

# New Frontiers

A newsletter for ★ educators

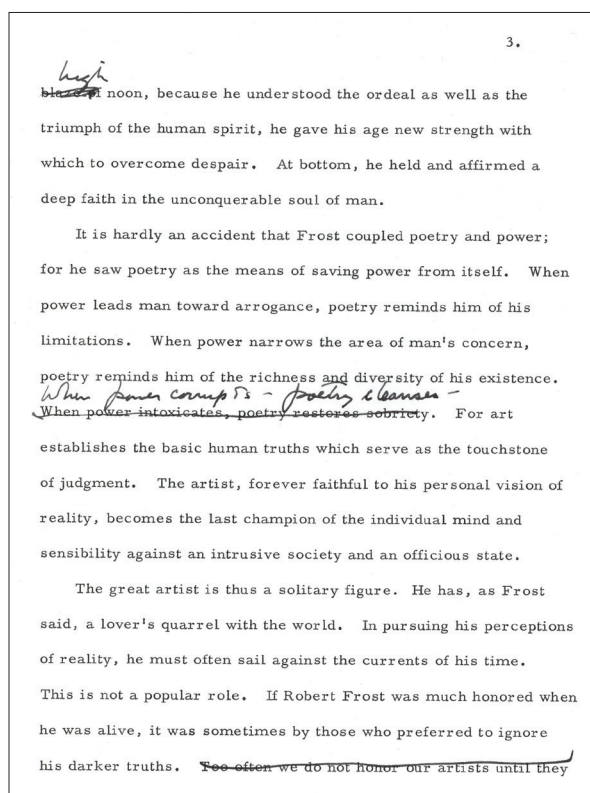
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS AT THE JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

## The Lasting Legacy of Words

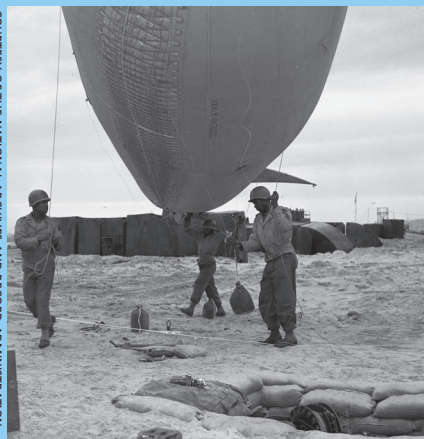
President Kennedy believed in the power of words – both written and spoken – to win votes, to set goals, to change minds, to move nations. He consistently took care to choose the right words and phrases that would send the right message.

It has been sixty years since the last year of the Kennedy administration. This edition presents educators with various opportunities to examine the lasting power of the written word. From a high school lesson plan exploring JFK's address at Amherst College about the importance of public service and the role of the poet in democracy to featured literature and related activities highlighting the interconnectedness of the natural world and how elementary and middle school students can take action to care for the environment, there is something for every classroom. A spotlight on two *Kennedy Library Forums* highlighting the power of words and the policies they convey round out the issue.

Above is an excerpt from JFK's October 26, 1963 Remarks at Amherst College Upon Receiving an Honorary Degree. Notice his handwritten edit to the draft copy of the speech, "When power intoxicates, poetry restores sobriety" to "When power corrupts, poetry cleanses." ★



Page 3 of President Kennedy's draft speech copy "Remarks at Amherst College Upon Receiving an Honorary Degree."



Corporal A. Johnson moves a balloon with the assistance of his men over to the winch at the invasion beaches. July 24, 1944.

### Collections Corner

This past summer, curatorial staff completed the installation of the new special exhibit *Service and Sacrifice: World War II – A Shared Experience*. With over 16 million Americans serving during World War II, every single person in the United States was touched in some way by the War. The special exhibit, *Service and Sacrifice* offers personal glimpses of a few of the many Americans who served, including members of the Kennedy family and the stories of historically marginalized communities, including women and people of color.

Despite sharing a common mission and purpose, the exhibit shows visitors how the service of each individual was seen through a different lens.

