

## WH6406-13-3818

**Date:** 1964-06-23

**Participant:** Lyndon B. Johnson

**Participant:** Lee C. White

**Start Time:** 12:35

**Place:** Oval Office

SCROLLER TITLE: "This Means Murder"

SCENE SETTER: Roughly 36 hours after the disappearance of civil rights workers James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman in Neshoba County, Mississippi, and following a request from Congress of Racial Equality national director James L. Farmer Jr. for a meeting at the White House, President Johnson vented to counsel Lee C. White about the prospect of granting an audience to Farmer and other aggrieved parties. As for the civil rights workers, White indicated that they probably had been killed.

**President Johnson:** I asked [J. Edgar] Hoover last—two weeks ago after talking to the Attorney General [Robert F. "Bobby" Kennedy] to fill up Mississippi with FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] men and infiltrate everything he could; that they hauled them in by the dozens; that I've asked him to put more men after these three kids; that he hauled them in last night.

**Lee C. White:** Right.

**President Johnson:** That I've asked him for another report today; that I'm shoving it as much as I know how; that I didn't ask them to go, and I can't control the actions of Mississippi people. The only weapon I have for locating them is the FBI. I haven't got any state police or any constables, and the FBI is better than marshals, and I've got all of them I've got looking after them. I can't find them myself. That I think it's pretty dangerous that they'll overrun the White House. Because anybody that wants a conference with the President, all they got to do is send his kid to Mississippi and then demand a conference with the President. And I think that's awfully bad precedent for the President to be seeing individual groups. I just think that—every damn woman that gets indicted will be wanting to see him. Or everybody gets arrested will be wanting to see him. And no telling where we'll ever stop it. Congressmen get to come in, get their picture made coming in and out of the White House. And it'll just be hell. But tell him [James L. Farmer Jr.] that we're doing everything we know how to do with the FBI and see if he's got any other constructive suggestions.

*End of excerpt 1.*

**President Johnson:** What do they think happened? Think they got killed?

**White:** This morning they had absolutely no trace. There's no sign of the automobile. They have found nobody who's seen the car or the three people. So, as far as they're concerned, they just disappeared from the face of the earth.

**President Johnson:** Now, you're waiting to reply—

**White:** This means murder, as they see it.

*End of excerpt 2.*

CITATION: "Lyndon B. Johnson and Lee C. White on 23 June 1964," Tape WH6406.13, Citation #3818, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition [Mississippi Burning and the Passage of the Civil Rights Act]*, vol. 8, ed. Kent B. Germany and David C. Carter] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014-). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/9080003>