

In Labor? Come back on Wednesday
News coverage of the integration of Atlanta's public hospital

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ABSTRACT: This study considers news coverage in Atlanta of the desegregation of the city's largest public hospital, Grady Memorial, in both white- and Black-owned newspapers from the late 1950s through 1968, a time when life expectancy for Blacks was almost seven years less than whites and when Black mothers could deliver babies at Grady only on Wednesdays. Civil rights activist, and the first Black woman to host a television show in Atlanta, Xernona Clayton, led a group of Black medical personnel to Washington, D.C., to push for hospital integration, and while she is celebrated today as an Atlanta Civil Rights icon, her efforts to fight for health care equity were ignored by all Atlanta news outlets at the time. This study provides insight into how Black and white journalists navigated Civil Rights coverage in a city governed by Jim Crow and during a time of tumultuous change.