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White-Collared White Supremacists: The Mississippi Citizens' Councils and the Origins of Rightwing Media

by Ian Davis

William J. Simmons, who occupied a precarious position among his peers, has remained a relatively obscure name in the history of post-war conservatism. The son of a wealthy Jackson banker and premier intellectual of the Citizens' Council movement, Simmons's loyalties, on their face, seemed to reside solely with the South and its racial hierarchy.¹ Yet though he fought to preserve racial segregation, Simmons ultimately envisioned the Citizens' Council as a major part of the conservative movement and saw the potential of media as a way to define and disseminate conservative ideology.² While partisan news outlets on television and the internet have become commonplace, rightwing media titans such as Fox News and burgeoning rightist internet outlets such as Breitbart and InfoWars grew not only out of the labors of iconic Northern and Sunbelt conservatives, but also out of segregationists in the Deep South.³

The Citizens' Council represented the legalistic, middle-class branch of the segregationist movement, and no Council chapters were more organized and innovative than those of Mississippi.⁴ Comprised of "the best men" of the white South, these chapters drew entrepreneurs, planters, and white-collar professionals into their ranks and engaged

¹ W. F. Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 31, Citizens' Council Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 119.

² Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 39, Citizens' Council Collection.

³ Nicole Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), ix-xvi, 260-276.

⁴ Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South during the 1950's* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 86-7.

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primarily in legal defenses of segregation and economic reprisals against their grassroots adversaries.⁵ The Citizens' Council proved more than an extra-political pressure group, and its use of print, television, and radio media to shape the agenda on American race relations and align the South with the national conservative movement reflected a strategy grander in ambition than the preservation of segregation alone. Although Robert "Tut" Patterson founded the first Citizens' Council in Indianola, Mississippi, in the summer of 1954 in response to the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Simmons's Jackson chapter proved the more influential segment of the movement within and beyond the state.⁶ It produced the monthly journal of the umbrella organization, the Citizens' Councils of America (CCA), as well as the organization's television and radio program, the Citizens' Council *Forum*, on which southern, national, and international conservative leaders appeared.⁷ Despite its regional and segregationist origins, this study argues that the Citizens' Council pursued and achieved footholds in print, radio, and television media in order to advance a middle-class, pro-segregationist conservatism.

The scholarship on the Citizens' Council has shifted from interpreting its origin as a regional backlash against federal policy on race relations to uncovering its ties to postwar conservatism, but the role of the Citizens' Council in the origins of rightwing media remains a largely open frontier.⁸ Stephanie Rolph's analysis of its use of media to gain the favor of conservatives outside of the region has shed light on the centrality of media to the Citizens' Council strategy and marks

⁵ W. F. Minor, "The Citizens' Councils—An Incredible Decade of Defiance," undated, 3-4, 8, Citizens' Council Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, 104; McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*, 20.

⁶ Minor, "The Citizens' Councils—An Incredible Decade of Defiance," undated, 1, 3, Citizens' Council Collection; Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 39, Citizens' Council Collection; McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*, 119, 140-41; Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, 85-7; McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*, vii-viii, 16-18.

⁷ *The Citizens' Council* was published in Jackson, Mississippi, from 1954 to 1961. The Citizens' Council *Forum* ran from 1957 through 1966.

⁸ Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, 82-104; McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*, 363; Joseph Crespiño, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counter Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 4, 8-9; Stephanie R. Rolph, "Courting Conservatism: White Resistance and the Ideology of Race in the 1960s," in *The Right Side of the Sixties: Reexamining Conservatism's Decade of Transformation*, eds. Laura Jane Gifford and Daniel K. Williams (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 21-25.

the starting point of a larger discussion on segregationists' influence on rightwing media.⁹ Recent studies on rightwing media such as Bryan Thrift's *Conservative Bias* (2014) and Nicole Hemmer's *Messengers of the Right* (2016) have not only extended the time frame of conservative media endeavors but have also uncovered segregationists' engagement in them.¹⁰ Yet, these historians' overwhelming emphasis remains on notable names such as William F. Buckley, Jr., Clarence Manion, and Jesse Helms, prioritizing a largely Northern or Sunbelt narrative of rightwing media's origins while casting Deep Southern conservatives and segregationists in a subordinate role.¹¹ Citizens' Council media ventures reveal that segregationists not only seized the initiative in creating rightwing media platforms in the Deep South, but also projected their message across the nation.

In the South, Mississippi led the way in the production and dissemination of rightwing media, and the Citizens' Council represented a significant grassroots effort to create separate, ideologically biased networks of news and information. The CCA printed the first issue of *The Citizens' Council* the same year that *National Review* printed its first issue, and by the late 1950s, Citizens' Council *Forum* broadcasts spanned across most of the continental United States.¹² The emergence of rightwing media was as historically contingent on an event in the Deep South as it was in the Sunbelt.¹³ Insofar as the reaction of white southerners to the Democratic Party's New Deal and Fair Deal policies laid the foundation for Sunbelt conservatism, the Party's increasing commitment to desegregation drove the South's rightward and eventual

⁹ Rolph, "Courting Conservatism: White Resistance and the Ideology of Race in the 1960s," 21-25.

¹⁰ Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, x-xii, xiv-xv, 116-117; Bryan Hardin Thrift, *Conservative Bias: How Jesse Helms Pioneered the Rise of Right-Wing Media and Realigned the Republican Party* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 1-14.

¹¹ Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, xi-xii; Thrift, *Conservative Bias*, 1-2.

¹² The first issue of the first volume of *The Citizens' Council* was published in October of 1955, see: Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 32, Citizens' Council Collection; "William F. Buckley Jr.: The Man and his Magazine," *National Review*, accessed July 19, 2017, <http://www.nationalreview.com/about>; "Citizens' Council Forum on TV and Radio," *The Citizens' Council*, April 1959, 3, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

¹³ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*, new edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015 [2001]), xvii.

