



The Irony of the Solid South: Democrats, Republicans, and Race, 1865-1944

Glenn Feldman

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The Irony of the Solid South examines how the south became the “Solid South” for the Democratic Party and how that solidarity began to crack with the advent of American involvement in World War II.

Relying on a sophisticated analysis of secondary research—as well as a wealth of deep research in primary sources such as letters, diaries, interviews, court cases, newspapers, and other archival materials—Glenn Feldman argues in *The Irony of the Solid South* that the history of the solid Democratic south is actually marked by several ironies that involve a concern with the fundamental nature of southern society and culture and the central place that race and allied types of cultural conservatism have played in ensuring regional distinctiveness and continuity across time and various partisan labels. Along the way, this account has much to say about the quality and nature of the New Deal in Dixie, southern liberalism, and its fatal shortcomings.

Feldman focuses primarily on Alabama and race but also considers at length circumstances in the other southern states as well as insights into the uses of emotional issues other than race that have been used time and again to distract whites from their economic and material interests. Feldman explains how conservative political forces (Bourbon Democrats, Dixiecrats, Wallace, independents, and eventually the modern GOP) ingeniously fused white supremacy with economic conservatism based on the common glue of animus to the federal government. A second great melding is exposed, one that joined economic fundamentalism to the religious kind along the shared axis of antidemocratic impulses.

Feldman’s study has much to say about southern and American conservatism, the enduring power of cultural and emotional issues, and the modern south’s path to becoming solidly Republican.

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