



In a Madhouse's Din: Civil Rights Coverage by Mississippi's Daily Press, 1948-1968

Susan M. Weill

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Mississippi is a unique case study as a result of its long-standing defiance of federal civil rights legislation and the fact that nearly half its population was black and relegated to second-class citizenship. According to the vast majority of Mississippi daily press editorials examined between 1948 and 1968, the notion that blacks and whites were equal as races of people was a concept that remained unacceptable and inconceivable. While the daily press certainly did not advocate desegregation, in contrast to what many media critics have reported about the Southern press promoting violence to suppress civil rights activity, Mississippi daily newspapers never encouraged or condoned violence during the time periods under evaluation. Weill places coverage of these important events within a historical context, shedding new light on media opinion in the state most resistant to the precepts of the civil rights movement.

This is the first comprehensive examination of civil rights coverage and white supremacist rhetoric in the Mississippi daily press during five key events: the 1948 Dixiecrat protest of the national Democratic platform; the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision to desegregate public schools in 1954; the court-ordered desegregation of Ole Miss in 1962; Freedom Summer in 1964; and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968. From nearly 5,000 issues of Mississippi daily newspapers, more than 1,000 editorials and 7,000 news articles are documented in this volume.

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