

# Richard Barrett

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## INTRODUCTION

Richard Barrett was the founder and leader of the Nationalist Movement, a white supremacist organization based in Learned, Mississippi. He was found murdered in his Mississippi home on April 22, 2010. Since Barrett's death, a small group of his followers have continued to publish the Nationalist Movement magazine, *All The Way*. The group's current headquarters is in Wisconsin.

## Quick Profile

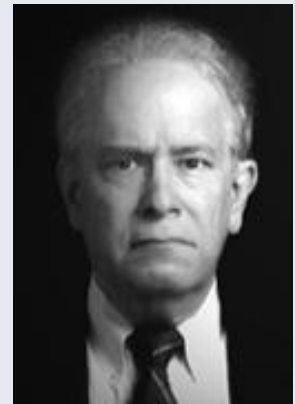
**Birth/Death:** 1943-2010

**Ideology:** White supremacy, ultranationalism, anti-Communism

**Extremist Affiliations:** Nationalist Movement (founder)

**Publication:** *All the Way* (newsletter)

**Notable for:** Well-publicized rallies, often following legal actions upholding his group's right to demonstrate, which draw large and sometimes violent crowds of counter-protestors.



While the Nationalist Movement has never enjoyed significant influence on the far right – due in part to Barrett's reluctance to share the spotlight – it has been able to attract a steady (if small) number of aggressive skinheads. An attorney and tireless promoter, Barrett was best known for staging well-publicized rallies, often following legal actions that upheld the group's free speech rights. He drew repeatedly large crowds of counter-protestors, some of whom responded violently.

In the mid-1990s Barrett extended his legal battles to the Internet arena, successfully waging a campaign to have Web pages characterizing members of his Nationalist Movement as “haters” taken down. In the last few years of his life, he began to pursue First Amendment lawsuits, often related to Nationalist Movement rallies. One such suit, which challenged the York, Pennsylvania, public assembly ordinance, led to a judgment in favor of the Nationalist Movement.

## THE MAKING OF A NATIONALIST

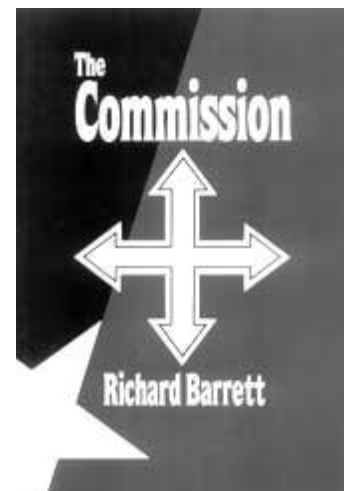
Richard Barrett was raised in New York City and East Orange, New Jersey. His account of his childhood suggests that he learned bigotry at an early age:

It was not the cold blizzard of 1949, but the pounding hailstorm of Puerto Rican, Negro and Jewish immigrants upon our community which made that winter so severe....A massive influx of foreign-born suddenly...rent the neighborhood apart....In no time at all, one could hear Yiddish more than English spoken in many public places.... Kidnappings and murders were mentioned in hushed whispers, chilling us all to the bone.

He attended nearby Rutgers University, then served in the Vietnam War with the United States Army. A partisan of the American South, particularly Mississippi ("Mississippians were endowed with an unconquerable anti-communist spirit because they had to perennially guard against a takeover by Negroes...."), he moved to the Magnolia State in 1966. He later received a law degree from Memphis State University in Tennessee.

Once in Mississippi, he began organizing anti-integrationist, anti-civil rights and a variety of "patriotic" and pro-white "heritage" events. For more than a decade, he organized an annual dinner honoring white male athletes called "Spirit of America." The gathering enjoyed the support of United States congressmen, governors and local politicians as late as 1984 (long after Barrett's racist views were publicly known), in part because he was successful in promoting the event as a celebration of civic values.

Having achieved local notoriety, he ran for governor of Mississippi in 1979, but received only two percent of the vote and finished last among six candidates. Three years later, he self-published a 435-page autobiography, *The Commission*, which the Nationalist Web site called the "textbook blueprint on Nationalism." The book's jacket went further, declaring it "the most important book of our time" and stating that Barrett was "a man whose name will be written in lightning across the pages of American history." Despite his self-mythification and purple style, Barrett's basic ideas were clear -- he advocated the "resettlement" of "those who were once citizens" to "Puerto Rico, Mexico, Israel, the Orient and Africa." Contending that non-whites, especially blacks, were inferior ("the Negro race... possess[es] no creativity of its own [and] pulls the vitality away from civilization"), he also advocated sterilization and abortions of the "unfit."



