1. Introduction

The White Citizens’ Councils were a network of groups which began to form in the United States from 1954 after racially segregated schools were judged to be unconstitutional. The first Council formed in Mississippi before spreading through the South and beyond. The aims of the groups were to:

- Maintain racial segregation
- Prevent the advancement of African American civil rights
- Maintain white supremacy & the privileges of whiteness

Analysing gender in the groups helps to uncover previously lost details, including: the activities of women in the segregationist movement; the role of masculinity in the groups; and how gender was used as a propaganda tool.

2. Gendered Roles

Individuals in the Councils typically performed gender-specific roles. My research forms typologies to establish gender-defined roles and to note individuals who had gender atypical roles.

- External Operators
- Directors
- Prominent exceptions
- Public-facing
- Women in the Councils
- Multi-members
- Members
- Administrative

3. Gender in Council Propaganda

The Councils created a great deal of propaganda, including:

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Flyers and Handbills
- Radio & TV programmes

Gender and sexuality were important aspects in many pieces of Council propaganda. A systematic analysis will establish:

- How the Councils sought to influence public opinion with these charged issues.
- How racial stereotypes were adapted for different audiences.
- How the content of the propaganda reflected broader political and cultural developments.

4. Aesthetics

The ways that Council members and activists presented themselves is an area that has received little attention. My research analyses the public image sought by the Councils, arguing that factors including gender and class played an important role in how Councillors sought to represent themselves and their segregationist cause in public.

5. Outcomes of Research

Assessing gender and sexuality in the Councils plays a particularly important role in furthering understanding of the extent of female participation, grassroots activities, conceptions of gender, and the motivations of segregationist propaganda. This is important for expanding understanding of the opposition movement to the Civil Rights Movement, as well contextualising contemporary manifestations of white backlash.