

Negroes Express 'Special Grief' For One Who Held Their Hopes

By THOMAS A. JOHNSON

"I get a chill everytime I hear that name."

Edward Johnson, who is 62 years old and sells hot dogs from a push cart at the corner of Harlem's Seventh Avenue and 125th Street, talked yesterday of the name of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

"It's hot today," he said, "the radio said it's 91 degrees, but still I get a chill when I hear that name. I get a chill and I wonder when will it all be over — this killing — when will it all be over."

A small, elderly woman carrying a shopping bag stopped beneath the shade of Mr. Johnson's red and yellow, circular umbrella and for a moment she joined in the talk about Senator Kennedy's assassination.

"I cried for a long time," she said, slowly shaking her head from side to side. "I cried just like I cried when they killed Dr. King and when they killed President Kennedy."

Then she walked away, still shaking her head.

A Special Sorrow

New York's Negro communities joined the nation yesterday in mourning the death of Senator Kennedy. Frequently, on the hot sidewalks and inside muggy storefronts, they expressed a special sorrow.

Many said, like Mr. Johnson, the sidewalk vender, that "everybody being killed was trying to do something for the black people, for the poor and the old."

Several spoke of "plots" and "conspiracies" aimed directly at keeping Negroes poor and powerless.

"It must be a conspiracy," one Harlem man said. "Nobody can hate that much. Somebody's being paid to kill off anyone who is 'for' the black man."

Both Walter Kelsey, 77, who walked with a cane along Brooklyn's Fulton Street, and 27-year-old Mrs. Mary Gerald, a Brooklyn housewife, said substantially the same thing.

Charles Kenyatta, the head man of Harlem's Mau Maus, a para-military, black nationalist group, saw in the killing of Senator Kennedy "another attempt to destroy the hopes of black people."

Mr. Kenyatta said the murders of Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, President Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. were other attempts to do the same.

"This is one of the few times I am made to realize that I'm human, when I can feel compassion for a white man," said bookstore owner Lewis Micheaux. "Although I'm sorry he's dead, I cannot forget that white America has endorsed the murders — the unpunished

murders — of black people for 340 years."

Standing in the midst of many piles of books on black people in his "orderly cluttered" National Memorial Book Store on 125th Street near Lenox Avenue, Mr. Micheaux said: "White people fail to see that if you train a dog to bite, he'll probably bite you too — you can't sow hate for centuries and reap love."

Expressing a similar view, the associate director of the Congress of Racial Equality, Roy Innis, suggested that the slaying was "a case of the history of this country catching up with itself."

New York State Senator Basil Paterson, who represents the Harlem area, said that "violence in America is not of recent vintage, but can be traced back to the extermination of the Indians, the witch hunts and the murders of black people." Mr. Paterson said the only time Negroes were given consistent protection in America was "when they were slaves and chattel, property of their masters."

Mr. Paterson contended that America has historically maintained the "kind of environment that produces killers."

Clergymen said that special church services were being planned in churches in the Negro communities on Sunday in remembrance of Senator Kennedy.

Harlem's St. Thomas the Apostle Roman Catholic Church, at 118th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue, is one of these Masses at 7, 8 and 11 A.M. were offered yesterday for Senator Kennedy, the Church's assistant pastor, the Rev. Joseph Gleason said, adding that "attendance at these masses were more than doubled."

Honi Coles, manager of Harlem's Apollo Theater on 125th near Eighth Avenue, said the theater planned a tribute to Senator Kennedy, although the details had not been worked out.

Photographs of Senator Kennedy have been placed in windows in stores in Negro areas — some next to pictures of Dr. King.

The store-front Kennedy campaign office on 145th Street

near Morris Avenue in the Bronx was locked yesterday afternoon when a middle-aged Negro man walked up and tried the door. "I thought I might have done a little work to help out," he told a stranger.

The man looked inside for a moment at the neat desks, stacks of posters, boxes of leaflets and rows of paper-backed volumes of Senator Kennedy's book, "To Seek a Newer World." Then he walked away.