## ACTIVISM

In 1984, Barrett again ran unsuccessfully for office in Mississippi, placing second with 9,500 votes in a United States Congressional race. He described the campaign, in which he ran against three black candidates, as a choice between "the cotton boll and three lumps of coal." While still based in Mississippi, in 1987, he served as the attorney for the Forsyth County Defense League, a group formed in Georgia to defend members of the local Ku Klux Klan who were charged with violence against civil rights marchers. The following year, in January, he led a parade of 65 demonstrators,

of whom 40 were robed Klansmen, through Forsyth County. Law enforcement estimated that only about 12 of the members were local residents, a ratio that reflects Barrett's practice of importing non-local activists to demonstrate about local issues (Forsyth County was nearly all white, and black community leaders had recently led marches for integration). During the event, Barrett and other white supremacists signed "The Forsyth County Covenant," a 12-point document that argued, among other things, that "America's heritage as a free, white, Christian, English-speaking democracy . . . must be advanced" and that "all efforts to make us a bi-lingual, bi-sexual or bi-racial society must be defeated."

Barrett returned to Georgia that summer to help lead a white power demonstration at the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, along with veteran racist agitators Ed Fields (founder of the National States Rights Party) and the now-deceased J.B. Stoner (former chairman of Fields's group). The march was stopped by policemen when they feared that hostile counter-demonstrators could turn violent. Barrett also began cultivating skinheads in 1988, hosting a "Warrior Weekend" of paramilitary training in December at his home. While the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* reported that a picture of Martin Luther King Jr. was used as the target for rifle practice, only a few teenagers attended, and the training turned out to be in the use of .22-caliber weapons.

#### WINNING THE RIGHT TO MARCH; MORE MARCHES

Forsyth County attempted to prevent Barrett from marching again in 1989 by insisting on a \$100 fee for a parade permit. Barrett sued, ultimately arguing successfully -- and memorably -- before the Supreme Court that the county had obstructed his right to free speech. (He had pledged to question black justice Clarence Thomas's fitness to sit on the court if Thomas had questioned him. "The day will come when there will be only Americans on American courts," he said he would have told the justice. While Thomas maintained his customary silence, Barrett's fevered rhetoric drew repeated rebukes from the other justices.) Later in 1989, Barrett demonstrated in Atlanta against the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, claiming that he would lead 1,000 marchers through the city. He was able to rally only seven supporters, but attracted 1,500 counterdemonstrators -- largely because his grandiose claims led civil rights leaders to view the event as a bellwether for the city's black community. Some of these demonstrators attacked the National Guardsmen and Atlanta police officers who were attempting to maintain order.

In the same vein, he twice attempted to rally support for the Los Angeles Police Department officers who beat Rodney King, stating that he felt "safer because there are men like the 'Gallant L.A. Four.'" His first rally, in June 1992, one month after the officers were acquitted, drew six followers and 300 counterdemonstrators to City Hall in Simi Valley, California (where the trial was held), and was halted when Barrett and the police were pelted with soda cans. His second attempt, three months later, was similarly a fiasco -- he attracted one supporter, 150 counterdemonstrators and 300 police officers. When asked where his supporters were, Barrett sounded defiant. "Let them ask how many people were on the back of Paul Revere's horse," he said. "I don't know. But I know he had a message of freedom."

Barrett's efforts during this time were not solely devoted to legal battles and public demonstrations. Along with publishing his monthly newsletter, *All the Way*, he also created a television show called "Airlink," consisting of 34 half-hour videos to be broadcast on public access channels. The program often featured interviews with far-right figures discussing subjects like neo-Nazism, immigration and the skinhead movement. Barrett claimed that, at its peak, "Airlink" appeared on 30 stations nationwide.

