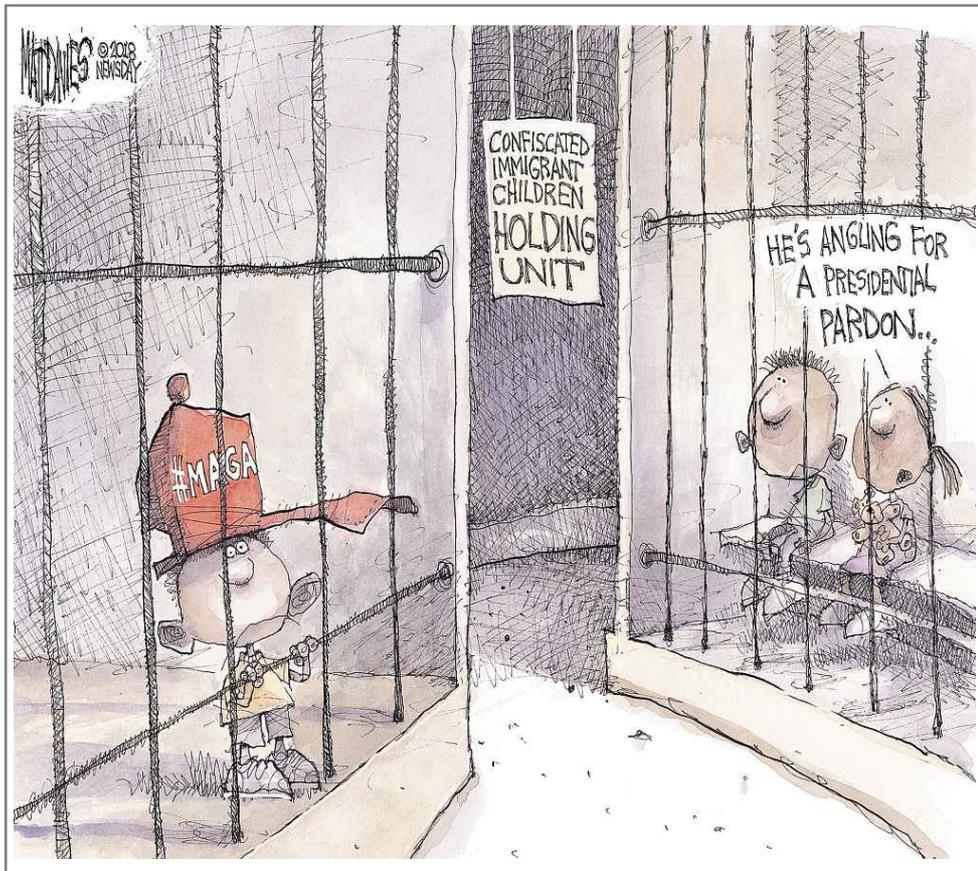


MATT DAVIES



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BOTTOM LINES

Would things have been different had Robert Kennedy lived? I can't waste my time or my emotions on that question. He didn't. Was he the sainted figure so many of us saw him to be? Hardly. Do I regret investing so much of my time, energy and belief in him? Absolutely not.

— MICHAEL COHEN, [NEWSDAY.COM](http://newsday.com)

Is New York City losing its edge? In the past year, several financial firms have moved jobs to distant cities like Nashville. Population growth has slowed, with Brooklyn actually losing more people than it gained last year. The news is likely to stir more debate over what makes for a successful city.

— STEPHEN MIHM, [BLOOMBERG OPINION](http://bloomberg.com)

Of course, I'm jealous of Ivanka Trump — because any criticism of another woman has to be jealousy, according to the letters I shall receive. In the following order, I want her wardrobe, hair, makeup, private transportation and height (5 feet 11) — and all of her trademarks in China. Confession accomplished, let's move on to emoluments, as in the constitutional clause forbidding gifts.

— KATHLEEN PARKER, [THE WASHINGTON POST](http://thewashingtonpost.com)

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RFK's message must still matter

Even 50 years after the candidate's death, his pleas for national unity can guide us



Michael Dobie

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I remember my shock when I heard that Bobby Kennedy had been assassinated.

I remember the photograph of him on the hotel kitchen floor, mouth agape, bewildered, his eyes haunted with the awful realization that he always knew this was how it was going to end.

I remember the 17-year-old busboy who knelt to comfort him, who tried to place a rosary in his hand, who said later that hope was taken away in a second. Bobby's last words, to medical attendants bearing a stretcher were reported to be, "Don't lift me." After he had lifted the spirits of millions.

I remember the nine-hour train procession that carried his coffin from New York to Washington, and all the people of all ages and races who lined the tracks to bear witness, a grim echo of how, encouraged by Bobby and in the absence of Secret Service protection for presidential candidates, people would throng to him, push to get close to him, just to touch him.

I remember the thudding sense of loss, again. Five years after the assassination of his brother President John F. Kennedy. Two short months after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

But mostly, I remember how the killing of Robert F. Kennedy, the 50th anniversary of which is this week, was part of one of the most tumultuous years in American history.

Every generation has its coming-of-age year, its coming-of-age moments. I turned 12 in 1968, in the process of emerging from childhood ignorance and embracing the world and its warts.

And 1968 was one holy hell of an eye-opener.

America was divided — by race, economic class and politics.

Riots wracked major cities. Opposition to the war in Vietnam was

fevered. The news was a daily litany of burning buildings, shattered windows, bombings, protest marches, picket lines, sit-ins, teenage run-aways, a tent city in Washington, manifestos by campus radicals and white flight from cities. Segregationist George Wallace was a third-party presidential candidate. And in August, blood ran in the streets of Chicago as thousands of police officers beat up thousands of unarmed young people at the Democratic National Convention.

Bobby Kennedy never got there. Historians still debate whether he would have wrested the nomination from Vice President Hubert Humphrey. But there is no debate that his was a message for troubled times. He wasn't a saint, but he spoke of fairness and equality, social justice and racial tolerance, and an end to the Vietnam War.

A half-century later, many see a reflection of 1968. We have splintered into opposing sides. We have protests and marches. We have distrust and dislike. We have divides between young and old, haves and have-nots, whites and blacks and Latinos. Our rhetoric grows more coarse.

In 1968, Olympic sprinters John Carlos and Tommie Smith raised gloved fists on a Mexico City podium. Now football players take a knee during the national anthem. Both protests silent and nonviolent, with seismic reverberations.

It helps to know that we've had warring tribes before, and eventually survived.

The night he was shot, after winning the California primary, Bobby Kennedy spoke of ending violence and disenchantment, and bridging our divisions, "whether it's between black and white, between the poor and the more affluent, or between age groups or over the war in Vietnam, that we can start to work together. We are a great country, an unselfish country and a compassionate country."

You can torture yourself with games of what-if. Starting with: What if Bobby had beaten Richard Nixon? That's a fool's game.

But if we remember what Bobby stood for, hold that in our hearts and live our lives by it, we have a chance to give today's 12-year-olds the world Bobby hoped would come.

Michael Dobie is a member of [Newsday's](http://newsday.com) editorial board.