

0. LEARNING FROM PAIN - Story Preface

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After Jack's death, Bobby was completely devastated. Trying to help him deal with the grief, Jackie Kennedy told her brother-in-law that he might find comfort in the books of Edith Hamilton. Taking her advice, he read The Greek Way. Soon thereafter he purchased, read and annotated the rest of Hamilton's works. He also started to read Greek poets.

The fruits of his study became apparent as he quoted ancient writers in his speeches - like the famous "Stars" speech he delivered (to a thundering, lengthy ovation) at the 1964 Democratic convention. He continued to memorize passages which gave him comfort.

Not long before he died, he said his favorite poet was Aeschylus, a survivor of the battle of Marathon and author of numerous Greek tragedies. It was Aeschylus, in The Oresteia, who said man must live by a "law" which includes pain and suffering:

*The truth
Has to be melted out of our stubborn lives
By suffering.
Nothing speaks the truth,
Nothing tells us how things really are,
Nothing forces us to know
What we do not want to know
Except pain.
And this is how the gods declare their love.
Truth comes with pain.*

(The Oresteia, Ted Hughes translation, page 9)

Before his brother's death, Bobby had always been known as a focused, hard-driving, energetic taskmaster who accomplished his objectives. Through his suffering, however, he noticed the plight of others who endured life's daily hardships.

Having stepped away from his job at the Department of Justice, RFK was elected U.S. Senator from New York. Traveling throughout America, and abroad, he found plenty of people in desperate circumstances. He began to think he could expose their plight and provide them with a voice which could be heard around the world.

In a moving talk he gave to white students, in apartheid South Africa, Bob Kennedy delivered what many scholars consider his finest speech. He challenged the students, and the world, to affirm their humanity and to help others.

Let's listen in.

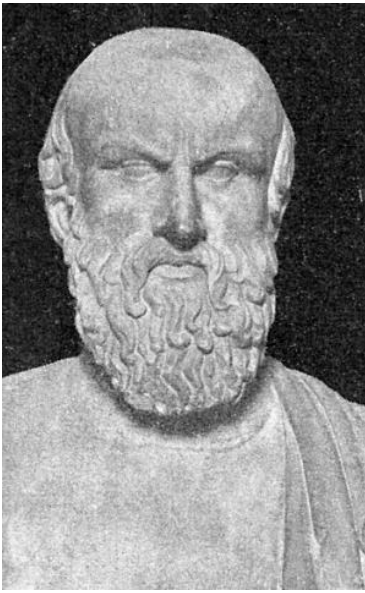
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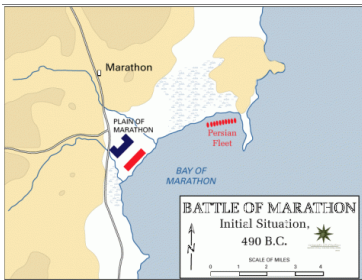


Aeschylus

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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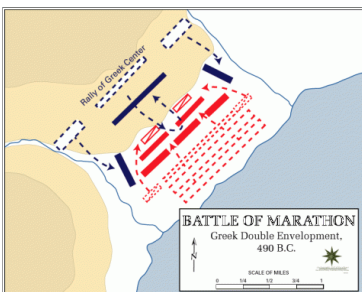


Map: Battle of Marathon

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Marathon - Battle Lines

Image online, courtesy Atlas Collection at the USMA.

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RFK - Bobby Delivers His "Stars Speech"

"Stars Speech" and Richard Norton Smith introduction, courtesy C-Span. PD

Quotation from *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 3, Scene II - PD

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RFK - Bobby at the 1964 Democratic Convention

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RFK - Suffering After JFK's Death

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