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REVIEW ESSAY

From the Margins to the Center: Southern Women's
Activism, 1820-1970

by JEAN GOULD BRYANT

In 1988, participants in the First Southern Conference on Women's History lamented the neglect of southern women's history. Despite the rich research possibilities suggested by Gerda Lerner's 1967 biography of the Grimké sisters of South Carolina and her documentary history, *Black Women in White America* (1972), and by Anne Firor Scott's *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (1970), only a small fraction of the new scholarship on women's history dealt with the South.¹ Women's historians focused largely on women in the North, while southern historians examined race, but not gender, and African American historians generally ignored black women in their analyses.

The 1988 conference, however, marked a significant turning point. In the last decade, research in southern women's history has exploded, and the field has taken its place as a central component of women's history, southern history, and African American history. Among the most exciting developments in the field is the increasing attention paid to the public activities of southern women. Studies of female activism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have illuminated similarities as well as differences between the South and the North and enhanced our understanding of the complex interrelationships among race, class, and gender. They have

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1. Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "Partial Truths: Writing Southern Women's History," in Virginia Bernhard et al., eds., *Southern Women: Histories and Identities* (Columbia, 1992), especially 11-15, 19, 22; Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition* (Boston, 1967); Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York, 1972); Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago, 1970).

also shed new light on the nature of southern Progressivism and suggested new analyses of political behavior that enrich political history. Equally important, they have shown that southern women were active players, not merely observers or pawns, in the unfolding drama of history.

It has been widely assumed that, with rare exceptions such as the expatriate Grimké sisters, antebellum southern women eschewed the reform causes that mobilized thousands of northern women in the antebellum decades. Tantalizing pieces of evidence from a number of communities, however, suggest otherwise. Driven by the same religious and moral fervor that motivated northerners, southern women engaged in benevolent, missionary, and educational work to aid the deserving poor. By the 1830s women of Charleston, Baltimore, Richmond, Fredericksburg and Petersburg, Raleigh, Wilmington, Nashville, New Orleans, and other communities had organized benevolent societies to distribute Bibles to the poor, run Sunday schools for disadvantaged children, and coordinate aid for orphans, elderly widows, and distressed women. Baltimore and Wilmington women operated charity schools for girls, Nashville women ran a school for orphans and a house of industry for women, and Charleston's elite worked with lepers, nursed the poor, and attempted to rescue children from houses of prostitution. By the 1850s the women of Petersburg, Virginia, operated two female orphan asylums and a house of industry to assist working women. While most of their efforts seem to have been focused on poor white women and children, benevolent societies occasionally aided free blacks as well.² Moreover, despite laws prohibiting black organizations, free black women created clandestine mutual aid societies to aid their poor.³

Elizabeth Varon's study of white women and politics in antebellum Virginia reveals that southerners were also involved in more controversial reforms. Temperance, for example, was popular among Virginia's women and remained so even after the mid-1830s

2. Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill, 1998), chapter 1; Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana and Chicago, 1991), 19-21; Suzanne Leacock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York, 1985), chapter 7; Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *Ladies, Women, and Wenches: Choice and Constraint in Antebellum Charleston and Boston* (Chapel Hill, 1990), 118-24.

3. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted*, 7.

when temperance to many southerners had become linked with abolition.⁴ She also found that contrary to the assumption that southern planter women were either "closet" abolitionists or strong pro-slaveryites, Virginia women participated in a meaningful debate about slavery that included advocacy of a moderate anti-slavery position. Among the many white women who expressed their views publicly in newspapers and petitions and in private correspondence, there was strong support for the American Colonization Society.⁵

After 1828, when the Virginia Colonization Society broke with the national American Colonization Society and began to focus solely on the removal of free blacks, women founded a separate Female Colonization Society of Virginia and petitioned the state legislature to end slavery. They monitored the legislative debates over slavery in 1831-32 and continued their lobbying efforts for the colonization agenda after the legislature enacted more restrictive laws. Even after the male-dominated Virginia Colonization Society shifted to a pro-slavery stance in the 1840s the Female Colonization Society of Virginia continued to contribute funds to the American Colonization Society and to advocate gradual emancipation.⁶

Southern women, like their northern counterparts, found themselves engaging in political activities to further their reform objectives. In addition to signing and circulating petitions written by their male reform colleagues, women initiated their own petition campaigns and lobbying efforts to get municipal and state funding for the schools, orphan asylums, and other welfare institutions they had created and managed. Fredericksburg women petitioned the legislature for permission to hold a lottery to raise money for their charity school, and other women's organizations petitioned for charters for their reform associations. As early as 1812, Petersburg women whose society ran the orphan asylum petitioned the general assembly for legal incorporation to insure their control over their finances and the girls in their asylum. Southern women also lobbied for the regulation of alcohol.⁷

4. *Ibid.*, chapter 1. Lebsock notes women's involvement in temperance, but only in an auxiliary relationship to the male Sons of Temperance. Lebsock, *Free Women of Petersburg*, 229-30.

5. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted*, chapter 2.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, 11-12, 18-20, 35, 39-40; Lebsock, *Free Women of Petersburg*, 200-201.

Reform activism paved the way for women's entry into partisan politics, albeit in a highly gendered fashion. In their 1840 Log Cabin campaign, Whigs made a concerted effort to involve women. Women, many of whom no doubt had privately shared their husband's partisan sentiments, responded enthusiastically. Some women, primarily in Kentucky, Baltimore, and New Orleans, also enlisted in the third party crusades of the nativist American Republican, or Native American, Party in 1844-46, and its successor, the American, or Know-Nothing, Party, ca. 1854-58. By the 1850s Democrats had adopted their rivals' tactics, and women were routinely included in campaign rituals and pageantry. Women's participation in Whig and nativist party campaigns was facilitated by the parties' links with evangelical Protestantism and benevolent reform causes such as temperance and Sabbath laws. In each case, both female and male partisans could justify women's involvement as disinterested benevolence and patriotism, not partisanship.⁸

Having once crossed the threshold of politics, many seemed to relish the opportunity to assume a new civic role and gradually expanded their partisan activities. At first they were content to lend their presence to party functions by waving hankies from their windows as partisans paraded past and joining the throngs at torchlight gatherings and picnics. They marched in processions and presented homemade banners to men's ward organizations. Soon, some were writing songs and poems for the party, submitting letters (under pen-names) to local newspapers, attending formal party meetings, and even giving short speeches when they made banner presentations. Occasionally, female partisans debated the merits of women's political activism with critics through exchanges of letters in newspapers.⁹

Female political activism continued through the secession crisis. Many rallied around the secession movement, leading and supporting boycotts of northern goods, financing volunteer companies

8. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted*, 71-95; Robert Gray Gunderson, *The Log-Cabin Campaign* (Lexington, 1957), 4, 7-8, 135-39; Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore, 1990), 135-38; Jayne Crumpler DeFiore, "COME, and Bring the Ladies: Tennessee Women and the Politics of Opportunity during the Presidential Campaigns of 1840 and 1844," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 51 (Winter 1992), 197-98; Jean Gould Hales, "'Co-Laborers in the Cause': Women in the Ante-bellum Nativist Movement," *Civil War History* 25 (June 1979), 127, 130-34, 136, 138.

9. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted*, 95-101; Hales, "'Co-Laborers in the Cause,'" 134-35.

and militia, and organizing and participating in secession rallies. They attended secession conventions and sometimes prepared written commentaries of proceedings. Some women, however, assumed new roles as sectional mediators, accepting the notion that it was woman's patriotic duty to promote sectional peace. Virginians were active in the Mount Vernon Association, hoping thereby to foster national sentiments. Some also supported the Constitutional Union Party in 1860, participating in rallies and disseminating campaign literature.¹⁰

Anna Ella Carroll of Maryland is a prime example of the intense interest some southern women had in party politics. Carroll was a propagandist for the American, or Know-Nothing, Party in 1856-57 and the Unionist cause in 1860. From 1856 through the Civil War, she corresponded with politicians about party strategy, tried to influence the selection of party candidates, and sought patronage for friends. She wrote pamphlets denying the constitutionality of secession and justifying the use of presidential power to end the rebellion, proposed colonization options to Lincoln, and claimed to have devised military strategy adopted by the government. Throughout her life, Carroll asserted a woman's right to engage in serious political discourse and participate in partisan and national affairs.¹¹

Historians of the renewed struggle for woman's rights after the Civil War have focused on the controversy over the Fifteenth Amendment, namely whether women or black men should receive the vote first. Few have asked if or how southern black women made their claims to citizenship or if they followed their newly enfranchised men into the political arena. Southern blacks did not adopt the model of rugged individualism in their quest for either economic or political freedom after the war, for they recognized that no one could be truly free unless all of the race enjoyed autonomy. Instead, a sense of collective responsibility to kin and the en-

10. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted*, 102-104, chapter 5.

11. Janet L. Coryell, *Neither Heroine Nor Fool: Anna Ella Carroll of Maryland* (Kent, Oh., 1990); Hales, "Co-Laborers in the Cause," especially 121-22, 126, 136-38; Janet L. Coryell, "Duty with Delicacy: Anna Ella Carroll of Maryland," in Edward P. Crapol, ed., *Women and American Foreign Policy: Lobbyists, Critics, and Insiders* (Wilmington, Del., 1992), 45-65; James Biser Whisker, ed., *Anna Ella Carroll (1815-1893), American Political Writer of Maryland* (Lewiston, 1992). For another example of women's continuing partisanship, see Christopher J. Olsen, "'Molly Pitcher' of the Mississippi Whigs: The Editorial Career of Mrs. Harriet J. Prewett," *Journal of Mississippi History* 58 (Fall 1996), 237-54.

tire community shaped their political behavior. Political decisions, thus, were communal decisions that required the input of all, voters and non-voters alike.¹²

Black women's post-bellum political activism was driven by this collective race consciousness, rather than the gender-based notions of female morality, patriotism, and motherhood that mobilized white women. Virginia's black women, including domestic servants and factory workers, participated in debates at open air meetings and shouted down conservative proposals. At the state constitutional convention, black women (along with men and children) participated in debates from the gallery and, during voice or standing votes, stood or yelled their responses as astonished white women silently observed the proceedings from their gallery seats. During South Carolina's constitutional debates over suffrage qualifications, they argued for woman suffrage at African American mass meetings, and, in 1869, gave suffrage speeches on the floor of the House.¹³

Throughout Reconstruction, black women in Virginia, Mississippi, and South Carolina actively tried to shape political decisions despite the danger of physical and economic retaliation from whites. They organized political societies to raise money for candidates, mounted voter education and get-out-the-vote campaigns, wore Republican campaign buttons, spoke out at party meetings, and petitioned local officials protesting policies they disliked. During the last years of Reconstruction, women guarded and sometimes carried guns to protect their men from armed Democrats during political meetings and at polling sites, and engaged in mob action after electoral defeats. They also developed sanctions, such as expulsion from black churches and mutual aid societies, against black men who deserted the Republican Party, and personally shunned, and even left, men who became Democrats. By such action, women asserted their contention that the vote was not an in-

12. Elsa Barkley Brown, "To Catch the Vision of Freedom: Reconstructing Southern Black Women's Political History, 1865-1880," in Ann Gordon et al., eds., *African-American Women and the Vote, 1837-1965* (Amherst, 1997), 68-72. Also see Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "African American Women and the Vote: An Overview," in *ibid.*, 10-15.

13. Brown, "To Catch the Vision of Freedom," 73-74, 77-79.

dividual male right but a collective power that had to be cast in the interest of wives, children, and the community.¹⁴

A number of black women, including Ida Wells Barnett, individually pursued their citizenship rights through litigation. They challenged discriminatory treatment and Jim Crow laws on railroads and steamboats, anti-miscegenation laws, and property laws that inhibited their ability to acquire and pass estates to heirs. Sometimes they received favorable rulings in lower courts, but such victories were inevitably reversed by state or federal appellate courts. Nevertheless, they left an important legacy of legal activism.¹⁵

A large proportion of works on southern women's activism have focused on the period between 1880 and the mid-1920s when black and white women created a host of voluntary associations across the South, championed a wide variety of local and state reforms, entered the public arena in unprecedented numbers, and became involved in the woman suffrage question. Anne Scott first called attention to women's significant role in southern Progressivism and delineated a pattern of women's gradual progression from church-based activities to political activism on their own behalf.¹⁶ Since then, scholars have tested her model with state, local, regional, and biographical studies, and have added new dimensions by delineating black women's activism and developing profiles of leaders and rank-and-file activists.