African Americans, Japanese Americans, and women would continue to endure their second class position even on the battlefield. But their performance

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### HIGHLIGHTS

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# From Head and Heart: Caring for the Environment through Science, Stories, and Action



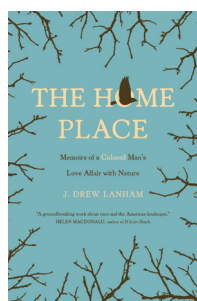
Young people are increasingly aware of the challenges to our planet. With each new environmental crisis, they are demanding action and asking leaders to acknowledge that, in President Kennedy’s words, “The supreme reality of our time is our indivisibility ... and our common vulnerability on this planet.” The JFK Presidential Library and Museum’s conference on November 8, 2023, will explore how literature can help students to understand the interconnectedness of the natural world and how educators can prepare young people to face the urgent challenges of a changing climate.

These books by guest authors featured at our fall children’s literature conference can help your students take action to care for the environment. Try out the Classroom Activities below to engage your classes with these books in a meaningful manner. For more information about the conference, visit [jfklibrary.org/Head&Heart](http://jfklibrary.org/Head&Heart).

## J. Drew Lanham

***The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man’s Love Affair with Nature.***

Milkweed Editions:  
Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
(2017, 240 pages.  
Ages teen to adult.)



The conference’s keynote speaker, Dr. J. Drew Lanham, deftly guides the reader through historical, personal, and professional landscapes. Lyrical and descriptive writing make his “Home Place” come alive with birdsong, gurgling creeks, smells of home cooking, and the triumphs and trials of a black man growing up and observing nature in rural South Carolina. In describing the risks he has faced as a natural scientist who is also a person of color, Dr. Lanham reveals essential connections between the environment, race, and history.

### Classroom Activity

Although the book is written for an adult audience, teachers can use a chapter or excerpt with middle school

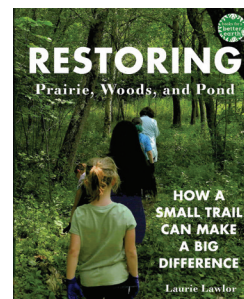
students. The chapter “Thinking” reads like a prose poem and provides an excellent mentor text for nature writing. After reading it and discussing the content and language, invite students to brainstorm a list of words and phrases about the land, animals, trees, plants, and sky surrounding their school. Prompts may include: What do they notice? What is the impact of development? Who has lived on the land? What might it have looked like before it was developed? Using the list of words, have students write their own prose poem about their school landscape or a place that has meaning to them.

Also by the author: *Sparrow Envy: Field Guide to Birds and Lesser Beasts*. Hub City Press: Spartanburg, South Carolina. (2021, 104 pages. Poetry for teens to adults.)

## Laurie Lawlor

***Restoring Prairie, Woods, and Pond: How a Small Trail Can Make a Big Difference.***

Holiday House: New York.  
(96 pages.)



This lively non-fiction account of a land restoration project focuses on several hundred acres of land in rural southeastern Wisconsin where a small community, including young people, pooled their skills, time, and energy to transform “tangled bushes and dense thickets of trees” into three thriving ecosystems they could celebrate, steward, and study.

### Classroom Activity

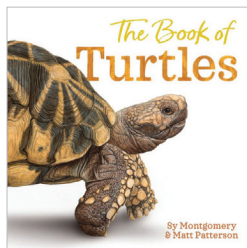
Discuss why the Eagle Nature Trail restoration project took place and what steps the community took to accomplish this difficult task. Identify the specific civic engagement steps taken to accomplish their goals, setbacks that were encountered, and how they were overcome. Brainstorm possible environmental projects that would

improve your community. Use the steps outlined in the book to plan your own environmental project.

Also by the author: *Rachel Carson and Her Book that Changed the World*. Holiday House: New York. (2014.)

**Sy Montgomery,  
illustrated by Matt Patterson**  
***The Book of Turtles.***

Clarion Books: New York.  
(2023, 40 pages.  
Ages 6-12.)



The irresistible language and illustrations in this picture book invite the reader to appreciate the variety of turtles, their appearance, body structure, abilities, and adaptations. Readers will come to know individual turtles notable for their weight, age, and even romantic

drama, as well as how to best protect these precious reptiles who have been around for about 240 million years.

