

The Three R's—Reading, 'Riting, and Race: The Evolution of Race in Mississippi History Textbooks, 1900-1995

by *Rebecca Miller Davis*

I must confess indignation that the recorded history of Mississippi has changed more slowly than the state itself.

—James W. Silver¹

Who controls the present controls the past.

—George Orwell²

In 1980, Mississippi public schools had been integrated for a decade, with white and black students sitting in the same classrooms and learning from the same textbooks.³ The problem remained, however, that dis-

¹ James W. Silver, "History Changes More Slowly Than State," *Delta Democrat-Times* (Greenville, MS), August 3, 1975.

² George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), 35.

³ The history of school integration is long and complicated, and this statement is a gross oversimplification of the realities of the public schools in Mississippi. While the 1954 *Brown* decision was intended to end segregation, only isolated incidents of token desegregation occurred in Mississippi until the end of the 1960s. Forced integration occurred in January 1970, and even then full integration was not the reality. Many white Mississippians went to great lengths to avoid racial integration, including supporting legislation that allowed the state government to close the public schools rather than integrate, voting to eliminate the compulsory school attendance law, and, most often, removing their children from the public schools and enrolling them in private segregationist academies. In the late 1960s, Mississippi employed a system called "Freedom of Choice," where parents could send their

REBECCA MILLER DAVIS teaches at the University of Kansas and will finish her PhD in history at the University of South Carolina in spring 2011. She would like to thank the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, James W. Loewen, David Sansing, and the John Ray Skates estate for graciously providing image permissions.

crimination and racism persisted in the schools because of the textbooks themselves. For much of the twentieth century, history textbooks deemphasized or ignored racial, class, and gender history in order to present a unified narrative of American freedom, democracy, and equality. The result was a monochromatic, diluted, and largely false history. Textbook authors suffered from what some have called “historical amnesia” as they glossed over darker segments of the American experience, such as slavery and racism. A 1967 assessment of textbooks charged that “among the perversions committed in the name of education, few equal the schoolbook’s treatment of the Negro and his history. For more than 150 years,” African Americans were “presented to millions of children, both black and white, as a sub-human, incapable of achieving culture, happy in servitude, a passive outsider.” Many of these stereotypes reflected the historiography, and as the historiography improved, so did many of the textbooks—but not all of them.⁴

Many school boards in the Deep South consistently selected textbooks that did not follow the recent scholarship, instead choosing books that defended outdated ideas regarding slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and civil rights. As a result, southern schoolchildren remained firmly rooted in a past that mythologized the Old South and Lost Cause and ignored African Americans. In 1980, a U.S. District Court ruled that Mississippi students deserved another version of history, and approved the revisionist history textbook *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* by James W. Loewen and Charles Sallis. Until then the adopted textbooks shielded Mississippi students from the realities of their past, provid-

children to any public school they wished. By and large, Mississippi schools remained segregated under “Freedom of Choice,” because white families rarely sent their children to black schools, and black families had the difficult choice of keeping their children in sub-par black schools or sending them into harm’s way at majority-white schools. As one civil rights activist said, “You got to choose whether or not to send your child into hell every day. Some were brave and wanted change, but most just wanted to keep their babies safe. You can’t blame them for that. Any parent would want that.” In 1969, however, the Supreme Court ruled that plans such as “Freedom of Choice” circumvented the law, and ordered that in January 1970 public schools had to integrate. Mississippi, which led the fight against outside agitators and the federal government, could not fight any more and bowed to the court order. For a more complete history of school integration in the state, see Charles Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle Over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870-1980* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005).

⁴ Joseph Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation: Conflicts Over American History Textbooks from the Civil War to the Present* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 337; Hillel Black, *The American Schoolbook* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1967), 106.

ing a whitewashed narrative that degraded African Americans and championed many of the wrong causes and heroes. This article traces how Mississippi textbooks published between 1900 and 1995 evolved from biased, one-sided interpretations of history to more multi-faceted views that incorporated several vantage points and produced more comprehensive histories of the state. The 1980 court case provided a unique opportunity in understanding Mississippi historical memory, as one textbook held tightly to white racial mores, where the other was a forward-looking narrative that honestly acknowledged the state's history of "conflict and change." Comparison of Mississippi textbooks and their representations of race over time reveals the evolving understanding of race and state identity, with a slow but recognizable acceptance of the rich and multi-racial nature of the state's history.

The anchor to any history course is the textbook. Teachers plan their courses around it, and, according to an issue of *School Management*, the textbook "determines what will be taught and when," but also "*how* almost any given subject will be taught."⁵ In her study of history textbooks, Frances FitzGerald wrote that these narratives had a profound impact on students and the way they understood their past. She argued that "those texts were the truth of things: they were American history ... [and] what sticks to the memory from those textbooks is not any particular series of facts, but an atmosphere, an impression, a tone." History textbooks served a different function than other kinds of history, FitzGerald explained, because "they are essentially nationalistic histories ... [and] they are written not to explore but to instruct—to tell children what their elders want them to know about their country," or, for the sake of this argument, their state. "The information is not necessarily what anyone considers the truth of things. Like time capsules, the texts contain the truths selected for posterity." Loewen agreed, arguing that "*when* an account is written influences *what* is written."⁶ It is unsurprising, therefore, that for much of the twentieth century, Mississippi textbooks told a pro-southern, pro-white, and anti-integrationist version of the state's history.⁷

⁵ Emphasis in original.

⁶ Emphasis in original.

⁷ Quoted in Black, *The American Schoolbook*, 3; Frances FitzGerald, *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979),

When examining old Mississippi history textbooks, it is easy to fall into the trap of judging them by current research and standards, but this ahistorical approach leads to unfair criticisms. One must consider the historiography available to the textbook authors at the time, the audience, and the prevailing political and social climate. The massive historiographical shift to a more inclusive narrative that incorporated black history occurred because of the modern civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In a 1984 interview, historian C. Vann Woodward acknowledged the impact of civil rights upon the field: "What created the possibility of a broader, more inclusive, more accurate approach to the past than magnolias and the Lost Cause [was] ... a revolution in consciousness about rights, democracy, race, culture, class, and our region." The civil rights "revolution," Woodward explained, "overturned the way historians look[ed] at themselves and their work, and challenged the dominance in the profession of conservative, white men." Before the 1960s, Hillel Black explained, "the American youngster saw an almost completely white world in the textbooks he studied," but the civil rights movement empowered blacks in much of the country, who then demanded more attention in textbooks. If textbook publishers and authors wanted their textbooks adopted, they could no longer ignore black history.⁸

While most textbooks published in the early 1970s included the history of African Americans, the South lagged behind. Most Deep South states had large black populations, but they lacked power in the communities compared to the rest of the country. As a result, the white South could stall the integration of their history even after the integration of their schools.⁹ "White southerners had been the most visible obstacle to the racial integration of schoolbook history," Joseph Moreau explained. Changes were slower in the South, because deep-rooted ideologies of

7, 18, 47; James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, 2nd edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 141-42.

⁸ James R. Green, "Rewriting Southern History: An Interview with C. Vann Woodward," *Southern Exposure* 12:6 (Nov/Dec 1984): 86.

⁹ In 1961, L.R. Beveridge, Jr., commented on the dual challenge of trying to integrate schools and the textbooks, declaring the "urgent" task of "demand[ing] equal treatment in the school books as well as in the school rooms." (L.R. Beveridge, Jr., "Racist Poison in School Books," *The African-American Heritage Association* (Summer 1961), in Dorothy M. and Robert Zellner Papers, 1960-1979, Mss 674, Box 3, Folder 21, Wisconsin Historical Society (Madison, WI), (henceforth referred to as WHS).

white supremacy, racism, and the “southern way of life,” took longer to overcome. Mississippi textbook authors continued writing “whites only” history well into the 1970s and some into the 1980s. New research debunked the “magnolia myths” regarding slavery, Reconstruction, and civil rights, but Mississippi students had no alternative to this outdated history until at least 1980.¹⁰

This warped view of history had a profound psychological impact on all students, black and white. As Jennifer Ritterhouse’s book *Growing Up Jim Crow* pointed out, “race was something that each generation of southerners had to *learn*.”¹¹ Southerners learned race through racial etiquette, largely taught by society and the family, but the classroom provided an important venue for molding southern minds. When white Mississippi children read about “happy and content slaves,” “corrupt Negro-controlled” Reconstruction governments, and “troublemaking” civil rights activists, while never reading about the brutality of slavery, violence of the Ku Klux Klan, or lynching, it created a fundamental misunderstanding about their history. These “facts” left an indelible impression upon white students, serving as “primers in white supremacy.” It created a mindset where these white students would later fight for their “heritage,” at least as they understood it, and resist any changes in the racial status quo. In his memoir, Curtis Wilkie, a native white Mississippian, explained how society beat white supremacy into children at every turn, from church sermons, to radio programs, and especially in the classroom, thereby teaching them to be racists. To describe the impact of this racial education, Wilkie quoted a Salman Rushdie novel: “children are the vessels into which adults pour their poison.”¹²

In contrast, black Mississippi schoolchildren found little to be proud of in their history textbooks. Many narratives available to Mississippi blacks before 1980 reinforced white supremacy and included African Americans as “voiceless appendages to the main story of whites,” ste-

¹⁰ FitzGerald, *America Revised*, 58, 84; Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 265; Black, *The American Schoolbook*, 106-108; Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 137, 141-42.

¹¹ Emphasis in original.

¹² Jennifer Ritterhouse, *Growing Up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern School Children Learned Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 7; Beveridge, “Racist Poison in School Books,” *The African-American Heritage Association*, in Zellner papers, Mss 674, Box 3, Folder 21, WHS; Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1981), quoted in Curtis Wilkie, *Dixie: A Personal Odyssey Through Events That Shaped the Modern South* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 50.

reotyped as “buffoons or ‘faithful darkies.’” This stripped any pride or agency from the race and taught blacks to believe that they were inferior. In 1891, Edward A. Johnson, a black teacher and principal, argued that textbooks of the time were inadequate for black students. His complaints about North Carolina’s textbooks in the 1890s could be made for Mississippi’s approved textbooks through 1980. He stated that the textbook authors wrote “exclusively for white children” and “rhetorically isolated Blacks from the American story.” Johnson understood the psychological impact of these histories upon black students, and he asked: “how must the little colored child feel” to take their assigned history courses and never read “a favorable comment for even one among the millions of his foreparents, who have lived through nearly three centuries of his country’s history?”¹³

To understand how Mississippi schoolchildren learned their own history through the state-approved textbooks helps to understand the state itself. At first, the textbooks merely echoed the recent historiography, which is to be expected. As the twentieth century progressed, however, and histories emerged that clearly negated the previous research, the situation became more complicated. Moreau argued that “writing history is always political,” and race certainly rested at the heart of southern politics for the entire twentieth century. Much of white Mississippi wanted to maintain the status quo through the 1960s, and in order to preserve a separate system, James Loewen argued, “it is terribly important to control how people think about that system ... How people think about the past is an important part of their consciousness. If members of the elite come to think that their privilege was historically justified and earned,” as the history textbooks indicated to their white readers, then “it will be hard to persuade them to yield opportunity to others.”¹⁴ When the state began requiring Mississippi history of all ninth-graders in 1956 and demanded textbooks that toed the pro-white, anti-integrationist political line, it established a way to reinforce not only the existence of a segregated society, but the belief in it, which created generations of

¹³ Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 81, 163-64, 170; Edward A. Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race in America* (Raleigh, N.C.: Edwards & Broughton, 1891), iii-iv, 91-92; Beveridge, “Racist Poison in School Books,” *The African-American Heritage Association*, in Zellner papers, Mss 674, Box 3, Folder 21, WHS.

¹⁴ Loewen credits this theory of “false consciousness” to Karl Marx (Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 304).

