On May 17, 1963, a painting of the African American writer James Baldwin appeared on the front cover of *Time* magazine. The accompanying article claimed that “in the U.S. today there is not another writer – white or black – who expresses with such poignancy and abrasiveness the dark realities of the racial ferment in North and South.”¹ The *Time* article caught the prevailing tensions in the civil rights movement, which would result in 1,340 demonstrations in more than two hundred cities in thirty-six states between May and August of that year.² By the end of May 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. “warned the White House of an impending national calamity” brought on because of the “snail like pace of desegregation,” a view forcefully echoed by the Reverend James Bevel, a colleague of King’s in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference: “Some punk who calls himself the President has the audacity to tell people to go slow. I’m not prepared to be humiliated by white trash the rest of my life, including Mr. Kennedy.”³

Baldwin’s appearance on the cover of *Time* serves as a useful starting point to evaluate the Kennedy administration’s record during the civil rights movement. In a speech two years before he appeared in *Time* magazine, Baldwin had pondered Robert F. Kennedy’s pronouncement that one day, a black American could become president of the United States. “What really exercises my mind,” Baldwin said, “is not this hypothetical day on which some other ‘first’ will become the first President. What I am really curious about is just what kind of country he’ll be President of.”⁴ Baldwin’s publications in the early 1960s suggested that the writer was not convinced by Robert Kennedy’s optimistic pronouncement; his essays of that period rather shine a torch onto the murky and troubled racial landscape that JFK would preside over. In 1962, the *New Yorker* published a 20,000-word essay by the writer, “Letter from a Region in My Mind,” a searing indictment on the racial inequities of the United States during the Kennedy era. Published a hundred years after Emancipation, Baldwin’s widely read essay made it clear that black Americans in the north and south were growing...
impatient with the lumbering pace of desegregation. “It is entirely unaccept-
able that I should have no voice in the political affairs of my own country,”
Baldwin wrote in a clear parting shot to the president, “for I am not a ward
of America; I am one of the first Americans to arrive on these shores.”
Not surprisingly, as Arthur Schlesinger recalls, Baldwin was on Robert Kennedy’s
radar after his inflammatory and eloquent New Yorker article, which was
expanded in 1963 as The Fire Next Time, a book that became a manifesto
of the civil rights movement.

Baldwin’s role in the story of JFK and the civil rights movement extended
beyond his influential writing about the racial politics of the 1950s and
1960s. A week after he was featured on the cover of Time magazine, Robert
Kennedy, the attorney general, held a meeting with Baldwin and others
in his New York apartment. At this meeting, on May 24, 1963, RFK met
Baldwin and a diverse cohort of artists and activists, including the politi-
cally engaged actor Harry Belafonte, the playwright Lorraine Hansberry,
the psychologist Dr. Kenneth Clark, Martin Luther King’s lawyer, Clarence
Jones, and Jerome Smith, who had “probably spent more months in jail and
been beaten more often than any other CORE [Congress of Racial Equality]
member.” According to Layhmond Robinson in the New York Times, the
meeting “was seen as evidence of growing concern over criticism voiced
by Negroes across the country on its handling of the civil rights issue.”
Baldwin, who would later describe “the laughter and bitterness and scorn”
that greeted RFK’s insistence that a black American could become presi-
dent within forty years, was unequivocal in his assessment of JFK’s civil
rights record.

Baldwin and his comrades pointed to JFK’s shortcomings on civil rights
issues in no uncertain terms, highlighting a prevailing view that the president
was slow to implement effective policies on racial inequality. Scholars such
as Garth E. Pauley have argued that the president “did not comprehend the
significance of race as the dominant factor in African Americans’ troubled
lives,” adding that “overall, race was often just another political issue to
Kennedy; in fact, he usually saw civil rights issues as a peripheral issue and
wanted to keep it that way.” As I explore later in this chapter, historians
have debated why it took the Kennedy administration nearly three years to
take a strong moral stance on federal civil rights issues: campaigners would
have to wait until February 23, 1963, for JFK to finally submit a legislative
program on civil rights. Baldwin’s accusation that the president had “not used the great prestige of his office as the moral forum it can be” was a barbed but prescient critique of JFK’s detached approach to civil rights. During the first three years of his presidency, historians, friends, and aides frequently describe JFK as “cool, sceptical and pragmatic.” It was not until Kennedy’s famous address to the nation concerning civil rights legislation on June 11, 1963, just weeks after Baldwin’s meeting with the attorney general, that JFK finally discussed racial inequality as a “moral” issue in what has been described as “the first sustained moral argument by an American president on civil rights.”

