

My Mind Set on Freedom: A History of the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1968 (American Ways Series)

John A. Salmond

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This is the story of the drive to free the American South from the shackles of legally sanctioned racial segregation. In a lively and compact narrative, John Salmond sets the scene with the first stirrings of revolt prompted by the New Deal and the experiences of blacks in World War II. He then concentrates on the years between the 1954 Supreme Court decision overturning segregated public schools and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the last of the civil rights statutes. Martin Luther King, Jr., plays a central role in the book, for as Mr. Salmond notes, he came to symbolize the moral trajectory of the "movement." Yet there were many players in this drama, not all of them in agreement with King's philosophy or tactics, and the author expertly assesses their contributions. "My Mind Set on Freedom" traces the hesitant reaction of the federal government to growing pressures, and the eventual passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Mr. Salmond explains why the movement finally collapsed and, in a concluding chapter, shows how the civil rights revolution transformed the American South. His book brings a new clarity to our understanding of this momentous struggle.

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