Mississippians willing to defend it. As C. Vann Woodward argued, this “bedtime story” was “calculated to keep the South sleeping, put blacks in their place, [and] console poor whites with white supremacy.”¹⁵

One should also be cautious about immediately blaming the textbook publishers and authors for inaccuracies or biases, or blaming the state adoption boards that selected these texts. Until the 1974 publication of the revisionist textbook *Mississippi: Conflict and Change*, the state’s textbook committee could not select fresh, inclusive texts because they did not exist. The reason that they did not exist, however, was because publishers and authors knew what kinds of histories would and would not sell, and therefore opted for “safe,” traditional histories that glossed over controversy and pleased their consumer, namely white-controlled textbook adoption boards. Southern state school boards had influenced the content of textbooks for some time. “For years,” Loewen explained, “any textbook sold in Dixie had to call the Civil War ‘the War Between the States,’” and some “used the even more pro-Confederate term ‘the War for Southern Independence.’” He admitted that this was “simply bad history,” but necessary to sell the textbooks. Southern states did not want histories that “cast a [poor] reflection on their past.”¹⁶

In many cases, these textbook boards functioned as censors, controlling what and how students learned. The motives of textbook committees are difficult to measure, because censoring the past could indicate that the committees simply wanted to avoid issues that they viewed as inappropriate for schoolchildren, such as lynching. Another explanation could be that boards wanted to emphasize equality, patriotism, democracy, and pride, but understood that honest depictions of their racial past, especially slavery and Jim Crow racism, undermined that. Yet another justification for whitewashing their history was a conscious approval of the state’s racial past. Calling for textbooks that ignored black history or included racial stereotypes indicated the preferred historical memory of white supremacy and their own political worldview. As FitzGerald stated: “the fact that most of the former Confederate states have state-

¹⁵ Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 16; Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 304; Green, “Rewriting Southern History,” 87.

¹⁶ Mark M. Krug, “On Rewriting of the Story of Reconstruction in the U.S. History Textbooks,” *Journal of Negro History* 46:3 (April 1961): 133-53; FitzGerald, *America Revised*, 24; Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 312; Bessie Pierce, *Public Opinion and the Teaching of History in the United States* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 39.

level adoptions has meant that until recently, conservative white school boards have imposed their racial prejudices ... on the children in their states."¹⁷

Whatever conscious manipulation of history existed in the past, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954 prompted formal, state-sponsored policies to safeguard the preferred version of history that championed the "southern way of life." Less than two weeks after the *Brown* decision, textbook publishers met in Jackson, Mississippi, to discuss the ruling's possible impact on the textbook business. White Citizens' Councils, designed specifically to resist all forms of integration, especially in the schools, began forming in July 1954. The white power structure, including the Citizens' Councils, school boards, and state government, went to great lengths to ensure the survival of separate schools, but also made sure that Mississippi students received a "proper" racial education. In 1956, the state legislature, pressured by the Citizens' Council, started drafting laws that drastically changed the nature of public education in Mississippi. First, the state did away with compulsory attendance laws, giving parents a way to remove their children from school in the event of integration. For those who remained in school, the legislature then mandated that all ninth-grade students take Mississippi history, thereby providing a forum for extolling the myths of white supremacy. In the same session, the Senate voted on a bill requiring the State Library Commission to purchase books that emphasized white supremacy, such as copies of pro-segregationist publications "Black Monday," "White America," and "You and Segregation." These measures were obvious attempts to prepare students for the fight against integration. Requiring Mississippi history and filling state libraries with one-sided, politically driven literature showed the conscious drive to manipulate racial ideas.¹⁸

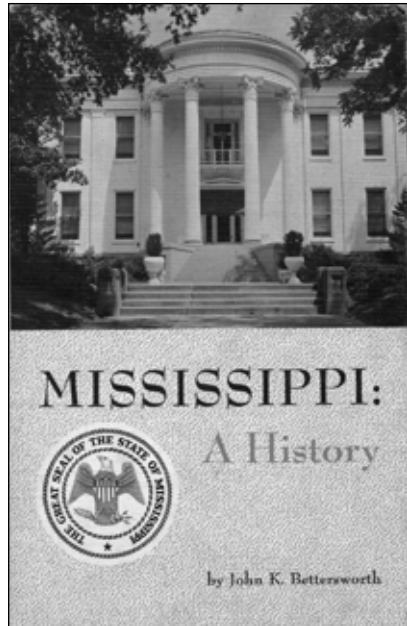
Civil rights struggles prompted a push for changes in education throughout the country, but the South steadfastly refused to waver in its insistence to teach segregation. In September 1959, the Mississippi

¹⁷ FitzGerald, *America Revised*, 35; Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 307, 312; Pierce, *Public Opinion and the Teaching of History in the United States*, 39.

¹⁸ "Textbook Publishers Meet Here, Discuss Segregation Rulings' Effect on Books," *Jackson Daily News* (Jackson, MS), May 28, 1954 (henceforth referred to as *JDN*); "Textbook Battle: Civil War vs. Civil Rights," editorial, *Capital Reporter* (Jackson, MS), September 6, 1979 (henceforth referred to as *CR*); "Library, Textbooks Hit In Segregation Dispute," *JDN*, March 3, 1956.

State Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) voiced its displeasure with changing textbooks, and attacked schoolbooks that promoted “progressive causes” such as the United Nations, organized labor, and integration. The Mississippi branch of the American Legion and the Citizens’ Council called for a committee to inspect the “unsatisfactory” and “subversive” texts listed by the DAR. As a result, the Mississippi Senate passed a bill in 1960 that gave newly elected Governor Ross Barnett full control over selecting textbooks. This unprecedented move, even in the South, created a direct link between the information available to students and the political agenda. Barnett argued that “all of us ought to be against anything in our textbooks that would teach subversion or integration. Our children must be properly informed about the Southern and true American way of life.”¹⁹

In 1962, Barnett exercised his new role in the public schools and selected John K. Bettersworth’s book *Mississippi: A History* as the only state-approved choice for the required Mississippi history course. Bettersworth specialized in the Civil War, and his narrative seemed stuck in the same Old South and Lost Cause mentality. From 1962 through



1980, all Mississippi students learned from Bettersworth’s texts. The state adopted new textbooks every six years, selecting his new edition *Mississippi: Yesterday and Today* in 1968, and *Your Mississippi* in 1974.²⁰ In 1970, however, the state changed its procedures for selecting its textbooks and created the History Textbook Review Committee, composed

¹⁹ “Legion Plans to Check Mississippi Textbooks,” *New York Times*, September 6, 1959 (hereafter referred to as *NYT*); “Textbook Curbs Gain,” *NYT*, April 29, 1960; “Integration’ in Textbooks,” editorial, *NYT*, April 19, 1959; “Mississippi Mud,” *Time*, May 16, 1960, 65; Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 279-80.

²⁰ Even though *Your Mississippi* was not published until 1975, it was adopted by the Textbook Review Committee in 1974. The committee reviewed galley proofs and the author’s explanation of the revisions from the previously adopted versions.

of four members selected by the state superintendent of education and three by the governor. The committee, comprising chiefly educators, historians, politicians, parents, and community representatives, reviewed the proposed texts, compared them to the curriculum, and then approved up to five. The Textbook Review Committee had criteria for rating proposals, and among the major requirements, approved texts had to be “consistent with the valid findings of recent research” and report history in an unbiased manner. This new committee, along with its new requirements, made it seem that Mississippi was finally ready come to terms with its racial past in the classroom, but the Textbook Review Committee’s decision in 1974 revealed that the state still had a ways to go.²¹

In 1974, Mississippi had an opportunity to provide a textbook that represented all of its students. Sociologist James Loewen at Tougaloo College and historian Charles Sallis at Millsaps College edited a new textbook titled *Mississippi: Conflict and Change*, the first revisionist history of the state. *Conflict and Change* presented a multi-racial, multi-ethnic story that honestly chronicled Mississippi’s past. Historians lauded it as a “groundbreaking” study, and it won various awards, but Mississippi rejected it for use in the public schools and approved, yet again, a Betterworth text. The newest Betterworth edition, *Your Mississippi*, was an improvement over the last two versions, but was still woefully behind the times, drew from outdated research, and did not acknowledge black contributions.²² Black students who learned about “their Mississippi,” had a hard time finding any redeeming contributions by African Americans. When Betterworth spoke of “Mississippians,” he meant white Mississippians. His coverage of civil rights was surprisingly thin, even for a book published in 1975. His pro-white,

²¹ Robert B. Moore, ed., *Two History Texts: A Study in Contrast* (New York: The Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, 1976), 3, 5, 8-12; “Section 37-43-21, The Mississippi Code of 1972,” The Mississippi Code, <http://www.mscode.com/free/statutes/37/043/0021.htm>; “Textbooks Procurement and Adoption,” The Mississippi Department of Education, <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/Textbook/textbooks.htm>.

²² In 1971, Loewen wrote to James W. Silver, author of the controversial *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, and explained the plans to write *Conflict and Change*. He admitted that he and Sallis wanted to “compete with and eventually replace the present Betterworth [text]. We feel ... that his book is woefully inadequate, especially in its treatment of the role of black Mississippians.” (Jim Loewen to James Silver, Nov 16, 1971, in James W. Silver Collection (MUM00410), Box 11, Folder 1, Archives & Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, The University of Mississippi.)

anti-integrationist narratives in the 1962 and 1968 editions were unsurprising since Mississippi was in the violent throes of the civil rights movement, but many questioned his sparse attention to civil rights in the 1975 edition. Robert Moore's scathing analysis of *Your Mississippi* stated that "the author's coverage of the civil rights struggle would be grossly inadequate even for a U.S. history textbook published in 1965. For a book about Mississippi, revised in 1975, the failure to present the enormous conflict and change that Mississippi experienced during the civil rights struggle is inexcusable."²³

When the Textbook Review Committee approved Betterworth's *Your Mississippi* and rejected Loewen and Sallis's *Mississippi: Conflict and Change*, it revealed the difficulties that the state had in coming to grips with its past. In his comparison of the two textbooks, Moore charged that the adoption committee felt "threatened by a book that deals honestly with Mississippi history and are attempting to suppress it. This represents censorship in its most blatant form." With no alternative, Loewen and Sallis filed suit against the state, and ultimately won adoption of their text in 1980. This struggle over a textbook is a telling example of Mississippi's difficult acceptance of its past and a hopeful outlook on the state's future. The final adoption of *Conflict and Change* showed a state moving toward racial reconciliation and a shift in public opinion. This shift took time, but in the two decades after the court case, textbook authors began publishing, and the state began accepting, more objective and comprehensive histories of the state. These new histories, Loewen explained, "represent a sea of change ... much less dominated by white supremacy." The journey toward this "new history" provides invaluable insight into racial attitudes in Mississippi.²⁴

The textbooks utilized in this study are by no means the entirety of existing resources, but merely a representative sample. The study incorporates almost twenty texts by various authors published between 1900 and 1995.²⁵ Editorial changes in subsequent textbooks by the same

²³ Moore, *Two History Texts*, 9.

²⁴ Moore, *Two History Texts*, 3; U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi Greenville Division, preliminary motion, *James W. Loewen, et al vs. John Turnipseed, et al*, 1980, in John Salter Papers, M55-525, Box 1, Folder 13, WHS; Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 157-58.

²⁵ Six of the textbooks analyzed were published prior to the establishment of the Textbook Review Committee. This study does not attempt to hold them to standards that were not

author present a unique opportunity at evaluating changing racial attitudes over time, as seen in texts by John Bettersworth, Richard McLemore, David Sansing, and John Ray Skates. Loewen and Sallis's *Conflict and Change* and Bettersworth's *Your Mississippi* receive significant attention because they provide the most poignant examples of differing representations in Mississippi textbooks and because of the court case surrounding the adoption controversy. None of the textbooks examined are free of bias, but the trend indicates that as historiographical, societal, and political pressures for more inclusion intensified, their treatment of race improved.

