

Civil Rights Collecting Institutions and the Facilitation of Public Engagement in the American South

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ABSTRACT

Across the American South, civil rights memory institutions created by city and state governments and private organizations, preserve and communicate complex civil rights histories. Each of these institutions, for different reasons, influenced by their particular cultural, historical, and community contexts, emerged to preserve and present this information to their communities. In addition to their individual contexts, each institution has various organizational and community contexts, for example mission statements or community support and interest, that helps to drive their relationships with their communities. Throughout the South, these historical and cultural contexts and elements DO inform how civil rights memory institutions interact with their communities, and researchers.

These various elements and contexts preside over and govern a complex series of relationships between civil rights memory institutions, their communities, and the generation of new ideas and concepts. Examples of this can be seen at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Alabama and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in Jackson, Mississippi. Understanding these elements and contexts and the roles they play in these situations and others are extremely important in an age of social justice and information decolonization and liberation in the American South and the wider world.

TOPICS

archival arrangement and description; education; community engagement; social justice; museums