

Reframing the Victim: Rhetoric for Segregation in the *Greenville News*

Jennifer E. M. Hill
Furman University

Most of the scholarly work on the rhetoric of the civil rights movement has focused on the speeches, writing, and actions of African-American protestors who fought against segregation and to gain equal rights or on violent physical responses by whites to the actions of African-American protestors. Much less research and writing have focused on examining the local spoken or written responses to the grassroots-level agitation of marches and sit-ins. This work helps to fill that gap by identifying the core rhetorical strategy used by Wayne C. Freeman, editor of the *Greenville News*, in editorials defending segregation in 1960. This essay expands upon the idea of a rhetoric of “victimage,” as put forward by Kenneth Burke and Friedrich Nietzsche, to show how Freeman reframed white southerners as victims of slander, discrimination, and violence in order to justify continued resistance to integration.

In this paper I investigate the rhetoric used to defend segregation in the unsigned editorials of the *Greenville News* in 1960. In this analysis, I will explain how and why the editor, Wayne C. Freeman, used portrayals of discrimination and punitive action against the South by the North, the national political parties, and the Supreme Court; lamentations about the loss of both rights and resources; and threats of impending disorder and violence in order to reframe white southerners as victims, thereby justifying continued resistance to integration. The year 1960 was chosen as it marked the beginning of mass public protests for integration in Greenville, South Carolina.

The National Rhetorical Context

The rhetorical devices used by Freeman to defend his viewpoint on segregation and race relations have their place in the larger context of a national, white, rhetorical response to the civil rights movement. One reason this study is important is because white rhetorical resistance to integration and equal rights has been underexamined in comparison to its activist, pro-civil rights opposition. In his investigation of southern opposition to the civil rights movement, Clive Webb states that scholars have been reluctant to treat segregationists as a subject for serious study and that only a small number of scholarly and journalistic works have been published on the opposition to desegregation (8). In a similar study, George Lewis explains how, too often, scholars simply dismiss the actions of segregationists as “racist” without delving into “how that racism manifested itself, how those manifestations were transmitted, or what the effect of that transmission was” (6).¹ I would further posit that the research that has been done tends to focus on white southerners’ rhetorical responses to the actions of the federal government, or the physical responses of whites to black civil rights protestors (such as lynching individuals or violently disrupting marches), whereas much less attention has been devoted to the rhetorical resistance to the

grassroots-level agitation of marches and sit-ins. Nonetheless, the field of southern resistance rhetoric has not been devoid of research, and some trends are clearly recognizable.² The unifying theme of southern resistance rhetoric was the need to maintain the purity of the white race: the white man's biological superiority and controlling political position were portrayed as both natural and necessary for preserving a peaceful and productive society. To support this position, white defensive rhetorical strategies included explicating the differences between the races and invoking fears of sexual race mixing, often while relying on the support of biblical and historical authority. However, white southern rhetors also employed less explicitly racist strategies that argued for maintaining segregation on the grounds of paternalism, combating the Communist threat, or legal rights (Logue and Dorgan 9).

The main idea behind white supremacy rhetoric was that the white race was inherently superior to the black, and hence any mixing of the races was undesirable. Historical observation and a newly fashioned amalgamation of anthropology and sociology were used to argue that people of African descent were physically and mentally different from whites at the genetic level, and that the "deficiencies" in the black race, because they were not due to environmental factors, could not be improved by structural social or political changes. White segregationists asserted that increased interaction between whites and blacks would eventually lead to the deterioration of the white race, and so this must be avoided to guarantee the maintenance of white "purity" (Mixon 166, 177).

Inextricably linked to this idea was the often virulently racist rhetoric that preyed on fears of miscegenation. Though this theme was more prevalent during resistance to the first Reconstruction, many southerners in the mid-twentieth century still saw sexual race mixing as the most dangerous and repulsive form of racial interaction. Rhetoric playing upon these fears was employed by more radical groups such as the White Citizens' Councils or the KKK, which promoted anxieties about the victimization of white women by black men (Lewis 44). On a related theme, some speakers made dire predictions that integration would result in the future destruction of both races. Mississippi State Supreme Court Judge Tom Brady's 1955 treatise *Black Monday* is a classic example of this; the author observes, "Whenever and wherever [the white man's] blood has been infused with the blood of the negro, the white man, his intellect, and his culture have died" (Lewis 43; Webb 3). These arguments were aimed at lower- or working-class southerners in an effort to promote racial solidarity and homogeneity while keeping morale raised during the fight against integration (Lewis 42; Mixon 174).

Jane Dailey links the use of religion by southern supporters of segregation to this idea of miscegenation. She describes how anti-integrationists found narratives within the Bible that supported a segregated world and then accounted for the tragedies of the world (from the Flood to the Holocaust) in terms of race relations (154). She further states that religion-based advocates used the story of Paul to support the idea that earthly race distinctions were real and necessary and that the spiritual union of all men did not equate to a physical one: "It was through sex that racial segregation in the South moved from being a local social practice to a part of the divine plan for the world" (151–54). Dailey emphasizes the importance of this ideological argument with evidence of the U.S. Supreme Court's reluctance to rule on interracial marriage laws, saying that this didn't reflect the issue's unimportance but rather the fact that the topic was "too hot to handle" (158).

