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Kennedy, Robert F. **Files on Civil Rights in Alabama, 1961-1964**

Biography/Background: Robert Francis Kennedy was born on November 20, 1925, in Brookline, Massachusetts. He attended Milton Academy and, after wartime service in the Navy, received his degree in government from Harvard University in 1948. He earned his law degree from the University of Virginia Law School three years later.

In 1950, Robert Kennedy married Ethel Skakel of Greenwich, Connecticut. Robert and Ethel Kennedy later had eleven children. In 1952, he made his political debut as manager of his older brother John's successful campaign for the US Senate from Massachusetts.

The following year, he served on the staff of the Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, chaired by Senator Joseph McCarthy. Disturbed by McCarthy's controversial tactics, Kennedy resigned from the staff after six months. He later returned to the Senate Subcommittee on Investigations as chief counsel for the Democratic minority, in which capacity he wrote a report condemning McCarthy's investigation of alleged Communists in the Army.

In 1960, he was the manager of John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign. After the election, he was appointed Attorney General in President Kennedy's cabinet. Attorney General Kennedy launched a successful drive against organized crime, and convictions against organized crime figures rose by 800% during his tenure. He also became increasingly committed to helping African Americans win the right to vote, attend integrated schools and use public accommodations.

Soon after President Kennedy's death, Robert Kennedy resigned as Attorney General and, in 1964, ran successfully for the United States Senate from New York. As New York's Senator, he initiated a number of projects in the state, including assistance to underprivileged children and students with disabilities and the establishment of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation to improve living conditions and employment opportunities in depressed areas of Brooklyn.

On March 16, 1968, Robert Kennedy announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Robert Francis Kennedy was fatally shot on June 5, 1968 at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, California shortly after claiming victory in that state's crucial Democratic primary. He was 42 years old.

Scope and Content: This collection, photocopies of documents from the John F. Kennedy Library, contains correspondence and other material collected by Attorney General Kennedy relating to the Freedom Rides, the integration of the University of

Alabama, civil rights activities in Birmingham and Gadsden, and meetings held with Alabama businessmen, attorneys and religious leaders.

Size: ¾ linear foot (1.5 boxes)

Source: John F. Kennedy Library

Restrictions: Standard preservation and copyright restrictions.

Guide Prepared By: Robert G. Corley

File Number:

Description:

299.1.1

General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Alabama, May 15-May 20, 1961 (20 pages).

This file contains a memo from the Director of Public Information to the US Attorney General; an illegible document from Robert Kennedy; and a memo to Robert Kennedy from Jayne Lahey (re: Birmingham bus station). Also included is a transcript of a phone conversation between Attorney General Kennedy and George E. Cruitt, Superintendent of Birmingham; an "Obstruction of Justice in the State of Alabama" proclamation by President Kennedy; and an executive order "Providing Assistance for the Removal of an Obstructions of Justice Within the State of Alabama" authorized by President Kennedy. Copies of Western Union telegrams from Attorney General Kennedy to John Patterson and the Honorable James W. (Jimmy) Morgan; and a telegram special to Robert Kennedy from Hodding Carter urging US Marshals stationed at "sizeable bus stations in the South" are also in this file.

299.1.2

General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Alabama, May 21, 1961 (34 pages).

This file contains correspondence from Robert Kennedy to: Floyd Mann, Director of Public Service (Montgomery); Assistant Police Chief Brown (Montgomery); Governor John Patterson; and Deputy Attorney General Byron White (Alabama). It also includes correspondence from Alabama Attorney General MacDonald Gallion; Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus; Lincoln Rockwell, Commander of the American Nazi Party; and Lewis Robinson, Freedom Fighter, to Mr.

Kennedy. (Several copies are illegible due to deterioration of the originals.)

299.1.3 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Alabama, May 22, 1961 (49 pages).

Correspondence in this file includes telegram specials to Robert Kennedy from Montgomery (Alabama) Chamber of Commerce Board members Edgar Stuart and Ben Wilbanks; Rhode Island Governor John A. Notte, Jr.; South Carolina Governor Ernest Hollings; and Congressman Wilbur Mills. Also included are a "Status Report on the Availability of Troops" from Bill Geoghegan; telephone transcripts of a conversation between Burke Marshall and Mississippi Attorney General Patterson; and three drafts of a report concerning events in Montgomery.

299.1.4 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Alabama, May 25, 1961 (24 pages).

This file contains correspondence in the form of telegram specials to Attorney General Kennedy from "Today Show" host Dave Garraway and Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett; and a telephone transcript between Kennedy and Governor Barnett. Justice Department statements from Attorney General Kennedy regarding the additions of Birmingham and Montgomery police officials as defendants in its complaint of interfering with interstate travel and the dismissing of US Marshals from Alabama; along with correspondence from Kennedy to the president of Capital Trailways, James Pruitt; and a list of telephone calls are also included.

299.1.5 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Alabama, May 1961 and undated (25 pages).