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14. Ibid., 81-84. Also see Anastatia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880-1930* (Columbia, 1997), 157; Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted*, 172-73. Black women also engaged in a form of political activism when they engaged in benevolent activities and created autonomous institutions to ensure the welfare of their communities and speed the transition from slavery to free citizenship. See Kathleen C. Berkeley, "'Colored Ladies Also Contributed': Black Women's Activities from Benevolence to Social Welfare, 1866-1896," in Walter J. Fraser Jr., R. Frank Saunders Jr., Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., *The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education* (Athens, 1985), 181-203.
15. Janice Sumler-Edmond, "The Quest for Justice: African American Women Litigants, 1867-1890," in Gordon, et al., eds., *African-American Women and the Vote*, 100-119; Alfreda M. Duster, ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago, 1970), xvi-xvii, 18-21.
16. Scott, *Southern Lady*, especially 140-41, 150-51, 158-63.

The wave of female association building began in the 1870s and continued into the early 1900s.¹⁷ Three clusters of religious-based associations were among the first to appear. White and black Protestant women in each southern denomination created separate female missionary societies to give themselves more control over the benevolent and educational work they were underwriting through their fund-raising efforts for the church and opportunities for women to do missionary work. These societies quickly shifted their focus from foreign missions to needs in their own communities. Women interested in nondenominational, ecumenical work organized Women's Christian Associations (WCA) and YWCA chapters, and in the 1880s, southern temperance advocates began to form local affiliates of the national Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). The religious nature of these groups and the additional

17. The information about the emergence, evolution, and activities of the Progressive era women's voluntary societies that follows is drawn from the following works: Scott, *Southern Lady*, 111-63; Scott, *Natural Allies*, chapters 4-7; Dorothy Salem, *To Better Our World: Black Women in Organized Reform, 1890-1920* (Brooklyn, 1990); Mary Martha Thomas, *The New Woman in Alabama: Social Reforms and Suffrage, 1890-1920* (Tuscaloosa, 1992); Mary Martha Thomas, "White and Black Alabama Women during the Progressive Era, 1890-1920," in Thomas, ed., *Stepping Out of the Shadows: Alabama Women, 1819-1990* (Tuscaloosa, 1995); Marsha Wedell, *Elite Women and the Reform Impulse in Memphis, 1875-1915* (Knoxville, 1991); Debbie Mauldin Cottrell, *Pioneer Educator: The Progressive Spirit of Annie Webb Blanton* (College Station, Tx., 1993); Jacqueline Masur McElhane, *Pauline Periwinkle and Progressive Reform in Dallas* (College Station, Tx., 1998); Elizabeth York Enstam, *Women and the Creation of Urban Life: Dallas, Texas, 1843-1920* (College Station, Tx., 1998), chapters 6-8, and 174-80; Elizabeth York Enstam, "They Called It 'Motherhood': Dallas Women and Public Life, 1895-1918," in Virginia Bernhard et al., eds., *Hidden Histories of Women in the New South* (Columbia, 1994), 71-95; Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895-1925* (Knoxville, 1989); Jacqueline Anne Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope: Black Southern Reform* (Athens, Ga., 1989); Gerda Lerner, "Community Work of Black Club Women," in Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York, 1979), 83-93; Anne Firor Scott, "Most Invisible of All: Black Women's Voluntary Associations," *Journal of Southern History* 56 (February 1990), 3-22; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1888-1920* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1996); Audrey Thomas McCluskey, "Most Sacrificing" Service: The Educational Leadership of Lucy Craft Laney and Mary McLeod Bethune," in Christie Anne Farnham, ed., *Women of the American South: A Multicultural Reader* (New York, 1997), 189-203; Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South*; Nancy A. Hewitt, "Politicizing Domesticity: Anglo, Black, and Latin Women in Tampa's Progressive Movement," in Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye, eds., *Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era* (Lexington, 1991), 24-41; Linda D. Vance, *May Mann Jennings: Florida's Gentle Activist* (Gainesville, 1985), especially chapters 49.

home protection theme of the WCTU enabled traditional women to engage in activities beyond the home and to begin to grapple with social problems they would not otherwise have dared to address.

Women also created secular voluntary organizations. Female patriotic societies, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, Colonial Dames, and United Daughters of the Confederacy, offered southern white women an acceptable outlet. The last major female voluntary associations to be formed were literary and cultural clubs, which appeared in the 1890s. Although generally formed to satisfy the social and educational aspirations of urban women, most clubs soon became involved in community projects. These were the most controversial organizations because they were neither religious nor patriotic, and hence seemed designed to take women out of their proper sphere.

These groups shared a number of common features, with some variations. Their leaders were largely urban middle-class and elite women who, particularly after 1880, had attended a ladies seminary, normal school, or college. Members of white societies were typically middle class or elite women, while black organizations had a broader cross-class membership. All the societies were racially segregated, but, with the exception of the patriotic societies, virtually all engaged in some interracial work. Local organizations were linked with larger statewide or regional networks or federations, and affiliated with a national organization: the YWCA, WCTU, or for club women, the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC). In 1896, black club women created their own national umbrella organization, the National Association of Colored Women (NACW).

These broader ties were important in the development of southern activism for they brought southern women into contact with northerners who had a decade or more of organizational experience and activism behind them. National organizations and leaders also often encouraged southerners to pursue a more advanced agenda. Equally important, national, state, and regional networks facilitated interracial contact between black and white organizations, in part by providing arenas removed from local pressures where women could interact.

It was soon evident that male critics of the various female associations had been correct: membership in such organizations did cause women to question their limited sphere; it did make them more independent and assertive; and it did cause them to invade the public arena. What often began as traditional benevolent work among the

unfortunate and efforts to control men's consumption of alcohol quickly mushroomed into a comprehensive reform program.

The following list, which is by no means complete, only hints at the scope and magnitude of their contributions. Southern women, black and white, provided essential social services for the needy in their communities. In addition to traditional charitable work, they built and funded institutions to care for orphans and elderly women, low cost boarding houses for poor working women, and day care centers for children of working mothers. In the area of moral reform they fought for the prohibition of alcohol, regulation of gambling and prostitution, and laws raising the age of consent to protect young girls from sexual assault. They developed sex and alcohol education programs, created and funded refuge houses for prostitutes. Like northerners such as Jane Addams, southern women also established settlement houses that offered comprehensive services to urban residents. And they developed innovative programs to serve the needs of the rural poor. Southern women also worked for labor and municipal reforms.

