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Book Review: Sisterly Networks: Fifty Years of Southern Women's Histories

Dana Johnson
Georgia Gwinnett College, djohnson106@ggc.edu

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Off the SHELF

Sisterly Networks: Fifty Years of Southern Women's Histories edited by Catherine Clinton (University Press of Florida, 2020: ISBN 9780813066615, \$40.00)

Sisterly Networks is an account of the eclectic Southern woman and the continued triumph over her struggles to be heard at a macro level and to be regarded as a contributing figure in Southern history as well as academia. Scholars and enthusiasts of Southern history and those who espouse a penchant for Southern women's history will find the firsthand essay accounts intriguing, perplexing, heartrending, and overwhelming.

An account of the history of the Southern Association for Women Historians (SAWH) is regaled and provides insight into its meager beginnings in 1970. This important timeline is a treasure trove of the intricate evolution of SAWH. Specifically moving is the realization—despite the obstacles women have overcome to have an active voice in Southern history—of how welcoming and supportive women have been to all interested in remembering and promoting Southern history, regardless of gender or ethnicity.

The volume captures the changing mindset that the role of women should be acknowledged and analyzed as worthy contributors in Southern history and that women offer different perspectives on history and how it was formed. History must be rewritten and reread, adding the female frame of reference. Furthermore, the volume chronicles the women in Southern academia. Countless instances are described in which educated women have not been recognized and credited for their aptitudes and accomplishments, all the while hoping for an “in” from their male counterparts. Exemplifying the charge of Helen Reddy's song “I Am Woman, Hear Me Roar,” *Sisterly Networks* recounts the ways in which women forge

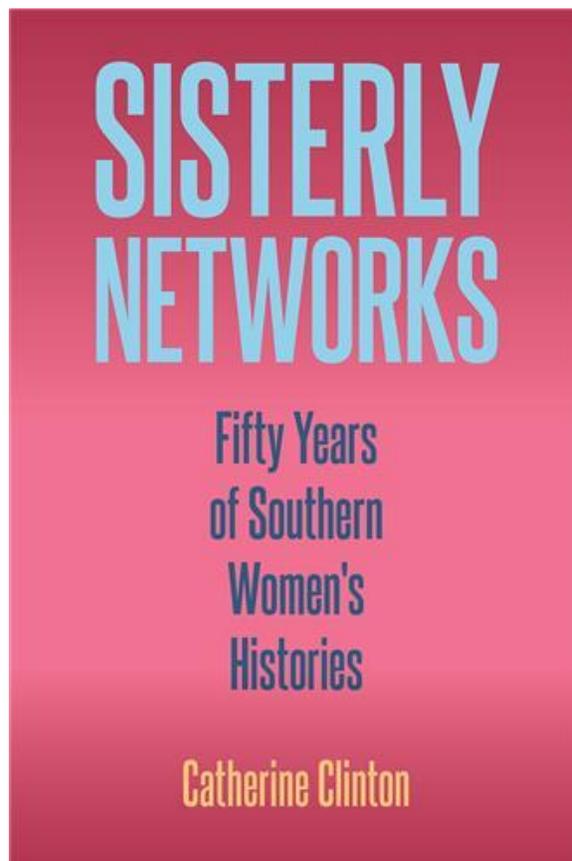


Image courtesy of the publisher

alliances via professional organizations and friendships by promoting one another through the “ships”—sponsorship, mentorship, and friendship.

Clinton and the contributing authors provide the reader's mind with a multitude of resource examples extending outside this reading, such as named authors who have paved the path for women's involvement and women's issues in the South and in academia. Additionally, dispersed throughout the reading are a plethora of published essays, databases, and websites that are mentioned to expand the

knowledge base of the reader and explain the ever-changing roles women have played with continued readings on Southern women's history. Specifically, and importantly, the role of African Americans and other minority women who have shaped academia in the South is recognized with insight to the additional struggles and victories gained.

Women are and will always continue to be valuable contributors to any history and

especially Southern history. *Sisterly Networks* is a must-read to refresh one's memory on the meager mentions in history and the "sisters" who have worked tirelessly to help women and others shine and mark contributions to Southern history and academia.

Dana K. Johnson is a reference and instruction librarian at Georgia Gwinnett College