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The Shooting of Governor Wallace

How many times are we as a nation to endure the pain and shame of it? How many men running for high office or otherwise legitimately asserting political leadership in this country are to be gunned down? The brutal assault on Governor Wallace in Laurel, Maryland, yesterday, is a deed that transcends both politics and ideology, one that must be grieved for in every part of a political community which is founded on a commitment to fair, rational and—above all—non-violent resolution of dispute. There can be, we suspect, no one—whatever his preferences in the narrower questions of politics at the moment—who does not share the human response of sorrow at the senseless pain inflicted on another, and who does not also share a profound sense of outrage at the wound which has simultaneously been inflicted on the body politic.

In terms of purpose and perspective, George Wallace has had very little in common with the victims of political gunfire who preceded him in our immediate past—President Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, Medgar Evers, Joseph Yablonski. What he has had in common with most of those men may be quite simply stated as the leader-

ship of a particular constituency of the alienated and aggrieved. Now, Governor Wallace has suffered terrible wounds and they—his constituents—have suffered a different but terribly damaging and dangerous blow.

You have to ask yourself what could conceivably go through the head of a gunman bent on assassination of a political leader, what possible benefit suggests itself to so distorted a mind, what objective it could hope to fulfill by adding so cruel a circumstance to the lives of those who are already mobilized around a man because they feel that he alone holds the key to assuaging their frustrations and fears and discontents. The young, the blacks, the seekers after labor union justice in the mines, and now the restless and alienated constituency of Governor Wallace have had to endure this senseless and unjust punishment.

It is not necessary to be part of this constituency to be shocked and shamed by the assault on him as a human being and as a candidate openly campaigning for higher office, and by the assault it represents on the democratic process in this country.