With some exceptions, Mississippi history textbooks followed the established historiography regarding slavery. Since much of the research prior to the late 1950s supported a romanticized southern version of slavery, it is unsurprising that textbooks also presented the same narrative. Ulrich B. Phillips's book *American Negro Slavery* dominated the field from its publication in 1918 through the late 1950s. According to Phillips, slaves were racially inferior and needed their masters to take care of them. Slaves had a great deal of autonomy on the plantations, and any punishments, Phillips contended, were light. The system itself was not profitable, and the real burden rested on the master, who had the responsibility of taking care of his slaves. Black scholars like W.E.B. DuBois and John Hope Franklin challenged Phillips's racist view, arguing that his "master narrative" written by elite white men ignored the slaves themselves. In 1956, Kenneth Stampp's *Peculiar Institution* challenged Phillips and argued that slavery was a severe and profitable institution, not the benign system posed by Phillips. Just three years later, Stanley Elkins argued that slavery was an oppressive system, beating slaves down to psychological helplessness. The growing historiography revealed problems with the Phillips model of slavery, and while there were considerable gaps remaining, they provided different vantage points for textbook authors to present.²⁶

in place at the time of their publication, but they are included to provide a benchmark for Mississippi history textbooks.

²⁶ Robert Abzug and Stephen Maizlish, eds., *New Perspectives on Race and Slavery in America, Essays in Honor of Kenneth Stampp* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 1-3; Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (New York: D. Appleton and Co, 1918); W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, David Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams, eds. (1903; reprinted Boston: Bedford Books, 1997); John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro*

Until the 1974 publication of *Conflict and Change*, Mississippi textbook authors repeated the preferred southern apologist version of slavery presented by Phillips. It is unsurprising that they ignored the research by black scholars, but there was no recognition of the brutality that Stamp and Elkins presented in the late 1950s. A textbook published in 1900 outlined the necessity of slavery to Mississippi's economic system and way of life. Slavery was not evil, as the so-called "ignorant" northern abolitionists argued, but a positive good, because it benefitted everyone involved, especially the slave. Charles Sydnor and Claude Bennett's *Mississippi History* (1939) stated that "the Negroes were well cared for, given enough food and clothing, and not required to do more than a reasonable amount of work." The authors admitted that some masters were cruel, "but even such owners generally gave their slaves fairly good care." When slaves ran away, they argued, they did so because they "were tired of work, or deserved punishment and wanted to escape it." By implication, slaves were lazy or troublemakers, which would certainly leave an impression on students who learned race from their textbooks.²⁷

These histories romanticized slave life in such a way that one can understand why white children learning from these texts had a hard time understanding the civil rights struggles and demands for black equality in the 1950s and 1960s. McLemore's *Mississippi Through Four Centuries* (1949) read almost exactly like Phillips's work, claiming that "the life the Negro lived as a slave was much better than that which he had lived in Africa. It was said that his condition would continue to improve more rapidly as a slave than as a free man." McLemore portrayed the masters as saviors of the black race, who readily supplied their slaves with seemingly every need and want, including summer and winter clothing of "good quality" and "as much bread, and usually as much milk and vegetables, as they wish[ed]." Slaves led a contented life with a minimal workload, for "they [had] no night work, [were] provided with comfortable quarters," and their masters were "kind, indulgent,

in *North Carolina, 1790-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943); Kenneth Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-bellum South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956); Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institution and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959).

²⁷ Charles S. Sydnor and Claude Bennett, *Mississippi History* (New York: Johnson Publishing Company, 1939), 159-60.

not over-exacting, and sincerely interested in the physical well-being of their dependents.” Sydnor and Bennett’s 1939 textbook gave the same impression, saying that masters gave their slaves as much food as they desired and the “best medical service available.” McLemore agreed, but added that “some Negroes were more lazy than sick.” Sydnor and Bennett’s narrative described how life in the close-knit slave communities involved “friendship with other slaves, fishing now and then in near-by streams, religious meetings, and occasional merrymakings, all of which helped make the life of a slave *pleasant*.”²⁸ With descriptions of slavery such as these, a Mississippi student might wonder why anyone would ever want to escape the “pleasantries” of lifelong servitude.²⁹

Textbooks published from the late 1950s through the mid 1970s hardly improved, even as the growing historiography revealed the inaccuracies of former scholarship. John Bettersworth’s *Mississippi: A History* (1959), adopted in 1962 as the only state-approved textbook, repeated many of the old Phillips arguments. He admitted that there was some abuse of slaves, but “public opinion and state law generally assured the slaves of good treatment,” a statement he repeated in his 1964 and 1975 editions. Richard McLemore’s new edition, *The Mississippi Story* (1959), also emphasized fair treatment for slaves, outlining how masters kept their slaves happy by providing holidays and gifts.³⁰

These textbooks were not necessarily wrong, as there were kind masters, and slaves did occasionally receive rewards for their labor, but there was no recognition of the brutal realities of slavery. Almost all of the textbooks reflected a paternalistic view of slavery, with the master as provider, and the slave as historical object. As Moreau explained, slaves did not have agency, and instead had “their destiny tossed about by slave owners, abolitionists, politicians, and ultimately the Union and Con-

²⁸ Emphasis added.

²⁹ Franklin L. Riley, *School History of Mississippi for use in Public and Private Schools* (Richmond, VA: B.F. Johnson Publishing Company, 1900), 134, 163; McLemore, *Mississippi Through Four Centuries* (1949), 151-55; Richard A. McLemore, *The Mississippi Story* (River Forest, IL: Laidlaw Brothers Publishers, 1959), 135, 151; Sydnor and Bennett, *Mississippi History* (1939), 154-61; John K. Bettersworth, *Mississippi Yesterday and Today* (Austin, TX: The Steck Company Publishers, 1964), 143; John K. Bettersworth, *Mississippi: A History* (Austin, TX: The Steck Company Publishers, 1959), 191; Wilkie, *Dixie*, 50.

³⁰ John K. Bettersworth, *Your Mississippi* (Austin, TX: The Steck Company Publishers, 1975), quoted in Moore, *Two History Texts*, 5; Bettersworth, *Mississippi: A History* (1959), 191; McLemore, *The Mississippi Story* (1959), 134-35.

federate armies.” There was also no blame placed upon slave owners or the system of slavery itself. Masters often treated their slaves with their own interests in mind, not the slave’s. They provided medical attention and adequate food, because a sick or undernourished slave could not work. Occasionally authors described slavery as a “necessary evil,” but rarely explained anything evil about it. By ignoring the darker aspects of slavery, Mississippi textbook authors, whether consciously or not, taught students white supremacy and black inferiority, therefore sowing the seeds of racial unrest.³¹



By the 1970s, there was sufficient research available to improve the textbook treatment of slavery. The publication of *Conflict and Change* (1974) revealed that a more complete look at slave life was possible. Loewen and Sallis clearly discussed the origins of slavery, the ideology justifying slavery, living conditions, violence used to maintain discipline, and slave resistance. The authors showed slavery from the black perspective as well, something completely ignored by previous textbooks. They used slave narratives to explain the brutality of slavery, including one slave’s recollection of a whipping: “I saw Old Master get mad at Truman, and he buckled him down across a barrel and whipped him till he cut the blood out of him, and then he rubbed salt and pepper in the raw places. It looked like Truman would die, it hurt so bad.”³²

Other textbooks sometimes acknowledged that masters or overseers beat slaves, but never in such detail or from the slave’s perspective. Bettersworth’s *Your Mississippi* (1975) put the onus on black overseers, not the masters, stating that “plantation owners cautioned their overseers against brutal practices.” The reasons for slave punishment were always

³¹ Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 274.

³² James W. Loewen and Charles S. Sallis, eds., *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 93-97; Moore, *Two History Texts*, 5.

some wrong-doing on the part of the slave, but *Conflict and Change* presented other objectives. "This harsh treatment ... accustomed the slaves to discipline, it required them to be submissive, it made them fear white men, and it attempted to make them feel that whites were 'naturally' superior to blacks." Loewen and Sallis cited Mississippi state laws against killing or crippling slaves, but said that "nevertheless, an owner could punish his slaves in any manner he desired. Slaves were rarely killed, however. They were too valuable."³³

Remember, however, that the Textbook Review Committee rejected *Conflict and Change* and approved Betterworth's *Your Mississippi*. One of the committee's requirements was that approved textbooks be "consistent with the valid findings of recent research," yet Betterworth's narrative paralleled Phillips's 1918 research. He ignored Stamp's 1956 argument that slavery was profitable, and claimed that slavery was so expensive that "planters often neglected their own families to care for their costly slaves." His chapter on the Old South opened with an illustration of a white mistress surrounded by well-dressed slaves with the caption reading: "on some plantations the mistress taught the house servants to read and write." While some did do this, Betterworth never mentioned that this was the exception, not the norm, and that Mississippi law forbade teaching slaves to read and write.³⁴

By the 1980s, however, textbook authors could not continue writing narratives that read more like Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*. The court ordered adoption of *Conflict and Change* in 1980, and there was a wealth of new research on slavery. John Blassingame's *The Slave Community* (1972), Eugene Genovese's *Roll Jordan Roll* (1974), Herbert Gutman's *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* (1976), Lawrence Levine's *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (1978), and many others too numerous to name made it impossible to ignore black history. As a result, Mississippi history textbooks began presenting narratives that broke with the Old South mentality so prevalent in the past texts. David Sansing's 1981 textbook, *Mississippi: Its People and Culture* dismantled the guise of "happy slaves" and acknowledged slave agency, arguing that many found the "total regulation of their daily lives ... unbearable, and they demonstrated their resistance many different

³³ Betterworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975), quoted in Moore, *Two History Texts*, 5; Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 96-97.

³⁴ Betterworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975), 184; Moore, *Two History Texts*, 10.

ways,” including running away, work slowdowns, and even violence against their masters.³⁵

Beginning with the eventual adoption of *Conflict and Change*, almost all textbooks published thereafter began emphasizing a slave culture distinct from its masters. Loewen and Sallis’s text, along with others by David Sansing, John Ray Skates, and Jesse O. McKee, acknowledged slaves as real people with real feelings and ideas, not simply a means to perpetuate King Cotton. Sansing’s 1981 textbook, along with the three texts that he co-wrote with Skates, discussed the interworkings of the slave family, stressing the importance of kinship, culture, and religion. “Within the framework of the family,” Sansing and Skates wrote, “slave parents were able to cushion the shock of bondage for their children and provide a frame of reference that enabled them to develop self-esteem and a positive self-concept.” Their 1995 textbook *Discovering Mississippi* included five pages on slave life, including illustrations, and emphasized how slaves borrowed from their African heritage and American experience to create a unique culture. They acknowledged the problematic nature of assessing the brutality of slavery, stating that “the question of how often whippings occurred and how severe they were is often debated, but some slaves were beaten so severely that their backs bore scars.” While many previous textbooks emphasized how well-fed and treated the slaves were, Skates and Sansing provided qualifying statements for their readers: “Since treating slaves decently was in the owners’ financial best interest, most owners gave their slaves adequate food, housing, and care.” They acknowledged that some masters arranged to

³⁵ John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974); Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 93-97; David Sansing, *Mississippi: Its People and Culture* (1981), 152-63; David G. Sansing and John Ray Skates, *Mississippi History Through Four Centuries* (Jackson, MS: Walthall Publishing Company, 1987), 81-83; John Ray Skates and David G. Sansing, *Mississippi: The Study of Our State* (Brandon, MS: Walthall Publishing Company, 1993), 155-60; John Ray Skates, David G. Sansing, and Mary Ann Wells, *Discovering Mississippi: A Mississippi Studies Textbook* (Brandon, MS: Walthall Publishing Company, 1995), 205-12; Joseph B. Parker et al, eds., *Mississippi Studies: Emergence of Modern Mississippi* (Brandon, MS: Magnolia Publishing Company, 1995), 80-81; Jesse O. McKee et al, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (Montgomery, AL: Clairmont Press, 1995), 61-67.

free their slaves or broke the law by teaching their slaves to read and write, but admitted that “this type of slaveowner was not common.”³⁶

The treatment of free blacks in Mississippi textbooks also evolved over time, as seen in changing language, attention, and visual representations. Until adoption of *Conflict and Change*, all previous textbooks either ignored free blacks entirely or presented them as troublemakers. The 1900 publication *School History of Mississippi* described free blacks in the antebellum era as “dangers” to the established system. McLemore referred to the need for the “disposal of free negroes.” In his 1959 and 1964 texts, Bettersworth described the free black as a “misfit” who had “no place ... in the Cotton Kingdom.” He argued that free blacks possessed few skills to make them self-sufficient, but cited one exception in William Johnson, an owner of three barbershops, a toyshop, and operator of a small loan service in Natchez. In *Conflict and Change* Loewen and Sallis described Johnson as “an exceptional man ... [who] regularly did business with whites and became quite wealthy,” pointing out that “Johnson was murdered by a white man. His murderer was never convicted because the only witnesses—blacks—could not testify in court against a white.” Johnson’s murder was absent from *Your Mississippi*, published only one year after *Conflict and Change*. Bettersworth referenced the murder in his 1981 revision and added a picture of Johnson, but did not mention that his murderer was white.³⁷

Subsequent textbooks followed *Conflict and Change*’s lead and emphasized Johnson’s role in the community that made him a respected figure of the period. David Sansing not only included a picture of Johnson, but also dubbed him as “one of the most successful businessmen in Natchez ... a remarkable man who overcame hardships to achieve not

³⁶ Sansing, *Mississippi: Its People and Culture* (1981), 152-63; Sansing and Skates, *Mississippi History Through Four Centuries* (1987), 82-83, 158-59; Skates and Sansing, *Mississippi: The Study of Our State* (1993), 158; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), 205-11; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), 205, 211; James V. Sullivan and Kathleen Sullivan, *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (Brandon, MS: Ollray Publishing Co., 1994), 102; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 60-67; Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 93-97.


