PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE



0. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE - 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?

Before he was a candidate for the US Presidency himself, Bob Kennedy was involved in seeking justice for all. While he was still America's Attorney General, he addressed crowds in front of the Department of Justice (on June 14, 1963).

This image, maintained by the Library of Congress, has the following description: "Photograph showing Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy speaking to a crowd of African Americans and whites through a megaphone outside the Justice Department; sign for Congress of Racial Equality is prominently displayed." Warren K. Leffler took this photo; it is part of the U.S. News & World Report collection at the Library of Congress. (As part of the Deed of Gift for this collection, USN&WR granted its copyrights to the Library of Congress; as such the image is now copyright-free.)

In March of 1968, nearly a half-million American troops were fighting in Vietnam. The war was becoming increasingly unpopular. Night after night American televisions broadcasted stories of dying soldiers. People throughout the country began to seriously question whether U.S. involvement in the region was wise.

President Johnson was under tremendous pressure. He had dramatically increased troop strength as a perceived way to win the war. Lady Bird, his wife, worried that her husband would die of a heart attack. Her diary reveals a strong desire that LBJ not seek another term as America's leader.

Eugene McCarthy, U.S. Senator from Minnesota, had already decided to challenge LBJ for the Democratic presidential nomination. An outspoken critic of the war, McCarthy made clear he disagreed with the President on how things were going in Vietnam.

On March 16, 1968 - about two weeks before LBJ stunned the country by asserting that "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President" - Robert Kennedy announced his candidacy:

. . . I do not run for the presidency merely to oppose any man but to propose new policies. I run because I am convinced that this country is on a perilous course and because I have such strong feelings about what must be done, and I feel that I'm obliged to do all that I can.

I run to seek new policies - policies to end the bloodshed in Vietnam and in our cities, policies to close the gaps that now exist between black and white, between rich and poor, between young and old, in this country and around the rest of the world.

I run for the presidency because I want the Democratic Party and the United States of America to stand for hope instead of despair, for reconciliation of men instead of the growing risk of world war.

I run because it is now unmistakably clear that we can change these disastrous, divisive policies only by changing the men who are now making them. For the reality of recent events in Vietnam has been glossed over with illusions.

. . . In private talks and in public, I have tried in vain to alter our course in Vietnam before it further saps our spirit and our manpower, further raises the risks of wider war, and further destroys the country and the people it was meant to save.

I cannot stand aside from the contest that will decide our nation's future and our children's future . . .

As Bobby began his presidential campaign, he knew he could count on the support of his friend, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Three days after President Johnson withdrew from the race, King was in Memphis to help protestors rally against low pay for black sanitation workers. Although too ill to preach to the crowd, which had gathered at Mason Temple Church of God, Dr. King spoke to the people without a single note.

In his famous "Mountaintop" speech (scroll down 25% to hear it), King addressed the threats against his life:

Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land! So I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord! (Move the cursor to 41:30 [out of 43:13 total running time] to hear this famous excerpt.)

The next day (April 4, 1968) - while Bobby was with a large gathering of African-Americans in Indianapolis, Indiana - Dr. King was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel. Realizing the crowd had no idea what had happened in Memphis, Bobby abandoned his prepared remarks to speak from his heart.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/PRESIDENTIAL-CANDIDATE-Bobby-Kennedy

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/PRESIDENTIAL-CANDIDATE-Bobby-Kennedy

Media Stream



President Johnson
Image online, courtesy LBJ Library.
PD
View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/President-Johnson



Lady Bird Johnson

Image online, courtesy LBJ Library.

PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Lady-Bird-Johnson



President and Mrs. Lyndon Johnson

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Park Service.

PD

View this asset at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/President-and-Mrs.-Lyndon-Johnson



Eugene McCarthy

Image online, courtesy U.S. Congress.

PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Eugene-McCarthy



Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King

Image online, courtesy JFK Library.

PD

View this asset at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bobby-Kennedy-and-Martin-Luther-King



Lorraine Motel - Neighborhood Layout

Image online, courtesy U.S. Department of Justice.

PD

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Lorraine-Motel-Neighborhood-Layout

Bobby Kennedy - Announces Run for Presidency

Clip from *Meet the Press* with Tim Russert, 2008 - the year Russert unexpectedly died of a heart attack.

Courtesy, NBC and YouTube.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bobby-Kennedy-Announces-Run-for-Presidency