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Janet G. Hudson. *Entangled by White Supremacy: Reform in World War I-era South Carolina.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009. x + 389 pp. $50.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-8131-9293-2.

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Commissioned by Phillip Stone (Wofford College)

The ideal of racial equality has a long history in the life of the American republic. From Thomas Jefferson's lofty language in the Declaration of Independence to Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and even to the Frank Sinatra song "The House I Live In," we find odes to the ideal. Woven so completely into America's DNA, this principle ultimately overwhelmed white supremacy during the civil rights movement. The completeness of its triumph is reflected every time one goes into a library, a restaurant, a movie theater, or casts a ballot. However, throughout much of history, our egalitarian vision was contested by a white racial order that continues to leave a bitter legacy. This is especially true for South Carolina, where for most of its history, the population included a higher percentage of African Americans than any other state in the union. Studying South Carolina history, therefore, means coming to terms with a population in which preserving white control was precarious at best. Such a heritage has led historians to study in depth the colonial, antebellum, and Reconstruction experience. As a result South Carolina twentieth-century history has appeared to be less relevant.

Thus gaps in our historical knowledge about South Carolina's past are especially acute for the last century. While important recent studies about the New Deal and civil rights movement have appeared, little attention has been devoted to the 1900-30 period. Janet G. Hudson's volume is significant on a number of levels, offering a political history and a focus on race relations for a period in which little work has been done. The period also matters because the society crafted in the years after disfranchisement had such a lasting influence. One would be hard-pressed to find an element of South Carolina that was not touched in that regard: voting, education, labor, economic development, and certainly, race relations. In many ways, those defending white supremacy in the years of the civil rights movement were but the inheritors of a system that had been created in the previous decades. To understand this Amer-

ican form of apartheid, historians must delve more deeply into the Progressive-era South.

Hudson's volume is focused on a fairly narrow time frame, World War I and its immediate aftermath in the early 1920s. When we join the story the disfranchisement era has been well established in the state for some twenty years and white supremacy supposedly has firm foundations. Yet, as Hudson makes clear, African Americans were certainly restive in rejecting the premises of white rule. However, they lacked the political, legal, and economic resources to mount an effective challenge to Democratic control. We are confronted with what the historian LaWanda Cox, in ***Lincoln and Black Freedom*** (1994), once termed the limits of the possible. African Americans in South Carolina were thus confronted with a racial system that had complete control. Moreover, indifferent to African American civil rights, the federal courts had endorsed both segregation and disfranchisement, and the wider American public largely endorsed white supremacy. Of course, one can find exceptions to the general rule, but historians need to appreciate just how hopeless racial equality seemed to most observers in the period. With hindsight, historians can point to the emergence of civil rights groups and see the early growth of the civil rights movement, but for people living in the World War I era, race relations had a settled quality in which the wisdom of white rule was self-evident.

Nevertheless, African Americans in South Carolina refused to accept the premises of white supremacy and with limited resources they sought change from within the political system. Where it was not possible to overthrow the existing system, blacks sought reform and the advancement of African Americans. In this process, one sees very few blacks who were ardent advocates of accommodation as a way of appeasing the larger white community. With the exception of the Reverend Richard Carroll, a prominent accommodationist, most blacks saw negotiation with white political elites as a way to advance the black community. Hudson also makes it clear that many African Americans had high hopes that the transformations of the war would lead to a renewed national commitment to racial equality. Their expectations would be dashed by the reactionary ethos of the 1920s, but their sustained effort in the period is revealing in many respects. This suggests that one way to view African American activities in the Progressive Era is by connecting them back to Reconstruction and forward to the civil rights movement. A continuity of dissent was present throughout the period and belies the myth of African American withdrawal from the political process.

