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The Dream is Lost: Voting Rights and the Politics of Race in Richmond, Virginia

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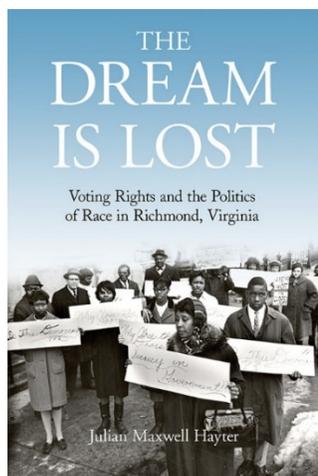
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The Dream Is Lost: Voting Rights and the Politics of Race in Richmond, Virginia. Julian Maxwell Hayter, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 2017. ISBN 978-0-8131-6948-4 (hardback). 346 p. \$60.



In the Chapter, “The Dream Is Lost”, author Julian Maxwell Hayter, an accomplished historian and university professor, quoted Atlanta mayor Maynard Jackson, who said, “The politics of Richmond are now controlled by Afro-Americans (but its) economics (are) still controlled by white Americans. It is a question now of whether there will be a standoff or a standing up together.” (p.151). Maynard Jackson’s challenge was foresighted.

Julian Maxwell Hayter in his well-documented writing of the legal and political history of Richmond shows us that African Americans in Richmond learned to seek and gain legal rights for voter participation, legal rights to own and operate businesses, and legal rights that allowed them to command majority seats on boards, councils and committees. Yet acceptance by whites and the white business community floundered. President of a brokerage firm and a city councilman, Henry Valentine “openly expressed that blacks were incapable of running the City” (p.161).

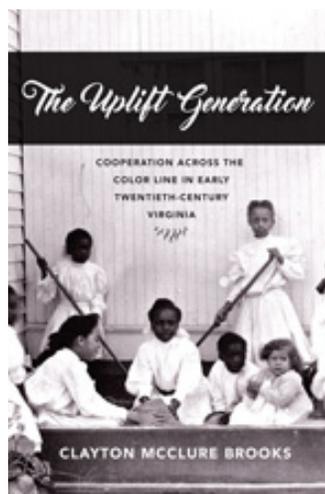
Hayter speaks to social conditions in Richmond today when he writes, “Richmond’s recent revitalization has been bittersweet. Poverty, residential segregation, and underperforming public schools have been an unfortunate yet constant feature of African American life in Richmond”. (p.243)

Contrasting the Richmond that is hailed as “a nationally recognized dining scene” (p.243), Hayter reminds us that there exists “glaring inequalities in education and wealth” (p.243). He says that the Richmond of today and its recent past are still intertwined. Housing, social programs of all types, and educational opportunities are vital to the growth of “standing up together”. A denial of renewed efforts to admit and address these woefully unaddressed conditions, might be said to remind us of Maynard Jackson’s challenge: will we stand up together or have a standoff?

This 338 page book is recommended for academic and public libraries. See its photographs and illustrations inserted after page 166, the Conclusion, p. 239 to 245, Appendix, p. 248 to 256, Acknowledgements, p.257 to 262, Notes, p. 263 to 308, Bibliography, p 309 to 322, and Index, p. 323 to 338.

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The Uplift Generation: Cooperation Across the Color Line in Early Twentieth-Century Virginia. Clayton McClure Brooks. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017. 978-0-8139-3950-6 (ebook); 978-0-8139-3949-0 (cloth). 288 p. \$45.



Reading “The Uplift Generation: Cooperation Across the Color Line in Early Twentieth-Century Virginia”, I was reminded of times in my life when I felt someone was patronizing me, not taking me seriously on an issue that was important to me. Even hearing a comment that sounded as if I were being encouraged to accept the unacceptable only stirred my rebelliousness. Clayton McClure Brooks points out to us that African Americans in the early 20th Century in Virginia did not exhibit my rebelliousness toward white Americans who encouraged them to accept the unacceptable.

Through her research, Brooks explains that an “uplift generation” supported social progressivism in the state of Virginia in the days of Jim Crow. The uplift they chose to provide to downhearted and segregated people reminded me of “now, now, don’t worry everything will be alright”. Their patronizing behavior was an oppressive yet powerful way to keep the status quo and never really address the social issues. Keeping the peace, some might say, was the generation’s goal.

Between 1910 and 1920, Brooks recounts that white women encouraged black women to believe that