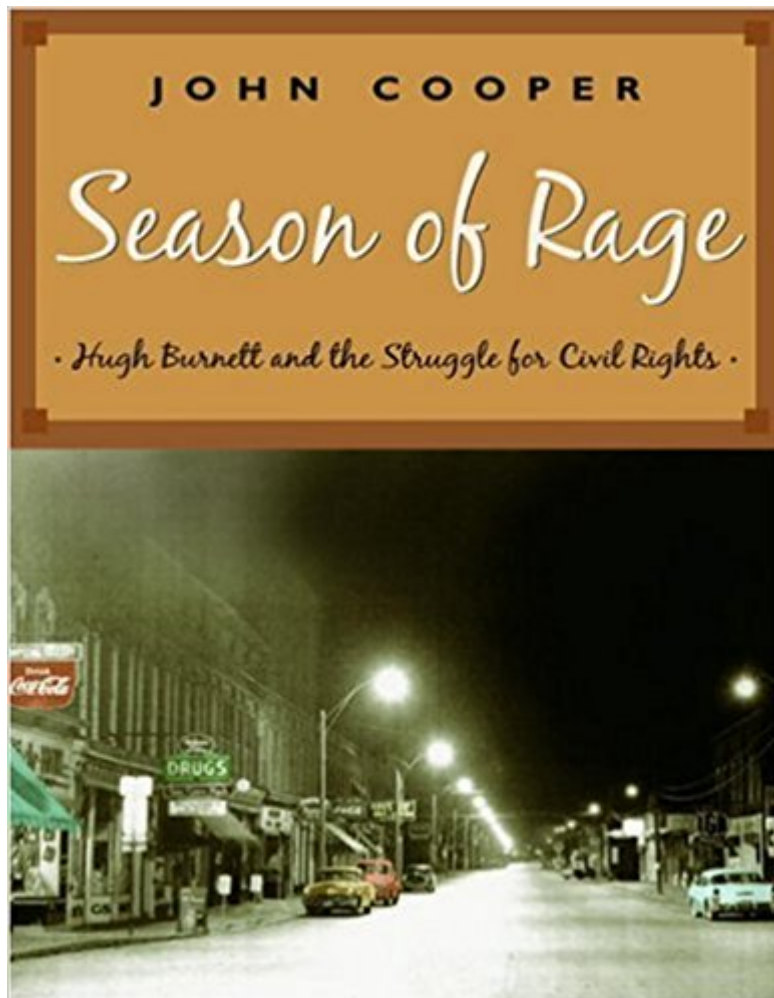




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Season Of Rage: Hugh Burnett And The Struggle For Civil Rights



Synopsis

The last place in North America where black people and white people could not sit down together to share a cup of coffee in a restaurant was not in the Deep South. It was in the small, sleepy Ontario town of Dresden. Dresden is the site of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Slaves who made their way north through the Underground Railroad created the thriving Dawn Settlement in Dresden before and during the Civil War. They did not find Utopia on the Canadian side of the border, despite their efforts. In 1954 something extraordinary happened. The National Unity Association was a group of African Canadian citizens in Dresden who had challenged the racist attitudes of the 1950s and had forged an alliance with civil rights activists in Toronto to push the Ontario Government for changes to the law in order to outlaw discrimination. Despite the law, some business owners continued to refuse to serve blacks. The National Unity Association worked courageously through a variety of means of protest to change attitudes. The story of their season of rage is told in this compelling new book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 7 Up-Cooper has chosen the small town of Dresden, Ontario, to paint a picture of what life was like for black Canadians in the middle of the last century. One Sunday in the early 1930s, when 12-year-old Hugh Burnett and his younger brother had a hankering for ice cream, they entered a restaurant. The boys were told that they would have to eat in the kitchen. The author writes factually and objectively; however, readers will clearly empathize with the citizens, whose descendants had escaped the horrors of slavery in the U.S. only to find discrimination and racism lurking in the sleepy

little towns in which they settled. The event in the restaurant sparked a lifelong crusade for Burnett, who spearheaded the formation of the National Unity Association. What began as a letter-writing campaign resulted in the passing of the "Fair Employment Practices Act." However, the battle was far from over, and Cooper discusses the discrimination and court battles that ensued and the personal toll it took on the Burnett family. A number of archival photos enhance the text. What is really a vignette of events in one small town results in a much broader view of the attitudes of an entire country. An eye-opening story.-Corrina Austin, Locke's Public School, St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 6-9. Many Underground Railroad stories end with escape to Canada, but some blacks faced racism in their home across the border, including segregation and even Klan violence. Cooper tells the story of Dresden, a small town in Ontario, where many ex-slaves settled and faced discrimination in housing, jobs, school, and daily life until Dresden became a center of Canada's civil rights struggle in the 1950s. The focus on the small community, and on the fight to get African Canadians served in two local restaurants, is a dramatic way to bring the history up close; readers will read about a variety of individuals, including Hugh Burnett, a carpenter who was Dresden's leading black activist; his supporters in Parliament and across the country; segregationists; and the majority of Dresden whites, who did nothing. The parallels with the struggle in the U.S. will spark class discussion. Boxed insets and photos of people and documents add interest, but there are no source notes, and only a brief bibliography. Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Much of the book consists of material on developments in civil rights generally, especially in the United States. This is useful context, and would be instructive for those who are just being introduced to the topic (younger high school students, for example); if it were extracted, it would make up something pamphlet-size. The material on Dresden is good but limited -- again, by itself, it would make a pamphlet. In total, the book has the feel of two quite good pamphlets amalgamated -- an interesting sidelight, but less substantial than I had hoped.

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