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Book Review of Desegregating Texas Schools: Eisenhower, Shivers, and the Crisis at Mansfield High

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LADINO, ROBYN DUFF. 1997. *Desegregating Texas Schools: Eisenhower, Shivers, and the Crisis at Mansfield High*. Pp. xiv, 208. Austin: University of Texas Press. \$35.00 Paperbound, \$13.95.

Many histories of southern school desegregation essentially skip from the Supreme Court's 1954 and 1955 decisions in *Brown v. Board of Education* to the celebrated desegregation crisis in Little Rock in 1957. Although the white opposition to racial mixing in Little Rock, fueled by Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus, riveted the nation's attention, Little Rock was not the first southern community torn by white opposition to desegregation efforts. One year earlier, in the fall of 1956, black children confronted white mobs seeking to prevent school desegregation efforts in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Texas. While in Tennessee and Kentucky, moderate governors successfully used the National Guard to squelch this resistance, in Texas, Governor Allan Shivers intervened on the side of white segregationists. These resisters successfully prevented the integration of a white high school in Mansfield, a small east Texas town near Fort Worth, in defiance of a federal court order requiring desegregation. This failed desegregation effort in Mansfield thereby set the stage for the

BOOK DEPARTMENT

far more infamous desegregation crisis in Little Rock.

Robyn Ladino has written the first book-length study of the unsuccessful effort in 1956 to desegregate Mansfield High School. Relying on extensive interviews, archival materials, and newspaper reports, Ladino has written an excellent study of the Mansfield desegregation controversy. In so doing, Ladino has helped fill a void in school desegregation history by examining desegregation efforts in a community and a state that have received less attention than many of their southern counterparts.

Ladino effectively places the Mansfield controversy in a broader political context, emphasizing the roles played by Governor Shivers and President Dwight Eisenhower. Shivers, in a manner followed by Faubus in Arkansas, used the desegregation controversy to aid his political fortunes by appealing to segregationist sentiment. Eisenhower followed a strategy of "moderation" that in reality was a strategy of avoidance. Eisenhower, privately critical of the *Brown* decisions, avoided the Mansfield controversy, claiming that the Supreme Court left enforcement to federal district court judges and local school officials. Eisenhower's unresponsiveness to the Mansfield controversy invites interesting comparisons to his activist response to Little Rock one year later.

Our understanding of the civil rights movement has been aided by the abundance of local studies written during the past several years. Ladino's is the latest contribution to this genre of scholarship.

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