



# Philadelphia Divided: Race and Politics in the City of Brotherly Love

*James Wolfinger*

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## **Philadelphia Divided: Race and Politics in the City of Brotherly Love** James Wolfinger

In a detailed study of life and politics in Philadelphia between the 1930s and the 1950s, James Wolfinger demonstrates how racial tensions in working-class neighborhoods and job sites shaped the contours of mid-twentieth-century liberal and conservative politics. As racial divisions fractured the working class, he argues, Republican leaders exploited these racial fissures to reposition their party as the champion of ordinary white citizens besieged by black demands and overwhelmed by liberal government orders.

By analyzing Philadelphia's workplaces and neighborhoods, Wolfinger shows the ways in which politics played out on the personal level. People's experiences in their jobs and homes, he argues, fundamentally shaped how they thought about the crucial political issues of the day, including the New Deal and its relationship to the American people, the meaning of World War II in a country with an imperfect democracy, and the growth of the suburbs in the 1950s. As Wolfinger demonstrates, internal fractures in New Deal liberalism, the roots of modern conservatism, and the politics of race were all deeply intertwined. Their interplay highlights how the Republican Party reinvented itself in the mid-twentieth century by using race-based politics to destroy the Democrats' fledgling multiracial alliance while simultaneously building a coalition of its own.

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