

Rutgers  
Events

**February 5**

At Records Hall, Mark Ethridge Jr., editor of the *Detroit Free Press* and a recent visitor to South Vietnam, refutes General Westmoreland's claim that the United States is close to military victory.

**February 7**

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) protest the presence of recruiters for Dow Chemical (maker of napalm) at the University Placement Office on the College Avenue Campus.

**February 12**

P.B.'s Place, a coffeehouse in the Newark Campus Center, opens and offers folk music, jazz, debates, and poetry readings. The *Newark Observer* calls it an attempt to re-create the beatnik scene.

THE WHOLE WORLD WAS WATCHING

# 40 Years Later

Many would argue that the United States has never been the same since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, that a national innocence was lost forever. If that event didn't do it in, the year 1968 certainly did. Between the escalation of the Vietnam War, the political assassinations, and civic, political, and racial unrest, the nation was ravaged by year's end, never to be the same. In the intervening 40 years, commentary on this most tumultuous of years in the nation's postwar history has centered on the sense of lost opportunity and what might have been. But what if we could rewrite history? What if we could change the fate of key figures and key historical events? Would the nation have been better for it? Worse? The same? *Rutgers Magazine* asked members of the Rutgers faculty to speculate on how history would have played out differently. It's the quintessential **"what if."** – Bill Glovin

National  
Events

**January 23**

North Korea intercepts the USS *Pueblo*, claiming that the American intelligence vessel violates the Communist nation's sovereignty, and it holds the crew for 11 months.

**January 31**

70,000 North Vietnamese launch the Tet Offensive. The weeks-long invasion of South Vietnamese cities, including Saigon, rocks American war resolve.

**February 13**

Civil rights protests disrupt the campuses of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

## February 16

The Lovin' Spoonful—led by lead singer John Sebastian—plays at the junior prom concert at Rutgers–New Brunswick. Students complain when ticket prices are raised \$0.25, to \$3.25.

## February 21

Calling it “a personal rededication to action,” 52 members of the Student Afro-American Society on the New Brunswick Campus sponsor a 24-hour fast on the third anniversary of Malcolm X’s assassination.

## March 3

Meeting *Daily Targum* reporters, U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy, a candidate for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination, attacks President Johnson for “failing to negotiate a peace in Vietnam and for neglecting the home front, especially the Negro problem.”

### What if Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy

hadn't been murdered? “The election of 1968 was close. One is tempted to believe that the charismatic Robert F. Kennedy might have beaten Richard Nixon and moderated America’s turn to the right. Conceivably, RFK would have understood that the United States could no longer ignore the People’s Republic of China’s existence. RFK probably would have pursued détente with the Soviets, as Nixon did. Perhaps he would have extricated the nation from the agony of the Vietnam War. It is difficult to believe that RFK would have condoned the murderous and repressive tactics that Nixon and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover used to destroy the Black Panthers and other black radical organizations. ▶ ▶ ▶



Dr. Ralph Abernathy and others stand on the balcony of Lorraine Motel and point in the direction of gunshots that killed American civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who lies at their feet, Memphis, Tennessee, April 4, 1968.

## Alumni and Faculty Remember

“In the middle of the controversy over the war, Barry Goldwater spoke at the College Avenue Gym. Hubert Humphrey also appeared on campus, speaking in the quad between Scott Hall and Murray. There were sharpshooters on the roofs of buildings.”

**Jeff Rubin RC’70**  
*economics professor*

“Most of us dressed like extras in *Hair*, but there was the counterpoint of the ROTC kids (short hair, neat) and the die-hard fraternity boys (some dressing as though they were in *Animal House*).”

**Robert McGarvey RC’70**  
*writer-editor*

“Many of my male classmates received their diplomas in one hand and their military induction notices in the other. A sad cloud dimmed our joy at graduating in 1968. Vietnam became close and real.”

**Kate McGinnity CCAS’68, GSE’75**  
*retired special-education teacher*

“Fraternities were very important, and the seriousness of the political events went unrecognized by many. Graduate students from overseas were the ones concerned about the assassinations and the racial unrest.”