Republican realignment.¹⁴ Rather than a perception of liberal media bias, white southerners' embrace of rightwing media was spawned by the immediate reality of waning political power, and media offered them an avenue to counterattack liberalism from without. Through its media platforms, the Citizens' Council blended segregation with conservative tenets such as property rights and anticommunism to project an ideology of white-collared white supremacy separate from the Klan and the Far-Right. Although Sunbelt segregationists such as Jesse Helms and Strom Thurmond became the southern leaders of the New Right, the Citizens' Council, for a time, was a recognized voice within rightwing media and in the national conservative movement.¹⁵

The publication that became the official paper of the Citizens' Councils of America began months after the formation of the first Citizens' Council in Indianola, Mississippi. Under the editorship of W. J. Simmons, *The Citizens' Council* operated out of Jackson and covered state, national, and foreign affairs.¹⁶ Jackson journalist Wilson F. Minor described Simmons as "a highly educated, world-traveled, semi-intellectual who had been long impressed with white supremacist causes" and who "saw the Citizens [sic] Council as the catalyst for creating a new political party in America – a party, of course, in which he would have a dominant role."¹⁷ As Simmons himself suggested in a 1958 speech in Oakland, Iowa, the "Citizens' Councils are not just a pro-segregation movement They represent a fundamental conservative movement."¹⁸ Though the Citizens' Council grew out of white southern outrage over the *Brown* Decision, Simmons and his paper fit into a wider spectrum of rightwing activism during the 1950s that sociologist Daniel Bell termed the "Radical Right."¹⁹

¹⁴ Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2011), 4-5.

¹⁵ Thrift, *Conservative Bias*, 5, 196, 204-6; Joseph Crespino, *Strom Thurmond's America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 8-11, 253-4, 274-5, 296-7.

¹⁶ Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 31, Citizens' Council Collection; "The Citizens' Council – Annual Report," August 1956, 2, Citizens' Council Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

¹⁷ Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 39, Citizens' Council Collection.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ The "Radical Right" was a term coined by Bell that came to be the title of a volume he contributed to and edited. For more on the "Radical Right," see: Daniel Bell, *The Radical Right: The New American Right Expanded and Updated* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963).

Simmons graduated from Mississippi College in 1937 and attended the Sorbonne before the Second World War, but scandal defined his life and endeavors prior to becoming editor of *The Citizens' Council*.²⁰ Minor reported that Simmons harbored sympathies for "Adolf Hitler and the Aryan theories of the Nazis" and that he came under the scrutiny of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as a result.²¹ According to Neil McMillen, however, Simmons's Nazi sympathies had been "darkly rumored" but "never substantiated."²² While Simmons harbored a white supremacist worldview, his most apparent sympathies resided with the segregationist states of Rhodesia and South Africa.²³ Beyond his politics, Simmons received a discharge due to psychological problems two months after entering the United States Navy in 1942.²⁴ Simmons's beliefs and personal conduct comported with the early, explicitly bigoted phases of the postwar Right, but as editor of *The Citizens' Council*, he devised a more nuanced agenda that united the interests of segregationists with those of the wider postwar conservative movement.²⁵

As Simmons stated on a 1958 *Forum* episode, the Citizens' Councils came into existence primarily "to inform and educate the people of the South as to some of the problems facing them," and *The Citizens' Council* publication represented an outgrowth of this mission.²⁶ It functioned as a respectable print outlet for the Citizens' Council movement and the segregationist cause at large, yet to view the paper only as a segregationist platform reduces the range of its ideas without acknowledging

²⁰ Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 31, Citizens' Council Collection; W. F. Minor, "WILLIAM JAMES SIMMONS, ADMINISTRATOR OF CITIZENS COUNCILS OF MISSISSIPPI, PERSONAL HISTORY," undated, 1, Citizens' Council Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

²¹ Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 31, Citizens' Council Collection.

²² McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*, 122-23.

²³ W. J. Simmons, "Report on Africa Trip," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 6622, 1966, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

²⁴ Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 31, Citizens' Council Collection; Minor, "WILLIAM JAMES SIMMONS, ADMINISTRATOR OF CITIZENS COUNCILS OF MISSISSIPPI, PERSONAL HISTORY," undated, 1, Citizens' Council Collection.

²⁵ John George and Laird Wilcox, *Nazis, Communists, Klansmen, and Others on the Fringe: Political Extremism in America* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1992), 251-53, 256-57.

²⁶ W. J. Simmons, "1st Anniversary of the Forum," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 58 x 14, 1958, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

its contributions to rightwing media and conservative discourse. Early issues offered vitriolic criticisms of the *Brown* Decision and the Eisenhower Administration's implementation of desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas, and while *Brown* and Little Rock remained subjects of the paper, *The Citizens' Council* incorporated a broader array of talking points in succeeding volumes.

