

STORY ORIGIN (AND WHY I TELL THIS STORY)

On arrival at Stellenbosch University in 1997, I was made aware of Bobby Kennedy's 1966 visit to South Africa, given he had spoken at my own residence of Simonsberg. Understandably, there were other things on my mind at the time, so I gave the story little thought – after all who was Bobby Kennedy? Some obscure brother of JFK?

However, the memory of his visit lingered, and nine years later (in 2006) Bobby Kennedy's tour would loop back into my life. By then I was working in the United States, while studying history on the side. A pursuit which was opening my eyes to the curious parallels between the United States and South Africa. Similarities identified by Bobby Kennedy during a famous speech in Cape Town.

Another nine years on, my interest in history had surpassed any desire for a stable career, prompting a wild career change from finance to storytelling. And as part of the transition, I released a series of short stories on YouTube. The very first of these was a ten-minute video about Bobby Kennedy's visit, which (by then) I had come to learn was something special.

That little video prompted an amazing response, as I received a fascinating stream of emails and interactions from people who had witnessed Bobby's tour first-hand. Now armed with some fascinating personal anecdotes, I developed the story further. This time, a 25-minute version, which I then told live to the students of Simonsberg in 2019.

By then South Africa (and much of the world) had entered a period of fracture between left and right. The Rhodes-Must-Fall movement and state capture, followed in turn by George Floyd and riots in Durban had left me (and many others) feeling despondent.

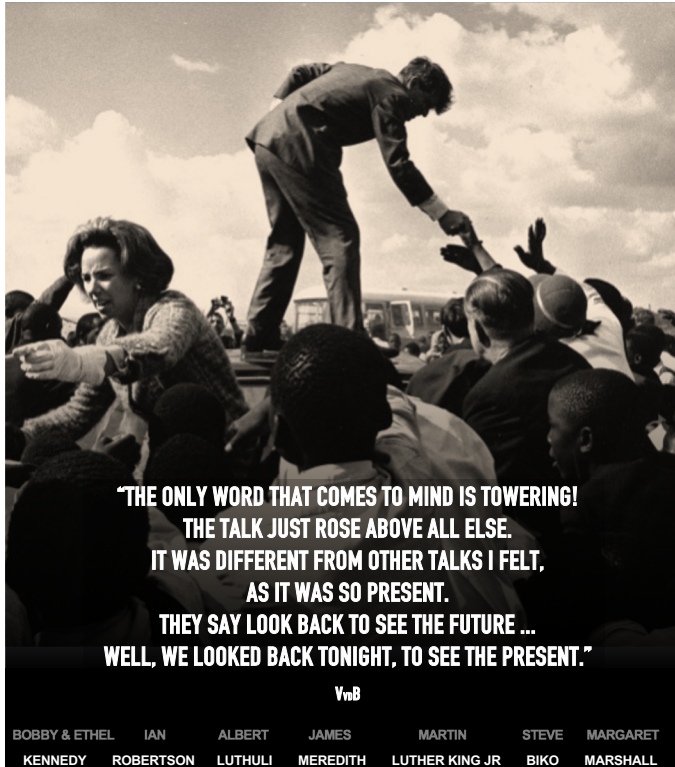
However, in recalling the crux of Bobby Kennedy's message in South Africa, I was drawn back to reading his speeches. It was a profound moment, for it felt as if those speeches had been written specifically for us today.

That was the trigger. The moment I realised a need to re-air the story of Bobby Kennedy's tour, so as to pass on his message here to a new generation. It was to spark a research project, culminating in a seven-part audio series (not yet released) and then a live performance, released in April 2024.

THE MESSENGER is a forgotten story of bravery, initiative and hope, with a tantalising message, whispered from the past.

