Sarah Caroline Thuesen, *Greater than Equal: African American Struggles for Schools and Citizenship in North Carolina, 1919-1965*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

Reviewed by Jeffrey L. Littlejohn

In her new book, *Greater than Equal*, historian Sarah Caroline Thuesen offers a meticulously researched and elegantly written examination of the African American struggle for educational equality in North Carolina. Drawing inspiration from previous works by James Anderson, Vanessa Siddle Walker, and David Cecelski, Thuesen complicates our understanding of black aspirations and white authority during the Jim Crow era. In particular, she shows how black activists pursued various, and sometimes contradictory, strategies to achieve more equitable school facilities, teacher salaries, and academic curricula. At the same time, Thuesen illustrates how white officials slow-walked or simply obstructed African American reforms in an effort to maintain white supremacy. And, finally, she shows how black activists countered white intransigence by pursuing something greater than equal -- "integrated schools that served as models of both material equality and civic inclusion"(p. 2).

By the end of World War I, African Americans in North Carolina confronted a fully articulated system of racial segregation. Schools in the state had been segregated by law since 1875, and government-sanctioned discrimination had created obvious inequities between black and white schools. Black school property was worth just one-fourth, per pupil, what white school property was worth. The average black teacher earned only 57 percent of what the average white teacher earned. And, even as late as 1944-45, black schools held just 16 percent of the state's school library books.

In response to these inequities, many black activists of the 1920s pursued the equalization strategy exemplified by clubwoman Charlotte Hawkins Brown, who "cloaked much of her advocacy for black youth in the language of black loyalty and white guardianship"(p. 23). By promising to work within the Jim Crow system, blacks hoped that North Carolina's white officials would give their children "the best training and education possible to qualify them for the responsible duties of citizenship"(p. 43). Despite black moderation, however, state leaders named a white educator, Nathan Carter Newbold, to serve as the director of North Carolina's Division of Negro Education. Although Newbold evolved over the course of his 29-year tenure in the position -- from 1921 to 1950 -- he consistently opposed "social equality" between the races. It was thus left to black grassroots organizations to invest their time and money in coordination with philanthropic gifts from the Rosenwald and Jeanes funds to build black schools across the state. Although these schools often proved to be rudimentary and inadequate, the black community took great pride in both the buildings and the teachers who staffed them.

As black organizers pushed to reform primary and secondary education -- even calling for African American history to be added to the state curriculum -- James E. Shepard emerged as the most fervent advocate for the equalization of higher education in the Tar Heel State. Thuesen shows how controversial Shepard proved to be, as he courted white officials and insisted on equalization over the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) integration strategy. Shepard's conservative approach often worked in the short term, allowing him, for instance, to serve as principal of North Carolina College for Negroes, the South's first publically supported black liberal arts college. At the same time, however, Shepard's conciliatory strategy never produced a black college on par with the University of North Carolina. Instead, he opposed NAACP efforts -- including teacher salary litigation, Thomas

Comment [J1]:

- Your paper should have 1 inch margins all around.
- The title and publication information for the book should appear like this.

Comment [J2]: Your name should appear here.

Comment [J3]: The body of the paper should be single-spaced.

Comment [J4]: Quotations should be followed by page numbers in this format.

Hocutt's integration suit, and Herman Taylor's Lumberton case -- to secure an unequal part of an unequal system.

Yet, as Thuesen shows, the NAACP's integration strategy had problems of its own. Following the organization's successful campaign to overturn racial segregation of schools in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), Governor Luther Hodges and the Pearsall Committee devised a pupil placement plan and state-supported tuition grants to stop integration before it started. Over the course of a decade, white resistance prevented much meaningful reform, and the few black students who desegregated local schools experienced "Pure D-Hell"(p. 247). Then, as the federal courts required more substantial integration, the true costs of the process became clear as more than 3,000 black teachers lost their jobs and the number of black high school principals declined from 209 to 3 (p. 249). In short, the black institutions and personnel that James Shepard and his generation had so valued became less and less common. In their place, the white-dominated legislature, city governments, and school boards of North Carolina created a system of white-majority schools, where black students and teachers generally appeared in small numbers, divorced from their historic roots and communities.

This study of the African American struggle for educational equality is crucial reading for anyone interested in the long civil rights movement, educational reform, or the relationship between schooling and citizenship. Theusen's research is impeccable; her writing is clear; and her arguments are well-grounded in the facts.