They contributed significantly to the development of public health services and education. They held community clean-up days and public health awareness campaigns, instituted programs of visiting school nurses, supported vaccination programs and anti-tuberculosis campaigns, and created mothers clubs to improve child care and nutrition. They established and funded well-baby clinics, hospitals, and neighborhood health centers. In addition, they documented patterns of infant mortality, inadequate sanitation, and poor housing conditions, then pushed for city inspections and regulations. Finally, they fought for pure food and drug laws. To advance education, female associations created kindergartens, established and funded public libraries and "traveling" libraries, and fought for additional resources for black schools. They pushed for extension of the school year and compulsory attendance laws, established school lunch programs, and created parent and teacher associations. They also funded new schools and college scholarships for women, and fought for improved teacher training, higher salaries for female teachers, and the election of women to school boards.

These women also helped reshape the justice system. Their achievements included the sex segregation of prisoners in local jails, the appointment of female matrons in jails and prisons, and the creation of a separate juvenile justice system. Their juvenile

programs included reformatories and half-way houses for girls and programs such as industrial schools to combat juvenile delinquency. In addition, they worked for abolition of the convict-lease system and began anti-lynching efforts.

To enhance the quality of life, women's associations engaged in local beautification projects and created parks, playgrounds and recreation centers. Some also began to study conservation issues. Florida club women were especially active in the conservation movement and played a key role in the establishment of highway beautification projects, state forests and parks, and the creation of the Everglades National Park. They also worked to set aside land for the Seminole Indians.

It is clear that women, black as well as white, shaped southern Progressivism in significant ways. Their concepts and programs of "municipal housekeeping" and social justice changed the role of government and helped create the modern welfare state. By focusing on human needs, they brought much needed balance to the male progressive emphasis on efficiency, expertise, and economic interests. It is equally evident that black women did not simply accept and support white reforms (which were often targeted at African Americans). Instead, they pursued their own agenda and adapted progressive programs to meet the needs of their people.

Black women's approach to reform was informed by the same sense of collective responsibility and race consciousness that had shaped black women's political behavior throughout Reconstruction. Adopting the NACW motto, "Lifting as We Climb," they sought to impose middle-class values and behavior patterns on their people knowing that only by challenging the insidious stereotypes of black inferiority and immorality could they hope to advance the race. To achieve their reforms, they successfully mobilized the entire female community, not just the small middle class. Their programs were funded by small donations from domestic servants, laundry and factory women, as well as teachers and well-to-do wives. They also learned how to chart a circuitous course to circumvent the sexism of black men and the racism of white women. They collaborated with black men on reforms when possible but often found more support from both northern and southern white women. Northern Baptist women, for example, were the most important supporters of black women's efforts to build and fund schools and colleges for black women. They also hired black women for southern missionary work and teachers for their white-

run schools. White southern Methodist women contributed money to support a black Methodist settlement in Nashville, and some white women directed charitable work to aid the black community.¹⁸

Black women seized every opportunity to engage in interracial projects with white women and hoped that common class values and links might help to overcome the racial divide. They retained their affiliation with the WCTU and YWCA despite the patronizing attitudes of many white members, and continued to initiate and participate in joint temperance and reform projects. Local clubs found common ground with white women in city-wide clean up days, sanitation reform, public health campaigns, and efforts to develop public playgrounds and day care centers. They also collaborated in joint charitable efforts. The Atlanta Neighborhood Union, for example, persuaded white club women to investigate conditions in the city's black schools and, as a result, won their support for needed city-funded reforms. Black women also cultivated white allies in their effort to get female matrons in jails and reformatories and preventative industrial schools for black girls, while recognizing that the two groups of women had very different reasons for supporting such reforms. During World War I, black and white women collaborated in the farm demonstration program that employed both white and black agents, and after the war, some women's clubs began serious interracial work to combat lynching. Finally, some black women cultivated contacts with white women and accepted invitations to speak to white conventions and meetings where they articulated black aspirations, vividly described life under Jim Crow, urged their audiences to begin anti-lynch efforts, and spoke of the progress made by southern blacks, despite the odds, since emancipation. In their capacity as grass roots activists, black women gained a reputation for being able to get things done. As a result, they emerged as informal power brokers or "ambassadors" to the local power structure. They could help the city achieve its goals, for example, by turning out workers for city clean up days, getting children to meet state attendance and educational require-

18. Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, especially 20-31, 59, 67-69, chapter 4, 186-92, 198-200. Also see Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, chapter 5; Thomas, "White and Black Alabama Women during the Progressive Era," in Thomas, ed., *Stepping Out*, 87.

ments, and getting citizens to health clinics for treatment to eradicate hookworm.¹⁹

The woman's suffrage movement was slow to emerge in the South.²⁰ Some white women began to enlist in the suffrage cause and to form suffrage clubs in the 1890s, but the leaders had difficulty attracting followers, and suffrage activity largely disappeared between 1897 and 1910. A movement finally emerged between 1910 and 1913, when many of the women's voluntary societies embraced the cause. The movement was exclusively a white woman's affair, for the triumph of white supremacy with the disfranchisement of black men and institution of Jim Crow laws in effect drove black suffragists' activism "underground" in the black community and precluded any interracial efforts. Women's experiences in the reform movement turned many into suffragists. Some first awakened to the value of power as opposed to feminine influence during their struggles to create independent female missionary societies and to obtain a greater voice in the affairs of their respective churches. The WCTU's portrayal of the ballot as a "weapon for home protection" converted others. Reformers recognized the need for the vote when male voters and politicians rejected their

19. Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope*, 74-5, 99-103; Salem, *To Better Our World*, 107-13; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, chapters 6 and 7; Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 169; Sims, *The Power of Femininity*, 56-57, 94, 190-91.

