



This effigy of writer John Howard Griffin, who posed as a black man while gathering background material for "Black Like Me," was hauled down from a stoplight at Broad and Main streets in Mansfield, and then cast into the city dump.

Courtesy of Special Collections Division, University of Texas at Arlington

How far has Mansfield come?

❶ The city is "light years" from when John Howard Griffin was hanged in effigy, locals say.

By Amanda Rogers
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In 1959, Mansfield author John Howard Griffin colored his skin and set out to discover the truth about race relations in the Deep South. His book, "Black Like Me," shone a light on the prejudice and inequality that prevailed in New Orleans, Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama.

But what was life like for black families in Mansfield then? And how have things changed in the 50 years since Griffin published his best-selling book?

"I think the city of Mansfield has come light years since then, but we still have vestiges (of prejudice)," said Michael Evans, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, the oldest African-American church in Tarrant County, and a school trustee. "We need to have enough inclusion till it becomes commonplace and is no longer an issue."

When word of Griffin's experiment got out, he and his family received hate calls and he was hanged in effigy on the stoplight at Main and Broad streets. Worried for his family's safety, Griffin moved his family to Mexico for a year.

Brenda Norwood remembers
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John Howard Griffin and Mansfield will be honored with a National Literary Landmark at 3 p.m. Sunday at the Mansfield Public Library, 104 S. Wisteria St. Griffin biographer, Robert Bonazzi, will be the featured speaker, and former first lady Laura Bush will be a special guest (no photos or autographs). The documentary "Uncommon Vision: The Life and Times of John Howard Griffin" will be screened at 1 p.m. Sunday at the Farr Best Theater, 109 N. Main St. Both events are free and open to the public. Space is limited; the library will open at 2 p.m.