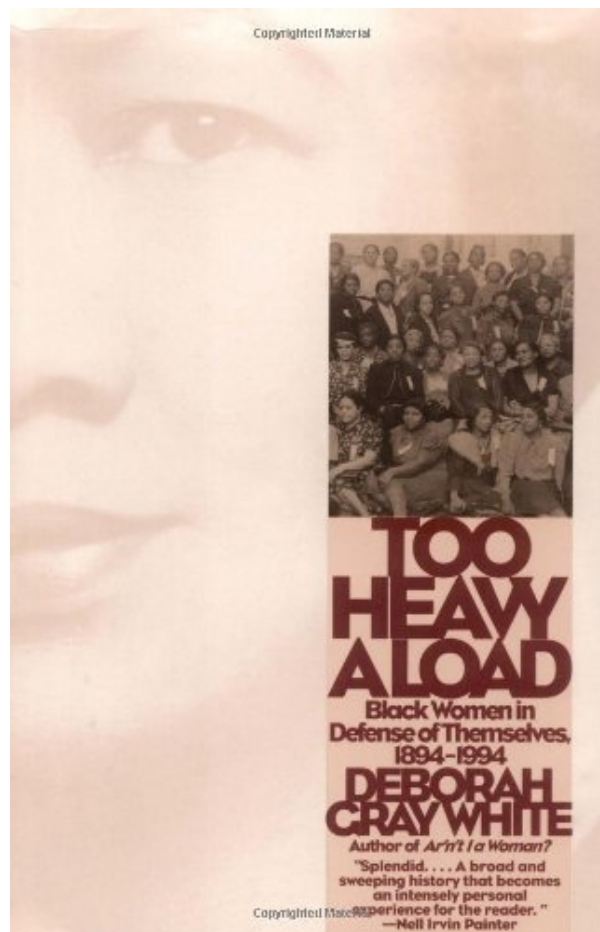
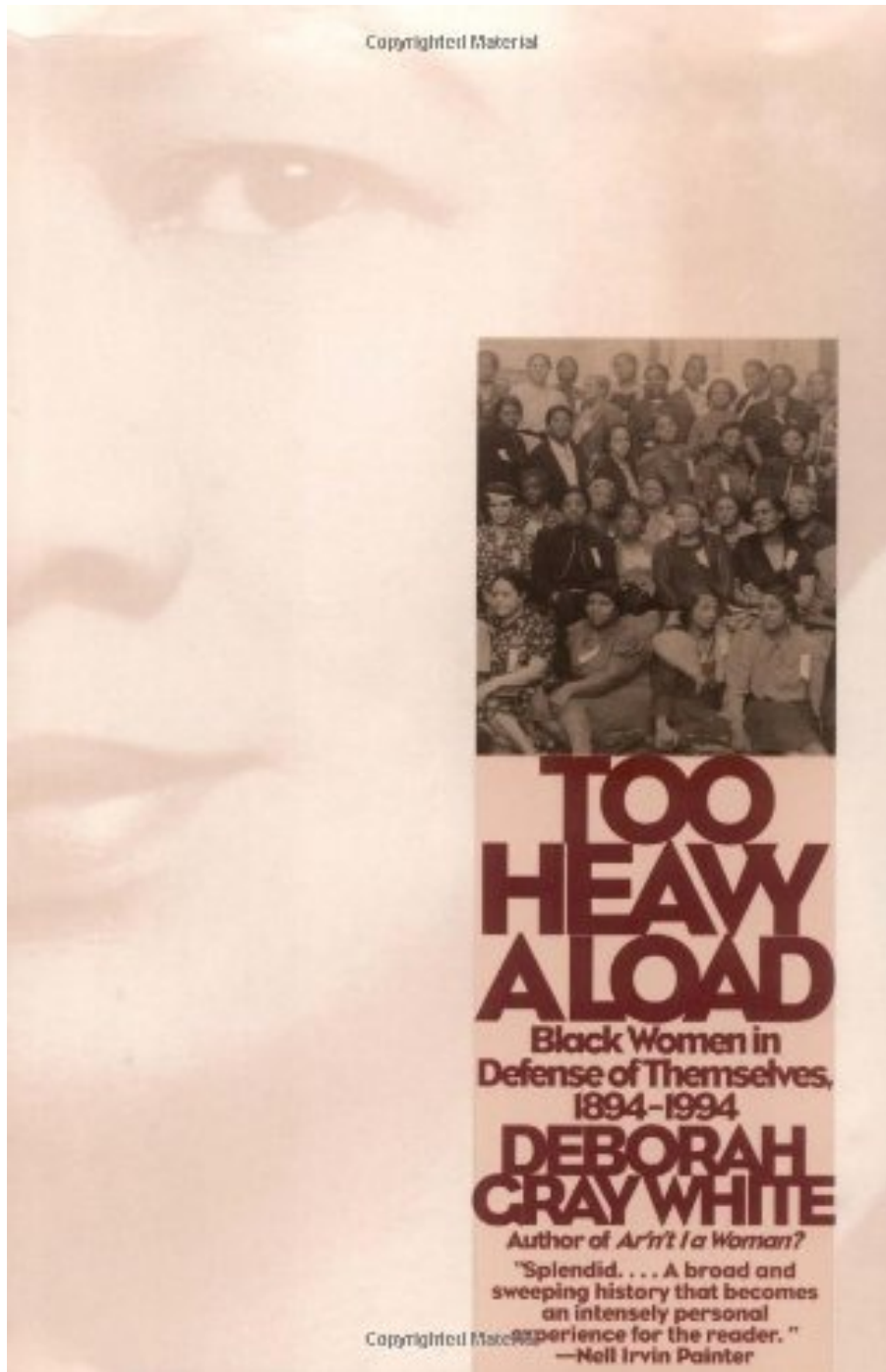


