



# **States of Dependency: Welfare, Rights, and American Governance, 1935-1972 (Studies in Legal History)**

*Karen M. Tani*

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Who bears responsibility for the poor, and who may exercise the power that comes with that responsibility? Amid the Great Depression, American reformers answered this question in new ways, with profound effects on long-standing practices of governance and entrenched understandings of citizenship. *States of Dependency* traces New Deal welfare programs over the span of four decades, asking what happened as money, expertise and ideas travelled from a federal administrative epicenter in Washington, DC, through state and local bureaucracies, and into diverse and divided communities. Drawing on a wealth of previously un-mined legal and archival sources, Karen Tani reveals how reformers attempted to build a more bureaucratic, centralized and uniform public welfare system; how traditions of localism, federalism and hostility toward the 'undeserving poor' affected their efforts; and how, along the way, more and more Americans came to speak of public income support in the powerful but limiting language of law and rights. The resulting account moves beyond attacking or defending Americans' reliance on the welfare state to explore the complex network of dependencies undergirding modern American governance.

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