

A GRAVE INJUSTICE: INSTITUTIONAL TERROR AT THE STATE INDUSTRIAL HOME  
FOR NEGRO GIRLS AND THE PARADOX OF JUVENILE DELINQUENT REFORM IN  
MISSOURI, 1888-1960

Leroy M. Rowe

Dr. Robert E. Weems, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the treatment of African American juvenile delinquent girls in Missouri from 1888-1960. It finds demonstrates that during the era of the training schools, Missouri's reformatories developed a reputation for their repressive treatment of juvenile delinquents. The period from 1888 to 1960 illustrates that white Missourians' racial attitudes toward African Americans, the political "spoils system," and the incompetence of penal officials, handicapped efforts to rehabilitation African American delinquent girls at the State Industrial Home for Negro Girls at Tipton, Missouri. The institutional failures outlined in this thesis are appalling. A direct result of public officials' failure to view African American youths as persons worthy of the same respect and basic dignity extended to their white peers. Public officials' conscious indifference to the institutional failures at the State Industrial Home for Negro Girls at Tipton, Missouri, reinforced traditional racial stereotypes, and created an environment for institutional terror to take place. Although the reformatory at Tipton was established as a training school for delinquent and wayward girls, a prison-like atmosphere was maintained for much its years of operation.

Thus, the thesis argues that corporal punishment took precedent over education and industrial training at this "so-called" school. The study especially scrutinizes public officials for the lack of moral fiber many displayed throughout the institution's period of operation. Their lack of political will allowed political appointees – who acted more like prison guards than teachers – to abuse the children at the reformatory.