

# Feminist Review

Feminist Review blog believes that all opinions - positive and critical - are valuable and seeks to give voice to communities that remain on the margins. Our mission is to write reviews from feminist perspectives to explore the world through an anti-oppression lens. We recognize that there are many feminisms and provide a space where those differences can be represented and explored. (That means we want you to add your opinions too.)

**Thursday, June 26, 2008**

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**[Bitter Pie #18](#)**

## Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America



By Charlotte S. Waisman and Jill S. Tietjen  
HarperCollins

Her Story is a timeline illustrating the accomplishments of American women, beginning in 1587 with the introduction of Virginia Dare and ending in 2007 amid the usual suspects, like Oprah Winfrey, as well as a variety of current female political and industry leaders. The book contains a lot of pictures with a short blurb about each person and occasionally a general relevant fact about a time period - such as The Women's Peace Party's founding in 1915. The layout of the book takes some getting used to; the pages seem overly busy at first, but it doesn't take long for the little snippets of information coupled with terrific photographs to take over the reader's attention and by the end of the book, it seems a perfect way to display the information.

Charlotte S. Waisman and Jill S. Tietjen penned the book intending to pique the curiosity of the reader, not to offer a great deal of detail about any particular woman, which is unsatisfying, by definition, but the authors were successful in their endeavor. They begin with an introduction by Madeleine Albright followed by some explanation by the authors of how their idea originated and developed. They took the opportunity to ask the (assumed) female reader to honor her own accomplishments. This flows nicely into what the book can best do, which is inspire. There is nothing quite like learning about the overwhelming obstacles some women have overcome to accomplish amazing things. For instance, Jeannette Rankin, the first female member of the House of Representatives, was elected to office in 1917, three years before she was permitted to even vote. Not only that, but several years before they could vote, women were leading the movements to abolish slavery and child labor as well as organizing workers' unions.

Wherever there is an historical injustice, it seems there are women working to correct it. This book's celebration doesn't fit any stereotype of a "great" woman. Alongside the protesters of the 1968 Miss America Pageant, there are actors and business executives, opera singers and scientists. There are many examples of the first [fill in the race/ethnicity] woman to [fill in the achievement]. Clearly the authors were sensitive to the issue of inclusiveness and careful to include the many contributions of women of color - in particular, of African American women.

Many of the stories you know – like the spunky Abigail Adams who told her husband he'd better "remember the ladies" when forming this new government of his or the ladies would be revolting, but there's plenty that goes beyond common knowledge - unless

everyone knows that no law firm would hire Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg after she'd graduated first in her class from Harvard Law in 1959 because she was "Jewish and a mother."

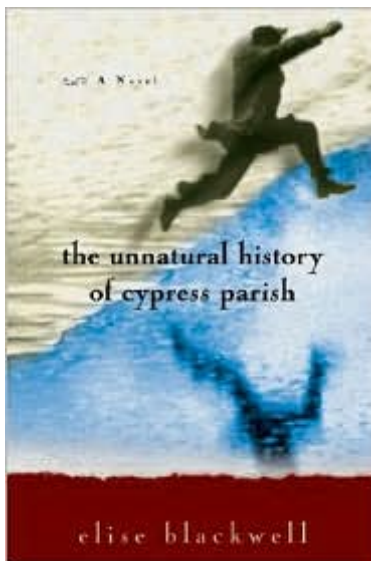
[\*Her Story\*](#) is designed to be interesting and inspiring, but not in-depth or scholarly. It would make a great gift for a young woman just graduating from high school or, better yet, middle school.

*Review by Staci Schoff*

[1 comments](#)  

Key Terms: [american history](#), [women's history](#)

### [The Unnatural History of Cypress Parish](#)



By Elise Blackwell

#### Unbridled Books

It is the goal of each generation to make things better for the next, if for no other reason than to be able to tell those whippersnappers how tough things used to be. How a parent or revolutionary goes about exacting this change remains to be judged by their children and grandchildren, sometimes unfairly applying the standards of a new, more civilized time. Such is the situation of Louis, the protagonist of [\*The Unnatural History of Cypress Parish\*](#). Son to one of the most important men in his parish, Louis frequently questions the sometimes brutal methods his father has used to stay in power. His taste is rather less discerning when it comes to his own actions and the sorts of men he begins to associate with in his advancing career. The climax of the book comes as Louis and his father confront each other's moral failings just as their lives are about to be destroyed. The novel is set against the backdrop of the historical event of the flood of 1927, and as their relationship deteriorates, so does any hope of saving their home.

The unnaturalness referred to in the title is that Cypress Parish was deliberately sacrificed, subjecting it to much greater damage than would have occurred without