

RFK

Harris Survey

The Kennedy Mystique Still Haunts LBJ

By LOUIS HARRIS

After three years as President, Lyndon Johnson continues to live in the shadow of constant comparisons with John F. Kennedy. By almost 5 to 1, the American people believe that President Kennedy will go down in history as a greater Chief Executive than President Johnson.

But the main reason people cite J.F.K. as a greater President is that "he was a martyr." His assassination three years ago tomorrow left a profound mark on this generation of Americans.

A Kennedy legacy continues, and it is nowhere more strongly felt than in Presidential politics. In the latest Harris Survey, the late President's brother, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, is preferred to Mr. Johnson as the 1968 Democratic nominee by 44 to 37%. Only two months ago, Kennedy held a slender two-point lead over Mr. Johnson, 39 to 37.

This means that Robert Kennedy's recent campaigning, evoking the memory of his brother, has been translated into viable political power. President Johnson must reckon not only with the memory of J.F.K., but also with the living R.F.K.

As for popular preferences for the 1968 Democratic Vice-Presidential nomination, Robert Kennedy has widened his lead over Hubert Humphrey to 61-39% since May. Although the New York senator has said that he is backing Mr. Johnson and Humphrey again for 1968, it is possible that powerful pressures will mount within the Democratic Party to put Kennedy on the ticket.

QUESTION: "Who do you feel will go down in history as a greater President — John F. Kennedy or Lyndon B. Johnson?"

John F. Kennedy	Total Public
Lyndon B. Johnson	70%
Not sure	15

People volunteered a number of bases for their belief: (1) the feeling that J.F.K. was a martyr, (2) the belief that he was a good President cut down before his time and (3) preference for J.F.K.'s style and personality over that of L.B.J.

This last reason has particularly dogged President Johnson.

"President Kennedy was young," recalls a woman in Asheville, N.C., "and didn't know all the dirty tricks of the politicians. That made him exceptional." A working man in Tulsa, Okla., observes: "He didn't have time to show it, but few have the education those Kennedys have. It takes education and experience these days." Says a California housewife: "President Kennedy just wasn't a power machine. He brought a lot of intelligence and prestige to the office."

"He was young, romantic and unfulfilled," a Baltimore white-collar worker remarks. A woman in Clifton, N.J., sums it up simply: "President Kennedy gave his life to man."

The Kennedy legend is undoubtedly a powerful force behind Robert Kennedy. The preference for him over Mr. Johnson as the Democratic nominee has grown in the past two months, during which the senator toured the country extensively and the President went to Southeast Asia.

	FOR DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION IN '68: L.B.J. OR R.F.K.?	
	November, 1966	September, 1966
Robert F. Kennedy	44%	39%
Lyndon B. Johnson	37	37
Not sure	19	24

The main reason for preferring Sen. Kennedy is that he reminds voters of his brother. The senator has also begun to win the "peace issue" from the President and is more identified with caring about the needs of the underprivileged.

More than anything else, however, Kennedy is helped by young people who prefer him over Mr. Johnson almost 2 to 1. The President, on the other hand, is preferred 3 to 2 by people over 50. The Kennedy-Johnson clash deeply splits the younger and the older generation in this country. Kennedy also fashions his lead out of heavy support from women and his co-religionists, the Catholics.

Kennedy continues to be heavily preferred to Vice-President Humphrey for the second spot in 1968:

	KENNEDY HUMPHREY	
1966:		
November	61%	39%
September	61	39
May	52	48
February	56	44

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Kennedy has often told people that he does not want the political legacy of his brother to fade away, but to continue and grow. As the embodiment of that legacy, he has succeeded thus far in seeing that it does.