



Burning Crosses and Activist Journalism: Hazel Brannon Smith and the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement

Jan Whitt

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Burning Crosses and Activist Journalism: Hazel Brannon Smith and the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement celebrates the contributions of the first woman to win a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing (1964). Owner and publisher of four weekly newspapers in Mississippi, Smith began her journalism career as a states rights Dixiecrat and segregationist, but became an icon for progressive thought on racial and ethnic issues. Though befriended by editors such as Hodding Carter Jr. and Ira B. Harkey Jr., Smith was a target of the White Citizens' Council and was boycotted by advertisers. During the civil rights movement, a cross was burned in her yard and one of her newspaper offices was firebombed. Before her death in 1994, she endured foreclosure, memory loss, and public humiliation, but she never lost faith in journalism or in the power of informed debate.



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