



## “That’s What the Democratic Party’s For”

**Date:** 1964-08-25  
**Conversation:** WH6408-36-5181  
**Participant:** Lyndon B. Johnson  
**Start Time:** 14:31  
**Duration:** 00:47  
**Place:** Mansion

SCENE SETTER: During the 1964 Democratic National Convention, President Johnson was so despondent over the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party struggle that he told several confidants that he planned to withdraw from the race. Shortly after deciding against withdrawal, he uttered these words to vice presidential nominee Hubert H. Humphrey Jr. and United Automobile Workers president Walter P. Reuther about the history and purpose of the Democratic Party.

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**President Johnson:** Our party’s always been a group that you could come to with any bellyache of injustice, whether it was a pecan-shelling plant that paid four-cents-an-hour sweatshop wages, or whether it was the usurious interest rates, or whether it was a discrimination [against the right] to vote, or Ku Klux Klan whipping somebody. And all of these injustices have wound up, and we’ve symbolized them someway or other in the county or state or national convention for time immemorial. And that’s what the Democratic Party’s for, and that’s why it was born, and that’s why it survives, and that’s why it thrives and exists. And long as the poor and the downtrodden and the bended know that they can come to us and be heard, and that’s what we’re doing: we’re hearing them.

*End of excerpt.*

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CITATION: “Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, and Walter Reuther on 25 August 1964,” Conversation WH6408-36-5181, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition* [Lyndon B. Johnson: Civil Rights, Vietnam, and the War on Poverty, ed. David G. Coleman, Kent B. Germany, Guian A. McKee, and Marc J. Selverstone] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014—). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/4002850>

This conversation was transcribed by the [Miller Center’s Presidential Recordings Program](#) with the generous support of the [National Historical Publications and Records Commission](#).

Full information about this conversation: [“That’s What the Democratic Party’s For”](#)