

1-1-2019

Book Review - Andrew Young and the Making of Modern Atlanta

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Recommended Citation

Jackson, C. (2019). Book Review - Andrew Young and the Making of Modern Atlanta. *Georgia Library Quarterly*, 56(1). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol56/iss1/15>

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Off the SHELF

Andrew Young and the Making of Modern Atlanta by Andrew Young, Harvey Newman, and Andrea Young (Mercer University Press, 2016: ISBN 9780881465877, \$29.00)

Andrew Young and the Making of Modern Atlanta, written by activist, politician, and ambassador Andrew Young, Georgia State University professor Harvey Newman, and Young's daughter Andrea Young, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Georgia, is a broad sweep through the history of Atlanta in the 20th century. The book charts Atlanta's rise to prominence in the so-called "New South" by developing and implementing the "Atlanta way," a mutually beneficial arrangement between whites and blacks involving the cooperation of moderate politicians and business leaders who were determined to project the image of—in former Atlanta mayor William Hartsfield's words—"the city too busy to hate." Unfortunately, while the authors have provided a clear, if superficial, history of the city of Atlanta, it appears that Andrew Young and his part in this endeavor is, oddly, mostly absent from the narrative.

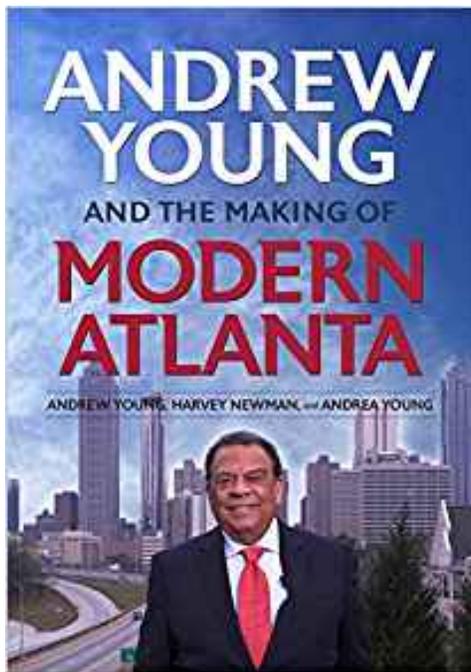
If readers are hoping to learn more about Young and his work in Atlanta as an activist and politician, they will be disappointed. The authors' intent seems to be to show how Young's experiences in Atlanta were informed by the coalition between the educated black middle class and white business leaders. The

book also serves as a primer on how the black middle class was created by focusing early sections on early 20th century black civic leaders like John Wesley Dobbs, who advocated the use of the three B's (the ballot, the book, and the buck) to help create a thriving black middle class in Atlanta. Andrew Young, as a character in the narrative, rarely appears at all, even in the discussions where one would expect him to loom large, as in the chapter on the Olympics. The book does not really function

well as a history of the city since Reconstruction, either, because all but the most mainstream and conciliatory stakeholders' voices remain silenced.

The chapters are broken up into thematic sections, which leads to much repetition, both between chapters and sometimes within succeeding paragraphs. Individuals are introduced into the narrative and only identified pages later. The narrative as a whole only loosely coheres; there are many instances where Young's entire presence is represented by what amounts to nothing

more than a catchy sound bite. Having said that, there are some sections of the book that work better than others. The authors have done a good job of delineating the history of minority business development, particularly under Young's and former Mayor Maynard Jackson's tenures. This section also contains the most coherent and concise elucidation of the "Atlanta way" and how Young was able to convert his African-American support at the ballot box into the third of Dobbs's three B's,



the buck. Not coincidentally, this section and another particularly strong one, on the hospitality industry in Atlanta, feature more of Young's voice than other, less successful parts of the book.

Taken as a whole, *Andrew Young and the Making of Modern Atlanta* is not entirely successful in what it sets out to do. The two best sections, on minority business development and the hospitality industry, illustrate that there is a better, more expansive narrative lurking at the edges of this one.

Andrew Young is an important figure in Atlanta's history, as well as America's, for his civil rights activism and for his political and diplomatic successes. While this book has some significant flaws, it does serve as a competent superficial introduction to recent Atlanta history. One wishes wholeheartedly that Andrew Young himself were more present in the narrative; when he appears on the page, the book becomes a better one.

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University of Georgia*