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Los Angeles, CA 90027  
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Ms. Diane Nixon  
Chairperson, RFK Materials Advisory Committee  
National Archives - Los Angeles Branch  
24000 Avila Road  
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

Dear Ms. Nixon:

It may be useful to add a further word to the comments on repository selection and related matters in my recent letter and remarks at the Monday meeting.

It seems apparent that most members of the advisory committee accept the importance of maximum disclosure of the RFK assassination files. That is the end which the current deliberations seek, and about which there seems to exist a general and sincere consensus. Unless, however, reliable means are crafted for insuring this result, I remain unconvinced that the full achievement of this goal is a foregone conclusion. The 15-year history of the efforts for disclosure in this case is primarily one of hopes repeatedly dashed and of broad assurances not implemented. (See enclosure.) To cite only the most recent episode, statements in support of strong public access resulted in an edited product, the redacted summary report, which glaringly fails to provide for basic needs of scholarship and public understanding. At one recent stage (enclosure), we were told that any release whatever from the assassination files was illegal in the view of the Los Angeles Police and City Attorney's office. This background weighs heavily in the minds of many of those pursuing these issues.

Given this history and the fact that the present committee will not itself be overseeing the processing work, it seems important that the safeguards for adequate release receive early and focused attention. These are more important than general exhortations, necessarily imprecise, and are needed in order to give such exhortations substance. From my point of view, this requires at least: 1.) that present legal recourse of interested citizens not be extinguished; and 2.) that the identities of the decision-making entities be understood, and well-founded confidence exist in their commitment and ability to implement maximum disclosure. That is why I believe the provisions of any contract are vital, and why possible contingencies or problems should be anticipated in advance.

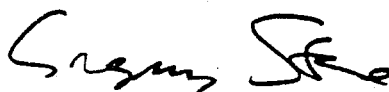
In this connection, some troubling ambiguities in present information should be noted. Of the remaining materials listed in the inventory of the RFK files 3.5 cubic feet (2 series) are estimated as requiring no redaction, 6.3 cubic feet (13 series) as requiring "minor" redaction, 2.85 cubic feet (3 series) as requiring "substantial" redaction, and 22.4 cubic feet (13 series) as requiring "major" redaction. I realize that these are tentative and non-binding estimates, but if the redaction on the summary report was fairly

characterized as "minor" then 72% of these materials might be edited more extensively than the already harshly edited summary report. Although members of the committee have spoken of the availability of 99% or similar proportions of the files, "substantial" redaction would allow for the availability of as little as 50% of original content, and "major" redaction would allow for as little as 25%. The "stenotype notes of tapes" (page 14) are listed as requiring "major" redaction, although the contents of these tapes are unclear and although tapes from the District Attorney's office are 100% available. Under the series "Index Cards" (page 2), the present guess asserts that although 3,150 paper slips exist, the "redacted version of the file will probably be less than 1000 cards." The removal of over 2,150 cards (68%) out of 3,150 would not only ravage such a card index but reflects a possibility of gross and extreme excisions throughout the entire file. The picture suggested by such conjectures is not one of the affirmative disclosure the committee has endorsed, but of expansive and aggressive continued withholding.

The difficulty of any such general discussion is that redaction of heterogeneous materials can only be fully assessed in specific, not abstract, contexts. If the present committee is debarred from such specific work, the identity, qualifications and commitments of those who will be making the binding decisions becomes all-important. That was the logic of designating an impartial panel to have formal and intimate participation in these judgements. If the practical decisions are to be delegated, whatever the format, the terms of the delegation should be clear and the delegate should inspire full confidence.

Were the present committee to retain final authority over these kinds of questions, I would have little worry about the outcome of this process. That not being the case, I believe that the committee, and others, should give careful attention to the practical safeguards needed to insure that the principle of maximum disclosure will at last be reliably implemented.

Sincerely,



Gregory Stone

ENC.

cc: committee members