

## FOURTEEN WOMEN SAID, 'YES, WE CAN'

Edited by:  
Larry E. Rivers  
*Beta Chi Boulé*  
and Canter Brown, Jr.  
University Press of Florida, 2010

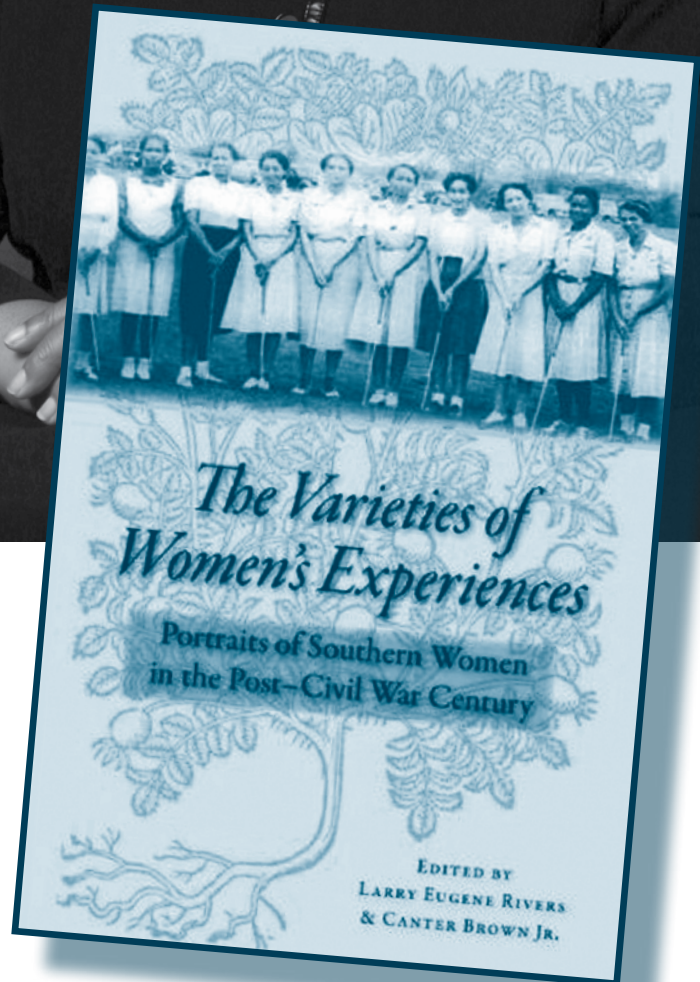
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**T**he *Varieties of Women's Experiences: Portraits of Southern Women in the Post-Civil War Century*, edited by Larry E. Rivers and Canter Brown, Jr. (University Press of Florida, 2010), takes the reader through the surprising and provocative journeys of fourteen women from diverse backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities during the hundred years following the Civil War. The incredible tenacity of these women is almost difficult to comprehend when one realizes that at the time women, like children, were to be "seen and not heard."

In those years the Jim Crow system was dominant, and attitudes were restrictive and often harsh. However, these women were not intimidated. Some had husbands who supported them and helped with their causes in any way they could; others were single, yet found strong, independent-thinking men who helped to open doors that were otherwise closed, thus facing their own risks in going against the system.

Even though there were barriers of every sort during the nineteenth century, these acts of courage paved the way for future generations. Many of the things women take for granted today are possible, at least in part, because of the determination of these pioneers. Several women in the book were invited to serve in important roles by U.S. presidents. Others were

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Archon Larry Rivers, president of Fort Valley State University, at book signing

affiliated with such people as Mary Church Terrell and James Weldon Johnson. One common thread is their dedication to what they believed in. They lived and worked in adverse conditions in order to achieve their goals, and there was no way to stop them. Even when they were sick, they continued to travel and raise money for their causes.

These women serve as reminders that we should not forget to appreciate and love our fellow men. Many of them were committed to teaching children to read, regardless of whether the children were black, white or Native American. Others became staunch activists for women's issues. Several were interested in health care, improving how poor people lived and changing society's attitudes toward the treatment of the underprivileged and underrepresented. Consequently, they were responsible

for the development of health-care centers, homes for the elderly, and safe places of refuge for troubled youth.

We cannot underestimate the power and the foresight of these fourteen amazing women, yet sometimes it seems as if history repeats itself. It is now the twenty-first century, and we must still confront the inadequacy of health care and education and the plight of the poor. This book provides inspiration to continue the struggle. It is a must-read for everyone who is interested in the history of women – especially those who have been omitted from our history books.

*Archon Berry D. Jordan  
Gapter, Beta Chi Boulé*