This file contains memos and correspondence including a memo explaining presidential use of armed forces; and a copy of a handwritten note by Robert Kennedy expressing his displeasure about the lack of protection given to Freedom Riders in Montgomery. A list of people arrested in Jackson, Mississippi for "breach of peace;" and a statement by Alabama Governor Patterson issuing martial law in Montgomery is also enclosed.

299.1.6 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Alabama, May 1961

and undated (26 pages).

Miscellaneous notes regarding Freedom Riders in Alabama including a message from Robert Kennedy to the Deputy Attorney General authorizing the use of US Marshals in Alabama along with various handwritten notes and diagrams are in this file.

299.1.7 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Alabama, May 1961 and undated (28 pages).

Various statements and draft pages are in this file including a letter from President Kennedy in re: the Freedom Riders and mob violence in Alabama; an announcement from AG Kennedy directing Birmingham attorney William Longshore to file criminal charges against 4 men implicated in the destruction of a bus; and a UPI statement from Robert Kennedy urging the citizens of Alabama and travelers to Alabama to refrain from violence.

299.1.8 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: The University of Alabama, April 9-May 31, 1963 (61 pages).

This file contains correspondence including memos to Robert Kennedy from: Burke Marshall (re: McGlathery and Carroll's applications to the University of Alabama in Huntsville Graduate Center); William H. Orrick, Jr. (re: the status of telephone calls concerning the University of Alabama); and Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach (re: Tuscaloosa and Huntsville—Alternative Plans). There is also a letter from President Kennedy to Anniston's Mayor Claude Deare commending the city for establishing a Human Relations Council; and several copies of a Supreme Court case "The State of Alabama versus the United States of America and Robert S. McNamara, US Secretary of Defense.

299.1.9 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: The University of Alabama, June 1963 (20 pages).

Contained in this file is a proclamation from President Kennedy (re: "Unlawful Obstruction of Justice and Combinations in the State of Alabama;") a campus patrol report from the University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa); and a copy of the *Crimson White* the University of Alabama campus newspaper (June 9, 1963).

299.1.10

General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Birmingham, Alabama, May 9-12, 1963 (40 pages).

This file contains a memorandum to Attorney General Kennedy from acting Director of the US Information Agency Donald H. Wilson (re: worldwide reactions to the situation in Birmingham); a press statement from President Kennedy (re: Birmingham); a summary of calls made to the US Attorney General's office; and *The Birmingham News* clippings, May 12, 1963 (re: bombings).

299.1.11

General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Birmingham, Alabama, May 13-16, 1963 (6 pages).

In this file, there is a letter to Robert Kennedy from Mrs. William H. Natter of Homewood, Alabama and news clippings from the Shades Valley Sun (May 13, 1963).

299.1.12

General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Birmingham, Alabama, May 17-20, 1963 and undated (54 pages).

This file contains a letter to Robert Kennedy from Cornelius Vanberbilt, Jr.; memo from Donald Wilson (re: world reactions to Birmingham situation); and a series of handwritten notes written on Northwest Orient Airlines stationary.

299.1.13

General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Gadsden, Alabama, July 2, 1963 (7 pages).

This file contains a memorandum to Robert Kennedy from Burke Marshall (re: the cost of added security on the campus of the University of Alabama) and a report on Gadsden, Alabama (re: desegregation).

299.1.14

General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Legislation, 1963 undated (86 pages).

Enclosed in this file are copies of the following: Senator Sam Ervin's Constitutional Objections to the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and 1960; Civil Rights Voting Records from 1957-1962; the Constitutionality and Coverage of the Public Accommodations Provisions of S.1731; and the

Constitutionality of the Public Accommodations Provisions of Title II.

299.1.15 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Legislation, 1963 undated (38 pages).

This file contains a copy of the Comparison of Major Civil Rights Bills Pending Before House Judiciary Committee, 88th Congress and of the Civil Rights Act of 1963.

299.1.16 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Legislation, January-May, 1963 (58 pages).

A copy of the 88th Congress "H.R. 3139" Civil Rights Act of 1963; an Agenda for Civil Rights Meetings; and another Comparison of Major Civil Rights Bills Pending Before House Judicial Committee, 88th Congress are stored in this file.

299.1.17 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Legislation, June 3-15, 1963 (34 pages).

This file contains a copy of the 88th Congress "H.R. 6720 the Equal Rights Act of 1963." It also contains memos to Robert Kennedy from Solicitor General Archibald Cox (re: Civil Rights Cases in the Supreme Court); a Supplemental Message on Civil Rights; from Assistant Attorney General Norbert Schlei (re: Comments of the Vice President on the Civil Rights Legislative Proposals); and from the Administrative Assistant to the President, Mike Manatos, (re: schedule outline of Capital Hill meetings on proposed Civil Rights Legislation

299.1.18 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Legislation, June 16-29, 1963 (125 pages).

This file contains a Supplemental Message on Civil Rights; a copy of the 88th Congress bill "S.1731 Civil Rights Act of 1963"; and a press release from Pierre Salinger (re: Civil Rights and Job Opportunities). The file also includes a copy of a memo on the Difference Between the President's Civil Rights Bill and the Tentative Draft of the Majority Leader's Staff; and a memo to Attorney General Kennedy from Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach (re: Civil Rights Legislation).