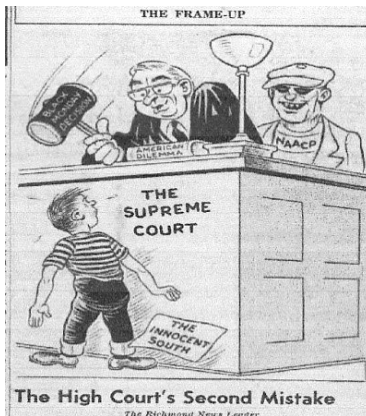


Fig. 1

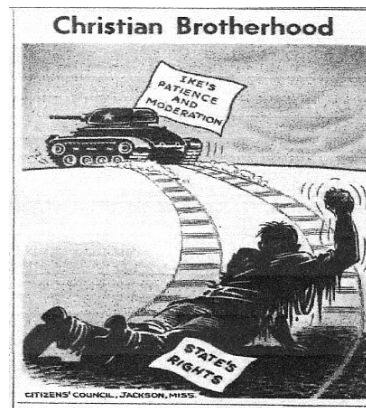


Fig. 2

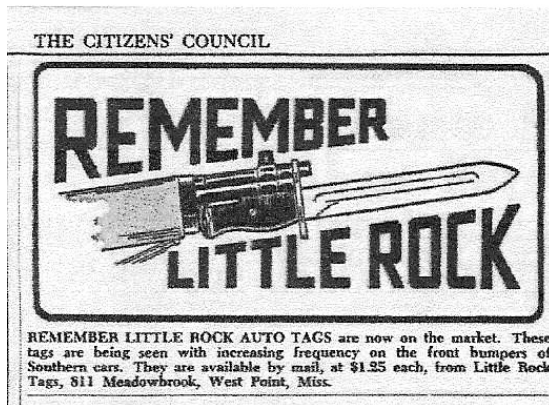


Fig. 3

Figure 1: A cartoon representation of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision on the front page of *The Citizens' Council*, November 1955. Image courtesy of the Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

Figure 2: A cartoon representation of the Little Rock Crisis on the front page of *The Citizens' Council*, October 1957. Image courtesy of the Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

Figure 3: An advertisement for an automobile tag protesting the Eisenhower Administration's handling of the Little Rock Crisis on page 2 of *The Citizens' Council*, December 1958. Image courtesy of the Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

The *Brown* decision, the Little Rock Crisis, and desegregation each served as external threats around which *The Citizens' Council* could rally white southerners, but the paper did not focus exclusively on civil rights activism or federal action against segregation. Throughout its publication, the paper concentrated on civil rights groups' communist sympathies or connections to the Soviet Union, sensationalist accounts of black criminal activity in the North, and advocacy pieces on segregationist states in Africa. Rather than being simply segregationist or regional in scope, Simmons attempted to frame these topics within a larger hierarchy of conservative ideas circulating in the postwar era Sunbelt.²⁷

Historians have interpreted segregationist efforts to malign civil rights advocates and legislation with the labels of "Red" or "Pink" purely as a defensive deflection through which they could delegitimize the civil rights movement, but *The Citizens' Council's* focus on communism

²⁷ "Hoover Refuses To Clear NAACP," *The Citizens' Council*, March 1958, 1-2, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; "It's About TIME! Negro Crimes Revealed," *The Citizens' Council*, April 1958, 1, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; "A Rip In 'The Paper Curtain'—Savages Stalk Corridors Of Northern 'Blackboard Jungles,'" *The Citizens' Council*, November 1960, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; John R. Parker, "Western Nations Undermine White Influence In Africa," *The Citizens' Council*, December 1960, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; John R. Parker, "New Society in South Africa Seeks Closer Ties With White Southerners," *The Citizens' Council*, March 1961, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; "The Pro-Communist Record of the NAACP Board Chairman Robert C. Weaver," *The Citizens' Council*, January 1961, 1, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; "U.S. Could Learn From South Africa," *The Citizens' Council*, April 1961, 3, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 5-7.

reflected a stratagem different from simple McCarthyism.²⁸ No cause during the 1950s was greater in scope and more favorable to conservatism than anticommunism, and aligning segregation with it fit into Simmons's grander vision of the Citizens' Council movement.²⁹ The Citizens' Council sought to preserve segregation by "courting" conservatives and winning colorblind, anticommunist defenders of the South's racial order.³⁰ By emphasizing the purported communist orientation, affiliation, or sympathy of groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) or the National Council of Churches (NCC), the paper affirmed the anticommunist credentials of the Citizens' Council while undermining those of civil rights advocates.³¹

Although *The Citizens Council's* language of anticommunism and national conservatism suggested a courtship of the Right, the implicit purpose of this framing, from Simmons's perspective, was to set or, at minimum, influence the conservative agenda.³² Rather than to coordinate a loose confederation of regional or local pressure groups, Simmons hoped to "catalyze" a national rightwing movement that would preserve segregation.³³ The paper served as both a separate, pro-segregationist channel of information and as a propagandistic vehicle placing the Citizens' Council in the anticommunist wing of postwar conservatism. With headlines like "Northern Whites Are Organizing!," "Citizens' Council Given Utah Oil Land," and "New Society In South Africa Seeks Closer Ties With White Southerners," the paper framed the Citizens' Councils as the vanguard of a national and, at times, international conservative

²⁸ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 28.

²⁹ Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 39, Citizens' Council Collection; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, xviii.

³⁰ Rolph, "Courting Conservatism: White Resistance and the Ideology of Race in the 1960s," 21-23.

³¹ "NAACP, Reds, Pinks Are Well-Represented on N. C. Civil Rights Advisory Committee," *The Citizens' Council*, April 1959, 1, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; "Left-Wing Clergy in NCC Advocates Recognition Of Mao's Communist China," *The Citizens' Council*, May 1959, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

³² Rolph, "Courting Conservatism: White Resistance and the Ideology of Race in the 1960s," 21.

³³ Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 39, Citizens' Council Collection.

segregationist movement.³⁴ Ultimately, *The Citizens' Council* synthesized the preservation of segregation with anticommunism to render segregation not only a goal of America's anticommunist crusade, but a position palatable to white-collared conservatives around the country.

The paper's synthesis of pro-segregation and anticommunist arguments encapsulated larger shifts in traditional racism and in white southerners' defense of segregation. Its decreasing focus on traditional white supremacist talking points such as miscegenation, social Darwinism, and biblically-ordained white supremacy reflected a turn from explicit to more implicit racist frameworks. This shift supported the CCA's effort to transcend from a regional to a national entity. To be sure, *The Citizens' Council's* minstrel-style caricatures of African Americans, such as a cartoon titled "Levittown, Pa." in which white suburbanites play a song titled "Ole (censored) Joe" to a prospective black resident, did harken back to older white supremacist tropes.³⁵ More often than not, however, the paper's cartoons sought to link the cause of white Mississippians to domestic anticommunism and, increasingly, to the plight of whites in decolonizing Africa.

