

WH6401-06-1197_scroller

Date: 1964-01-06

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Whitney M. Young Jr.

Start Time: 15:55

Place: Oval Office

SCROLLER TITLE: "I'm Not a Hater and a Bigot"

SCENE SETTER: As President Johnson prepared to appoint two Black Americans to the federal judiciary, he spoke with Whitney M. Young Jr., the head of the National Urban League and a prominent voice on civil rights. Johnson wanted Young to spread the message that LBJ was a friend of Blacks.

Whitney M. Young Jr.: I just talked with Lee [C.] White. He mentioned something to me about your . . . what you're thinking about doing today, and the two people, as far as the judgeships are concerned.

President Johnson: Yeah.

Young: And I think this is excellent. I think both of them are good men.

President Johnson: I want to do it if your people want me to do it. I don't want to do it just because they serve them up and got no one else, 'cause I've got 40 men that would like to have a judge. But if these are the best ones in the community, and we can give them some recognition, and our people will understand it, and y'all can do something about letting them know that I'm not a hater and a bigot. You all—you know that, but most of the—a lot of them don't. And they keep saying I have all this trouble in the Negro community, and I've never heard a Negro say that.

Young: Well, I haven't either. I don't . . .

President Johnson: I've got a new secretary here. Do you know this little [Gerri] Whittington girl?

Young: Yeah, I heard about that. That's—

President Johnson: Well, she's in my office, and she's my personal secretary. And I took her [to] church with me yesterday in Stonewall, Texas. And she stayed in my home down there for two weeks and [is] the most competent person in the world. But we're just doing fine. I've got to get two good civil rights commissioners. I want to appoint these judges. But I keep reading in the columnists where they don't quote you, and they don't quote Roy [O.] Wilkins, and they don't quote [James L.] Farmer [Jr.], and they don't quote Martin Luther King [Jr.], and they don't quote [A. Philip] Phil Randolph, 'cause every damn one of them knows that I'm stronger for them than nearly anybody around this place and have been all these years.

Young: Well, now, you know, last night, in the TV film—I don't know whether you saw it—the duties of the president and the job facing you and all this.

President Johnson: No, I didn't.

Young: Well, they quoted again from us and showed pictures of our meeting with you.

President Johnson: Well, that's good.

Young: And this was awfully good visibility—

President Johnson: Well, but *Jet* magazine—

Young: What *Jet* did—well, now, *Jet* this past week talked about Miss Whittington, and I think their whole tone has changed after I talked with you.

President Johnson: Well, that's good, then. That's good. I hadn't seen it. I just see it when it's bad.

Young: Oh, they have a beautiful story on Miss Whittington [*unclear*] in there.

President Johnson: [*speaking over Young*] I didn't know that. I didn't know that.

Young: Now, but, you see, some of these people they figure their role—just like they were with JFK [John F. "Jack" Kennedy]—they figure their role is to stick pins in him. But I wouldn't get too concerned about this if—

President Johnson: Well, I do want to get concerned, [*Young attempts to interject*] 'cause I want them to know that I'm their friend.

Young: Well, you make moves like you're fixing to do today, you won't have any question on this.

President Johnson: Well, but I'm afraid they just think, well, that's because that somebody recommended him was with Kennedy.

Young: No, this won't happen.

President Johnson: All right. Now, if you want it, it'll be done.

Young: I want it.

President Johnson: Now, the President [Kennedy] wanted it, and he would have done it. And I feel like I've got an obligation to it. But I don't want to do it unless the whole Negro community knows that I'm doing it, and the Democrats are doing it. And this damn *Jet* and the rest of them quit cutting us up, saying we hate the Negroes.

Young: Yeah. Well, no, you won't have that to worry about. This is what we want done.

President Johnson: All right. It'll be done.

Young: All right.

President Johnson: Thank you, Whitney.

Young: Thank you—

President Johnson: And you be my ambassador, now, and talk to them about it.

Young: OK.

President Johnson: Bye.

Young: I'll do it. Bye.

End of excerpt.

“Lyndon Johnson and Whitney Young on 6 January 1964,” Tape WH6401.06, Citation #1197, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition [The Kennedy Assassination and the Transfer of Power]*, vol. 3, ed. Kent B. Germany and Robert David Johnson] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/9030046>