



# **Justice of Shattered Dreams: Samuel Freeman Miller and the Supreme Court during the Civil War Era (Conflicting Worlds: New Dimensions of the American Civil War)**

*Michael A. Ross*

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Appointed by Abraham Lincoln to the U.S. Supreme Court during the Civil War, Samuel Freeman Miller (1816--1890) served on the nation's highest tribunal for twenty-eight tumultuous years and holds a place in legal history as one of the Court's most influential justices. Michael A. Ross creates a colorful portrait of a passionate man grappling with the difficult legal issues arising from a time of wrenching social and political change. He also explores the impact President Lincoln's Supreme Court appointments made on American constitutional history.

Best known for his opinions in cases dealing with race and the Fourteenth Amendment, particularly the 1873 Slaughter-House Cases, Miller has often been considered a misguided opponent of Reconstruction and racial equality. In this major reinterpretation, Ross argues that historians have failed to study the evolution of Miller's views during the war and explains how Miller, a former slaveholder, became a champion of African Americans' economic and political rights. He was also the staunchest supporter of the Court of Lincoln's controversial war measures, including the decision to suspend such civil liberties as habeas corpus.

Although commonly portrayed as an agrarian folk hero, Miller in fact initially foresaw and embraced a future in which frontier and rivertown settlements would bloom into thriving metropolises. The optimistic vision grew from the free-labor ideology Miller brought to the Iowa Republican Party he helped found, one that celebrated ordinary citizens' right to rise in station and riches. Disillusioned by the eventual failure of the boomtowns and repelled by the swelling coffers of eastern financiers, corporations, and robber barons, Miller became an insistent judicial voice for western Republicans embittered and marginalized in the Gilded Age.

The first biography of Miller since 1939, this welcome volume draws on Miller's previously unavailable papers to shed new light on a man who saw his dreams for America shattered but whose essential political and social values, as well as his personal integrity, remained intact.

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