



Sarah H. Case. *Leaders of Their Race: Educating Black and White Women in the New South.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017. x + 219 pp. \$28.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-252-08279-5.

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In *Leaders of Their Race: Educating Black and White Women in the New South*, Sarah Case offers a concise addition to the recent scholarship on race, gender, and education in the postwar South. By exploring white and black women's higher education, Case demonstrates how Spelman Seminary and the Lucy Cobb Institute promoted modern visions of New South womanhood. Administrators, students, and alumnae of two Georgia institutions exploited postemancipation and New South changes to redefine notions of postgraduate career opportunities, sexual purity, respectability, and participation in shaping the postwar landscape. They defended their role in building leaders of their respective race. While "concerns about female sexuality and respectability united the schools," Case argues that the new leaders of the race envisioned "these new expectations in specifically race-conceived ways" (pp. 2-3). She astutely demonstrates that the shared vision, objectives, and expectations did not result in a common identity of an educated New South sisterhood. Rather, racial ideology imbued the new identities and enactment of the new visions of the postwar world.

Case opens by exploring Lucy Cobb Institute administrators' expectations for students and graduates and how alumnae refashioned their education in a manner that contributed to both New

South growth and oppression of black women. She reveals the crucial role of three Rutherford women who used the Lucy Cobb Institute to redefine roles in the New South from one of domesticity to active participation. Initially started by Laura Rutherford, Mildred Rutherford completed the transformation of the Lucy Cobb Institute from an antebellum finishing school into an institution that trained elite white women as the southern alternative to the Progressive Era New Woman. In sum, the school's vision involved the redefinition and defense of "southern womanhood, white supremacy, and upper-class hegemony" (p. 16).

Before her involvement in the United Daughters of the Confederacy, principal Mildred Rutherford's efforts occurred at a pivotal time. The revised curriculum celebrated antebellum genteel life but also provided the tools for students to cope with new opportunities and threats without sacrificing modesty and respectability. Moreover, the adoption of a modified liberal arts curriculum and new buildings increased enrollment and enhanced institutional prestige. Her vision cemented new gender norms fitting to the New South. She advanced sexual impropriety as a breach of the social contract. Those who broke these norms, therefore, no longer deserved the protection of white men. While Rutherford opposed suffrage, many students and alumnae advocated for it as a

defense of the Lost Cause, white supremacy, and racial hierarchy. When Mary Ann Rutherford Liscomb replaced her sister, she advocated for more Progressive Era reforms without minimizing the commitment to white supremacy. In less than fifty years, the three Rutherford women secured popular support among white Georgians and shaped a new generation of elite white women committed to white supremacy and class hegemony.

Students and alumnae valued their education and crafted diverse lives, as Case demonstrates in the second chapter. They did not always embrace the sisters' conservatism, but they did embrace the opportunities yielded by their education, whether in teaching, outreach, or other respectable careers within the New South and its white supremacist logics. Case exploits the richness of her sources and provides in-depth profiles of the more successful alumnae who upheld the institutional vision of racial hierarchy, New South womanhood, and leadership. Case uses Carolina O'Day as a foil to the other graduates showcased. Defying New South racial ideologies, O'Day became involved in the Democratic Party and assisted with Marian Anderson's performance at the Lincoln Memorial. As revealed in her postgraduate career, even O'Day refashioned her education without minimizing the institutional expectations of an activist ethos. Overall, these profiles allow Case to persuasively demonstrate how the school destigmatized employment for the New South woman. Neither these opportunities nor Mildred Rutherford's second tenure as principal could prevent its closure due to low enrollments, financial difficulties, and competition with the University of Georgia.

Over the next two chapters, Case contrasts the founding mission and expectations of communal uplift of the Lucy Cobb Institute with Spelman Seminary (now College). Although both schools shared moral and academic goals and an obsession with modesty, Spelman advanced black female respectability. "All viewed Spelman's blend

of industrial and academic education as beneficial to black women and essential to racial progress," as Case convincingly argues, "yet they differed widely in what the legacy of the benefit would be" (pp. 69-70). The Rockefellers' financial support and Baptist religious connections enabled Spelman to weather the financial storm plaguing other schools. In addition, Spelman's increased academic rigor and expanded curriculum secured its reputation as the "Vassar of the South" (p. 81).

Case firmly acknowledges the underlying racism within the curriculum and mission advanced by co-founders Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles. Spelman students and alumnae were expected to "spread ... ideal respectable Christian womanhood to African American children" while simultaneously modernizing and uplifting black Georgian adults (pp. 86-87). Ultimately, Spelman's success rested on its appeal to white male philanthropists, white leadership, and African American community leaders. Spelman ably secured Slater Fund money by convincing funders of its New South role in "teaching blacks their 'place'" (p. 95). Yet, its students and alumnae reinforced newer forms of black politics and racial uplift messages. Indeed, their refashioning of the Spelman education caused prominent black Atlantan leaders such as Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois to embrace the school and the educated women it produced as essential to turn-of-the-century racial progress.

Mirroring the Lucy Cobb Institute chapters, Case examines how students and alumnae embraced their education in a manner that created the "female 'talented tenth'" who actively shaped the New South (p. 100). They used their education—and not class as their white counterparts did—to participate in the public sphere as respectable women. Here Case engages with the scholarly debates over black women's respectability and concludes that all were cognizant of a shared destiny and duty as a legacy of slavery, racism, and white supremacist New South realities. Alumnae wield-

ed respectability as a powerful weapon for challenging racial and gender norms, whether in education, public health initiatives, African missionary service, or Progressive Era reform. After a survey of alumnae demographics, Case ends with an in-depth examination of Selena Sloan Butler, Claudia Thomas White Herrald, and Sue Elvie Bailey Thurman, who refashioned their vision of the proper education of a black Christian woman over forty years.

Though readers might want more in-chapter comparisons, Case successfully shows how the Georgia schools created new opportunities for white and black women and gave them an entry to become public authorities in addressing societal ills. Both institutions produced New South women who ushered in real change and created ways to improve their respective communities and female leadership. This work is a worthwhile addition to any undergraduate classroom and graduate seminar on the history of race, gender, and education in the New South.

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