



Lords of Misrule: Mardi Gras and the Politics of Race in New Orleans

James Gill

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Mardi Gras remains one of the most distinctive features of New Orleans. Although the city has celebrated Carnival since its days as a French and Spanish colonial outpost, the rituals familiar today were largely established in the Civil War era by a white male elite. In fact, the men behind the masks on the parade floats and at the Mardi Gras balls have kept the spirit of the Confederacy alive. They have put artistry and erudition into their Carnival displays while harboring a virulent racism that has led to violence and massacre. Because the Mardi Gras organizations have remained secret societies, their role in the white supremacist cause has not been fully recorded, until now.

Lords of Misrule is the first book to explore the effects of Mardi Gras on the social and political development of New Orleans, the first to analyze recent attempts to end racial segregation within the organizations that stage the annual festivities.

The history of Carnival is so intertwined with the history of New Orleans that the story cannot be told without a social, economic, and political context. *Lords of Misrule* examines the often-bloody history of segregation and documents the role of the Carnival fraternity and the controversy aroused by attempts to desegregate Mardi Gras.

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