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Reviews the film Hoxie: The First Stand (2003)

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Hoxie: The First Stand (Directed by David Appleby, 2003) As the film reminds us at the start, before Alabama Governor George Wallace defied federal law by standing before school house doors in 1963 and even before the racial turmoil in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957, there was the first battle of school desegregation in the small northeastern Arkansas town of Hoxie.

This understated one hour David Appleby documentary follows the little known battle over school desegregation in Hoxie, Arkansas. A straightforward piece of film, sprinkled with somewhat awkward and unnecessary reenactments, tells the story of ambivalent local townspeople who gave little thought to the move toward integration, but soon found themselves overwhelmed by meddling racist outsiders.

After the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision by the Supreme Court in 1954, the Hoxie School Board voted in favor of desegregation. For most of the town's people this was of no surprise, because, although some aspects of the town were segregated, the black and white communities intermingled and coexisted without much strife. Much of the housing in this small town was already integrated.

On the first day of school integration, *Life* magazine visited the town to document the occasion. It wasn't until the publication of that article and its corresponding images of white and black children playing quietly together that the town encountered the glare, and instigation, of southern racist outsiders. The *Life* article was the start of outsider meddling and influence that tore the town apart. This film follows that little known and often forgotten struggle in what was commonly referred to as "a little hick town" of Hoxie.

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