



The Eight Media Perspectives on the Events of Nov. 3, 1979

In media depictions of Nov. 3, 1979, eight different news frames were most commonly used to describe what happened in Greensboro and why.

1. Nov. 3, 1979, was an unfortunate event and a disruption to Greensboro's civility. This frame portrays the Nov. 3 violence as a surprise. No one anticipated it; violence erupted spontaneously; violence was unpredictable. The focus is on the event, not the issues surrounding the event (Communist Workers Party (CWP) goals, Greensboro Police Department (GPD) absence). Larger issues are ignored or trivialized. As media coverage turns to trials, specifics of trial process are emphasized — how many jurors selected, costs, subpoenas issued.

2. Police acted responsibly and were the pride of the town. This frame portrays the bold actions of police as not only perfectly acceptable, but helpful in curtailing the violence. Greensboro, as a city, was the victim of two extremist groups. Police were misinformed about the location of the march. This frame suggests two extremist groups were the culprits of the violence, and the police were the innocent bystanders. This frame also portrays the police as following prudent action in marches and educational events involving the CWP after the shootings.

3. Police and government knew of and ignored violence and CWP protection. In this frame, city and federal officials are portrayed as knowing violence would occur through informants and other intelligence efforts. Police saw the Klan/Nazi guns and tailed the caravan all the way to the march. [The] claim is [that] the event was a government-assisted massacre. Government representation of CWP survivors failed to put forth the best case, leaving out key information that could implicate the government.

4. The march and its aftermath were part of Greensboro's civil rights history. This frame describes the march, [as] led by people described as educated and opposed to racism

and the oppression of minorities. The march is seen as part of a wave of labor strikes and events sweeping the South in 1978-1979, in part as a response to the resurgence of Klan activity. Cone Mills (a textile manufacturing company) in Greensboro was attempting to bust union organizing efforts. "Death to the Klan" was a slogan used around the country. Organized labor in 1979 may have been at a tipping point where a shift in favor of worker's and minorities was imminent. The police and the justice system failed to serve the unpopular CWP.

5. Protestors' legitimacy is denied. In this frame, CWP protestors are portrayed as militant, deviant, disorganized and dishonest. They are presented as misleading the police about the march starting point. They misled the community about their ulterior motives — to promote communism over and above workers' rights. Protestors were crazy in that they wanted violence and martyrs to occur to bring attention to the cause. They baited the Klan. They put innocent children and community members in harm's way. These were outsiders, leftists, extremists who advocated revolutionary overthrow of the government. They refused to cooperate with the justice system and were responsible for the unjust outcomes.

6. Patriotism of the Ku Klux Klan/Nazis explains their reasonable actions. This frame focused on the Klan and Nazis as patriotic people who wanted to defend the good name of their groups and the admirable mission of protecting the United States against communist take-over. Their character as church-going people is highlighted and their plans at most were to hurl eggs at the crowd of Communists. They represented the plight of the poor, white workers in America being increasingly displaced. Although they brought and shot guns, they did so only when provoked and in self-defense.

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7. Klan/Nazi legitimacy is denied. This frame portrays the Klan and Nazis as hate-filled individuals involved in criminal activity to eradicate the world of blacks, Jews, and non-Christians. They were uneducated, stuck in a Civil War mentality where white supremacy was reinforced in the South. These were deviant individuals.

8. Community pulse and response. In this final frame, community members respond with collective concern and/or support for the response to Nov. 3, 1979. Other communities or groups outside Greensboro issue statements and initiate action in response to the aftermath of Nov. 3, 1979. National and local groups issued statements or were the subject of newspaper coverage.

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