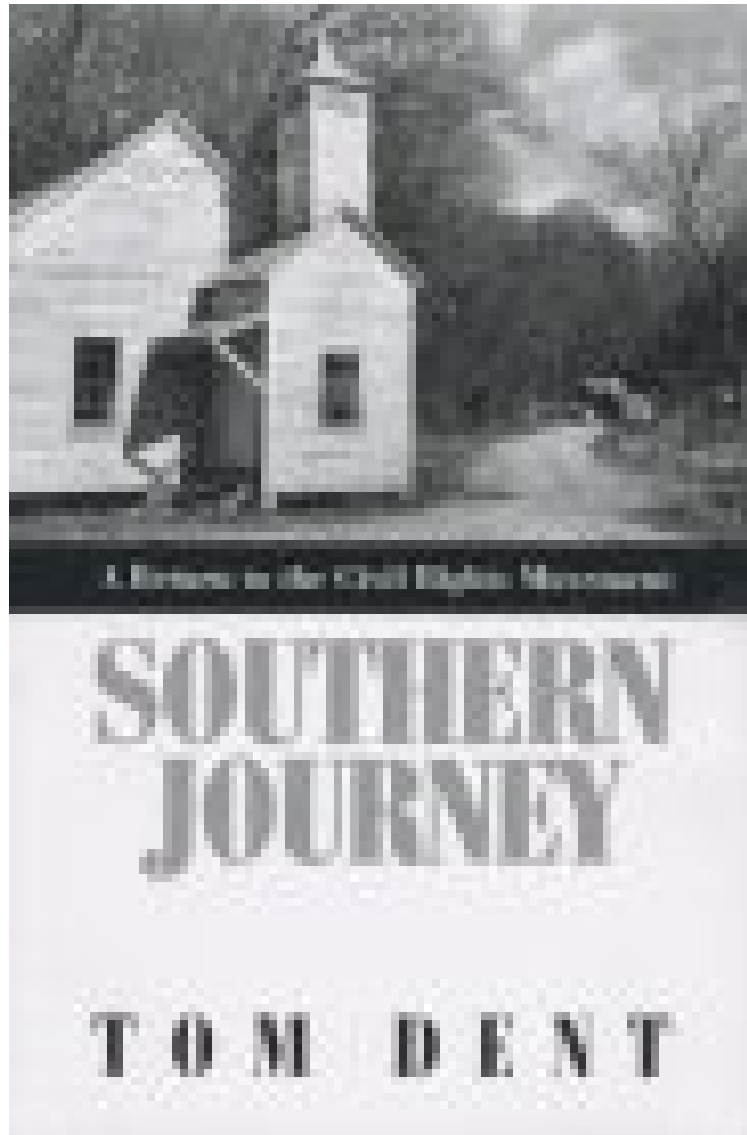


## Southern Journey: A Return to the Civil Rights Movement

*Tom Dent*

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#3007629 in Books 1997-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.75 x 6.50 x 1.50l, #File Name: 0688140998400 pages | File size: 36.Mb

**Tom Dent : Southern Journey: A Return to the Civil Rights Movement** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Southern Journey: A Return to the Civil Rights Movement:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Considered a classic but . . .By PigsFlyThis is considered a classic civil rights book. Dent quite literally gets into a car and starts driving, hitting many of the more famous signposts that mark the highway of American civil rights. He tracks down original players, walks the walk, talks the talk. For novices and younger people (who did not live during those times), this is a good introduction. I found his style to be a bit dry,

so much so that it made it hard to keep up with the book. Some of the interviews just aren't that interesting and read more as reflections than first-person histories. A shame, really. I prefer -- and recommend -- "Eyes on the Prize," other works.<sup>3</sup> of 3 people found the following review helpful. An extraordinary and intensely personal narrative

By W. Welburn

The late poet and journalist Tom Dent is, above everything else, a product of the American South. The son of a distinguished educator and president of Dillard University, Tom Dent received his education at Morehouse College and Syracuse University before pursuing a career as a writer with the NAACP and Freedomways before he became one of the founding members of the legendary Umbra movement in Lower Manhattan. As the group of writers disbursed, Dent returned to the South and his home in New Orleans, where he helped to create a model that fused the Civil Rights Movement and the arts in the form of the Free Southern Theater. Dent's firsthand experience as a writer and educator engaged him in many communities across the South, and *Southern Journey* is his opportunity to revisit many of the communities that figured prominently in the freedom movement in an attempt to answer a simple question, what has changed? Throughout the volume, the reader finds histories, journalistic accounts, oral histories and remembrances woven together with skillful articulation and knowledge that could only come from someone with the temperament to recognize subtle change. This is observed especially "in the tiny villages of the Deep South, the very blood cells of the South as we knew it," where on his return Dent observed the then newness of black elected officials in communities once deeply segregated. The volume also contributes to the spate of travel books, not only for Dent's observations of well-known place names in the lexicon of the Civil Rights Movement but in the juxtaposition in travel itself. Early in his book, Dent recalled the difficulties of negotiating segregation while living and traveling with his family as a child in post-World War II Southern states. "My father was not one who enjoyed being asked 'why' when it came to race matters," Dent recalled. "You were supposed to become aware of the more subtle and unpleasant vagaries of race via osmosis. I eventually took to calling such undiscussed racial patterns 'blues truths.'" Therein lies the essence of *Southern Journey*. Far from a narrative extolling dramatic change across the South, Dent tells the story of complexities found in race relations in its cities and towns. Much like what readers find in his collections of poetry, Dent was an important chronicler of the joys and contradictions in African American life and culture and his writings reflect his deepest love for the South.

