

engaging history of “style and status” that will influence many fields of study.

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STEPHANIE Y. EVANS. *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850–1954: An Intellectual History*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. 2007. Pp. xiv, 275. \$59.95.

In 1850, the year Lucy Stone became the first African American woman to earn a college degree upon her graduation from Oberlin, the vast majority of American black women were enslaved and illiterate. By the time the Supreme Court handed down its initial ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, in 1954, black female illiteracy had fallen to ten percent. More remarkable, black women were entering college at the same rate—one quarter of all eighteen-year olds—as their white sisters. They did so, however, along a parallel track. Apart from the small number who won degrees in northern colleges and universities, most attended college in the segregated South, in schools blacks built themselves. Underfunded institutions such as Mary McLeod Bethune’s Bethune-Cookman College in Florida survived only because of outreach to the broader black community. This community involvement had a marked effect on ideas about research, teaching, and service, as Stephanie Y. Evans demonstrates. While white, male-dominated higher education turned increasingly away from its religious roots and distanced itself from reform efforts, black educators, women especially, became ever more committed to issues of social justice, civil rights, and the need for black children to know and appreciate their own history and culture.

Evans begins by laying out the obstacles of poverty, racism, and sexism that black women faced. Ambitious though they were to win higher degrees, few could afford the trip north then necessary to find graduate programs open to them. Since most female black college graduates supported themselves by teaching in segregated southern schools, graduate work almost always had to be squeezed into brief summer sessions, far from home, and balanced against community work and family obligations. Even many years of summer school were not enough in most instances to win the doctorate. Anna Julia Cooper, who fulfilled the credits and dissertation requirement for a Ph.D. in Romance languages at Columbia University before World War I, could not satisfy the one-year residency requirement without risking the loss of her teaching job in Washington, D.C. Small wonder that so few black women earned doctorates in the United States. Not until 1921 did the first three do so. Cooper had to transfer to the University of Paris, Sorbonne, which lacked a residency requirement, to win her doctorate in 1925.

In many ways black educators’ careers paralleled those of white women at the time. They both joined countless clubs dedicated to social reform and shared what Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has called “the politics of respectability” (p. 64). Both sought to remake

the black working-class in their middle-class image in what Ula Taylor has dubbed “the iron cage of uplift” (p. 64). But unlike their white peers, whose efforts at uplift were directed for the most part toward people from different national, ethnic, and racial groups, black educators reached out to members of the same race, who faced the same kinds of political, legal, social, and economic obstacles they did. Evans argues that this difference made them less willing to accept the biologically based, hierarchical thinking of the day. In common with an increasing number of black feminist theorists, Evans analyzes her subjects less in the either/or terms of class division and more in the both/and terms of shared oppression.

This analysis is most compelling in Evans’s discussion of the writings of Cooper: both Cooper’s early essays, published as *Voice of the South* in 1892 and, less recognized until recently, her doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne in 1925, *L’attitude de la France à l’égard de l’esclavage: Pendant la Révolution*, defended and published in 1925. Evans, in common with Vivian M. May, in *Anna Julia Cooper, Visionary Black Feminist* (2007), departs from the traditional portrayal of educated black women as elitist and shows how Cooper used race and gender to challenge elitism. Cooper debunked black male ministers’ claim that they could represent the interests of all blacks, criticized white suffrage leader Anna Howard Shaw for excluding Indians from her vision of democracy, and (more than a decade before C. L. R. James published *Black Jacobins* in 1938) criticized the members of her dissertation committee at the Sorbonne for failing to appreciate the centrality of blacks and the slave trade to Enlightenment thought and the course of the French Revolution.

Stephanie Evans’s contribution is to set the work of Cooper and other members of the tiny band of black female college-educated pioneers in the context of the broader struggle for black education. Ignored by the larger white society in their time, these women played a key role in educating those who would fill the ranks of the mid-twentieth-century civil rights movement and foreshadowed key aspects of modern black feminist theory, with its emphasis on historical contingency and the intersectionality of race and gender.

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LEE SARTAIN. *Invisible Activists: Women of the Louisiana NAACP and the Struggle for Civil Rights, 1915–1945*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 2007. Pp. 212. \$36.50.

Female activists were integral to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and often in the front lines of the civil rights struggle. Commentators on the period, however, have generally ignored the role of these activists mainly because women were not prominent in media reporting on the early struggles for civil rights. Lee Sartain details the activism of African American women, with an anal-