



# Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century (Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America)

*Cheryl Lynn Greenberg*

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Was there ever really a black-Jewish alliance in twentieth-century America? And if there was, what happened to it? In *Troubling the Waters*, Cheryl Greenberg answers these questions more definitively than they have ever been answered before, drawing the richest portrait yet of what was less an alliance than a tumultuous political engagement--but one that energized the civil rights revolution, shaped the agenda of liberalism, and affected the course of American politics as a whole.

Drawing on extensive new research in the archives of organizations such as the NAACP and the Anti-Defamation League, Greenberg shows that a special black-Jewish political relationship did indeed exist, especially from the 1940s to the mid-1960s--its so-called "golden era"--and that this engagement galvanized and broadened the civil rights movement. But even during this heyday, she demonstrates, the black-Jewish relationship was anything but inevitable or untroubled. Rather, cooperation and conflict coexisted throughout, with tensions caused by economic clashes, ideological disagreements, Jewish racism, and black anti-Semitism, as well as differences in class and the intensity of discrimination faced by each group. These tensions make the rise of the relationship all the more surprising--and its decline easier to understand.

Tracing the growth, peak, and deterioration of black-Jewish engagement over the course of the twentieth century, Greenberg shows that the history of this relationship is very much the history of American liberalism--neither as golden in its best years nor as absolute in its collapse as commonly thought.

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