

2018

Desegregating the Stands: De facto segregation redrawn through social interaction and sports at the University of Mississippi in the 1970s

Nathan Robert Smith
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd>

 Part of the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, Nathan Robert, "Desegregating the Stands: De facto segregation redrawn through social interaction and sports at the University of Mississippi in the 1970s" (2018). *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*. 16470.
<https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/16470>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

Desegregating the Stands: *De facto* segregation redrawn through social interaction and sports at the University of Mississippi in the 1970s

by

Nathan Smith

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major: History

Program of Study Committee:
Lawrence McDonnell, Major Professor
Kathleen Hilliard
Maximilian Viatori

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this thesis. The Graduate College will ensure this thesis is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2018

Copyright © Nathan Smith, 2018. All rights reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	v
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: INTEGRATION OR COEXISTENCE?	12
CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION	29
BIBLIOGRAPHY	32

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Lawrence McDonnell, for his unwavering support and guidance throughout the formation of this project. I met Dr. McDonnell in my first history survey course as a first-year undergraduate at Iowa State. It happened that my last class as an undergraduate with Dr. McDonnell, on the history of baseball, set off passion for Sports History. Thank you, Dr. McDonnell, for helping me refine my thoughts and ideas for stronger research questions. Thank you also, for helping me maintain a work balance and reminding me to prioritize my health. To Dr. Kathleen Hilliard, for your guidance, editing, and the time you spent helping synthesize this topic from its original form. To Dr. Maximilian Viatori, my outside committee member, your insight improved this work tremendously.

I wanted to thank the library staff at the J.D. Williams Library for bearing with me while I scanned reel after reel of microfilm. I also wanted to give special thanks to the staff at the University of Mississippi's special collections. Their interest in this work sent me down research paths that I would not have found without their help.

I was fortunate to have had the chance to work beside a wonderful graduate cohort. Thanks to Sarah Pillan Amundson, Sydney Marshall, Wansu Luo, and Kelsey Sissel. Being able to work closely with them has improved my research and writing in countless ways. We have pushed and supported each other to grow and become better historians.

To my family, I owe a special appreciation. To my mother and father, even though somewhat worried about my decision to return to school, they did not waver with their support. To my brother, Adam, and my sister-in-law, Kaila, the two of you have always been there

whenever I needed advice. Finally, of course thanks to my dog, Indiana Bones, for putting up with my late nights.

ABSTRACT

In September of 1972, Robert “Gentle Ben” Williams became the first black football player for the University of Mississippi. This study focuses on the formal and informal forms that segregation took place on campus at the University of Mississippi during his tenure. With the introduction of Williams on the Rebels squad, all major Division I football teams achieved a level of at least token integration. An examination of the student body at the school reveals segregated spaces formed informally between white and black students on campus.

By probing the student produced newspapers the minutia of day to day life, along with clear and defined divisions between white and black students lays the groundwork for how informal segregation played out on campus. Unlike previous work done on this era, this thesis explores the individual motivations and methods of anti-integration white students as they operated in a system moving increasingly away from their ideology. Ole Miss football continued to be an exclusionary space for white Mississippi fans to celebrate the south and their “heritage.”

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On September 30, 1972 the Ole Miss Rebels suited up to play their first home game of the football season. The 17th-ranked Rebs prepared to face off against their in-state rival, the University of Southern Mississippi. The previous week, when the team traveled to Columbia, South Carolina, the defense looked to improve its performance from week one's game against Memphis State. Allowing only 51 total offensive yards the Rebels shut out the South Carolina Gamecocks 21-0. Buried in the game recap from the *Daily Mississippian*, a single mention of the Rebel's defensive tackle, Robert "Ben" Williams, informed fans that "the first black footballer to ever play in a [Mississippi] varsity game, played in key third down situations."¹ The showdown against Southern Miss would be a different experience than the previous two games. Williams entered Hemingway Stadium as the first African American on the home team's sideline, with "Dixie" playing and thousands of Rebel football fans waving the Stars and Bars. Walking onto the field Williams would have seen very few African American students, as many of them, disillusioned with the Athletics Department, stopped attending events or in some cases had taken to cheering for black athletes on opposing teams.² Hemingway Stadium, with all of its Confederate relics, represented a space for white Mississippians to embrace their "heritage" and exclude black fans from participating. Although Ole Miss defeated the Golden Eagles, perhaps more memorably, this game fell on the tenth anniversary of a different sort of contest that played out on the campus of the University of Mississippi. That long-remembered match pitted the

¹ Dudley Marble, "REDEMPTION: Rebel Defense Assumes Unfamiliar Hero's Role," (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, September 25, 1972. The title of the student newspaper changed throughout this time. For the sake of consistency, I referred to it as the *Daily Mississippian*.

² Burnice Morris, "School Spirit: Rebs Headed for Another Disaster?," (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 14, 1971.

federal government against the residents of what Mississippi faculty member James Silver called the “Closed Society.”³ The final score on that occasion remains very much in doubt.

The university had seen several important changes since the school’s forced integration on September 30, 1962. From the viewpoint of the first African American student James Meredith, enrolled on campus that year, integration had progressed slowly: by the start of the 1970s, the African American population still numbered only about 200 students, less than three percent of the total campus population of 6,500. Worse than this, most black students believed that they lived “largely in isolation from the whites.”⁴ The lines of Jim Crow had merely been redrawn. In a letter published in the 1971-72 yearbook, one student wrote, “At any rate, what we have at Ole Miss is co-existence, not integration. It’s funny, but that word seems awfully antiquated.”⁵ Isolation of black students from the white majority of students created two separate worlds at the University of Mississippi, white and black campuses that, although not segregated by law, they were far from a cohesive student body. Changing racists’ hearts and minds could not hope to begin so long as white and black students steered around each other in deliberate non-interaction. After the elimination of segregation *de jure*, why did segregation persist *de facto* at the University of Mississippi?

This study focuses on the student newspapers at the University of Mississippi, both the long-published *Daily Mississippian* and the short-lived *Spectator*, a grassroots paper printed by the Black Student Union in the fall of 1971 and spring of 1972. These papers show not only the minutia of day to day campus life, but by looking at both papers the division of white and black

³ James Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, New Enlarged Edition. (New York; 1966), 3-4.

⁴ Article reprinted from the *Washington Post*. Philip Carter, “Mississippi, 1971: The End of the Exodus,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 12, 1971.

⁵ Letter to parents from white student on April 9, 1972 published in University of Mississippi yearbook. *Ole Miss ’72*. Oxford: (University of Mississippi, 1972).

students in social settings is clear and defined, laying the groundwork for how informal segregation played out on campus. Students admitted that “rarely [will one] see blacks and whites walking and talking together, except inside class.” Although students interacted in their classes, black and white students did little to “promote friendship” between their groups.⁶ Daily, individuals made the choice to construct parallel campuses, determining the fate of integration.⁷ By examining the entire student body, the areas that white students claimed for themselves came into focus, these areas include but are not limited to Greek society, Hemingway Stadium, and student government. By probing the student produced newspapers the minutia of day to day life, along with clear and defined divisions between white and black students lays the groundwork for how informal segregation played out on campus.

