

## **The Anti-Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi and North Carolina, 1955 to 1971**

Principal Investigators:

Prof. David Cunningham, Sociology, Brandeis

Prof. Dan Kryder, Political Science, Brandeis

Prof. Geoff Ward, Criminology, Law & Society, UC Irvine

There is an extensive body of research on the Civil Rights Movement yet little attention has been given to those who organized against it. We have only a limited understanding of why conservative whites used clandestine and brutal or public and legal enforcement methods to suppress movement activity in some places but not others; whether such enforcement patterns resulted from local economic, cultural, or political factors; or how such enforcement actions altered protest in various places, if at all. This two-year project will examine how whites both inside and outside of government in the American South combined in various ways to try to suppress local civil rights activity from 1955 to 1971, and will consider the immediate and long term implications of this anti-civil rights activism. We will focus on actions of local courts, police agencies, and civic associations (including vigilante groups like the Ku Klux Klan), and how their operations blended together or remained separate in four cities in Mississippi, a cotton state regarded as the most brutally resistant to black freedom activists, and in four cities in North Carolina, thought to be one of the more progressive states in the region.

Evidence of enforcement events will be compiled through fieldwork in local archives, including police arrest logs, local newspapers, and court records. Using statistical and narrative approaches, investigators will gauge how certain area and population characteristics (e.g., African American employment in agriculture or industry) relate to enforcement actions, both in terms of the characteristics of those acting in opposition to the civil rights movement (e.g., employers or the police) and the kinds of action taken (e.g., violence, job pressures or arrests). We will also consider whether and how historical patterns of anti-civil rights enforcement relate to racial conflict and inequality today (i.e., racial violence and disparities in education, labor, or criminal justice). The principle investigators will partner with academics and students at UNC-Chapel Hill and the University of Mississippi in conducting the research. Resulting scholarship will augment the deep literature on the Civil Rights Movement with closer attention to the role of racial group power relations and anti-civil rights enforcement activity in shaping the movement and longer term race relations.