299.2.1 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Legislation, July 1963 (48 pages).

Enclosed in this file are various correspondence including a memo to Robert Kennedy from Special Assistant to the President Arthur Schlesinger (re: Civil Rights Bill); and a memo to Attorney General Kennedy and Deputy Attorney General from Assistant Attorney General Joseph Dolan. A memo from the DC Coordinating Committee for the March On Washington (Walter Fauntroy, et al.) to the Residents and Organizations of the Washington Area (re: March on Washington); a copy of the testimony of Erwin N. Griswold, Commissioner of the US Commission on Civil Rights before the Senate Commerce Committee on S.1732 and other pending legislation; and a copy of a handwritten letter to Kennedy from “Chick” (re: public accommodations section of Civil Rights Legislation) is also included in this file.

299.2.2 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Legislation, August-September 1963 (15 pages).

This file contains correspondences from Robert Kennedy to Emanuel Celler, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee (re: Provisions of the Omnibus Civil Rights Legislation) and a memo to Kennedy from Katzenbach (re: Civil Rights Legislation).

299.2.3 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Meetings with Business Leaders, May 1963 (23 pages).

This file contains a copy of Attorney General Kennedy’s schedule from May 23-25, 1963; a memo (re: meeting in New York with representatives of the pharmacy industry; and other correspondences to Mr. Kennedy.

299.2.4 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Meetings with Business Leaders, June 1963 (56 pages).

In this file are copies of correspondence including a memo to Kennedy from Assistant Attorney General Louis Oberdorfer (re: Daily Report of Racial Practices in Southern Businesses); and a memo to Edwin Guthman from Oberdorfer (re: briefing reporters on the specifics of a White House meeting with business executives). Also included is a draft letter sent to participants in a phone

campaign to business leaders with interests in Alabama; and a report to Kennedy from Oberdorfer summarizing voluntary changes in racial practices of businesses.

299.2.5 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Meetings with Business Leaders, July 1963 (33 pages).

This file contains two memos to Robert Kennedy from Louis Oberdorfer (re: Report on Desegregation Activity) and a list of public school districts scheduled to ordered to desegregate.

299.2.6 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Meetings with Business Leaders, February 1964 and undated (66 pages).

This file contains a memo to Robert Kennedy from Louis Oberdorfer (re: list of businessmen attending the February 18, 1964 meeting and suggestions on voluntary desegregation); and a copy of a *Wall Street Journal* article, "Negroes Ready Another Wave of Demonstrations Against Business in South." Also included is a directory of hotel systems operating 3 or more hotels and a list of drug stores.

299.2.7 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Meetings with Lawyers, May-June 1963 (31 pages).

A press release (re: lawyers asking Governor Wallace to comply with court order to admit Negro students to the University of Alabama); and a memo to Kennedy from Ed Guthman (re: draft of a reply letter to a telegram from Clarence B. Henson, publisher of *The Birmingham News*) are stored in this file. Also included is a memo to Burke Marshall (re: Danville, Virginia); and a memo to Louis Oberdorfer from Assistant Special Counsel to the President Lee C. White (re: information and suggestions for a June 24th meeting with leaders of the American Bar Association)

299.2.8 General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Meetings with Lawyers, July-September 1963 (pages).

This file contains a letter to Robert Kennedy from Attorney Kenneth Burns, Jr. regarding a meeting with leaders of the American Bar Association (w/return reply from Kennedy); and a roster of the Members of the

American Bar Association Special Committee on Civil Rights and Racial Unrest. Also included is a memo to John Nolan, Jr. from Edward Smith (re: Lawyers Civil Rights Correspondence); a thank you note from Kennedy to Bernard Segal, and a *New York Times* article: “Lawyers on Civil Rights—Convention of the American Bar Association Points Up The Changed Attitude Towards The Negro.”

299.2.9

General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Meetings with Religious Leaders, June-December 1963 and undated (35 pages).

This file contains a memo to Attorney General Kennedy from Special Assistant to the President Ralph Dungan regarding a meeting with religious leaders; and a memo from Louis Oberdorfer (re: Material For Use in Connection With President's Meeting With Clergymen, June 17, 1963). Also included is a list of religious leaders meeting with the Attorney General and “A Call to the People of America” by religious leaders gathered in Washington (re: racial unrest in America). *New York Times* articles: “Churchmen Urge Action on Rights,” “Churchmen Spur Civil Rights Bill” and others; a report by religious leaders in Jackson, Mississippi on Civil Rights; and thoughts for proposed Presidential meeting with religious leaders are also enclosed.

299.2.10

General Correspondence, Civil Rights: Racial Practices of Southern Businesses, Daily Reports, November 13, 1963-February 17, 1964 (24 pages).

This file contains several memos from Louis Oberdorfer to Robert Kennedy: two memos regarding Reports on Desegregation Activity (December 13 and 26, 1963); another concerning Voluntary Desegregation; and one report on Desegregation Progress.