

Collection #
SC 2878
DVD 0196-0197

YOU ARE THERE 1968: ROBERT F. KENNEDY SPEAKS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 2010

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF 4 folders; 2 DVDs; 1 artifact

COLLECTION:

COLLECTION 2010

DATES:

PROVENANCE:

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Ray E. Boomhower, *Robert F. Kennedy and the 1968 Indiana Primary*. Bloomington: Indiana University, 2008; OM 0271, Indiana Students for Kennedy Records, 1968; M 0538, CT 0702, Robert F. Kennedy Speech, April 4, 1968 in Muncie, Ind.

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2010.0145; 2011.0007

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968), a Baptist minister and the preeminent American civil rights leader who had been awarded a Nobel peace prize was slain on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. Throughout his life he had espoused non violence toward solving racial and other concerns in the United States and throughout the world. Following his assassination, violence (in the form of riots) erupted in over 100 U. S. cities.

Robert F. Kennedy was on the presidential campaign trail in Indiana on the day of King's death. Earlier in the day, he spoke at Ball State University in Muncie. He was scheduled to speak at an outside rally in an Indianapolis inner city neighborhood that evening. Against the advice of his staff members and Indianapolis city officials, he chose to speak at the event. He delivered a six-minute, sincere, clear, and heartfelt speech to the interracial crowd, composed primarily of African Americans. He empathized with the crowd, sharing that his brother, President John F. Kennedy, had also been killed by an assassin's bullet. He implored the crowd not to react with violence. The reaction of local black leadership and Kennedy's words have been credited for the tranquility in Indianapolis.

As a component of the *Indiana Experience*, the Indiana Historical Society created "You Are There" (YAT) using historical photographs from their 1.6 million photographs. As explained on their website a description of YAT follows: ***You Are There*** *Step into another era in You Are There. Historic photographs are brought to life three-dimensionally, right down to the first-person interpreters playing the people in – and around – the images. Become part of the story and see, hear and touch history because ... You Are There.*

The "**You Are There 1968: Robert F. Kennedy Speaks**" depiction is described on the IHS website: *Senator Kennedy's April 4 Indianapolis campaign rally changes course when he announces the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to a stunned crowd. Revolutionary hologram technology allows you to be swept up in that historic moment with him and his supporters in the park that evening, mourning the loss of one of the world's greatest civil rights leaders.* (Duration of the exhibit: February 17, 2011 through April 14, 2012.)

The image used for the “You Are There 1968: Robert F. Kennedy Speaks” is taken from the *Indianapolis Recorder* collection. It is a picture of Kennedy talking to the rally participants through a mike as he stands on a flatbed pick-up truck. He delivered a short speech, and many of the participants gasped at the news that King had been killed. The hologram is achieved with the use of actors that appear alive. Also, live interpreters interact with visitors throughout the space resurrecting the April 4, 1968 rally event.

The IHS had a preview event on February 17, 2011 to publicize the opening of the exhibit. Joseph Kennedy III, grandson of Robert F. Kennedy, and some of the rally participants attended and spoke at this event. The exhibit’s sponsors included the Joseph F. Miller Foundation and Kroger with support from Diane Meyer Simon.

Sources: Materials in the collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection includes oral history interviews on DVD of individuals who attended the Robert F. Kennedy rally in Indianapolis on Thursday, April 4, 1968. At the rally, Kennedy announced the assassination of civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. It is believed that the majority of the crowd was unaware of his death at the time of Kennedy’s six-minute speech. It also includes an invitation, program, and a large RFK political button for the preview event (held at the Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center on February 17, 2011) that announced the “You Are There 1968: Robert F. Kennedy Speaks” exhibit.

The subjects for the oral histories were interviewed by Steve Haller, Senior Director of Collections for the Indiana Historical Society. They were interviewed at the History Center. Haller solicited personal biographical information, reflections on the night of the event, and the impact of the evening on the interviewee’s life.

William A. Crawford (Interviewed, December 13, 2010; 54 minutes) Crawford was born and reared in Indianapolis. Through his freshman year in high school, he attended parochial schools (St. Bridget’s and Cathedral). After that he went to Indianapolis Public Schools, leaving Crispus Attucks High School prior to graduating. He later obtained his GED. He served in the United States Navy from 1954 through 1958. Afterwards he enrolled at the Indiana College of Business and Technology. He was an employee of the United States Post Office.

Crawford has been a state legislator since 1972. He served on the Indiana Black Caucus in 1971 and worked with Richard Hatcher and others to form the National Black Political Convention that was held in Gary in March 1972. In his interview, he talked about the tenor of the time leading up to and after Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination. More specifically, he spoke about local places (e.g. the College Room) and local African American leaders (e.g. Snooky Hendricks, Ben Bell, and Abie Robinson). He talked about the creation of UNIGOV in the late 1960s and the more recent establishment of the Kennedy/King Committee and the park and the King and Kennedy statues. He spoke about racial injustices in Indianapolis and the impact of Kennedy’s speech on him. He said that though the era surrounding 1968 was a time of contention, it was also a time of civility.

Diane I. Meyer Simon (Interviewed, June 1, 2010; 40 minutes) Simon, an Indiana native grew up in small Indiana towns. She graduated from Nappanee High School (1964) and Butler University (1968). She has indicated that April 4, 1968 was a defining moment in her life. She has said that when Robert F. Kennedy announced the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. to the rally crowd that her life changed and it took her on a new course. She decided not to go to graduate school immediately after college, as planned. Afterwards she worked for and travelled with the Kennedy campaign. She had prepared to work in Robert Kennedy’s Washington office, until his life was also cut short by an assassin’s bullet. Afterwards, she worked for Senator Birch Bayh for twelve years. Simon has fundraised for many Democrats seeking national offices. She has been active in civic causes and any environmental concerns. She has owned an environmental design firm and served as an environmental consultant.

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 2878).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.