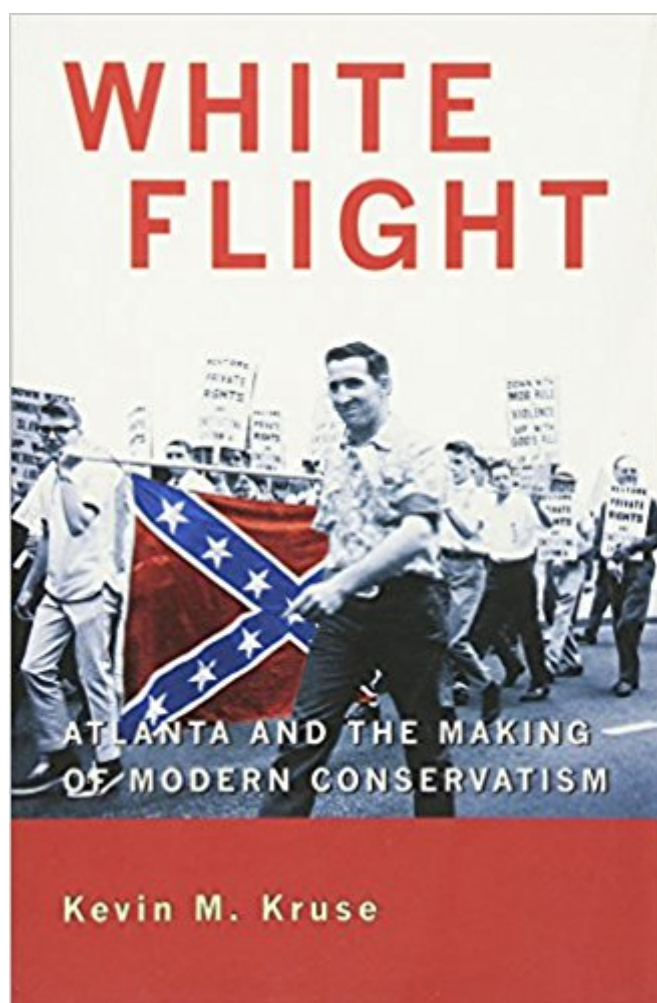


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# White Flight: Atlanta And The Making Of Modern Conservatism (Politics And Society In Modern America)



## Synopsis

During the civil rights era, Atlanta thought of itself as "The City Too Busy to Hate," a rare place in the South where the races lived and thrived together. Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, however, so many whites fled the city for the suburbs that Atlanta earned a new nickname: "The City Too Busy Moving to Hate." In this reappraisal of racial politics in modern America, Kevin Kruse explains the causes and consequences of "white flight" in Atlanta and elsewhere. Seeking to understand segregationists on their own terms, *White Flight* moves past simple stereotypes to explore the meaning of white resistance. In the end, Kruse finds that segregationist resistance, which failed to stop the civil rights movement, nevertheless managed to preserve the world of segregation and even perfect it in subtler and stronger forms. Challenging the conventional wisdom that white flight meant nothing more than a literal movement of whites to the suburbs, this book argues that it represented a more important transformation in the political ideology of those involved. In a provocative revision of postwar American history, Kruse demonstrates that traditional elements of modern conservatism, such as hostility to the federal government and faith in free enterprise, underwent important transformations during the postwar struggle over segregation. Likewise, white resistance gave birth to several new conservative causes, like the tax revolt, tuition vouchers, and privatization of public services. Tracing the journey of southern conservatives from white supremacy to white suburbia, Kruse locates the origins of modern American politics.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ronald Brownstein, "American Prospect" American Prospect : In *White Flight*, a study of white resistance to desegregation in Atlanta, Kruse produces a panoramic and engaging portrayal of the struggle over desegregation. Jeff Roche, "Journal of American History" Journal of American History : An ambitious, well-researched, and interesting study, *White Flight* offers a provocative examination of the connections between race and conservative politics. Jonathan Tilove, "Times-Picayune" Times-Picayune : Kruse presents a nuanced portrayal of the trends that fostered the growth of the suburbs and the casting aside of racist demagoguery. R. Claire Snyder, "New Political Science" New Political Science : *White Flight* provides a detailed yet fascinating history of right-wing backlash against the civil rights movement that has relevance not only for historians but also for political scientists. Kevin Kruse's study deserves a wide reading. Kristen O'Hare, "Urban History Review" Urban History Review : In his book, Kevin Kruse analyzes the ideology accompanying white flight and its ongoing impact on American politics. . . . In a beautifully written, clearly structured, and deeply researched narrative, Kruse lays out the historical processes that led to the development of modern conservatism. Clay Risen, "Nashville Scene" Nashville Scene : Kruse's ultimate success lies in using history to answer contemporary political questions, and without compromising his professional standards.

