

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-1954: An Intellectual History* by Stephanie Y. Evans

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debate among students. Stanton's writing is as vibrant today as it was in the nineteenth century, with implications for current discussions of feminism, marriage, religion, and equality in American society.

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Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-1954: An Intellectual History. By Stephanie Y. Evans. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007. Pp. xvi, 275. \$59.95 cloth; \$24.95 paper.)

The years between 1850 and 1954 gave us powerful black women such as Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, Anna Julia Cooper, Ann Plato, just to name a few, and a number of others. These women were truly remarkable in the fact that they were individuals who managed to achieve and persevere in spite of chronic racism, sexism, and other endemic injustices that permeated the mid-nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century American landscape.

In her formidably enlightening and refreshing book, Stephanie Evans, a trailblazing young scholar and assistant professor of African American and Women's studies at the University of Florida, demonstrates that, despite whatever societal obstacles they were confronted with (and there were many), this era was one of considerable accomplishment for many black women. Evans introduces readers to Lucy Stanton who becomes the first black woman to have a degree conferred upon her in 1850, Anna Julia Cooper, who was born a slave, yet manages to earn a PhD at the age of sixty and Mary McLeod Bethune who was the founder of Bethune-Cookman College and was well respected by a number of political figures, including presidents Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry S. Truman in that she was actively involved on some level in each of these presidential administrations.

Evans divides her book into two parts. Part one examines the initial years of knocking down the previously impervious doors of higher education that had often either subtly or blatantly excluded black women from obtaining higher education, let alone advanced degrees. In this section of her book, Evans manages to create a very informative, yet sympathetic narrative for the reader. The number of triumphs, frequent setbacks, pain, gains, and other events that a number of these pioneering women endured not just for themselves, but in an effort to improve life for others, especially black Americans

was nothing short of inspiring. Part two focus on the intellectual legacy of black women academics and the evolution of teaching, research, service clubs and other hands-on activities that many of these women were actively involved in and demonstrates both the similar and divergent ways that many of these women pursued such activities.

One distinctive aspect of Evans's book provides the reader with three major periods of educational opportunities for Black women. The first period was 1850-60, the years just before the Civil War. At this time, almost all black women who were enrolled in higher education earned their degrees from predominately black institutions. The second wave took place during latter third of the nineteenth century until the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. These were institutions that focused mainly on teaching and industrial training. Evans is clear to make the point that higher educational activity among Black women was not confined solely to the South. Black women attended racially integrated colleges and universities in the Northeast, Midwest and in some cases, the West; however, the number of black students allowed to matriculate in predominately white institutions was purposely limited due to racial (and in some cases gender) discrimination. In the last chapter of her book, Evans discusses the many accomplishments black women have made since 1954, such as including women who have written groundbreaking works like Michelle Wallace and the late Audre Lorde that helped to continue to transform the academy. She also mentions the fact that a number of number of black women broke new ground by becoming college presidents, among them Ruth Simmons, Willa Player, Mary Frances Berry, Johnetta Cole and Gloria Randall Scott, to name just a few, became college and university presidents (pp. 207-8). Moreover, in the penultimate chapter of her book, Evans informs the readers that her monograph is both a personal as well as professional endeavor: "This research is my life's work. This is my word, my law, my experiment. My journey. My prophecy. But this history is not my story alone" (pp. 214-16).

Evans has written a engaging, melodic, and, in some cases, spell-binding book that will no doubt be of interest to scholars who focus on race and gender.

ELWOOD WATSON is professor of history and African American studies at East Tennessee State University. He is the author of *Outsiders Within: Black Women in the Legal Academy after Brown v. Board* (2008) and several journal articles; he has also edited or coedited several anthologies.