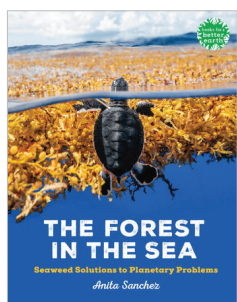
**Classroom Activity**

Discuss the section, “You Can Help Turtles” and have students share personal experiences related to the information. Have students create posters to share with other classrooms – hang them in hallways and/or present the guidelines in person. Students can gather additional information to add to the poster, making sure to cite their sources. Add illustrations to enhance the information.

Also by the author: *The Octopus Scientists*. Clarion Books: New York. (2021, 80 pages.)

**Anita Sanchez**  
***The Forest in the Sea:  
Seaweed Solutions to  
Planetary Problems.***

Holiday House: New York.  
(2023, 96 pages. Ages 8-12.)



A fascinating “deep dive” into all-things seaweed (which turns out is neither plant nor animal), Sanchez has a knack for selecting the most interesting aspects of the subject that grab the attention of elementary and middle school readers, as well as adults! While not shying away from

the imminent and life-threatening dangers of climate change, her research brims with optimism in describing the potential of “the forest of the sea” to decrease carbon dioxide, help provide food, and contribute to our fuel supply.

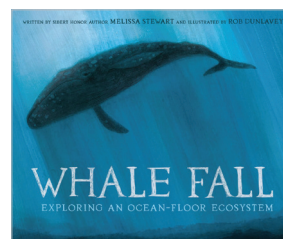
**Classroom Activity**

Discuss the various projects mentioned in the book and work in small groups or as a class to find out what progress has been made. Generate a list of questions and use sources in the bibliography to gather additional information. Use the website list in the back matter as a starting point for contacting a scientist, seaweed farmer, or journalist for a live or email interview.

Also by the author: *Meltdown: Discover Earth’s Irreplaceable Glaciers and Learn What You Can Do to Save Them*. Workman Publishing Company: New York. (2022, 128 pages.)

**Melissa Stewart,  
illustrated by Rob Dulavey**  
***Whale Fall: Exploring an  
Ocean-Floor Ecosystem.***

Random House Studio:  
New York. (2023, 40 pages.  
Ages 4-10.)



With full-spread illustrations throughout, *Whale Fall* chronicles in words and pictures the ecosystem that is created when a whale corpse drops to the sea floor. The literal depth and breadth of creatures that are nourished by the whale’s body is

astonishing. Close-up illustrations of small sea animals provide detailed visual information.

**Classroom Activity**

Use the text and images in the addendum at the back of the book to create an illustrated timeline of a whale fall ecosystem. Show which animals come at what interval: have students draw and color the animals and describe how they attract and nourish the additional creatures. Discuss what would happen if the population of whales decreases.

Also by the author: *Un Lugar Para Mariposas* (Spanish Edition of *A Place for Butterflies*). Peachtree Publications: Atlanta, Georgia. (32 pages.) ★

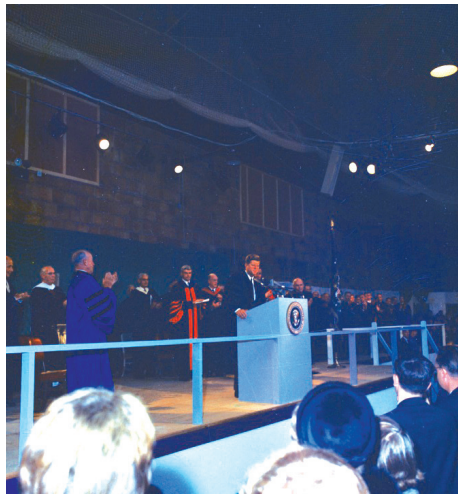


# Kennedy on the Poet’s Civic Role

On October 26, 1963, President Kennedy delivered a timeless speech at Amherst College about the importance of public service and the role of the poet in a democratic society. In this activity, students analyze the meaning of a significant portion of this speech, and then write a brief poem about the role of the poet in civic life.

