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Project: Documentary Research on
the Assassination of Robert F. Kennedy

Fundamental questions have grown over time about the assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy and about the credibility of official efforts in connection with it. This project involves systematic research centering on material currently available, particularly the 4,700 pages of FBI documents on the case released over past years as a result of the Freedom of Information Act.

At least four central unresolved issues exist about the assassination, and enough basic failures have been exposed in the official response to the evidence to remove any presumption of its adequacy. It is also apparent that independent efforts of re-examination are possible, even within the limitations of information released thus far or otherwise available. The basic objectives of this project are to review the body of the FBI material and produce: 1.) a general report addressing specified questions about the case; 2.) a partial chronology of the murder and investigation; 3.) an index of significant subjects and names in reports; and 4.) specialized documents or studies suggested by the work as it proceeds. Although this summary addresses solely work in connection with the FBI reports, other avenues of investigation also exist, particularly in connection with resources in Los Angeles.

The FBI reports on this assassination deal with various aspects of the evidence, centering largely on possibilities of conspiracy. They consist of over a thousand items, mostly brief, under general headings, with some summary material. Parts have been deleted pursuant to Freedom of Information Act guidelines. Examples of subject areas include the background of Sirhan, Ambassador Hotel witnesses and employees, conspiracy leads and reports, events leading up to the shooting, legal developments and physical evidence. While a few sections of the documents have been studied intensively by critics, large stretches have not been reviewed. It is doubtful that the reports as a whole have ever been comprehensively examined outside the FBI, and there is reason to doubt the competence of the review which may have taken place within the FBI. The work envisaged here, therefore, has original value in advancing the status of the case.

A level of basic knowledge of the information currently available about the assassination is essential to effective work on these materials, and can be gained from existing books and documents. These should be reviewed before the work is begun.

The precise form of this project depends on the number of persons involved and should have some flexibility in connection with the above guidelines. All of the FBI documents will be available, along with other basic material. Information and advice from various other sources may also be drawn upon, and periodic contact with me and with the faculty advisor are important. Professor David Wrone of the University of Wisconsin, an authority on recent U.S. assassinations and Freedom of Information issues is available for assistance and advice.

This project is an outgrowth of continuing efforts to determine the truth of the Robert Kennedy assassination and to assess the nature and adequacy of the institutional response to it. These efforts have drawn on the legal, investigative and research work of people in Los Angeles and elsewhere, directed at clarifying the evidence and testing official claims against it. No preconceptions are assumed, however, and work on this project demands objectivity, patience, methodological care and critical thinking.

-Gregory Stone