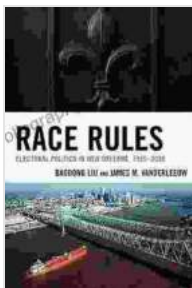


Race, Rules, and Electoral Politics in New Orleans, 1965-2006

In the wake of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, New Orleans emerged as a battleground for racial politics. The city's complex electoral system, rooted in a history of white supremacy, underwent a series of contentious changes that shaped the political landscape for decades to come.

The Pre-1965 Era

Prior to the Voting Rights Act, New Orleans was governed by a system of white supremacy known as the "Old Regular" machine. The machine, controlled by a small group of white elites, maintained its power through a combination of voter suppression, gerrymandering, and patronage.



Race Rules: Electoral Politics in New Orleans, 1965-2006 by Baodong Liu

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 6011 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 180 pages



African Americans, who constituted a majority of the city's population, were largely excluded from the political process. They faced barriers to voter registration, were concentrated in districts with reduced electoral power,

and were denied access to patronage jobs that provided financial stability and a pathway to influence.

The Voting Rights Act and Its Impact

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed discriminatory voting practices and provided federal oversight of voter registration and elections in areas with a history of voter suppression.

In New Orleans, the Voting Rights Act triggered a dramatic increase in African American voter registration. By 1968, nearly 80% of eligible African Americans were registered to vote, up from just 20% in 1960.

The influx of new voters challenged the Old Regular machine's grip on power. In 1972, Ernest "Dutch" Morial, an African American Democrat, was elected mayor of New Orleans, becoming the city's first Black mayor.

Electoral System Reforms

The Voting Rights Act also led to a series of electoral system reforms designed to increase the political representation of African Americans.

In 1975, the Louisiana legislature adopted a new redistricting plan that created two majority-Black congressional districts and increased the number of majority-Black electoral districts for the city council and other local offices.

In 1987, the city of New Orleans implemented a system of instant runoff voting (IRV) for the mayoral election. IRV allowed voters to rank candidates on their ballots, with the winner determined by a series of elimination rounds until one candidate received a majority of votes.

Political Polarization and Racial Tensions

The changing electoral landscape in New Orleans did not occur without significant political polarization and racial tensions.

White backlash to increasing African American political power led to the rise of conservative, anti-integrationist candidates and the formation of the "Old-New Regular" machine.

Racially charged rhetoric and violence became common in political campaigns. In 1978, former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke won a seat on the Louisiana State Legislature by appealing to white voters who felt threatened by the rise of Black political power.

The Post-Katrina Era

The devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 had a profound impact on New Orleans' political landscape.

Massive population displacement, combined with the federal government's slow and ineffective response, led to widespread distrust of established political institutions.

In the aftermath of the hurricane, a new generation of political leaders emerged, many of whom rejected the divisive racial politics of the past and focused on issues of economic recovery and social justice.

Legacy and Significance

The period from 1965 to 2006 was a tumultuous time for race and electoral politics in New Orleans. The Voting Rights Act and subsequent reforms

transformed the city's political system, leading to the election of the first African American mayor and increased representation of Black voters.

However, the struggle for racial equality and political power in New Orleans was far from over. Political polarization and racial tensions continued to shape the city's politics, even as new leaders sought to build a more inclusive and just society.

The legacy of the past continues to inform present-day political debates in New Orleans, as the city grapples with issues of racial disparities, economic inequality, and the future of democracy in a diverse and divided nation.

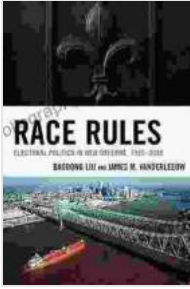
Additional Points of Interest

- The "Old Regular" machine was led by former governors Earl Long and Jimmy Davis.
- The Voting Rights Act also prohibited literacy tests and other discriminatory voting practices.
- The instant runoff voting system in New Orleans has been credited with promoting greater political diversity.
- Hurricane Katrina caused an estimated \$108 billion in damage and displaced over 1 million people in New Orleans and surrounding areas.
- New Orleans' current mayor, LaToya Cantrell, is the city's second Black woman mayor.

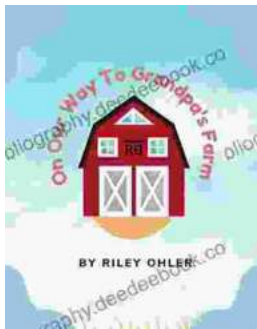
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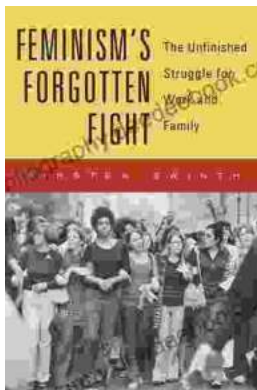


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