow the example of his father as King followed his father. Being in the role of a police officer in India, he strove to establish peace by violence and oppression. In the essay "Shooting an Elephant",

Orwell recalls “the wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, that scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos.” He was very disillusioned by this and resigned his position in the police force. For the rest of his life, he was never in one place for very long. He spent much time with those less fortunate than he, and he was never very far from war.

King and Orwell, during the times when they were in the minority, were hated. King was hated because he was different. Orwell was hated because he represented the oppression of the people in Burma. They were both widely discriminated against because of their differences. At the time, the way they dealt with the discrimination was very different. King chose confrontation, to change the people’s hearts through acts of non-violence. Orwell was oppressed by the hatred that Burmese people held toward him, and he hated them for it, but he also hated the government that oppressed their freedom. He chose to change himself, to do the things that would not be looked upon with hatred, but would be accepted into the Burmese population. Through his writing, he expressed all of his hatred towards the oppressing governments that he had kept quieted for so many years.

These two men led very different lives and had very different views. However, their goal in life was the same: freedom from oppression. The hatred and discrimination they experienced led them to action in very different ways.