

## Movie Review 'Bobby'

***"Since Dr. King died, no one left but Bobby"***

This line from this emotionally inspiring and tragic movie probably best sums up the feeling that Robert Kennedy evoked in the hearts of a nation torn by the evils of racism and the quagmire of Vietnam. In the summer of 1968, Kennedy was seen by many as the hope of America.

This movie, set on 4 June 1968, the day that Kennedy was gunned down at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, powerfully portrays the prevailing mood of the day, interspersing clips of the horror of Vietnam with the spectre of the race conflict that Dr. King worked so hard to confront. Kennedy was seen particularly by the African-American community as being of the same ilk as King – a prophet reminding his nation and the world that violence only begets violence and hate breeds hate.

From the eyes of someone born a year after Bobby Kennedy's assassination, and therefore not having experienced the reality of it, it comes across to me that America was then a more optimistic society than it is today – a more hopeful one. That hope was maybe extinguished on the day that Kennedy died. And maybe America has never recovered since. Today's society seems a whole lot more dead when seen in the light of the mood that Kennedy evoked.

The death of Bobby Kennedy leaves us forever with the question of the great "what if?". What if he had lived? What would the world be like today? Tragically he never got the chance to show us, cut down like so many great people in history who dared to take an unpopular stand, who stood up for the powerless and dared to try to leave the world a better place than when they entered it. Think of people like King, Gandhi, Lincoln, Romero, and of course Jesus of Nazareth himself and you will see what I mean.

As well as capturing the tide of public opinion turning against the war in Vietnam, and the struggle of the nation to deal with relations between African-Americans and whites, especially in the wake of the murder of Dr. King just 2 months prior, this movie also highlights the lesser known race struggle between Latinos and whites, and the impact of LSD on young people and their search for a better world. It was to this world that Bobby Kennedy offered the promise of making the dream a reality. Kennedy had the vision and dared to dream out loud, to quote the words of Bono.

However what this movie does not show (and for which it cannot be criticised), is the fact that while it is easy to romanticise about Kennedy and the hope that he offered, he had his failings too, like his brother and Dr. King before him. Even in the last couple of weeks we have had revelations implicating Bobby Kennedy in the suicide of Marilyn Monroe, with whom he had been having an affair. This only goes to show how even people with the best intentions can bring themselves terribly unstuck by lust and power. It makes one see a bit more clearly that we all need saving, that none of us can be trusted ultimately. And it shows the truth of what a former pastor said to me once, which is that I cannot be trusted, but God can be trusted working in me. Despite his failings though, can we dare to imagine what America, and the world, may have been like had Bobby Kennedy lived?

Brilliantly filmed as though it was made in 1968, 'Bobby' intersperses much actual footage of Kennedy and other significant moments of that era so that at times the viewer is not sure which footage is real and which is part of the movie.

With an all-star cast including Martin Sheen, Christian Slater, Anthony Hopkins, Sharon Stone, Emilio Estevez (who produced the film), Elijah Wood, Laurence Fishbourne, Demi Moore and Harry Belafonte, this movie takes you back to a time when hope was more alive than it is today, and when cynicism was less of a reality. This is such a hopeful yet such a tragic movie of a man who evoked so much promise

and inspiration for his generation, but in the end was the victim of the dark side of humanity. Dare we dream about what the world would be like today had Bobby Kennedy not been cut down before his time?

*by Nils von Kalm*  
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