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Now Is the Time

Lillian Smith

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Now Is the Time Lillian Smith

This impassioned plea for tolerance, desegregation, and civil rights advocacy was written by one of the South's leading activists and writers. Originally it was published in 1955, a year after the Supreme Court's landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision outlawing segregation. Reprinted on the fiftieth anniversary of this case, *Now Is the Time* addresses issues that continue to resonate in today's world.

Lillian Smith's writing is at the same time lyrical and deeply infused with polemics. She was no stranger to controversy, for both her nonfiction and her novels were passionately charged. She freely admitted that she used literature as a means for challenging southern cultural norms, particularly in regard to race. She is the author of *Killers of the Dream* and of two novels, *One Hour* and the best-selling *Strange Fruit*, that are thinly veiled autobiography.

In *Now Is the Time* Smith combines the genres of personal essay, confession, propaganda, and documentary to create a moving defense of the inclusive democratic vision she sees as America's true legacy.

While broad and visionary in its themes, her book is practical in its approach and its solutions. With wit, intensity, and moral certitude, she answers twenty-five basic questions about race relations, including "Is not education better than legislation?" and "If God wanted the races to mix, why didn't He make us all the same color?"

Her commingling of disparate genres makes *Now Is the Time* more than simply a tract but a document of a nation under the force of tumultuous change. This new edition, with an afterword by Will Brantley, brings back into print a classic that states America's moral commitment to civil rights.

Lillian Smith (1897Ð1966) lived in north Georgia and is the author of numerous essays and seven books including *Strange Fruit* and *Killers of the Dream*.

Will Brantley, a professor of English at Middle Tennessee State University, is the author of *Feminine Sense in Southern Memoir* and the editor of *Conversations with Pauline Kael*, both published by the University Press of Mississippi.

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