"In his study of Atlanta over the last 60 years, Kevin Kruse convincingly describes the critical connections between race, Sun Belt suburbanization, the rise of the new Republican majority. *White Flight* is a powerful and compelling book that should be read by anyone interested in modern American politics and post-World War II urban history."--Dan Carter, University of South Carolina  
"White Flight is a myth-shattering book. Focusing on the city that prided itself as 'too busy to hate,' Kevin Kruse reveals the everyday ways that middle-class whites in Atlanta resisted civil rights, withdrew from the public sphere, and in the process fashioned a new, grassroots, suburban-based conservatism. This important book has national implications for our thinking about the links between race, suburbanization, and the rise of the New Right."--Thomas J. Sugrue, Kahn Professor of History and Sociology, University of Pennsylvania, author of *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*  
"This is an imaginative work that ably treats an important subject. Kruse gets beyond and beneath Atlanta's image as a place of racial moderation, the national center of the civil rights movement, and a seedbed of black political power to reveal other simultaneous, important currents at work."--Clifford Kuhn, Georgia State University  
"Kevin Kruse recasts our understanding of the conservative resistance to the civil rights movement. Shifting the spotlight from racial extremists to ordinary white

urban dwellers, he shows that "white flight" to the suburbs was among the most powerful social movements of our time. That movement not only reconfigured the urban landscape, it also transformed political ideology, laying the groundwork for the rise of the New Right and undermining the commitment of white Americans to the common good. No one can read this book and come away believing that the politics of suburbia are colorblind."--Jacquelyn Hall, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Kevin Kruse writes about the discrimination in a Southern city that really happened, and I witnessed it. This is a remarkable study of the times and attitudes of white Southerners defending a myth that caused a Civil War in 1860, and in the 1960s it caused a mad rush of selling properties when white people did not want to live in neighborhoods where Black people lived. General Robert E. Lee his battle for States Rights in 1865, and the white people in Atlanta lost their battle for States Rights in the 1960s. Reading the names of the leaders against the freedom of property ownership stirs memories, and I recall those incidences and people who are on the front lines of both sides. Of course, justice prevailed, and it took federal laws to settle the matter. I recommend this book to anybody that wants to know about racism in Atlanta, Georgia during the Civil Rights era. Kruse had done a powerful work in research, and he has his facts lined up to present what really happened in the City that was too busy to hate.

Accessible and detailed without being dry and difficult to power through. Gave me tremendous insight into the city I call home, as well as the history nationwide about the white response to the civil rights movement and the breaking down of segregation.

Puts into focus the source of a political ideology . Easy reading, but redundant examples. Anyone interested in race and class politics already knows much of this. Well written and logically organized.

12/8/14 -- POST-REVIEW ADDITION: WHEN CONTEMPORARY EVENTS CATCH UP WITH SCHOLARSHIP -- This morning's news reported the resounding defeat of conservative Democrat Sen. Mary Landrieu (LA) by a Republican challenger. As of today, there are no senatorial Democrats in the Deep South. The election of a black president in 2008, the rise of the white far right Tea Party in reaction to Pres. Obama, and subsequent unrelenting efforts by the right to undermine Obama, has produced this toxic outcome 6 years later. What author Kruse identifies in Atlanta in the Civil Rights Era and the consolidation of white, race-based conservatism in Atlanta

suburbs thereafter did indeed spread throughout the South (and midwest) in later years. As of this writing, governing Republicans are divided into at least 2 camps, thanks to the rise of the white Tea Party. This latter group would have its conservatism be regional, insurrectionist/anti-government and neo-Confederate. And this will lead to deeper polarization in the US. See:Â The Backlash: Right-Wing Radicals, High-Def Hucksters, and Paranoid Politics in the Age of Obama