The Baldwin–Robert Kennedy meeting undoubtedly shaped the direction of the weeks leading up to JFK’s address to the nation. While it is hard to gauge the extent that RFK “use[d] his influence to get the President to make a series of talks to the nation on the civil rights issues,” the meeting clearly shook the attorney general, who was also the president’s closest aide and adviser on civil rights matters. According to Philip A. Goduti Jr., the “Baldwin meeting was a turning point for [Robert] Kennedy in many ways” although it was a fractious and heated encounter. Recounting the horrors of his experience in the South as he protested with CORE, Jerome Smith made it clear that he was on the point of renouncing nonviolence. “When I pull the trigger,” he warned, “kiss it goodbye.” Smith further incensed Kennedy by stating that he would refuse to fight for his country, a remark that enraged the deeply patriotic attorney general, who was shouted down when he tried to suggest that he too had been discriminated against because of his Irish heritage. Baldwin told RFK that he did not “understand our urgency,” and the meeting ended, as Clark recalled, with the attorney general becoming “silent and tense . . . He no longer continued to defend himself. He just sat and you could see the tension and pressure building in him.”

The confrontational meeting clearly gave RFK an insight into the depth of African American anger and frustration at the lack of clear strategy on civil rights issues. The meeting, Tom Adam Davies observes, “left [Robert] Kennedy in little doubt that the clock was ticking for the nonviolent and gradualist approach of the civil rights establishment.” Arthur Schlesinger, a Kennedy aide, recalled that days after talking to Baldwin and his cohort, the attorney general began “to grasp as from the inside the nature of black anguish,” telling his press secretary, Edwin Guthman, that if he were African American, he would share the views of those with whom he had clashed with at the meeting. In James Hilty’s estimation, this episode was something of an epiphany for RFK, who “gained insight into the larger meaning of the civil rights movement” that he would later share with his brother, using his position as adviser and family member to influence JFK’s
piecemeal approach to civil rights. 21 Within weeks of the Baldwin–Robert Kennedy meeting, JFK gave a largely extemporized address to the nation on June 11, 1963, a speech that marked what Peniel E. Joseph claims “might have been the single most important day in civil rights history.” In fact, for Joseph, “without the moral forcefulness of the June 11th speech, the bill [the 1964 civil rights act signed by Lyndon Johnson] might never have gone anywhere.” 22 So how did JFK, who “had been routinely criticized by black leaders for being timid on civil rights,” become in Garth E. Pauley’s words, “a champion of civil rights?” 23

Any attempts to map out JFK’s record on the civil rights movement needs to take account of the wider historiography of these turbulent years. In “Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement,” Steven Lawson argues that early accounts from the 1960s and 1970s “focused on leaders and events of national significance,” while in the 1980s historians emphasized the roles that grassroots organizations and local communities played in the movement. Lawson contends that the continuing interest in the civil rights movement is inextricably bound to “cycles of nostalgia that prompt Americans to recall the historical era of their youth. Memories dredged up turbulent and unsettling times, yet they also harked back to inspirational moments when ordinary people exhibited extraordinary courage.” 24

JFK’s assassination in November 1963, shortly after the August 27 March on Washington, has undoubtedly clouded critical opinion on the political achievements and shortcomings of the thirty-fifth president of the United States. In the wake of JFK’s assassination, memoirs by the former president’s aids and friends proffered largely favorable accounts of his time in office, and in particular his record on civil rights. His former aide Theodore Sorensen, for example, though conceding that JFK acted “more as a matter of course than of deep concern,” maintains that the late president was deeply aware of racial inequalities from the start of his political career. 25 Sorensen, like early allies including Harris Wofford (JFK’s main adviser on civil rights issues) and Arthur Schlesinger, claims that both Kennedys’ views on civil rights were deeply shaped by their Irish heritage, arguing that their early speeches “invoked comparisons to the discrimination suffered by their Irish grandparents.” 26 Early accounts of JFK and the civil rights movement, such as Carl Brauer’s John F. Kennedy and the Second Reconstruction (1977), painted a picture of the president at the forefront of policy changes at a national level, claiming that he was the first chief executive “who genuinely committed his administration to broad action taken specifically to improve the position of the Negro.” 27 By 1980, the historiography of the civil rights movement started to shift away from accounts
of prominent politicians to focus instead on civil rights organizations and their leaders. As Malcolm Smith concluded, “By exploiting a heart-rending problem for his political gain, and by failing then to honor the promise, the President betrayed the Negroes.”  

