

Primary Source: The 1950 Senate Campaign ^[1]

One of North Carolina's most contentious and notable Senate campaigns explicitly brought race front and center. In 1950, North Carolina was largely a one-party, Democratic state. But the party had two very different wings: traditional southern Democrats and progressive Democrats. Traditional southern Democrats favored traditional southern cultural norms and policies that supported segregation on one side. Progressive Democrats who supported the goals of social progress.

In 1949, Governor Kerr Scott appointed UNC-Chapel Hill president Frank Porter Graham to fill the unexpired U.S. Senate seat of J. Melville Broughton when he suddenly passed away in March. Graham was a progressive Democrat. He was fierce defender of the freedoms of democratic society and had worked for causes promoting social change and progress. He had also served on a number of national boards and commissions that came out of New Deal era programs created during the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt.

*After his one year appointment to the Senate, Graham made a bid to run for the open seat in 1950, opposing Willis Smith, a North Carolina tax attorney. The primary election failed to produce a winner, and Graham narrowly lost a run-up. Willis Smith was a traditional southern Democrat. He brought the issue of racial segregation and threats to the traditional southern way of life to the forefront and launched a number of smear campaigns to discredit Graham and his academic and professional career. The same year, the Supreme Court handed down a decision in *Sweat v. Painter*, forcing the University of Texas to integrate its law school. This ignited fear across the South, and Smith used the racially charged climate to attack Graham's liberalism to successful effect and Graham lost the bid. A number of racially charged ads and posters were created by the Smith campaign, including the one below.*

WHITE PEOPLE WAKE UP

BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE YOU MAY NOT HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE

Do you want?

- **Negroes** working beside you, your wife and daughters in your mills and factories?
- **Negroes** eating beside you in all public eating places?
- **Negroes** riding beside you, your wife and your daughters in buses, cabs and trains?
- **Negroes** sleeping in the same hotels and rooming houses?
- **Negroes** teaching and disciplining your children in school?
- **Negroes** sitting with you and your family at all public meetings?
- **Negroes** Going to white schools and white children going to Negro schools?
- **Negroes** to occupy the same hospital rooms with you and your wife and daughters?
- **Negroes** as your foremen and overseers in the mills?
- **Negroes** using your toilet facilities?

Northern political labor leaders have recently ordered that all doors be opened to Negroes on union property. This will lead to whites and Negroes working and living together in the South as they do in the North. Do you want that?

Frank Graham favors mingling of the races

HE ADMITS THAT HE FAVORS MIXING NEGROES AND WHITES — HE SAYS SO IN [THE REPORT HE SIGNED](#). (For Proof of This, Read Page 167, Civil Rights Report.)

DO YOU FAVOR THIS — WANT SOME MORE OF IT? IF YOU DO, VOTE FOR FRANK GRAHAM

BUT IF YOU DON'T

VOTE FOR AND HELP ELECT

WILLIS SMITH FOR SENATOR

HE WILL UPHOLD THE TRADITIONS OF THE SOUTH

Know the Truth Committee

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^[15]Frank Porter Graham ^[15]



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BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

YOU MAY NOT HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE DO YOU WANT?

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^[18] 1950 Senate Campaign Flyer encouraging voters to elect Willis Smith because he would uphold "the traditions of the south" that favored segregation and a tiered power structure based on race.

3 January 2018

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