

## How did the White Citizens' Councils legitimize their campaign against desegregation in the Deep South from 1954-1965?

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The 1950s and 1960s in America are remembered historically as a period which saw dramatic changes in the race relations of that Nation. Many historians since, have paid considerable attention to the civil rights movement, which was uniquely organized and fluid in nature, whilst its opposition – the segregationists – have generally been portrayed as monolithic, one dimensional and unintelligent.<sup>1</sup> It has only been in recent years that historians have begun to examine the Southern white resistance movements and discovered just how complex they were. Between 1954 and 1965, these resistance movements were at their prime, standing firm against desegregation, with significant followings of likeminded white Southerners. No resistance movement was quite as prominent in the late 1950s, as the Citizens' Councils, which were created in protest of the 17 May 1954 United States Supreme Court decision to overturn the notion of "separate but equal" in the *Brown v Board of Education* trial.<sup>2</sup> The popularity of this organization can only be understood in the context of the 'Southern Way of Life', which had been built on white supremacy and segregation since the Civil War. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr, the greatest obstacle faced by the civil rights movement was not the violence of white bigots, "but the white moderate who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice."<sup>3</sup> In order to gain the popularity they enjoyed, it was necessary for the Citizens' Councils to legitimize their ideology and campaign. They needed to differentiate themselves from the violence of other well-known segregationist organizations, and prove they were not only helping the Southern people, but also benefiting the Nation. They were able to achieve this justification between 1954-1965

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<sup>1</sup> George Lewis, *Massive Resistance: The White Response to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Hodder Education, 2006), p.4.

<sup>2</sup> Waldo E. Martin Jr., *Brown v. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 1998, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> Dr Martin Luther King Jr quoted in Timothy B. Tyson, "Dynamite and the 'Silent South': A Story from the Second Reconstruction in South Carolina," in *Jumpin' Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights*, ed. Jane Dailey, Glenda E. Gilmore and Bryant Simon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p.275.

through the creation of an image of respectability and legality, combined with the utilization of a newspaper entitled *The Citizens' Council*, which enabled them to spread their message of white supremacy and the sanctity of States' rights, while also allowing them to undermine any opposition.

Unlike the civil rights movement, many historians believe the white resistance movements required a specific event to spark the interest and concern of the Southern population.<sup>4</sup> The event that was the catalyst for not only interest, but also the creation of the Citizens' Councils themselves, was found in the *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, Briggs v Elliott, Davis v County School Board of Prince Edward County, Belton v Gebhart* and *Bolling v Sharpe* cases which were argued collectively in the Supreme Court as *Brown v Board of Education* in the early 1950s.<sup>5</sup> The final court declaration was to overturn the 1896 decision in the *Plessy v Ferguson* case, which upheld all Jim Crow laws through the notion of "separate but equal,"<sup>6</sup> and ordered all states to start a process of school desegregation to ensure equality. Considering world events that occurred during this time, such as the end of the Second World War and the start of the Cold War, which led to a "worldwide re-evaluation of human rights,"<sup>7</sup> it is unsurprising the Court ruled in such a way. In this context, Jim Crow laws appeared to be anachronistic, as slavery had been abolished a century before.<sup>8</sup> On top of this, anthropological and biological advancements began to disprove the 'popular theory' that African Americans were an inferior race.<sup>9</sup> Although the traditional basis for segregation was disappearing, white southerners were not prepared to sit idly and watch changes to their way of life occur.<sup>10</sup>

Evidence of the Deep Southern States' reluctance to allow any change to their 'Southern Way of Life' can be seen in the immediate responses of State politicians to the Court's decision. Thomas Stanley, the Governor of Virginia at the time of the Court decision, exemplified the Southern sentiment when he stated – "I shall use every legal means at my

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis, *Massive Resistance*, p.4.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Jr., *Brown v. Board of Education*, p.27.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>7</sup> Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950s 1969* (Clinton, Massachusetts: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), p.4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

command to continue segregated schools in Virginia.”<sup>11</sup> Marvin Griffin, Governor of Georgia, was in agreement with Stanley when he proclaimed, “come hell or high water, races will not be mixed in Georgia’s schools.”<sup>12</sup> In Mississippi, Governor Hugh L. White declared there was a “universal resolution not to abide by such an unreasonable decision,”<sup>13</sup> whilst Senator James O. Eastland was recorded stating “you are not required to obey any court which passes out such a ruling. In fact you are obligated to defy it.”<sup>14</sup> The Southern Manifesto of March 12, 1956, claimed that the decision to force desegregation on the Southern States was “destroying the amicable relations between the white and Negro.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, it appears that the same sentiment was felt by the general public, with findings from a poll conducted in 1956 by The American Institute of Public Opinion of the Deep South – Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and South Carolina – that 9 out of 10 white people disapproved of school desegregation.<sup>16</sup> Most importantly, in the wake of this decision was the call to arms by Virginian Senator Harry Flood Byrd. Byrd was the first person to coin the term ‘massive resistance’, a term which came to define the white resistance movement, when he stated:

“If we can organize the Southern states for massive resistance to this order, I think that in time the rest of the country will realize that racial integration is not going to be accepted in the South.”<sup>17</sup>

This idea of massive resistance was important in the months that followed, as it paved the way for the rise of the most prominent white resistance movement in the late 1950s, the Citizens’ Councils.

The first Citizens’ Council was founded in July 1954 by plantation manager Robert B. Patterson and around a dozen other likeminded men. They were impelled to act after hearing Judge Tom P. Brady’s ‘Black Monday’ speech and later publication, which urged

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Stanley quoted in Michael Perman, *Pursuit of Unity: A Political History of America’s South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p.276.

<sup>12</sup> Marvin Griffin quoted in Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens’ Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64 1971* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1971), p.9.

<sup>13</sup> Hugh L. White quoted in McMillen, *The Citizens’ Council*, p.15.

<sup>14</sup> Senator James O. Eastland quoted in Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan: History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America’s Most Notorious Secret Society*, (North Carolina: McFarland and Company Inc Publishers, 1951), p.22.

<sup>15</sup> The Southern Manifesto quoted in Martin Jr., *Brown v. Board of Education*, p.220.

<sup>16</sup> Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, p.13-14.

<sup>17</sup> Harry Flood Byrd quoted in Lewis, *Massive Resistance*, p.2.

Southerners, particularly Mississippians, to act against the *Brown* decision.<sup>18</sup> They “sought to put society back together in its accustomed pattern,”<sup>19</sup> and believed it their duty to rally support in the South in order to present their case to the Nation.<sup>20</sup> The Councils fed on long-developing racial fears and frustrations, and aimed to counter the threat to the ‘Southern Way of Life’ and re-establish “Southern” values.<sup>21</sup> The Councils were seen as the ‘respectable’ wing of resistance<sup>22</sup> and appealed to the middle class.<sup>23</sup> The popularity of the Councils can be seen in the speed with which they expanded across the South, as well as their incredible membership growth over such a short period of time. In Mississippi, by September 1954 there were already 17 counties with Citizens’ Councils.<sup>24</sup> By the end of 1954, the movement had also spread to Alabama, and from there continued to expand through other Southern states.<sup>25</sup> An article published in 1955 stated that the rapid growth was “proof of the movement’s popularity”<sup>26</sup> and this statement was correct as membership numbers reached 250,000 within a year.<sup>27</sup> In a few short years, the popularity of the Councils had grown to the point that they were claiming governors, congressmen, judges, physicians and lawyers amongst their members.<sup>28</sup>

One of the most significant ways in which the Councils conveyed their message and aims to both the white and black populations in the Southern and Northern States was through their monthly newspaper entitled *The Citizens’ Council*, which was first published in October 1955. In the first issue, the Council outlined the newspaper’s purpose:

“‘The Citizens’ Council’ is simply designed to serve a useful purpose, to provide a means of exchanging authoritative information among the responsible movements throughout the South, and to present, at least in a small way, something of the

<sup>18</sup> McMillen, *The Citizens’ Council*, p.17.

<sup>19</sup> Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, p.237.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Patterson quoted in McMillen, *The Citizens’ Council*, p.34.

<sup>21</sup> Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, p.83.

<sup>22</sup> McMillen, *The Citizens’ Council*, p.vii.

<sup>23</sup> Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, p.104.

<sup>24</sup> McMillen, *The Citizens’ Council*, p.16.

<sup>25</sup> W. Stein, “The White Citizens’ Councils,” *The Negro History Bulletin* 20 (1956): p.21.

<sup>26</sup> T. R. Waring, “Private Citizens Formed Citizens’ Council,” *The Citizens’ Council*, November 1955, p.1.

<sup>27</sup> Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, p.84.

<sup>28</sup> McMillen, *The Citizens’ Council*, p.11.