## Goals/ Rationale

President Kennedy held a special regard for Robert Frost, whom he invited in January 1961 to deliver a poem for his inauguration. Frost died in January 1963 and, in October of that year, Amherst College held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Robert Frost Library. At the ceremony, President Kennedy delivered a timeless speech about the importance of public service and the role of the poet in a democratic society. During the speech, he famously stated, “When power leads men towards arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man’s concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses.” In this activity, students analyze the meaning of a significant portion of this speech (approximately 8 minutes), and then write a brief poem about the role of the poet in civic life.



President Kennedy delivering remarks at Robert Frost Library ground-breaking at Amherst College. Amherst, MA. October 26, 1963.

- describe the contributions JFK says that a poet can make to civic life.
- write a poem about the role of the poet in civic life.

## Prior Knowledge and Skills

Students should have read and analyzed at least one poem by Robert Frost. You may want them to study his famous poem, *The Road Not Taken*, or choose another from the Poetry Foundation’s website ([poetryfoundation.org](http://poetryfoundation.org)).

## Historical Background and Context

Born in San Francisco in 1874, Robert Frost moved with his family

to Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1884. He became known for creating poems steeped in references to New England. Though he published his first book of poems at age forty, he won four Pulitzer Prizes before his death at age 88.

Frost supported Kennedy in his 1960 presidential campaign and was subsequently invited to read a poem at Kennedy’s inauguration. Their friendship developed and, during Kennedy’s presidency, Frost was a frequent guest at the White House.

In the late summer of 1962, Robert Frost visited the USSR with Stuart Udall, Kennedy’s Secretary of the Interior, where both met with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. After the visit, Frost met with news media and, according to Udall, inaccurately asserted that Khrushchev thought the US was “too liberal to fight.” This misrepresentation of Khrushchev’s position irritated Kennedy and soured the relationship between Kennedy and Frost.

## Essential Question:

What role can a poet play in a democracy?

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- discuss the connection JFK makes between power and poetry.

## Connections to Curriculum Standards

**National History Standards - US History, Era 9: Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)**

- **Standard 2: How the Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics.**

**Common Core State Standards**

- **ELA College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language**
- **ELA – Reading Informational Texts; Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language Standards in Literacy in History/Social Studies for grades 9-10 and 11-12**

**C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards**

- **Discipline 2 - Applying disciplinary concepts and tools (Civics)**
- National Council of Teachers of English: Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12**
- Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework**
- **GOV.T1 - Foundations of government in the United States**
- Massachusetts English Language Arts Framework**
- **Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language**

IT IS HARDLY AN ACCIDENT THAT FROST COUPLED POETRY AND POWER; FOR HE SAW POETRY AS THE MEANS OF SAVING POWER FROM ITSELF. WHEN POWER LEADS MAN TOWARD ARROGANCE, POETRY REMINDS HIM OF HIS LIMITATIONS. WHEN POWER NARROWS THE AREA OF MAN'S CONCERN, POETRY REMINDS HIM OF THE RICHNESS AND DIVERSITY OF HIS EXISTENCE. WHEN POWER CURRUPTS -- POETRY CLEANSSES. FOR ART ESTABLISHES THE BASIC HUMAN TRUTHS WHICH SERVE AS THE TOUCHSTONE OF JUDGMENT. THE ARTIST, FOREVER FAITHFUL TO HIS PERSONAL VISION OF REALITY, BECOMES THE LAST CHAMPION OF THE INDIVIDUAL MIND AND SENSIBILITY AGAINST AN INTRUSIVE SOCIETY AND AN OFFICIOUS STATE.

THE GREAT ARTIST IS THUS A SOLITARY FIGURE. HE HAS, AS FROST SAID, A LOVER'S QUARREL WITH THE WORLD. IN PURSUING HIS PERCEPTIONS OF REALITY, HE MUST OFTEN SAIL AGAINST THE CURRENTS OF HIS TIME. THIS IS NOT A POPULAR ROLE. IF ROBERT FROST WAS MUCH HONORED WHEN HE WAS ALIVE, IT WAS SOMETIMES BY THOSE WHO PREFERRED TO IGNORE HIS DARKER TRUTHS.

