

Social & Behavioral Sciences \ History, Geography & Area Studies \ North America

Dattel, Gene. **Cotton and race in the making of America: the human costs of economic power.** Ivan R. Dee, 2009. 416p index afp; ISBN [9781566637473](#), \$28.95. Reviewed in 2010aug CHOICE.

Independent scholar Dattel provides a thoughtful analysis of cotton's economic power and the ways in which it helped shape race relations in the US. He examines cotton from an economic and financial viewpoint, noting that the confluence of westward land expansion and the need for inexpensive cotton textiles in the early 19th century generated a global economic juggernaut that was primarily responsible for reviving and expanding slavery in the US. Slave-produced cotton became the country's largest export commodity, generating wealth and commercially and financially connecting the North, the South, and Europe. Cotton's importance helped shape the political and legal defense of slavery, while the economic bond of cotton and slavery pushed the country into the Civil War. Even with the end of slavery, cotton influenced the economy and race relations, as cotton production continued under sharecropping and racial antagonism persisted. Dattel argues that northern racial animosity deterred black mobility, containing African Americans in the cotton South until well into the 20th century. The advent of the mechanical cotton picker and the Great Depression ended the economic might of cotton, yet the residue of racial antipathy continued. **Summing Up:** Recommended. All levels/libraries. -- *R. M. Hyser, James Madison University*