Southern viewpoint to our friends, and to some not so friendly, in the North and West.”<sup>29</sup>

The articles that appeared in each monthly edition supported the aims of this extract as they provided Council viewpoints such as the fear of integration, which they combined with other fears such as Communism and inter-racial relations. As well as this, they continually professed their respectability whilst defending their views from opposition journalists in the North. Articles cropped up on the ideal ‘Southern Way of Life’ they were fighting to protect, and would usually include some form of religious rhetoric. Through the medium of this newspaper, the Citizens’ Councils were able to spread their message throughout the South and legitimize their standing on segregation, which was necessary to ensure continued popularity and support.

One of the key ways in which the Citizens’ Councils legitimized themselves as a reputable organization was by creating an image of respectability and disassociating themselves, in the words of Judge Tom P. Brady, from the “nefarious Ku Klux Klans.”<sup>30</sup> In the first edition of *The Citizens’ Council*, they included articles such as one by Thomas Waring, who stated that the Councils were, “sound and decent, and loaded with power for good.”<sup>31</sup> They saw themselves as “a peaceable and law-abiding organization, pledged to defend ‘the Southern way of life’ by all legal means.”<sup>32</sup> Due to the nature of the organization, however, they forever had to defend themselves against critics who saw them as “white-collar Klans.”<sup>33</sup> In an article published in 1956, the author compared the Councils with the Klan organizations of Reconstruction and First World War times, however he also recognised the Councils’ “almost self-conscious desire for respectability” and that they “shunned both the Klans’ reputation for violence, and their haberdashery.”<sup>34</sup> Instead of violence, the Councils turned to other methods of creating fear in all those who would oppose them. Some of the strategies the Councils used were to boycott black business owners, publish the names of

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<sup>29</sup> “To All Citizens’ Council Members,” *The Citizens’ Council*, October 1955, p.1.

<sup>30</sup> Judge Tom P. Brady quoted in Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan*, p. 22.

<sup>31</sup> T.R. Waring, “Mississippi Citizens’ Councils are Protecting Both Races,” *The Citizens’ Council*, October 1955, p.1.

<sup>32</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan*, p.170.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>34</sup> D. Halberstam, “The White Citizens Councils: Respectable Means for Unrespectable Ends,” 22 (1956): p.294.

petition signers in newspapers,<sup>35</sup> dismiss 'radical' blacks from their jobs and foreclose on mortgages.<sup>36</sup> Reid Walles, a lawyer and Alabama Citizens' Council member highlighted the success of these measures when he stated the boycotts and other pressures were "damn effective" and that there were "few politicians who don't go along with us."<sup>37</sup>

In order to maintain the respectable image they desired, there were times when the governing body of the Councils – The Association of Citizens' Councils – had to intervene. One such instance was with regard to Ace Carter, the leader of the North Alabama Citizens' Council. Carter had split with the other Alabama Citizens' Council leader, Sam Englehardt, over ideological differences in early 1956. Carter wanted to use violence, would not admit Jews to his Council and had connections with the Klan in Alabama.<sup>38</sup> The Association of Citizens' Councils eventually interceded after Carter and other Council/Klan members assaulted singer Nat 'King' Cole in 1956 by separating Council beliefs from his personal beliefs, and emphasizing their support for Englehardt.<sup>39</sup> On another occasion, the assassination of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) Field Secretary Medgar Evers by known Council and Klan member Byron De La Beckwith, the intervention was via a legal fund set up by the Council in Jackson.<sup>40</sup> The fund, together with significant support, ensured he was not found guilty in court, so could not implicate the organization further.<sup>41</sup> Other than these few instances, it was evident that resistance in the South to desegregation was predominantly taking "more respectable channels...the Klan tending to be less of a resistance than a status movement."<sup>42</sup> As well as this, the Councils held so much control throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s that there was rarely a need for the Klan.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> K.T. Andrews, "Movement-Countermovement Dynamics and the Emergence of New Institutions: The Case of 'White Flight' Schools in Mississippi," 80 (2002): p.921.

<sup>36</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan*, p.170.

<sup>37</sup> Reid Walles quoted in Halberstam, "The White Citizens Councils," p.298.

<sup>38</sup> J.B. Martin, "The Deep South Says Never," *The Saturday Evening Post*, (1957): p.54.

<sup>39</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan*, p.280.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan, 1865-1965*, (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc, 1965), p.6.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.369.

