



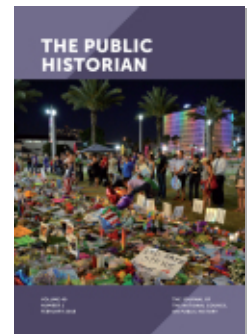
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*“A Shaky Truce”: Starkville Civil Rights Struggles,
1960–1980*, Mississippi State University Department of
History (review)

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Digital Reviews

“A Shaky Truce”: Starkville Civil Rights Struggles, 1960–1980. Mississippi State University Department of History. Judith Ridner, Project Leader; Hillary A. H. Richardson, Project Leader; Nickoal Eichmann-Kalwara, Project Leader and Webmaster; Christine Dunn, Project Team Member; Daaiyah Heard, Project Team Member; Michael Murphy, Project Team Member; Kellie Nelson, Project Team Member; Nick Timmerman, Project Team Member. <http://starkvillecivilrights.msstate.edu/wordpress/>. Accessed November 27, 2017.

“A Shaky Truce”: Starkville Civil Rights Struggles, 1960–1980 illuminates the history of the civil rights movement in Starkville, Mississippi, for the general public, researchers, and educators. The site provides a counternarrative that challenges many of the tenets of the accepted local history of the region, which is frequently “told as a heroic and progressive tale” of white settlement, Confederate resistance, economic diversification in the New South, and the emergence of Starkville as a college town. This narrative largely obscures African American contributions to Starkville’s development. “Telling Starkville’s history from the vantage point of African Americans thus refocuses the story,” the site notes. Through its focus on civil rights and the black experience in Starkville, the site “challenges the progressive story the town tells about itself.”¹

Created by students and faculty in the Mississippi State University’s history department and libraries, the site provides visitors with information about the civil rights struggle in Starkville through narrative online exhibits, digitized archival materials including documents, oral histories, and news clippings, and by providing educators with prospective lesson plans and presentation slides. It is also designed to be a gateway for researchers interested in utilizing the civil rights collections at Mississippi State University Libraries by supplying links to research guides, finding aids, and bibliographies associated with the library’s collections and related online resources.

The narrative history presented on the site is in keeping with current trends in civil rights historiography, which has placed increased emphasis on grassroots organizing, local struggles for change, and the long trajectory of the midcentury

¹ “The Place: History of Starkville,” *“A Shaky Truce”: Starkville Civil Rights Struggles, 1960–1980*, Mississippi State University Department of History, accessed November 27, 2017, <http://starkvillecivilrights.msstate.edu/wordpress/the-place/>.


black freedom struggle. Through an interactive timeline, the site places local events in Starkville within the context of national civil rights milestones, beginning with the iconic 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision but extending well past the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights and 1965 Voting Rights Acts. The site places particular emphasis on the gradual desegregation of Starkville's schools, the organization of the local chapter of the NAACP, and efforts to secure full economic and political equality that unfolded in the region in the late 1960s and 1970s. In doing so, the site chronicles the "long civil rights movement" in Starkville and illuminates the importance of mapping the uneven evolution of the civil rights struggle in localities throughout the Jim Crow South.

The site is easy to navigate. The home page directs visitors to resources related to information about Starkville as a place, oral histories collected from the people involved in the movement, and brief exhibits highlighting different aspects of the civil rights struggle in the region. By connecting visitors directly to the resources that underlie the interpretation presented, "*A Shaky Truce*" affords visitors the opportunity to deepen their own engagement with the history it chronicles. In doing so, the site employs a full range of digital tools that enable the project to serve the needs of different audiences. Even footnotes are hyperlinked to the library's catalog, providing visitors with the call number and availability of the texts cited. Moreover, by connecting visitors directly to digitized documents and the diverse range of perspectives gathered in oral histories, visitors are empowered to utilize them to formulate their own interpretations and make their own meaning out of the civil rights struggle in Starkville. Indeed, many of the proposed lesson plans for secondary school teachers are designed to encourage students to utilize the site in this way.

Despite these strengths, the site's presentation of digitized materials is inconsistent from page to page. Some pages utilize documents, images, and maps from Mississippi State University (MSU) special collections as illustrations for the text, whereas other materials are presented in banners of related documents, or as click-through buttons that take visitors to PDFs of the materials. Likewise, all of the digital oral histories available are collected on a single page and usefully tagged for easy navigation, but specific interviews highlighted in individual topical exhibits are presented variously as buttons, embedded videos, or linked footnotes. As a result, some of the pages on the site are visually disjointed, including an assortment of different materials and divergent strategies for accessing them.

There is also considerable overlap in the information provided to visitors in the individual topical exhibits. Indeed, the narrative text presented about school desegregation in Starkville is presented in two separate exhibits, "School Desegregation" and "Fighting Segregation." Although the narrative text presented on both pages is identical, the illustrative materials assembled from MSU special collections at the bottom of each page differ. The utility of including both on the site is unclear.²

² Comparison of content available at <http://starkvillecivilrights.msstate.edu/wordpress/fighting-segregation/> and <http://starkvillecivilrights.msstate.edu/wordpress/desegregation/>.



Teaching the UNTOLD Stories of the STARKVILLE CIVIL RIGHTS Movement

Join Us for a Community Forum
The Mill, 100 Mercantile Lane, Starkville, Mississippi

January 26, 2017
5:45-7:00pm

starkvillecivilrights@lists.msstate.edu
(662) 325-2838

- Hear discussions from panelists, including:
Julia Trzaskowski, Nokubee High School
Dr. Jason M. Ward, MSU History
Cindy Ming, MSU Research & Curriculum Unit
Vanjury Dozier, Educator & Librarian
Dr. Paul Binford, MSU College of Education
- Learn about classroom resources like the Starkville Civil Rights Project and discuss ways to use them.
- Share and record your own memories of the Starkville Civil Rights Movement

starkvillecivilrights.msstate.edu

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The Starkville Civil Rights Project hosted community forums in association with the launch of the site to familiarize community members with the stories and digitized materials available on the platform, and to reach out to educators about using the site for classroom projects. Community members were also invited to share their stories about the local civil rights movement as part of the ongoing oral history project. (Photo courtesy of the Starkville Civil Rights Project, Mississippi State University)

Even so, “*A Shaky Truce*” provides local residents and students with the platform to narrate their own history and to make meaning out of the events that unfolded in their own community. Its greatest contribution is the work that it does not only to share the history of Starkville’s civil rights story but to provide visitors with insight into the records, experiences, and perspectives that historians rely on when crafting their accounts.

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