



# Tasting Freedom: Octavius Catto and the Battle for Equality in Civil War America

*Daniel R. Biddle, Murray Dubin*

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Octavius Valentine Catto was an orator who shared stages with Frederick Douglass, a second baseman on Philadelphia's best black baseball team, a teacher at the city's finest black school and an activist who fought in the state capital and on the streets for equal rights. With his racially-charged murder, the nation lost a civil rights pioneer—one who risked his life a century before Selma and Birmingham.

In *Tasting Freedom* Murray Dubin and Pulitzer Prize winner Dan Biddle painstakingly chronicle the life of this charismatic black leader—a “free” black whose freedom was in name only. Born in the American south, where slavery permeated everyday life, he moved north where he joined the fight to be truly free—free to vote, go to school, ride on streetcars, play baseball and even participate in July 4th celebrations.

Catto electrified a biracial audience in 1864 when he proclaimed, “There must come a change,” calling on free men and women to act and educate the newly freed slaves. With a group of other African Americans who called themselves a “band of brothers,” they challenged one injustice after another. *Tasting Freedom* presents the little-known stories of Catto and the men and women who struggled to change America.

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