

Robert Francis Kennedy (1925-1968)

Statement on Assassination¹ of Martin Luther King, Jr., Indianapolis, Indiana (transcript of the actually spoken words)

Robert F. Kennedy was a younger brother of John F. Kennedy. He worked as US Attorney General² from 1961 to 1964 using his legal powers to sustain the Civil Rights Movement. He left the Johnson administration because he opposed the war in Vietnam and became Senator for the State of New York. In 1968 he ran as presidential candidate for the Democrats. He was assassinated on June 5, 1968 in Los Angeles.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm only going to talk to you just for a minute or so this evening, because I have some very sad news for all of you, and I think sad news for all of our fellow citizens, and people who love peace all over the world, and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and was killed tonight in Memphis, Tennessee.

Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice between fellow human beings. He died in the cause of that effort.

In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it's perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are black -- considering the evidence evidently is that there were white people who were responsible -- you can be filled with bitterness, and with hatred, and a desire for revenge.

10 We can move in that direction as a country, in greater polarization -- black people amongst blacks, and white amongst whites, filled with hatred toward one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand and to comprehend, and replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand, compassion and love.

For those of you who are black and are tempted to be filled with hatred and mistrust of the injustice of such an act,
15 against all white people, I would only say that I can also feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a white man.

But we have to make an effort in the United States, we have to make an effort to understand, to get beyond these rather difficult times.

My favorite poem, my -- favorite poet was Aeschylus³. He once wrote:

20 Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget
falls drop by drop upon the heart,
until, in our own despair,
against our will,
comes wisdom
25 through the awful grace of God."⁴

What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness, but is love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or whether they be black.
[Applause and cheers.]

30 So I ask you tonight to return home, to say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King -- yeah that's true -- but more importantly to say a prayer for our own country, which all of us love -- a prayer for understanding and that compassion of which I spoke.

We can do well in this country. We will have difficult times. We've had difficult times in the past. And we will have difficult times in the future. It is not the end of violence; it is not the end of lawlessness; and it's not the end of
35 disorder.

But the vast majority of white people and the vast majority of black people in this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings that abide⁵ in our land. [Applause and cheers.]

Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world. Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people.
40 Thank you very much. [Applause and cheers.]

(680 Wörter)

Quelle:

http://books.google.de/books?id=iZvTu_EkmeEC&pg=PA135&dq=%22Martin+Luther+king+dedicated+his+life+to+love+and+to+justice+between+fellow+human+beings%22+robert+Kennedy&hl=en&sa=X&ei=410JUe2nIozUsgaP_4CIAg&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

¹**assassination** murder (of a prominent person) especially for political reasons – ²**Attorney General** Minister of Justice –

³**Aeschylus (525-456 BC)** Greek poet and playwright – ⁴quote from Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 179-183 – ⁵**to abide (old use)** to stay or live in a place

Aufgaben

1. Outline the main points of the text.
2. Analyse the rhetorical devices that Robert F. Kennedy uses to make his speech more powerful and convincing.
3. Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated only two months later (June 5, 1968). In an obituary, *Time* magazine (June 14, 1968) used a quote from Aeschylus as its motto: "When the height is won, then there is ease." This evokes the image used by Martin Luther King ("I have been to the mountaintop"). Is it this one of the core beliefs of the American Dream? Discuss.