

# Of Long Memory: Mississippi And The Murder Of Medgar Evers

*A. Nossiter*

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size: 47.Mb

**A. Nossiter : Of Long Memory: Mississippi And The Murder Of Medgar Evers** before purchasing it in order to  
gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Of Long Memory: Mississippi And The Murder Of  
Medgar Evers:

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find regarding the 60's and the history that was made in that time. Even though I was a teenager I don't remember all  
of these happenings. Being a teenager I had other things on my mind. The book was excellent and gave a good  
background leading up to the death of Medger Evans. A man who was cut down in the prime of his life by a bigot.5 of  
5 people found the following review helpful. Really a well-done bookBy SchmergulsThis account was writt6en in  
1994 and covers the story of the murder of Medgar Evers up to the time when Byron de la Beckwith was convicted.  
The author makes the trial seem like a slam dunk so far as the law was concerned, but a perusal of the Mississippi  
Supreme Court opinions show that there were real legal problems in bringing him to trial so long after the murder. The  
citation for the case is 707 So. 2nd 547. The conviction was affirmed by a four to 2 vote with 3 justices not  
participating. Nossiter tells the story from a number of angles and it is simply absorbing reading. And since the book  
ends with justice triumphant it is a most satisfying book, showing that some things do eventually turn out right.13 of  
13 people found the following review helpful. ExcellentBy A CustomerI concur with the previous reviewer. Mr.  
Nossiter has produced a well-researched and fascinating chronicle of the case of Medgar Evers, including a detailed

and chilling portrait of his assassin. Nossiter also effectively re-creates the eerie atmosphere of early 1960's Mississippi, where the Klan, the White Citizens' Council, and the Sovereignty Commission flourished, and where a man like Beckwith would become a sort of folk hero to his fellow racists. However, it is also a story of dogged determination and the quest for justice, as exemplified by Myrlie Evers and Bobby DeLaughter, whose efforts culminated in the long-overdue conviction of Beckwith. It is a story of tragedy and triumph, skillfully crafted by a talented and deeply insightful writer. Well done, Mr. Nossiter!

A look at the 1963 murder of civil rights crusader Medgar Evers describes Mississippi then and now and the recent revival of the case against Byron de la Beckwith, Evers's accused killer.

From Publishers Weekly In this resonant and absorbing narrative, Nossiter uses the 1963 murder of NAACP staffer Medgar Evers and the recent re-prosecution of assassin Byron de la Beckwith as a prism through which to examine the significant evolution in hearts, minds and government in Mississippi. Nossiter, who formerly covered Mississippi for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, tells his story mainly in deft profiles: Evers, the resolute field secretary shunned by many of the black bourgeoisie in Jackson; Beckwith, the racist supported by the white establishment, whose first two trials led to hung juries; prosecutor Bobby DeLaughter, who slowly developed a consciousness of the past. By the late 1980s, with new political leaders in place and a collective introspection in process, the state exhumed the case: information about jury tampering became known, formerly reluctant witnesses testified and Beckwith was convicted. The need for this thoughtful analysis--a more comprehensive look at the Evers case than Reed Massengill's recent Beckwith biography, *Portrait of a Racist*--is shown by a jury pool, black and white, almost universally ignorant of Evers. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal In the 1950s and 1960s Southern segregationists frequently argued that the Civil Rights movement in the South was the work of "outside agitators" rather than local blacks. Southern blacks were said to be satisfied with the social, political, and economic status quo. Ironically, even recent books and films (e.g., *Mississippi Burning*) more sympathetic in their portrayals nonetheless have perpetuated the image of Southern blacks as passive people, with the principal impetus for change coming from Northern civil rights organizations and the federal government. Journalist Nossiter and historian Dittmer offer useful correctives of this image in their books on the Civil Rights movement and its participants in that most Southern of Southern states, Mississippi. More narrow in focus, Nossiter's book examines the assassination of Medgar Evers, the Mississippi field secretary for the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in 1963, as well as changes in Mississippi politics and culture that made possible the conviction of Byron de la Beckwith for that crime 30 years later. Dittmer provides a more comprehensive account but does not ignore the roles of national Civil Rights organizations in mobilizing and supporting black Mississippians. Moreover, he provides an excellent examination of the tactical and strategic disagreements between such organizations as the NAACP and SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee). But his book's strength lies in its discussion of the activities of black students, farmers, railway workers, and other "local people" as they struggled to improve their lives. Dittmer's book is highly recommended for academic libraries. Nossiter's work, despite shifts in perspective that reduce continuity, provides lay readers with a good account of a crime that focused national attention on the Civil Rights movement in the South. Thomas H. Ferrell, Univ. of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s The conviction earlier this year of Byron de la Beckwith for the 1963 murder of Medgar Evers provides a timeliness to this well-researched, fluidly written, and thoughtful book. A Jewish Yankee, Nossiter seems an unlikely chronicler of the lives of black civil rights Mississippian Evers; the racist murderer de la Beckwith; the original prosecutor of the murder, Bill Waller, who later became Mississippi's governor; Evers's mercurial, radical brother Charles; and Bobby DeLaughter, the prosecutor who finally obtained a conviction of de la Beckwith after two mistrials. Nossiter covered Mississippi in general and the case in particular for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and indeed, Nossiter and Mississippi are central characters in this book. In many ways, the assignment was akin to covering a foreign country. Like most foreigners, Nossiter had trouble at first learning the local language and byways. But, like most smart and persistent travelers, eventually he could claim some measure of understanding. In asking why the Evers case came to trial again, Nossiter found the answer not through looking at culture or economics but through a study of changing state government politics, which he views as "a compelling mirror of larger movements beneath the surface." His Jewishness often plays a part in the story. For example, in July 1992 Nossiter finally had an opportunity to meet the imprisoned de la Beckwith, a man past 70 and in failing health. A friend, knowing de la Beckwith would never grant an interview to a Jew, presented Nossiter as a Catholic. But de la Beckwith was suspicious. "Say the Hail Mary for me," he demanded of Nossiter, who admitted, "Can't. Don't know it." Immediately, Nossiter writes, "the look on Beckwith's face changed." Then he spoke: "You're not a Catholic. You're a damn Jew." The book is filled with such dramatic, revelatory scenes, which prove Nossiter to be a perceptive, observant journalist. They are not likely to be forgotten soon by readers. -- Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.