



## “We’re Doing Everything We Can”

**Date:** 1968-04-04  
**Conversation:** WH6804-01-12908  
**Participant:** Lyndon B. Johnson  
**Participant:** Ivan E. Allen Jr.  
**Participant:** Lady Bird Johnson  
**Start Time:** 23:00  
**Duration:** 02:48  
**Place:** Mansion

SCENE SETTER: Four days after President Johnson declared on national television that he would not seek the Democratic nomination in the 1968 presidential election, civil rights leader Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was shot in Memphis, Tennessee. In this call with Ivan E. Allen Jr., the mayor of King’s hometown of Atlanta, Georgia, the President and Lady Bird Johnson reflected on both events, and the President and Allen agreed to remain in contact about civil unrest in the wake of King’s assassination.

---

**White House Operator:** Ready, sir.

**President Johnson:** Yes, Mr. Mayor.

**Ivan E. Allen Jr.:** Mr. President?

**President Johnson:** Yes, Mr. Allen.

**Allen:** I want to thank you for your very fine statement that you made so promptly, sir.

**President Johnson:** Thank you, Mayor.

**Allen:** We’re doing everything we can. We have a very heavy rainstorm here in Atlanta [Georgia]. It’s preventing any disorder at the present time. We’ve been through these situations before. But I think that we can cope with them. I’ll do everything I can to hold the house in order here, sir.

**President Johnson:** Well, you’re mighty, mighty good, and I have great confidence in you, and I know that [*coughs*] you’re right on top of it. I called Mrs. [Coretta Scott] King and—

**Allen:** I was with Mrs. King when you called.

**President Johnson:** Well, I—

**Allen:** I accompanied her to the airport, where we heard of Dr. [Martin Luther] King [Jr.]’s death, and then went home with her. And Mrs. [Louise Richardson] Allen was with me, and we’ve done everything we possibly could, sir. Martin was my close personal friend. I had great respect and admiration for him, sir.

**President Johnson:** Uh-huh. Well, you’ve done a—you done a great job there, and I hope you’ll [*clears throat*] let me know anything—any suggestions you have. [*Allen acknowledges throughout.*] We had a little problem in Durham [North Carolina], and we have one here in Washington [D.C.]. They’re moving around. We don’t know the extent of it, don’t know how serious it’s going to be [*snorts*], but they have 2[000] or 3,000 people gathered.

**Allen:** Yes, sir.

**President Johnson:** I was due to come out to Honolulu [Hawaii] in the morning, but I’ve decided I’d wait till the morning to take a look at it and see what to do. You have any suggestions as to anything else that I ought to . . . do?

**Allen:** Mr. President, I think you’ve taken exactly the right steps, sir, and I’m following the same pattern here, sir, and I’m just delighted that you’re running the show, sir.

**President Johnson:** Well, you’re wonderful to call me and stay in touch with me, and please know that I’m very grateful for your whole attitude.

**Allen:** You’re very fine, sir. I hated to hear that news last Sunday night, sir, but . . . [*President Johnson acknowledges*] you’re a great man, sir.

**President Johnson:** Thank you so much, Mayor, and I look forward to seeing you.

**Allen:** Give Mrs. [Lady Bird] Johnson my regards.

**President Johnson:** Here she is. I’ll let you say a word to her. [*Hands the phone to Lady Bird Johnson.*]

**Lady Bird Johnson:** Mayor Allen?

**Allen:** Mrs. Johnson, how are you?

**Lady Bird Johnson:** Oh, troubled and sad, but God bless those who keep on striving and trying, and you’re sure among them.

**Allen:** Thank you, ma’am, and we’re certainly proud of the President, and his statement last Sunday night was just magnificent, and he’s a great man. And I’m so grateful that he made the statement that he made [tonight]. It was exactly the right thing, and I’ve tried to follow the same course here in Atlanta, and I hope everything will be all right.

**Lady Bird Johnson:** [*Slight chuckle.*] Thank you. Thank you, and for many things.

**Allen:** Thank you, ma’am.

**Lady Bird Johnson:** Good night.

**Allen:** Good night.

*End of excerpt.*

---

CITATION: “Lyndon B. Johnson, Ivan E. Allen Jr., and Lady Bird Johnson on 4 April 1968,” Conversation WH6804-01-12908, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition* [Lyndon B. Johnson and Civil Rights, vol. 2, ed. Kent B. Germany] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/4005993>

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: [“We’re Doing Everything We Can”](#)