Page 3 of the reading copy of "Remarks at Amherst College Upon Receiving an Honorary Degree." October 26, 1963.

After Frost's death in January 1963, Amherst College decided to break ground on a library named for the poet, who had been a member of the faculty for more than forty years. They invited President Kennedy to the groundbreaking on October 26, 1963, where he received an honorary degree and made a timeless speech referencing a poet's role in civic life. It was one of the last speeches that Kennedy delivered before his assassination on November 22, 1963.

For more information about Robert Frost, visit the Poetry Foundation's web page.

### Materials

- For background information: WGBH News, Remembering John F. Kennedy's Last Speech ([wgbh.org/news/local/2018-08-09/remembering-john-f-kennedys-last-speech](http://wgbh.org/news/local/2018-08-09/remembering-john-f-kennedys-last-speech))
- John F. Kennedy's October 26, 1963 Remarks at Amherst College on the Arts ([jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/remarks-at-amherst-college-on-the-arts](http://jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/remarks-at-amherst-college-on-the-arts))

YET, IN RETROSPECT, WE SEE HOW THE ARTIST'S FIDELITY HAS STRENGTHENED THE FIBER OF OUR NATIONAL LIFE. IF SOMETIMES OUR GREAT ARTISTS HAVE APPEARED MOST CRITICAL OF OUR SOCIETY, IT IS BECAUSE THEIR FEELINGS ARE SO STRONG THAT THEY CANNOT BEAR FOR IT TO FALL SHORT OF ITS HIGHEST POTENTIALS.

I SEE LITTLE MORE IMPORTANCE TO THE FUTURE OF OUR CIVILIZATION THAN FULL RECOGNITION OF THE PLACE OF THE ARTIST. IF ART IS TO NOURISH THE ROOTS OF OUR CULTURE, SOCIETY MUST SET THE ARTIST FREE TO FOLLOW HIS VISION WHEREVER IT LEADS. WE MUST NEVER FORGET THAT ART IS NOT A FORM OF PROPAGANDA: IT IS A FORM OF TRUTH; AND, AS MR. MacLEISH ONCE REMARKED OF POETS, "THERE IS NOTHING WORSE FOR OUR TRADE THAN TO BE IN STYLE." IN FREE SOCIETY, ART IS NOT A WEAPON. ART DOES NOT BELONG TO THE SPHERE OF IDEOLOGY. ARTISTS ARE NOT ENGINEERS OF THE SOUL.

IT MAY BE DIFFERENT ELSEWHERE. IN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY, THE HIGHEST DUTY OF THE WRITER, ARTIST AND COMPOSER IS TO REMAIN TRUE TO HIMSELF AND TO HIS VOCATION, LETTING THE CHIPS FALL WHERE THEY MAY.

IN SERVING HIS VISION OF THE TRUTH, THE ARTIST BEST SERVES HIS NATION. AND THE NATION WHICH DISDAINS

Page 4 of the reading copy of "Remarks at Amherst College Upon Receiving an Honorary Degree." October 26, 1963.

### Procedure

1. For background, have students visit this WGBH web page for brief information about the relationship between Frost and Kennedy, and Kennedy's October 26, 1963 speech.
2. Provide students with guiding questions as they read along with the audio clip of President Kennedy's speech beginning at 6:39 to the end (about 8 minutes, beginning with the words, "This day devoted to the memory of Robert Frost..."). Pause, or instruct students to pause the audio, at times, to allow them to note their responses to the questions below:
  - What distinction does Kennedy make between politicians and poets?
  - What connections does Kennedy make between political power and poetry?
  - What contribution does Kennedy say that a solitary poet can make to civic life?

*continued on page 6*



## LESSON PLAN ★ High School, Grades 9–12

### Kennedy on the Poet's Civic Role

*continued from page 5*

- According to Kennedy, why is it important for an artist to maintain personal integrity?
- 3. Provide students an opportunity to share their answers either in small groups or to the whole class.
- 4. Assign students the task of writing a poem about the role of the poet in civic life. If they choose not to write an original poem, student may create a “found poem” by selecting and rearranging words and phrases from Kennedy’s speech.