More than twenty years after the civil rights movement, one question still lingers: What significant changes, if any, have resulted from its efforts? In search of the answer, author Tom Dent takes us on a unique journey through the contemporary South, revisiting the places where protesters and their supporters took a stand for equality. Dent interviews blacks, whites, civil rights workers, and just plain folks about the sit-ins, student demonstrations, and protests that shaped the Movement. In their own words, the participants discuss the impressions these events left on their communities. Dent's journey becomes a personal one as well, as he examines the role the Movement has played in his own life. Raised "a black youth in New Orleans one generation before the legal obstructions that delineated racial segregation in the South were dismantled piece by piece," he was encouraged by his family to seek his fortune outside the South but soon returned home. With *Southern Journey*, Dent takes readers on a trip through the South and into the past, visiting: -- The F.W. Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina, where sit-down strikes in 1960 ignited a new phase of black protest against racial injustice -- The campus of South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, where, in 1968, one of the most blatantly violent reactions to student demonstrations occurred -- The Medical College Hospital of South Carolina in (Charleston, where a hospital workers' strike in 1969 addressed the fundamental economic inequalities at the core of the struggle -- St. Augustine, Florida, where the Southern Christian Leadership Conference led peaceful protests against segregation in 1964 -- Albany, Georgia, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led one of the first mass-movement civil rights efforts in 1962 -- Selma, Alabama, the starting point for Dr. King's 1965 Selma to Montgomery March, which dramatized the denial of the right to vote Using these smaller towns -- "more interesting, more resistant to change, more reflective of the South as a region" than their larger counterparts -- Dent demonstrates how the civil rights movement continues to make a positive impact on people's lives today, but also learns that the goal of equality hasn't been fully achieved. Tom Dent invites readers into his beautifully written and accessible discussion by portraying genuine and engaging southern personalities. *Southern Journey* takes us on a special trip of discovery and hope, letting us see and feel how the historic fight for civil rights still shapes our world today.

.com In January 1991, Tom Dent began a journey that would take him through the South United States, visiting cities and towns that had been significant during the Civil Rights Movement. He began in Greensboro, North Carolina, where sit-ins at a Woolworth's lunch counter in the 1960 helped spark black protest against segregation, and ended in November in Mayersville, Mississippi, a town of just 475. Dent's fascinating journey takes place mostly on the back roads and state highways and, for the most part, he talks to ordinary folks who played vital roles in the Civil Rights Movement, but whose names will probably be lost to history. One of those was Unita Blackwell, who in the 1960s tried to register to vote in Mississippi and was told she would never work again. When Dent visited her, she was mayor of Mayersville, and she assessed the changes she'd seen this way: "I suppose what we really gained is the

knowledge that we struggled to make this a decent society, because it wasn't. And maybe it still isn't now, but at least we tried."From Publishers WeeklyA black youth reared in segregated New Orleans, Dent went to Mississippi for the civil rights movement, and that experience stuck with him. So in 1991, he decided to work his way south from Greensboro, N.C., to Mississippi, skirting both large cities and important officials, to talk to (mostly) black folk and to assess the movement's legacy. At times, Dent's meandering approach lacks depth and is unwieldy, but his personal connection to his inquiry informs his story with commitment. In Greensboro, the unresolved gap between blacks and whites, exemplified in an anniversary celebration of the city's historic sit-ins, remind Dent "of the strained interracial meetings of the 1950s." In Orangeburg, S.C., a black academic tells him ruefully that many social-work students go into "criminal justice" lacking the broader awareness of the politics behind the new programs. In Albany, Ga., Dent discerns signs of material progress but deep divisions not only between the races but also within the black community. In Mississippi, where he sees black political victories as having had a relatively small payoff, he becomes convinced that a new black organization is needed to supplant the NAACP to address national political issues of special concern to blacks (education, unemployment) and to monitor cases of police and official abuse and discrimination. Though not quite a complete plan, it's a constructive response to Dent's conclusion that the civil rights movement opened up doors, but "once inside, well, there was hardly anything there." Photos not seen by PW. Author tour. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalA poet (*Blue Lights and River Songs*, Lotus, 1982) and former executive director of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation, Dent seeks to discover "ordinary people who did extraordinary things in an extraordinary time in our history....they represent the soul of the southern movement, the spirit that made change possible." Dent interviewed 120 black and white Southerners, many former proponents and a few opponents of the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. He relates people's assessment of Southern life and race relations since the movement in Greensboro, North Carolina; St. Augustine, Florida; Charleston, South Carolina; Albany, Georgia; Selma, Alabama; and elsewhere. He writes of the participants' optimism and despair, especially of African Americans who felt that the movement failed to address economic issues adequately. Dent compellingly reveals that ordinary Southerners fundamentally changed the region and are poised to make more substantive changes. Recommended for public and academic libraries.?Charles L. Lumpkins, Bloomsburg Univ. Lib., Pa.Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.