TOO HEAVY A LOAD: BLACK WOMEN IN DEFENSE OF THEMSELVES, 1894-1994 BY DEBORAH GRAY WHITE



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In the last decade of the 1800s, lynching, mob violence, and segregation were well-entrenched responses to the American "race problem." Rising up in spirited defense, black women launched several regional organizations designed to defend and improve the rights of their race and their place within it. Yet the creed of betterment espoused by many black club women overlay sometimes-bitter commentary on black men for their failures as supporters and protectors. It also castigated lower-class "sisters" whose oft-caricatured mores cast a shadow on their own. And it had a rocky relationship with the broader American feminist movement: "Since they could not control white men, the source of most of their woes," historian Deborah Gray White says, "and since they believed that a race could rise no higher than its women, they had to begin that elevation with the women themselves." Too Heavy a Load swings on through the maelstrom of the civil rights movement, welfare advocacy, black nationalism, and feminism to more recent rifts, such as the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings. While doing so, it pieces together the engaging story of the backstage struggles in such early firebrand organizations as the National Association of Colored Women and the National Council of Negro Women. By including the clashes that strong personalities and different aims beget, White brings dimension to her story and provides strong illustration for her contention that "gender and race sameness [are] no guarantee of a beloved sisterhood." --Francesca Coltrera

Review

Meticulously researched. . . . Too Heavy a Load reads like a wonderful historical novel. -- Akilah Monifa, Emerge

Splendid . . . a broad and sweeping history that becomes an intensely personal experience for the reader. . . . An inspiring showcase of scholarship and sistership. -- Nell Irvin Painter, Raleigh News & Observer

About the Author

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"Meticulously researched. . . . Too Heavy a Load reads like a wonderful historical novel."--Akilah Monifa, Emerge

Too Heavy a Load celebrates this century's rich history of black women defending themselves, from Ida B. Wells to Anita Hill. Although most prominently a history of the century-long struggle against racism and male chauvinism, Deborah Gray White also movingly illuminates black women's painful struggle to hold their racial and gender identities intact while feeling the inexorable pull of the agendas of white women and black men. Finally, it tells the larger and lamentable story of how Americans began this century measuring racial progress by the status of black women but gradually came to focus on the status of black men--the masculinization of America's racial consciousness. Writing with the same magisterial eye for historical detail as in her best-selling *Ar'n't I a Woman*, Deborah Gray White has given us a moving and definitive history of struggle and freedom. "Splendid . . . a broad and sweeping history that becomes an intensely personal experience for the reader. . . . An inspiring showcase of scholarship and sistership." - Nell Irvin Painter, *Raleigh News & Observer Illustrated*

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Informative read.

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I really appreciated the interest Deborah White has taken in this time period and in these people. The book is intended for those that are truly interested in the development of the role NACW in a hundred year span. The book could be used more specifically for those studying the liberation of women or African Americans in this time period. White is a teacher by profession and that comes through in the book. It was written more to educate, not to entertain.

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