As Charles Eagles points out, when examining the current state of civil rights historiography, “[h]istorians of the movement have also generally taken an asymmetrical approach to the campaign for equal rights,” emphasizing the movement side while neglecting the responsibility of understanding the segregationists.⁸ Numan V. Bartley’s study places white “massive resistance” to desegregation in the context of the civil rights movement. Bartley argues these resisters were ultimately willing to accept token racial equality rather than negatively affect their economic standing.⁹ Bartley’s work, published in 1969, marks an outlier in the historiography as most scholars chose to focus their studies more on the oppressed than the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Thomas C. Schelling, *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 137-142.

⁸ Charles W. Eagles, “Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era,” *Journal of Southern History*, 66, no. 4, (200): 815-16.

⁹ Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950's*, (Baton Rouge, 1969).

oppressors. These studies often follow Bartley's ideas linking racial orthodoxy and class. The role of class and economic independence has played a central role in civil rights studies. Robert J. Norrell examines how economically independent African Americans were uniquely set up for political activism.¹⁰ Literature on this movement, apart from Norrell's superb look at local movements, focuses too much on large sweeping studies or biographical pieces. *Bearing the Cross* by David Garrow willingly discusses the flaws of its subject, Martin Luther King Jr., without analyzing broader context.¹¹ In trying to chronicle as many events as possible biographical pieces like Garrow's leave out the importance of their subjects and any influence they exhibit on the civil rights movement up to their death. The work of John Egerton takes a step back to reexamine the early years of the movement.¹² Egerton puts race at the forefront of Southern politics as he lays out a new direction for scholarship arguing that researching the pre-civil rights movement will lead to greater comprehension of the era. In trying to understand why the movement was successful in certain cities and not others, J. Mills Thornton argues in *Dividing Lines*, the conflict between different classes within the white community prevented compromises which would have weakened local civil rights groups.¹³ Civil rights historiography's debate whether race or class is the primary driver of segregationists' ideology limits the understanding of the era. As with the leaders of the civil rights movement,

¹⁰ Robert J. Norrell, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Civil Rights Movement in Tuskegee*, 2nd ed, (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998).

¹¹ David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, (New York, 1986).

¹² John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South*, (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994).

¹³ J. Mills Thornton, *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma*, (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2002).

segregationists were a complex assortment with different backgrounds and had individual motives.

Scholars are taking a far greater notice of the seventies as a pivotal decade that shifted away from the hope offered at the end of the sixties. Peter Carroll describes the seventies as a decade that “rest[s] uneasily on the national conscience,” moving from, “the frustration of the apocalyptic dreams of the sixties,” while Jefferson Cowie believes it ends with “injured pride and diminished material hopes.”¹⁴ Jefferson Cowie’s *Stayin’ Alive* chronicles the destruction of the working class by deindustrialization and deunionization.¹⁵ Cowie presents evidence in a way that individualism and the turn away from unions was a bottom up movement, an informal change from led by choices from individuals. Splintering of social movements of the late 1960s led to decentralization into local community-action groups. Peter Carroll’s *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened* is an appropriate title to accurately describe how this was perceived.¹⁶ Judith Stein’s *Pivotal Decade* provides a history of the 1970’s political economy, laying bipartisan blame for trade policy that crippled American industry. Stein’s contempt for the New Left and their “culture of anti-unionism” is a trend that continued in later studies of the decade.¹⁷ Julilly Kohler-Hausmann points to the prison reform of the seventies as a response to the nation’s welfare predicament. Criticizing both the left and the right, *Getting Tough* emphasizes that politicians from both sides of the aisle took the path of least resistance regardless of what these

¹⁴ Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*, (New York: New Press, 2010), 364; Peter N Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: America in the 1970’s*, (New Brunswick, NJ, 2000), ix.

¹⁵ Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive*.

¹⁶ Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened*.

¹⁷ Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies*, (New Haven, CT, 2010), 189.

policies would mean for marginalized groups. This reclassified these marginalized groups as unfit for society and sent them to penitentiaries where emphasis was no longer on rehabilitation but isolation from society.¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, even as historians are beginning to agree on the importance of the decade, they disagree on the direction this change originated.

The dominant narrative of integration of higher education in the Southern United States has asserted that solitary individuals played crucial, heroic roles to strike back against the injustice of Jim Crow era segregation. Through court cases, and in many cases, federal government intervention, the color barrier at these institutions fell. Robert Pratt's *We Shall Not Be Moved* sets the integration of higher education in the broader conversation of desegregation, weaving the tale of two black students admitted for the integration of the University of Georgia against obstinate white students.¹⁹ Work done by historian Peter Wallenstein reinforces the idea that integration was a process that could be described in a series of steps. Integration across the South began with the early successes in an era described as "protodesegregation," where schools such as the University of Arkansas and Oklahoma A&M integrated in low-key court cases that upheld "separate but equal" rulings, while it is often seen as ending in the era post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) when the more well-known last stands made by public figures like Governor George C. Wallace at the University of Alabama took place.²⁰ While these more dramatic events are often heralded as an end to the "Jim Crow" South, informal segregation persisted, the black student leaders took up the crusade for integration beyond tokenism.

¹⁸ Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, *Getting Tough: Welfare and Imprisonment in 1970s America*, (Princeton, NJ, 2017).

¹⁹ Robert Pratt, *We Shall Not be Moved: The Desegregation of the University of Georgia*, (Athens, GA, 2002).

²⁰ Peter Wallenstein, "Black Southerners and Nonblack Universities: The Process of Desegregating Southern Higher Education, 1935-1965," in *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners, and College Campuses*, ed. Peter Wallenstein (Gainesville, FL, 2008), 17-59.

Although most historians on desegregation of higher education have focused on the more dramatic examples such as the flagship universities in Deep South states like Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi, historian Hayward Farrar's study on black student activism at the University of Maryland in the late 1960s and early 1970s is a deeply personal account. By detailing his own experience leading members of Maryland's Black Student Union in nonviolent demonstrations and protest, Farrar added much needed context to struggles that black students continued to face against administrations at Southern universities after integration.²¹ Farrar's work and many other monographs that were generated from this type of personal memoir neglect to discuss the relationship between the black student body and white peers. This silence exposes a hole in the historiography of the integration of higher education in the United States. As discussed previously in relation to scholarship on the civil rights era, historians have a responsibility to understand both sides of the conflict to comprehend the context.

Sports reinforced the narrative that segregation was a barrier, something an athlete of strong will and character could smash through. This mythology reaches its pinnacle in the story of Jackie Robinson. Jules Tygiel eloquently moves the conversation beyond the myth and demonstrates how desegregation in baseball was a process.²² College athletics are no exception. Charles H. Martin writes that "the story of major college sports in the South cannot be separated from the region's commitment to the ideology of white supremacy, the maintenance of public

²¹ Hayward "Woody" Farrar, "Prying the Door Farther Open: A Memoir of Black Student Protest at the University of Maryland at College Park, 1966-1970," in ed. Wallenstein, *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement*, 137-165.

²² Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

segregation, and the practice of racial exclusion in higher education.”²³ Once African Americans were able to emerge as stars on the football field, research into the social interactions between white and black students on campus is something the current historiography has neglected. Historians need to move beyond the moment of the color barrier breaking and focus on the early years of integration to understand how it progressed and whether it was successful. Alas, the student newspapers show that the process of desegregating Southern football became a way of side-stepping racial inclusion.

Much of the work done on the University of Mississippi by historians focused on the fight for integration, and the conflict between a group opposed to desegregation (composed of white supremacists from around the South and Mississippi students) and James Meredith. This led to an event that would become known as the Battle for Oxford in 1962. Two professors of the University of Mississippi turned their personal experiences into monographs detailing the history of the university’s integration. Without the distance of time neither James Silver nor Russell Barrett grasped commitment to segregation and white supremacy that continued into the 1970s.

The year after the events that followed Meredith’s enrollment into Ole Miss, Professor of History James W. Silver, gave his presidential speech to the Southern Historical Association, later adapted into a full monograph entitled *Mississippi: The Closed Society*. Silver penned his book while working in the very “closed society” that he describes. The 1966 enlarged edition of this book added a 120-page chapter entitled “Revolution Begins in the Closed Society,” giving an account of the decline of institutionalized white supremacy. The lack of hindsight allows

²³ Charles H. Martin, “Hold That (Color) Line! Black Exclusion and Southeastern Conference Football,” in ed. Wallenstein, *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement*, 166.

Silver to end the new edition with the thought that one day Mississippians would “[embrace] integration simply because it is right.”²⁴ This would turn out not to be the case, as integration would evolve under new circumstances and the culture that surrounded sports at the university continued to exclude those not dedicated to the former Confederate cause.

Mississippi Professor of Political Science Russell H. Barrett followed Silver in publishing his own account, *Integration at Ole Miss*. The key chapter, “A Night of Violence,” breaks down in detail the events of the 1962 campus riot. In discussing the aftermath, Barrett describes campus life in which one form of white resistance to integration presented itself in the campus press. The *Rebel Underground*, a non-sanctioned paper that circulated around Ole Miss, proclaimed, “We will never accept integration at this or any other institution.” As with much of the scholarship about the university, this monograph stops at 1964, Russell Barrett, like Silver, ends with a tone of optimism: “failure need not be permanent. Mississippians as well as other Americans can learn from adversity.”²⁵ Mississippians did indeed learn from their adversity, as the school and its students found new ways to hide racial tensions that existed well into the 1970s.

Work on integration continues to be the focus of historical study of the University of Mississippi. More recent work such as Charles W. Eagles’ monograph *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss* explores in depth of the history of segregation and white supremacy in the state’s flagship university. The school’s long history with the “Lost Cause” starts with its widely-used nickname *Ole Miss*, likely taken from antebellum slave

²⁴ Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 366, 326.

²⁵ Russell H. Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*, (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1965), 246, 190.

vernacular.²⁶ In tracing relationships between the university and African Americans, Eagles demonstrates the how sports became one of the few avenues for individuals to navigate the school's strict segregationist policies.

In the spring of 1896, James E. Ivy, son of a former slave, began at the university selling peanuts and candy to students. The university commonly employed black workers, often giving them jobs that were out of sight, such as cooks, dishwashers, or janitorial duties. Having a stand inside the Lyceum, a central location on campus, placed Ivy not only in the vision of students, but also in direct contact with them, which differentiated him from most black employees of the school.²⁷

Before working at the University, James Ivy suffered an injury that permanently blinded him; this disability earned him the nickname "Blind" Jim from most Ole Miss students. Ivy's connection with the university's Athletic Department goes back to a baseball game against the University of Texas, the Rebels were trailing, when Ivy's cheers of "Come on Miss'ippi" fell over the crowd, inspiring the team to victory. Whether there was any truth to that tale, the students of Mississippi adored Blind Jim Ivy. This admiration fostered a paternalistic relationship in which students financially supported Ivy. This support included a new suit donated annually to him by incoming freshmen. The self-appointed "Dean of Freshmen" was a regular sight at sporting events and on the campus, escorted by Ole Miss freshmen. Students regularly referred to him as a "faithful Negro."²⁸

²⁶ Ole Miss is likely the diminutive form of "Old Mistress", although its origins are not confirmed by Eagles as he offers multiple possible origins for the school's nickname. Charles W. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss*, (Chapel Hill, NC, 2009), 17.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 43-47.

The paternalistic relationship that formed between the students of Mississippi and Jim Ivy stemmed from romantic racism. Ivy's blindness served a dual purpose of shielding him from idea that black men were dangerous, as seen in the ideas of the "black rapists"²⁹ In a sense, by calling him "Blind" Jim, students of Ole Miss not only degraded him but also infantilized his character. James E. Ivy bears a striking resemblance to the school mascot Colonel Reb, first appearing in 1936. The image, representing a Southern planter, clutches a cane while wearing a wide brim hat and bushy, white mustache comparable to photos of Ivy.

White folks at the university excluded African Americans from sports following the death of Ivy. It was not until 1972 that sophomore Coolidge Ball broke the sports color barrier at Ole Miss, suiting up for the Rebels basketball team. The next year, Robert "Ben" Williams ended 79 years of whites-only play on the gridiron, becoming the first black footballer for the Rebels.³⁰ Using the framework of sports integration at the university these two men initiated an impact on student life that that simultaneously helped tear down segregated spaces while at the same time white students re-intensified efforts to secure social spaces for whites-only.

²⁹ George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, (New York, NY, 1971), 274-275.

³⁰ Ball did not play varsity athletics until his sophomore season as freshmen were barred from varsity competition due to NCAA guidelines. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss*, 435.

CHAPTER 2: INTEGRATION OR COEXISTENCE?

The fall 1971 semester started off in full gear, as such, the start of the new football season became a central aspect of campus life. As the symbol of Ole Miss athletics, the confederate battle flag had raised some concern the previous year as group of black students set fire to the rebel flag in a symbol of protest. This pressed the school into action, to “differentiate” themselves from the stars and bars the administration decided to add the letters UM to the flag. This not only solidified “Lost Cause” symbolism, as the flag would still remain as the symbol of the university, but also allowed the university to claim that steps had been taken to separate from “extremist groups that use the flag to ‘further their own ulterior causes’.”³¹ This moderate change was met with criticism by the traditionalists in the state, going as far to call the idea a “disgrace to Ole Miss.”³²

The controversy surrounding the flag subsided as the Rebels stumbled in consecutive games. By the middle of October 1971, the team had suffered losses to both Alabama and Georgia and their conference title hopes started to dwindle. Southern Mississippi was the next game on the schedule for the Red and Blue, the previous year the (now named) Golden Eagles shocked the Rebs with a 30-14 victory, playing Willie Heidelberg, Southern Miss’ first African-American varsity football player.³³ As the game started to approach, an article appeared written by Burnice Morris, a black journalism major, in the school paper that sought ways to reenergize

³¹ Ken Weeden, “Says Reed: Rebel Flag Gets New Look,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, September 20, 1971.