According to Ulrich B. Phillips, “race relations are a central theme of Southern history.”<sup>44</sup> This idea is extremely important when examining how the Citizens’ Councils were able to so successfully attain popular support of their campaign. In order to understand the history of the South, it becomes necessary to examine the importance of race and white supremacy which supported the ‘Southern Way of Life’. One of the main reasons the white Southerners so readily clung to their ‘Southern Way of Life’ was because it was their identity, created through a collective memory, together with the knowledge they were superior.<sup>45</sup> This tradition was treated as if it were a distinct civilization from the rest of the nation<sup>46</sup> and white supremacy was so pervasive in it that it ensured its entrenchment in all aspects of Southern life.<sup>47</sup> George Lewis wrote that “white supremacy was clearly a central pillar around which their past had been constructed.”<sup>48</sup> Superiority was what the white Southerners were familiar and comfortable with, as it had been ingrained into them for generations. In the June 1957 edition of *The Citizens’ Council* an article proclaimed that “the Southern Way of Life has been built on segregation since the [Civil] War.”<sup>49</sup> In the confusion of the Second World War and the Cold War, it is not surprising that they yearned for the certainty of their roles and positions in society.<sup>50</sup> Crucial to the ‘Southern Way of Life’ were the Jim Crow laws which enabled the white elites to avoid any possibility of political, economic or social power being given to the Negroes.<sup>51</sup> The *Brown* decision was a direct threat to these laws and this frightened many as they began to realise their traditional way of life was at risk.

What is interesting is how the politicians and Council leaders were able to highlight the idea that the African Americans also enjoyed this ‘Southern Way of Life’ based on the supremacy of one race over another. An example of this can be seen in a speech James O. Eastland made in 1954 – “Segregation is not discrimination. Segregation promotes racial

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<sup>44</sup> Ulrich B Phillips quoted in Dailey et al., *Jumpin’ Jim Crow*, p.3.

<sup>45</sup> W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “White Women and the Politics of Historical Memory in the New South, 1880-1920,” in *Jumpin’ Jim Crow*, p.116.

<sup>46</sup> Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, p.241.

<sup>47</sup> Lewis, *Massive Resistance*, p.16.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>49</sup> “A Manual for Southerners,” *The Citizens’ Council*, June 1957, p.2.

<sup>50</sup> Lewis, *Massive Resistance*, p.13.

<sup>51</sup> Dailey et al., *Jumpin’ Jim Crow*, p.4.

harmony...there is no racial hatred in the South. The Negro race is not an oppressed race.”<sup>52</sup> As well as this, Bryant Simon writes that when an African American tipped his hat or moved off the footpath for a white man, these gestures were read as “clear windows into their collective psyche...They convinced themselves that African Americans accepted, even liked, segregation, Jim Crow, and disfranchisement.”<sup>53</sup> Concern for the preservation of the ‘Southern Way of Life’ can be seen through a study of white perceptions to Negroes in Guildford County, North Carolina conducted in 1958 by Melvin M. Tumin. This study found that the majority of white people interviewed saw Negroes as an inferior race, with more than 75% of those interviewed favouring segregated schools.<sup>54</sup>

Central to the ‘Southern Way of Life’ was Southern religion. In the 1960s, almost 90% of all white Southerners called themselves Protestant.<sup>55</sup> Evidence of the importance of religion to Southerners can be seen in every edition of *The Citizens’ Council* as religious propaganda appears on most pages of the publications. In the April 1957 edition, one article states “God made different races and put them in different lands. He knew that races must live apart so they won’t mix.”<sup>56</sup> Another article detailed statistics of child illegitimacy which proved in the editor’s eyes that the institution of marriage was being made a mockery of, and that school integration would affect the moral standards of white children.<sup>57</sup> This sentiment also appeared in Council pamphlets which were circulated widely:

“The white men built America for you. White men built America so they could make the rules...The White man has always been kind to the Negro. We do not believe that God wants us to live together. The Negro has his own part of town to live in. This is called our Southern Way of Life.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> James O. Eastland quoted in Maryanne Vollers, *Ghosts of Mississippi: The Murder of Medgar Evers, the Trials of Byron De La Beckwith, and the Haunting of the New South* (Canada: Little, Brown & Company (Canada) Limited, 1995), p.49.

<sup>53</sup> Bryant Simon, “Race Reactions: African American Organizing, Liberalism, and White Working-Class Politics in Postwar South Carolina,” in *Jumpin’ Jim Crow*, p.240.

<sup>54</sup> Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, p.13.

<sup>55</sup> Numan V. Bartley, *The New South: 1945-1980*, (USA: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), p.272.

