

Example of the promise of the new south: life after reconstruction by edward l. a...

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



A single train track can be seen the dust jacket of Edward L. Ayers's monumental books *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* that cuts through a forest and points into an apparently unknown terrain. The image seems to be both promising and foreboding because the progress that the train track symbolizes also posed a threat to the necessary changes in the physical and social landscape that so well known to the southerners. The fundamental theme of Ayer's book is propelled by this image, in which the uneven course of fundamental changes in a post-Reconstruction South is tracked.

Once the Southerners were redeemed from Republican rule, they ironically became increasingly Yankeeified during the post- Reconstruction period, which has been identified in Ayers book. Southerners were pulled into national market by the railroads, such as the one seen in the dust jacket of this book, and modern conveniences were brought into even the formerly backwater villages. As a result of the railroads, some towns were made while others were unmade. Even mining expanded and cotton mills began spreading because of the railroads. The denuding of the forests in the South is one thorough change that has been documented by Ayers quite well. An accurate picture of the making of the new South has been painted by Ayers in his book. The many and new diverse sounds of the New South can be heard throughout Ayers exceptionally sensory narrative.

A more noticeable historical identity was absent from the South of the late 19th century because of the boisterous Reconstruction period that came after it and the retraining era of victorious supremacy that was there before it. The Reconstruction era is now being remodeled by Edward Ayers in his

book. He pulls it away from the issues of Reconstruction, namely black civil rights and race, and lines it up with the agrarian revolt that was embodied by the People's Party and the Farmers' Alliance. While half of his concern is with narrative history, Ayers splits his South, but not along the usual racial fault line.

The great spilt in *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* separates the country folk and the townspeople from each other. Although race is taken into account by this contrast but it does not become a prisoner of race. In this reorientation by Ayer, it is assumed that conflict drove the Southerners, who were people diverse in character, and Southern history is pulled together across the lines of class, gender and race. In this regard, a major progress in the desegregation of Southern history his made by this book, which was nominated for the Book Award.

In the past 45 years, Southern historians have politely but continuously struggling, a struggle that has continued to get more intense, for the apparent agreement over the outcome of breaking of the color bar of the Southern Historical Association. Although it will be acknowledged by almost any Southern historian that rather than studying the rich white men who exercised power, the female and/or black, and/or the unpopular Southerners in that time need to be studied by this field. However, the way in which historians concede the need to recognize these groups has resulted in the preservation of the South for those who were running it. Mainly, instead of the adjustment of generalizations about the entire South, sub-fields have been multiplied by Southern history. Now, instead of the South we have the Confederacy and the Confederate supporters in place of the Southerners.

A Southern aversion for conflict was one part of the problem. The difficulty of drawing conclusions has been the other part of the problem, once the Southerners acknowledged the fact the conflict exists. Often Southerners who were not white supremacists have been counted as Southerners. In this case, historians have found it tricky to present something relevant as the Southern position, for instance the disenfranchisement of black voters. This was issue that was surging in that era and has been addressed in Ayers's *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction*.

That particular period has been defined in Ayers's book, and as for the entire Southern history, he takes the first steps away from the characterizations of the South that are nothing but monolithic. Disagreement among Southern whites has been chronicled in Ayers's chapters and the destructive effect that white policies had on the blacks, since they were aimed at them, have been laid out in the chapters as well. Although black Southerners have not been fully integrated into the analysis that is in this book, but Ayers's book can still be regarded as a reward for the readers. Thanks to the exceptional vigor that is in this book, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* is truly a monumental book that does not let any other account of the 'New South' tower before it or replace it.

Although, as a field, the post-modernist influence that literary theory has had, because of which other historical fields have been reshaped, has often been stubbornly resisted by Southern history, but in his book, Ayers takes theory one step and a time. Ayers recognized that he has intellectual debts that he must pay to famous thinkers; everything that he writes is effective and purposeful from a multitude of perspectives. *The Promise of the New*

South: Life after Reconstruction is characterized by ambiguity, gender analysis and surprise, all of which bristles abrupt surprise. Ayers also named one of the chapters “ Faith” in which he discusses Southern religion.

However, the chapter ends with two disturbing images; one is the anguish of W. E. B. Du Bois over the death of his child, and the other shows if of a young man committing suicide.

The discussion of segregation in book is pervaded by gender, baseball is mentioned as the beginning of sectional reconciliation; and Ayers also mentions the political consequences of the resentment of assertive, well-educated black Southerners by the whites. In a synthesis in which the late 19th-century South has been captured in its perplexing intricacy, Ayers does justice to the New South in his book. The Southerners were not damaged or flawed people, and they were certainly not merely the sum of their problems, regardless of how diverse and tremendous those problems were. The key to the approach that Ayers takes and the method he uses to draw a portrait that is so delicate and infallible the command he has over the sources. He builds his analysis from scratch, but the intricacy within the groups that are usually seen as monoliths are preserved and the ironies are recognized with super touch. Above all, The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction has a unique grace of style.

Works Cited

Ayers, Edward L. The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction - 15th Anniversary Edition. 15th anniversary edition. Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.