

Aspect of the year 1968 contributed to it being a unique year in world history

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Aspect of the year 1968 that contributed to it being a unique year in world history The year 1968 goes down in history as an exceptionally unique year, given myriad of events that occurred in this year that shaped the direction of the world. However, the decision not to seek re-election by then incumbent president, and Democratic Party front-runner, Lyndon Johnson, overrides all other events. His decision sent shock waves across the country, and contributed to 1968 being a unique year in world history, and American presidency. This essay seeks to analyze why this decision topped the list of events that happened in the event year of 1968. To achieve this, the essay shall rely on Mark Kurlansky's book, " 1968: The Year That Rocked the World," and Selection from Lady Bird Johnson's March 31, 1968 diary entry, concerning Johnson's failure to run for re-election.

Kurlansky (2005) argues that his decision had several and far reaching implications on the country and presidency. He was leaving a country that was deeply divided and facing unprecedented crisis both locally and abroad. His decision to give up when the nation needed leadership most surprised many. Kurlansky's arguments are supported by Abbie Hoffman, who asserts that the decision came at a bad time when America had involved itself deeply in the Vietnam War under Johnson' leadership, and had already generated a negative public opinion, both locally and globally. Kurlansky quotes Hoffman that " we were standing still. How could we pull our pants down? America was already naked. What could we disrupt? America was falling apart at the seams,' (Kurlansky 229). This confirms the surprise of the Americans after the president's decision. Kurlansky points to the division that had arisen in the country and especially in the Democratic Party

because of the Vietnam War. The president was facing stiff opposition from his own party while, ironically, it was the republicans who supported him on the war. The decision also came at a time when the American citizens and the soldiers at the battle front were becoming demoralized due to the losses they had encountered in Vietnamese battle fronts and the desire by the people to end the war.

The president himself had foreseen the effect his resignation would have on the morale of the troops on the battle front. According to Lady Bird Johnson's March 31, 1968 diary entry, the president had consulted General Westmoreland, who was in command of the troops, in the battle front, and who had assured him that it would have little impact. While dismissing a suggestion from his wife who had talked to wives of two young soldiers, he argues that the general was more authoritative, given that he was with the soldiers at the battle front. According to the diary, the president took this decision to preserve credibility of the office of the presidency, and that he could not allow his presidency and political pursuit to destabilize the country: " what we won when all of our people united just must not now be lost in suspicion, distrust, selfishness, and politics among any of our people."

In summary, the decision by President Johnson to withdraw from the race led to the division of the Democratic Party in the 1968 election and ultimately to the end of the unpopular Vietnam War. It led to the republican win, and impacted negatively on the morale of the soldiers in the battlefield, and the Americans, who questioned the participation of U. S in the war. Moreover, it prevented the escalation of the war, because it prevented the Russians and

Chinese from entering into the war. His decision, moreover, helped to preserve the integrity of the office of the presidency, and reunited Americans who were heavily divided at that time. The fact that the decision showed a U. S president resigning because of a war gone bad contributed to 1968 being a unique year in world history.

Works cited

Kurlansky, M. 1968: the Year that Rocked the World. Random House Publishing Group. 2005.

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“ Selection from Lady Birds Diary on Johnson not running for re-election.”

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