

Allard K. Lowenstein Oral History Interview – RFK#1, 04/23/69
Administrative Information

Creator: Allard K. Lowenstein
Interviewer: Larry J. Hackman
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Biographical Note

United States Representative, New York, 1969 - 1971; delegate, New York, Democratic National Convention, 1968. In this interview, Lowenstein discusses assisting Robert F. Kennedy with the Day of Affirmation Address.

Access

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Larry Lowenstein

Date

March 27 1990

Archivist of the United States

Date

June 8, 1991

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Oral History Interview

with

ALLARD K. LOWENSTEIN

April 23, 1969
Washington, D. C.

By Larry J. Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: Do you remember how you got on this?
All I know about is that somehow you came in for advice on a South African trip and helped him rewrite a speech or something.

LOWENSTEIN: Yeah, well, I was going to the Dominican Republic. And I got a message to call his apartment. ~~I can't remember--~~I can probably find out--but I can't remember who gave me the message, but I got the

message. I was going to Kennedy with--

going to the airport with--Norman Thomas.

We got to the airport and I said, "I have to make a phone call," And I went over

and called the apartment. And Robert

Kennedy said, "I'm going to make this

speech in Capetown, and I need to talk to

you about it." And I said, "Well, I'll

be back from the Dominican Republic in

three days." And he said, "No, no." He

said, "I'm leaving for South Africa," I

think like the day after the next." I mean,

it was before I would have been back. And

he said, "Can't you come back to the

apartment?" And I said, "No. I've got

Norman Thomas. I've got to take him to

the Dominican Republic." And he said

something like, "Oh, for heaven's sakes,

someone else can take Norman Thomas to

the Dominican Republic." I said, "Well,

if I can find someone else." But you know,

Norman Thomas was by then very. . . .
His eyesight was very bad. ^e And he was
having trouble walking. So I told him
that if I could find someone else that
was going. The elections were taking place
and there were other people going for that
purpose, And if I could ^{find} one that was
going to be going down that I trusted,
who would take care of Norman Thomas and
besure that nothing befell him, and if
I could get on the next flight down so
I could join the observers, then I would
come back into the city. ^H Well, as it
worked out, someone came along, Another
observer came along. Well, I was prac-
tically in the telephone booth then. Then
I explained to Norman Thomas what had
happened, and ~~he said. . . .~~ ^e Of course,
he insisted that he didn't need anyone to
go with him, which is why I didn't discuss
it with him. I just told him when I had

somebody else. So then I came back into the city. And I did get on the next flight, which was like that night, and then flying down overnight and I think stopping in San Juan and changing in the morning.

So I came back into the city. That's the first time I remember meeting Adam [Adam Walinsky]. I had heard a lot about him, and I may have met him in a group, but I don't remember him from before that. Adam was in charge of the speech. We went in to the second room in from the left as you walk down the corridor to the master bedroom, and sat down in there, and there was this speech, And it was, I thought, terrible. And after I looked at it for a few minutes and realized that from the point of view of the South African opposition, as well as, I thought, from Kennedy's point of view, that it was a disastrous speech. I figured what the

hell?[?] No one's going to listen to me.

I'm sure they've had all these South

African Foundation people, and that's

how these things come about. ^{//} The first

thing I did was I called up Francis Suzman,

[Interruption.]