Those opposing integration also drew attention to instances of segregation in the Bible, and

pointed to the separation of the black race on the African continent as a sign of God's plan for segregation (Dorgan 31). Religious leaders also argued that from Abraham to Jesus and his disciples, Christian figures implicitly and explicitly approved of segregation. This was often tied to examples of revered American historical figures, such as Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, who could be quoted defending segregation or asserting the inferiority of blacks (Mixon 180).

Another trend less overtly critical of African Americans was the proliferation of paternalistic arguments. Andrew Secrest observes, "Palmetto society remained rooted in the idea of benevolent paternalism whereby the dominant whites would look after and protect the black man, provided he accepted his status as a second class citizen and fulfilled his function as a mudsill in Southern civilization" (40). Paternalistic speakers argued that race relations would be best for all if the traditional system of segregation was maintained. Many claimed that race relations in their city had been just fine before "their" blacks had been stirred up by outside agitation. This rhetoric did not focus on combating race mixing specifically, but rather implicitly argued the inferiority of African Americans, and focused on the unnecessary or destructive nature of northern and federal meddling in southern race relations.

Related to the idea of protecting peaceful societal order from the threat of outside agitation, southerners sometimes used the more complex rhetorical strategy of appealing to fears of a communist threat. The Cold War and Red Scare context of the civil rights movement has recently received increased attention for its usefulness in analyzing the underlying arguments used by both sides in the struggle over integration. Lewis describes how the growing post-World War II civil rights agitation was believed by many southerners to be driven by the United States' Cold War enemies (Lewis 71; Mixon 181). It was simple to link "leftist" policies to the fight over race, and therefore connect Communism to desegregation (Durham 59).³ This connection was used by southern elites to combat integration, thereby preserving the status quo and their own power (56). As Mathew Grindy describes it in his review of several books linking the Red Scare and the civil rights movement, "[T]he 'other' to be feared was communist infiltration and outside, non-Southern agitation, namely in the form of a supposedly anti-American communist ideology that espoused racial equality. Segregationists preyed upon the Southern public's fears of a supposed social upheaval resulting from the end of Jim Crow Laws" (10).

The Cold War threat was especially useful as it allowed southern resisters to cast traditional arguments in a new light—avoiding perceptions of entrenched and anachronistic viewpoints—and to attempt to transform a southern problem of race relations into an American concern over national security (Lewis 73). White southerners used Red-baiting to attempt to discredit the NAACP and other pro-civil rights groups and activists, as well as to argue that federally enforced desegregation would create an opening for a Marxist revolution (Grindy 4; Woods 1). But Frank Durham suggests that southern anti-integrationists were in fact largely unconcerned with the Red threat: "[T]he South was ready to prosecute a domestic war on Communism that had more to do with controlling desegregation than with Communism" (61).

Southern rhetoricians also linked the threat of a Soviet invasion to calls for individual state autonomy. One Citizens' Council broadcast suggested: "It is much easier for those who would overthrow our form of government to subvert and infiltrate centralized government than it is to go into 48 separate states and do the same thing" (Lewis 74). This strategy fit well within popular calls for states' rights, which, along with objections to federal impositions upon the South,

made up a key anti-integrationist platform. A popular interpretation of the Constitution, with an emphasis on the Tenth Amendment, focused on the individual states' powers to regulate their own laws concerning voting, businesses, and especially public schooling. Also, many southerners argued that the Fourteenth Amendment had been adopted illegally, as it received approval from three-fourths of the states only after Congress had imposed military rule in the South and disfranchised many whites (Mixon 179). Furthermore, segregationists placed higher value on earlier legal precedent than on the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision and so argued that history and the law were on their side (Lewis 21–22, 74). As such, they rejected the power of the federal government to interfere with local affairs (in order to enforce integration or voting rights) and rhetorically portrayed it as invasive and power-hungry.

Finally, Kevin M. Kruse elucidates a similar legal argument used by southerners that rested not on the denial of the civil rights of African Americans, but on the defense of the supposed rights of whites. In his study on resistance in Atlanta, a relatively moderate and progressive southern city, he describes the argument for “freedom of association.” White segregationists argued that they had the right to select their neighbors, employees, business associates, and their children’s classmates. Moreover, this right was negatively defined as well, in the right *not* to have to associate with certain people (99–101).

The Situation in Greenville

While an understanding of the national rhetorical context is crucial in properly identifying themes in the *Greenville News* editorials, newspapers chiefly focus on events of local interest. In 1960, Greenville was the growing metropolitan center of upstate South Carolina, focused on business and commercial expansion and heavily invested in the textile industry. It boasted an average income far above that of the rest of South Carolina (and the entire Southeast), as well as several institutions of higher education (Secrest 25). Stephen O’Neill describes how this atmosphere shaped not only the economy but also the attitudes of the city’s elite, which were characterized by optimism, energy, and civic boosterism (287). Racial violence at this time was uncommon, with Greenville seeing its last lynching in 1947 (Hart 18; O’Neill 288). Despite this, the racial situation in 1960 was far from egalitarian. Although African Americans made up 42 percent of the population, Jim Crow laws were strictly enforced, resulting in separate public facilities and restrictions on consumer rights (Hart 29).