#### Additional Resources

- The President’s Tribute to Robert Frost, February 26, 1962 ([jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHA/1962/JFKWHA-076-002/JFKWHA-076-002](http://jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHA/1962/JFKWHA-076-002/JFKWHA-076-002))

This sound recording of President John F. Kennedy’s remarks was recorded for the television program “Robert Frost: American Poet.” The recording also contains remarks from Robert Frost discussing his work.

- “The Gift Outright” by Robert Frost (Inaugural Poem) ([jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/life-of-john-f-kennedy/fast-facts-john-f-kennedy/the-gift-outright-by-robert-frost](http://jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/life-of-john-f-kennedy/fast-facts-john-f-kennedy/the-gift-outright-by-robert-frost))

Robert Frost recited this poem at John F. Kennedy’s inauguration. Kennedy had suggested that if Frost would prefer not to write a new poem, he could recite “The Gift Outright.” Though Frost planned to and did indeed recite “The Gift Outright,” he wrote an introductory poem especially for the event, but was unable to read



President John F. Kennedy presents a Congressional Gold Medal to poet Robert Frost at the White House, Washington, D.C. March 26, 1962. (AR7118-C)

it because of the bright sunlight. The new, undelivered poem, originally called “Dedication” was later titled “For John F. Kennedy His Inauguration.”

- Statement on Robert Frost’s Death, January 29, 1963 ([jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/042/JFKPOF-042-032](http://jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/042/JFKPOF-042-032))

This folder contains materials collected by the office of President John F. Kennedy’s secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, concerning President Kennedy’s statement on the death of poet Robert Frost. ★

#### Collections Corner *continued from page 1*

on the battlefield and exposure to desegregated European cities had lasting impacts on their fight for racial justice in America. A young Medgar Evers, who would later become a leader in the civil rights movement, would tell his brother Charles, “When we get out of the army, we’re going to straighten this thing out!”

During D-Day, the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, was the only unit made up entirely of African American soldiers to storm the beach at the Normandy Invasion. This battalion provided crucial protection to soldiers from enemy aircraft attacks. The shell casing on exhibit, loaned by the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, was picked up on the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944 by Master Sergeant Wallace B. Jackson, who was part of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion.

Come to the Kennedy Library to see *Service and Sacrifice: World War II - A Shared Experience* for yourself before the exhibition closes on **March 10, 2024**. ★



Shell casing taken from the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944.

COURTESY OF SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

# In Case You Missed It! Highlights from Kennedy Library Forums

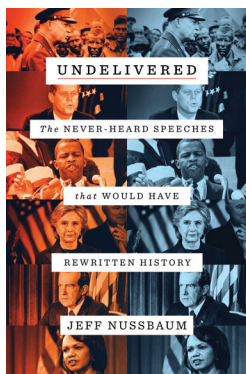
**K**ennedy Library Forums are a series of public affairs programs offered by the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum to foster public discussion on a diverse range of historical, political, and cultural topics reflecting the legacy of President and Mrs. Kennedy's White House years.

Videos of past *Kennedy Library Forums* are available for class viewing at [jfklibrary.org/forums](http://jfklibrary.org/forums). Please check that page for the most up-to-date *Forums* information, or e-mail [jfkforums@nara.gov](mailto:jfkforums@nara.gov) to join our *Forums* e-mail list.

