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# BOOK NEWS

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact:** Jenny Keegan  
225.578.6453 / [jenniferkeegan@lsu.edu](mailto:jenniferkeegan@lsu.edu)

### **Democracy and Power in Antebellum Alabama** *LSU Press to Bring Out Paperback Edition of J. Mills Thornton Classic*

**Baton Rouge**— More than three decades after its initial publication, J. Mills Thornton's *Politics and Power in a Slave Society* remains the definitive study of political culture in prewar Alabama. Controversial when it first appeared, the book argues against a view of antebellum Alabama as an aristocratic society governed by a planter elite. Instead, Thornton claims that Alabama was an aggressively democratic state, and that this very egalitarianism set the stage for secession.

White Alabamians had first-hand experiences with slavery, and these encounters warned them to guard against the imposition of economic or social reforms that might limit their equality. Playing upon their fears, the leaders of the southern rights movement warned that national consolidation presented the danger that fanatic northern reformers would force alien values upon Alabama and its residents. These threats gained traction when national reforms of the 1850s gave state government a more active role in schools, banks, and transportation, intruding for first time in the everyday lives of Alabama citizens and enabling ambitious young politicians to carry the state into secession in 1861.

Called an "important and controversial monograph" on its original publication in 1978, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society* continues to inspire scholars by challenging one of the fundamental articles of the American creed: that democracy intrinsically produces good. Contrary to our conventional wisdom, slavery was not an un-American institution; instead, it coexisted with and supported the democratic beliefs of white Alabama.

J. MILLS THORNTON was a professor of history at the University of Michigan for thirty-five years prior to his retirement in 2010. He is the author of *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma*.

November 2014  
528 pages, 6 x 9, 15 maps, 6 charts  
978-0-8071-5914-9  
Paper \$35.00s, ebook available  
Southern History / Slavery Studies

To request a review copy or set up an interview with the author,  
please contact Jenny Keegan at [jenniferkeegan@lsu.edu](mailto:jenniferkeegan@lsu.edu).

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