In 1960, Greenville saw the beginning of active protests by the African-American community against segregationist racial policies and for civil rights. Prompted by two events at the Greenville Airport,⁴ a prayer pilgrimage was made to the airport on 1 January 1960 to protest “the stigma, the inconvenience, and the stupidity of racial segregation” (“Pilgrimage”). Estimates of how many African Americans took part range upwards from 250, and the march was followed by a series of speeches advocating for equality. This was the first time the civil rights movement in Greenville moved out of the courts and involved active public participation (Hart 29).

Sit-in movements soon began sweeping through the South, beginning in Greensboro, North Carolina, and reaching Greenville in March of 1960. Of particular note were the protests at the Greenville Public Library: an initial incursion took place on 1 March, in which a group of African-American students entered the library but no arrests were made. The students involved are unknown other than Hattie Smith [Wright], but they were accompanied by Reverend S. E. Kay (“Group”). Shortly thereafter, on 16 March, the “Greenville Seven,” students from Sterling

High School, were arrested for attempting to use the white branch of the library (“7 Negroes”).⁵ On 16 July, eight students again sat-in at the library and were arrested, despite the fact they were described as orderly and peaceful, exhibiting no intention to disturb the white patrons (“8 Negroes”).⁶ On 28 July, the Greenville Seven filed a federal suit to integrate the facility (“Integration”). In response, the library closed on 2 September, reopening on 19 September on an integrated basis after a moot ruling but strong warning by Judge C. C. Wyche (“Library Is Open”; “White and Negro Libraries”).⁷

The first lunch counter sit-ins were staged in Greenville on 18 July 1960, with brawls in the streets between whites and blacks soon following (“3 Counter Sit-ins”; “Whites, Negroes in Street Battle”). These racial clashes escalated to the point of rock throwing and gunfire; in response, on 26 July, the city council invoked a 9 p.m. curfew on all people aged twenty and younger (“Gunfire”; “9 PM Curfew”). By the end of 1960, sit-ins persisted (though violence had tapered off due to the curfew), but no other facilities had been desegregated, although a temporary injunction was issued restraining the continuation of segregated waiting rooms at the Greenville Municipal Airport (“Restraining”). Interestingly, even ironically, several historical accounts by the city describe the desegregation of public facilities and schools in Greenville as voluntary, dignified, and undertaken with “grace and style” (O’Neill 286).

The Press

Civil rights activity during this time received much attention from the press, both in news reports and editorials. The *Greenville News* had a circulation of around 75,000 in 1960 and was owned and published by the prominent Peace family (Secret 36). Editorials ran daily on any number of issues, with those unsigned most often written by the editor, Wayne C. Freeman, and his writings were intended to reflect the opinion of the paper. As the author whose rhetoric this paper intends to investigate, he deserves some attention.

Freeman was a Greenville native, born in 1916, who attended Furman University and Clemson College. He, and hence the *Greenville News*, initially aligned politically with the conservative wing of the Democratic Party, but between 1944 and 1964 he followed the trend in South Carolina of loyalties shifting to political independence and then alliance with the Republican Party (Secret 37). Andrew M. Secret’s 1972 dissertation surveys the editorials written by Freeman from 1954 to 1964, and from Secret’s work we can summarize the trends in the editor’s coverage of the civil rights movement. Following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that called for integration of public schools, many in the South reacted with horror and refusal. Freeman, however, remained moderate the few times he addressed the issue at all. Though he criticized the Supreme Court’s decision on legal and political grounds, he used restrained language and suggested that community leaders work together towards gaining popular acceptance of the idea of an integrated society (77–83). However, as public opinion hardened, Freeman’s editorials became more conservative, especially after he was named secretary of the Gressette Committee on School Segregation (99).

Secret describes how, at the beginning of 1960, many political and civic leaders were reluctant to accept any basic change in race relations, and how increased protests by African Americans led Freeman to become more entrenched in a conservative position (243, 268). However, “the newspapers [showed] a disposition to follow rather than lead in matter of public policy” (285). Essentially, as changes were made by the establishment powers, they were imme-

diately accepted by Freeman, no matter what his previous opposition. This was apparent in his writing about both the closing and reopening of the Greenville Public Library and the later integration of the airport.⁸

In general, the editorial position of the *Greenville News* was “more in harmony with antebellum South than with twentieth century democracy” (Secret 420). This was evident in its advocacy of laissez-faire liberalism, states’ rights, elitist politics, and white supremacy at a time when more equalitarian principles had long been gaining favor in the United States.

The Victim: Rhetoric for Segregation in the *Greenville News* Editorials

For this paper I identified and analyzed fifty-four editorials by Wayne C. Freeman, published between 1 January and 31 December 1960, that discussed themes of race relations and/or civil rights. Many of the aforementioned trends in the southern rhetorical response to integration efforts played a role in shaping Freeman’s writing of the *Greenville News* editorials, though they are insufficient to fully account for his rhetorical strategy. But first, I believe it is relevant to mention which traditions of southern resistance he did *not* employ.

Adhering to the use of more moderate and ostensibly egalitarian tactics of persuasion, Freeman made no references to miscegenation, and paternalism was generally absent from his rhetoric.⁹ While he was a staunch anti-integrationist, it would be difficult to characterize him as a racist in the simplest sense of the word, and he would likely have been shocked if such a descriptor had been applied to him. Furthermore, he made no appeals to segregation on a religious basis and, in fact, held that the fight for or against integration should not be made on spiritual grounds (“Billy Graham”; “Civil Rights”).

