



# The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders

*James Oakes*



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**"A sweeping and spirited history of Southern slaveholders."?David Herbert Donald**

This pathbreaking social history of the slaveholding South marks a turn in our understanding of antebellum America and the coming of the Civil War. Oakes's bracing analysis breaks the myth that slaveholders were a paternalistic aristocracy dedicated to the values of honor, race, and section. Instead they emerge as having much in common with their entrepreneurial counterparts in the North: they were committed to free-market commercialism and political democracy for white males. The Civil War was not an inevitable conflict between civilizations on different paths but the crack-up of a single system, the result of people and events.



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