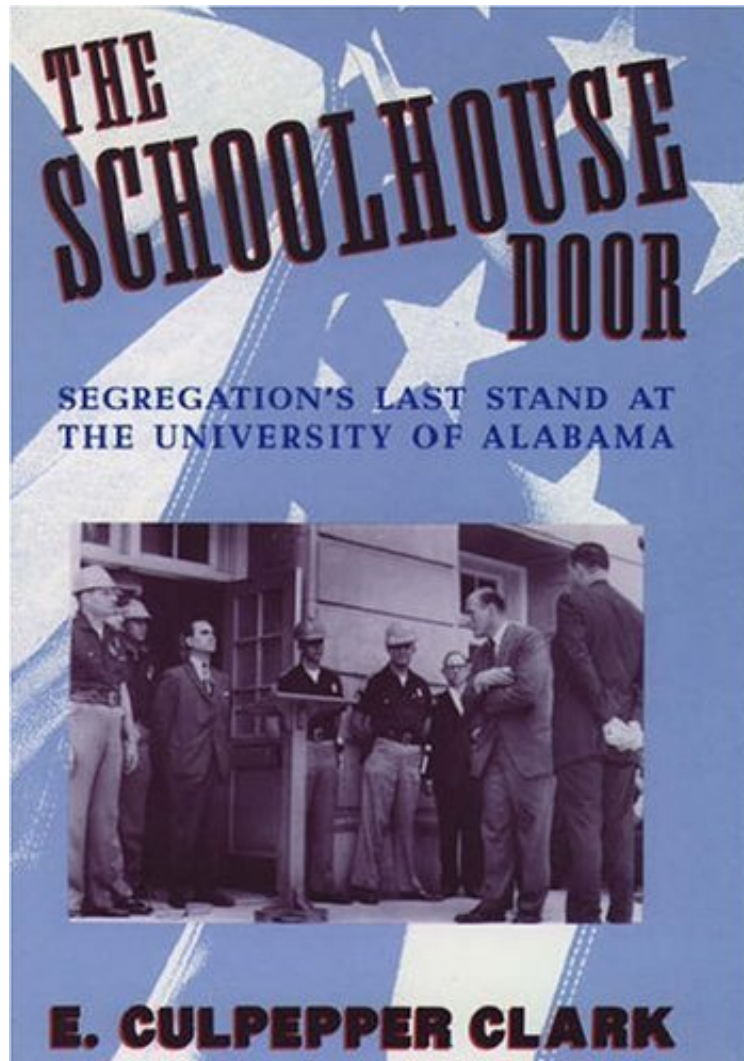


The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama

E. Culpepper Clark

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E. Culpepper Clark : The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama:

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On June 11, 1963, in a dramatic gesture that caught the nation's attention, Governor George Wallace physically

blocked the entrance to Foster Auditorium on the University of Alabama's campus. His intent was to defy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach, sent on behalf of the Kennedy administration to force Alabama to accept court-ordered desegregation. After a tense confrontation, President Kennedy federalized the Alabama National Guard and Wallace backed down, allowing Vivian Malone and James Hood to become the first African Americans to enroll successfully at their state's flagship university. That night, John F. Kennedy went on television to declare civil rights a "moral issue" and to commit his administration to this cause. That same night, Medgar Evers was shot dead. In *The Schoolhouse Door*, E. Culpepper Clark provides a riveting account of the events that led to Wallace's historic stand, tracing a tangle of intrigue and resistance that stretched from the 1940s, when the university rejected black applicants outright, to the post-Brown v. Board of Education era. We are there in July 1955 when Thurgood Marshall and lawyers at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund win for Autherine Lucy and "all similarly situated" the right to enroll at the university. We are in the car with Lucy in February 1956 as university officials escort her to class, shielding her from a mob jeering "Lynch the nigger," "Keep 'Bama white," and "hit the nigger whore." (After only three days, these demonstrations resulted in Lucy's expulsion.) Clark exposes the many means, including threats and intimidation, used by university and state officials to discourage black applicants following the Lucy episode. And he explains how University of Alabama president Frank Anthony Rose eventually cooperated with the Kennedy administration to ensure a smooth transition toward desegregation. We also witness Robert Kennedy's remarkable face-to-face plea for Wallace's cooperation and the governor's adamant refusal: "I will never submit voluntarily to any integration in a school system in Alabama." As Clark writes, Wallace's carefully orchestrated surrender would leave the forces of white supremacy free to fight another day. And the Kennedys' public embrace of the civil rights movement would set in motion a political transformation that changed the presidential base of the Democratic party for the next thirty years. In these pages, full of courageous black applicants, fist-shaking demonstrators, and powerful politicians, Clark captures the dramatic confrontations that transformed the University of Alabama into a proving ground for the civil rights movement and gave the nation unforgettable symbols for its struggle to achieve racial justice.

