

**Book Review**

# Oppression and Resistance in Southern Higher and Adult Education: Mississippi and the Dynamics of Equity and Social Justice

Kamden K. Strunk, Leslie Ann Locke, and Georgianna L. Martin  
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*Oppression and Resistance in Southern Higher and Adult Education: Mississippi and the Dynamics of Equity and Social Justice*, by Strunk, Locke, and Martin, provides a critical examination of the historical development and current state of adult and higher education in Mississippi using the narratives of oppression and resistance to raise awareness of educational strategies that promote social justice and equity. A significant portion of the book focuses on historical and contemporary resistance to oppression, including strategies used in Mississippi that may be transferable to other contexts.

The volume is part of the Palgrave Studies in Global Citizenship Education and Democracy, a series engaging with the many capacities of adult and higher education to positively engender citizenship, human rights, and democracy. While Strunk, Locke, and Martin self-identify as scholar-activists with a shared passion for social justice, they bring a diversity of expertise and emerging research perspectives in education. Critical readers, especially graduate students and new faculty, may find inspiration in the authors' shared experience responding to growing student interest in critical education at the University of Southern Mississippi and the institutional pushback that acted as a springboard for their academic careers. Each author shares their positionality, which helps to contextualize the research's theoretical and methodological underpinnings.

The book is organized into two sections. Part 1, which includes Chapters 1-3, provides a critical analysis of the historical significance and long-reaching consequences of pervasive oppression in Mississippi's formal and informal education based on race, ethnicity, income, gender, and sexual orientation. Chapter 1 provides a cogent summary of the contemporary and historical analysis that follows, as well as an insightful sharing of each author's positionality. In Chapter 2, the authors examine the physical manifestations of contemporary oppression in Mississippi's educational system. They provide statistical analyses that support the view that the current state of segregated K-12 schools and differences in educational experience and quality for Black students can only be accounted for by understanding injustice as deliberate and systemic. Besides documenting race and class inequalities, the chapter also examines contemporary forms of oppression based on gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

Chapter 3 links current social conditions to their historical roots and outlines the main mechanisms that are responsible for perpetuating oppressive ideologies. The significant role of inequitable K-12 education is emphasized, as well as an in-depth discussion of multi-level political power as a means of social control.

Chapter 4 serves as a transition from oppression to resistance using a timeline of significant events. Although it is intended to be an illustrative overview, the timeline documents 131 accounts of racial/ethnic oppression and resistance from 1607 to 2016. Events are historically organized in three overarching eras (slavery, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration) as well as seven sub-eras. The visual representation of oppression and resistance side-by-side helpfully depicts not only the pervasive and calculated nature of oppression in Mississippi and the nation, but also the presence of ongoing efforts to resist oppression by individuals, social movements, the courts, and legislation.

Part 2, which includes Chapters 5-9, comprises the bulk of the book and brings together a number of organized and collective efforts to resist oppression. The authors explore Black, social class and queer resistance, each receiving chapter-length treatment. Chapter 5 documents Mississippi educational institutions' slow compliance with federally mandated integration, but notes the important role that on-campus initiatives, such as the University of Mississippi's Winter Institute, played in raising awareness and organizing communities around notions of equity and engaged citizenship. Also highlighted is the importance of several national and state-level organizations supporting resistance. In Chapter 6, resistance to inequity based on social class is framed in terms of financial access to higher education and the effect of historical segregation on the construction of contemporary social classes. The authors illustrate the continuous nature of resistance by exploring how the efforts of civil rights activists to secure the right to vote for low-income Mississippians, particularly African Americans in rural areas, have resulted in substantial progress but still continue to face opposition today. Chapter 7 provides a useful expansion to race-based accounts of resistance by exploring efforts by LGBTQ students and allies in adult and higher education, as well as a nuanced discussion of tensions within resistance efforts. In the context of increased discrimination on college campuses, the authors describe the ways that student and community groups help provide voice and visibility to LGBTQ Mississippians. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 also include future considerations for resistance efforts building on the lessons drawn from current struggles.

Chapters 8 and 9 shift the focus from historical and contemporary analyses to prospects of more socially just and equitable adult and higher education in Mississippi, as well as what activists in other states might learn from Mississippi's policies. In Chapter 8, the authors apply a critical pedagogy framework to their analysis of Mississippi adult and higher education to theorize how formal and informal education oriented toward liberation and democracy can transgress the dominant ideologies of White supremacy and heteropatriarchy. Chapter 9 outlines specific ways in which activists in other states can be politically proactive by drawing lessons from the oppressive policies and struggles in Mississippi. The text concludes with a hopeful sense of progress toward social justice for the future of Mississippi's adult and higher education.

While the book is consistently thorough in its analysis, there are three considerations that would provide further depth to the authors' arguments. First, the authors' intentions to emphasize strategies for resistance over accounts of oppression is certainly welcomed. However, the last five chapters continue to document oppression in the context of specific resistance efforts. While the content is new and relevant, it detracts somewhat from the authors' framing of

the chapters as resistance to oppression. Second, the book would have been enhanced by discussing oppression of and resistance by Native American tribes of Mississippi, beyond the events noted in the illustrative timeline. Third, the book might also have been enhanced by making theoretical connections to social movement learning, particularly regarding the resistance strategies of activist and on-campus groups.

Overall, the book is well-organized and the writing is clear and accessible. The authors include a number of useful aids for readers, such as an index of key terms and names, definitions of key terminology used throughout the book, and a summary of the central theoretical frameworks of critical pedagogy. In sum, the book concisely illuminates the historic roots of the contemporary narratives of White supremacy and heteropatriarchy that remain pervasive in Mississippi's adult and higher education, and I believe that Strunk, Locke, and Martin have succeeded in achieving their goal of promoting dialogue around successful strategies for resisting oppression. This volume constitutes a thoughtful and timely contribution to the education activism literature, with important theoretical and practical lessons for educators interested in social change.

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