³⁷ Riley, *School History of Mississippi for use in Public and Private Schools* (1900), 164; Sydnor and Bennett, *Mississippi History* (1939), 156; McLemore, *Mississippi Through Four Centuries* (1949), 154; Bettersworth, *Mississippi: A History* (1959), 193; Bettersworth, *Mississippi Yesterday and Today* (1964), 145; Bettersworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975), 151; John K. Bettersworth, *Mississippi: The Land and the People* (Austin, TX: The Steck Company Publishers, 1981), Chapter 8.

only substantial wealth but also the respect and admiration of many whites and blacks in Natchez.” In their 1987 text, Skates and Sansing added how Johnson “even loaned money to his white friends.” Other texts stated how Johnson’s success earned him respect, but Betterworth only half-heartedly recognized this in his 1981 text, stating that “a free black like Johnson might be respected in a certain community.” In contrast, Skates and Sansing in *Mississippi: The Study of Our State* (1993) gave Johnson full recognition for his role as a successful free black

by naming him as “A Person To Know” and allotting an entire page in the textbook, complete with photograph. The growing recognition of William Johnson was simply one example of the acceptance of black individuals into Mississippi history. The addition of pictures and Johnson’s acknowledgement as a positive addition to white society showed a changing attitude towards race in Mississippi textbooks and society. By providing positive role models and descriptions for black students, this trend helped strip past feelings of racial inferiority.³⁸

While Mississippi history textbooks generally followed the historiography when it came to slavery, their treatment of Reconstruction was more

A PERSON TO KNOW



William Johnson,
The “Barber
of Natchez”

William Johnson was free black in Mississippi. He owned barbershops in Natchez, Port Gibson, and Vicksburg. Johnson also owned a thousand acres of land, five houses, a delivery service, and fifteen slaves.

Johnson was a wealthy businessmen in Natchez. Sometimes, he even loaned money to his white friends.

He was born a slave in 1809. But Johnson and his mother were set free. He taught himself to read and write. As a young man, he learned how to be a barber.

Johnson kept a diary of his personal and business affairs. His diary was found and made into a book a hundred years after Johnson's death in 1851. His life was made into a book named *The Barber of Natchez*. His house on State Street in Natchez is being restored. It will be opened to visitors as a part of the Natchez National Park.

Johnson was a remarkable man. He achieved wealth and respect when most black Mississippians were slaves.

³⁸ Sansing, *Mississippi: Its People and Culture* (1981), 161; Sansing and Skates, *Mississippi History Through Four Centuries* (1987), 83-84; Betterworth, *Mississippi: The Land and the People* (1981), Chapter 8; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), 208; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 67; Skates and Sansing, *Mississippi: The Study of Our State* (1993), 159.

troublesome. Frances FitzGerald argued that “textbook treatment of Reconstruction offers the most striking example of the gap between the academic world and the secondary schools,” which held true for Mississippi textbooks. Many textbooks presented the passing of the Old South as something to be lamented, and depicted Reconstruction as one of the grimmest chapters in the nation’s history. This version of the post-war period originated in the 1890s and argued that Reconstruction had been a tragic error. This school of thought, known as the Dunning School, grounded itself in the widespread racism of the period and accepted racial stereotypes that blacks were illiterate, incompetent, and ill-equipped for freedom. Claude Bowers’s work *The Tragic Era* (1929) argued that vindictive Republicans, carpetbaggers, scalawags, and blacks ran state governments during Reconstruction, creating incompetent and corrupt governments to punish the South. As a result, decent white southerners united out of desperation, forced out the Republican regimes, and “redeemed” their governments by putting white southern Democrats in charge and stripping the freedmen of voting and other civil rights.³⁹

Beginning in the 1920s, however, historians emphasized the positive contributions of Reconstruction governments, including long-needed reforms like public schools, and argued against the notion that naïve and inexperienced blacks led to corruption in state governments. Works by W.E.B. DuBois and C. Vann Woodward tore apart “the shrouds of myth surrounding post-Civil War Southern history,” namely the romance of the Old South and righteousness of the Lost Cause. The civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s also changed the historiography regarding Reconstruction and all areas of southern and black history. Starting in the mid 1950s, historians like Kenneth Stampp, Joel Williamson, and C. Vann Woodward highlighted the central question of the black experience and made race a critical component of understanding the South during and after Reconstruction.⁴⁰

³⁹ FitzGerald, *America Revised*, 89; Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 60, 66, 274-75; Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 137; Francis G. Couvares, et al, eds., *Interpretations of American History: Patterns & Perspectives, Volume One—Through Reconstruction* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), 381-88; Green, “Rewriting Southern History,” 87-89; Claude G. Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 1929).

⁴⁰ *Ibid*; W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1935); C. Vann Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1951) and *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951); Kenneth Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction:*

Despite advances in the historiography beginning in the 1920s, all adopted Mississippi textbooks until 1980 ignored later scholarship and instead based their narrative on works that clearly upheld the idea of white supremacy. In a *Southern Exposure* article, Anne Braden recalled learning history in the public schools: “Certain ‘facts’ were undisputed. One was that the Reconstruction period was a ‘tragedy’—because ignorant former slaves (manipulated by ‘carpetbaggers’ and ‘scalawags’) took over state governments, refused to let whites vote, threatened white womanhood, wreaked chaos throughout the South, and stole public treasuries blind.” Reconstruction finally ended “well,” however, “when the ‘better class’ of white Southerners, through brains and skill, regained control.” Joseph Moreau blamed this lag between scholarship and textbooks on southern textbook boards and their attempts to censor history for a more pro-South message. For white southerners, Moreau argued, “the ‘truths’ of history proved remarkably malleable...[they] sought to rewrite the history taught to children [because] they wanted more than final exoneration for the [South.] They wanted to use the past to legitimate the new social order they were creating,” namely Jim Crow segregation, and “buttress an official system of racial inequality” built on the ashes of the Old South.⁴¹

Until the adoption of *Conflict and Change*, Mississippi students learned from textbooks that repeated the Confederate myth of Reconstruction. These textbooks mourned the passing of the Old South, seen in descriptions of the Civil War itself. Betterworth’s 1964 textbook discussed how “the War for Southern Independence...began like a glorious revolution.” Betterworth and many of his predecessors blamed losing the war on various groups, including “abolitionist crusaders of the North” with their “violent propaganda,” Yankee intruding armies, and disloyal slaves. Sydnor and Bennett’s 1939 text argued that loyal slaves stayed on the plantations to help, but disloyal ones who escaped

1865-1877 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), Joel Williamson, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861-1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965); C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955) and *The Burden of Southern History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960).

⁴¹ Krug, “On Rewriting of the Story of Reconstruction in the U.S. History Textbooks,” 135, 152; Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 276; Anne Braden, “A Long Way To Go: Teaching Young People the Truth About Racism,” *Southern Exposure* 12:4 (July/August 1984): 53; Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 79, 90.

or refused to work were “a great handicap to the state.”⁴² When the South lost, Bettersworth explained, “the end of the war brought the final blow to the slave owner, the loss of his slaves. Every able-bodied fieldhand and house servant was worth about two thousand dollars...All of this was completely lost.” Robert Moore chastised Bettersworth’s mourning for the Old South, and argued that his “grieving for the slave owner keeps him from celebrating—even briefly—for the hundreds of thousands who



were freed.” For Bettersworth and his predecessors, the once “loyal” slaves transitioned to “confused” freedmen during Reconstruction, and created the “critical problem” of what to do with them.⁴³

Following the Dunning School’s interpretation, virtually all Mississippi textbooks prior to the adoption of *Conflict and Change* addressed the “problem” of the freedmen using racial stereotypes. In a section entitled “Need for the Black Codes,” Sydnor and Bennett’s text explained that “most of the Negroes refused to work after they were given their freedom.”⁴⁴ Since the freedmen believed that the government would

provide them with forty acres and a mule, many of them “wandered about

⁴² Eventually textbooks recognized the role of African Americans in the war itself, with discussion of black soldiers in David Sansing and John Ray Skates’s texts *Mississippi: The Study of our State* (1993) and *Discovering Mississippi* (1995). Both include pictures of black soldiers, and the 1995 text includes recognition of a former slave from Mississippi who won the Congressional Medal of Honor. (Skates and Sansing, *Mississippi: The Study of Our State* (1993), 212; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), 226-27.)

⁴³ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 156-58; Bettersworth, *Mississippi Yesterday and Today* (1964), 202; McLemore, *Mississippi Through Four Centuries*, (1949); Wilkie, *Dixie*, 50; Bettersworth, *Mississippi Yesterday and Today* (1959), 193; Sydnor and Bennett, *Mississippi History* (1939), 169; Bettersworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975), quoted in Moore, *Two History Texts*, 5, 16.

⁴⁴ McLemore made a similar comment in his 1949 textbook: “Many of the Negroes refused to work. Others were guilty of petty crimes, especially stealing.” (McLemore, *Mississippi Through Four Centuries* (1949), quoted in Wilkie, *Dixie*, 50-51.)

in bands and flocked to towns.” Since they had to eat, but refused to work, they explained, “many begged or stole,” making themselves parasites on hardworking southern whites. They conceded that blacks should not be blamed for their “annoying” behavior, because the “ignorant Negroes had always been forced to work, and now that they were free they did not know how to behave.” McLemore’s 1949 and 1959 textbooks stated that rebuilding after the war’s devastation was difficult, “but the presence of the carpetbag element and the bad conduct of the Negroes made the task more difficult [since] the war had given him his freedom, but he was not trained to use it.” In the introduction to his Reconstruction chapter, McLemore summarized the Confederate myth of Reconstruction perfectly. “In this chapter, you will see how the Republicans ran the state. Their extravagance and their willingness to place untrained people in important places made the conservative whites unite against them.” Curtis Wilkie, who learned from McLemore’s book in the Mississippi public schools, commented: “No wonder Mississippi helped anchor the Democratic Solid South for nearly one hundred years.”⁴⁵

Breaking with the Confederate version of history, *Conflict and Change* described how the Black Codes put “serious controls” on black people and the result “made sure that blacks were kept down, socially and economically.” Because of Black Codes and the sharecropping system, black farmers were “victims” because “without land [they] had no economic power.” Jesse McKee’s *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995) added to the narrative, claiming that “the Codes placed harsh economic and social restrictions over blacks’ behavior and, particularly, their labor.” He included the reaction of a white traveler in Mississippi who stated: “while honest and industrious Negroes are often arrested and punished, there is not arrest of notorious idle... white men.”⁴⁶

Representations of the Ku Klux Klan also revealed that Mississippi textbooks prior to *Conflict and Change* ignored the historiography and deferred to the romanticized idea of the Klan as a protector of southern

⁴⁵ Sydner and Bennett, *Mississippi History* (1939), 186; McLemore, *Mississippi Through Four Centuries* (1949), 246; McLemore, *The Mississippi Story* (1959), 228; Wilkie, *Dixie*, 50-51.

