

## CIVIL RIGHTS IN AMERICA

The term “civil rights” has such a familiar presence in discussions about American politics and law that we tend to use it reflexively and intuitively, but rarely do we stop to think about what exactly we mean when we use the term and why certain uses strike us as right or wrong. In this book, Professor Christopher Schmidt tells the story of how Americans have fought over the meaning of civil rights from the Civil War through today. Through their struggles over what it means to live in a nation dedicated to protecting civil rights, each generation has given the label new life and new meaning. *Civil Rights in America* shows how the words we use to understand our world become objects of contestation and points of leverage for social, political, and legal action.

Christopher W. Schmidt is a professor at Chicago-Kent College of Law, where he serves as the Associate Dean for Faculty Development and co-director of the Institute on the Supreme Court of the United States; a research professor at the American Bar Foundation; and the editor of *Law & Social Inquiry*. Professor Schmidt received his Ph.D. in American Studies from Harvard University and his J.D. from Harvard Law School. He is the author of *The Sit-Ins: Protest and Legal Change in the Civil Rights Era* (2018).

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-42625-1 — Civil Rights in America  
Christopher W. Schmidt  
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General Editor: Alexander Tsesis, *Loyola University, Chicago*

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A HISTORY

**CHRISTOPHER W. SCHMIDT**

Chicago-Kent College of Law and the American Bar Foundation



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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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[More Information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India  
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108426251](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108426251)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108550857

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First published 2021

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

### *Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

NAMES: Schmidt, Christopher W., 1974– author.

TITLE: Civil rights in America : a history / Christopher W. Schmidt, Chicago-Kent College of Law.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2021. | Series: Cambridge studies on civil rights and civil liberties | Includes index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2020025736 (print) | LCCN 2020025737 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108426251 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108444972 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108550857 (ebook)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Civil rights – United States – History.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC KF4749 .S36 2021 (print) | LLC KF4749 (ebook) | DDC 323.0973–dc23  
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020025736>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020025737>

ISBN 978-1-108-42625-1 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-44497-2 Paperback

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For Erin

*Only something which has no history can be defined.*

— Friedrich Nietzsche

*A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged, it is the skin of a living thought, and may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and the time in which it is used.*

— Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.



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