<sup>56</sup> “A Manual for Southerners,” *The Citizens’ Council*, April 1957, p.2.

<sup>57</sup> “The Truth is Painful,” *The Citizens’ Council*, February 1956, p.2.

<sup>58</sup> Council Pamphlet in Lewis, *Massive Resistance*, p.10-11.



The repetition of these ideas in all forms of Council propaganda, including references to biblical stories such as the Curse of Ham and the Tower of Babel,<sup>59</sup> highlights the importance they give to religion being a justification for segregation. Furthermore, many of the religious leaders in the Southern States were either opposed to the civil rights movement, or avoided the topic completely, thereby doing “little...to advance social justice for African Americans.”<sup>60</sup> The Councils encouraged lay members to “coerce conformity on the part of their ministers”<sup>61</sup> as they saw the Church as a significant threat to their campaign. Lewis highlights an interesting point on this idea when he argues that it was the congregants rather than the religious leaders who were more willing to push the segregationist agenda, and it was therefore these people who continued to aid the Councils in justifying their position.<sup>62</sup>

The Citizens’ Councils not only justified their ideology through links to the ‘Southern Way of Life’ and religion, they also employed numerous scare tactics to encourage membership and popularise their campaign. One particular scare tactic used to encourage white Southerners to stand against desegregation was a ‘false’ recording that was created by the Association of Citizens’ Councils of Mississippi of an address given to an NAACP audience by Professor Roosevelt Williams. This recording supposedly showed the ‘real’ motives behind the NAACP’s campaign for equality being the prospect for inter-racial sexual relations.<sup>63</sup> In creating this false recording, the Council “sought to exploit the white community’s darkest fears about racial co-mingling.”<sup>64</sup> The fear of inter-racial marriage was at the forefront of many segregationists minds during this period. Numerous articles appearing in *The Citizens’ Council* pointed to the desegregation of schools as being responsible in the future for the abomination of mixed marriage, as Southern belles were forced to associate with huge Negro boys.<sup>65</sup> This idea can be seen in a statement made by Reid Walles - “I’ll tell you what

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<sup>59</sup> Lewis, *Massive Resistance*, p.76.

<sup>60</sup> C.J. Evans, “White Evangelical Protestant Responses to the Civil Rights Movement,” 102 (2009): p.247.

<sup>61</sup> Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, p.299.

<sup>62</sup> Lewis, *Massive Resistance*, p.77.

<sup>63</sup> McMillen, *White Citizens’ Council and Resistance to School Desegregation in Arkansas 1971*, p.98.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.104.

<sup>65</sup> “Who Has God’s Word On Integration?,” *The Citizens’ Council*, April 1956, p.1.

they want. They want intermarriage, and mixed social groups, white girls going off to dances with some big black buck and dancing to jungle music with him.”<sup>66</sup>

The derogatory and undermining nature of this quote shows that the belief was that not only were the Negroes inferior, but that they were the result of a less complete evolutionary process which made the possibility of inter-racial marriage frightening.<sup>67</sup> The Councils used this fear to project their belief that segregation was necessary to protect the “sanctity of white blood and Anglo-Saxon civilization.”<sup>68</sup>

In the context of the Cold War, it is understandable that the American population was prone to paranoia when it came to communism and the idea that communists were plotting to ‘undermine American society.’ The Citizens’ Council were able to take advantage of the fear surrounding this phenomenon by attempting to equate communism and the NAACP with school desegregation and the ‘mongrelisation’ of society.<sup>69</sup> In Arkansas, one Council leader spoke to audiences about there being “active Communist cells in your own community”<sup>70</sup> which sparked a huge amount of fear. In one editorial, segregation is legitimized by linking Communism with integration:

“So the integrationist would break down all racial barriers and merge all classes and nationalities and races into one huge mass of humanity. This is what the Communists have been attempting to do for almost half a century.”<sup>71</sup>

Another article entitled ‘Then the Reds Will Take Over’ stated that:

“Every day, more and more, the people of the nation, inside and outside of the Southland, are becoming to view the NAACP in its true light, as a Communist infiltrated organization...the aim now of the NAACP is the fusing of Negro blood into white veins. When that happens, Communism can step in and take over.”<sup>72</sup>

Communism was a National issue, and by associating the NAACP and other desegregation organizations with it, the Citizens’ Councils were able to transform a Southern sectional

<sup>66</sup> Reid Walles quoted in Halberstam, “The White Citizens Councils,” p.299.