Freeman’s commentary on issues pertaining to race relations and the civil rights movement covered diverse topics and employed a range of arguments to support his opposition to integration. However, upon careful reading, one can detect a common theme that shaped his rhetoric as a whole: Freeman constructed an image of the white South as the victim in the racial struggle, claiming a position of innocence that encompassed the past, present, and future. As a victim, the South could hold the moral high ground in the present, reasonably fear a return to the increased victimization of the past (during Reconstruction), and become less responsible for future actions if provoked beyond reason. It is, of course, now recognized that the South was not an innocent victim, but rather the powerful agent of policies that have had repercussions on race relations to this day. As such, this rhetorical strategy can be imagined as a sort of Goliath in David’s clothing.¹⁰

The rhetoric of “victimage” (also referred to as victimhood or victimization) has been defined and explored by several authors recently, such as Michal Blain in his article on the use of victimage in an anti-gay campaign in Boise, or Amanda Davis and Dana Cloud in their consideration of the rhetoric of the War on Terror.¹¹ Victimage is an idea advanced by Kenneth Burke as part of his theory of dramatism, which elucidates how people aim to ease guilt for their own actions or symbolic status by identifying an aggressive and attacking enemy (the “scapegoat”), and hence defining themselves as a victim (Engels 304; Blain “Politics of Victimage” 33). This idea has also been attributed to Friedrich Nietzsche, who explored how politics and modern society create feelings of resentment that are then redirected elsewhere—at a “guilty” party that is targeted as being the cause of suffering (Engels 309–12).¹² Robert Ivie describes how this victimage ritual, as enacted by a society or political leader, promotes social cohesion and allows people

to avoid any self-punishment or critique for (typically violent) actions that go against their usual ideas of morality. The impetus and blame for any reprehensible actions of the self-defined victim are attributed to the identified scapegoat (280). Or, as Michael Blain explains, “The chief social function of vilification [of an opponent, and hence self-victimization] is the creation and maintenance of in-group solidarity through hostility toward out-groups, or what Kenneth Burke calls congregation through segregation” (“Power, War” 820).

The attack upon the white South, in its portrayal by Freeman, came in three forms: libel against the South’s image or otherwise unjustified hatred of the South; the destruction, disruption, or limiting of southerners’ rights and resources; and the threat to—or actual breakup of—peace, order, and goodwill with incitements to violence. These forms were neither discrete nor exclusive, as many “attackers” overlapped into more than one category. Also, Freeman at times portrayed these threats as attacks upon African Americans well, but never perpetrated by the white southern powers.

Libel against the South’s image is the least commonly found “attack” upon the South in the 1960 editorials, but is still clearly discernable. Freeman made a concerted effort to refute what he saw as people “unjustifiably” criticizing the South, drawing attention to outsiders’ hatred of the South, allegedly without good reason. Though he did not comment on the 1 January march to the airport, he did argue against one of the speakers, who claimed that South Carolina had a poor history of race relations (“It Once”). When discussing the possibility of an African-American man, who had no obvious qualification other than skin color, being given a position in Nixon’s Cabinet, Freeman took the opportunity to mention on an unrelated note, “It is also true that it is now and for a long time has been impossible for a Southerner to receive serious consideration for nomination for the presidency by either of the major political parties. This ‘kiss of death’ imposed by accident of birth is no less effective than the artificial boost supplied by race and religion in other cases. And it makes as little sense” (“Mr. Lodge”). In these instances, Freeman’s dedication to the defense of his home comes off as largely irrelevant to the actual news stories of the time.

Though my analysis considers only those editorials printed in 1960, it seems as if this issue of southern defamation was a long-standing problem for Freeman. His 10 March editorial entitled “Another Libel against the South” refuted a claim made about the preponderance of lynching in the South: “This is just another example of the continuing libel against the residents and natives of the South, both White and Negro.” Likewise, when writing against the Civil Rights Act, Freeman derided, “The present sorry spectacle in the United States Senate . . . is worse than all of the propaganda and misunderstanding which has characterized the portrayal of Southern race relations” (“Just Who”). These comments indicate that Freeman believed, or found it useful to argue, that the South had long been a victim of calumny.

Furthermore, his appraisals of the civil rights planks of the Democratic and Republican parties indirectly or directly portrayed them as attacks upon southerners. He wrote, “They are even more drastic in many respects than any of the legislation thus far proposed in Congress by even the most rabid civil rights advocates and South-haters” and “[They] have set themselves up as liberals . . . to punish and destroy the White South” (“ . . . About”; “Liberal”). In these defensive editorials Freeman seemed to be actively working to improve the popular image of the South while portraying it as a victim of unfair defamation.

The second way that the South is victimized—by loss of essential rights and resources—is

found extensively in Freeman's editorials. The most common attackers in these cases were the federal government, the Supreme Court, the national Democratic and Republican parties, both local and national chapters of the NAACP, and local sit-in demonstrators. The primary resources that Freeman lamented Greenville losing as a result of its victimization were public facilities; he portrayed the closing of libraries or schools in order to prevent integration not as an active choice made by the white power structures, but rather as a sad but necessary step brought on by the forceful activities of others. "[I]t should be obvious to all concerned that integration would destroy the public schools just as completely as would closing them by state action" ("NAACP May"), wrote Freeman. Similarly, concerning the sit-ins at the Greenville Library, Freeman proclaimed, "[T]he Negroes should understand that their demonstrations are not going to get for them what they want—integration—but repetition of such unseemly conduct could destroy the Library" ("To No"). And when the library was closed by white authorities in the face of a federal integration suit, Freeman bemoaned the idea that a "handful of Negroes have seriously impaired if not destroyed something intended to serve upwards of 200,000 Negro and White citizens of the city and county" ("Everyone").

