



Baptized in PCBs: Race, Pollution, and Justice in an All-American Town (New Directions in Southern Studies)

Ellen Griffith Spears

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In the mid-1990s, residents of Anniston, Alabama, began a legal fight against the agrochemical company Monsanto over the dumping of PCBs in the city's historically African American and white working-class west side. Simultaneously, Anniston environmentalists sought to safely eliminate chemical weaponry that had been secretly stockpiled near the city during the Cold War. In this probing work, Ellen Griffith Spears offers a compelling narrative of Anniston's battles for environmental justice, exposing how systemic racial and class inequalities reinforced during the Jim Crow era played out in these intense contemporary social movements.

Spears focuses attention on key figures who shaped Anniston--from Monsanto's founders, to white and African American activists, to the ordinary Anniston residents whose lives and health were deeply affected by the town's military-industrial history and the legacy of racism. Situating the personal struggles and triumphs of Anniston residents within a larger national story of regulatory regimes and legal strategies that have affected toxic towns across America, Spears unflinchingly explores the causes and implications of environmental inequalities, showing how civil rights movement activism undergirded Anniston's campaigns for redemption and justice.

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