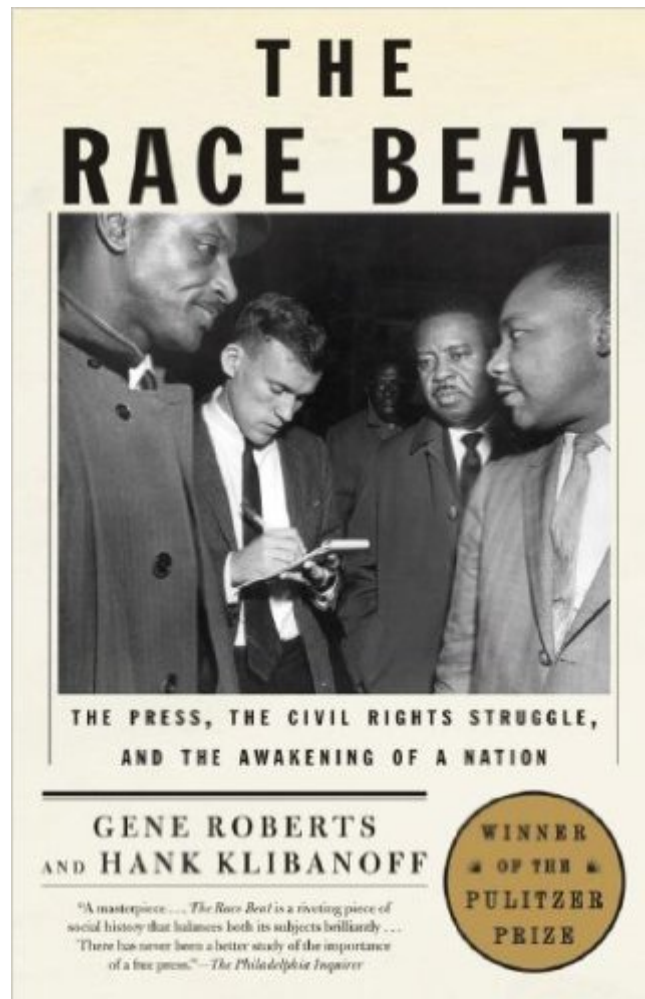


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# The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, And The Awakening Of A Nation



## Synopsis

An unprecedented examination of how news stories, editorials and photographs in the American pressâand the journalists responsible for themâprofoundly changed the nationâs thinking about civil rights in the South during the 1950s and â60s. Roberts and Klibanoff draw on private correspondence, notes from secret meetings, unpublished articles, and interviews to show how a dedicated cadre of newsmenâblack and whiteârevealed to a nation its most shameful shortcomings that compelled its citizens to act. Meticulously researched and vividly rendered, *The Race Beat* is an extraordinary account of one of the most calamitous periods in our nationâs history, as told by those who covered it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have read a lot on the civil rights struggle, including Taylor Branch's trilogy, and *Simple Justice*, by Richard Kluger, and have appreciated all the reading I have done on that momentous struggle. But this account of how newspapers and television chronicled the exciting events told me a lot I did not know or had not remembered. The book is carefully footnoted and has a 26 page bibliography, in addition to the footnotes (thus avoiding the unfortunate lapse of some books which are well-footnoted but omit a bibliography). The book not only tells of newsmen and media sometimes going to great, even heroic lengths, to tell the story of the events in the clash between aspiring blacks and the status quo, but also tells of the media which sought to uphold segregation. As with other books on the struggle, when one is appalled by the violence and murders which marked the

history, it is some comfort to realize that in the end right triumphs. This book is an astoundingly interesting survey of an important aspect of the civil rights efforts of the 1950s and 1960s.

This book is about the television and print media reporters that covered the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's often at great risk to themselves. While it seems that the author plays up the role the reporters played in the Civil Rights era, it cannot be denied that the media played a key role in the movement and that civil rights leaders used the media as a tool to advance their cause. Leaders such as Martin Luther King and John Lewis realized that if the national press did not cover it, the event may as well not have happened. The national press and television soon began to appreciate the significance of the movement and increase their coverage of it. In this way the national press and civil rights leaders developed a kind of symbiotic relationship with overly aggressive segregationist serving as their foils. While there are really no new stories about the movement and the role of reporters seems a little overly lionized, this is an interesting book in that it tell a familiar story from a new perspective.

Outstanding effort by legendary editor Gene Roberts, widely admired for turning around the Philadelphia Inquirer in the 1980s and leading it to multiple prizes in journalism, revisits, with co-author Hank Klibanoff, managing editor of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, both their own work in civil rights reporting and the work of colleagues to pen this precise and most interesting study of what journalists were and weren't doing when segregation was legal in the U.S. Highly readable and fascinating history.

An important component of African-Americans attaining their civil rights was the press. Without the courageous reporters, editors and publishers, who risked financial ruin and social ostracism, the Reverend Martin Luther King and company's aspirations would have been dead in the water. Mr. Roberts and Mr. Klibanoff give a very evenhanded history of how not all newspapers were on the same philosophical page. Southern segregationist news outlets in newspapers, radio and television went to great lengths to dehumanize blacks and argue about their right to treat them as less than equals. The upper and middle-class whites as well as politicians and some Southern judges may not have been the ones busting blacks' heads, but they were certainly complicit in provoking the dimwitted rednecks into doing their violent dirty work. Most of the nation had no clue as to the horrible conditions in which Southern African-Americans lived. The newspapers and, especially television, changed the nation's perspective. Mr. Roberts and Klibanoff also take pains in describing

how some segregationists' editorials, such as James Kilpatrick's hate-filled screeds, were sophistry at its worst. The authors have written a truly informative and highly readable aspect of the Civil Rights movement that many take for granted. A great book.

The Civil Rights Movement of the '50s and '60s was a significant and well-known period of American history. But have you ever thought about why it is so well known, or even why it had so much success? *The Race Beat* is a story, not only of the well-known players of the Civil Rights Movement, but also the men who covered it in the media. These men poured their hearts and souls into covering the stories that would make the people of the United States stand up and take notice of the injustices being done in the name of "separate but equal," "justice," and "liberty." Many of these men had battled against Hitler over his racial elitism. Once they came home, they were quick to jump into the front lines of our own battle for racial equality before we descended into the depravity that Hitler is known for. This is a fascinating insider's look at how the civil rights battle was brought to the forefront of the United States' attention. Blending well-known events with the stories of the men who were there writing about it, you get a whole new perspective of what these men were feeling and fighting for. Not just as outside observers, but compatriots. This book is well written and well researched, but it is slow to start. I picked it up expecting the jump into the civil rights movement, but found myself in the '40s as they laid the groundwork for what the journalists were to become. It is also heavily journalist-centric. That is to say, there are references the non-journalists among us won't understand. But all in all, it is a great read. *Armchair Interviews* says: If you are looking for a new perspective on the civil rights movement, this book is for you.

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