When commenting upon the sit-ins at lunch counters across the South, Freeman used a tactic similar to the previously described "right of association" argument to characterize the demonstrations as attacks upon white businessmen: "[T]he sit-in demonstrations at lunch counters were a violation of the rights of the other patrons and their owners" ("Time for Cooler Heads"). Freeman also combined this rights argument with a financial one, saying, "So far has this integration nonsense gone that these young people have taken it upon themselves to interfere with the rights of the proprietors of the establishments concerned, by depriving them of business to create a public disturbance and to deprive the regular customers of service" ("What"). This appeal against loss of business had added weight in Greenville because, as mentioned above, it was a growing commercial center in the South.

Freeman deplored the attack upon economic interests independently of individual rights as well. In his editorial "Economic Effects of Integration," Freeman claimed that industry and business leaders would move out of areas of forced integration, predicting, "If continued 'pushing' and court and executive action to force integration continues and succeeds, the economy may be done irreparable damage, and the Negro will be the greater loser." Although Freeman stated here that the greatest loss would be to African Americans (because they had further to go in economic development), the white South was necessarily a victim as well.

However, the most vivid depictions of encroachment upon the rights and resources of the South arose from Freeman's criticism of national powers. In these editorials the white South is portrayed as unable to stand up against the overbearing and invasive activities of the federal government. He described the U.S. Senate as "seeking punitive and oppressive legislation aimed primarily at one section of the country [and trying] to impose its will by force" ("Just Who"). Emphasizing the suffering of white southerners, Freeman lamented, "It is a tragic situation, of course. We have not accepted the propriety of federal court decisions ordering integration of the schools, although we must concede that the central government has the power to over-rule the states and to force their people to comply" ("Federal-State"). Freeman saw the right of the South to govern itself as under threat; considering the Civil Rights Act's voting protections, he warned, "The more dangerous proposal was the creation of the system of federal registrars who could move in and take over from the duly qualified state and local officials," stating, "This is a clear

invasion of the constitutionally guaranteed right of the states to establish and enforce qualifications for voting and to conduct their elections as they see fit” (“NAACP Pressure”; “Let’s Hope”).

Freeman fomented fear for the future of the South resulting from this aggression by national powers. He characterized the Democratic Party platform as a promise to “declare martial law in the South [and] abolish all local government” (“A Promise”). This threat of martial law and a second Reconstruction was referenced repeatedly in Freeman’s editorials.¹³ He portrayed the South as a victim, but a valiant one: “Mr. Douglas [Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois] does not realize that the Southerners are fighting to head off a vicious and vengeant Reconstruction of the White South” (“Just Who”). Because of this threat, Freeman was able to defend the morality of the South’s position and of its actions against the will of the majority of the United States.

The third and final way that Freeman framed the South as the victim in the struggle over race relations was through his depiction of protestors as active and aggressive agitators with destructive, rather than constructive, ends. He described these people as intent upon ruining the peace, order, and goodwill that had previously characterized southern life. Freeman frequently stressed that the sit-in demonstrators and similar protestors were instigators of violence. He stated, “[T]hey, knowingly or not, are inciting riots,” and used rhetorical questions to steer the audience away from the idea that these were passive and peaceful actions: “What is passive about this well organized and seemingly well financed campaign to disrupt peace and order?” “Is it ‘passive resistance’ when smaller crowds gather and invade private business establishments or even segregated public facilities when equal facilities for the races have been provided?” (“Demonstrations”; “Passive”). Freeman summed up: “[T]he sit-ins can only result in harm, they are open provocations to violence” (“Time for Level Heads”). This depiction of the demonstrators as aggressors rather than victims was an attempt to turn the common portrayal of peaceful African Americans and violent whites on its head, and thereby justify the refusal to give into integrationist demands. Freeman applauded storeowners’ refusal to serve African-American customers: “It could be that, by refusing to serve them and closing their lunch counters, the stores concerned were doing the Negro students a favor. From that kind of conduct, with hundreds of persons of both races packed into a scene of tension, grave incidents could occur. It would take only one rash act from either side of the color line to touch off trouble that would feed upon itself, grow and lead to a major tragedy” (“What Did”).

Using this characterization of the sit-in demonstrators as aggressive, Freeman was able to warn of impending violence that, even if coming from whites, was the fault of instigation and so could not be blamed on white southerners. He in no way condoned violence but made such justifications as “It is hard to be patient in the face of all the pressures and agitation being brought to bear in the issue of racial relations” and “If this goes on, the end result is bound to be [race riots]. The Whites, with some exceptions, have been rather patient thus far. But the clashes between the fringe elements of both races are beginning” (“Patience”; “Demonstrations”). As Freeman described the situation, “The negro’s militant and impatient self-assertion has aroused a strong reaction on the part of Whites,” thereby making the demonstrators the blameworthy agents in these clashes and maintaining white southerners as the victims being acted against (“Jacksonville”).