³² Scott Ferguson, “To the Editor: ‘UM Beavers’ Would be Better,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, September 23, 1971.

³³ Page 8, (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*. October 15, 1971.

the Ole Miss fanbase. “If the Rebs are to be unanimously supported by 100 percent of the student body, it must carry the remaining three percent disenchanting blacks.”³⁴ This was not a sentiment all were thrilled to read about. Readers boiled down Morris’ article to an “attempt to blackmail the University...in exchange for which the disenchanting blacks will give their support.” Going on to claim that “96.25 percent [was] a fantastic...showing of genuine, pure Rebel support,” and “even the all-powerful Ivory Soap Bar is only 99.44 percent pure.”³⁵

The university experienced more than football during the semester, 1971 was a gubernatorial election year for the state of Mississippi. Fayette mayor and gubernatorial candidate Charles Evers, spoke to the students on the topic of affordable college tuition.³⁶ Evers sparked outrage from within the university as Professor James R. Fawcett claimed “exposure to Charles Evers does not improve anyone mentally, morally, spiritually or physically.” Justifying his complaints based on protecting his children from “being exposed to an acknowledged pimp.”³⁷ Response to Fawcett’s comments agreed that “the university should be a place for...searching for truth through reason,” although, “anyone can stand before us and say

³⁴ Burnice Morris, “School Spirit: Rebs Headed for Another Disaster?,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 14, 1971.

³⁵ Wayne Lee Wright, “To the Editor: School Spirit Must Win Out,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 22, 1971.

³⁶ “Evers Speaks Today,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 7, 1971.

³⁷ John R. Fawcett, “To the Editor: Students Must be Treated Equal,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 14, 1971.

whatever he wishes.”³⁸ An anonymous letter called James Fawcett, “obviously racist and narrow minded.”³⁹

As the *Daily Mississippian* continued to play out the controversy surrounding Dr. Fawcett, the Black Student Union announced the creation of a newspaper of their own. With the purpose to “give black journalism majors a chance to participate in the publication of a newspaper because no black student can become editor of the campus newspaper, the *Daily Mississippian*.” This paper called, *Spectator*, stated its goal was to comment on the feelings of black students, as they live separate existences from the white majority.⁴⁰

On December 15, 1971, the student body elected senior football player Jim Poole and senior Cindy Carr as Colonel Reb and Miss Ole Miss respectively, these are the highest honors the student body could bestow.⁴¹ As the fall semester closed, the football team signed their incoming freshman class, promoting the signing of four black athletes, two of which would eventually play for the Rebels. Making the University of Mississippi the last school in the Southeastern Conference to play an African-American in the sport of football.⁴² An occasion that went mostly ignored by the student body as only one mention of these young men found its way into the student paper. The signing of the black football players came in parallel with the

³⁸ Michael L. Harrington, “To the Editor: Fawcett’s Letter Provokes Replies,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 20, 1971.

³⁹ Nothing to lose, “To the Editor: Fawcett’s Letter Provokes Replies,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 20, 1971.

⁴⁰ Ken Weeden, “BSU to Publish Newspaper,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 23, 1971.

⁴¹ “Poole, Carr Lead Candidates,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, December 15, 1971.

⁴² Buddy Bynum, “And the Battle’s Not Over Yet: Rebels Sign 34 to Grid Pacts,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, December 15, 1971.

start of a new student publication at the school, this time written and most significantly edited by members of the black student body.

After some delay, the Black Student Union launched the *Spectator* in December 1971. With the first of what would be only three issues, the December issue featured no local advertising, a necessary source of revenue for other university papers. In some ways the two papers wrote on similar topics. A review of the Black Student Union production of “Contribution” or an article on student’s opinion of “hot pants” would have been common place in the *Daily Mississippian*. In the BSU paper a cartoon entitled, “Leroy,” which features roommates one black and one white as they talk in their room, the first two frames show the white roommate complain about studying and professors before, finally, in the third frame considering to jumping out of the window, all the while his black roommate quietly sat at his desk studying. Leaving the forth frame for the African American student to answer his roommate with the 5th Dimension lyric “one less bell to answer.”⁴³ The *Spectator* allowed African American journalist students a real opportunity to write and edit a newspaper. Although the *Daily* had multiple black student contributors, including the editor of the *Spectator*, Burnice Morris, up to the publication date of the BSU paper none had made editor of the *Daily Mississippian*. When the team producing the paper went up before the university’s publication committee, they asked the students if their new paper would be “sophisticated.” In response the first issue’s editorial ended by asking its audience their opinions on whether the paper is “sophisticated.”⁴⁴

⁴³ “Leroy,” (Oxford, MS), *Spectator*, December, 1971, 4-5.

⁴⁴ Burnice Morris, “Editorial,” (Oxford, MS), *Spectator*, December, 1971.

“Save your Confederate money, boys, the South’s gonna rise again.”⁴⁵ The phrase used by broadcaster Fran Tarkenton, heard by the nation as they watched the Rebel’s win the Peach Bowl and printed again by the student newspaper marking not only the victory but the end of the football season. Just as the season wrapped up the NCAA implemented new rules regarding eligibility that would be a great importance to the university. The new guidelines granted freshman eligibility to participate in varsity sports starting in the fall of 1972.⁴⁶

Ole Miss students did not write all articles published in the *Daily Mississippian*, instead the paper published syndicated articles from the United Press International. UPI writeups did not always represent the specific ideas of the student body, although articles they chose to publish did speak for themselves. In mid-January, an article from the St. Louis UPI discussed a federal court ruling, “calling ‘Dixie’ a ‘typical American song’.” Having “ruled unanimously that the song is not offensive to blacks.”⁴⁷ The printing of this article shows the dedication that the white majority has for the song. In response to an earlier letter to the editor, self-described “just another honky”, Jack Lee, wanted to “educate” a Mr. Joseph on the origins of “Dixie.” “Mr. Joseph should be proud of ‘Dixie’ since it was written and composed by a Negro, D.D. Emmett, in New York in 1859.” By continuing with information that Lincoln counted the tune among his favorites, Mr. Lee closed by defending the confederate flag and hoped that Mr. Joseph’s “Black racism” does not get in the way of his fight to end “White racism.”⁴⁸ Jack Lee’s comments were

⁴⁵ Buddy Bynum, “Rebels rise to Peach win,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, January 4, 1972.

⁴⁶ Steve Morse, “Rebel Review: Frosh Eligibility,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, January 14, 1972.