**Hans Fisher RC’50**  
*nutritional sciences professor emeritus*

“There was a growing consciousness about racism, sexism, gay rights, distrust of government, global human rights, and, of course, drugs. They were fringe issues when I entered Rutgers in ‘65; by 1968, they were front and center.”

**Owen Ullmann RC’69**  
*journalist*

## March 12

U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy comes within 230 votes of defeating President Lyndon B. Johnson in the New Hampshire primary for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination.

## March 16

American troops from Charlie Company, led by Lieutenant William Calley, slaughter Vietnamese civilians in the village of My Lai.

## March 16

U.S. Senator Robert F. Kennedy, of New York, ends months of debate by announcing that he will enter the race for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination.

## March 31

President Johnson announces he will not run for reelection, saying: “I shall not seek—and I will not accept—the nomination of my party as your president.”

## Rutgers Events

### March 7

The Student Council passes a resolution urging seniors and first-year graduate students to appeal their 1-A classifications to their local draft boards in order to paralyze the Selective Service System.

### March 12

Less than a year after refusing to serve in the Vietnam War out of religious conviction, a decision that would cost him his heavyweight crown, Muhammad Ali speaks at Records Hall in New Brunswick.

### April 8

Following Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination on April 4, the April 8 *Daily Targum* dedicates its issue to addressing perceived university racism. Classes are cancelled on April 9.

▶ ▶ ▶ “If Martin Luther King Jr. had not died in 1968, the issue of race might not have become so polarized, and King would surely have continued to be an outspoken advocate for social justice. However, he probably would have remained disappointed by the indifference and complacency of a rich society that turns a blind eye to poverty and, four decades later, still cannot provide health care for all of its citizens and equal educational opportunity for all of its children.”

**Wayne Glasker**, *associate professor of history and director of African-American Studies, Rutgers-Camden*



Earth seen from over the horizon of the moon as viewed from Apollo 8.

**What if NASA had not pursued the Apollo manned space flight program?** “Manned space flight was a gift from previous generations, reminding us that exploration and advancement require vision and courage. The first man orbiting Earth, the first woman in space, and the first step on the moon are events that had a huge impact on public life, geopolitics, and science and technology.

“If President John F. Kennedy had not vowed in May of

1961 to place a man on the moon by the end of the decade, had the Apollo program thus never been pursued, so many breakthroughs would never have occurred. Apollo, consisting of 17 space missions, was the largest scientific and technological undertaking in history. It spawned competition among nations in technological innovation, and it inspired students to seek careers in engineering and science.

“Because lives were at stake, by-products of the space missions were advances in health monitoring and diagnostics as well as electronics and engineering: digital imaging for breast cancer detection; protocols and diagnostics for osteoporosis and cataracts screening; polarized sunglasses; and state-of-the-art advancements in intensive-care instrumentation. Safety demands for spaceflights resulted in fire-retardant paints, thermal blankets, microelectronics sensors, and night-vision technology, to name a few.

“The success of space missions affected geopolitical relationships. Novel treaties were created, such as the European Space Agency. Nations new to the space race, like China, have made major advancements in their space programs, modeling them after the United States’ and Russia’s programs.”

**Assimina A. Pegleri**, *associate professor and laboratory director, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, Rutgers-New Brunswick*

### What if Richard M. Nixon had not been elected president?

“Richard M. Nixon campaigned in 1968 on the theme of restoring ‘law and order’ in a nation rocked by social and political turbulence; he resigned facing impeachment for conspiring to obstruct justice. He built his early political career running as an anti-Communist crusader, ruining the careers of suspected Communist sympathizers; he left office as the first president to open a relationship with a Communist nation, Mao Zedong’s People’s Republic of China.

“The Watergate scandal introduced ‘dirty tricks’ to our political vocabulary and became emblematic of the abuse of presidential power. Congressional Watergate hearings created a deep partisan divide that remains a fixture of national politics today. In electoral politics, he championed the Southern Strategy, which emphasized appealing to disaffected southern white voters of the Democratic Party. In sympathy with ‘states’

## National Events

### April 2

2001: *A Space Odyssey* premieres at the Uptown Theater in Washington, D.C.

