



# **A Massacre in Memphis: The Race Riot That Shook the Nation One Year After the Civil War**

*Stephen V. Ash*

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**An unprecedented account of one of the bloodiest and most significant racial clashes in American history**

In May 1866, just a year after the Civil War ended, Memphis erupted in a three-day spasm of racial violence that saw whites rampage through the city's black neighborhoods. By the time the fires consuming black churches and schools were put out, forty-six freed slaves had been murdered. Congress, furious at this and other evidence of white resistance in the conquered South, launched what is now called Radical Reconstruction, policies to ensure the freedom of the region's four million blacks-and one of the most remarkable experiments in American history.

Stephen V. Ash's *A Massacre in Memphis* is a portrait of a Southern city that opens an entirely new view onto the Civil War, slavery, and its aftermath. A momentous national event, the riot is also remarkable for being "one of the best-documented episodes of the American nineteenth century." Yet Ash is the first to mine the sources available to full effect. Bringing postwar Memphis, Tennessee to vivid life, he takes us among newly arrived Yankees, former Rebels, boisterous Irish immigrants, and striving freed people, and shows how Americans of the period worked, prayed, expressed their politics, and imagined the future. And how they died: Ash's harrowing and profoundly moving present-tense narration of the riot has the immediacy of the best journalism.

Told with nuance, grace, and a quiet moral passion, *A Massacre in Memphis* is Civil War-era history like no other.

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