³⁴ "Northern Whites Are Organizing!," *The Citizens' Council*, February 1960, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; "Citizens' Council Given Utah Oil Land," *The Citizens' Council*, November 1960, 3, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; John R. Parker, "New Society in South Africa Seeks Closer Ties With White Southerners," *The Citizens' Council*, March 1961, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

³⁵ "Levittown, Pa.," *The Citizens' Council*, November 1957, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library Mississippi State University; "Mau Mau Party—Mississippi Headquarters," *The Citizens' Council*, December 1958, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; "The String Pullers," *The Citizens' Council*, May 1959, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.



Fig. 4

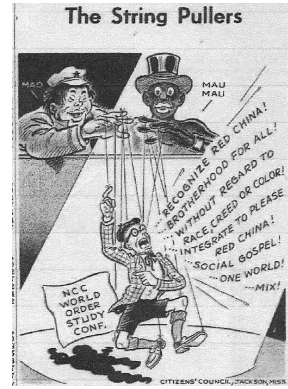


Fig. 5

Figure 4: A cartoon likening African-American political activists to the Mau Mau rebels in *The Citizens' Council*, December 1958. Image courtesy of the Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

Figure 5: A cartoon maligning the National Council of Churches (NCC) as puppets of People's Republic of China (PRC) leader Mao Zedong and the Mau Mau rebels in *The Citizens' Council*, May 1959. Image courtesy of the Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

As a 1961 article in *The Citizens' Council* revealed, white South Africans displayed an interest in the Citizens' Council movement and dignitaries from South Africa and Rhodesia appeared as guests on the Citizens' Council *Forum*.³⁶ Simmons played a personal role in the CCA's alliance-building efforts in Africa, making trips to segregationist African states and delivering favorable reports on their economies and race relations on the *Forum*.³⁷ Though the paper's cartoons relied on older racial tropes, they also reflected an internationalist view of segregation

³⁶ Parker, "New Society in South Africa Seeks Closer Ties With White Southerners," 4, McIlhenny Collection; John Gaunt, "Circumstances Leading Up to Rhodesian Independence," *Citizens' Council Forum* #6611A, 1966, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Basie Maartens, "Life in Southwest Africa," *Citizens' Council Forum* # 6617A, 1966, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

³⁷ W. J. Simmons, "Report on Africa Trip," *Citizens' Council Forum* # 6622, 1966, CCFC.

as a front in a global defense of the western, implicitly white, way of life that ironically paralleled some African-American activists' alignment of civil rights with pan-African struggles against colonialism.³⁸

While articles and cartoons on foreign affairs reflected the CCA's international aspirations, articles "exposing" criminal activity in urban centers such as New York and Los Angeles that resulted from integration situated the Citizens' Council at the head of a burgeoning national consensus on crime and race.³⁹ Beyond explicit race baiting, articles such as "Negro Wolf Pack Slays and Rapes in Michigan" and "Savages Stalk Corridors of Northern 'Blackboard Jungles'" that often referenced FBI statistics on urban crime reflected the adaptation of the Citizens' Council media strategy to national postwar racial constructions.⁴⁰ Nationwide anxieties about youth delinquency and urban guerilla warfare in the Third World migrating to American cities became salient concerns by the end of the 1950s, and *The Citizens' Council's* crime articles spoke within the ideologically and geographically wider dialogue on "law and order."⁴¹ Insofar as Jesse Helms's WRAL-TV network saturated its programming slots with westerns and crime dramas as a subtle means of political positioning, *The Citizens' Council* focused on black criminal activity to affirm the CCA's commitment to "law and order" as much as to malign civil rights activism.⁴² In this regard, the paper's crime exposés represented more than straightforward race baiting as they catered to broader anxieties on criminal activity with the strategic ends of discrediting desegregation and reinvigorating segregation as a national rather than simply southern institution. The paper's coverage of crime suggested a positioning of segregation within the national discourse on

³⁸ "Mau Mau Party—Mississippi Headquarters," 4, McIlhenny Collection; Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 220-26.

³⁹ "It's About TIME! Negro Crimes Revealed," 1, 4, McIlhenny Collection; "A Rip In *The Paper Curtain*'—Savages Stalk Corridors Of Northern 'Blackboard Jungles,'" 4, McIlhenny Collection.

⁴⁰ "Black Cult Menaces White Race: 'Your Time Is Up' Says 'Messenger' To All White Men," *The Citizens' Council*, August 1959, 1, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; "It's About TIME! Negro Crimes Revealed," 1, 4; "A Rip In *The Paper Curtain*'—Savages Stalk Corridors Of Northern 'Blackboard Jungles,'" 4; "Negro Wolf Pack Slays and Rapes in Michigan," *The Citizens' Council*, June 1956), 9, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Crime to the War on Poverty: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 106-12.

⁴² Thrift, *Conservative Bias*, 142-143.

“law and order,” and its “Letters To The Editor” section revealed how it potentially succeeded in this endeavor as well as the Citizens’ Council movement’s appeal outside the South.

