



# Video Story Transcript

## Three Assassinations: Kennedy, King, Kennedy

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**Link to YouTube Video:**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_XUGf8Owli8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_XUGf8Owli8)

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Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

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Hi, my name is Megan Hicks.

It was a Friday morning, in late November, in 1963. I was in my second period algebra class. We heard the loud speaker in the ceiling crackling and the vice principal's voice came through. He said, "Teachers, students." We all figured it was gonna be an announcement about the pep rally or the activity bus for the game that night. Instead, he said, "We've just received word that the president has been shot. President Kennedy has been shot and he is dead. Extra-curricular activities cancelled, school is dismissed early. Please take your regular assigned buses home."

Well, I sat there on the bus on the way home that day, I was looking out the window, looking down at my lap, wondering how I was supposed to feel about all this. And all around me, kids were crying, boys and girls, volubly. I, I, wondered... They acted as though it were a family relative who had just been killed. I mean, I knew a terrible thing had happened but I didn't know President Kennedy personally. It's not like his death affected me. These kids, the way they were carrying on, you know, it just seemed kind of phony to me, except that 9<sup>th</sup> graders, especially boys, don't cry in public. And I thought it was really strange. I realized all these kids came from families that their parents had probably voted for Kennedy for president.

My parents hated Kennedy. They voted for Richard Nixon. I remember, that 1960 campaign. I was 10 years old; my mom and dad took me with them. They knocked on doors, they distributed year signs, bumper stickers, they made phone calls. That election was so close, they held out hope until the very last votes were

counted. But, when all was said and done, it wasn't Richard Nixon. No, it was the rich kid from Harvard, the papist, who talked funny, who went to the White House.

Now, my mom and dad, like Richard Nixon, had both grown up in humble circumstances. We were living in Orange County, California at the time but both my parents had grown up during the Great Depression in Oklahoma, where Jim Crow laws were strictly observed and enforced. That "separate but equal" approach to race relations, to my parents' way of thinking, had been working just fine all along. And then along comes this East Coast intellectual, this John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Bringing in Federal government to integrate Southern schools, Southern buses, Southern affairs that were none of his business. I sat there on the bus that November day, and I thought, "Well, he went and got himself assassinated." And I guess that's a terrible thing. But it all washed over us pretty quickly. Thanksgiving was just around the corner and then Christmas and by the time we rang in the New Year, everybody was accustomed to the idea of *President Lyndon Johnson*.

Now, my mom and dad hated Johnson too. I mean, he went right on with Kennedy's Civil Rights Act, plowing through, with, with movements and, and legislation. And my parents were just sure it was the end of life in America as we knew it. I mean, it was an almost a weekly occurrence now. We saw race riots, we saw protest demonstrations, sit-ins; not firsthand because we lived in a good neighborhood. And, you know, I went to an all-white high school but all you had to do is turn on the TV. And my parents said, "See there, there's proof this country is going to hell in a handbasket. What do those people want? That Martin Luther King and all those black power agitators. I mean, they're just whipping them into a frenzy. King needs to go back where he belongs. They would go back where they belong and then we could get some peace around here. Somebody needs to shut that man up."

And in April 1968, somebody did shut him up, permanently. My next-door neighbor was almost beside herself with excitement. She said, "Isn't this just exactly what I said was gonna happen, huh? Haven't I said that he has been asking for it for years? He got no better than he deserves, as far as I'm concerned."

My mom allowed us how it was really terrible that things had come to this pass. She said, "Well, no. He won't be giving any more speeches but you know, the real tragedy is that now the is a martyr."

My dad watched the six o'clock news with satisfaction, "Ah, there's another troublemaker out of the way. Pay attention, Megan," he said. "This is what happens when you stand up, you rock the boat, you make yourself a target. Martin Luther King brought this on himself. I hope you understand that." I didn't understand anything.

You know, by the time of Dr. King's murder, 1968, I was a freshman in college. A very sheltered freshman living in a household where all the answers had been determined long before I was even born. I was going to a college where there didn't seem to be any answers, just more questions. In my home, a disagreement meant somebody left the conversation angry. In my college classes, we were encouraged to disagree, to debate, to argue, to, to consider things from different perspectives that sometimes change our minds. You know, all I wanted was for somebody to tell me what I needed to know to pass the tests. I thought, "I can't sort this out now. I've got papers to write. I've got finals coming up. It's not as if I'm old enough to even vote yet, anyway. So, what difference does it make? All this controversy, it makes me uncomfortable. It's distracting. I'm not gonna think about it."

And I didn't until June when Robert Kennedy was shot and killed. I knew what my parents thought of Robert Kennedy, not much. He was just like his big brother, John - only worse. Only more the advocate for this Civil Rights Movement, more the champion of these political agitators who, to my parents' way of thinking, were running America into the ground. And it looked like, until the bullet brought him down, he was on his way to the White House too. I heard about it driving to my sociology class. It was on the radio news. The announcer

said, "Senator Kennedy had just won the California Democratic presidential primary and was on his way out of the convention hall. He has been shot and killed." The announcer said, "Today has been declared a national day of mourning. People who want to honor the work and the life of Senator Kennedy are encouraged to drive with their headlamps on as a sign of respect."

I honestly didn't know what I thought about Bobby Kennedy at the time but in that moment, in the car alone, with no one there to cue me about how to think, how to respond, how to act, I did know one thing. That was the moment I knew that it is obscene for anyone to think somebody's standing up and speaking their mind, speaking what's on their heart, is grounds for homicide. In that moment, I realized it doesn't matter if I embrace what you have to say or if I totally rejected it. You speaking up should not get you shot.

I sat up a little straighter in the driver's seat. My hand trembled a little as it left the steering wheel and reached out for the dashboard. It was a tiny, timid, political statement but it was my first and I remember it viscerally. I reached for the knob, I pulled those headlamps, and I drove with my high beams on all day.