MY ORIGINAL REVIEW: *White Flight* is the first book by Princeton's Assistant Professor of History (in 2005) Kevin Kruse. It is a most auspicious debut and promises ever more accomplished studies as the scholar deepens his expertise and skills. Relying on a wide range of archives in greater Atlanta, Kruse demonstrates how the about-to-boom city was poised to enter the Civil Rights struggles as early as the late 1940s. Key to this situation was the greater concentration of blacks in the city and their modest but relatively advanced role (compared to elsewhere in the South) in Atlanta's affairs, despite segregation -- and the shortage of post war housing. This put Atlanta in the vanguard of the movement which picked up steam in the later 1950s throughout Dixie. *White Flight's* chronicle leaves off in the early 1970s, in the period immediately following the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964. The book closes with an epilogue wherein Kruse ponders the national implications of Atlanta's conflicts and struggles and its impact on the rise of conservatism in the 1980s. In this section he makes some most intriguing and potentially useful interpretations and analyses, but they don't quite get tied together. I suspect further research, however, will accomplish this. This is why I give the book 4 stars (only a definitive classic merits 5 stars) , meaning I believe it is a strong accomplishment in a field of emerging studies of US society and politics in the later 20th century. The book looks at post-Civil Rights era Atlanta and its suburbs and the subsequent trends that informed white conservatism. IMO these seemed to have peaked in the 2010 interim election, and post-2012, are entering a decline as other factors move center stage. [12/8/14: I was wrong here. Anti-Obama fury rose again after the 2012 election, and extremist attacks on him continued up to the 2014 mid-terms. Georgia continues to elect far right state and national representatives.] Kruse writes in an engaging narrative style, taking his account from block to block, neighborhood to neighborhood, district to district, as blacks acquire homes in formerly all white areas -- all the while looking at parallel developments in City Hall. It closes as most whites leave Atlanta to establish suburban enclaves designed to keep the "Blackening" Atlanta at bay. It is from these racially resentful redoubts that Georgia Republicanism is born, spawning its most prominent "native son," Newt Gingrich. The Society of Southern Historians, a rather conservative lot, gave *White Flight* an outstanding award for studies in Southern History. I strongly recommend it, too. (For what its worth, and as an example of abiding conservative, "anti-elite" resentment of the Civil Rights legacy, see

the 1-star review of WF by Mark Bennett. His belligerent exchange with his challengers, including me, is telling, and I trust readers will realize that White Flight is in no way about "stupid accusatory politics, but a prophetic work of history.)

This book pulled back the covers of what actually happened with the demographic changes in the city of Atlanta and the inner suburbs later on. Behind the moniker of "The City Too Busy to Hate" was a carefully constructed coalition of moderate white businessmen and black clergy that presided over incremental changes to comply with desegregation orders. Ultimately this alliance broke down but the insight of how Atlanta did not have bus boycotts as Montgomery did or schoolhouse standoff as Little Rock did is simply fascinating and little discussed in the interest of revisionist history. I do not view white flight solely as a race issue but as a class issue as middle class whites heavily leveraged local government investments in parks and schools as the battlecry and initially fought the efforts of middle to upper class blacks to move out of the overcrowded areas of the city and into their neighborhoods. A must read by anyone seeking to understand Atlanta's past and even present!

A great read

Very thought-provoking book. It is thorough and even-handed in it's treatment of the racial divisions in the country. It specifically deals with Atlanta but could be any city North or South (Detroit and Chicago come to mind). I have read a couple of Mr. Kruse's books and find him to be a very careful and well-researched author. If you are interested in social history, I recommend this book as well as "One Nation Under God".

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