



A New Day in the Delta: Inventing School Desegregation As You Go

David W. Beckwith

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A New Day in the Delta is a fresh and appealing memoir of the experience of a young white college graduate in need of a job as the Vietnam War reached its zenith. David Beckwith applied and was accepted for a teaching position in the Mississippi Delta in the summer of 1969. Although it seemed to him a bit strange that he was accepted so quickly for this job while his other applications went nowhere, he was grateful for the opportunity. Beckwith reported for work to learn that he was to be assigned to an all-black school as the first step in Mississippi's long-deferred school desegregation.

The nation and Mississippi alike were being transformed by war and evolving racial relations, and Beckwith found himself on the cutting edge of the transformation of American education and society in one of the most resistant (and poor) corners of the country. Beckwith's revealing and often amusing story of the year of mutual incomprehension between an inexperienced white teacher and a classroom full of black children who had had minimal contact with any whites. This is history as it was experienced by those who were thrust into another sort of "front line."

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