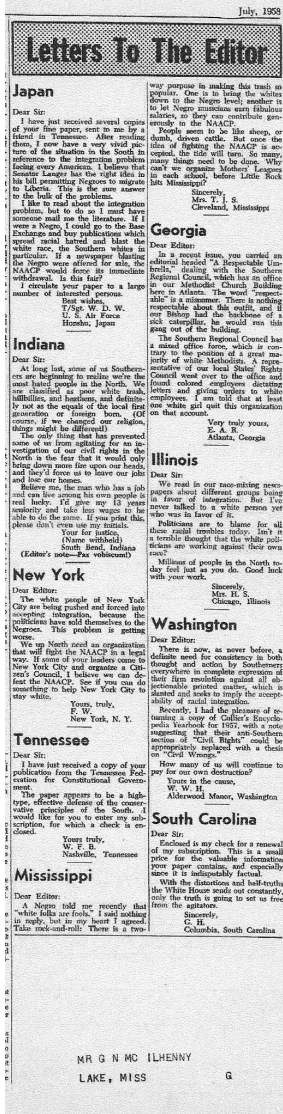
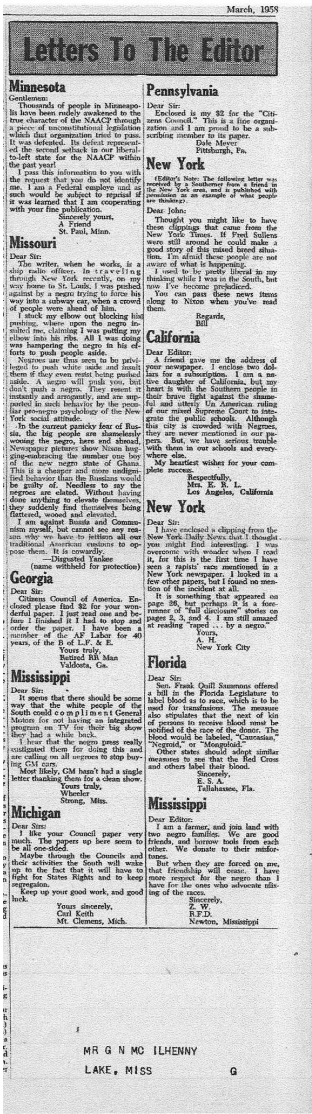


Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Figure 6: The Citizens’ Council, March 1958. Image courtesy of the Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

Figure 7: *The Citizens' Council*, July 1958. Image courtesy of the Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

Contrary to the regional and state orientation of the paper, *The Citizens' Council's* "Letters To The Editor" section featured letters from around the country, suggesting that the paper reached a significantly broader audience. These letters demand some skepticism due to their predominantly anonymous authorship as well as the paper's purpose as a propaganda platform for the CCA and the greater Citizens' Council movement, but the popularity of *The Citizens' Council* outside of Mississippi and the Deep South is neither impossible nor improbable. Letters of citizens from northern states like New York, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio and western states such as California pledging monetary contributions and pleading for organizational training from the CCA would confirm the Citizens' Council's legitimacy to Southern as well as non-Southern readers, yet the context and maneuvers of the CCA suggest far more.⁴³

Simmons as well as other prominent Citizens' Council leaders engaged in speaking tours in northern and western states as well as outside the U.S. and attempted to establish organizational ties with activists in California and segregationists in Africa.⁴⁴ These activities suggest that the Citizens' Council possessed sympathizers outside the Deep South, and while few records exist on the attendance and reception of these events and speeches except for the testimony of the Citizens' Councilors themselves, it remains probable that *The Citizens' Council* possessed a readership above the Mason-Dixon Line. Studies dismantling the liberal consensus narratives of the 1950s and 1960s and the exceptionalist narratives of southern racism and northern colorblindness suggest a portion of these letters were authentic.⁴⁵ The embrace of Citizens' Council outreach efforts in northern and western states as well as the

⁴³ "Letters To The Editor," *The Citizens' Council*, March 1958, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; "Letters To The Editor," *The Citizens' Council*, July 1958, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

⁴⁴ Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 39, Citizens' Council Collection; McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*, 140-46; for African connections, see: notes 39-40.

⁴⁵ Matthew D. Lassiter and Joseph Crespino, "Introduction: The End of Southern History," *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 2010), 6-8.

later popularity of the arch-segregationist Alabama governor George Wallace during his 1968 presidential run suggest that the ideas of *The Citizens' Council* resonated beyond the Deep South.⁴⁶

The Citizens' Council ran from 1955 to 1961 as the premier publication of the CCA, but it was far more than a print media platform for segregationists. It constituted a Deep Southern foray into rightwing media and revealed segregationists and conservatives' ideological closeness during the 1950s and 1960s. Rather than segregationists latching onto the burgeoning conservative movement, however, the paper advanced conservative ideas filtered through southern racial frameworks. *The Citizens' Council* reflected the view of Simmons and his fellow Citizens' Councilors that the relationship between conservatism and segregation was a natural one rather than an alliance of convenience. For the Mississippi Citizens' Council movement, segregation existed within the conservative ideological tent as both a legal institution and a way of life threatened by the Scylla and Charybdis of increasing racial liberalism and expanding federal power. Just as civil rights activists packaged their struggle against segregation as a microcosm of the global struggle between American democracy and totalitarianism, *The Citizens' Council* framed the preservation of the white southern way of life as a test not simply of the South's anticommunist credentials, but of the nation.⁴⁷ *The Citizens' Council* contrasted the colorblind conservatism that figures like William F. Buckley and Clarence Manion projected, but it was no less a part of the "first generation" of conservative media activism and demonstrated the entrepreneurship of segregationists in rightwing media.⁴⁸

As the CCA began transitioning from print to radio and television, both the message and the audience of the Citizens' Council expanded. With the subtitle, "The American Viewpoint with a Southern Accent," Simmons and the CCA envisioned the Citizens' Council *Forum* as the voice of a national rather than purely regional movement.⁴⁹ Constituting

⁴⁶ For more on Wallace, see: John Egerton, *The Americanization of Dixie: The Southernization of America* (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1974), 126-150; Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 341-347.

⁴⁷ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 11.

