



# **Between North and South: Delaware, Desegregation, and the Myth of American Sectionalism (Politics and Culture in Modern America)**

*Brett Gadsden*

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*Between North and South* chronicles the three-decade-long struggle over segregated schooling in Delaware, a key border state and important site of civil rights activism and white reaction. Historian Brett Gadsden begins by tracing the origins of a long litigation campaign by NAACP attorneys who translated popular complaints about the inequities in Jim Crow schooling into challenges to racial proscriptions in public education. Their legal victories subsequently provided the evidentiary basis for the Supreme Court's historic decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, marking Delaware as a center of civil rights advancements. Gadsden's further examination of a novel metropolitan approach to address the problem of segregation in city and suburban schools, wherein proponents highlighted the web of state-sponsored discrimination that produced interrelated school and residential segregation, reveals the strategic creativity of civil rights activists. He shows us how, even in the face of concerted white opposition, these activists continued to advance civil rights reforms into the 1970s, secured one of the most progressive busing remedies in the nation, and created a potential model for desegregation efforts across the United States.

*Between North and South* also explores how activists on both sides of the contest in this border state—adjacent to the Mason-Dixon line—helped create, perpetuate, and contest ideas of southern exceptionalism and northern innocence. Gadsden offers instead a new framework in which "southern-style" and "northern-style" modes of racial segregation and discrimination are revealed largely as regional myths that civil rights activists and opponents alternately evoked and strategically deployed to both advance and thwart reform.

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