

THE SOUTH CAROLINA ROOTS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN THOUGHT

A Reader

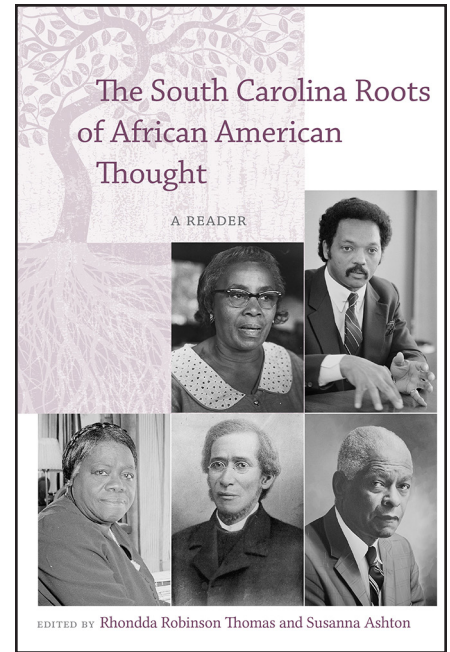
Edited by Rhondda Robinson Thomas and Susanna Ashton

South Carolina has always loomed larger in the national imagination, particularly in terms of political and social policy, than its size and population might justify. The audacity and the often astonishing character of thinkers and political figures who have hailed from this region might suggest that climate affects personality. Edward Rutledge challenged the condemnation of the slave trade in the initial draft of the Declaration of Independence; John C. Calhoun penned the audacious philosophy of state nullification; Citadel cadets fired shots at Fort Sumter; and Senator Strom Thurmond defended racial segregation with the longest filibuster in Senate history. South Carolina has always used its passion to influence national debate.

Rhondda Robinson Thomas and Susanna Ashton seek in this collection to remedy the singularly narrow way in which South Carolina's intellectual character has been defined in the popular imagination. Thomas and Ashton document an equally important tradition that parallels that of white radical thought. Through this anthology they reveal a tradition of national prominence and influence of black intellectuals, educators, journalists, and policy analysts from South Carolina. These native and adopted citizens mined their experiences to shape their thinking about the state and the nation. Francis Grimké, Daniel Payne, Mary McLeod Bethune, Kelly Miller, Septima Clark, Benjamin Mays, Marian Wright Edelman, and Jesse Jackson have changed this nation for the better with their questions, challenges, and persistence—all in the proudest South Carolinian tradition.

In *The South Carolina Roots of African American Thought*, each of the nineteen authors is introduced with a supplementary scholarly essay to illustrate the cultural and historical import of their works and to demonstrate how they draw on and distinguish themselves from one another. These connections exhibit a coherent legacy of engagement, brought on and nurtured by South Carolina traditions.

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Rhondda Robinson Thomas is an assistant professor of English at Clemson University, author of *Exodus: A Cultural History of Afro-Atlantic Identity, 1774–1903*, and editor of Jane Edna Hunter's autobiography, *A Nickel and a Prayer*.

Susanna Ashton is an English professor at Clemson University, author of *Collaborators in Literary America*, coeditor of *These "Colored" United States: African American Essays of the 1920s*, and editor of *I Belong to South Carolina: South Carolina Slave Narratives*, a *Choice* magazine Outstanding Academic Title for 2010.

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