For James Hilty, the Kennedys were “splendid opportunists” whose “soaring eloquence raised expectations and promised greatness for their country and themselves,” although “In both life and death the Kennedys often got credit for more than they achieved.”

More recent notable accounts of JFK’s record on civil rights include Nick Bryant’s acclaimed book, *The Bystander: John F. Kennedy and the Struggle for Black Equality* (2006), which, according to Sheldon M. Stern, is the first to “examine, systematically and comprehensively, John F. Kennedy’s leadership (or lack of it) on race and civil rights, not only in the thousand days of his presidency but also during his six years in the House of Representatives and his eight years in the Senate.” As Stern observes, JFK emerges in Bryant’s account as a complex figure who demonstrated “a willingness to make important symbolic gestures about race and civil rights, coupled with a reluctance to take political risks.”

In 1946 when Kennedy won his first election, “five black Georgians were murdered merely for attempting to vote.” From his early days in office, JFK was careful and pragmatic about his stance on racial politics; his “strongest impulse was to empower blacks rather than dethrone Jim Crow.” As Bryant observes, “Even the friendliest biographers have suggested that civil rights failed to interest Kennedy in the early stages of his political career and touched only the fringes of his consciousness.” Even close aides, such as Sorensen, recalled that the future president “simply did not give much thought” to the civil rights movement, adding that he had “no background or association of activity.” In his early political years, Kennedy had little experience of the Deep South, which he did not visit until the mid-1950s, and he had little contact with African Americans aside from his trusted valet, George Taylor; as Bryant writes, “No blacks managed to penetrate his close circle of friends.”

While Bryant concludes that racial inequality “seemed to trouble him intellectually rather than arouse him emotionally,” he nonetheless provides a complex picture of the future president. On the one hand, JFK’s cool pragmatism and intellectualism enabled him to think strategically about his future ambitions, which necessarily involved courting the southern vote. According to Garth E. Pauley, by the late 1950s JFK “transformed himself from a symbol of southern opposition into an adopted southerner.” As a result of Kennedy’s 1957 tour of the region during his campaign to win the 1960 Democratic Party presidential nomination, “the South had accepted JFK as one of their own and came to know him as ‘Dixie’s favorite
Yankee.’”\textsuperscript{37} JFK’s political maneuvering as he courted the South meant that he would only indicate his support for the 1954 \textit{Brown} ruling if pressed to do so. And yet his well-crafted public persona belied his record on civil rights legislation. As Bryant has demonstrated, “From the very outset of his [JFK’s] career, he voted unfailingly for civil rights and signaled his intentions early on by lending enthusiastic support to a series of bills calling for the abolition of the poll tax.”\textsuperscript{38} In fact, in JFK’s early political years, “He boasted a voting record that matched, if not surpassed those of most northern colleagues.”\textsuperscript{39}