### April 4

James Earl Ray assassinates Martin Luther King Jr. at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis. Riots erupt in major American cities, including Newark, for several days.

### April 11

President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1968.

### April 23

Students protesting the Vietnam War take over five administration buildings at Columbia University. Seven days later, police storm the buildings and end the standoff.

## April 19

Students request black-oriented fraternity and dormitory sections and a recruiting program on the New Brunswick and Newark campuses.

## April 22

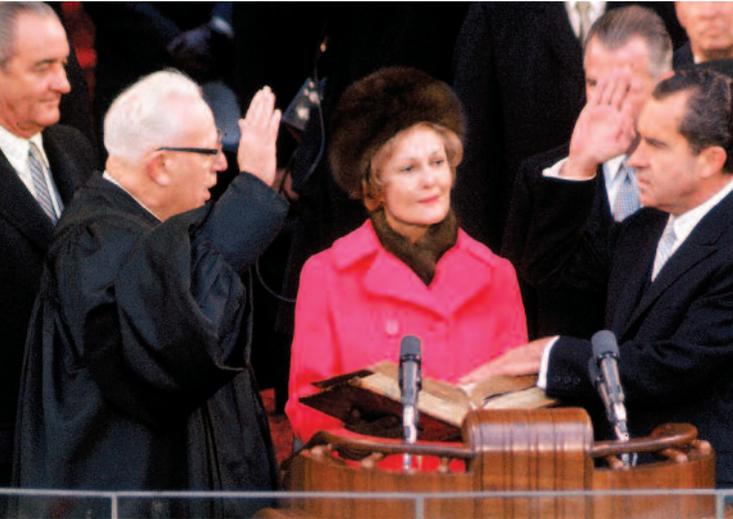
Students complain to the *Newark Observer* about an unknown folk singer hired to perform at the coronation ball. The singer, Richie Havens, opens Woodstock the following year.

## May 3

Simon and Garfunkel cancel an appearance at the Military Ball in a protest against militarism. The duo performs free instead at an SDS fundraiser in Princeton.

## October 10

90 percent of the 3,000 students living in dormitories at Rutgers College, which is all male, vote for extending female visiting hours.



**Chief Justice Earl Warren swears in Richard Nixon as the 37th President of the United States in Washington, D.C. He was elected on November 5, 1968.**

rights; Ronald Reagan perfected the approach.

"What if Vice President Hubert Humphrey had won the 1968 election? Without Nixon, no Watergate and no opening to China. The national traumas and waves of social change that swept through the 1960s left transformative marks on the nation and the world. Neither Nixon nor anyone else elected in 1968 could have stemmed the tides."

**Ruth Mandel**, *director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers–New Brunswick*

### What if Lyndon B. Johnson had run for reelection in 1968?

"Had he run, President Lyndon B. Johnson would have received the Democratic nomination instead of Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey. Like Humphrey, Johnson would not have run in the primaries, where attention was turned to the candidacies of U.S. Senators Robert F. Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy. Kennedy's assassination



**President Lyndon B. Johnson**

## Alumni and Faculty Remember

"I was taking a midterm in Latin American politics on Election Day 1968. Outside our window, we could see police on horseback dispersing students. We returned to our seats and finished exams. Still, I thought: the tides, they were (almost) a-changin'!"

**Marcia Robins Greenhouse NCAS'69**  
*English teacher*

"As a new faculty member at Douglass in 1966, I was still adapting in 1968. I had come from a relatively radical Chicago campus to staid Douglass. My hair expanded (into a Judaeo), and I had a Mexican bandit moustache. I wore a tie to class but kept my Nehru jacket ready for special occasions."

**Harvey Waterman**  
*associate dean, Rutgers–New Brunswick*

"The drug culture was a terrible turning point in music as artists dropped dead from overdoses. It was a decadent lifestyle. There was so much turmoil that I sensed a total degrading of society."

**Rusty von Schwedler RC'68**  
*engineer*

"The assassination of Bobby Kennedy moved me more than any of the problems in the world. He would have brought the U.S. together more so than any politician, and he would have ended the Vietnam War quicker than Nixon."

