



Reconstituting Whiteness: The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission

Jenny Irons

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In *Reconstituting Whiteness*, sociologist Jenny Irons explores the tactics and legacy of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, an agency of the state that existed from 1956 to 1977 and was devoted exclusively to defending and supporting the institution of segregation. Using a myriad of surveillance and public relations efforts, the commission was unique in its expanse and resistance during a time of change.

Going far beyond a mere institutional history, however, Irons uses the commission as a tool to explore the intersection of state-organized defense of white supremacy and the dramatically shifting racial constructs of the civil rights era. Ultimately, the commission failed to protect segregation, but as a state entity, it adapted racism in new terms.

Reconstituting Whiteness is an insightful study of the methods Mississippi state government used to move the goal posts of what was considered "decent" and "acceptable" white supremacy and racism, as it raced against time to define whiteness while the boundaries of segregation fell all around it.

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