⁴⁸ Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, x-xii

⁴⁹ The subtitle of the *Citizens' Council Forum* on TV and Radio. See: "Citizens' Council Forum on TV and Radio," *The Citizens' Council*, April 1959, 3, McIlhenny Collection.

the most ambitious media venture of the movement, the Forum offered commentary on state, regional, national, and international affairs to a viewership within and beyond the borders of Mississippi.⁵⁰ Although ostensibly an extension of the Jackson-based CCA and *The Citizens' Council*, the television and radio program aspired to and nominally achieved a national orientation. By 1958, it had moved its headquarters from Jackson to Washington, D.C., and according to an advertisement in a 1959 issue of *The Citizens' Council*, the *Forum* aired on television stations in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia as well as on television stations in New York, Illinois, Minnesota, Montana, and Wyoming.⁵¹

CITIZENS' COUNCIL FORUM
on TV and RADIO
THE AMERICAN VIEWPOINT WITH A SOUTHERN ACCENT

TELEVISION

ALABAMA
Mobile - WTVZ Channel 3
Montgomery - WTVZ Channel 3
Birmingham - WTVZ Channel 3

ARKANSAS
Little Rock - WTVZ Channel 3

ILLINOIS
Springfield - WTVZ Channel 3

LOUISIANA
New Orleans - WTVZ Channel 3

MONTANA
Billings - WTVZ Channel 3

SOUTH CAROLINA
Columbia - WTVZ Channel 3

VIRGINIA
Richmond - WTVZ Channel 3

WYOMING
Cheyenne - WTVZ Channel 3

RADIO

ALABAMA
Mobile - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio
Montgomery - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio
Birmingham - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

ARKANSAS
Little Rock - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

ILLINOIS
Springfield - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

LOUISIANA
New Orleans - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

MONTANA
Billings - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

SOUTH CAROLINA
Columbia - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

VIRGINIA
Richmond - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

WYOMING
Cheyenne - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

ALASKA
Anchorage - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

ARIZONA
Phoenix - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

ARKANSAS
Little Rock - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

CALIFORNIA
San Francisco - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

COLORADO
Denver - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

CONNECTICUT
Hartford - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

DELAWARE
Wilmington - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

FLORIDA
Jacksonville - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

GEORGIA
Atlanta - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

IDAHO
Boise - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

ILLINOIS
Chicago - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

INDIANA
Indianapolis - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

IOWA
Des Moines - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

KANSAS
Topeka - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

KENTUCKY
Lexington - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

LOUISIANA
New Orleans - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

MAINE
Portland - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

MARYLAND
Baltimore - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

MASSACHUSETTS
Boston - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

MISSISSIPPI
Jackson - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

MISSOURI
St. Louis - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

MONTANA
Billings - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

NEBRASKA
Omaha - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

NEVADA
Las Vegas - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

NEW YORK
New York City - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

NORTH CAROLINA
Raleigh - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

NORTH DAKOTA
Grand Forks - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

OHIO
Columbus - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

OKLAHOMA
Oklahoma City - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

PENNSYLVANIA
Philadelphia - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

RHODE ISLAND
Providence - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

SOUTH CAROLINA
Columbia - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

SOUTH DAKOTA
Sioux Falls - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

TENNESSEE
Nashville - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

TEXAS
Houston - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

UTAH
Salt Lake City - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

VIRGINIA
Richmond - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

WEST VIRGINIA
Martinsburg - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

WISCONSIN
Milwaukee - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

WYOMING
Cheyenne - WOPR (1000 kc) Radio

The Truth For A Change!
CITIZENS' COUNCIL FORUM

SUBSCRIBE NOW
1111 Pine Bluffway, Jackson, Mississippi
Circle 17 on Reader Service Card
Check or money order payable to The Citizens' Council
1111 Pine Bluffway (Please Print)
Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____
Zip: _____

Fig. 8

Figure 8: An advertisement listing the television and radio stations on which the Citizens' Council *Forum* aired, *The Citizens' Council*, April 1959. Image courtesy of the Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

⁵⁰ Rolph, "Courting Conservatism: White Resistance and the Ideology of Race in the 1960s," 25-26.

⁵¹ Ibid.; "Citizens' Council Forum on TV and Radio," *The Citizens' Council*, April 1959, 3, McIlhenny Collection.

Approximately two years later, *The Citizens' Council* reported the addition of seventy-five new stations broadcasting the *Forum*, reaching three-hundred and eighty-three stations total.⁵² Although the states with the most *Forum* television and radio broadcasts resided in the Deep South, the program's distribution above the Mason-Dixon Line revealed the Citizens' Council *Forum's* influence and credibility as a rightwing media operation. The *Forum* functioned as an agenda-setting tool with which the Citizens' Council could establish its legitimacy and bona fides as a southern faction within the national conservative movement.⁵³ Issues of *The Citizens' Council* framed the program as an "American" and therefore national perspective "with a Southern Accent," and in Simmons's own ideological vision, the *Forum* would not only allow white southerners to regain the initiative in the civil rights debate but would place them on the frontline of the national conservative counterrevolution against the postwar liberal consensus.⁵⁴

Despite the Citizens' Council's reputation as a segregationist organization, the *Forum* devoted equal-to-surpassing attention to domestic issues such as communist subversion and unrest on college campuses and foreign policy issues such as American relations with Rhodesia and, eventually, the Vietnam War. *Forum* episodes also engaged in informational campaigns about organizations such as the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), state equivalents thereof, the Citizens

⁵² "Citizens' Council Forum' TV-Radio Series Adds Another 75 Stations," *The Citizens' Council*, April-May, 1961, 4, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

⁵³ Rolph, "Courting Conservatism: White Resistance and the Ideology of Race in the 1960s," 36.

