

Events in 1968 america



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The year of 1968 was a tumultuous and agitated 12 months. January ended with the surprising launch of the Tet Offensive. Shock continued in April when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. Robert Kennedy was also killed in June. In later months, tension grew again as election day neared. The race ended in a close win for Richard Nixon. 1968 had its highs, and it was full of lows, right from the get-go.

At the start of the year, North Vietnam was planning to catch the United States and South Vietnam off guard. By launching a series of attacks on 100 cities in South Vietnam on January 30, the North Vietnamese broke an informal truce of the Tet New Year. Their operation became known as the Tet Offensive. Its aim was to get the United States to back out of the war, and it did indeed start America's withdrawal from Vietnam. One of the biggest attacks of the Tet Offensive was the Battle of Hue. Beginning on January 31, the Battle of Hue lasted for more than three weeks. North Vietnamese soldiers conducted searches and arrested civilians connected with American or South Vietnamese forces. These civilians were executed in what became a massacre. Overall, the Tet Offensive was successful for North Vietnam: it proved that the war was not at all close to over like Americans believed. Back in the United States, news coverage of the Tet Offensive shocked Americans and decreased war support even further. From overseas to the homeland, shock and turmoil continued.

The nation mourned when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4. King had been called to Memphis, Tennessee, to help at a sanitation workers' strike. While standing on a balcony of the Lorraine Motel the next evening, King was shot in the neck and killed. The suspected murderer, James Earl

Ray, was apprehended in London on April 8. Witnesses claimed to have seen Ray running from a house across from the Lorraine Motel when King was shot. His fingerprints were also found on the rifle used in the assassination. Ray was sentenced to 99 years in prison. King's assassination caused riots, looting, and burnings in over 100 cities across the nation. President Lyndon B. Johnson called for people to "reject the blind violence" that had killed the "apostle of nonviolence". With the death of King, more disorder rose between blacks and white. Blacks saw the assassination as a rejection by whites of their nonviolent pursuit of equality. It also fueled both the Black Power and Black Panther movements. Little did the nation know, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination wouldn't be the year's only one.

Robert Kennedy, who was John F. Kennedy's younger brother, was assassinated on June 5. Kennedy was running for President because Democrat LBJ had stepped down. Kennedy had just won the California Primary and was in Los Angeles at his headquarters, the Ambassador Hotel. In a celebration of his victory, Kennedy spoke on live TV. The hotel was packed with reporters and people. To avoid the crowds, Kennedy left through a back door with bodyguards around midnight. Sirhan Sirhan, a Palestinian Arab, was waiting for a glimpse of Kennedy. He shot Kennedy three times, with one of the bullets striking Kennedy in the head and fragmenting his brain. Sirhan later claimed that he had wanted to assassinate Kennedy because it appeared he supported Israel. Five other people were injured in the struggle between Sirhan and bodyguards that ensued. Kennedy was rushed to a hospital, where he died on June 6 after undergoing three hours and forty minutes of surgery. With the assassination of Robert Kennedy

came the loss of the main Democrat running for President, which opened a door for Richard Nixon.

Richard Nixon won the 1968 presidential election on November 5. Nixon, as the race's front-running Republican, had a couple of advantages. First, the Democratic party was torn between candidates because of their stances on the Vietnam War. Also, there was a third major party running in the election, its candidate being George C. Wallace. Finally, the two other Republican candidates, Ronald Reagan and Nelson Rockefeller, couldn't beat Nixon because their votes were split between minorities. Another thing that Nixon had going for him was his public appeal. Besides having a likeable character and appearing on television, Nixon promised to restore law and order. He vowed to continue LBJ's War on Poverty and support the Civil Rights Movement. Nixon also claimed he had a secret plan to end the Vietnam War. Nixon beat Hubert H. Humphrey with a tight margin in a very close race; Nixon and Humphrey each won 43 percent of the popular vote. Spiro T. Agnew ran with Nixon as his Vice President.

From negative developments in the Vietnam War with the Tet Offensive, to the shocking assassinations of both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy, as well as Richard Nixon's presidential election, 1968 was quite a year. It was a roller coaster ride of protesting, mourning, and celebration, especially in America. With such traumatic events, the year 1968 often stands out as one of the most turbulent years in American history.

WORKS CITED

<https://assignbuster.com/events-in-1968-america/>

- “ Bobby Kennedy is Assassinated”. *History* . A & E Television Networks, 13 Nov. 2009, www.history.com/this-day-in-history/bobby-kennedy-is-assassinated . Accessed 21 May 2019.
- Daniel, Clifton. *Chronicle of the 20th Century* . JI International Publishing, 1994.
- “ Dick Nixon’s Winning Ways”. *Newsweek* , vol. 72, no. 15, Newsweek Inc., 7 Oct. 1968, pp. 30-31.
- “ Martin Luther King, Jr. Assassination”. *History* . A & E Television Networks, 28 Jan. 2010, www.history.com/topics/black-history/martin-luther-king-jr-assassination . Accessed 21 May 2019.
- “ Nixon Wins Presidential Election”. *History* . A & E Television Networks, 16 Nov. 2009, www.history.com/this-day-in-history/nixon-wins-presidential-election . Accessed 21 May 2019.
- “ Tet Offensive”. *History* . A & E Television Networks, 29 Oct. 2009, www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/tet-offensive . Accessed 21 May 2019.