

We are pleased to announce the winner of the 2022-23 Carwardine Prize, awarded to the outstanding student on the MSt course in US History: Jake Newbury.

The Carwardine Prize was established by a donation from the William S. Broadbent Family, and the RAI is very grateful for this generous support. It is named in honour of Professor Richard J. Carwardine, FBA, Rhodes Professor Emeritus of American History at Oxford and Distinguished Fellow of the RAI.

Read more about Jake's research below.

Through an examination of the material networks of Maricopa County's Republican Party during Phoenix's Charter Governance era (1949-1975), my Master's thesis both revised prevailing understandings of the Sunbelt's conservative movement and post-war economic transformation.

Though a well-known area in conservatism's development, the Sunbelt crucible of Phoenix appeared very different in this retelling. It was argued that Maricopa's 'cowboy entrepreneurs' had nothing to do with the evangelical upsurge elsewhere (such as that examined by Lisa McGirr) – and it was further proposed that within the state the two groups were antagonistic. The analysis demonstrated how a web of corporate real estate investors, lobbyists, attorneys, and bankers created a professional state-wide nationally renowned Republican organisation. These figures corrupted state officials to ignore laws and regulations which played a hidden role in the flight of capital to the Sunbelt.

My analysis also stressed the distinctiveness of Maricopa's GOP. While there exists a series of interchangeable Sunbelt conservative origin stories that share overarching precepts, this research has suggested that the New Right was far from an ideologically and institutionally homogenous movement. It revealed a robust internal Phoenician political culture that diverged from other Sunbelt clusters of conservative activity, such as California's Orange County, Mississippi and Atlanta. Despite not becoming the ideologically dominant branch, many of the facets associated with the Reagan Revolution, such as pay-to-play lobbyists who moved between the regulatory state and private sector, hallmarked Arizona's subnational Republican networks during the 1960s. It concluded that this variation between Sunbelt conservative activists undermined the narrative of a singular conservative revival.