African Americans found allies in a progressive faction of the state Democratic Party. Hudson describes them repeatedly as "reformers," although the nature of this reforming faction is never quite clear. South Carolina's path to Progressive reform was convoluted to say the least. Many of the governors elected in the 1900s were largely indifferent to the concerns of the Progressive movement. The governorship of Cole Blease, a reactionary as well as a racial demagogue, also certainly retarded efforts toward political reform in the state. It was only under the governorship of Richard Manning that South Carolina moved in a Progressive direction, and he was only governor for four years. Hudson makes it clear that South Carolina's governing elite were deeply dedicated to preserving white supremacy, and she appreciates the limits of the effort at racial liberalism in the state. Nevertheless, these reformers sought to improve educational opportunities for African Americans, and as advocates of law and order, they disliked lynching as well. Moreover, the reformers were also interested in modernizing South Carolina, especially in efforts to reform the antiquated taxation system.

One part of Hudson's analysis that could be developed more is the impact of the Wilson administration. While Woodrow Wilson was a racist

and ardent defender of white supremacy, he also repositioned the Democratic Party as one that embraced Progressive-era reform. While the national party did not truly embrace civil rights until the 1940s, the push for reform created an impetus for economic regulation that was followed by state parties. It was hardly an accident that the reforming faction of the Democratic Party finally achieved political victory during the Wilson years.

A major theme in Hudson's account is the internecine warfare between the Blease and reforming factions of the state party. Hudson presents an accurate and thoughtful analysis of Blease's approach. Comparisons with David Carlton's *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920* (1982) and Bryant Simon's *A Fabric of Defeat* (1998) obviously suggest themselves. Hudson views Blease in a much more negative fashion, more an opportunist than someone with a sustained critique of Progressive reform. She does err in seeing Blease as a protégé of Senator Ben Tillman, when in fact their relationship seems to have been more of a rhetorical similarity than a personal one. In the 1890s, as a member of the state legislature, Blease was a marginal actor whose influence was mainly centered in Newberry County. He only became an important statewide figure in the mid 1900s, by which time Tillman was focused more on national developments in Washington.

Hudson suggests that Blease exerted an influence on Progressive-minded reformers in a variety of different ways. First, the Blease faction had a sustained ability to command a minimum of 45 percent of the vote. This forced the reform faction to limit their agenda so they could remain unified against this internal threat. The limited and incremental nature of reform in the state, in Hudson's view, was a reflection of the need to keep the Blease forces at bay. However, it could also be said that the modest and limited nature of reforms reflects all that South Carolina Progressives were interested in achieving. After all, these were people uninterested in the systemic changes that would lead to a dramatic reordering of their society.

Additionally, Hudson believes that Blease's constant focus on race also had an impact on the reform faction. While both groups were committed to white supremacy, the reformers were willing to at least consider ways to modify some of the worst features of the system. The racial demagoguery that the reformers engaged in was more about using an available weapon against Blease than anything else. This is one element where Hudson's argument is a little weak. While both sides were committed to white supremacy, it is important to understand how tenuous that control was in reality.

South Carolina whites only returned to political power in the 1876 election through widespread use of violence and massive voter fraud. While disfranchisement created a political environment that made the Democratic Party safer in theory, the reality was that the courts and the national Republican Party could always change their minds. From a white southern perspective, the ambiguity of their position was made clear when a new Republican administration pushed for new antilynching legislation. Whites in South Carolina could not help but notice that it was assistant attorney general Guy Goff pushing for the law. Goff's father, federal judge Nathan Goff, had declared the state's Eight Box Law unconstitutional in 1894. As a result, both factions were on their guard for any deviation from racial orthodoxy and they were inclined to believe the worst of one another. For Bleaseites this took the form of criticizing anti-Tillmanites, rebuking those who failed to endorse lynching, and seeing their opponents as not tough enough on racial matters. Conversely, for reformers, the Bleaseites were dangerous because they failed to protect the plantation order. As elitists, they considered white working-class voters as a dangerous element that needed to be purged as much as possible. In essence, both

sides believed in white supremacy but didn't trust the other to be truly "loyal" to its principles.

Hudson's account is well written, drawing upon a wide range of manuscripts and other primary sources. It is a remarkable study and one that deserves a wide readership. Historians of South Carolina should give it close scrutiny as it provides important information about the development of the unique political culture of the state.

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