20. The information that follows on the southern suffrage movement is drawn from the following sources: Scott, *Southern Lady*, 164-83; Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill, 1997), especially chapters 1-3, 6, 7, and conclusion; Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York, 1993); Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, chapters 3, 5, 6, and 226-29; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 10-19, 203-18; Adele Logan Alexander, "Adella Hunt Logan and the Tuskegee Woman's Club: Building a Foundation for Suffrage," in Thomas, ed., *Stepping Out*, 96-113; Darlene Clark Hine and Christie Anne Farnham, "Black Women's Culture of Resistance and the Right to Vote," in Farnham, ed., *Women of the American South*, 104-14; Wedell, *Elite Women and Reform*, 98; Thomas, *New Woman in Alabama*, chapters 6-9, and 205; Sims, *The Power of Femininity*, chapter 5, especially 156-85; Thomas, "White and Black Alabama Women during the Progressive Era," in Thomas, ed., *Stepping Out*, 87-95; Mary Martha Thomas, "The Ideology of the Alabama Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920," in Bernhardt et al., *Southern Women*, 109-28; Elizabeth Hayes Turner, "'White-Gloved Ladies' and 'New Women' in the Texas Woman Suffrage Movement," in *ibid.*, 129-56; Vance, *May Mann Jennings*, 88, 90, 92-100, 105-6; Enstam, *Women and the Creation of Urban Life*, chapter 9; Jacqueline Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York, 1993), 19-45; Lee Ann Whites, "Rebecca Latimer Felton and the Problem of 'Protection' in the New South," in Hewitt and Lebsack, eds., *Visible Women*, 41-61.

reform proposals. Male criticism of women's activism fueled a growing gender consciousness, as did the growing self-confidence women gained through their voluntary efforts and the sense of sisterhood that developed within the close women's networks. Virtually all suffragists were reform activists in women's voluntary societies, although not all members of the WCTU, women's clubs, or other organizations became suffragists. Some, in fact, became anti-suffrage activists.

Suffragists appear to have been the quintessential New Women of the New South. They were among the best educated women in the region and more likely than others to have completed four years of collegiate education.²¹ Many went north to college and even more traveled, worked or attended conventions in the North. A number of southern suffrage leaders (and reform activists) were originally from outside the South. They were members of the new urban middle class, whose parents were primarily merchants and professionals, well removed from the planter elite. Another distinguishing characteristic of suffragist leaders and movement members is the unusually large number who were employed as teachers, clerical workers, and journalists. They knew the difficulties working women faced and were well aware of the problems facing booming towns and cities. Like middle-class women in the North, southern suffragists saw the need to reform both the industrial elite and the poor.

By 1910, these New Women had more than a decade of experience in reform and the organizational skills necessary to mount a vigorous suffrage campaign. They were energized by the revival of the national movement, victories in some southern states, and the militant tactics of the Congressional Union. Southern suffragists mounted lavish parades, hired professional lobbyists, established permanent headquarters from which to direct their activities, published journals, and sponsored suffrage plays and essay contests. Adopting northern tactics, they delivered public speeches at street corners and from cars, and mobilized college students. Suffragists also split into competing factions, thus stimulating more debate. All southern states by 1913 had organizations affiliated with the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and two alternative groups: affiliates of the more radical National Woman's

21. Scott, *Southern Lady*, 115, noted that half of the members of the Southern Association of College Women in 1913 were educated in the North or West.

Party (NWP) and the states' rights Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference (SSWSC) led by Kate Gordon. Contrary to much of the historical literature, southern suffragists avoided the race issue and refused to portray woman suffrage as a weapon to insure continued white supremacy. Instead, they used the same arguments employed by northerners: municipal housekeeping, home protection, and woman's moral leadership.

The growth of the suffrage movement spawned a well-organized anti-suffrage movement led by wealthy women and men from the traditional ruling elite. Although they shared many traits of their opponents, female "antis" generally were educated in the South in seminaries that stressed traditional roles, were members of voluntary societies that were less involved in reform causes, and were not working women. More importantly, their opposition to suffrage reflected their gendered class interests. They were daughters of the Old South, whose fathers, husbands, brothers and friends were members of the planter elite or new industrial and professional elite that was deeply linked with the plantation economy and social structure. They were also former secessionists, Redeemers who restored the South to Democratic rule, and leaders of the movement to disfranchise black men in the 1890s and implement Jim Crow. When these women argued that woman suffrage would destroy women's influence in society and leave them powerless, and that it was a threat to white supremacy, they were voicing real fears. Their own power was based on their unique access to the men who held power as long as the Democratic Party and white supremacy ruled. The reforms suffragists championed, particularly labor and political reforms, threatened their economic position and their power. It was the anti-suffragists, not the suffragists, who persistently raised the race issue to scare voters, particularly in the black belt and among the planter-industrial elite.²²

The phenomenon of women anti-suffragists in the South as well as the North raises important issues. It suggests we err in equating female activism with liberal or feminist causes and in assuming that women's participation in female voluntary associations will in-

22. Green, *Southern Strategies*, chapters 4, 5, 7, and conclusion; Thomas, *New Woman in Alabama*, 195-203; Suzanne Lebsack, "Woman Suffrage and White Supremacy: A Virginia Case Study," in Hewitt and Lebsack, eds., *Visible Women*, 62-100; Elna Green, "Ideals of Government, of Home, and of Women': The Ideology of Southern White Antisuffragism," in Bernhard et al., eds., *Hidden Histories of Women*, 96-113.

evitably create a sense of sisterhood that fosters feminist consciousness. It also suggests we need to examine conservative and radical right women to ascertain what motivates them and what issues and experiences divide and unite women. Recent scholarship on women in the Ku Klux Klan, as well as that on anti-suffragists, has begun to illuminate this other side of female activism.²³

With the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in July 1920, a new chapter began in southern women's activism.²⁴ Even before the final vote by the Tennessee legislature, suffragists had begun organizing chapters of the League of Women Voters (LWV) in anticipation of victory. Throughout the South, LWV members pressured governors and legislators to call special sessions to enact "enabling" legislation to provide for the registration of women voters.

23. It is clear that we also err in assuming that conservative or right wing women are necessarily exclusively traditionalist and anti-feminist; many pursue political and personal agency and their own women's rights agenda. Kathleen M. Blew, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley, 1991); Nancy MacLean, "White Women and Klan Violence in the 1920s: Agency, Complicity and the Politics of Women's History," *Gender History* 3 (Autumn, 1991), 285-303.

