



American Congo The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta

By Nan Elizabeth Woodruff

The University of North Carolina Press. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 288 pages. Dimensions: 9.2in. x 6.1in. x 0.8in. In 1921, freedom fighter William Pickens described the Mississippi River Valley as the American Congo. Nan Woodruff argues that the African Congo under Belgium's King Leopold II is an apt metaphor for the Delta of the early twentieth century. Both wore the face of science, progressivism, and benevolence, yet were underwritten by brutal labor conditions, violence, and terror. As in the Congo, she argues, the Delta began with the promise of empire: U. S. capitalists on the lookout for new prospects cleared the vast Delta swamps. With the subsequent emergence of a wealthy planter class, the promise of untold riches, and a largely black labor force, America had its Congo. Woodruff chronicles the following half-century of individual and collective struggles as black sharecroppers fought to earn a just return for their labor, to live free from terror, to own property, to have equal access to the legal system, to move at will, and to vote. They fought for citizenship not only of men, but of women and families, and were empowered by the wars and upheavals of the time. Indeed, Woodruff argues,...



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