

GUEST EDITORIAL

Southern Miss Should Begin Erasing its Segregationist History Starting with Aubrey K. Lucas Administration Building

Given Dr. Rodney Bennett's desire to hire a "Vice President of Diversity" to meet "the urgency of this moment," perhaps he should take a hard look at the name on the building where he works. That building is named for Aubrey K. Lucas.

Today, in the interests of diversity and reconciliation, we ask Dr. Bennett to revisit Mr. Lucas' role in one of the most horrific events in the history of Southern Miss.



Aubrey K. Lucas Administration Building

During the late 1950's, Aubrey K. Lucas was the Director of Admissions at Mississippi Southern College, later named the University of Southern Mississippi, when Mr. Clyde Kennard applied for admission. Among other accomplishments, [Mr. Kennard](#) was "a former sergeant and paratrooper in the U.S. Army." Mr. Kennard's clearly met all conditions for acceptance, except for one insignificant thing: he was black.

Mr. Kennard wasn't just rejected, he was punished for his efforts to become the first black to be admitted to MSC-USM. He was falsely accused of a crime, prosecuted, and jailed.

Mr. Lucas blamed "the governor, J. P. Coleman, who decided against admitting Mr. Kennard." Although Mr. Lucas said, in 2006 – long after Mr. Kennard's death -- "[it was a mistake](#)," he did not stick his neck out to prevent the injustice, even though he was the Director of Admissions and had the authority to do so.

Let there be no mistake that the behavior of the Mississippi officials was disgusting and despicable. Their behavior was so disgusting that no one, much less one who professes to be a devout Christian, could have perceived what was done to Mr. Kennard was anything other than an appalling injustice.