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## President John F. Kennedy to Senator James O. Eastland, 26 October 1962

John F. Kennedy

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 26, 1962

Dear Senator:

This will acknowledge your telegram to me of September 28 regarding the enforcement of the court orders requiring the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi.

Under the Constitution it is my duty to enforce federal law, including the orders of the federal courts. When state and federal laws conflict, federal law must be paramount or this Nation could not continue to exist. I respect and appreciate your concern for the people of the State of Mississippi. In this connection, I refer you to my address of September 30, 1962, in which I said the following:

I recognize that the present period of transition and adjustment in our nation's southland is a hard one for many people. Neither Mississippi nor any other southern state deserves to be charged with all the accumulated wrongs of the last 100 years of race relations. To the extent that there has been failure, the responsibility for that failure must be shared by us all, by every state, by every citizen.

Mississippi and her university moreover are noted for her courage, for their contribution of talent and thought to the affairs of this nation. This is the state of Lucius Lamar and many others who have placed the national good ahead of sectional interest. This is the state which had four Medal of Honor winners in the Korean War alone. In fact, the Guard Unit federalized this morning, early, is part of the 155th Infantry, one of the ten oldest regiments in the Union and one of the most decorated for sacrifice and bravery in six wars.

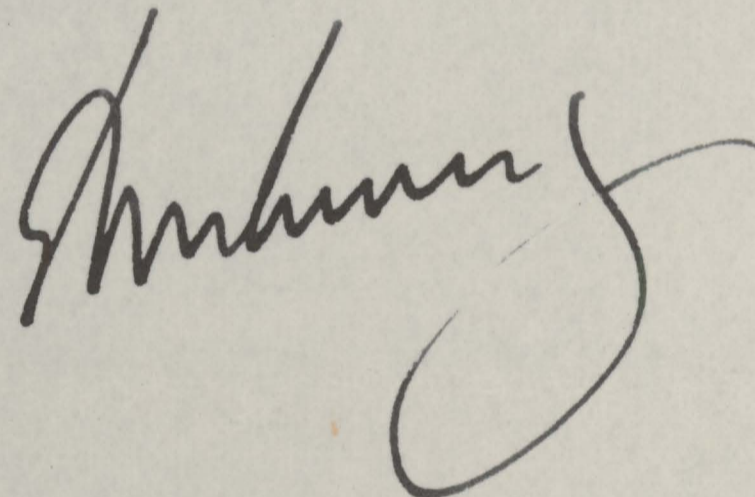
In Mississippi in 1945 Jake Lindsey was honored by an unusual joint session of the Congress. I close therefore with this appeal to the students of the University, the people who are most concerned.

You have a great tradition to uphold, a tradition of honor and courage, won on the field of battle and on the gridiron as well as the university campus. You have a new opportunity to show that you are men of patriotism and integrity. For the most effective means of upholding the law is not the state policeman or the marshals or the National Guard. It is you. It lies in your courage to accept those laws with which you disagree as well as those with which you agree. The eyes of the nation and all the world are upon you and upon all of us, and the honor of your university and state are in the balance. I am certain the great majority of the students will uphold that honor.

There is in short no reason why the books on this case cannot now be quickly and quietly closed in the manner directed by the Court. Let us preserve both the law and the peace and then healing those wounds that are within we can turn to the greater crises that are without and stand united as one people in our pledge to man's freedom.

I appreciate hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Andrew J. Young". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Honorable James O. Eastland  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C.

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United States Senate  
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