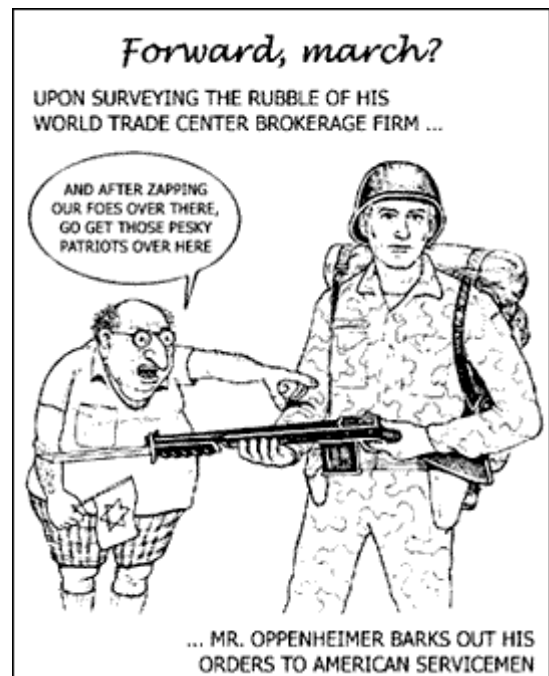
Another Barrett rally fizzled in 1994 when he traveled to Boston to hold an anti-gay demonstration in May after a veterans committee chose to cancel its annual St. Patrick's Day parade rather than include gay groups. Staging his appearance in South Boston, an area riven by racial tension since the busing riots of the 1970s, he again failed to attract local support. Along with 14 followers, and surrounded by 800 police officers, he marched for a mere 15 minutes along a Boston sidewalk (having been denied a parade permit). He then delivered a 45-minute address and returned home. "We did what we said we were going to do," he insisted. "We broke the ban on the Bill of Rights. You can call Richard Barrett the civil rights leader of the country."

#### OTHER ACTIVITIES

Back in Mississippi, Barrett spearheaded a movement to support Byron de la Beckwith (now deceased), who was convicted in February 1994 for the 1963 killing of Medgar Evers, a regional leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Barrett collected 4,000 signatures demanding that Mississippi Governor Kirk Fordyce pardon Beckwith, whom Barrett called "the prisoner of an affirmative-action jury," but the governor refused to meet with Barrett.

Undaunted, in September 1994, Barrett, along with members of the Ku Klux Klan, led a march in Alabama calling for Beckwith's pardon. The two dozen marchers also rallied in support of Hulond Humphries, the principal of Randolph County High School, who had been fired for threatening to cancel the senior prom if mixed-race couples attended.

On July 4, 2000, Barrett led an "Independence From Affirmative Action Day" march through Morristown, New Jersey. The unsurprising results: he and eight followers paraded down the streets in front of 300 counterdemonstrators. Police protected Barrett from members of the crowd who attempted to cross the barricades and attack him. At an appearance in Morristown the following year, two alleged followers damaged his sound



equipment, resulting in an altercation. The Nationalist Movement's Web site posted photographs of Barrett wrestling with one of the men over the caption: "Single-handedly walloped anarchist Matthew Sheard, who had attacked the podium."

Over the years, Barrett repeatedly denounced other white supremacists, particularly those who advocated "lone wolf" guerrilla tactics and condemned the type of public activism in which Barrett specialized. He assailed Tom Metzger of White Aryan Resistance, for example, and engaged in a long-running feud with Alex Curtis, then the leading Internet advocate of such tactics. Curtis's arrest in November 2000, and subsequent imprisonment for civil rights violations, did not seem to lessen Barrett's antagonism; the Nationalist Movement's newsletter included several articles insulting and ridiculing Curtis -- suggesting that he should apologize for "following the path of communism" -- in its April 2001 edition.

Barrett also focused on legal issues. By threatening legal action, he was successful in having more than two-dozen Web pages that characterized members of his Nationalist Movement as "haters" removed from the Web sites of colleges, organizations, and state and local law enforcement agencies.

In 2007, Barrett and the Nationalist Movement won a lawsuit against the City of York, Pennsylvania over its public assembly permit law after the group was asked to submit an application and fees to hold a 2002 rally. The court declared much of the city's permit law to be in violation of the First Amendment, and ruled in favor of the Nationalist Movement. The City of York paid out \$48,000 to the Nationalist Movement as a direct result of the decision. Barrett filed similar lawsuits against other cities.