<sup>67</sup> Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, p.238.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> N.R. McMillen, “White Citizens' Council and Resistance to School Desegregation in Arkansas,” 30 (1971): p.111-112.

<sup>70</sup> James Johnson quoted in McMillen, “White Citizens' Council and Resistance,” p.112.

<sup>71</sup> D.M. Nelson, “Conflicting Views on Segregation,” *The Citizens’ Council*, October 1955, p.4.

<sup>72</sup> “Then Reds Will Take Over,” *The Citizens’ Council*, April 1956, p.2.

problem into a problem of America's national security.<sup>73</sup> The Councils realised correctly that to ensure any long-term success, they needed to make some progress into Northern public opinion.<sup>74</sup> They applied communist rhetoric to the Supreme Court who they claimed was staffed by "communists, red sympathizers and parlour pinks."<sup>75</sup> Communists were seen to advocate for 'international brotherhood' and so it was easy for segregationists to then link this with racial equality.<sup>76</sup> The Councils needed to find an explanation for the dramatic changes that were taking place, particularly in Southern society with regard to race, and the context of the Cold War gave them just such an explanation they could use.

Inter-racial relations and communism were fears which were seen as legitimate by many Southerners, and yet the Citizens' Councils continued to justify their position on segregation through other means as well. They would undermine African Americans through articles on the prominence of venereal disease in States that have implemented integration.<sup>77</sup> Also, in another article, the NAACP are portrayed as 'savages'. *The Citizens' Council* linked the NAACP with primitive savages from the Congo in an article on the funeral of Emmett Till because the family chose to have his casket open in order to show attendees exactly how horrifically he was treated by 'Southern hospitality' during his vacation to Mississippi.<sup>78</sup> This not only undermined the organization and downplayed the brutality of the murder; it once again showed the African American's to be inferior.

This inferiority can also be seen in many other articles regarding school desegregation. One article from January 1956 argued that integration would leave lasting psychiatric damage to Negro children due to their poorer performance levels in comparison to white students.<sup>79</sup> In the same edition, there was also included an article on the state of schools in Washington DC which had already undergone integration. The article stated that there was a "definite lowering of standards in the integrated schools" and that "white children are being pulled

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<sup>73</sup> Lewis, *Massive Resistance*, p.73.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> "Disease, Prison Records Reflect Lapse in Morals Poses Real Threat to the Welfare of our Nation," *The Citizens' Council*, March 1956, p.1.

<sup>78</sup> T. Ethridge, "Mississippi Notebook: NAACP Witch Doctors," *The Citizens' Council*, October 1955, p.3.

<sup>79</sup> "Negro Students Would Sustain Lasting Psychiatric Damage By Integration," *The Citizens' Council*, January 1956, p.4.

down to the intelligence level of the Negro.”<sup>80</sup> As well as this, the February edition argued that 75% of students at the University of Mississippi were unhappy with the possibility of desegregation at the University.<sup>81</sup> These articles all attempted to undermine integration and assist the Citizens’ Councils in legitimizing their stance that integration would wreak havoc on the Nation. The articles also proved just how important the newspaper was to the organization in allowing it to have a voice and speak not only to Council members and other Southerners, but also to the rest of the Nation.

The Citizens’ Councils in the Deep South experienced an incredible amount of success and popularity during the period 1954-1965 due to their ability to legitimize their campaign and ideology in the eyes of the white Southerners. Although membership declined in the years after 1965, it is evident that the leaders of the Councils achieved their popularity following the *Brown* decision due to a careful and strategic use of the organization’s newspaper *The Citizens’ Council* and by ensuring disassociation with extremist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. Through the medium of this newspaper, they were able to spread their ideology all across the Southern States, and where possible into the North and West. They legitimized their stance on segregation by linking it with the ideology of the ‘Southern Way of Life’, through promoting fear of integration and by undermining their opposition. The paper not only allowed them space to justify the organization, it also permitted them to rebut the arguments of the NAACP and other opposition groups. The Citizens’ Councils were able to exert the amount of control they did in the South because of their successful campaign to legitimize their resistance movement which slowed the inevitable move to desegregation across the South.

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<sup>80</sup> "Survey Clearly Shows Racial Integration Has Lowered Standards of Public Education," *The Citizens; Council*, January 1956, p.4.

<sup>81</sup> "Students and Ole Miss Frown On Integration," *The Citizens’ Council*, February 1956, p.1.

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