From Publishers Weekly Though the struggle to desegregate the University of Alabama from 1952 to 1963 was more protracted and in some ways less dramatic than similar conflicts elsewhere in the South, this readable, minutely detailed chronicle adds to the histories of the era. Clark, an administrator at the university who came to teach there in 1971, criticizes the unenlightened administration at the institution. He combines interviews and documents to describe the loosely planned 1952 application of black students Autherine Lucy and Pollie Anne Myers, the university's 1956 expulsion of Lucy (Myers's admission was ultimately denied) to appease Klansmen and Citizens' Councilors and to thwart future black applicants. He also explains how "the most logical site for quiet desegregation," the university's campus at Huntsville, was abandoned by both civil rights activists and intransigent Alabama Governor George Wallace. With the civil rights movement accelerating and federal troops on hand, the university finally accepted black students in 1963. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace's 1963 stand in the Tuscaloosa schoolhouse door has endured as an emblem of how things were in the segregated South of that day. Clark explains the incident as a chapter in the history of the university and in the civil rights campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s, from Montgomery to Birmingham and Selma. An assistant to the University of Alabama's president, Clark exposes the institution's hateful and ill-considered responses to the crisis of racial integration that began there with the Autherine Lucy episode in 1956. He identifies forsaken alternatives in probing why university administrators and faculty, people of supposed intelligence and integrity, failed to behave better. His account of how Alabama came to occupy a special place in the demise of both segregation and states' rights deserves a close reading. For civil rights, education, and Southern collections.- Thomas J. Davis, Univ. at Buffalo, N.Y. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. "This is a book about threats, intimidation, courage, perseverance, and the morality of an old and rotten way of life finally giving way. The story moves from the national politics of the Kennedy's confrontations with George Wallace to Wallace's artfully orchestrated public surrender and the impact of the transformation of the base of the Democratic Party in the Southern states as a result. This is a story of high drama about the human spirit and how Lucy's religious faith sustained her through the turmoil and racist threats. The author's research is carefully documented and his access to Lucy is evident. More important, the author clearly identifies the forces of racism, anti-democracy and ignorance. He names names, he discloses the betrayals, and he pierces the hypocrisies of the politicians and leaders who failed."--Nashville Banner "Clark charts Wallace's rise to power from 1957 onward, and offers day-by-day insight into goings-on within the Kennedy administration....Engaging and upbeat, and [Clarke's] case that events at the University of Alabama amounted to a microcosm of the civil rights struggle is strong indeed."--Booklist "All but impossible to put down, this remarkable study recalls the high drama of the days when the human spirit at its best met the human spirit at its worst at 'the schoolhouse door.' Rarely have I seen a more effective blend of analytical rigor and masterful storytelling than this book presents."--James C. Cobb, The University of Tennessee, author of *The Most Southern Place on Earth* "This readable, minutely detailed chronicle adds to the histories of the era."--Publishers Weekly "Clark exposes the [University of Alabama's] hateful and ill-considered responses to the crisis of racial integration that began there....His accounting of how Alabama came to occupy a

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