

# The 1960s in the US: Decade of Death [B2]

In un contesto di lotte per i diritti civili, gli anni sessanta sono stati un decennio particolarmente turbolento negli Stati Uniti. Ripercorriamo gli episodi più significativi di violenza politica.



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To understand the present, look back sixty years to the 1960s. This traumatic decade of [high-profile](#) killings fomented [widespread](#) anxiety and [mistrust](#). It also marked a boom in conspiracy theories, today's political weapons of mass manipulation! Aside from the JFK assassination, some of the most [high-profile](#) and mysterious deaths of the 1960s were:

## MALCOLM X

Born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1931, Malcolm X was an African-American Muslim [minister](#) and a prominent figure in the civil rights movement; the 'X' signified his original, lost tribal name, the surname Little having been imposed on his ancestors by their slave master. A [spokesperson](#) for the Black nationalist group Nation of Islam, he received death threats on leaving the organisation. He was shot twenty-one times at a public event in

New York on 21 February 1965. In 2021, two men convicted at the time were exonerated after decades in prison.

## MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

African American Baptist [minister](#), activist, and political philosopher Martin Luther King Jr. was killed by a single shot on 4 April 1968 at a motel in Memphis, Tennessee. A fugitive called James Earl Ray later confessed to the crime but then retracted his [statement](#), saying a Cuban called Raul was responsible. The King family have since shown support for Ray: they believe that the US government, the mafia, and the Memphis police were involved.

## ROBERT F. KENNEDY

JFK's younger brother was shot three times on 5 June 1968 while campaigning for the presidency. The assassin was Sirhan Sirhan, a twenty-four-year-old Christian Palestinian immigrant. Witnesses and some experts say that not only the position of Sirhan was wrong, but the bullets did not [match](#) the gun, and at least thirteen shots were fired from an [eight-shot firearm](#). As of April 2023, Sirhan has been [denied parole](#) seventeen times.

## MARILYN MONROE

Born Norma Jeane Mortenson in Los Angeles in 1926, Marilyn Monroe died of an [overdose](#) on 4 August 1962 in her home. However, there are [claims](#) that both John and his brother Robert Kennedy were having affairs with the actress, and that [sensitive](#) information was recorded. A 2022 Netflix documentary [claims](#) that the FBI cleaned Monroe's room of evidence of a Kennedy connection as she [lay](#) dead, and before her death was reported.

## THE KILLING OF A US PRESIDENT

In English, the word 'assassination' refers to the deliberate killing of a prominent or influential individual, often driven by personal [grievances](#) or

for political or religious motives. While the assassination of US president John F. Kennedy stands out as a defining moment in 20th-century history, four other US presidents have also been assassinated. In 1865, just days after the American Civil War ended, US president Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. John Wilkes Booth, a Confederate sympathiser, shot Lincoln in the back of the head during a theatre performance in Washington, D.C.. In 1881, James A. Garfield, the 20th US president, met a similar [fate](#). His killer, Charles J. Guiteau [nursed](#) resentment for the president as he was not [appointed](#) to a diplomatic post he thought he [deserved](#). When he shot his revolver, at the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station in Washington, D.C., one of his bullets [glanced off](#) Garfield's arm and the other one [pierced](#) his back. Garfield died from his injuries months later. In 1901, President William McKinley was killed by Leon Czolgosz, an anarchist driven by his desire to eliminate what he [deemed](#) to be oppressive government figures. Czolgosz shot McKinley twice in the abdomen during a public event in Buffalo, New York. Other US presidents have survived assassination attempts, including Andrew Jackson in 1835, Theodore Roosevelt in 1912, and Ronald Reagan, who survived an assassination attempt by John Hinckley Jr. in March 1981, just a few months into Reagan's first term. Hinckley's [alleged](#) motive was to impress actor Jodie Foster. He fired six shots at the president, striking him and several others. Reagan was hit in the [chest](#) and suffered a [punctured lung](#), but survived after undergoing [surgery](#). He continued to serve as president for another eight years.

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# Glossary

- **statement** = dichiarazione
- **eight-shot firearm** = pistola a otto spari
- **denied** = rifiutare
- **nursed** = nutrire
- **appointed** = nominare
- **overdose** = overdose
- **surgery** = chirurgia
- **parole** = libertà condizionata
- **widespread** = generalizzata
- **lay** = giacere
- **grievances** = rivendicazioni
- **fate** = destino
- **mistrust** = diffidenza
- **sensitive** = sensibile
- **pierced** = perforare
- **chest** = petto
- **high-profile** = di alto profilo
- **spokesperson** = portavoce
- **claims** = affermazioni
- **minister** = ministro
- **match** = corrispondere
- **alleged** = affermare
- **punctured lung** = polmone perforato
- **deserved** = meritare
- **glanced off** = colpire di striscio
- **deemed** = considerare