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**New History Explores Women Activists, Feminism, and the Politics of Social Change in Virginia**

*LSU Press to publish **Creating a Progressive Commonwealth** in December*

**Baton Rouge, LA**—Building upon the work of late twentieth-century scholars in the field of feminist studies, Megan Taylor Shockley provides an in-depth look at feminism in the modern U.S. South. Shockley challenges the monolithic view of the region as a conservative bastion and argues that feminist advocates have provided crucial social progressive force, particularly in Virginia, between 1970 and 2010. An innovative study, ***Creating a Progressive Commonwealth*** illustrates how feminists in the state challenged the traditional patriarchal system and engaged directly with the legislature through grassroots educational efforts on three major initiatives: passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, protection of abortion rights, and pursuit of legal and social rights for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Shockley suggests that advocates for gender equality fundamentally changed Virginia, improving the state's support for women both personally and professionally as well as fostering an environment more conducive to additional progressive reform. In sharing the stories of these activists, the author discusses their initial choices to participate in the movement, the challenges they faced in promoting a progressive agenda, as well as their successes and failures. Throughout, Shockley emphasizes the need for scholars to look beyond the history of state legislatures in order to fully understand the nature of southern progressivism and feminism.

Using both archival sources and oral histories, *Creating a Progressive Commonwealth* examines the individual women and their motivations as they battled recalcitrant legislators and conservative citizens to achieve social reforms.

**Megan Taylor Shockley**, research professor of history at Clemson University, is the coauthor of *Changing History: Virginia Women Through Four Centuries* and the author of "We, Too, Are Americans": *African American Women in Detroit and Richmond, 1940–1954* and *The Captain's Widow of Sandwich: Self-Invention and the Life of Hannah Rebecca Burgess, 1836–1917*.

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Women's Studies / Southern History

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