Within this tactic Freeman employed the language of the Red Scare in order to implicitly, and at times even explicitly, link the demonstrators to a Communist threat. He referred to integra-

tionists as “leftist sympathizers” and to the resistance as “class aggression” (“How”; “Passive”). In one unambiguous editorial Freeman stated, “The war against segregation . . . affords to Communists more opportunities even than they had in the beginning stages of the Indian Revolution” and “the situation and the organization [to coordinate civil rights protests] are made to order for the Communist purposes. They can exploit the one and infiltrate the other. One of the primary purposes of the Reds is to stir up racial strife and use it as only they can to their best advantage” (“Non-violence”). This could be one area where American Communists might have agreed with Freeman; as Grindy observes, “By making resistance to American racism a top agenda item, Communists arguably contributed to the Southern perception that desegregation efforts were part of a malevolent, radical attack on Southern cultural norms from an external, red menace” (5).

However, most of Freeman’s rhetoric more subtly raised suspicions of communist activity within the civil rights demonstrations, rather than so explicitly linking the two threats to the southern way of life. He described sit-in demonstrators as “invading” lunch counters or businesses in several articles that reference them;¹⁴ a word that draws upon ideas of war and subversive action. Likewise, he frequently stressed the idea that the demonstrators were not from local communities, but were “being directed by outside agitators” (“Time for Cooler Heads”). Similarly, another editorial claimed, “[A]n insidious sort of subversion has invaded the field of race relations in South Carolina and much of the rest of the South. The pattern of ‘sit-ins’ or ‘sit-downs’, or whatever they may be called, has become too widespread and it has become too obvious that they are being carefully planned and coordinated to believe otherwise. There is much evidence that they did not originate in the communities in which they have occurred” (“Demonstrations”). While phrases such as these did not specifically reference the Cold War, the vague idea of subversive “outsiders” in light of the national atmosphere of suspicion was enough to raise fears of Communism. These outsiders could have simply been from the North, or they could have been from some anti-American organization outside the traditions, goals, and ideals of U.S. society. Either way, Freeman claimed that these agitators attacking the South could not possibly be simply discontented members of Greenville’s African-American community. It is easily possible to imagine that Greenville’s African-American protestors had been caught up in the growing national civil rights movement, influenced by the images and events portrayed in the media. However, Freeman writes as if their protest could have arisen only from some threatening national or international subversion.

Conclusion

Wayne Freeman was writing for and editing the *Greenville News* at a time when massive protests against segregation began to arise in his community and across the South. As a staunch anti-integrationist, Freeman wrote many editorials criticizing these actions and defending the traditional southern way of life. However, in order to prevent white southerners being viewed as violent, racist, or unwilling to give up societal power, Freeman reframed the South and its inhabitants as victims in the racial clash. By doing so, he was able both to solidify support for his opinion and to justify the intransigence of the South and the methods of suppression it used against civil rights demonstrators.

By identifying this strategy, I have attempted to increase our understanding of rhetorical resistance to integration, especially at the local level. This study expands on Kenneth Burke’s and

Nietzsche's theories of victimage by depicting how rituals of self-victimization can be consciously used as a rhetorical strategy. While other authors have elucidated the deployment of this strategy in other contexts—its use by the U.S. government to justify war, or its use by social and political movements to try (usually ineffectively) to point out the oppressive nature of a stronger power—this paper shows how a strong actor can employ the rhetoric of victimization against a politically, socially, and economically weaker challenger in an attempt to retain a moral high ground and justify continued oppressive action. Aspects of this are similar to Jeremy Engels's recent analysis of how President Nixon used the politics of resentment and the rhetoric of victimage to mobilize and justify rage against his political adversaries. Nixon portrayed rioting students and African Americans as a tyrannical, unruly, and anti-democratic minority victimizing a silent, forgotten, Republican majority. Nixon's goals were to sustain support for the war in Vietnam and to ensure that middle America continued to feel a need for his leadership, but clear parallels can be seen to the rhetorical strategy this paper analyzes. As rhetors, both Nixon and Freeman morally justified their position of power and refusal to acknowledge calls for change by portraying politically weak protestors as threatening attackers of a victimized majority.

Further research may uncover other instances of activists or politicians employing this rhetoric of victimization, and it is likely that this strategy will continue to be used if it proves effective. Recent events connected with the development of the Tea Party and its claim of government intrusion into private rights may prove noteworthy. In a different context, we may find this tactic employed by current political leaders in the Middle East in their resistance to agitation for democracy. Identifying and understanding this use of rhetoric is important because, as Engels points out, such rhetorics are deeply problematic when they cultivate hostility towards the perceived cause of suffering or make democratic deliberation more about achieving expiation and plotting revenge than about finding consensus. Thus a continued exploration of the rhetoric of victimage would not only prove interesting and informative, but could play a part in diffusing the power of this rhetoric and preventing its use in perpetuating or justifying political and social abuses.

Notes

¹ Lewis presents several reasons for this: the perceived nobility of the quest for civil rights; the fact that many of the first producers of this history were in fact civil rights activists, whereas proponents of southern resistance would be less likely to share their stories; the possibility that physical documentary evidence of the voice of segregationists may have been bleached of its worst examples of white supremacy before being archived; and the simple fact that the supporters of white resistance tended to be a generation older than African-American activists, so may have died long before there was any reinvigorated interest in southern resistance strategies.