**Louis Faruolo NCAS'68**  
*real estate broker*

"It was the last 'straight year' when some students still wore suits to football games and traditions were still followed, but the vast passion and expressive energy of the more liberal students were sweeping over Rutgers."

**Bruce B. Bingham RC'68**  
*financial consultant*

## April 29

The musical *Hair* officially opens on Broadway at the Biltmore Theatre, the first of 1,742 performances.

## June 5

U.S. Senator Robert F. Kennedy is shot at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles by Sirhan Sirhan and dies the following day.

## August 8

The Republican National Convention in Miami Beach nominates Richard M. Nixon as the Republican Party's presidential nominee.

## August 20

200,000 Warsaw Pact troops, under the direction of the Soviet Union, invade Czechoslovakia, exterminating the political liberalization movement of the Prague Spring.

Rutgers Events

October 11

At a Board of Governors meeting in Newark following the dedication of \$24 million in campus building improvements, 100 students protest Rutgers funding policies.

October 29

At a teach-in on Vietnam and elections in New Brunswick, history professors and moderators Lloyd Gardner and Warren Sussman cause an uproar when they endorse the candidacy of Richard M. Nixon.

October 30

The *Daily Targum* endorses Dick Gregory as the Peace Freedom Alternative Candidate for President following his speech at the College Avenue Gym before 3,000 people.

would have left Eugene McCarthy as LBJ's main challenger, and McCarthy would not have had any greater success against Johnson than he did against Humphrey. In 1968, political bosses and party insiders, such as Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago, still carried great weight in selecting candidates. Johnson, like Humphrey, would have been their choice.

"If Johnson had run, Richard Nixon still would have won, but by a wider margin. More than Humphrey, Johnson was identified with the Vietnam War. The contest had three candidates—Humphrey, Nixon, and the independent Governor George C. Wallace of Alabama, a segregationist who took votes from Humphrey and would have done the same to Johnson. Had Johnson competed instead of Humphrey, McCarthy or George McGovern would have been a fourth candidate who represented the antiwar forces. He would have made significant play for the party's left-wing voters."

**Steven F. Lawson**, professor of history, Rutgers–New Brunswick

**What if unrest hadn't created the Black Panthers, the SDS, and the Chicago 7?**

"Despite the efforts of the Black Panthers, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the Chicago 7, these youth movements didn't change events. The Vietnam War dragged on, and members of these organizations came to believe that they couldn't change anything. They are too often dismissed by history as degenerates who were part of a drugged-out generation. They were mostly idealists who listened to the antiwar speeches and pleas for an end to racial bias and wanted someone to do something about it. But, what if these baby boomers hadn't been so disappointed by the lack of results? Perhaps they might have retained some of their youthful idealism and not become a generation obsessed with

making a fast buck."

**Allan Wolper**, professor of journalism and media studies, Rutgers–Newark

**What if the Tet Offensive had not taken place?** "The Tet Offensive was a political catastrophe, perhaps radically shifting the course of American political history. It punctured the myth of U.S. invincibility; convinced most Americans, key policy-makers, and military officials that the war couldn't be won;

led to peace negotiations; launched the candidacy of U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy; discouraged President Lyndon B. Johnson from running for reelection and thus opened the way for the candidacy of U.S. Senator Robert Kennedy. Tet contributed to major domestic unrest; destroyed the morale of the conscript army; and even shattered the \$35 fixed price for gold, which had held since 1934.

"If Tet had not taken place, the outcome of the war would probably have been the same: U.S. defeat. Johnson probably would have run for reelection and might have won, preventing the presidency of Richard M. Nixon and most of the features of his administration. Kennedy probably would not have been assassinated and might have succeeded Johnson in 1972."

