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Constitution Day Colloquium – September 15, 2009 – presentation abstract

"Constitutional Crisis in Birmingham: The Civil Rights Movement and Beyond"

Beginning in 1963, this talk will examine how challenges to segregation laws in Birmingham sparked political and even violent resistance, culminating in the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing during school desegregation that fall. Movement activism in the city prompted not only a change in the structure of local government, but a showdown between John F. Kennedy, aligned with local and civil rights leaders, and Governor George Wallace over states' rights. Following the civil rights movement in Birmingham through the 1970s and 1980s, I examine the continuing pursuit of local individuals for equal justice under the law, and their reactions to the eventual trials of the Klansmen convicted of the bombing.