THE MESSENGER

A RIPPLE OF HOPE WHISPERED FROM BOBBY KENNEDY'S TOUR OF SOUTH AFRICA IN 1966



**"THE ONLY WORD THAT COMES TO MIND IS TOWERING!
THE TALK JUST ROSE ABOVE ALL ELSE.
IT WAS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER TALKS I FELT,
AS IT WAS SO PRESENT.
THEY SAY LOOK BACK TO SEE THE FUTURE ...
WELL, WE LOOKED BACK TONIGHT, TO SEE THE PRESENT."**

VmB

BOBBY & ETHEL KENNEDY IAN ROBERTSON ALBERT LUTHULI JAMES MEREDITH MARTIN LUTHER KING JR STEVE BIKO MARGARET MARSHALL

CORE THEMES

- Free-Marketplace of Ideas:** The story explores the correlation between a free marketplace of ideas and our ability to flourish as humans. That ideas is then extrapolated to include societies, nations and organisations. An insight pertinent to modern commerce and the power of ideas.
- Making a Start:** Using the words and actions of Bobby Kennedy, the story celebrates the importance of making small contributions ("Ripples of Hope") which in aggregate can build into powerful currents. So much of what holds us back as human beings is having the courage to make a start. Kennedy's insight then is to start small, but make a start ...
- Stoicism:** The power of reframing trauma (individual and national) not as a burden, but rather, as a source of wisdom. Bobby's experience of his brother's assassination inspired a fresh outlook on life.
- Limitations of the Left/Right Political Model:** In a world dominated by the left/right model (which is limited and often divisive) Kennedy used his SA tour to introduce a fresh (alternative) model, which more accurately identifies the challenges undermining flourishing societies.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & DETAILS

THE MESSENGER is a story about Bobby Kennedy's forgotten visit to South Africa in 1966 and the two years which followed it. The story explores the curious parallels between South Africa and the United States in the 1960s, while revealing a message of hope from a comparable time of political fracture. At face value, THE MESSENGER is a niche story from a distant time, however its characters (from both sides of the Atlantic) are woven together to provide a fascinating study of the present, which has been receiving standing ovations from across the country.

LENGTH	80 minutes (40 mins x 2).
AGE RESTRICTION	>17 (Nothing crude, but concepts are nuanced).
INTERVAL	Recommended.
IMAGES	Yes. Good size screen is important.
SOUND	Musical soundtrack plays through PowerPoint.
PREVIEW	https://youtu.be/jnx9VIJ1rGk

TESTIMONIALS

It was nothing short of magical. The timing, the interconnectedness, the delivery.

Between lapping up the factual account and enjoying the waves of goosebumps, I had to try resist my mind wondering about the implications and potential for life today ... in SA, the US & the world.

MMH

Whatever you had hoped to achieve consider it done many times over.

This was simply one of the most sublime, moving and spell-binding stories I have heard for a very long time.

SW

Last night was incredible. The story resonated with me on a fundamental level, especially the references to the Ripple speech

JT

You really are a master storyteller. There's something about how you weave the facts together that makes previously unseen connections so obvious.

Simply and profoundly illustrated. The Messenger was truly exceptional.

TJ

Probably the best talk I've ever been to.

JM

I'm still gathering myself after last night ... The connections are just extraordinary.

Your research and crafting of the story and the players was an experience which touched me deeply.

C W-T

I have thought about its powerful themes once a day, every day since.

What an incredible experience.

WH

I think there is life before you hear Michael Charton speak and life after.

Just incredible. We were spellbound.

SD

When you finished the story, I was not quite ready to let go.

Like waking from a very vivid dream ... I was still clinging to the details before they faded and were lost. ... I've loved all four of your shows ... I have a new favourite.

TJ

TARGET AUDIENCES

- Leadership Teams:** Leaders looking for a nuanced product, where inspiration is discovered within the story, rather than pushed-out. THE MESSENGER provides a baseline for important conversations within any organisation: the importance of taking action (even if small initially); the nurturing of open communication and conflicting ideas; and the power of carefully dissecting failures, to draw on their stoic source of wisdom.
- Client Events:** Where business have a sophisticated client base (e.g. wealth managers; professional bodies; brokers) who are less inclined towards inspiration from adventurers and celebrities, Michael's stories are a great alternative. They offer the joy of learning and connections, while providing conversation points for meaningful client engagement.
- Charity Events:** The underlying theme of small actions combining to make meaningful change is perfectly aligned with the message of many charities. We've had some amazing events with THE MESSENGER.
- Groups with links to the United States:** THE MESSENGER draws on parallels while sparking a human connection to one another's countries.