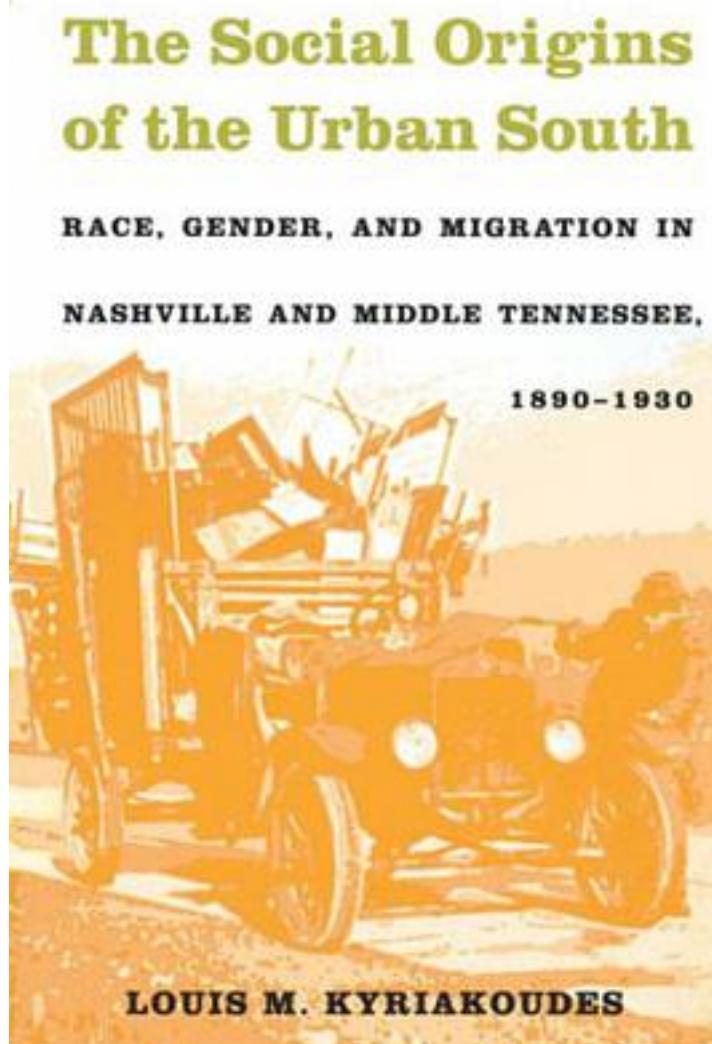


# The Social Origins of the Urban South



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In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, thousands of black and white southerners left farms and rural towns to try their fate in the region's cities. This transition brought about significant economic, social, and cultural changes in both urban centers and the countryside. Focusing on Nashville and its Middle Tennessee hinterland, Louis Kyriakoudes explores the impetus for this migration and illuminates its effects on regional development. Kyriakoudes argues that increased rural-to-urban migration in the late nineteenth century grew out of older seasonal and circular migration patterns long employed by southern farm families. These mobility patterns grew more urban-oriented and more permanent as rural blacks and whites turned increasingly to urban migration in order to cope with rapid economic and social change. The urban economy was particularly welcoming to women, offering freedom from the male authority that dominated rural life. African Americans did not find the same freedoms, however, as whites found ways to harness the forces of modernization to deny them access to economic and social opportunity. By linking urbanization, economic and social change, and popular cultural institutions, Kyriakoudes lends insight into the development of an urban, white, working-class identity that reinforced racial divisions and laid the demographic and social foundations for today's modern, urban South.

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