


## Eddie R. Cole. *The Campus Color Line: College Presidents and the Struggle for Black Freedom*

New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2020. 376 pp.

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In 1957, W. E. B. Du Bois published the first installment of *The Black Flame*, a trilogy of books that follows the life of a fictional character named Manuel Mansart. It was one of his final projects. The first book is entitled *The Ordeal of Mansart*, and the second book, published in 1959, entitled *Mansart Builds a School*, follows the main character as he rises through the professional ranks and ascends to the presidency of a southern Black college. In describing the challenges that affected Black college presidents, Du Bois wrote, “They said little, they did not protest publicly, but quietly and persistently they kept pressing on, often winning victories, but staging no celebrations, never boasting, but always insisting.” Indeed, the position of college president, whether it be at predominantly White institutions or historically Black colleges and universities, has been one of the most pivotal roles in determining the trajectory of intellectual thought in America, yet the men and women who have occupied these positions have often flown under the radar of the general public. Moreover, college presidents have played a crucial role in setting the tone on race relations and crafting spaces that either perpetuated the cycle of White supremacy in America or sought to deconstruct it. Eddie Cole has finally addressed this lacuna in the historical record with a brilliant and richly detailed study entitled *The Campus Color Line: College Presidents and the Struggle for Black Freedom*.

With painstaking detail, *The Campus Color Line* presents seven different case studies of campus presidents caught within the crosshairs of the civil rights struggle and the culture wars of the second half of the twentieth century. Beginning with the story of Martin Jenkins at Morgan State College (now University), the monograph moves on to highlight the careers and public turmoil that beset the presidencies of Lawrence Kimpton and George Beadle at the University of Chicago, Clark Kerr at the University of California, Chancellor John Davis Williams at the University of Mississippi, Frank A. Rose at the University of Alabama, Robert F. Goheen at Princeton University, and Fred Harvey Harrington at the University of Wisconsin. The monograph successfully weaves together a narrative that examines some of the most explosive issues that confronted college campuses at the height of the modern civil rights movement. In doing so, the author has produced the first “national study of the college presidency” (p. 15) and the role this position has played in navigating or directly challenging the color line.

Cole argues that “the college presidency is a prism through which to disclose how colleges and universities have challenged or preserved the many enduring forms of anti-Black racism in the United States” (p. 4). Using a diverse array of primary sources, the book absolutely excels in documenting the inescapable nature of racial politics as contentious issues were thrust onto the desks of college administrators at the height


of the Black liberation movement. The author also astutely sidesteps the typical trappings of examining the struggle for civil rights through a traditional lens that foregrounds the US South. Chapters highlighting the struggle over segregated housing that surrounded the University of Chicago, the clash over free speech at Princeton, and the emerging battlefront over affirmative action at the University of Wisconsin in the early 1960s are among the book's most engrossing and eye-opening episodes. Cole's ambitious collection of intimate and masterfully researched institutional histories make *The Campus Color Line* a must-read for upper-level undergraduate courses or graduate students examining the legacy of student activism and social movements, or the history of education.

Among the university presidents that Cole chooses to highlight, a common theme emerges. Jenkins tacitly prodded his students at Morgan State to directly confront the hypocrisies of American democracy. Jenkins proactively addressed the legacy of White supremacy in his own research and through the space he crafted that empowered his students to act. Conversely, the college presidents at the nation's predominantly white institutions only reacted to the legacy of systemic racism when it slammed against the front doors of their respective institutions, and even then, many only seemed pre-occupied with transformation at a glacial pace while steering their respective institutions through the public relations crises resulting from confrontations with the color line. While this stance may have carved out space for a handful of Black scholars and students to integrate and endure at those respective institutions, it has failed in rooting out the legacy of White supremacy in higher education and generating a public discourse that courageously and honestly addresses the dilemma that Du Bois once declared would be "the problem of the twentieth century." To be certain, college presidents by and large are not activists in the traditional sense. Most often they assume a position like that of Du Bois's character Mansart by either "quietly or persistently" addressing and erasing the color line, or they become complicit in maintaining the long legacy of racism in higher education. As Cole boldly and astutely concludes, "Campus initiatives geared toward racial equality are only as effective as the college president's clearly articulated acknowledgment that racism is a problem" (p. 317).

doi:10.1017/heq.2021.40

## Mark Boonshoft. *Aristocratic Education and the Making of the American Republic*

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020.

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This study can best be described as a political history of academies from the Revolutionary era to the early Republic. The existing literature on academies describes