



Getting Away with Murder: The Twentieth-Century Struggle for Civil Rights in the U.S. Senate

Vanessa A. Holloway

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Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the US Congress engaged in bitter debates on whether to enact a federal law that would prosecute private citizens who lynched black Americans. In *Getting Away with Murder*, the fundamental question under scrutiny is whether Southern Democrats' racist attitudes toward black Americans pardoned the atrocities of lynching. The book investigates underlying motives of opposition to Senate filibustering and invites an intellectual discussion on why Southern Democrats thought states' rights were the remedy to lynching, when, in fact, the phenomenon was a baffling national crisis. A rebuttal to this query may include notions that congressional investigations into state-protected rights were deemed unconstitutional. In a unifying theme, the appeal ties into questions of the federalism-civil rights debate by noting intervals that warrant research and advancing new perspectives intended to accentuate the matrices of race-based politics. To examine the federalism-civil rights debate, this book asks three practical questions: (1) Would Southern Democrats suspend their friendships with private citizens and enact a federal law that would prosecute them for lynching? (2) Was the national government limited in its constitutional power to protect black Americans from private citizens who organized themselves as lynch mobs? (3) Were concerns for states' rights the core reasons for Senate filibustering, or did Southern Democrats' argument for states' rights support the lie of racism?

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