

The first chapter concisely tackles the major issues facing the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, including race relations, industry, economics, inventions, and foreign policy. Common to many texts, a chapter is devoted to the Progressive Movement, while another discusses U.S. foreign policy from 1900 to World War I. Hereafter the chapter subjects resemble those found in most standard textbooks.

The significant difference, however, between *The American Century* and other texts is how the material is presented. The work reads like a monograph, while maintaining its twentieth-century focus. The authors don't treat their readers necessarily as students, and, rather than lecturing to them, they present the material in a reader-friendly format. Other highlights of the book come in the authors' coverage of modern American politics and history in the last two chapters. "1993-2000: The Road to the Twenty-First Century" provides a plethora of new and updated material about the Clinton administration and the major events that shaped the years leading to George W. Bush taking office. The final chapter, "9-11: Causes and Consequences," is especially useful, as students are often looking for a way to make sense of the current political situation and foreign affairs. These foreign policy issues are where LaFeber is at his best, and the reader can see how he skillfully weaves this into certain chapters of the book. The frequent sidebars, about one per chapter, that illuminate the biographies of important people, help maintain the textbook feel. Even these are set into the backdrop of the chapter and appear as interesting and useful rather than distracting.

As many professors lament that they are not able to cover the most recent twenty years of U.S. history in one semester, they will enjoy the change of pace provided by *The American Century* by beginning their lectures in the 1890s. Students will find the work easy to read, well-indexed, and despite the length of the work, it is still very concise and reasonably priced.

If professors and students are looking for a book that is chock full of maps, highlighted terms, illustrations, and review questions, however, this will probably not be the textbook for them. Also, while the chapters are neatly organized into subheadings, there are no important terms highlighted in bold, no review questions at the end, and no ideas to ponder at the beginning. If, however, a professor wants a work that does an excellent job of weaving the major events of U.S. history into a format that is both enlightening and thought provoking then this work is highly recommended.

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Barbara Dianne Savage. *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us: The Politics of Black Religion.* Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008. Pp. 368. Cloth, \$27.95; ISBN 978-0-674-03177-7.

Today it is common to hear people speak of the "African American community" and the "Black Church" as if they were cohesive, clearly-defined institutions. Barbara

Dianne Savage, professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, looks at the complex history of such terms in her book *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us: The Politics of Black Religion*, effectively chronicling the debates of African Americans over the role of religion in political activism and social reform in twentieth-century America. Specifically, Savage identifies three "paradoxes" present at "the nexus between black religion and black politics," namely, the rich diversity and idiosyncratic manifestations of religion among individual African Americans that elude clear demarcation, the largely localized and decentralized organization of predominantly African American churches that confound any notion of an all-inclusive Black Church, and the tendency within African American churches toward male leadership and female dominance.

Your Spirits Walk Beside Us is an intellectual history of prominent African Americans thinking about and critiquing what it meant to be black and religious in the United States. Savage joins black men like W.E.B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, Benjamin Mays, and E. Franklin Frazier with black women like Zora Neale Hurston, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Nannie Helen Burroughs, in order to describe the negotiative, dynamic qualities of black churches. Yet despite such diversity, Savage concludes that "the emancipatory potential of spiritual belief" runs throughout the history of black religion in the United States, and it is this consistent thread that has played an essential role in the political activism of African Americans during the twentieth century.

Broken into seven chapters, *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us* provides a chronological narrative of how black intellectuals and activists conceived of a so-called "Negro Church" in the early decades of the twentieth century, followed by their incorporation of religion into the Civil Rights Movement after the 1940s. Perhaps most interesting, Savage includes in her conclusion a discussion of "reconcilable differences" among African Americans today as made evident in the controversy surrounding the relationship between Barack Obama and Jeremiah Wright during the U.S. presidential campaign of 2008. Both Obama and Wright, according to Savage, "were guilty of collapsing the diversity and distinctiveness among black churches for the sake of political argument," though they reached this end by taking somewhat different paths.

In summary, *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us* is a lucidly written history of African American intellectuals who thought long and hard about the relationship between religion and politics in the twentieth century. It demonstrates in an accessible format the complexity of black and religious identities in the United States. That being said, Savage's emphasis upon well-educated African Americans limits insight into the role of the large majority of black men and mostly women who filled the pews and marched the streets of America but whose activities were often overshadowed by the towering legacies of men like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Teachers of high school and undergraduate courses will find in this book avenues for inquiry into the rich intellectual tradition of African Americans and the pivotal, complex role of religion in the Civil Rights Movement.