⁴⁷ St. Louis UPI, “Court Claims ‘Dixie’ Doesn’t Offend Blacks,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, January 14, 1972.

⁴⁸ Jack Lee, “To the Editor: Adds Facts to ‘Dixie’,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, March 8, 1972.

not all that different from contemporary opponents of removing confederate statues, Lee replied to Mr. Joseph, but did not engage with his thoughts or ideas. The earlier letter written by Wilhelm H. Joseph, who styled himself “just another nigger,” listed fourteen points, which he believed showed a sincere lack of effort on the university’s behalf to move beyond its racist past. Most of the list contained information on the disproportionate makeup of the campus faculty and staff. Without listing all these points, three of them dealt with the athletic department, Jack Lee wrote to specifically attack two of those points. Those points are the continued use of both the confederate flag and “Dixie” as school symbols. The third recommendation Joseph made towards the athletic department dealt with lack of black athletes on the university athletic teams.⁴⁹

By March 1972, the BSU had released the second issue of the *Spectator*. Unlike the first issue, this one showed evidence of outside funding in the form of advertisement. This would seem to suggest that the paper was looking towards a bright successful future. This issue contained a biographical piece on black basketball player Coolidge Ball, not unlike similar articles on athletes written in *The Daily Mississippian*. It also contained a clear voice that African Americans on the campus wanted to tear down the division on the campus. “Because black students do not fit easily into the campus social life, they have formed their own social groups as a means of adjustment.”⁵⁰ Other pieces such as “Why teach black history?,” written by Dr. Harry Owens from the university’s Department of History, and an editorial put out by the Black Student Union which was to be used as a humorous guideline for African American

⁴⁹ Wilhelm H. Joseph, “To the Editor: Racism is Still in Mississippi,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, March 6, 1972.

⁵⁰ “Blacks Unsocialized,” (Oxford, MS), *Spectator*, March, 1972.

students when asked common questions from white students, these two pieces show not only how the separate campuses interact but also expressed the importance of truly integrating the school.⁵¹

As spring semester wound down, topics of dorm visitation and the University of Mississippi Athletic Department dominated the headlines. By late April, students had rallied together to protest the lack of visitation rights, nearly 900 students participated.⁵² “Dixie Week,” an annual festival held on campus, continued unabated with its “Ugliest Man on Campus” contest.⁵³ Buried in these pieces, Morris’ article entitled, “Why I love Ole Miss,” showed just what it was like to be a minority student on campus, to “find eggs splattered against my door and shaving cream blocking my exit [...], [o]nly at Ole Miss can a poor boy like me come from the bottom of the barrel and stay there. I love Ole Miss.” This student did not choose to write this article just to air his grievances but instead believed that the university could change for the better.⁵⁴

The end of the 1972 spring semester marked the end of the *Spectator*, although it seemed that at this time not even the staff knew this. In the third and final issue the BSU publication businesses purchased advertisements throughout the paper. The paper called out the law school on the front cover, claiming racial bias against African American students to be the cause of the high fail out rate among black law students, the administration took no formal action after

⁵¹ Black Student Union, “Editorial,” (Oxford, MS), *Spectator*, March, 1972.; Dr. Harry Owens, “Why Teach Black History?,” (Oxford, MS), *Spectator*, March, 1972.

⁵² Ken Rector, “Students Mass for Dormitory Protest,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, April 27, 1972.

⁵³ “Dixie Week Committee Sets More Grove Activities Today,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, May 4, 1972.

⁵⁴ Burnice Morris, “Why I love Ole Miss,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, April 19, 1972.

hearing the complaints.⁵⁵ In a later article editor Morris posed the question of “whether blacks want total integration.” Going on to define “total integration” as assimilation, believing that in giving in to assimilation the black community would lose its identity.⁵⁶ The future looked bright for the new paper, Morris was quoted, “Look at the *Daily Mississippian*. Its entire staff is probably composed of journalism majors. But you would have a hard time trying to convince me that they are any better than the *Spectator*’s staff.”⁵⁷ This was less than one month before the fourth issue, that never made publication, was set for release.

The 1972 Rebel football season marked a change for the school, although by reading the student paper one would be hard pressed to know what that change was. Due to the new rule regarding freshman eligibility Robert Williams, then already called “Gentle Ben,” moved up the depth chart and became the first African American football player at the University of Mississippi. Williams’ nickname comes from the book series and later television show “Gentle Ben” about the friendship between a young boy and a bear named “Ben.” The first mention of Williams’ performance on field was before the second game of the season against the South Carolina Gamecocks. Briefly mentioning that the “gigantic freshman...is backing up Jim Stuart at defensive tackle and pushing hard for the starting position.” The paper made no mention of Williams crossing one of the last major color lines in sports, the same for James Reed, a freshman like Williams moved up to varsity for the South Carolina game becoming the second African American player for the team.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ John Hubbard & Burnice Morris, “The Law School – a Black Phase-out?,” (Oxford, MS), *Spectator*, May, 1972.

⁵⁶ Burnice Morris, “Editorial,” (Oxford, MS), *Spectator*, May, 1972.

⁵⁷ “Black Student Newspaper Gains Interest of Campus,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 20, 1972.

⁵⁸ Dudley Marble, “Rebs Coked for Saturday’s ‘Game’,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, September 22, 1972.

This first season went well for “Gentle Ben” Williams, though the Rebels struggled as a team. After going 10-2 the previous year, the 1972 team fought to get to its 5-5 record, missing a bowl game, ending a bowl streak that started with a 39-7 win over Texas on January 1, 1958.⁵⁹ We know only of Williams progress on the field by newspaper clippings that were scarce, even though by the October 14th game he had already become a starter showing his on-field value to the team.⁶⁰

Although issues of the Vietnam War, presidential election, school bussing, and Watergate dominated national headlines, and as such held a prominent place in the student papers as well, local tensions within the university still interested students. As the fall semester of 1972 ended the annual Miss Ole Miss and Colonel Reb elections were set. Although he eventually lost, Jerald Ulmer made a statement after becoming the first black student to run for the office of Colonel Reb. Asserting if elected it would “mean that whites are now willing to accept blacks as student leaders-no black student [had] ever held an elective student position at Ole Miss.”⁶¹

Tensions between the two campuses increased through the spring of 1973. Omega Psi Phi, a new fraternity formed a chapter on campus. Unlike previous organizations Omega Psi Phi offered African American students an opportunity to participate in the Greek society that previously had been unattainable. President of the Interfraternity Council, Steve Stanford, admitted that, “the new fraternity would be a solution because no other fraternity would accept them or give them a chance to participate.”⁶² The new fraternity was not whole heartedly

⁵⁹ Scott Ware, “Death Knell Sounds for the Reb Streak,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, November 20, 1972.

⁶⁰ Dudley Marble, “SEC Title Hopes on Line” (Oxford, MS) *Daily Mississippian*, October 13, 1972.