⁴⁶ Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 146-47; Snyder and Bennett, *Mississippi History* (1939), 169, 186-87; Bettersworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975), 226; Bettersworth, *Mississippi: The Land and the People* (1981), 212; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 111-12.

values. *Mississippi History* (1939) argued that the Klan provided a much-needed service to white people, since “the government of the state gave the citizens almost no protection. The white people therefore had to protect themselves without the help of sheriff or police.” The authors defended the Klan, admitting that their actions were illegal, but arguing that they had no choice because the Reconstruction governments were not enforcing the law. Actions of the Klan, they surmised, “can therefore be justified on the grounds of grim necessity.” McLemore explained that “a Negro who had been giving trouble in a community might awake some night to find a ghost-clad figure standing by his bed.” Because of their “superstitious” nature, the mere sight of the Klansmen was enough to scare blacks into passivity. The Klan, according to McLemore, “helped the South at a difficult time.” Section headings in textbooks, such as “The White Man Fights Back” and “White People Organize to Control the Negroes,” revealed much of their biases, implying that the Klan was something that whites were driven to, and their violent actions were justified by the need to protect themselves from blacks and carpetbaggers. Many textbooks only hinted at Klan violence. All of Betterworth’s editions described the Klan as a “secret social and fraternal club,” which “were very popular at the time. The initiation of a member required him to ride across the countryside in bedsheet and hood to serenade his best girl. This frightened the blacks.” Betterworth’s *Mississippi: The Land and the People* (1981) added that the Klan used this fear to keep blacks from voting, but gave no indication of the realities of Klan violence and intimidation.⁴⁷

Most later textbooks acknowledged the KKK as a terrorist organization. Loewen and Sallis bluntly stated that “the Klan became an instrument of terror throughout the South,” with a stated purpose to “promote white supremacy and to ‘preserve the Southern way of life.’” *Conflict and Change* recognized positive achievements of Reconstruction governments, especially the establishment of public education, and noted how the Klan consciously targeted black schools and whites who supported them. Loewen and Sallis, and later Sansing and Skates,

⁴⁷ Sydnor and Bennett, *Mississippi History* (1939), 195-96; McLemore, *Mississippi Through Four Centuries* (1949), 247-48; McLemore, *The Mississippi Story* (1959), 228-29; Quoted in Wilkie, *Dixie*, 50-51; Betterworth, *Mississippi: A History* (1959), 324-25; Betterworth, *Mississippi Yesterday and Today* (1964), 231-33; Betterworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975), 231; Moore, *Two History Texts*, 6, 19; Betterworth, *Mississippi: The Land and the People* (1981), 218-19.

candidly discussed how the Klan burned black schools and churches, and even beat and killed white teachers and black parents who sent their children to school. *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1994) discussed the violence toward blacks and noted the huge increase in lynchings and beatings in the late-Reconstruction period.⁴⁸

When white Redeemer governments regained control of the South and proceeded to strip African Americans of their rights, textbooks followed suit. After Reconstruction, Joseph Moreau explained, blacks “largely departed from textbooks, appearing infrequently or in awkward contexts.” These textbooks reflected southern historical memory, carefully censored to show an all-white narrative. Until the adoption of *Conflict and Change*, most Mississippi textbooks ignored blacks completely after Reconstruction. Betterworth’s *Your Mississippi* (1975), for example, did not mention segregation or lynching. In his 1934 *Journal of Negro History* article, Lawrence Reddick discussed the problems with textbooks of the time. They gave an unfavorable picture of blacks, because “as a slave he was happy and docile. As a freedman he was shiftless, sometimes vicious, and easily led to corruption. As a freeman,” however, “his activities have not been worthy of note.” Some textbooks discussed the 1890 convention where the new Mississippi state constitution disfranchised blacks, and they occasionally mentioned that blacks migrated out of the state during World War II, but never recognized the consequences of disfranchisement, or the discrimination and violence that drove them out of the state. As Moreau explained, “historians generally excluded Blacks from popular schoolbooks as assiduously as Southern Democrats kept them from the polls.”⁴⁹

Yet again, Loewen and Sallis’s *Conflict and Change* displayed a dramatic shift in textbook representations of race and racism. Unlike previous texts, and some that followed, the authors dealt directly with

⁴⁸ Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 155-56; Sansing, *Mississippi: Its People and Culture* (1981), 212-13; Skates and Sansing, *Mississippi: The Study of Our State* (1993), 228; Sansing and Skates, *Mississippi Through Four Centuries* (1987), 126; Sullivan and Sullivan, *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1994), 162.

⁴⁹ Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 91, 163-64, 276; Lawrence D. Reddick, “Racial Attitudes in American History Textbooks of the South,” *Journal of Negro History* 19:3 (July 1934): 264; Marie Elizabeth Carpenter, “The Treatment of the Negro in American History Textbooks: A Comparison of Changing Textbook Content, 1926-1939, with Developing Scholarship in the History of the Negro in the United States” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1941), 128.

racial violence and segregation. Lynching, they explained, “was the ultimate weapon to keep blacks under control...In the minds of many white Mississippians, the black man had become the symbol of the defeat of the Confederacy,” and was therefore punished. Loewen and Sallis plainly stated that Mississippi had the most recorded lynchings in the country, and even included a picture of a lynching. Many subsequent texts omitted a candid discussion of lynching, and no other textbook included a picture. James and Kathleen Sullivan’s *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1994), however, described lynching and the efforts to fight such injustice. The Sullivans included a description of Ida B. Wells’s fight against lynching, including a picture of her, something only replicated by Loewen and Sallis. The inclusion of Wells showed a growing recognition of not only African Americans, but also women, in the greater narrative.⁵⁰

For much of the Deep South, and especially Mississippi, the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was the most significant period of change, upheaval, and crisis since the Civil War and Reconstruction. Many textbooks had a difficult time presenting civil rights, especially those published in the midst of such a difficult period in the state’s history. Others suffered from a lack of secondary sources on the Mississippi movement since it took some time for the literature to develop. Neil McMillen’s 1971 book on the Citizens’ Council was one of the earliest works, but the standard works on Mississippi, namely John Dittmer’s *Local People* and Charles Payne’s *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom* were not published until the mid 1990s. Despite this, there were resources on the movement for textbook authors to utilize. Many primary sources existed, such as Anne Moody’s *Coming of Age in Mississippi* and James Silver’s *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, but many textbook authors gave only scant accounts of civil rights. *Conflict and Change* was the exception, providing an excellent overview, but the difficult decades that helped shape Mississippi did not receive adequate attention until the early 1990s.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 178-89; Sullivan and Sullivan, *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1994), 169, 173.

⁵¹ Neil McMillen, *The Citizens Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994);

Most textbooks began their discussion of civil rights with the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Some textbooks, such as *Conflict and Change* (1974) and *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), included the impact of World War II and the decade of Dixiecrats and demagogues, but they were in the minority. Mississippi textbooks were slow to recognize the significance of the *Brown* decision, and few prior to the mid 1970s gave it much attention. Several textbooks refused to even call the landmark case by name, and instead referred to it as “the court decision,” “the integration decision” or “the desegregation decision.”⁵² All of John Bettersworth’s editions referred to *Brown* as “the desegregation decision” and buried the case in paragraphs that described events of Governor J.P. Coleman’s term in office, completely omitting it from the timeline of significant events in Mississippi history.⁵³

Many textbooks described white dissatisfaction with *Brown*, and implied that the decision was unnecessary. Bettersworth asserted that

Charles Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York: Dial Press, 1968); James W. Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1964). There were also earlier secondary works on the movement in general, such as Richard Kluger’s *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America’s Struggle for Equality* (1977) and August Meier and Elliot Rudwick’s *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement* (1973).

⁵² Today the terms “integration” and “desegregation” are used interchangeably and thought of as virtually the same, but there is a difference, however slight, that indicates the author’s attitudes towards the *Brown* decision. “Integration,” to the traditional southern white in the 1950s and 1960s, was the more negative of the two, because it implied a mixing of the races where the government forced the races together and erased the traditional barrier between white and black. Two textbooks directly defined the word “integrate.” In Bettersworth’s *Mississippi: The People and Culture* (1981), “integrate” meant “to come together as equals,” and Jesse McKee’s *Mississippi: The Portrait of an American State* (1995) gave a similar definition. The terms “desegregation” was still unwelcome, but it did not arouse quite the tensions as the term “integration.” “Desegregation” meant the end of the traditional system, but it did not directly create a new system. In short, but still rather ambiguous, desegregation declared the end of the accepted system, but integration imposed a system that most southern whites could not even comprehend, having to mingle with blacks. (Bettersworth, *Mississippi: The Land and the People* (1981), 288; McKee, *Mississippi: The Portrait of an American State* (1995), 183.)

⁵³ Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 243-46; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), 238-40; Bettersworth, *Mississippi Yesterday and Today* (1959), 484, 566; McLemore, *The Mississippi Story* (1959), 258; Bettersworth, *Mississippi Yesterday and Today* (1964), 321; Bettersworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975); Bettersworth, *Mississippi: The Land and the People* (1981), 307, 359; Moore, *Two History Texts*, 9.

“both races evidenced their satisfaction” with separate facilities, and emphasized the rare occasions where blacks had better schools than whites. McLemore also insisted that separate facilities for blacks and whites were indeed equal and preferred by all parties. *The Mississippi Story* (1959) contained two photographs showing “one of Mississippi’s modern Negro schools” and “one for our newer [white] school buildings.” The photographs gave the appearance of separate and equal schools for the races. To be fair, there were some excellent new schools built for blacks in the state during the “school equalization” program in the years leading up to *Brown*, but they were in the minority. McLemore’s representation of a modern black school misrepresents the education provided to black students in the larger scope of educational facilities, which is obvious when compared to other descriptions of black schools. *Conflict and Change* argued that “black children received especially poor treatment in Mississippi’s public schools” and stated that “separate but equal” was a “disguise” since black schools were much poorer than white schools. Loewen and Sallis provided a very different visual comparison of white and black schools than McLemore, with two photographs and a chart of “equal education.”⁵⁴

Textbooks published in the early 1980s and onward offered a representation similar to Loewen and Sallis. *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1994) described the “poorly funded black schools,” and *Mississippi: Its People and Culture* (1981) gave comparative statistics similar to those in Loewen and Sallis’s text that clearly showed the gap between supposedly equal black and white schools. *Mississippi: The Study of Our State* (1993) stated plainly that “schools for black and white children were not equal.” Skates and Sansing contended that Mississippi wanted a better educational system since “the schools for both blacks and whites were poor ... [and] steps were taken to improve the schools—at least for white children.” Skates and Sansing referred to the *Brown* decision by name, and described how it gave black students rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Their 1995 revision introduced the role of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the *Brown* case, an aspect ignored by most previous textbooks. *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995) continued this trend and even

⁵⁴ Bettersworth, *Mississippi Yesterday and Today* (1959), 484; McLemore, *The Mississippi Story* (1959), 258; Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 212-13.



White school (left) and black school (right) in Tishomingo County about 1935.

Equal Education

Table 4 shows that Mississippi's schools were not "separate but equal." Read the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Were these school systems constitutional? If not, what events and attitudes in our history can you remember that would allow this to happen? Can you relate these unequal schools to the white opposition to black education in slavery and Reconstruction years? to the 1890 Constitution?

