

A New Film Explores Boss Crump's Rule of Memphis – and How it was Undone

WKNO-TV will present a new one-hour film on Edward Hull Crump's autocratic control of politics in Memphis (and often the entire state) and how three Memphis heroes rose up to challenge it. **Citizens Not Subjects! Reawakening Democracy in Memphis** will premiere on Thursday, April 22 at 9:00 p.m. on WKNO/Channel 10.

Most people who have lived in Memphis for any length of time have heard the name "Boss Crump", but many may not know that his reign lasted for almost fifty years, even though he held elective office for less than then of those years!

Mr. Crump, who achieved such national prominence he was on the cover of *Time* magazine, offered Memphians a safe, clean, prosperous city...all he asked in return was control over every phase of civic life. He was last mayor in 1915, but continued to rule the city from his sixth-floor office in the Crump Insurance Building into the 1950's.

For years and years there was no one in Memphis who dared challenge the power of the "Boss", but in the 1940's an unlikely alliance of three extraordinary, but very different men came together united in their belief that however beautiful Memphis might have been in those days, the complete absence of democracy in the city was unacceptable.

Edward Meeman, crusading editor of the *Memphis Press-Scimitar*; legendary lawyer and social activist Lucius Burch; and Edmund Orgill, a highly respected businessman, banded together with other concerned citizens to defeat Crump's candidates and restore the instruments of participatory democracy in Memphis.

This documentary is the story of the risks these three citizens took in challenging the Boss's authority and how they succeeded, first with the successful senatorial campaign of Estes Kefauver in 1948 over Crump's hand-picked candidate, and ultimately with the election of Edmund Orgill as the first non-Crump controlled mayor of Memphis in almost a half-century.

The project was born two years ago when Catherine Orgill West, Edmund Orgill's daughter and her lifetime friend, the late Nancy Hill Fulmer, decided to make sure this story would be told while people who were there were still around to tell it. They each participated in Orgill's campaigns for mayor and governor and are featured in the film.

Other key subjects among the eighteen Memphians interviewed for the film include Mike Cody, who once ran for Mayor; Lewis Donelson, a founder of the local modern Republican Party; and Dr. Ben Hooks, former Executive Director of the NAACP.

The story starts when the young E.H. Crump, comes up from Holly Springs in the 1890's to a rough and rowdy Memphis, riddled with crime and gangsterism. Using his favorite saying, "plan your work and work your plan," does do good things for the city...but as his power grows, he resorts to a kind of outrageous tactics vividly portrayed in the film

that drove Meeman, Burch and Orgill to respond with vigor. It was at first dangerous for them to do this, but after WWII they were ultimately able to win over a citizenry who had grown weary of being Mr. Crump's SUBJECTS and longed to become CITIZENS.

The one-hour documentary, dedicated to the memory of Nancy Hill Fulmer, is produced by native Memphian Rob Cooper and his wife Pam, of Verissima Productions, located in Cambridge, MA. Verissima Productions has been making historical films for individuals and institutions in Memphis for ten years, and has nationally placed several films on PBS. Verissima Productions also produced **The Jews of Memphis**, which aired on WKNO to great acclaim ten years ago.

Citizens Not Subjects! Reawakening Democracy in Memphis premieres Thursday, April 22 at 9:00 p.m. on WKNO/Channel 10. It also airs Friday, April 23 at 9:00 p.m. on WKNO2, available on digital channel 10.2 or on Comcast Digital Cable on Channel 910.

WKNO is a non-profit, private foundation serving the Mid-South for more than 50 years. An important community resource, WKNO uses the power of non-commercial public broadcasting to provide the Mid-South with quality educational and cultural programs that inform, entertain, and inspire. For more information: wkno.org

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