



Witness to the Truth: My Struggle for Human Rights in Louisiana

John H. Scott

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Witness to the Truth tells the extraordinary life story of a grassroots human rights leader and his courageous campaign to win the right to vote for the African Americans of Lake Providence, Louisiana. Born in 1901 in a small, mostly black parish, John H. Scott grew up in a community where black businesses, schools, and neighborhoods thrived in isolation, yet African Americans were still being denied a voice in local and national politics. Scott, a minister and farmer, sought to redress this inequality. Ultimately convincing Attorney General Robert Kennedy to participate in his crusade, Scott led a twenty-five year struggle that illustrates how persistent efforts by local citizens translated into a national movement.

Told in Scott's own words, Witness to the Truth recounts the complex tyranny of southern race relations in Louisiana. Raised by grandparents who had lived during slavery, Scott himself experienced the injustices of Jim Crow laws firsthand. But without bitterness or anger he chronicles almost one hundred years of parish life, including migrations between the two world wars, the displacement of African American farmers during the New Deal, and the shocking methods some white southerners used to keep African Americans under economic domination and away from the polls. Chapter president of the NAACP for more than thirty years and a recipient of the A. P. Tureaud Citizens Award, Scott embodied the persistence, strength, and raw courage required of African American leaders working to advance human rights in the rural South.

Cleo Scott Brown, Scott's daughter, draws on oral history interviews with her father conducted by historian Joseph Logsdon as well as personal papers, court transcripts, records of the East Carroll chapter of the NAACP, interviews with other East Carroll residents, family recollections, and her own conversations with her father as the basis for this narrative.

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