Table 4. White Schools, Black Schools, 1940

Money spent per student	\$41.71	\$7.24
Length of school year	160 days	124 Days
Average college education of teachers	3.5 yrs.	1.5 yrs.
Teacher salaries	\$776	\$232

included a photograph of the victorious NAACP attorneys on the steps of the Supreme Court building.⁵⁵

One central civil rights incident in the state's history was James Meredith's integration of the University of Mississippi in 1962 and the violence that ensued. The language, attention given to the incident, and visual representations of the Ole Miss riot serve as the best methods to evaluate the changing views of the incident. Betterworth's *Mississippi Yesterday and Today* (1964) dedicated a short paragraph to the riot

⁵⁵ Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 250-53, 256-57; Sansing and Skates, *Mississippi History Through Four Centuries* (1987), 166-67; Sullivan and Sullivan, *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1994), 217, 225; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), 240-43; Parker, *Mississippi Studies* (1995), 166; Sansing, *Mississippi: Its People and Culture* (1981), 308; Skates and Sansing, *Mississippi: The Study of Our State* (1993), 232, 283-90; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 182-83.

and blamed the violence on both Meredith and the federal government. "A disturbance followed," he explained, "involving first marshals with tear gas and later federal troops with fixed bayonets." Betterworth compared the Ole Miss "disturbance" to the Civil War, reminding his readers that one hundred years beforehand, Union troops had been in Oxford. Since publication of this textbook came only two years after the Ole Miss riot, while the state was still in the midst of the civil rights movement, a short paragraph that victimized Mississippi rather than Meredith is understandable. His next edition, *Your Mississippi* (1975), however, surprisingly gave Ole Miss slightly *less* attention, and included a picture of five of Mississippi's governors, two of whom were adamant segregationists. The picture seemingly glorified the "great leaders" of Mississippi and applauded their actions. In the 1981 revision of *Your Mississippi*, Betterworth still downplayed the Ole Miss riot, but did provide the significant addition of a picture of James Meredith.⁵⁶

In juxtaposition to Betterworth's representations of Meredith and Ole Miss stand Loewen and Sallis's *Conflict and Change* and the similarly progressive histories that followed. As opposed to Betterworth's brief and impersonal accounts of the Ole Miss incident, Loewen and Sallis took nearly three pages to explain the events and significance of the riot. *Conflict and Change* provided a biographical sketch of Meredith as an Air Force veteran, therefore portraying him as an upright citizen instead of a "trouble making Negro." Their detailed account of the riot provided a better understanding of the tense atmosphere. Once the mob realized that Meredith was on campus, the "students began throwing gravel and lighted cigarettes at the marshals. Soon the crowd was pelting the marshals with rocks, bottles, and lengths of pipe. Nearby cars and trucks were overturned, smashed, and set on fire. Bullets began to whiz out of the night." This dramatic recounting of the riot continued, providing one of the most complete representations of the Ole Miss riot in this study, second only to Skates, Sansing, and Wells's *Discovering Mississippi* (1995).⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Betterworth, *Mississippi Yesterday and Today* (1964), 321; Betterworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975), 311-12; Betterworth, *Mississippi: The Land and the People* (1981), 300-301; Moore, *Two History Texts*, 8.

⁵⁷ Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 263-65; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), 245-48.

In addition, textbooks following the adoption of *Conflict of Change* shifted the blame for the riot from Meredith and the federal troops to Mississippi itself. Sullivan's *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1994) explained that Governor Ross Barnett, "who represented Mississippi's defiantly segregationist government, did not provide the leadership" that Mississippi needed. Sansing's 1981 textbook, as well as the three he co-wrote with Skates, all described how the mob of students and other Mississippians attacked the marshals and provoked the riot. *Mississippi Studies* (1995) gave an overview of the riot, but also showed the hardships Meredith faced while attending Ole Miss. "Though he was constantly harassed, threatened and ostracized by white students, and had to have continuous protection by federal marshals," the authors explained, "James Meredith graduated from the University of Mississippi in August 1963." This description made Meredith a brave man, a hero even, who fought adversity to achieve a goal, not the troublemaker of Betterworth's texts.⁵⁸

All of the Mississippi textbooks published since *Conflict and Change* discussed the events of the "long hot summer" of 1964, though in varying degrees of detail. Sansing and Skates described how Freedom Summer volunteers worked to teach blacks how to register to vote. They also addressed the southern white reaction to the Freedom Summer Projects, explaining that many white Mississippians saw northern college students as "outside agitators" in much the same way Mississippians had reacted to the carpetbaggers during Reconstruction." In response, Sansing and Skates explained that Mississippi saw resurgence in the Ku Klux Klan, and violence against civil rights workers increased, as

⁵⁸ Later textbooks also began recognizing the integration efforts at other universities, namely Clyde Kennard's 1958 attempt to enroll at Mississippi Southern College (now University of Southern Mississippi). These textbooks describe how Kennard was arrested for buying twenty-five dollars worth of stolen chicken feed and sentenced to seven years in jail, what Jesse McKee called "questionable charges." (Sansing and Skates, *Mississippi History Through Four Centuries* (1987), 167-68; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 185. Sullivan and Sullivan, *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1994), 225-27; Sansing, *Mississippi: Its People and Culture* (1981), 315-17; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), 246-48; Sansing and Skates, *Mississippi History Through Four Centuries* (1987), 168-70; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 186; Skates and Sansing, *Mississippi: The Study of Our State* (1993), 290; Parker, *Mississippi Studies* (1995), 182.

seen in the brutal murders of Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman.⁵⁹

Some Mississippi textbooks dealt with the murders of Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman directly and in depth, while others skirted the difficult issue of vigilante violence by white Mississippians. In his 1975 and 1981 textbooks, for example, John Bettersworth allotted only two sentences to the murders and did not refer to the victims by name. He simply stated that “three civil rights workers were murdered in Neshoba County. Their deaths added fuel to the flames of racial strife.” In his timeline of “events to remember,” Bettersworth also omitted Freedom Summer and the murders. In comparison, *Conflict and Change* described the murders in depth and recounted how this violence spread to other parts of the state. Loewen and Sallis, along with Skates and Sansing, gave the scope of white violence that summer, reporting the three murders, eighty beatings, thirty-five shootings, thirty bombed homes, thirty-five bombed churches, and more than one thousand arrests that mired the state in racial turmoil. The 1993 and 1995 editions of Skates and Sansing’s textbook included lengthy descriptions of the murders, along with pictures of the three victims, something repeated in Jesse McKee’s 1995 textbook that included the famous FBI poster of the three civil rights workers.⁶⁰

Racial violence was a pervading and constant theme in Mississippi during the civil rights movement. Because of the brutal nature of many racially motivated murders in Mississippi, and the negative publicity the state received as a result, this was one of the most underrepresented areas in Mississippi textbooks until the mid 1990s. Besides the murders of the three civil rights workers, the assassination of NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers received the most attention. In *Your Mississippi* (1975), Bettersworth explained that the state was “shocked” and that the

⁵⁹ Sansing, *Mississippi: Its People and Culture* (1981), 321-23; Sansing and Skates, *Mississippi History Through Four Centuries* (1987), 172; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), 248.

⁶⁰ Bettersworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975), cited in Moore, *Two History Texts*, 8; Betterworth, *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1981), 310, 359; Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 268-71; Sansing, *Mississippi: Its People and Culture* (1981), 321-23; Skates and Sansing, *Mississippi: The Study of Our State* (1993), 294-95; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), 248-49; Sansing and Skates, *Mississippi History Through Four Centuries* (1987), 172-73; Sullivan and Sullivan, *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1994), 228-29; Parker, *Mississippi Studies* (1995), 183-84; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 188-89.

courts unsuccessfully tried “a Mississippian” for the murder in 1964. In his 1981 edition, however, Betterworth took a step back and said that the state tried “one white person” for the murder. *Conflict and Change* described the murder and included a picture of Evers, but did not identify the sniper as either white or a Mississippian. Over time, the “murder” of Evers evolved into an “assassination” of the state’s greatest civil rights leader. In 1995, *Discovering Mississippi* finally identified Evers’s assassin as white supremacist Byron de la Beckwith. Two 1995 textbooks, *Mississippi Studies: Emergence of Modern Mississippi* and *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State*, both contained pictures of Beckwith.⁶¹

Even though the latter three textbooks seem superior to their predecessors because they identified Evers’s murderer, one must consider the whole story before judging prior publications too harshly. The fact was that Beckwith went free after the first two murder trials ended in hung juries. In 1994, thirty-one years after the murder, the state of Mississippi finally convicted Byron de la Beckwith of the crime. Books published before his ultimate conviction could not print Beckwith’s name or likeness in relation to the murder, for it would portray the man as guilty prior to his actual conviction. Once the court made a conclusive decision, the textbook authors quickly completed the story and provided some amount of closure to the thirty-year-old murder.⁶²

Other civil rights murders were also slow to appear in Mississippi textbooks. *Conflict and Change* (1974) included a section entitled “Violence Against Blacks,” where Loewen and Sallis discussed the murders of George Lee and Gus Courts, who helped register blacks to vote, as well as the lynching of Mack Parker, an accused rapist taken from his jail cell by a mob.⁶³ Mississippi’s most famous lynching, that of Emmett Till, received relatively little attention until the 1990s. Loewen

⁶¹ Betterworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975), 312-13; Betterworth, *Mississippi: The Land and the People* (1981), 310; Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 267-68; Sansing, *Mississippi: Its People and Culture* (1981), 322; Sansing and Skates, *Mississippi Through Four Centuries* (1987), 173; Skates and Sansing, *Mississippi: The Study of Our State* (1993), 293; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), 248; Parker, *Mississippi Studies* (1995), 183; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 187.

⁶² Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 267-68; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995), 248; Parker, *Mississippi Studies* (1995), 183; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 187.

⁶³ Parker, *Mississippi Studies* (1995) described all three of these murders. *Mississippi: The Portrait of an American State* (1995) included a description of the Mack Parker lynch-

and Sallis briefly mentioned Till in a sidebar, but surprisingly did not offer explanation. This is a strange omission given the narratives on Lee, Courts, and Parker. The Till lynching did not appear again until *Mississippi Studies* (1994) listed it in a simple civil rights timeline. After this point, only two textbooks included Till in their narrative of the civil rights struggle. *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995) provided the most in-depth account and included three images related to the Till case and a short description of the murder, explaining that it “painted a poor picture of Mississippi and its white citizens.” The gradual recognition of white violence against blacks during this period and the attention that these murders began to receive in textbooks was a telling sign of the progress in Mississippi’s internal conflict with its violent racial past.⁶⁴

The inclusion of prominent black civil rights personalities also revealed the progression of how Mississippi taught race in the classroom. Almost all earlier works, such as Betterworth’s publications, contained references and pictures of the great governors of Mississippi who fought integration throughout their terms in office, but they rarely recognized civil rights leaders. Names like Fannie Lou Hamer, Martin Luther King, Jr., Charles Evers, Stokely Carmichael, and countless others began to appear in mid 1970s publications. Fannie Lou Hamer received the most attention over time, with Sansing’s 1981 text calling her “one of the nation’s most admired and beloved civil rights activists.” As textbooks began to acknowledge the positive roles black leaders played in the movement, rather than portraying them as “troublemakers” or “outside agitators,” it revealed a state moving beyond the racism that marred its history to a more inclusive, multi-racial society.⁶⁵

ing, as well, but did not refer to it by name. (Parker, *Mississippi Studies* (1995), 172-73; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 185.)

⁶⁴ Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 257-58; Sullivan and Sullivan, *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1994), 218-221; Parker, *Mississippi Studies* (1995), 172-73; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 184-85.