⁶¹ “Elections Tomorrow for Favorites: Five Compete for Top Honors Tuesday,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, December 4, 1972.

welcomed, Burnice Morris criticized that the school did not need another fraternity, if African American students needed a social outlet they would do well to stay away from the Greek system as it was of the “genre of nonsensical rubbish made exclusively for the trash heap.”⁶³

The most pronounced topic that expressed the intransigent views of the school administration was the school censoring of the student magazine IMAGES. The issue that was “impounded” became a matter of the courts, when the federal circuit court declared this to be a violation of the First Amendment, the school continued to deny the release of the material.⁶⁴ Fears of the “closed society” continued to loom over the University as the “taboo” topic that was considered too offensive for publication was a “story by a black student author about the relationship of a black man and a white woman.”⁶⁵ This restriction led to demonstrations by students that even the organizers saw only as a “symbolic effort.”⁶⁶ This was a fight that was not solved by the end of the 1973 spring semester and spilled into the next school year as litigation continued. It took nearly two years and a federal court’s intervention for the administration to release the controversial issue in the fall of 1974.⁶⁷

Ben Williams began his sophomore year as the Rebels starting right tackle.⁶⁸ Sports writers, both local and national, rewarded Williams for his prowess on the field with

⁶² Susan Nolan, “New Fraternity Organized on Campus,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, January 22, 1973.

⁶³ Burnice Morris, “‘Just Like the White Boys Do’,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, January 31, 1973.

⁶⁴ D.T. Allred, “Letters to the Editor: Picket Lines Set for Images Battle,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, March 13, 1973.

⁶⁵ John Ratcliff, “Letters to the Editor: Picket Lines Set for Images Battle,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, March 13, 1973.

⁶⁶ “Images Protest Continued Today,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, March 15, 1973.

⁶⁷ Dennis Moore, “After Two-Year Court Battle: ‘Images’ Finally Released,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, August 2, 1974.

acknowledgement and praise. The Associated Press named Williams Lineman of the Week following a victory over Villanova. Ben used this exposure to reiterate that his goals were set not on individual success but on his team.⁶⁹ As the season went on Williams stood apart as one of the few stand out performances on the field. With the rise in popularity the student paper saw fit to write up its first article dedicated to the second-year starter. The piece was mostly a statistical rundown of Williams' collegiate career up through that point, offering no enlightenment on how off-the-gridiron campus life was for the 19-year-old.⁷⁰

Throughout the fall 1973 semester students saw change as a realistic possibility. With the acceptance of sports stars such as Williams and Coolidge Ball, journalist Harold Reynolds believed that progress was happening, albeit slowly, at the school. Black student enrollment was on the rise, although "a lack of positive information about Ole Miss and difficulties in obtaining financial aids" still hindered efforts. Issues regarding the university's troubled past likely caused many black students to shy away from applying, which, in Reynold's belief, was the way some would prefer.⁷¹ The election of Colonel Reb and Miss Ole Miss wrapped up the fall semester as it always had, what made this election stand out was tight competition for the office of Colonel Reb. Two student athletes ran a competitive campaign for the position, quarterback Norris Weese, and basketball player Coolidge Ball. The *Daily* was quick to point out the significance of this competition, reminding its readers that "race is a difficult subject on which to write. It arouses emotions which have been just below the surface for the past 11 years." By reminding

⁶⁸ "Rebs Announce Tentative Lineup," (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, September 7, 1973.

⁶⁹ "'Gentle Ben' Named Lineman of the Week," (Oxford, MS) *Daily Mississippian*, September 13, 1973.

⁷⁰ "Ben: Plays Anything but 'Gentle'," (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, November 15, 1973.

⁷¹ Harrold Reynolds, "Reynolds' Rap: Some Reflections on Ole Miss," (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, September 28, 1973.

his readers six times that race and racism would, but should not have been, a factor in the election, tensions that divided students on this campus remained as the author put it “just below the surface.”⁷² Ball ultimately lost his campaign for Colonel Reb, ending his chance be the first black student elected to that position.

The year progressed, as did the effort to show racial inclusion at Mississippi. As Black History Week neared, the Office of Admissions co-sponsored a conference held by the Black Student Union, with the purpose of recruiting the 90 or so black students to the school. The effort taken represented not only “the first of its kind in the state,” but also the “first in the nation.”⁷³ Only a few days after this article the College Board sent their plan for compliance on federal desegregation guidelines to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Once again trying to set the state at the forefront College Board President Thomas Turner believed that the new plan was going to be “the best plan in the United States.” This was the second attempt at a plan, as the HEW rejected earlier strategies. After that initial rejection Turner declared, “there is no such thing as segregation anymore.”⁷⁴ The Department of Health, Education and Welfare’s move to reassess the success of desegregation showed how far the university still had to go to achieve integration.

Black History Week saw an influx of articles that both promoted the progress that had taken place in terms of race relations, as well as offered criticism and opinions on how to proceed from the current state. When given a platform to speak openly on any criticism they

⁷² Bill McCarthy, “Politics as Conflict: Genuine Ole Miss Campaign...,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, December 3, 1973.

⁷³ Tom Redmond, “UM Sponsors Conference in Effort to Recruit Blacks,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, February 6, 1974.

⁷⁴ “New College Desegregation Plan Sent to HEW,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, February 11, 1974.

have towards the university, many black students expressed their concerns with Confederate relics, the song “Dixie” and the Confederate flag, still prominently displayed on campus. On the topic of “Dixie” Mary Adams, a senior, stated, “most whites are astonished that blacks get offended by a song written by a black man, but one black man is not necessarily the spokesman for all blacks.”⁷⁵ Jeanette Jennings, the first full-time black instructor hired at the school, told stories of white students who still believed in segregation, “and thought that blacks had ruined white schools by entering them.”⁷⁶

The previous articles focused on some less than positive aspects of the school. By calling out areas the school could improve upon and thus raise its image. Harold Reynolds’ piece on black athletes at the school had a different message entirely. Describing the progress, the athletic department has moved towards, Reynolds may have over stated the situation. Pointing to athletic stars, Ben Williams and Coolidge Ball, the reader got the image of school where race is no longer the issue that it once was. James Reed, Ole Miss tailback, led the way for a Rebel victory against Tennessee on national television. Allowing a national audience, and for the author specifically an African American national audience, to see that, “the overall racial image of the University of Mississippi is changing.”⁷⁷

It was difficult to say from newspaper articles whether this publication had any real effect on the students of Mississippi. It did however have an impact on the newspaper. After this incident, seven articles published together, each representative of a different experience of

⁷⁵ Linda Buford, “Blacks, Ole Miss and the Rebel Flag,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, February 19, 1974.

⁷⁶ Doris Williams, “Good Morning, Teacher,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, February 19, 1974.

⁷⁷ Harold Reynolds, “Ball, Williams & Company,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, February 19, 1974.

African Americans on the campus of Mississippi, the paper relegated the experience of black students (who were not athletes) to few articles scattered throughout the school year.

