

WASHINGTON, Jan. 18—Eartha Kitt, the singer, stunned other guests at a White House luncheon today when she angrily told Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson that American youth was rebelling because of the Vietnam war.

About 50 white and Negro women invited to the White House to discuss President Johnson's proposals to combat crime in the streets sat at their table in silence as Miss Kitt, a Negro, spoke out against the war and high taxes.

"You send the best of this country off to be shot and maimed," she said. "They rebel in the street. They will take pot and they will get high. They don't want to go to school because they're going to be snatched off from their mothers to be shot in Vietnam."

A pale Mrs. Johnson later rose and looked directly at Miss Kitt, who leaned against a podium in the yellow walled Family Dining Room.

"Because there is a war on—and I pray that there will be a just and honest peace—that still doesn't give us a free ticket not to try to work for better things such as against crime in the streets, better education and better health for our people," Mrs.



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Eartha Kitt talking with Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson at the White House luncheon yesterday, before Miss Kitt angrily denounced United States involvement in the war in Vietnam.

Johnson said, her voice trembling and tears welling in her eyes.

Before Mrs. Johnson's response, however, Mrs. Richard J. Hughes, wife of the Democratic Governor of New Jersey, broke the silence following Miss Kitt's remarks.

"I feel morally obligated," Mrs. Hughes said. "May I

speak in defense of the war?"

She said that her first husband had been killed in World War II and that she had eight sons, one an Air Force veteran.

"None wants to go to Vietnam but all will go, they and their friends," she said.

Mrs. Hughes said that none of her children smoked mari-

juana and that youth was not rebelling because of the war. The other guests applauded. Miss Kitt, who has one child, a 5-year-old daughter, stared at her with arms folded.

After the luncheon, Mrs. Johnson remarked with a

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## EARTHA KITT HITS U.S. WAR POLICY

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little laugh, "I do want to say this has been a lively meeting with lots of ideas."

Miss Kitt, who was born in poverty 39 years ago in North, S. C., and made a fortune in the movies and Broadway shows, said to newsmen later:

"I see nothing wrong with the way I handled myself. I can only hope it will do some good."

Of the First Lady, she said:

"I'm afraid she became a little flustered. She made a very nice little speech. The fact that Mrs. Johnson wants to put flowers along the driveways and trees up and down the boulevards can make a very attractive city, but that is not going to do very much good when it comes to solving the problem of juvenile delinquency."

Miss Kitt, her eyes flashing while she puffed on a cigarette and jabbed a finger at her startled audience, said that American youths were "angry because their parents are angry, because there is a war going on that they don't understand, that they don't know why."

She said that youngsters felt alienated because "they can't get to you [Mrs. Johnson] and they can't get to the President, and so they rebel in the streets."

The President made a surprise appearance at the luncheon to join his wife's appeal for female leadership in the fight against crime, but he was gone when Miss Kitt rose in a white sweater dress to challenge Mrs. Johnson.

While he was in the room, however, Miss Kitt stood up and asked him, "What do you think about delinquent parents, parents who can't spend time with their children?"

### President Replies

The President, taken aback by the unexpected question, said that day care centers had been established under Social Security legislation and added, "I think it would be a good idea if you would ask the women and then tell me what you think."

He left soon afterward.

A panel discussion then resumed on "What Citizens Can Do to Insure Safe Streets."

The speakers were Miss Katherine Peden of Hopkinsville, Ky., a member of the President's Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders; Mrs. Charles Coe, a member of Volunteers in Service to America at Atlanta, and Mrs. Margaret Moore, who led a female anticrime crusade in Indianapolis.

Miss Kitt rose during a question-and-answer period afterward and apologized for speaking up if she offended the President and his wife.

But, she said, turning to the other guests, "I have to say what is in my heart."

She said she had not walked the streets of ghettos as crusaders as the other guests had, but "I have lived in the gutters."

"I'm sorry," Mrs. Johnson replied. "I cannot understand the things that you do. I have not lived with the background that you have. I cannot speak as passionately or as well as you. But I think we have made advances in these things and we will do more."

Miss Kitt said she thought that the speakers had "missed out on something" that she had learned while working in the racially troubled Watts section of Los Angeles.

"The main reason for juvenile delinquency today is because their parents are angry and their parents are angry because they are so highly taxed and because there is a war going on they do not understand," the singer said.

"We have to realize where the truth really is," she said, pointing her finger at the guests.

"The children of America are not rebelling for no reason. They are not hippies for no reason at all. We don't have what we have on Sunset Boulevard for no reason. They are rebelling against something. We all seem to camouflage something. This is very basic. We pay taxes and we are very resentful of those high taxes."

Miss Kitt described herself as a "mini-mommy" who is close to people who get a "\$4 welfare check."

"There are so many things burning the people of this country, particularly mothers. They feel they are going to raise sons—and I know what it's like, and you have children of your own, Mrs. Johnson—we raise children and send them to war."