

0. RFK on RACIAL INJUSTICE - Story Preface

1. WHO WAS RFK?
2. BOBBY'S ROLE in the MISSILE CRISIS
3. THE SECRET DEAL
4. THE ACTUAL DEAL
5. LEARNING FROM PAIN

**6. RFK on RACIAL INJUSTICE**

7. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE
8. A CALMING INFLUENCE
9. THE AMBASSADOR HOTEL
10. THE SHOOTING
11. THE AFTERMATH
12. WHAT WOULD BOBBY SAY?

Bobby's political philosophy—expressed in his speeches—was to do right even when it isn't popular.

In the summer of 1966, he and Ethel traveled to South Africa where he was scheduled to give a speech on the "Day of Affirmation." Huge crowds (like these in Johannesburg and Sowetto) surrounded him wherever he went. He was warmly greeted at a primary school and by the residents of Sowetto where he took time to talk with people.

On June 6, Kennedy addressed a crowd of students at the University of Capetown in South Africa. Beginning with a joke, he quickly became serious. (You can listen to the entire speech which is on-line at the JFK Library.)

Not only does he stress equality, while apartheid was the law of that land, he challenges young people to develop moral courage. Giving what many consider his finest speech—referred to as the "Ripple of Hope" speech—Bobby said:

... For two centuries, my own country has struggled to overcome the self-imposed handicap of prejudice and discrimination based on nationality, on social class or race - discrimination profoundly repugnant to the theory and to the command of our Constitution. Even as my father grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, signs told him, "No Irish Need Apply."

Two generations later, President Kennedy became the first Irish Catholic, and the first Catholic, to head the nation; but how many men of ability had, before 1961, been denied the opportunity to contribute to the nation's progress because they were Catholic, or because they were of Irish extraction? How many sons of Italian or Jewish or Polish parents slumbered in the slums - untaught, unlearned, their potential lost forever to our nation and to the human race? Even today, what price will we pay before we have assured full opportunity to millions of Negro Americans? ...

... We must recognize the full human equality of all of our people - before God, before the law, and in the councils of government. We must do this, not because it is economically advantageous - although it is. Not because the laws of God command it - although they do. Not because people in other lands wish it so. We must do it for the single and fundamental reason that it is the right thing to do . . . (12:37 into the speech)

... There is, said an Italian philosopher, nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things. Yet this is the measure of the task of your generation and the road is strewn with many dangers.

... Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance . . .

... Moral courage is a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence. Yet it is the one essential, vital quality for those who seek to change the world which yields most painfully to change. Aristotle tells us at the Olympic Games it is not the finest or the strongest men who are crowned, but those who enter the lists . . . so too in the life of the honorable and the good it is they who act rightly who win the prize.

Not-yet a presidential candidate, Bobby returned to America where he tried to put his words into action. A child of privilege, he worked hard to bring the plight of underpaid farm workers and disenfranchised African-Americans into the public spotlight.

Attorney General when his brother sent advisors into Vietnam, he no longer believed that armed conflict in Southeast Asia was right for the United States. In his final Senate speech regarding Vietnam, he said:

*Are we like the God of the Old Testament that we can decide, in Washington, D.C., what cities, what towns, what hamlets in Vietnam are going to be destroyed? ... Do we have to accept that? I do not think we have to. I think we can do something about it.*

Through study and reflection, Bobby Kennedy had transformed himself. Those he had helped were among his biggest supporters when the Junior Senator of New York made a surprising announcement in March of 1968.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/RFK-on-RACIAL-INJUSTICE-Bobby-Kennedy>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/RFK-on-RACIAL-INJUSTICE-Bobby-Kennedy>

## Media Stream



### Bobby and Ethel Kennedy in South Africa

Image online, courtesy RFK in the Land of Apartheid.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bobby-and-Ethel-Kennedy-in-South-Africa>



### Bobby Kennedy in South Africa - June of 1966

Image online, courtesy Bailey's African History Archive.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bobby-Kennedy-in-South-Africa-June-of-1966>



### Crowd in Johannesburg for Kennedy's Speech

Image online, courtesy Bailey's African History Archive.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Crowd-in-Johannesburg-for-Kennedy-s-Speech>



### Bobby Kennedy in Johannesburg - 1966

Image online, courtesy Bailey's African History Archive website.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bobby-Kennedy-in-Johannesburg-1966>



### Bobby Kennedy - Meeting People of Sowetto

Image online, courtesy RFK in the Land of Apartheid.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bobby-Kennedy-Meeting-People-of-Sowetto>



### Bobby Working the Crowd in South Africa

Image online, courtesy the [npr.org](http://www.npr.org) website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bobby-Working-the-Crowd-in-South-Africa>



### Bobby Talking with People of Sowetto

Image online, courtesy RFK in the Land of Apartheid.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bobby-Talking-with-People-of-Sowetto>



### Bobby and Ethel at a Primary School - South Africa, 1966

Image online, courtesy RFK in the Land of Apartheid.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bobby-and-Ethel-at-a-Primary-School-South-Africa-1966>



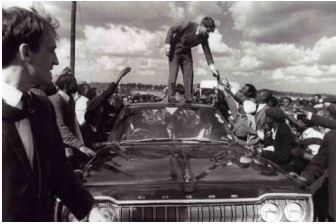
### Bobby Traveling Around South Arica - 1966

Image online, courtesy RFK in the Land of Apartheid.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bobby-Traveling-Around-South-Arica-1966>



### Bobby Kennedy in Sowetto - 1966

Image online, courtesy RFK in the Land of Apartheid.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bobby-Kennedy-in-Sowetto-1966>