⁵⁴ *The Citizens' Council*, April 1959, 3, McIlhenny Collection, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

Council, as well as the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission.⁵⁵ The *Forum* offered a platform for groups friendly to the cause of the Citizens' Council and occasionally engaged in self-advertisement, but it also transcended the Council's original mission.⁵⁶ As the Citizens' Council *Forum's* radio and television distribution widened, its episodes continued to project southern critiques of integration's legality and necessity to audiences in Iowa, New York, and California, but also linked the ills of integration to those of federal spending and communist

⁵⁵ Martin Dies, John Bell Williams, William Colmer, Jamie Whitten, and Arthur Winstead, "Committee on Un-American Activities and Its Functions," Citizens' Council Forum # 57-1, 1957, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Carroll Gartin, "State Sovereignty Commission," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 597-57 x 7, 1957, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Citizens' Council *Forum* # 57-1, 1957, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Carroll Gartin, "State Sovereignty Commission," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 597-57 x 7, 1957, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; W. J. Simmons, "1st Anniversary of the Forum," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 58 x 14, 1958, CCFC; W. J. Simmons, "Informational and Educational Work of the Citizens' Councils," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 597-58 x 21, Citizens' Council Forum Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Samuel L. Devine, "Duties of the Ohio Un-American Activities Committee," Citizens' Council *Forum* #6013, 1960, Citizens' Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Library, Mississippi State University; Francis D. Walter, "House Committee on Un-American Activities," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 6114, 1961, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

⁵⁶ See note 26.

subversion.⁵⁷ On the one hand, this blending of messages vindicated the Citizens' Council as a respectable, middle-class voice among white southerners already sympathetic to the cause and among northern and western whites who might have otherwise viewed the South's brand of segregation more negatively. On the other hand, they shifted the conversation on the South and its institutions from one about white supremacy and segregation to a one about the unifying themes of the American Right that positioned the Citizens' Council within the greater, grassroots conservative counterrevolution. Yet, contrary to the view that the Citizens' Council *Forum* coded its white supremacist message in "Americanism," "anti-communism," and "states' rights" to bypass Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations, the *Forum* was not simply a Trojan horse for segregationists.⁵⁸

The Citizens' Council was more than "a white supremacist organization," and the format and messaging of the *Forum* reflected its members' identity as middle-class conservatives as well as their conviction in the intertwined destinies of segregation and conservatism.⁵⁹ The *Forum* dispensed with an explicitly southern, white supremacist message, going

⁵⁷ Tom Q. Ellis, "Northern Concept of Mississippi Race Relations," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 57 x 2, 1957, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Tom P. Brady, "Reactions to a speech made to the Commonwealth Club of California," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 58 x 2, 1958, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Strom Thurmond, "Factors Affecting Internal Security," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 5938, 1959, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Roy V. Harris, "Northern Interest in Race Problems," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 6343R, 1963, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; James Utt, "Trend Toward Conservatism," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 6208, 1962, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; James Utt, "California's Views on the Cuba Crisis," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 6319, 1963, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; James Dumbacher, "Students for a Democratic Society," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 6548R, 1965, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Medford Evans, "Racial Riots," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 6631, 1966, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

⁵⁸ Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, 116-117.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*; Bartley, *Rise of Massive Resistance*, 104-107; McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*, 20, 25, 144-147.

so far as to change its intro music from Dixie to a more generic martial theme, but these changes embodied a natural evolution rather than an sudden sea change in the Citizens' Council media strategy.⁶⁰ The program projected a white-collar, pro-segregationist conservatism that implied, but never explicitly endorsed white supremacy, and its repackaging of segregation represented no significant departure in mission or messaging from the CCA's prior endeavors.⁶¹ Simmons and his fellow Citizens' Councilors approached conservatives as neither charlatans nor sycophants but as sincere ideologues and committed partners in the conservative agenda, and nowhere was this more apparent than in the *Forum's* guests.

The plethora of southern and national politicians and foreign dignitaries who appeared on the program was a defining feature of the *Forum* and revealed not only the national contours of the Citizens' Council movement but the extent to which conservatives embraced it. Senators Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and John Stennis of Mississippi, Congressmen James Utt of California, Ralph Gwinn of New York, and Samuel L. Devine of Ohio, and presidential candidates Barry Goldwater of Arizona and George Wallace of Alabama appeared on the

⁶⁰ Edward Hunter, "Communist Brainwashing," Citizens' Council *Forum* #6116, 1962, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

⁶¹ Rolph, "Courting Conservatism: White Resistance and the Ideology of Race in the 1960s," 36.

program.⁶² Beyond politicians, the program also featured Simmons himself as well as intellectuals and heroes on the Right like William Shearer, a rightwing Republican political consultant and organizer in California, and former U.S. Army Major General Edwin Walker, whose career martyrdom and rightwing agitation during and after his service earned him both fame and infamy.⁶³ While scholars have traditionally framed the Citizens' Council as a largely state and regional movement and dismissed its claims of national status on the grounds that they remained institutionally strong only in the Deep South and seemingly

⁶² Strom Thurmond, "Integration, how to oppose," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 5910, 1959, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Strom Thurmond, "Factors Affecting Internal Security," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 5938, 1959, CCFC; Strom Thurmond, "Trend Toward Big Government," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 5825, 1958, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; John C. Stennis, "Trend Toward States Rights, American People," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 5828, 1958, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; James Utt, "Trend Toward Conservatism," Citizens' Council *Forum* #6208, 1962, CCFC; James Utt, "California's Views on the Cuba Crisis," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 6319, 1963, CCFC; Ralph Gwinn, "Opposition to Force Bills," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 5824, 1958, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Samuel L. Devine, "Duties of the Ohio Un-American Activities Committee," Citizens' Council *Forum* #6013, 1960, CCFC; Barry Goldwater "Labor and Politics, COPE," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 5926, 1959, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; George C. Wallace, "Effect of Kennedy's Sending Federal Troops into Ole Miss on Future of National Elections," Citizens' Council *Forum* #6246R, 1962, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; George C. Wallace, "Public Attitudes Toward the South," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 6640R, 1966, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

