

Good article review on florida and the modern civil rights movement

[Politics](#), [Civil Rights](#)



Introduction

The book *Old South, New South, or Down South?: Florida and the Modern Civil Rights Movement* is a collection of 9 essays edited by Irvin D. S.

Winsboro to reconceptualize the impression that Florida was more temperate than other southern states in regard to its relationships with civil rights leaders and the Blacks' demands for equal rights. The author accomplishes this by exploring multiple racially motivated events, including black agency, racist assaults and political stonewalling to put his point across.

The time frame of this volume ranges from 1940s to the late twentieth century. The other contributors whose essays are included in this volume are respected scholars in the civil rights history of Florida. They are Irvin D. S. Winsboro (editor), Abel A. Bartley, Marvin Dunn, Leonard R. Lempel, Amy Sasscer, Connie L. Lester, Lise M. Steinhauer, Paul Ortiz and Gregory W. Bush.

Thesis

The thesis of this book is that " Florida response to the civil rights movement from the 1940s to 1960s was no different from the other southern states contrary to popular opinion that it was more temperate and tolerant on the civil rights and race relation issues than its southern neighbors". This book explores a variety of civil rights battles held in the streets, public spaces, schools, stores, churches and courtrooms of Florida with an aim to reconceptualize the civil rights legacy of the State. Winsboro has set out his thesis of the book in the introduction by providing a summary of a series of status based contestations in Florida and in the subsequent chapters

contributes to this thesis by successfully build an argument based on several essay explorations to present his case.

Many readers and observers seem to have formed an impression that the ' Sunshine State' was not as ' radical' as its corresponding neighborhood states in the region that have an outspoken reputation of having fought radically for the equality of Blacks. However, in the introduction of this book, Winsboro is quick to point out that people make such conclusions without having looked at the history of the American Civil Rights Movement (1955-68) in Florida.

Winsboro therefore is seeking to reveal that Florida like other southern states has a long outstanding history of Blacks' struggle for freedom, civil rights, jobs, and decent wages. He then goes ahead to contribute to this book by his own research and 8 other historians essays to explore the impression that Florida was an exceptional state in that it was moderate in its race relations (Winsboro,) The author vividly describes the degree to which the fight against racism and Black resistance was as live in Florida as it was in other State such as Mississippi (Winsboro).

Brotherhood of Defiance

Chapter 3 of Irvin D. S. Winsboro's, " Brotherhood of Defiance: The State-Local Relationship in the Desegregation of Lee County Public Schools, 1954-1969 depict a series of status based contestations evidenced by several Supreme Court battles and rulings. In this account, the author notes that although Florida was more often characterized by an escape of the widespread national images of die-hard segregationists, the state was even

more accommodating of the racial progress than even more radical states ingrained in the 1950s and 1960s modern civil rights movements.

This chapter of Winsboro's work supports Old South, New South, or Down South?: Florida and the Modern Civil Rights Movement argument to correct the misconceptions presented in this paper. The author does this by demonstrating how White Floridians just like their Dixie neighbors battled hard to maintain the segregated schools and unequal political and employment opportunities. In this chapter, the author also examines the experiences of state-local agencies involvement in the segregation of the public schools in Lee County, Florida.

This chapter covers a time frame from 1885 when the Florida Constitution provided that, " White and children of color shall not be taught in the same school" then touching on Plessy in 1896, and statutes of 1905, 1913, and 1939, all reinforcing the separate schools policy. The chapter examines events until 1969, fifteen years after the Brown's landmark decision to strike down public school segregation. The chapter provides key insights on how the segregationist system worked in Florida from the post-Reconstruction period to the recent times. The author notes that education of black students in Lee County was restricted to church and private institutions until 1913, when the Lee County Public Instruction Board allocated skimpy funds to support black population education in the state. The Board afterward created a segregated school to serve the black population in Fort Myers, county seat, The school went ahead to serve the blacks o until 1969.

The segregationist practice suffered a major blow on 18 May, 1954, as a result of the Brown, which was tendered by a unanimous decision by

Supreme Court judges. The ruling declared segregated schools for black and white students as intrinsically unequal and thus a violation of the 13th and 14th Amendments of the US Constitution.

The chapter concludes by examining the aftermath of Brown. Winsboro examines how Acting Governor Charley E. Johns continued his battle to the new amendment by even suggesting “ a special legislative assembly on school desegregation”. He however, notes that Johns did not pursue this suggestion in the next Cabinet meeting, but he traveled to Florida’s southern cohort Richmond, Virginia to attend on a state conference on segregation from which he stated publicly that majority of people in Florida both white and blacks favored segregation. This was recorded in the front page of the Fort Myers News-Press. Johns continued his campaign by proposing in a Conference of Southern Governors’, an amendment of the US Constitution to allow states maintain “ separate but equal public schools for whites and people of color ”.

Conclusion

It has been assumed for a long time that Florida was not as vibrant as other southern states in its Blacks’ struggle for freedom and equal rights. However, Winsboro’s work presents a new revelation of Florida’s racial past and provides new ideas about the meaning of civil rights to constituencies in Florida.

The essays expand on the thesis of the collection by providing a comprehensive analysis of various historical events within the mentioned time frame and an analysis of Floridian society in general. The volume

includes an assessment of three themes namely " Old South" " New South," and " Down South". Each theme is juxtaposed in the book with a brief discussion of the image, illusion, myth and reality. The contributors use these themes to provide an insight into Florida's resistance to social and political changes as well as Florida's crafted reputation in the southern-based progressivism.

Bibliography

Winsboro Irvin D. S. 2009. Old South, New South, or Down South? Florida and the Modern Civil Rights Movement Morgantown: West Virginia University Press