⁶⁵ McLemore, *The Mississippi Story* (1959), 258-59; Betterworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975), 309-15; Betterworth, *Mississippi: The Land and the People* (1981), 306-09; Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 258-83; Sansing, *Mississippi: Its People and Culture* (1981), 315-18, 321-24; Sansing and Skates, *Mississippi History Through Four Centuries* (1987), 166-70, 172-74; Skates and Sansing, *Mississippi: The Study of Our State* (1993), 289-97; Sullivan and Sullivan, *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1994), 169, 225-28; Skates, Sansing, and Wells, *Discovering Mississippi* (1995),

While acceptance of the black role in history was important, Mississippi textbooks that acknowledged and accepted black culture and its contributions to the whole of Mississippi culture truly showed the extent of racial reconciliation. In its discussion of Mississippi culture, especially folklore, literature, and music, *Conflict and Change*, yet again, represented a shift away from one-sided history towards one that acknowledged the black place in society.⁶⁶ Textbooks acknowledged African influences in language, with words like *gumbo*, *okra*, and *jazz*, along with black contributions to literature, such as Richard Wright, author of *Black Boy* and *Native Son*. They also emphasized black contributions to music, especially spirituals, gospel, work songs, prison songs, country music, rock and roll, jazz, and the blues. This growing recognition of Mississippi culture that included both whites *and* blacks was just another indication of the progress in not only Mississippi textbooks, but in Mississippi itself.⁶⁷

Prior to the adoption of James Loewen and Charles Sallis's *Conflict and Change* in 1980, Mississippi students learned race through textbooks that skewed their history by presenting them with a "magnolia myth" of their past. By under-representing black history and championing the ideals of secession, redemption, and white supremacy, these textbooks held Mississippi back and contributed to the problems of racism and discrimination that pervaded the state. Slavery's twin legacies haunted Mississippi, including the social and economic inferiority instilled in blacks, and the cultural racism conferred upon whites. The textbooks used prior to 1980 only reinforced this and made it more difficult for the state to overcome its difficult racial past. When *Conflict and Change* directly challenged the accepted narrative of Mississippi history, the Textbook Review Committee promptly rejected it in favor of John Bettersworth's more traditional *Your Mississippi*. Bettersworth's textbooks

238, 243-51; Parker, *Mississippi Studies* (1995), 172-73, 181-85; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 183-91.

⁶⁶ Bettersworth's 1964 discussion of culture, for example, makes no mention of black contributions, even in its discussion of jazz. (Bettersworth, *Mississippi Yesterday and Today* (1964), 339-43.)

⁶⁷ Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 219-30; Sansing and Skates, *Mississippi History Through Four Centuries* (1987), 184-96; Sullivan and Sullivan, *Mississippi: The Land, The People* (1994), 231-247; McKee, *Mississippi: A Portrait of an American State* (1995), 236-37, 245-51, 270-72.

had safeguarded the preferred mythologized history since 1962, and Loewen and Sallis's 1974 textbook stood in stark contrast. Perhaps the rejection of *Conflict and Change* was to be expected only four years after forced integration took place in a state still licking its wounds from the civil rights movement, but the adoption process itself, along with the court case that finally forced the textbook's adoption, revealed the ongoing struggle over racial identity and historical memory.⁶⁸

Not only did Loewen and Sallis have difficulties getting *Conflict and Change* adopted for Mississippi schools, but they also had trouble getting it published in the first place. Eleven publishers rejected their manuscript before Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, finally accepted it.⁶⁹ None of the dissenting presses questioned the book's quality, but more the marketability. Trade presses would not publish a textbook, while textbook publishers would not touch a book "so unlikely to be adopted." They were understandably skeptical, because after all, the textbook committee had rejected an 815-page literary anthology simply because it contained a three-page essay by James Baldwin, a black novelist.⁷⁰ Pantheon had never published a textbook before, but believed that it was "a special case" and a "model of its kind" that they hoped "will inspire similar revisions of other state histories."⁷¹

After its release in 1974, *Conflict and Change* received excellent reviews and even won the Lillian Smith Award for the best southern nonfiction. The New Orleans *Times-Picayune* called it "splendidly written [and] handsomely illustrated ... It is like no other textbook used in America's schools today. It tells things ... like they were—and like they are." One scholarly review claimed that "it displays an informed scholarship and a sensitivity to the real meaning of cultural pluralism which critics of American history texts have demanded for over a decade." The *New York Times* called it "extraordinary ... a sensitive, skillfully writ-

⁶⁸ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 143.

⁶⁹ They took the book to eight textbook publishers and three trade presses.

⁷⁰ Some textbook publishers feared that the state would reject the book, and in turn, boycott their other textbooks.

⁷¹ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 9, 313; FitzGerald, *America Revised*, 29; Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 283, 318-19; "Suit to Win State Textbook Adoption—in Mississippi," *Publishers Weekly* (November 24, 1975): 18-19 (hereafter referred to as *PW*); "Integrated Texts on the Rise: Opposition in the South," *Library Journal* 90 (May 15, 1965): 41; Lerone Bennett, Jr., "Reading, 'Riting and Racism," *Ebony* 22 (March 1967): 137; "Mississippi: An Updated View," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), September 22, 1974.

ten book that maintains a positive conviction about history despite the dark deeds discussed.” Perhaps the best review came from the *Clarion Ledger* and *Jackson Daily News*, Mississippi’s largest daily newspapers, who said the book had “excellent balance and perspective.”⁷² “Page by page,” the review said, “the sorry side of Mississippi’s history unfolds.” The state’s civil rights history “is one of bitter white prejudice and opposition ... [but] as ugly as this chapter is to many Mississippians—black and white—today, [Loewen and Sallis] point out that ‘the conflict of the 1960s made possible the changes leading into the 1970s.’” In conclusion, the review called *Conflict and Change* “an excellent chronicle of two Mississippis—the violent, bitter Mississippi which refused to accept the black man as a human being, and the Mississippi which stirred the imaginations” of such famous Mississippians as William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, and Richard Wright. This lavishing praise did not impress the Textbook Review Committee, however, which rejected it for use in the Mississippi schools.⁷³

The Textbook Review Committee met in 1974, presented with only two proposals for adoption, Loewen and Sallis’s *Conflict and Change*, and Betterworth’s *Your Mississippi*. Betterworth’s previous texts had drawn considerable complaints from black teachers who argued that it treated blacks “as complacent darkies or as a problem to whites.” He submitted a new edition right before the deadline, which the *New York Times* called an “obvious political move,” with “the more ridiculous interpretations of black life slightly revised.” The textbook committee could have approved both textbooks and let individual school districts choose between them, but instead, they approved *Your Mississippi* and rejected *Conflict and Change*.⁷⁴

Furious with the decision, Loewen and Sallis, along with school districts, teachers, parents, and students who wanted to adopt the book,

⁷² The review was published in the joint Sunday edition, October 20, 1974, of the *Clarion Ledger* and *Jackson Daily News*.

⁷³ “Mississippi: An Updated View,” *Times-Picayune*, September 22, 1974; “Teaching Mississippi History,” *NYT*, October 10, 1975; Jimmie L. Franklin, review of *Mississippi: Conflict and Change*, by James W. Loewen and Charles Sallis, *Red River Valley Historical Review* (undated): 94-95 (Mississippi Department of Archives and History Subject File: Textbook Controversy)(hereafter referred to as MDAH SF); “Tougaloo, Millsaps Profs Pen New History of Mississippi,” *CL* and *JDN*, October 20, 1974.

⁷⁴ “Teaching Mississippi History,” *NYT*, October 10, 1975; Preliminary motion for *Loewen vs. Turnipseed*, in Salter Papers, M55-525, Box 1, Folder 13, WHS.

fought to overturn the committee's decision.⁷⁵ They first appealed to the state superintendent, who claimed that he had no control over the committee. In order for the Textbook Purchasing Board to buy the textbook, he explained, at least four of the committee members had to recommend it. He insisted that racial bias did not play a part in the decision, even though the committee's vote broke down along racial lines, with the two black members voting for the book, and the five white committee members against it. The authors and their supporters then went to Governor William L. Waller, a moderate, and asked that he review the decision, but he refused. With no appeal procedure, they secured legal counsel from the NAACP's Legal and Educational Defense fund and sued the members of the review committee who rejected the book, the Textbook Purchasing Board, Mississippi Superintendent of Education Garvin Johnston, and Governor Waller.⁷⁶

The suit *Loewen et al vs. Turnipseed et al* attacked the textbook decision on many different points. First, the fact that the board rejected *Conflict and Change* "without satisfactory cause or a fair hearing" violated due process and equal protection guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. They also attacked the textbook policies themselves, arguing that the state rejected *Conflict and Change* because of racial bias. The committee, they charged, consistently adopted texts that "minimize, ignore, [and] denigrate the role of blacks and other minorities in the history of the United States and of Mississippi," as well as "present historical events in a manner sympathetic to principles of racial segregation and

⁷⁵ In addition to authors James Loewen and Charles Sallis, the plaintiffs included Msgr. Paul V. Canonici, Director of Education Services at the Natchez-Jackson Diocese; Father Luke Mikschl, Pastor and Superintendent of the Holy Child Jesus Elementary and High School in Canton (along with one teacher and six black students at Holy Child Jesus School); the Jefferson County Board of Education, including the superintendent, assistant superintendent, two teachers, and two students of the Jefferson County school district; as well as one white student from Jackson's St. Andrews Episcopal Day School whose father was the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi. (Preliminary motion for *Loewen vs. Turnipseed*, in Salter Papers, M55-525, Box 1, Folder 13, WHS; "Textbook Authors Sue State Board," *Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, MS), November 6, 1975 (henceforth referred to as *CL*)).

⁷⁶ Preliminary motion for *Loewen vs. Turnipseed*, in Salter Papers, M55-525, Box 1, Folder 13, WHS; "Bias is Charged in Book Rejection," *NYT*, November 10, 1974; "Textbook Authors Sue State Board," *CL*, November 6, 1975; "Race Emphasis Reason for Rejection of Book," *CL*, September 6, 1979; "Suit to Win State Textbook Adoption—in Mississippi," *PW* (November 24, 1975): 18-19; "Mississippi Is Sued on History Books," *NYT*, November 9, 1975.

discrimination, black inferiority, and ‘white supremacy.’” This process, they argued, “is and has been an instrument of state propaganda to exclude controversial viewpoints, [and] operates as a state instrument of unconstitutional state censorship.” By rejecting *Conflict and Change*, the suit argued that the state “denie[d] the right of school-age children to a fully nondiscriminatory public school system.”⁷⁷

In order to prove that the committee should have adopted *Conflict and Change*, NAACP lawyer Mel Leventhal took Betterworth’s textbook to task, arguing that it attempted to maintain the white-dominated version of Mississippi by means of “omission, distortion, and falsification.”⁷⁸ Among the many shortcomings and complaints regarding *Your Mississippi*, Leventhal focused on the periods of slavery, Reconstruction, and civil rights. Regarding slavery, he pointed out that Betterworth devoted only four paragraphs to slave life, and those passages “minimize[d] the brutality of the system.” His Reconstruction chapter emphasized black corruption and marginalized the Klan to a sort of gentlemen’s club. For civil rights, Leventhal listed a host of complaints, including Betterworth’s refusal to recognize the significance of the *Brown* decision. In his list of “Events to Remember,” Betterworth recorded such events as the Great Delta flood, the organization of seemingly every public college in the state, and even the arrival of the boll weevil, but not even a mention of the 1954 Supreme Court decision. In addition, his narratives portrayed civil rights activists and the federal government as the problem of civil rights. One passage stated that “federal voting

⁷⁷ Preliminary motion for *Loewen vs. Turnipseed*, in Salter Papers, M55-525, Box 1, Folder 13, WHS; “Bias is Charged in Book Rejection,” *NYT*, November 10, 1974; “Mississippi Is Sued on History Books,” *NYT*, November 9, 1975; “Authors’ Suit Charges Racial Bias in History Textbook,” *JDN*, August 28, 1979; “Japanese Journalists Gather Data Here About Censorship of Textbooks,” *JDN*, undated (MDAH SF: Sallis, Charles); FitzGerald, *America Revised*, 29; “Suit to Win State Textbook Adoption—in Mississippi,” *PW* (November 24, 1975): 18-19; “Mississippi Textbook Dispute Revived,” *NYT*, March 29, 1981.

