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**Review of *Desegregating Texas Schools: Eisenhower, Shivers, and the Crisis at Mansfield High* By Robyn Duff-Ladino**

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*Desegregating Texas Schools: Eisenhower, Shivers, and the Crisis at Mansfield High.* By Robyn Duff Ladino. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. Notes, bibliography, index. xiv + 208 pp. \$35.00 cloth, \$13.95 paper.

The author's thesis is that the school desegregation "crisis at Mansfield marked a significant milestone on the pathway to equality in the United States." She builds her argument through a painstaking reconstruction of the national, state, and local circumstances surrounding the failed attempt to integrate the Mansfield, Texas, high school in August 1956.

Nationally, the Supreme Court had issued its *Brown* desegregation ruling two years earlier, and President Dwight Eisenhower maintained his moderate attitude toward involving the federal executive in desegregation. In Texas, Governor Allan Shivers was determined to cripple desegregation. Shivers's powerful support of Eisenhower in 1952, which helped the war hero carry Texas, was the political nexus between the national and state levels. Locally, whites in Mansfield, a small town south of Fort Worth, bitterly opposed admitting African Americans to the high school. That defiance gave Shivers his opening. He sent Texas Rangers to Mansfield to keep order by, in effect, keeping African American students out.

The Eisenhower Administration did nothing because the federal district judge having jurisdiction did not ask for intervention; the State of Texas kept order, albeit at the expense of African American citizens who were denied their constitutional rights; and

Eisenhower hesitated to take a stand because the 1956 elections were just over the horizon. Mansfield was pivotal, nevertheless. Eisenhower came to understand that the federal government had been finessed, even though the situation made federal intervention problematic. In 1957, with the elections past, Eisenhower sent troops to Little Rock Central High School when Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus defied him in unambiguous circumstances.

Effective as it is in exploring the situation in 1956, this book has two limitations. First, although its title is *Desegregating Texas Schools*, it contains practically nothing about statewide desegregation after 1956. Even Mansfield's desegregation is linked only to the "monetary incentives" of 1964 and 1965 federal legislation, and not to new enforcement powers granted to the US Attorney General, or to the activism of the federal courts. Second, the book is lamely written. At least one of those professors whom the author thanks, or her editors, should have pointed out that double adverbs and adjectives, the passive voice, and polysyllabic malapropisms are stereotypical of scholarly writing, not essential to it.

This is an important study, nonetheless, for anyone concerned with Texas history, or with desegregation within or outside of Texas. The author's interpretations are judicious, and her archival and other research is thorough.

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