² Note that the methods of southern resistance to integration during the 1950s and 1960s were expansive and varied, from enacting new legislation to closing schools to employing vigilante violence. My summary in this section will focus solely on discursive rhetorical traditions and the strategies used by white southerners in their efforts to garner support for segregation.

³ Adding provocation was the fact that Communists were in fact committed to racial equality, as they saw racism and the legacy of slavery as linked to capitalist oppression (Grindy 5).

⁴ In February of 1959, Richard Henry, who was traveling through Greenville on air force business, was verbally harassed and then forcibly removed from the "white" waiting room. He filed suit against the Municipal Airport Authority with the aid of NAACP attorneys Lincoln Jenkins and Willie T. Smith. While this case was pending, baseball legend Jackie Robinson, en route to a speaking engagement at a national NAACP conference, flew in and out of Greenville. He received similar treatment—he and his party were asked to relocate to the colored waiting room and were threatened with arrest when they refused (O'Neill 289).

⁵ The students taking part were Hattie Smith [Wright], Doris Walker, Dorothy Franks, Blanche Baker, Benjamin Downs, Virginia Hurst, and Robert Anderson. They were picked up from the police station by Reverend James S.

Hall and attorney Donald J. Sampson.

⁶ Those arrested were Elaine Leans, Hattie Smith [Wright], Jeff [Jesse] Jackson, Benjamin Downs, Willie B. Wright, Margaret Seawright [Crosby], Joan Mattison [Daniel], and Doris Wright.

⁷ Judge Wyche warned that if the library reopened while still segregated, then those suing for integration would have a strong case against the defendants.

⁸ Similarly, one can note a general trend in Freeman's writing towards agreement with local political authorities. While his editorials in the 1960s often criticized the actions of the federal government or national parties, Freeman had only praise for Governor Hollings, other southern politicians, and the police. (Examples: "Independence"; "Time for Cooler Heads"; "Governor"; "Time for Level Heads"; "Everyone Loses"; "Library Is Open"; "Federal-State Test.")

⁹ However, the *Greenville News* (and therefore presumably Freeman) did choose to reprint a letter to the editor of the *News and Courier* that Secrest aptly describes as "a classic example of white supremacy sentiments and racial paranoia," which dramatically warned of "mongrelization" and a future "face of mulattoes" (287). Thus, while Freeman did not seem to hold such views himself, it may be that he saw some value in their dissemination.

¹⁰ I borrow this phrase from Davis and Cloud's title.

¹¹ However, I found no articles that looked at how it related to opposition to the civil rights movement. For the use of victimage rhetoric to justify war by the U.S. government, see Davis and Cloud; Engels; and Ivie. For use by a social movement in order to combat greater powers, see Davis and Cloud; Blain, "Politics of Victimage"; and Blain, "Power, War."

¹² Resentment in modern government is caused by leaders having to give up some of their ultimate power and autonomy as well as practice self-denial and discipline, which is against Nietzsche's ideas of human nature's basic instincts and desires.

¹³ Including "Just Who"; "Let's Hope"; "A Promise"; ". . . About."

¹⁴ Examples include "Demonstrations"; "Passive Resistance?"; "Non-violence"; "Time for Level Heads"; "Party Platforms."

Works Cited

- Blain, Michael. "The Politics of Victimage: Power and Subjection in a US Anti-gay Campaign." *Critical Discourse Studies* 2.1 (2005): 31–50. Print.
- . "Power, War, and Melodrama in the Discourses of Political Movements." *Theory and Society* 23.6 (1994): 805–37. Print.
- Dailey, Jane. "The Theology of Massive Resistance: Sex, Segregation, and the Sacred after *Brown*." *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction*. Ed. Clive Webb. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. 151–80. Print.
- Davis, Amanda, and Dana Cloud. "Goliath in David's Clothing: The Oppressed Militant and the Mighty Victim in the Rhetoric of Self-Defense." NCA 94th Annual Convention, San Diego, CA, 20 Nov. 2008. www.allacademic.com. Web. 4 May 2010.
- Dorgan, Howard. "Response of the Main-line Southern White Protestant Pulpit to *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954–1965." *A New Diversity in Contemporary Southern Rhetoric*. Ed. Calvin M. Logue and Howard Dorgan. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1987. 15–51. Print.
- Durham, Frank D. "Anti-Communism, Race, and Structuration: Newspaper Coverage of the Labor and Desegregation Movements in the South, 1932–40 and 1953–61." *Journalism & Mass Communication Monographs* 4.2 (2002): 48–107. Print.
- "8 Negroes Sit-in at Library Here." *Greenville News* 17 July 1960. Print.
- Engels, Jeremy. "The Politics of Resentment and the Tyranny of the Minority: Rethinking Victimage for Resentful Times." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 40.4 (2010): 303–25. Print.
- Freeman, Wayne C. ". . . About as Fur as They Can Go." *Greenville News* 28 July 1960. Print.
- . "Another Libel against the South." *Greenville News* 10 Mar. 1960. Print.
- . "Billy Graham on the Race Issue." *Greenville News* 18 Apr. 1960. Print.
- . "'Civil Rights' Idol." *Greenville News* 17 May 1960. Print.
- . "Demonstrations a Form of Madness." *Greenville News* 7 Mar. 1960. Print.
- . "Economic Effects of Integration." *Greenville News* 8 Aug. 1960. Print.
- . "Everyone Loses in Library Suit." *Greenville News* 7 Sept. 1960. Print.
- . "Federal-State Test in Louisiana." *Greenville News* 14 Nov. 1960. Print.
- . "The Governor Offers Wise Counsel." *Greenville News* 8 Apr. 1960. Print.
- . "How 'Offensive' Can You Be?" *Greenville News* 12 July 1960. Print.
- . "Independence: A Political Shield." *Greenville News* 6 Feb. 1960. Print.

