

Kennedy: Bobby's Last Crusade

1968 Timeline

To understand Robert Kennedy's presidential campaign, one must first understand the state of the nation at the time he ran for office. Known as the "Year that Broke America," 1968 took an incredible toll on the United States. Increasing resistance to the Vietnam War combined with countrywide civil rights movements to create a nationwide state of unrest that underscored the presidential election in November. American citizens, particularly young college students, raised their voice against the Vietnam War, Racism, and Sexism in the nation only to be met by violence from police forces and the military. Below is a timeline of social and political events that illustrate the struggles of a nation in pursuit of freedom for those who reside there.

1968

- January
 - 1/15 Jeannette Rankin, an 87-year-old who in 1916 was the first woman to hold federal office in the U.S., led around 5,000 women on a march in Washington D.C. protesting the Vietnam War. This was the largest march by women since the Women's Suffrage Parade of 1913.
 - 1/30 North Vietnamese communists launched the Tet Offensive, a campaign of surprise attacks throughout South Vietnam. Upon seeing the devastating effects of this campaign, attitudes amongst many U.S. citizens, previously under the impression that the U.S.-backed South was winning the war, shifted towards the antiwar movement.
- February
 - 2/1 Memphis sanitation workers Echol Cole and Robert Walker are crushed to death by a malfunctioning garbage truck where they were taking shelter from the rain. Their deaths lead to a sanitation worker's strike for better working conditions that grew into a larger movement, even receiving a visit from Martin Luther King Jr.
 - 2/8 Police officers open fired on a group of SCSU students protesting segregation at their local bowling alley. 3 students were killed, and 28 others sustained injuries. This event would become known as the Orangeburg Massacre. Nine officers were tried for their involvement, but all were acquitted. Meanwhile, one of the injured students, Cleveland Sellers, was charged for inciting to riot and sentenced to a year in prison. He served seven months and was pardoned 25 years later.
- March
 - 3/1-3/8 Approximately 15,000 Cicanx High School students in East L.A. walk out of classes in protest of racism in the educational system across a series of protests.
 - 3/1 Senator Robert F. Kennedy announces his campaign for Democratic presidential candidate nomination.
 - 3/31 With pressure from the antiwar movement growing ever stronger, President Lyndon B. Johnson announces that he is not running for reelection.
- April

- 4/4 While visiting Memphis for the aforementioned sanitation workers' strike, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated by white supremacist James Earl Ray. Riots responding to the assassination in over 100 cities across the country would leave 39 dead, over 2,600 injured, and 21,000 arrested over the course of the next week alone.
 - 4/11 President Johnson signs the Fair Housing act, which bans discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, or national origin.
 - 4/27 Vice President Hubert Humphrey enters the presidential race in Johnson's absence.
- May
 - 5/10 Representatives of the U.S. and North Vietnam meet at the International Conference Center of the French Foreign Ministry in Paris to begin peace talks.
 - 5/27 The Supreme Court rules 7-1 that burning a military draft card as an act of free speech is not protected by the First Amendment.
- June
 - 6/4 Robert F. Kennedy begins making notable strides in his presidential campaign but is tragically assassinated at the Ambassador Hotel in L.A. by Sirhan Sirhan. The assassin was captured at the scene and is currently serving life in prison.
 - 6/8 James Earl Ray is found by the FBI in London, arrested, and brought to the U.S. To avoid the death penalty, he initially pleads guilty to the assassination of MLK, but three days later recants his confession and claims to be a pawn in a greater conspiracy. He is arrested and sentenced to life in prison where he dies of a liver failure in 1998.
- July
 - 7/1 President Johnson signs the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. To this day it is still the world's primary means of preventing the spread of and encouraging the reduction of nuclear weapons throughout the world.
 - 7/20 The first Special Olympics opens. More than 1,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities gather in Chicago to compete in 200 events.
- August
 - 8/5-8/8 Richard Nixon is nominated by the Republican National Convention as their presidential candidate.
 - 8/21 Pvt. First Class James Anderson Jr. posthumously becomes the first African American Marine to receive the Medal of Honor. Anderson had died the year prior in Vietnam when, to protect his fellow Marines, he used his body to shield against an enemy grenade, with the hopes of absorbing most of the impact.
 - 8/28 Under fear of assassination, Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley calls in extra police and Illinois National Guardsmen to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The police and Guardsmen then indiscriminately riot against anyone in the area, clubbing, and tear-gassing hundreds of not just peaceful protesters, but news reporters and bystanders as well. Much of the event, later dubbed the Chicago Police Riot was broadcast on national television. The next day, Vice President Hubert Humphrey received the presidential nomination, despite 80% of primary votes going to an antiwar candidate. Humphrey's nomination is suspected to be the

result of individuals, such as Daly and President Johnson, tampering behind the scenes.

- September
 - 9/7 In Atlantic City, New Jersey, Feminists protest the Miss America Pageant and the misogynist, racist, corporate driven, pro-military, and double standard riddled nature of the pageant.
 - 9/9 Arthur Ashe wins the U.S. Open, becoming the first black man to win a Grand Slam tennis tournament.
- October
 - 10/16 American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos receive gold and bronze medals respectively in the 200-meter dash at the 1968 Olympic Games. Following the event, during the playing of the national anthem the two raised black gloved fists to protest America's treatment of black citizens. The International Olympic Committee president, Avery Brundage, was enraged by their gesture despite notably having no issues with German athletes giving Nazi salutes during the 1936 Olympics. Smith and Carlos were stripped of their medals by the committee and sent home.
 - 10/31 President Johnson, supposedly because of the peace talks in Paris, orders a halt to, "all air, naval and artillery bombardment of North Vietnam" effective the following day.
- November
 - 11/5 After a campaign setting himself up as a figure of stability, appealing to those opposed to the wave of counterculture and political demonstrations, Richard Nixon beats out Hubert Humphrey by 0.7 percent of the popular vote to become president of the United States.
 - 11/5 Shirley Chisholm is elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, making her the first black woman to do so.
 - 11/9 After being an all-male school for 267 years, Yale University announces that it will admit female undergraduate students in 1969.
- December
 - 12/9 Douglas C. Engelbart gives a demonstration at the Fall Joint Computer Conference in San Francisco, where he introduces the world to two new inventions: The computer mouse and the word processor.
 - 12/21-12/27 The Apollo 9 becomes the first manned spacecraft to safely orbit the moon and return to Earth.