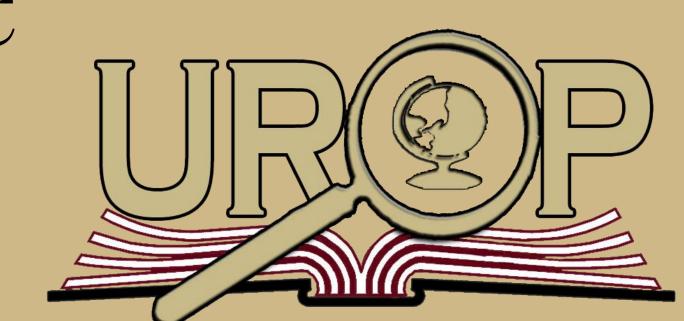


# Florida State University Student Responses to the Ole Miss Riot of 1962



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#### **ABSTRACT**

To develop a better understanding of contemporary 20th century attitudes towards race and integration among students at Florida State University (FSU), I investigated articles concerning the 1962 University of Mississippi riots from the FSU student newspaper, the Florida Flambeau. My analysis of Flambeau artifacts revealed two important tendencies in the majority of student articles, the first being that most of the Flambeau articles expressed outrage towards the rioters at the University of Mississippi and the actions of Governor Ross Barnett. Second, most student writers did not juxtapose the Mississippi riots with

Florida universities. Despite the dearth of explicit comparisons in the Flambeau articles between the Florida universities and the University of Mississippi

concerning race

# Mores Versus Law Of The Land

Fig. 1. "Mores Versus Law Of The Land" by

Carole Goldstein. Florida Flambeau, 1962-10-02.

and integration, I determined how students at FSU viewed these issues by analyzing the language and attitudes of the Flambeau articles on the subject. I discovered that while most FSU students viewed the Mississippi rioters negatively, fewer were prepared to extend their support to integration or condemn racial injustice closer to home. The significance of these findings is in how they reveal the prevailing attitudes of FSU students. Overt racism and disobedience of civil authority were easily condemned, but integration especially remained controversial.

#### Ben Sharp

# The Sad View Of Mississippi

"We Are Determined To Fight Communism By Any Means Short Of Actual Spending"



Fig. 2. "The Sad View Of Mississippi" by Ben Sharp. Florida Flambeau, 1962-09-28.

#### INTRODUCTION

The 1962 Ole Miss riot was a seminal moment in the history of the Civil Rights era. 1 It occurred in late September and early October of that year over the attempt of African American veteran James Meredith, "the essential actor" of the story, to enroll in the University of Mississippi. All

eyes were drawn to the spectacle. The student population of Florida State University was no different. Evidence exists in the form of articles, letters, and cartoons in the old Florida State student newspaper: the Florida Flambeau. These artifacts offer direct insight into the attitudes and beliefs of FSU students in 1962.

# Who Is Narrow-Minded?

Fig. 3. "Who Is Narrow-Minded?" by Lisa Diaz. Florida Flambeau, 1962-10-02.

#### Mess At Miss.

The words "Ole Miss" used to conjure up a beautiful, peaceful campus, home of several Miss Americas, where

Fig. 4. "Mess At Miss." by Toni Dicarlo. Florida Flambeau, 1962-09-25.

#### METHODS

The first step of this research project was to discover and identify articles in the Florida Flambeau that relate to the University of Mississippi riot of 1962. My review of Flambeau editions revealed 21 articles which explicitly mentioned the riot, the actions of Mississippi governor Ross Barnett, James Meredith, and the fallout of the incident. Next, these articles were qualitatively sorted into 4 broad categories based on their content: news articles, Pro-Barnett opinions, Anti-Barnett opinions, and an unsatisfying but necessary "other" category. Scan the QR code on the bottom of this poster to view the exact categorization of each article. After sorting the articles into categories, I began my qualitive assessment of their individual and combined arguments in order to answer my primary research questions.

#### RESULTS

Qualitative analysis of the Florida Flambeau articles related to this project's topic revealed a few common beliefs shared by most student writers. Broadly,

students at FSU:

- Viewed the Mississippi protestors negatively
- Condemned the actions and conduct of Gov. Barnett
- Considered integration in some form an inevitability
- > Expressed dismay at lawlessness on the campus of an American University

There were, however, many dissenting viewpoints. Many students believed that Gov. Barnett's actions had been for the good of Mississippi and saw the rioters and students at the University of Mississippi as defenders of Southern freedoms. Other students argued that the riots were the fault of President Kennedy, the Supreme Court, or Communist influences.



Fig. 5. "How'd You Like Your Daughter Marrin' One Of Them?" by Lisa Diaz. Florida Flambeau, 1962-10-02.

#### Guilt's Burden

Fig. 6. "Guilt's Burden" by E. Schlotthaver. Florida Flambeau, 1962-10-02.

#### LIMITATIONS

The limitations associated with this type of research project are myriad—individual judgements in qualitative assessments, sample size, and the partial scope of analyzing only newspaper articles. Below is a list of some limitations of this project:

- ➤ Limited sample size
- Lack of personal expertise
- > Scope of the data

> Time constraints

- Qualitative bias
- Pearce Northrup. Florida Flambeau, 1962-10-09

Shame" by

Our Shame Fig. 7. "Our ot disgraced. He is one of the last Since when is the education of ONE As long as we are bluffed by these Pearce Northrup

### CONCLUSIONS & FUTURE DIRECTION

What can be drawn from the results of my research? Florida State students of 1962 demonstrated a willingness to engage in public discourse of questions of race and integration. In the FSU community, overt racial discrimination and public disorder were easily condemned, while causes like that of James Meredith remained more divisive. Few FSU students, however, were willing to consider the idea that their school could make greater steps towards racial integration. Students generally considered themselves a part of broader Southern culture, while remaining conscious of the distinctive nature of having a relatively liberal campus in a conservative city and state. Dissenters from the norm were too numerous to be disregarded, and the Flambeau hosted active debate over race, integration, and the Ole Miss riots. I encourage future researchers to dig deeper into the copious written records of Florida State's past and discover more about the history of the institution and

Gerry Dobson Barnett Not Illegal ws Roundup sad state in which the Unite finds itself..."law" means anymore...it's all power p

Fig. 8. "Barnett Not Illegal" by Lisa Diaz. Florida Flambeau, 1962-10-02.

## relations, integration, and student political discourse could reveal much about the University's place in Tallahassee, Florida, and American history.

fits into broader

narratives of race

student population.

Finally, future analysis of

how Florida State history

#### MORE INFORMATION

Scan this QR code to read the References, Acknowledgements, and the Florida Flambeau articles that informed the research. They are organized into categorizes based on their basic content and argument.