⁶³ W. J. Simmons, "1st Anniversary of the Forum," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 58 x 14, 1958, CCFC; W. J. Simmons, "Informational and Educational Work of the Citizens' Councils," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 597-58 x 21, CCFC; William K. Shearer, "California's Views on the Civil Rights Act, Citizens' Council *Forum* #6404, 1964, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Edwin A. Walker, "U.S. Victory in the Cold War?," Citizens' Council *Forum* #6107R, 1961, Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition, Citizen's Council *Forum* Collection (CCFC), Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; for more on Shearer, see: McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*, 144-147; for more on Walker, see: Charles W. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 174-176, 331, 345-346, 360-362, 368-369.

floundered everywhere else, the intersections between southern and non-southern conservatives say otherwise.⁶⁴ To be sure, the CCA failed to create the nationwide organizational infrastructure that its name implied, but as Simmons's statement on the Citizens' Council's mission implied, informing and persuading the public superseded organizational expansion.⁶⁵ The *Forum's* guests reflected the appeal and embrace of the Mississippi Citizens' Councils outside of traditional white supremacist circles as well as the nuances in the segregationist movement and early rightwing media.

On the surface, the Citizens' Council *Forum* appeared to constitute a refined platform for elevating segregation into the ranks of respectable conservative political discourse, yet the content, framing, and guests on the television and radio program tell a different story. As a public affairs program that devoted more time to questions of domestic and foreign policy than explicit white supremacy, the *Forum* reflected Simmons's aspirations for the Citizens' Council to act as the vanguard of a national conservative movement separate from less savory segregationists and conservatives in the postwar era.⁶⁶ The *Forum* may never have achieved the prestige of later programs such as *Firing Line*, but, with prominent guests such as Strom Thurmond and Barry Goldwater, it constituted a significant, Deep Southern footprint in rightwing media.⁶⁷ To a greater degree than *The Citizens' Council*, the *Forum* revealed the artificial separation of segregationists from postwar conservatism, and suggested that for a time the Citizens' Council and the state of Mississippi could not only participate in but could potentially play a leading role in the broader conservative discourse of the 1950s and 1960s.

The disintegration of the Citizens' Council movement in the mid- and late 1960s as well as the triumph of an avowedly colorblind conservative movement and media suggested that neither *The Citizens' Council* paper nor the Citizens' Council *Forum* played any significant role in

⁶⁴ Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, 86-90; McMillen, *The Citizens' Councils*, 118-122, 140-146.

⁶⁵ W. J. Simmons, "1st Anniversary of the Forum," Citizens' Council *Forum* # 58 x 14, 1958, CCFC.

⁶⁶ Minor, "Enter Bill Simmons, Theoretician," undated, 39, Citizens' Council Collection.

⁶⁷ For an example of *Firing Line*, see "Firing Line with William F. Buckley: The Practical Limits of Liberalism," archives.org video, 1:00:08, from *Firing Line* by Southern Educational Communications Association (SECA) on October 11, 1975, posted by Pamela Vakadan, 7/20/2011, https://archive.org/details/csth_00001.

the origins of rightwing media. The narratives of the South's political realignment, moreover, continue to cast the Sunbelt South and its politicians as the dominant forces in the Republicanization of the region.⁶⁸ Yet, the Sunbelt South, much like the Sunbelt thesis itself artificially limits the geography of the conservative movement and the influence of segregationist elements upon it.⁶⁹ Insofar as the conservative movement in the postwar era was far from monolithic, the origins of rightwing media were not isolated to men such as Buckley and regions such as the Sunbelt. The Citizens' Council's creation of pro-segregationist, conservatively biased media platforms arose from the *milieu* in which Buckley and Manion flourished, but its efforts were not simply derivatives but competitors for the postwar conservative agenda.

The collapse of *de jure* segregation as well as the crystallization and political success of a colorblind conservatism prompted the scholarly and popular embrace of a historical narrative of the postwar Right largely absent of the segregationists, yet this narrative is a dying one.⁷⁰ With the exposure of southern exceptionalism's artificial geographic and ideological dichotomies, the scholarship on rightwing media has to contend with the southern contours of conservatism and the national contours of southern politics.⁷¹ Recognizing the Citizens' Council as an actor in the early development of rightwing media represents the next step in re-approaching the postwar conservative movement.

The Citizens' Councilors were middle-class defenders of segregation who consciously set themselves in contrast to the terroristic, working-class Klan, but they also represented pioneers in rightwing media and the Deep South's political future. Individuals such as William J. Simmons demonstrated that the Citizens' Council viewed conservatives not simply as pawns for their pro-segregationist cause but as natural ideological partners in the futures of the region and nation, and their media conveyed this informal but sincere alliance during the 1950s and 1960s. Though Jesse Helms and Strom Thurmond have long occupied the center of histories on the South's Republican realignment, this process ultimately began at the grassroots with men like Simmons and groups

⁶⁸ Crespino, *Strom Thurmond's America*, 8-11; Thrift, *Conservative Bias*, 4-5.

⁶⁹ McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 14; Crespino, *Strom Thurmond's America*, 8-11; Thrift, *Conservative Bias*, 5;

⁷⁰ Matthew D. Lassiter, "De Jure/De Facto Segregation: The Long Shadow of a National Myth," in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, ed. Matthew Lassiter and Joseph Crespino (New York: Oxford University, 2010), 25-28; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, xiii.

⁷¹ Lassiter and Crespino, "Introduction: The End of Southern History," 6-13.

like the Citizens' Council utilizing media as the foundation for a larger movement.⁷² While contemporary rightwing media outlets bare little similarity in format and messaging to either *The Citizens' Council* or the Citizens' Council *Forum*, the endeavors of the Mississippi Citizens' Council movement expose both the longer and wider development of rightwing media in postwar America.⁷³

⁷² Crespino, *Strom Thurmond's America*, 3-5; Thrift, *Conservative Bias*, 5, 14.

⁷³ Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, x.