24. The material that follows on women's activism in the 1920s is drawn from the following sources: Sims, *The Power of Femininity*, 185-88, 196-98; Thomas, *New Woman in Alabama*, chapter 10; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Clubwomen and Electoral Politics in the 1920s," in Gordon et al., eds., *African American Women and the Vote*, 134-55; Hine and Farnham, "Black Women's Culture of Resistance," in Farnham, ed., *Women of the American South*, 214; Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "Discontented Black Feminists: Prelude and Postscript to the Passage of the Nineteenth Amendment," in Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen, eds., *Decades of Discontent: The Women's Movement, 1920-1940* (Boston, 1987), 261-78; Barbara Blair, "Renegotiating Liberty: Garveyism, Women, and Grassroots Organizing in Virginia," in Farnham, ed., *Women of the American South*, 220-49; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 217-24; Wheeler, *New Women*, 181-82, epilogue; Anne F. Scott, "After Suffrage: Southern Women in the 1920s," *Journal of Southern History* 30 (August 1964), 298-318; Scott, *Southern Lady*, 188-209; Scott, *Natural Allies*, 157, 171-72, 180-81; Salem, *To Better Our World*, chapter 8; Neverdon-Morton, "Advancement of the Race," 125, 129-32; Cottrell, *Pioneer Woman Educator*, chapters 4, 5; Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope*, 83-87, 91, 96-121, 124-25; Vance, *May Mann Jennings*, 107-113, chapters 9, 10; Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American Women of the South*; Joanne Varner Hawks, "Stepping out of the Shadows into Politics: Women in the Alabama Legislature, 1922-1990," in Thomas, ed., *Stepping Out*, 154-57; Marion W. Roydhouse, "Bridging Chasms: Community and the Southern YWCA," in Hewitt and Lebsack, eds., *Visible Women*, 270-95; Lynne A. Rieff, "'Go Ahead and Do All You Can': Southern Progressives and Alabama Home Demonstration Clubs, 1814-1940," in Bernhard, et al., eds., *Hidden Histories*, 134-49; Joanne V. Hawks and Mary Carolyn Ellis, "Heirs of the Southern Progressive Tradition: Women in Southern Legislatures in the 1920s," in Caroline Matheny Dillman, ed., *Southern Women* (New York, 1988), 81-92; Dolores E. Janiewski, *Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender, and Class in a New South Community* (Philadelphia, 1985), 4, 83-95; John A. Salmond, *Miss Lucy of the CIO: The Life and Times of Lucy Randolph Mason, 1882-1959* (Athens, Ga., 1988), chapters 1-5.

Concurrently, the non-partisan League organized voter registration drives and created citizenship schools in county and congressional districts, voter demonstration programs, and educational material to prepare women to exercise their newly won right. As fall elections approached, the League and other women's organizations mounted get-out-the-vote campaigns. Black women's clubs also orchestrated voter registration efforts. Of the large numbers of black women who tried to register throughout the 1920s, probably only a few thousand succeeded, but they set an important precedent.

Southerners also entered party politics, forming white Democratic women's clubs and Republican Colored Women's clubs. In the 1920s and 1930s, southern Democratic women were active in party affairs at the local, state, and national levels. They ran for public office, were delegates to party conventions, created and served in the party's Women's Division, and campaigned for Democratic candidates. Some southern black women who were leaders in the national League of Republican Colored Women participated in meetings of the Women's Division of the Republican National Committee.

Southern women continued to be a force for progressive reform throughout the 1920s and 1930s, working through their traditional networks of clubs, missionary societies, the WCTU, YWCA, and PTA, and a number of new organizations. The new groups included the LWV, National Woman's Party (NWP), Business and Professional Women's Clubs (BPW), American Association of University Women (AAUW), Federation of Colored Parent Teachers Clubs, Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, and the National Council of Negro Women. To coordinate and enhance their lobbying efforts, white women in each state created a new umbrella organization, a women's joint legislative council, and affiliated with the Women's Joint Congressional Committee in Washington, D.C.

They used their new political power to push through reforms that recalcitrant politicians had ignored or rejected before 1920, and to champion even more advanced programs. Women lobbied for ratification of the federal child labor amendment and, when it failed, for passage of similar state laws. They pressured Congress to pass the Sheppard-Towner Act, a state-federal maternal and infant health program, and lobbied their states to implement and fund the new law. Reformers also pushed for state protective labor laws for women that would establish an eight-hour day, prohibit night work, and set a minimum wage, and they pushed for federal and state investigations of factory conditions. They supported creation of local and state child welfare departments, and lobbied for laws

to allow women to serve on juries and gain coguardianship rights over children. Some southerners supported the Equal Rights Amendment, proposed by the National Woman's Party in 1923.

Women were also active on behalf of peace. Some lobbied for American membership in the League of Nations and prodded President Warren Harding into calling the Washington Disarmament Conference in 1921. Black women created the International Council of Women of the Dark Races to promote peace and worldwide harmony, and worked with whites in the bi-racial International Council of Women. More importantly, southern women worked for peace and justice at home. In the 1920s they created women's committees affiliated with local and state Commissions on Interracial Cooperation, providing a forum in which black and white women could confront racism together. In 1930, Jessie Daniel Ames founded the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, which drew significant numbers of white women into the crusade for the first time. This white organization created some interracial forums and lobbied for state anti-lynch laws. Some whites joined black women in lobbying for a federal anti-lynch law in the 1930s.

As a result of the expertise they developed in welfare, health, education, and labor conditions and the administrative and political skills they acquired, southern women were able in increasing numbers to affect social and political change from inside the political system. Local and state governments appointed prominent suffragists and reformers to advisory boards and jobs created to implement and oversee the welfare and justice programs they had helped create. During the depression, southern women, including Floridians Ruth Bryan Owen and Mary McLeod Bethune, were appointed to a number of significant positions in the Roosevelt administration.²⁵

25. Martha H. Swain, "Loula Dunn: Alabama Pioneer in the Public Welfare Administration," in Thomas, ed., *Stepping Out*, chapter 8; Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope*, 124; Wheeler, *New Women*, 194-95, 197; Martha H. Swain, "A New Deal for Southern Women: Gender and Race in Women's Work Relief," in Farnham, ed., *Women of the American South*, chapter 15; Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981). Ware includes nine southern women in the New Deal Women's Network: Mary Anderson (Washington, D.C.), Marion Glass Banister (Va.), Emily Newell Blair (Mo.), Daisy Harriman (Washington, D.C.), Lucy S. Howorth (Miss.), Lucille F. McMillin (Tenn.), Ruth Bryan Owen (Fl.), Sue Shelton White (Tenn.), and Ellen S. Woodward (Miss.). She notes that Mary McLeod Bethune, despite holding a job that was more important than that held by many other women, was excluded from the network. Because of her race, she was seen as a representative of black people, rather than of women. See pp. 12-13.

