
Robert F. Kennedy (Nov. 20, 1925 - June 6, 1968)

Robert “Bobby” Kennedy was an American politician from Massachusetts who was committed to social justice. He was the seventh of nine children born to Joseph and Rose Kennedy. Raised as a devout Roman Catholic, he and his siblings lived a life of wealth and privilege. The Kennedy clan has become one of the most famous political families in American history. His father served as a U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom. His brother, John F. Kennedy, became the 35th President of the United States. His brother Ted was a prominent U.S. Senator.



Attorney General

Robert Kennedy graduated from Harvard University and the University Of Virginia School Of Law. He was appointed attorney general after his older brother John Kennedy was elected president in 1960. He also served as a close advisor to the president and was involved in important foreign policy decisions.

As attorney general he fought organized crime and worked for civil rights for African Americans. It was Kennedy who ordered U.S. marshals to protect James Meredith, the first African American student admitted to the University of Mississippi. He also gave a passionate speech after the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King to a mostly African American crowd in Indianapolis. In his speech, he shared that he knew the pain of losing a family member to an assassin.

Senator

Nine months after the death of his brother, Kennedy began campaigning to represent the state of New York in the U.S. Senate. He won the election and took office in 1965.

In the Senate, Kennedy was a committed advocate of the poor and racial minorities and championed civil rights and social justice issues. He traveled to Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, migrant workers' camps, and urban ghettos to study the effects of poverty. He made trips to foreign countries, such as South Africa, to advocate for the advancement of human rights. Kennedy also spoke out against President Johnson's policies to further escalate the war in Vietnam.

Bid for Presidency

In 1968 Kennedy supporters urged him to run for president as an antiwar and socially progressive Democrat. He announced his candidacy in March 1968 after seeing the support that Eugene McCarthy, who was also antiwar, was receiving. President Lyndon Johnson dropped out of the presidential race just two weeks later. Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Kennedy, and Eugene McCarthy were all in the running for the democratic nomination.

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With President Johnson out of the race, Humphrey was the Democratic hopeful. However, Kennedy conducted an energetic campaign and on June 4, 1968, won a major victory in the California primary.

Assassination

In the early hours of June 5, 1968, not long after giving a speech to celebrate his win in the California primary, Kennedy was shot at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. He died early the next day. He was just 42 years old and in the midst of one of the most controversial presidential campaigns of the 20th century. His assassination stunned America, coming just months after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis.

He left behind a wife and 11 children. His brother Edward “Ted” Kennedy, the youngest Kennedy sibling and a Senator from Massachusetts, delivered a now-famous eulogy for his brother, remembering him as a “good and decent man, who saw wrong and tried to right it, saw suffering and tried to heal it, saw war and tried to stop it.” Kennedy was buried at Virginia’s Arlington National Cemetery near the grave of his brother John.

Questions:

1. What is the purpose of this text?

2. Explain the main idea of the article.

3. Create a title for this text. Why did you choose this title?

4. How could someone use the information in this text?

5. Where did Bobby Kennedy attend school? _____

6. What work did Bobby do while he was a senator? Where did he travel to fulfill this work?