During the presidential campaign of 1960, it became clear to the Kennedys that they could not avoid questions about civil rights. In response they adopted a rhetoric that they hoped would appeal to traditional segregationists as well as advocates of social change. During the closely fought campaign for the presidency, which JFK would win by less than 120,000 votes, several factors emerged as key: the state of the economy, foreign relations with the Soviet Union, JFK’s Catholicism, and the burgeoning struggle for civil rights. While it is often noted that there had never been a Catholic president, it is also the case that no other presidential campaign had made African American civil rights a central issue. According to Taylor Branch, “Race played a large role in the campaign, less because of the civil rights movement than because polls were showing the Negro vote to be divided and volatile.”\textsuperscript{40} The Kennedys could not afford to lose the southern vote, which they would do if they vociferously opposed segregation; yet in so doing, they risked losing the African American vote. JFK’s political predicament and maneuvering did not go unnoticed. “Senator Kennedy has been equivocating on civil rights so long,” the African American journalist Chuck Stone wrote, “he wouldn’t know a forthright statement on racial equality if he were dragged across his breakfast table.” More specifically, Stone seemed to catch JFK out in his attempts simultaneously to vote for civil rights legislation and ingratiate himself with the South: “Has he ever condemned the South’s barbaric attitude?” the journalist asked, “Has he ever shown deep concern about the second-class citizenship?”\textsuperscript{41} This was not the only time that JFK’s maneuvering nearly cost him dearly. After JFK voted against Eisenhower’s Civil Rights Act of 1957, he emerged “looking opportunistic and unprincipled” in what was widely viewed as a blatant attempt to gain southern allies while underestimating African American support.\textsuperscript{42} Later, CORE founder Bayard Rustin would describe JFK as “the smartest politician we have had in a long time,” adding that the president pledges to support African Africans but then “turns and bows to Dixiecrats,” echoing one Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) member’s description of Kennedy’s “quick-talking and double-dealing.”\textsuperscript{43}
During the 1960 presidential campaign, neither Nixon nor Kennedy “embraced a strong, vigilant civil rights platform.” In fact, both candidates put their faith in the power of the southern vote, which complicated their reliance on the support of the unpredictable African American vote. Nixon and JFK were both keen to seek endorsements, not only from civil rights leaders but also from high-profile African American entertainers and sportsmen. The influential former baseball player and activist Jackie Robinson had been vocal in his distrust of Kennedy, going so far as to pledge his support for Nixon: “As long as he [JFK] continues to play politics at the expense of 18,000,000 Negro Americans, then I repeat: Sen. Kennedy is not fit to be President of the U.S.” Despite concerted attempts to convert Robinson to the Kennedy camp, the former baseball player remained deeply distrustful of Kennedy’s allegiance with the South. In May 1960, JFK held a meeting with Harry Belafonte to discuss, among other issues, the possibility of “organizing Negro stars” to support the Kennedy campaign. Belafonte’s advice was a pivotal turning point in the presidential campaign: “Forget me – forget Jackie Robinson . . . If you can join the cause of King, and be counseled by him, then you’ll have an alliance. That will make a difference.”

King would need persuading that Kennedy was the right Democratic presidential candidate to support. As David Garrow records, King was only too aware how JFK had voted on the 1957 Civil Rights Act and he viewed the Massachusetts senator with some suspicion, believing that he “was so concerned about being President of the United States that he would compromise basic principles to become President.” After a private meeting on June 23, 1960, King changed his mind, noting that the presidential candidate “lacked ‘a depthed understanding’ of civil rights” but he conceded that he “was very impressed by the forthright manner in which he discussed the civil rights question.” Nonetheless, after a second meeting in mid-September King refused to endorse either Nixon or JFK, warning the latter that “something dramatic must be done to convince the Negroes that you are committed on civil rights.”

Within a month of their second meeting, Kennedy did just that, interceding when King was arrested and convicted for a probation violation after participating in an Atlanta sit-in. In a well-documented gesture, JFK called Coretta Scott King to offer his support. This act concerned RFK, who was worried that the campaign workers “had managed to align his brother publicly with a national symbol of black activism.” Louis Martin, Kennedy’s sole black adviser, turned this problem around by alerting African American news organizations to the Kennedy–Coretta Scott King telephone call. By contacting black – but not white – journalists, Martin was able to increase Kennedy’s stature in the black community without running the risk of
alienating white southern voters. The tactic worked: the *Pittsburgh Courier* reported that with the help of the Kennedys, King was “the biggest Negro in the United States,” while the story barely made it into *Time.*\textsuperscript{51} This incident displayed JFK’s frequently noted adroitness at symbolic actions, a quality that has led some critics to charge that his policies were vague in terms of strategy and light on substance.

Historians such as James H. Meriwether have noted that the October 1960 telephone call to Coretta Scott King “has become the campaign’s iconic event and a storied explanation for the outcome of the election,” an event understood as having “endeared Kennedy to a skeptical black America and provided the critical boost for his ultimate victory.”\textsuperscript{52} Meriwether rightly observes how the story of the telephone calls has become “canonized” in influential works such as Taylor Branch’s *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–63* (1988), noting that this mythologization has obscured other tactics employed by Kennedy to obtain the important black vote.\textsuperscript{53} In particular, Meriwether calls attention to JFK’s interest in and engagement with the dozen or so African nations that gained independence during the presidential campaign. JFK mentioned Africa during his presidential campaign more frequently than civil rights, a strategy that enabled him to engage with black politics, but from an international, rather than a domestic, perspective. The continent of Africa represented for Kennedy “the newest frontier, one where he could burnish his Cold War credentials by enrolling newly independent states on the side of the West while making himself known as a candidate sympathetic to black Americans.”\textsuperscript{54}