Black women have been nearly invisible in most literature on the twentieth-century civil rights movement, but they were at least as central to the story as the male leaders and northern volunteers who command the most attention. Southern black women were important in the growth and successes of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League in the South. Both organizations, for example, built local chapters on the foundation of existing female community networks and organizations, and relied heavily on women's grass roots leadership. They also embarked on social welfare efforts because of pressure from female leaders. Women were particularly active in the NAACP as founders of southern chapters, fund-raisers, field workers, activists, and officers.²⁶

African American women frequently rejected the accommodationist position taken by male leaders and adopted a more assertive stance in pursuing equality. In the half-decade before *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954), women such as Lugenia Burns Hope, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Ida B. Wells, and Mary Church Terrell, to name a few, spoke out forcefully against lynching and openly critiqued racism and segregation. In 1949, Terrell pushed the white AAUW of Washington, D.C., to integrate, and, in 1950 (at age 87) she spearheaded a drive to desegregate the restaurants of the Capitol, using direct action such as picketing, boycotts, and sit-ins. Some, including Terrell, and Septima Clark and Modjeska Simkins of South Carolina, brought lawsuits challenging the white primary, inequities in black teachers' salaries, Jim Crow, and segregated schools. During the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott, women refused to end the boycott and accept a compromise solution when urged to do so by the clergy, and instead kept the protest alive until they won complete bus desegregation. In 1964, Tennessee Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) member Diane Nash mobilized students to continue the freedom ride after Martin Luther King and other leaders had decided to halt the ride because of the violence that threatened the lives of the participants. Likewise, Fannie Lou Hamer and other women in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) delegation rejected the com-

26. Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope*, 118-21, 125; Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American Women of the South*, 223-26; Salem, *To Better Our World*, chapters 5, 6; Barbara A. Woods, "Modjeska Simkins and the South Carolina Conference of the NAACP, 1939-1957," in Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods, eds., *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965* (Bloomington, 1993), 99-120; Rosa Parks, with Jim Haskins, *Rosa Parks: My Story* (New York, 1992), chapters 5, 6, 7.

promise seating arrangement negotiated by male civil rights leaders and the Democratic Party leadership at the 1964 Democratic convention and insisted that the MFDLP delegates deserved to be seated in full.²⁷

But black women (and men) were not the only ones to challenge race and class oppression with increasing militancy after 1930. Some white southern women also increased their anti-racist activities. From the 1920s through the 1940s white Methodist women had continued interracial work. In fact, nearly one-half of southern white women involved in such efforts were Methodists. In 1952, the Methodist Women's Board of Missions embarked on efforts to end segregation in schools and colleges, focusing first on Methodist institutions, then on public schools as well. They disseminated facts about the impact of segregation and the inequities in facilities, instructional materials, and teacher salaries. They brought parents and teachers of both races together to exchange views and find common ground. After *Brown* they worked with biracial groups to facilitate peaceful integration and to insure that integration did not cause black teachers to lose their jobs. They also lobbied the federal government to cut aid to schools that refused to desegregate.²⁸

White women were also active in early civil rights work through the Highlander Folk School (HFS) in Tennessee. Founded by Lillian Johnson of Memphis as a center to advance union efforts in the South, it became a center for interracial meetings and activism in the early 1950s. HFS pushed for integration of labor unions, trained black and white civil rights workers (including Rosa Parks), and developed educational programs for the movement. White

27. Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope*, see especially chapter 5; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 185; Duster, ed., *Crusade for Justice*; Jones, *Quest for Equality*, 38-42, 44, 64-86; Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 221-26; Grace Jordan McFadden, "Septima P. Clark and the Struggle for Human Rights," in Crawford et al., eds., *Women in the Civil Rights Movement*, 86-89. Clark was fired from her teaching position in South Carolina for her NAACP activism; Woods, "Modjeska Simkins," in *ibid.*, 107-10; Ella Baker consistently challenged male leaders because of their conservatism. See Carol Mueller, "Ella Baker and the Origins of 'Participatory Democracy,'" in *ibid.*, 51-70; Mamie E. Locke, "Is This America? Fannie Lou Hamer and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party," in *ibid.*, 32-33; Belinda Robnett, "African American Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Spontaneity and Emotion in Social Movement Theory," in Kathleen M. Blee, ed., *No Middle Ground: Women and Radical Protest* (New York, 1998), 79, 82-85.

28. Alice G. Knotts, "Methodist Women Integrate Schools and Housing, 1952-1959," in Crawford et al., eds., *Women in the Civil Rights Movement*, 251-58.

women were among Highlander's key financial supporters, and women of both races were among its field organizers, teachers, and strategists.²⁹

From 1954 through 1965, black women were the heart and soul of the civil rights movement. Although they were not the public spokespersons, women often outnumbered male participants in demonstrations and campaigns and were among the first to enlist in the movement, frequently defying church leaders who urged caution. They were organizers and motivators who effectively utilized existing women's networks and kin connections, and inspired others through words, songs, and action with their faith and courage. Women were, as Belinda Robnett convincingly argued, charismatic bridge leaders whose spontaneous decisions and actions kept the momentum of the movement going at critical times. Excluded from formal leadership in the movement, they were free to remain loyal to their community constituents at times when the male leaders felt it necessary to compromise with civic and national authorities to maintain their influence.³⁰

Members of the Montgomery Women's Political Council (WPC) mobilized the community and organized and funded the 1955 bus boycott after Rosa Parks' decision to challenge the discriminatory bus policy. Since its founding in 1946, the WPC had engaged in voter registration and education projects (sometimes with assistance from the League of Women Voters), organized block voting drives, and desegregated public parks. WPC strategists and the black working women who comprised the bulk of the bus riders were primarily responsible for keeping the boycott going until the company and city government capitulated. They received behind-

29. Donna Langston, "The Women of Highlander," in *ibid.*, 145-67.

30. Robnett, "African American Women in the Civil Rights Movement," in Blee, ed., *No Middle Ground*, 65-95; Charles Payne, "Men Led, but Women Organized: Movement Participation of Women in the Mississippi Delta," in Crawford et al., eds., *Women in the Civil Rights Movement*, 1-11; Vicki Crawford, "Beyond the Human Self: Grassroots Activists in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement," in *ibid.*, 13-26; Anne Standley, "The Role of Black Women in the Civil Rights Movement," in *ibid.*, 183-202; Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Women as Culture Carriers in the Civil Rights Movement: Fannie Lou Hamer," in *ibid.*, 203-17; Jacquelyn Grant, "Civil Rights Women: A Source for Doing Womanist Theology," in *ibid.*, 39-50; Hine and Farnham, "Black Women's Culture of Resistance," 205, 215-16.