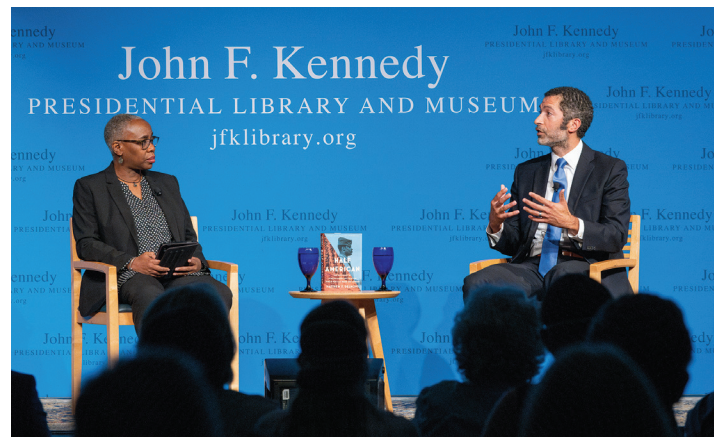
Listed below are two *Forums* featuring opportunities to reflect on the lasting power of words and policies that shape our national history.

## ***Undelivered: The Never-Hard Speeches That Would Have Rewritten History***

May 18, 2022



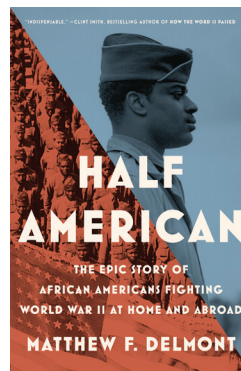
Jeff Nussbaum, political speechwriter, discussed his book *Undelivered: The Never-Hard Speeches That Would Have Rewritten History*, which explores the context of undelivered speeches by notable figures including Presidents Kennedy, Eisenhower, and Nixon; John Lewis, Hillary Clinton, and Condoleeza Rice. Mark Arsenault, reporter at *The Boston Globe*, moderated.



Matthew Delmont discussed his recent book *Half American: The Epic Story of African Americans Fighting World War II at Home and Abroad* with Renée Graham. August 16, 2023.

## ***Half American: The Epic Story of African Americans Fighting World War II at Home and Abroad***

August 16, 2023



Matthew Delmont, Dartmouth professor of history, discussed his recent book *Half American: The Epic Story of African Americans Fighting World War II at Home and Abroad*, which explores the crucial contributions of the more than one million Black men and women who served in segregated units in World War II, performing unheralded but vital support jobs, only to be denied housing and

educational opportunities on their return home. Renée Graham, associate editor and columnist at *The Boston Globe*, moderated.

This public discussion complemented the new special exhibit *Service and Sacrifice: World War II – A Shared Experience*. ★

*With generous support from:*



The Boston Globe

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## 2023 Essay Contest Winner Profiles Former Alabama State Senator Joseph Langan

**Jeremy Haynes of Mobile, Alabama** won the national 2023 John F. Kennedy *Profile in Courage Essay Contest for High School Students*. His winning essay describes the political courage of former Alabama State Senator Joseph Langan who in 1949 took a bold stand against an amendment that would disenfranchise Black citizens in his state. Haynes describes how Langan was ousted in his reelection campaign for protecting voting rights of all citizens in Alabama.

A track and cross-country runner, Haynes discovered his essay subject while training in a municipal park named after Joseph Langan. He became curious about the park's namesake, researched Langan's story, and discovered the state senator's fearless actions to support voting rights for all.

The John F. Kennedy Library Foundation will honor Haynes with a \$10,000 scholarship award and a trip to the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum to be recognized at the 2023 Profile in Courage Award Ceremony. Haynes's nominating teacher, Ms. Anita Presley, will receive a John F. Kennedy Public Service Grant in the amount of \$500 for school projects that encourage student leadership and civic engagement.

The annual *Profile in Courage Essay Contest* invites US high school students to write an essay on an act of political courage by a US elected official. The *Contest* is open for submissions and the **deadline is January 12, 2024**. To read Jeremy's winning essay and past winning submissions and access *Contest* information, including curricular resources, visit [jfklibrary.org/EssayContest](http://jfklibrary.org/EssayContest).

Visit [jfklibrary.org/TeacherSignUp](http://jfklibrary.org/TeacherSignUp), to sign up for the *Profile in Courage Essay Contest* teacher mailing list and receive a free *Contest* poster! ★ *The contest is generously sponsored by The Boeing Company.*



2023 Profile in Courage Essay Contest  
Winner Jeremy Haynes.

Support for the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum's history and civic education programs is provided by  
The James M. and Cathleen D. Stone Foundation, and:

