



# The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee: A Narrative History

*Bobby L. Lovett*

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From legal battles to sit-ins to freedom rides to marches, activists in the United States rose up against racial discrimination in the civil rights movement. While many books have focused on the national campaign and prominent leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, this is the first book to examine the civil rights movement in the state of Tennessee. Bobby L. Lovett proposes that African Americans have always had a civil rights movement in Tennessee, even during slavery. He identifies three phases of the movement in the state—1864 to 1880, 1881 to 1934, and 1935 to the present—and focuses on the last period. Lovett explores early Jim Crow Tennessee, public school desegregation since *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, sit-in and public desegregation activities, politics and civil rights, and the desegregation of higher education. This well-researched book draws on special collections from libraries across the state, personal papers, manuscript collections, conversations, observations, books, scholarly articles, and newspapers. Lovett covers the entire state, but concentrates on the four major cities: Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville. There are short descriptions of local interest to bring the movement alive, as well as sketches of main players, federal judges, and more than three dozen court cases that have affected race and civil rights in Tennessee. African American and white leaders in the fight for equality in Tennessee are revealed, and Lovett relates the movement with African Americans' pursuit of inclusion in society nationally. Tennesseans who engaged in the struggle included prominent African American figures such as civil rights attorney Avon Williams of Nashville and NAACP activist Maxine Smith of Memphis. This book fills a gap in the historical record of the civil rights movement and is an important addition to studies of the movement both in Tennessee and in the nation.

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