

325 Manley Heights Road
Orange, Connecticut
March 27, 1965

President Lyndon B. Johnson
White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

I was very moved by your stirring words on Friday denouncing the heinous murder of Mrs. Liuzzo and your condemnation of the KKK which continues to terrorize the South. This bloody act, fast on the heels of the murder of Rev. Reeb and others before him, indicates that the lawless elements will now resort to terror and intimidation as never before.

As the mother of a college student who has been in Selma now for three weeks and is still there, the news each day is my own personal torture. I weep that so many of our young people are faced with moral choices today of helping to overcome the wrongs that their elders permitted to accumulate. They show a courage and a spiritual conviction that our generation failed to give. The tragedy is that they are shouldering responsibilities and facing dangers which are not of their making.

I know that there are many legal and constitutional obstacles which you face. But it is terribly frightening that the Negro people and their civil rights helpers who are the conscience of our nation, are once again left with no protection. The Alabama troopers, the local sheriffs and their police, are a menace in themselves.

It was with dismay that I (and many others) read that the National Guard has been de-Federalized and that the Army units have been returned. There will be other murders, other beatings and atrocities unless there is adequate Federal protection. The fact that the criminals continue to go unpunished in the Alabama courts is only an incentive for others to commit the same crimes. They emerge as 'heroes' to their supporters and they are well aware that they will not be punished.

I don't know the answers but I do present a mother's plea that you send and keep Federal forces of some kind in Alabama, and further that some measures be employed to guarantee that these criminals can be tried and punished to the full degree of their acts. Let there be an end to more sorrowers like Mr. Liuzzo and his children, Mrs. Reeb and her children and the many Negro families who have lost their dear ones. Please give our idealistic young men and women the support they deserve in placing human rights above their own personal education and future.

It's awfully hard to be a parent today, to know the right answers, to support a young person's faith and ideals -- but it's agonizing to wait and wonder. You have done much, but more is needed, and we fervently hope that you will continue towards these ends. We hope it in a very personal way. With best wishes,

Respectfully,

Mrs. Claire Hartford