## **BARRETT'S MURDER**

On April 22, 2010, Richard Barrett was found murdered in his home in Pearl, Mississippi. An autopsy showed that Barrett suffered multiple stab wounds, blunt force trauma to the head, and severe burns on one third of his body. Vincent McGee, a neighbor whom Barrett had hired to do yard work, has been charged with capital murder, robbery, and arson in relation to Barrett's death. Authorities have charged three other people connected to McGee as accessories after the fact: Tina McGee, Vincent McGee's mother; Alfred Lewis, her boyfriend; and Michael Dent, Vincent

McGee's friend. Authorities maintain that the alleged crime was not racially motivated. McGee, currently imprisoned, is a repeat offender, and has served two separate jail sentences for assaulting a police officer and grand larceny. McGee has made statements claiming that he was not aware that Barrett was a white supremacist prior to the alleged murder, and that the violence occurred after Barrett propositioned McGee to perform a sexual act. The prosecution will reportedly seek a sentence of life without parole in lieu of the death penalty. McGee's trial is expected to begin in August, 2011.

# Report Updates (2002-2005)

## **RICHARD BARRETT UPDATE**

July 3, 2002

In January 2002, six people who were arrested for obstructing a public highway while protesting Barrett's July 2000 rally in Morristown were fined \$225 each. Barrett condemned the sentence, claiming that the judge had given them merely a "slap on the wrist" and calling the protesters "domestic terrorists."

More recently, Governor Ronnie Musgrove of Mississippi proclaimed March 4, 2002, "Spirit of America Day" without realizing that Barrett sponsored the proclamation. Moreover, Musgrove was unaware that the proclamation, which celebrated high school athletes, listed only white ones.

A spokesman for the governor stated, "We did not know he [Barrett] was involved."

## **WHITE POWER RALLY IN YORK, PENNSYLVANIA**

January 31, 2003

On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Richard Barrett held a white power rally on the steps of City Hall in York, Pennsylvania. Barrett organized the rally to memorialize Henry C. Schaad, a white York police officer who was killed by blacks in 1969. Barrett was joined by only eight people, three of whom were actually infiltrators from the local chapter of the organization Anti-Racist Action. This was York's third white supremacist rally in just over a year.

## **SPEECH AT UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI**

October 30, 2003

Barrett spoke outside at the University of Mississippi against the university's plan to stop using "Colonel Reb," a caricature of a Southern plantation owner, as its mascot. "We want Colonel Reb in," Barrett said. "We want the Confederate flag back in. We want 'Dixie' in." More than 200 counterprotestors stood with their backs to Barrett, many wearing shirts that said "Turn Your Back on Hate." Barrett's Web site later claimed that an online forum affiliated with local newspapers had called for violence against him, but none was reported.

## **BARRETT PLANNED FAIR BOOTH IN SUPPORT OF ALLEGED MURDERER OF CIVIL RIGHTS WORKERS**

January 15, 2005

In another clever publicity gambit, Richard Barrett announced that he would sponsor a booth at the annual Mississippi State Fair on October 16-17, 2004. His attraction, Edgar Ray Killen, was a former Klan leader and the key suspect in the murders of three civil rights workers in 1964. Killen had been acquitted years before by a hung jury, but Mississippi officials were again investigating and there was speculation that the case might be reopened. Barrett planned to hold a petition drive at the fair supporting Killen.

Fair authorities responded to Barrett's plans by issuing a directive "barring any racial exhibits"; Barrett argued that the provision violated the First Amendment and succeeded in having it struck down. He was also able to win a First Amendment decision striking down the \$500,000 bond the fair required for vendors leasing booths.

Shortly before the fair began, however, Killen announced that he would not appear. Barrett cancelled the booth, expressing surprise. "He absolutely committed to me," he said of Killen.

Killen's wife maintained that her husband "has nothing to do with the booth." She added, "That is Richard Barrett's doing. Richard Barrett wanted publicity and he got plenty."

While Barrett's non-appearance cost a planned counter-petition effort some of its urgency, local civil rights demonstrators were able to gather 2,000 signatures supporting prosecution of the 1964 killings.

On January 7, 2005, Killen was arrested by state authorities on three charges of murder. The trial is set for March.