In fact both 1960 presidential candidates were more preoccupied with international affairs than domestic concerns, with Nixon in particular “convinced that the continent [of Africa] was a Cold War battlefield that needed more American attention,” as illustrated by a steady increase in the number of African students studying in the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{55} As race increasingly became an international issue from the late 1950s onward, both Nixon and Kennedy were only too aware that negative images of domestic civil rights would hinder the United States’ foreign policy agendas. This awareness was illustrated by a key event in the presidential campaign. In 1960, Jackie Robinson, on behalf of the African American Students Foundation (ASAF), asked Nixon to help fund the airlift of 250 East African students (including President Obama’s father) who had won scholarships to U.S. and Canadian universities. Robinson appealed to Nixon’s interest in foreign policy by pointing out that the Soviet Union was planning to open a “University of Friendship of People” in Moscow that would offer “free education for four thousand African, Asian and Latin American Students.”\textsuperscript{56} Nixon wanted
Robinson’s support but was unable to find a way of securing the necessary funds to airlift the African students. JFK was quick off the mark and secured the money through the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation, a charitable organization set up to honor the senator’s older brother who was killed during the war. News of the donation spread quickly; the Republican Hugh Scott spoke up against “the long arm” of the Kennedy family, accusing them of trying to “take over the function of the Government in advance of an election.” Both presidential candidates were aware that Kennedy’s donation would endear him to the black American voter, despite mutterings that the Democratic senator had bought, rather than earned, that crucial African American support. With this move, Kennedy had managed to outmaneuver Nixon, who at that point had a much stronger civil rights record, while also adroitly maintaining the support of the important bloc of (anticommunist) white southern voters.

The first major civil rights crisis that the Kennedy administration faced occurred during the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) Freedom Rides during 1961, when integrated groups rode buses into the segregated South after the December 1960 Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in bus and train terminals involved in interstate travel. On May 14 in Anniston, Alabama, white mobs smashed the windows of one of the buses, which was later firebombed by another group of rioters as the riders left church. A second bus, carrying the CORE leader James Peck, was attacked and several riders were badly beaten, with one Ku Klux Klan member shouting, “Just tell Bobby [Kennedy] and we’ll do him in too.” Robert Kennedy was furious about the incident, claiming he had not been aware of the Freedom Rides, which came at an inopportune time politically: JFK was scheduled to meet the Soviet leader in a few weeks’ time, and Khrushchev, who “rarely missed an opportunity to point out America’s racial injustice,” would now “have an opportunity to humiliate the president on the world stage.” Despite the mounting violence, however, the Kennedys were reluctant to employ federal troops, maintaining that these were state, not federal, incidents. RFK’s mantra was clear: the national government would only intervene when “there was a specific and clear ‘federal responsibility.’” After one of RFK’s closest aides, John Seigenthaler, was badly beaten in Montgomery, Alabama, the attorney general “refused still to publicly condemn the violence or issue any press statements on the crisis.” The situation escalated when Martin Luther King, along with a group of Freedom Riders and sympathizers, was trapped in a Baptist church by a mob of several thousand whites until they were rescued by several hundred marshals. For critics of the Kennedys, the lack of federal intervention in this case underscored JFK’s cautious approach to the civil rights movement and his
belief in gradual rather than radical change – something that would come under greater scrutiny the following year.

In 1962 speculation was rife about how the Kennedy administration would commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Owing to a scheduling mix-up, Kennedy would not appear at the September commemorations, instead spending time at the America’s Cup yachting races. In his absence, Kennedy recorded a brief taped message that “was vague and numbingly banal.”63 The timing was unfortunate, not least because of mounting unrest in Mississippi. This came on the back of a difficult campaign which tried, but failed, to end all segregation in the city of Albany, Georgia. Then on October 1, 1962, James Meredith became the first black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi after the Fifth Judicial Circuit concluded that the university was unlawfully maintaining a segregated admissions policy. State officials and a number of students opposed the decision, which escalated into riots as federal marshals escorted Meredith to the university in what RFK called “the mightiest internal struggle of our time.”64