**H. Bruce Franklin**, John Cotton Dana Professor of English and American Studies, Rutgers–Newark



**Black Panther activist Eldridge Cleaver, framed by a poster image of H. Rap Brown, authored the book *Soul on Ice*.**

**What if a breakthrough understanding of genetics hadn't been discovered?**

"Robert W. Holley, Har Gobind Khorana, and Marshall W. Nirenberg won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their interpretation of the genetic code and its function in protein synthesis. They had done the groundbreaking work in 'cracking the genetic code'—the discovery that all living things use almost exactly the same chemical language for getting information out of DNA. This discovery paved the way for breakthroughs in genetic engineering and biotechnology (genes from different organisms could be moved from one to another because they

National Events

August 22–30

Police clash with antiwar protesters in Chicago during the week of the Democratic National Convention, which selects Hubert H. Humphrey as its presidential nominee and Edmund Muskie as his running mate.

October 11

NASA launches Apollo 7, the first manned Apollo mission and the first trip to transmit a live television broadcast to Earth.

October 16

During the Summer Olympics in Mexico City, African-American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos give the Black Power salute after winning gold and bronze medals for the United States.

### December 3

A \$3.3 million classroom building, at Linden Street between Fourth and Fifth streets, is dedicated on the Camden Campus, with Governor Richard J. Hughes and Rutgers President Mason W. Gross attending.

### December 18

A year-end editorial in the *Daily Targum* chastises students for their lack of reaction to "problems that plague this campus. The outlook for an active Rutgers College in the near future appears dismal."

### December 19

Mark Rudd, SDS leader of the recent student revolt at Columbia University, tells 300 students on the Newark Campus to close their university so it will meet their demands. A member of the Young Americans for Freedom carries a placard reading, "Rid Rutgers of Rudds."



**Wounded Marines ride on top of a tank during the battle to recapture the city of Hue during the Tet Offensive in the Vietnam War, 1968.**

all used the same code) and for the revolution in genomics (the coded information in sequenced DNA can be interpreted through bioinformatics algorithms).

"Forty years ago, geneticists knew that cracking the genetic code would change our science. But we didn't know how. We didn't know, for instance, that it would allow for manufacturing of human insulin in bacterial fermentations or that it would open the way for personalized genetic medicine. The next 40 years will bring remarkable achievements: novel treatments and new drugs for chronic degenerative diseases; the harnessing of microbial power for solving energy problems; and more understanding of human impact on the natural world. The cutting edge of science is endless."

**Joan W. Bennett**, *associate vice president, Promotion of Women in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics; professor of plant biology and pathology, Rutgers–New Brunswick*

## Alumni and Faculty Remember

"Livingston College was preparing to open, its idealism undimmed by later realities and already transforming the campus through its acceptance of coeducation, innovative faculty, and multiethnic commitments."

**Gerald M. Pomper**  
*political science professor emeritus*

"I felt the world was lapsing into anarchy when Martin Luther King Jr. was killed. But I maintained my black and white friends, and we survived it. Friendship conquers all."

**Bryant Mitchell RC'69**  
*commercial real estate broker*

"A student group gathered to protest a pro-war presentation by somebody from the War College, in Pennsylvania. Students' pictures and names were given to the FBI. A larger protest of 200 students marched to Camden City Hall to demand the files and photos."

**Tom Venables CCAS'67, GSE'76**  
*college administrator*

"I lived and worked in Newark (when I wasn't in classes). It was a year of uncertainty. 'What's next?' was the mindset. It was a difficult year for me because my father, who was 44, died between the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy."

**Mary Jo Green NCAS'69, RBS'70**  
*corporate executive*

"For those who lived through it, it shaped so much of what followed—even 40 years later. Could there have been a more exciting, challenging, broadening time to be on a college campus?"

**James Gerstenzang RC'69**  
*journalist*

### November 5

Republican candidate Richard M. Nixon wins the U.S. presidential election, defeating Vice President Humphrey and American Independent Party candidate George Wallace.

### November 5

Shirley Chisholm, from New York's 12th District, is the first African-American woman elected to the U.S. Congress, defeating Republican James Farmer.

### November 15

500,000 people march in Washington, D.C., for peace, the largest antiwar rally in U.S. history.

### December 24

Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and William A. Anders are the first astronauts to see the far side of the moon, and the whole of planet Earth, when Apollo 8 orbits the moon.