An emphasis on black student athletes was more pronounced in the fall of 1974. Ben Williams continued to receive national recognition for his on-field performances as he won the UPI Southeast Defensive Player of the Week award.⁷⁸ The publicity continued with an interview in the *Daily*. Other than a comment on a friend being the first to call him “Gentle Ben” during high school, readers learned of Williams personally or his experience.⁷⁹ As the season progressed journalists from the *Daily Mississippian* interviewed other black football players. Freshman tight end Curtis Weathers and junior tailback James Reed were both given glowing pieces highlighting their skills and on-field successes.⁸⁰

In an article about possible discrimination on campus, the reporter claimed, “there is no major racial or sexual discrimination at Ole Miss,” from interviews held by HEW. This article neglected to define “major” as the rest of the piece contradicted the statement made early. Eric Brown, a black graduate student, described the Greek system as “geared toward keeping the undesirables out.” This had rippling effects, as student body Presidents and their cabinets came mostly from the Greek system, leaving non-Greeks, which include all black students, until the previously mentioned black fraternity, few avenues for positions into the student government. Students in the article believed the racial situation at the school was, “blacks and whites remain

⁷⁸ “Williams Wins UPI Player Title,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, September 18, 1974.

⁷⁹ Lynn Burns, “Williams is Far from Being Gentle,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 18, 1974.

⁸⁰ “Reed is Not Indescribable as Rebels’ Leading Rusher,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, November 1, 1974; Mac DeMere, “Curtis Weathers is Hot this Season,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 14, 1974.

socially segregated by their own decision.” Even ASB president George Yarbrough described the relationship between white and black students as, “between, indifferent and good.”⁸¹

A piece highlighting the Clarion-Ledger on their hire of former University of Mississippi journalism graduate, Linda Buford, becoming the first black reporter hired by the paper out of Jackson, Mississippi was set alongside other representations of progress.⁸² The Army ROTC program saw a rise in the enrollment of black students. Supported by the NAACP the ROTC was a way for students, including black students, to pay for school expenses. Associate professor of Military Science, Tom Kuypers stated, “we don’t want an all-white Army ROTC here.”⁸³

This stands in contrast with the lone letter of dissent published in the spring of 1975. The author believed that African Americans need to fight for recognition that went beyond just statistics showing their status as present. To achieve this, African Americans would need to unite, share a collective consciousness that directed them towards the same goal. He set his creed out as, “we should decide now whether we want our voice heard or whether we just want to be ‘a good nigger’.”⁸⁴ The feelings expressed by this student had become a rarer sight among student publications.

The fall of 1975 marked the senior season for Robert “Gentle Ben” Williams. Awards continued to come in for him, receiving another UPI Lineman of the Week award.⁸⁵ By the time

⁸¹ Bill Fuller, “HEW/ Students Agree Discrimination Unfelt,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 24, 1974.

⁸² Jan Jacobs, “Ledger Hires 1st Black Reporter,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, January 22, 1975.

⁸³ Fred Anklan, “Black Enrollment Rises in ROTC,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, January 29, 1975.

⁸⁴ James Knox, “Letters: Black Recognition,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, March 10, 1975.

the season came to a close he was considered to be a high round draft pick for the NFL.⁸⁶

Perhaps the highest honor bestowed on Williams in his final season was being elected Colonel Reb, making him the first black student to hold this position.⁸⁷ This election is often held as a symbol of major racial inclusion at the university. As with all Colonel Rebs, the year book featured Williams photographed along with the 1975 winner of the Miss Ole Miss election. What sets the 1975 image apart for previous years is the care the photographer took in posing their subjects. Williams and Barbara Biggs (Miss Ole Miss) are situated on opposite sides of the fence, in a way that this black man was in no way in physical contact with a white woman. A striking visual that both described how far the university had come to elect Williams and how far it still had to go to reach racial inclusion.⁸⁸

Following the election in the spring of 1976, one student, Greg Lisby, began to question what role, if any, the Civil War vestiges surrounding them had on campus. Naming all the relics he could see on campus included; the statue in front of the Lyceum loop, the stained-glass window to remember the University Greys, athletic team name “Rebel”, Confederate battle flags at football games, even the Mississippi state flag “was designed to immortalize the Confederate battle flag.” Lisby was not only unashamed of his ancestor deserting the Confederate army but proud. Believing that the school and its people may not have been able to change its past, it still had a say in its future.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ “UPI selects Gentle Ben Lineman of the Week,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, October 1, 1975.

⁸⁶ Billy Watkins, “Reb Ben Williams Expected to Receive High Draft Spot,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, December 10, 1975.

⁸⁷ “Biggs, Williams Receive Honors,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, November 7, 1975.

⁸⁸ *Colonel Reb and Miss Ole Miss*, 1976, published in University of Mississippi yearbook. *Ole Miss '72*. Oxford: (University of Mississippi, 1976), 237.

The sentiments expressed by Greg Lisby may have been ahead of the rest of the university. One response by a university Professor cut right to heart of the problem, “I know that you are right; yet, there is a segment of your message that threatens the Southern Section of my soul.” This letter set up the juxtaposition of his feelings wanting to remember that the “rebellious environment...that gave us provincialism gave us, also, Professor Silver...that gave us ‘Colonel Rebel’ gave us, also, Ben Williams.” This professor acknowledges that he could not overcome his own “racist” demons. For all his acknowledgement he still saw the simple changing of the team name as “ignoring history” and comparable to Orwell’s book “1984.”⁹⁰ Other replies to Lisby’s piece tended to take less of an objective approach. Asking if calling the team “Rebels” really offend anyone? Or telling Lisby that if he was unhappy with the situation to leave campus. Finally, one student defended the Confederate statue by saying the “people in the South revere their dead.”⁹¹

In the spring of 1976, *The Daily Mississippian* decided to give hate group leader David Duke a platform for his ideas. Without ever condemning the Ku Klux Klan, senior journalism major, Leslie Banahan, gave Duke the stage to say that “the Klan during Reconstruction stopped violence and rape and burning. It restored decency to Southern society.” Without any historical context offered, the article written by Leslie Banahan came off as more of a pro-Klan piece.⁹²

⁸⁹ Greg Lisby, “‘Fergit, Hell!’ Antebellum Fantasies Obstructing South’s Progress,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, March 8, 1976.

⁹⁰ Dudley E. Sykes, “Letters: Puts Us in Good Company: Battle with Self Southern Tradition,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, March 12, 1976.

⁹¹ Tucker Henley, “Letters: Lisby’s Editorial Opinion Unbelievable, Fails to Comprehend South’s Feelings,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, March 11, 1976.; Mary Hunter, “Students, Alums Rally to ‘Rebels’,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, March 11, 1976.; Thomas Kesler, “View of Future to Decide South’s Progress,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, March 11, 1976.

⁹² Leslie Banahan, “Grand Wizard David Duke: The Man Behind the Sheet,” (Oxford, MS), *Daily Mississippian*, April 13, 1976.

CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION

By allowing the leader of the KKK a forum to speak on campus and not stating in the paper that his views did not reflect those of the *Daily* or the university, the author showed a lack of willingness to empathize with minority students, especially African Americans. James “Blind Jim” Ivy and the sexual race politics that surrounded his existence on campus were never far from the minds of the University administration, as the events of the publication of the spring 1973 IMAGES magazine show. Integration was far from inclusion, Greek societies excluded black men at the school, forcing the formation of a black fraternity on campus. This exclusion extended beyond social clubs, even though the student newspaper *Daily Mississippian* did employ some African American journalist students, many felt that it was still impossible to obtain the position of editor. In response the Black Student Union financed the *Spectator*, a paper written and edited by black journalist majors. The paper’s abrupt abandonment calls for further study on African American journalism in Southern Universities. The first half the 1970s did see some progress at the university, Robert “Gentle Ben” Williams became not only the first African American football player for the Rebels but also was the first black student elected Colonel Reb, the highest elected honor that the student body can bestow on one of its members. Not until 2012, four years after the election of Barack Obama, did Ole Miss elect its first African American student body president, Kimbrey Dandridge.⁹³ Although students like Williams were in some ways able to transcend the social divisions at the university, by summer of 1976 when

⁹³ Valerie Strauss, “First black female Ole Miss student body president reacts to newest racial incident at university,” *The Washington Post*, February 25, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/02/25/first-black-female-ole-miss-student-body-president-reacts-to-newest-racial-incident-at-university/?utm_term=.411a6a7adabd (accessed December 12, 2017)

the NFL drafted Williams the University of Mississippi was very much still composed of two separate student bodies occupying one campus.

Why did Southerners, particularly white Southerners, continue redraw the lines of segregation on their campuses, excluding African Americans from many social engagements? Why do these same Southerners cling tightly to their Confederate past, even after some acknowledge the problems this can cause? Is this a way to continue to perceive the South as a separate identity apart from the rest of the nation? Where does the rise of conservatism fit into this this discussion? Was the Women’s Liberation Movement, which was growing in popularity at this time, an ally of the African American student’s fight for social equality? If not, why would they want to distance their movement from the latter? Were there physical spaces of segregation on campus: “no go” spots?

These questions will have to be subjects of future research. Individually they represent shortcomings in this paper, while collectively they offer a roadmap for future historical work. To solve these questions, it will be important to expand the source material beyond the student newspapers. Looking at area church records could expose how Republican politicians took root in a formally Democrat state. In trying to identify how and where segregation reestablished itself on campus it will be necessary to examine university club records, including membership and activities, as well as looking at entertainment events such as concerts and movie attendance. Performance, in the ways people interact with each other, can show a great deal about its participants.

Shifting focus towards informal challenges to desegregation would benefit the historiography of the civil rights movement. This thesis helps to show the value a new paradigm offers by moving the conversation into the 1970s and on to college campuses. The addition of

sports as a possible tool in helping create these informal lines segregation adds a new dimension to the historiography of sports as well. Integrating sports does not end with the playing field. The fervent defense of “lost cause” relics, including the Stars and Bars and Dixie, aided in keeping the stands almost an entirely white only space even after Williams joined the team. By examining the *de facto* segregation that took place on the University of Mississippi’s campus in the first half of the 1970s, we are one step further towards this goal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Black Student Union. "Editorial." *Spectator*, March, 1972, University of Mississippi Archives.

"Blacks Unsocialized." *Spectator*, March, 1972, University of Mississippi Archives.

Hubbard, J., & Morris, B. "The Law School – a Black Phase-out?" *Spectator*, May, 1972, University of Mississippi Archives.

"Leroy." *Spectator*, December, 1971, University of Mississippi Archives.

Morris, Burnice. "Editorial." *Spectator*, December, 1971, University of Mississippi Archives.

Morris, Burnice. "Editorial." *Spectator*, May, 1972, University of Mississippi Archives.

Owens, Harry. "Why Teach Black History?" *Spectator*, March, 1972, University of Mississippi Archives.

University of Mississippi. *Ole Miss '72*. Oxford, MS: 1972. University of Mississippi Archives.

Newspapers

Daily Mississippian. University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi.

Secondary Sources

Barrett, Russell H. *Integration at Ole Miss*. Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1965.

Bartley, Numan V. *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950's*. Louisiana State University Press, 1969.

Bloom, John. *Sports Matter: Race, Recreation, and Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2002.

Carroll, Peter N. *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: America in the 1970's*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000.

Cowie, Jefferson *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*. New York: New Press, 2010.

Eagles, Charles W. *Price of Defiance: James Merideth and the Integration of Ole Miss*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

- . “Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era,” *Journal of Southern History*, 66, no. 4, (200): 815-16.
- Egerton, John. *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.
- Farrar, Hayward. “Prying the Door Farther Open: A Memoir of Black Student Protest at the University of Maryland at College Park, 1966-1970.” In *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners, and College Campuses*, edited by Peter Wallenstein. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2008.
- Fredrickson, George M. *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- . *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971.
- Garrow, David J. *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*. New York: William Marrow and Company, 1986.
- Genovese, Eugene D. *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy & Society of the Slave South*. 2nd Edition. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1965.
- Hale, Grace Elizabeth. *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.
- Hawkins, Billy Joe. *The New Plantation: Black Athletes, College Sports, and Predominantly White NCAA Institutions*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Kilvington, Daniel. *Race, Racism, and Sports Journalism: Black, White, and Read All Over*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Kohler-Hausmann, Julilly. *Getting Tough: Welfare and Imprisonment in 1970s America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.
- Martin, Charles H. “Hold That (Color) Line! Black Exclusion and Southeastern Conference Football.” In *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners, and College Campuses*, edited by Peter Wallenstein. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2008.
- Miller, Patrick B. *Sports and the Color Line: Black Athletes and Race Relations in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Norrell, Robert J. *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Civil Rights Movement in Tuskegee*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

- Ownby, Ted. *Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013.
- Painter, Nell Irvin. *The History of White People*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.
- Pratt, Robert. *We Shall Not be Moved: The Desegregation of the University of Georgia*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2002.
- Roediger, David R. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. Revised Edition. New York: Verso, 1991.
- . *Working Towards Whiteness: How American Immigrants Became White the Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs*. New York: Basic Books, 2005.
- Silver, James W. *Mississippi: The Closed Society*. Oxford: University of Mississippi Press, 1964.
- Schelling, Thomas C. *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1978.
- Sokol, Jason. *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of the Civil Rights, 1945-1975*. New York: Vintage Books, 2006.
- Stein, Judith. *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Sugrue, Thomas J. *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*. New York: Random House, 2009.
- Thornton, J. Mills. *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002.
- Tygiel, Jules. *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Wallenstein, Peter. "Black Southerners and Nonblack Universities: The Process of Desegregating Southern Higher Education, 1935-1965." In *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners, and College Campuses*, edited by Peter Wallenstein. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2008.