The Battle of Ole Miss was a turning point in the history of the civil rights movement. Ostensibly the Kennedy administration showed the world, through the use of federal troops, that it was committed to ending racial injustice. Black leaders, however, remained less convinced: King and Baldwin bemoaned the president’s “lack of moral conviction,” with the former convinced that U.S. civil rights “no longer commanded the conscience of the nation.”65 Determined to make progress in the South, King launched a new campaign in Birmingham, Alabama, in April 1963. This campaign resulted in numerous clashes with Bull Connor, the commissioner for public safety, who would deploy dogs and hoses against peaceful protesters of segregation. By May 1963, weeks before RFK’s meeting with James Baldwin, the Birmingham campaign was resolved, but Kennedy’s detractors were increasingly disillusioned with the administration’s handling of the bloody events in Alabama and the South more generally. Harris Wofford recalls that the president had a tendency to react hurriedly to issues involving racial equality, noting that he frequently took action “at the last minute, in response to Southern political pressures without careful consideration of an overall strategy.”66

King observed that JFK “has got the political skill . . . but the moral passion is missing,” a point the Baptist minister would underscore, bemoaning his own inability to “force the President . . . to speak out in moral terms.”67 In the wake of Alabama governor George Wallace’s declaration to bar all African American students from enrolling at the University of Alabama, Robert Kennedy realized that it was time for his brother to act swiftly.
On June 11, 1963, JFK addressed the nation on live television, referring to recent events in Birmingham and Alabama. Midway through his speech, Kennedy put down his script and extemporized. As he called on every American to “stop and examine his conscience about this and other related incidents,” JFK framed the struggle for racial equality in explicitly moral terms, something that his detractors had found lacking in his earlier pronouncements. The president made it clear that this was a national, not a regional problem, stating, “Difficulties over segregation and discrimination exist in every city, in every State of the Union, producing in many cities a rising tide of discontent that threatens the public safety.” He declared, “We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution.” In echoes of James Baldwin’s conclusion to The Fire Next Time, which warned of “a cosmic vengeance” in Old Testament rhetoric, JFK described how “the fires of frustration and discord are burning in every city, North and South.”

The June 11 address undoubtedly shaped JFK’s legacy, although he would soon be tested with further tragedies. On the night of the presidential address, Medgar Evers, the field secretary of the Mississippi State National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was murdered by Byron De La Beckwith, a Ku Klux Klan member. During the August 28 March on Washington the president kept a low profile, and he maintained a “reserved reaction” after the death of four schoolgirls in the September 15 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. This suggests, in Bryant’s words, “that he had not yet fully evolved his thinking about America’s racial crisis.”

Had Kennedy lived, it is likely that he would have secured passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. At the time of his assassination, however, JFK’s record was not strong on civil rights issues. Martin Luther King, for example, estimated that if integration continued at the current pace, it would take until 2054 for southern schools to be completely desegregated. For historians such as Bryant, Kennedy’s civil rights achievements are not always quantifiable, and Bryant notes that JFK’s “symbolic approach to the race problem meant that many of the changes he ushered in were largely cosmetic.” For Jill Abramson, JFK “remains all but impossible to pin down,” despite the fact there are some 40,000 books on the late president. The record offers a complex picture of JFK’s commitment to civil rights. While his June 11 speech galvanized the nation and almost certainly had a direct impact in the shaping of American race relations, it is also the case that JFK was the victim of his own inertia during his first two years in office. Kennedy’s legacy on this issue is by no means secure. It will no doubt remain the subject
of contention between critics who point to his civil rights achievements and those who claim that JFK was a bystander.

NOTES

3 Ibid., 2.
12 Robinson, “Robert Kennedy Consults Negroes Here about North,” 1; emphasis mine.
14 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 192.
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31 Ibid., 118–19.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 25.
36 Ibid., 30.
38 Bryant, *The Bystander*, 26
39 Ibid., 29.
42 Bryant, *The Bystander*, 79.
43 Schlesinger Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, 315.
49 Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 142.
50 Ibid., 147.
51 Bryant, *The Bystander*, 185.
53 Meriwether, “‘Worth a Lot of Negro Votes,’” 738.
54 Ibid., 739.
55 Ibid., 743, 749.
56 Ibid., 752.
57 Ibid., 737.
59 Ibid., 64
60 Bryant, *The Bystander*, 264.
63 Ibid., 329, 330.
64 Schlesinger Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, 325.
65 Ibid., 327.
67 Ibid., 129, 157.
70 Bryant, *The Bystander*, 442.
71 Ibid., 463.
72 Ibid., 464.