⁷⁸ The suit did not call for the removal of *Your Mississippi* but insisted that teachers have a choice. Public school districts who wanted to adopt the book, such as the predominantly black Jefferson County, could not afford the book on their own, and needed state monies only available for books on the state-approved list. Loewen declared: “it’s tragic that Mississippi children get a leftover segregationist text,” and had no alternatives. (“Bias is Charged in Book Rejection,” *NYT*, November 10, 1974; “Miss. Must Allow Textbook That Stresses Black Role,” *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), April 5, 1980; “Suit to Win State Textbook Adoption—in Mississippi,” *PW* (November 24, 1975): 18-19; “Teaching Mississippi History,” *NYT*, October 10, 1975; “A New View of Old Miss,” publication unknown, c. 1979 (MDAH SF: Textbook Controversy).

registrars moved into the state [in 1965] to help register black people to vote. Civil rights marches and boycotts followed." By implication, the federal registrars caused disturbances rather than guaranteeing civil rights denied by the state since Reconstruction.⁷⁹

Bettsworth's vague and scanty accounts of civil rights became more obvious when compared to Loewen and Sallis's text. While *Your Mississippi* stuck civil rights events into descriptions of Mississippi governors from 1946 to 1970, *Conflict and Change* provided a thirty-five-page analysis of the struggle for civil rights, complete with detailed sections that addressed almost every major event that touched Mississippi, such as "White Reaction to the Supreme Court Decision," "Violence Against Blacks," "White Views of the Movement," "Black Voting Is Cut," "Token Desegregation in the Public Schools," and many more. As Moore rightly pointed out, "students might receive a broader understanding of this era if they read only these subheadings than they would by reading *all* of Bettsworth's discussion of the period."⁸⁰ Leventhal also scrutinized Bettsworth's rosy summary of the period, where he concluded that "gradually Mississippians, black and white, found that they could get along together—as they always had." For many, Bettsworth white-washed or omitted too many events in order to make such a claim of "togetherness."⁸¹

The suit criticized many other aspects of Bettsworth's textbook in comparison to Loewen and Sallis's, but the use of the word "Mississippian" and images received considerable attention. According to the lawsuit, Bettsworth's references to "Mississippians" meant white Mississippians. The suit listed forty-seven instances of this, including his description of how "Mississippians took vigorous measures to resist" the *Brown* decision, and the Citizens' Council "[took] the Mississippi case to the nation." In both of these instances, Bettsworth clearly meant only white Mississippians. In addition, the case charged that Bettsworth's use of pictures discriminated against blacks by omission. In the entire book, *Your Mississippi* had only two photographs of blacks, Charles Evers and Leontyne Price, where *Conflict and Change*

⁷⁹ "Court Bars Rejection of Textbooks for Racial Reasons," *NYT*, April 5, 1980; "Mississippi Textbook Dispute Revived," *NYT*, March 29, 198; Moore, *Two History Texts*, 3, 8.

⁸⁰ Emphasis in original.

⁸¹ Bettsworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975), 315, quoted in Moore, *Two History Texts*, 3-12; "Authors' Suit Charges Racial Bias in History Textbook," *JDN*, August 28, 1979.

included twenty.⁸² Critics argued that a book claiming to be about “your Mississippi” should represent the whole state, but only two photographs of African Americans in a state with a large black population hardly accomplished that.⁸³

Even though the state insisted that race had not influenced the Textbook Review Committee’s decision, the testimonies of committee members quickly revealed otherwise.⁸⁴ On the stand, committee members admitted that they rejected the book because it was “too racially oriented” and had “too much black history.” One defendant complained that the book spent seventy-five to eighty percent on racial strife, and gave “misleading” coverage of “isolated incidents” like slave abuse, lynchings, and racism. Two teachers from the board agreed that the book overemphasized racial unrest and preferred to leave much of past unpleasantness in the past. “I feel like we can mention the bad, but why belabor it? ... I don’t see why [students] need to know how many lynchings there were when so many good things have happened in our state.”⁸⁵

While the suit criticized Betterworth’s omission of pictures of African Americans, it was Loewen and Sallis’s inclusion of certain pictures that led to its rejection. John Turnipseed testified that the book was “unsuitable for classroom use” for many different reasons, but specifically pointed to some of the pictures. The most controversial picture was a grainy photograph of a lynching that showed whites posing for the camera around a burning black body. Turnipseed explained that discussing racial issues like lynching “would be embarrassing,” and he thought that it would make it hard for a “white lady teacher” to con-

⁸² This broke down to roughly five percent of Betterworth’s book and twenty-six percent of Loewen and Sallis’s. (“Authors’ Suit Charges Racial Bias in History Textbook,” *JDN*, August 28, 1979.)

⁸³ “Court Bars Rejection of Textbooks for Racial Reasons,” *NYT*, April 5, 1980; Betterworth, *Your Mississippi* (1975), quoted in Moore, *Two History Texts*, 8, 10-11; “Mississippi Textbook Dispute Revived,” *NYT*, March 29, 1981; “Authors’ Suit Charges Racial Bias in History Textbook,” *JDN*, August 28, 1979.

⁸⁴ At first, the defendants testified that they rejected the book because it did not have a teacher’s edition and failed to provide summaries and reviews at the end of each chapter. On cross-examination, however, John Turnipseed admitted that Random House told him that a teacher’s edition would be available. (“Textbook Bias Ruling Delayed,” *CL*, September 7, 1979.)

⁸⁵ “Textbook Bias Ruling Delayed,” *CL*, September 7, 1979; “Judge Rules State Was Biased in Rejecting Textbook,” *CL*, April 3, 1980; “Race Emphasis Reason for Rejection of Book,” *CL*, September 6, 1979.

trol a “predominantly black class.” Judge Orma Smith asked, “Didn’t lynchings happen in Mississippi?” Turnipseed replied, “Yes, but it was all so long ago, why dwell on it now?,” to which the judge replied: “It’s a history book isn’t it?”⁸⁶



In addition to the lynching photograph, Turnipseed and other defendants took issue with two additional photographs that documented the struggle for civil rights. Author Joseph Moreau called *Conflict and Change*’s photographs “the most remarkable aspect of the book,” but others found the images troublesome. Turnipseed claimed that, “quite simply, I felt the book harps on the black vs. white issue,” and pointed to the Pulitzer Prize–winning photograph of James Meredith lying in the middle of the road after a sniper’s bullet caught him in the leg. The committee took issue with another photograph that showed a white police officer wrenching an American flag from the hand of a young black protestor, while a nearby officer clutched a confiscated sign that read

⁸⁶ Loewen and Sallis, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), 178-79, 274, 281; Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 169, 313; Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 318-19; “Teaching Mississippi History,” *NYT*, October 10, 1975; “Authors’ Suit Charges Racial Bias in History Textbook,” *JDN*, August 28, 1979; “Mississippi is Sued on History Books,” *NYT*, November 9, 1975; “Court Bars Rejection of Textbooks for Racial Reasons,” *NYT*, April 5, 1980; “Textbook Bias Ruling Delayed,” *CL*, September 7, 1979.

“No More Police Brutality.” The caption read “police harassing a young protestor.” Loewen credited these three pictures as the main reason for the textbook’s rejection. Mississippi whites were not ready for their children to see pictures that cast such a dark shadow on their past.⁸⁷

The U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in April 1980, ordering the state to place *Conflict and Change* on their approved list. The court ruled that the board had no “justifiable” reason to reject the book and found that the review process “tended to perpetuate some of the segregationist ideas of the past.” Many considered this a significant First and Fourteenth Amendment case that solidified “the right to read freely.” The state of Mississippi, from Ross Barnett to the Textbook Review Committee, had consciously safeguarded the white supremacist version of history and censored any text that challenged long-held beliefs. By forcing the approval of a revisionist textbook that countered this narrative, however, the court broke this trend and gave Mississippi schools access to an alternative to Betterworth. *Conflict and Change* and the court case that put it in the schools were turning points for Mississippi education, because they finally broke down the “magnolia curtain” that had separated the state from its true past. Journalist Bill Minor wrote that Mississippi had “outlived the times when blacks could be extracted from educational contact with whites,” but then had to change the textbooks that “dealt with blacks as non-persons.” Many Mississippi school districts wanted a more balanced textbook like *Conflict and Change*, and one year after the court battle ended, twenty-one of the state’s one hundred fifty school districts used the textbook.⁸⁸ In the years that followed, Mississippi history textbooks improved dramatically, partially due to the shifts in

⁸⁷ Loewen and Sallis, *Conflict and Change*, 178-79, 274, 281; “Textbook Bias Ruling Delayed,” *CL*, September 7, 1979; “Judge Rules State Was Biased in Rejecting Textbook,” *CL*, April 3, 1980; Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 318-19.

⁸⁸ There were reports that some school districts threatened teachers and principals with dismissal if they tried to adopt the book, and many believed that, despite the court battle, *Conflict and Change* would never reach Mississippi students. (Jim Loewen to John Salter, July 20, 1980, in Salter Papers, M55-525, Box 1, Folder 6, WHS; “Mississippi Textbook Dispute Revived,” *NYT*, March 29, 1981; “Embattled History Textbook Finally OK’d,” *CL*, December 18, 1980; “Time Will Tell If Book Reaches Students,” *CL*, April 4, 1980.)

the historiography, but also because of the new expectation that they reflect all of Mississippi, not just whites.⁸⁹

During the 1970s and 1980s, Mississippi underwent significant changes. After forced integration in 1970, the state took time to adjust to the sudden change. Race relations improved somewhat, and many began to see a "New Mississippi" emerging. Charles Sallis saw this new state identity and was "shocked and dismayed" by the rejection of his textbook. "I saw integration working," he said. "People were ready for it. Obviously the bureaucracy wasn't." The state continued to change, however, and for the better. In 1980, the same year the U.S. District Court forced the adoption of *Conflict and Change*, Mississippi inaugurated a new governor, William Winter. During his term in office, Winter worked tirelessly to improve the public schools and race relations. His most significant accomplishment was passage of the Education Reform Act of 1982, which reinstated compulsory education abolished after the *Brown* decision, reorganized the State Department of Education, improved teacher certification requirements, and created public kindergartens.⁹⁰

Winter's efforts put the state of Mississippi on a new course. The state continues making significant strides to improve the curriculum into the twenty-first century, as seen in a 2006 law that mandated civil rights education in the public schools and the creation of the Mississippi Civil Rights Education Commission.⁹¹ James Loewen and Charles Sallis helped this process of racial reconciliation and education. They knew that Mississippians needed to understand their past, however dark and disturbing, in order for whites to move beyond old prejudices and feelings of superiority, and for blacks to find an equal place in society. Their forward-looking *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* showed the promise of

⁸⁹ "Judge Rules State Was Biased in Rejecting Textbook," *CL*, April 3, 1980; Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 313; "A New View of Old Miss," publication unknown, c. 1979 (MDAH SF: Textbook Controversy); "Textbook Battle: Civil War vs. Civil Rights," editorial, *CR*, September 6, 1979; "Japanese Journalists Gather Data Here About Censorship of Textbooks," *JDN*, undated (MDAH SF: Sallis, Charles).

⁹⁰ "Japanese Journalists Gather Data Here About Censorship of Textbooks," *JDN*, undated (MDAH SF: Sallis, Charles); Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All*, 217; "Liberating Our Past," *Southern Exposure* 12:6 (Nov/Dec 1984): 2.

⁹¹ According to the Mississippi Department of Education, the three-year process of adding civil rights education "is nearly complete," and the new curriculum will go into effect in 2010. "News Release: Mississippi Public Schools Add Civil Rights Education to Curriculum," The Mississippi Department of Education, <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/Extrel/News/2009/09CivilRightsEd.html>.

an inclusive multi-racial society. As evidenced in this study, Mississippi students who learned race through their textbooks before 1980 learned white superiority and black inferiority, but this began to change with *Conflict and Change*. Joseph Moreau explained that “somewhere in the 1960s, American history lost its way. At least the teaching of it did.” In Mississippi, however, James Silver wrote that “the recorded history of Mississippi has changed more slowly than the state.” Mississippi history had lost its way long before the 1960s, but it took until 1980 for it to find its way and set its history “free at last.”⁹²

⁹² Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation*, 1; James W. Silver, “History Changes More Slowly Than State,” *Delta Democrat-Times*, August 3, 1975; Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All*, 217; “Liberating Our Past,” *Southern Exposure* 12:6 (Nov/Dec 1984): 2.