White Citizens' Councils

See also: White Patriots of North Carolina[2].

White Citizens' Councils were established during the 1950s in reaction to federal initiatives to end racial segregation in the South. Historically, they were similar to the various white supremacy groups that grew out of the extreme racial tensions defining southern culture after the Civil War[4]. The nation's first White Citizens' Council was founded in July 1954 in Indianola, Miss., in the aftermath of the U.S. Supreme Court's school desegregation ruling in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. As part of the massive resistance that swept across the South in the mid-1950s, the White Citizens’ Council embarked on a mission to interpose the Brown decision, attack the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People[6], and build support through a nationwide propaganda campaign. Citizens' councils appeared in other states, including North Carolina, where the most influential group, the White Patriots[2], was formed on 22 Aug. 1955 to circumvent the Brown ruling.

These citizens' councils were careful to distinguish themselves rhetorically from the more explicit forms of Jim Crow oppression-particularly the Ku Klux Klan[7]-by declaring their disdain for violence. Despite this public stance, individual members did become linked to acts of violence, and the councils greatly contributed to the racial unrest in the mid- to late-1950s South.

References:


Additional Resources:


Subjects:

Post War 20th Century (1946-2000)[12]
Civil Rights[13]
Segregation[14]
Societies, clubs, and organizations[15]
UNC Press[16]

Authors:

McRae, Elizabeth Gillespie[17]
Schutz, J. Christopher[18]

From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.[19]

1 January 2006 | McRae, Elizabeth Gillespie; Schutz, J. Christopher

Source URL: https://www.ncpedia.org/white-citizens-councils

Links