- . “It Once Was True.” *Greenville News* 5 Jan. 1960. Print.
- . “Jacksonville Incidents a Warning.” *Greenville News* 31 Aug. 1960. Print.
- . “Just Who Is Filibustering Anyway?” *Greenville News* 8 Mar. 1960. Print.
- . “Let’s Hope Senator Russell Is Right.” *Greenville News* 12 Apr. 1960. Print.
- . “‘Liberal’ Double Standard Revealed.” *Greenville News* 14 Mar. 1960. Print.
- . “Mr. Lodge Plays Politics.” *Greenville News* 19 Oct. 1960. Print.
- . “NAACP May Be Closing a Door.” *Greenville News* 4 Jan. 1960. Print.
- . “NAACP Pressure Produces a Reaction.” *Greenville News* 18 Jan. 1960. Print.
- . “‘Non-violence’ Produces Violence.” *Greenville News* 26 Apr. 1960. Print.
- . “Party Platforms Aren’t Law.” *Greenville News* 12 Aug. 1960. Print.
- . “Passive Resistance?” *Greenville News* 18 Mar. 1960. Print.
- . “Patience Is Watchword in Race Issue.” *Greenville News* 29 Feb. 1960. Print.
- . “A Promise of ‘Martial Law?’” *Greenville News* 14 July 1960. Print.
- . “Time for Cooler Heads to Take Over.” *Greenville News* 12 Mar. 1960. Print.
- . “Time for Level Heads to Take Over.” *Greenville News* 23 July 1960. Print.
- . “To No Avail.” *Greenville News* 16 Mar. 1960. Print.
- . “What Did Demonstrations Prove?” *Greenville News* 17 Feb. 1960. Print.
- Grindy, Mathew A. “Civil Rights and the Red Scare.” *Rocky Mountain Communication Review* 4.1 (Winter 2008): 3–15. Print.
- “Group of Young Negroes Enter Greenville Library.” *Greenville News* 2 Mar. 1960. Print.
- “Gunfire Breaks out as Races Clash in Greenville.” *Greenville News* 26 July 1960. Print.
- Hart, T. Robert, Jr. “Amend or Defend: The End of Jim Crow in Greenville and Charleston.” Diss. Clemson U, 1997. Print.
- “Integration of Local Library Is Sought, Negroes File Federal Suit.” *Greenville News* 29 July 1960. Print.
- Ivie, Robert L. “Images of Savagery in American Justifications for War.” *Communication Monographs* 47 (1980): 279–91. Print.
- Kruse, Kevin M. “The Fight for ‘Freedom of Association’: Segregationist Rights and Resistance in Atlanta.” *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction*. Ed. Clive Webb. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. 99–114. Print.
- Lewis, George. *Massive Resistance: The White Response to the Civil Rights Movement*. London: Hodder Education and Oxford UP, 2006. Print.
- “Library Is Open for ‘Any Citizen.’” *Greenville News* 19 Sept. 1960. Print.
- Logue, Calvin M., and Howard Dorgan. *A New Diversity in Contemporary Southern Rhetoric*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1987. Print.
- Mixon, Harold. “The Rhetoric of States’ Rights and White Supremacy.” *A New Diversity in Contemporary Southern Rhetoric*. Ed. Calvin M. Logue and Howard Dorgan. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1987. 166–87. Print.
- “9 PM Curfew Ordered to Ease Racial Unrest.” *Greenville News* 27 July 1960. Print.
- O’Neill, Stephen. “Memory, History, and the Desegregation of Greenville, South Carolina.” *Toward a Meeting of the Waters: Currents in the Civil Rights Movement of South Carolina in the 20th Century*. Ed. Winfred B. Moore Jr. and Orville Vernon Burton. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2008. 286–99. Print.
- “Pilgrimage by Negroes Set Today.” *Greenville News* 1 Jan. 1960. Print.
- “Restraining Order in Local Airport Case Is Called For.” *Greenville News* 6 Dec. 1960. Print.
- Secret, Andrew McDowd. “In Black and White: Press Opinion and Race Relations in South Carolina, 1954–1964.” Diss. Duke U, 1972. Print.
- “7 Negroes Walk into Library Here.” *Greenville News* 17 Mar. 1960. Print.
- “3 Counter Sit-ins Held in Greenville.” *Greenville News* 19 July 1960. Print.
- Webb, Clive, ed. *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.
- “White and Negro Libraries Closed.” *Greenville News* 3 Sept. 1960. Print.
- “Whites, Negroes in Street Battle.” *Greenville News* 22 July 1960. Print.
- Woods, Jeff. *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948–1968*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2004. Print.
- Wright, Hattie Smith. Personal interview. 10 July 2010.