the-scenes support from some white women who employed black domestics and from some courageous individuals who boldly spoke out for desegregation.³¹

Women were central to the success of the voter registration effort that culminated in passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Septima Clark masterminded the creation of citizenship schools to educate illiterate rural and small town blacks, and prepare them to pass voter registration tests and assume full citizenship. Working first through Highlander and, after 1961, as field organizer for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), she ultimately directed a massive eleven-state project of voter education. The strategy and philosophy that guided the citizenship school project differed markedly from that of the male civil rights leadership. Where they focused on mobilizing urban middle-class African-Americans in particular, women organizers and the young people in SNCC believed illiterate and poor rural and small town blacks were key to the success of the voter registration drive. If the black belt could be organized, the system of white supremacy could be toppled. More importantly, Clark and others sought to train local leaders, thus empowering the people to continue the struggle long after outside organizers had left the area. Local women defied the system and housed civil rights workers during summer voter registration drives. But they did much more. Sharecroppers and women in small towns risked their lives and precarious livelihood by participating in marches and repeatedly attempting to register to vote. Fannie Lou Hamer and others returned to the registration lines after being jailed, beaten, fired from jobs, and driven off the land they had share cropped for a generation, proclaiming that they had nothing to lose and everything to gain for their grandchildren.³²

31. Mary Fair Burks, "Trailblazers: Women in the Montgomery Bus Boycott," in Crawford et al., eds., *Women in the Civil Rights Movement*, 71-83; Parks, *Rosa Parks*, chapters 8-10; David Garrow, ed., *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Made It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson* (Knoxville, 1987); Sheryl Spradling Summe, "'Alive to the Cause of Justice': Juliette Hampton Morgan and the Montgomery Bus Boycott," in Thomas, ed., *Stepping Out*, 176-90.

32. McFadden, "Septima Clark," in Crawford et al., eds., *Women in the Civil Rights Movement*, 85-97; Langston, "The Women of Highlander," in *ibid.*, 153-58, 162-66; Sandra B. Oldendorf, "The South Carolina Sea Island Citizenship Schools, 1957-1961," in *ibid.*, 169-82; Locke, "Is This America?" in *ibid.*, 27-37; Mueller, "Ella Baker," in *ibid.*, 51-70.

Black and white female students throughout the South were among the organizers of and participants in bus boycotts, sit-ins to desegregate local lunch counters, voter registration drives, and freedom rides. Some spontaneously became activists, others entered the fray through campus SNCC chapters or through the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), organized by white students in 1964. The SSOC fought to desegregate college campuses and worked to organize African American students from black colleges and create a biracial leadership in the organization. Although most freedom workers in the 1960s were northern whites or blacks, among women, the majority prior to 1964 were southern. The SSOC engaged in community organizing efforts to combat poverty as well as racial oppression, and opposed the Vietnam War. Women were much more effective than men in the SSOC community organizing projects. Southern black women, such as Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, were equally important as leaders, organizers, and activists in SNCC.³³

Despite women's vital roles in the SSOC and SNCC, they were increasingly excluded from the male-dominated leadership circles after 1967, and their concerns as women were ignored. These organizations thus became the incubators of the women's liberation movement in the South. SSOC women founded the first women's liberation group in Gainesville in 1968, and by 1969, the movement had spread to southern campuses across the South. The rest of the story remains to be told.³⁴

The civil rights movement was a major impetus for the emergence of the contemporary feminist movement, however, this movement and many other areas of southern female activism re-

33. Cynthia Griggs Fleming, " 'More Than a Lady': Ruby Doris Smith Robinson and Black Women's Leadership in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee," in Bernhard et al., eds., *Hidden Histories*, 204-23; Christina Greene, " 'We'll Take Our Stand': Race, Class, and Gender in the Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969," in *ibid.*, 173-92; Cynthia Griggs Fleming, *Soon We Will Not Cry: The Liberation of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson* (Lanham, Md., 1998); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York, 1980), chapters 2 and 3; Glenda A. Rabby, *The Pain and the Promise: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Tallahassee, Florida* (Athens, Ga., forthcoming 1999).

34. Greene, " 'We'll Take Our Stand,'" in Bernhard, et al., eds., *Hidden Histories*, 192-203; Evans, *Personal Politics*, chapters 4 and 5, 183, 204-5; Jane Sherron De Hart, "Second Wave Feminism(s) and the South: The Difference That Differences Make," in Farnham, ed., *Women of the American South*, 273-301, especially 273-76, 278, 284-85, 291-92.

main nearly unplowed fields for women's historians. Scholars can build on the foundation laid by studies on working women's activism, women in the Farmers' Alliance and Populist movement, women in southern politics, and conservative or right-wing female activism.³⁵ Much also remains to be learned about women's activism in the colonial, revolutionary, and antebellum South, as well as in the period since World War II. The four articles that follow provide case studies of some of the major themes in southern women's activism and demonstrate the value of exploring these issues and dynamics through local and state history, biography, and studies that focus on black women and ethnic groups. They also raise new questions and suggest new directions for research on Florida's activist women.

35. DeHart, "Second Wave Feminism(s) and the South," in Farnham, ed., *Women of the American South*, 273-301; Janiewski, *Sisterhood Denied*, especially 150-77; Dolores Janiewski, *Subversive Sisterhood: Black Women and Unions in the Southern Tobacco Industry* (Memphis, 1984); Sally Ward Maggard, "'We're Fighting Millionaires!' The Clash of Gender and Class in Appalachian Women's Union Organizing," in Blee, ed., *No Middle Ground*, 289-306; Salmond, *Miss Lucy of the CIO*; Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "O. Delight Smith's Progressive Era: Labor, Feminism, and Reform in the Urban South," in Hewitt and Lesock, eds., *Visible Women*, 166-98; Nancy A Hewitt, "In Pursuit of Power: The Political Economy of Women's Activism in Twentieth-Century Tampa," in *ibid.*, 199-222; Marion K. Barthelme, ed., *Women in the Texas Populist Movement: Letters to the Southern Mercury* (College Station, Tx., 1997); Hawks, "Stepping Out of the Shadows into Politics," in Thomas, ed., *Stepping Out*, 154-75; Pamela Tyler, *Silk Stockings and Ballot Boxes: Women and Politics in New Orleans, 1920-1963* (Athens, Ga., 1996); Kathleen Blee, "Introduction: Women on the Left/Women on the Right," in Blee, ed., *No Middle Ground*, 1-15.