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**Writing Today's History Required Hard Work From Yesterday's Women
Historians**

LSU Press to publish No Straight Path in September

Baton Rouge, LA— *No Straight Path* tells the stories of ten successful female historians who came of age in an era when it was unusual for women to pursue careers in academia, especially in the field of history. These first-person accounts illuminate the experiences women of the post–World War II generation encountered when they chose to enter this male-dominated professional world.

None of the contributors took a straight path into the profession; most first opted instead for the more conventional pursuits of college, public-school teaching, marriage, and motherhood. Despite these commonalities, their stories are individually unique: one rose from poverty in Arkansas to eventually chair the history department at the University of Memphis; another pursued social work before becoming a history professor at Tulane University; a third attended seminary, then taught high school, entered the history graduate program at Indiana University, and helped develop two honors colleges before entering academia. The experiences of the other contributors are equally varied and distinctive.

Several themes emerge in their collective stories. Most assumed they would become teachers, nurses, secretaries, or society ladies—the only “respectable” choices available to women at the time. The obligations of marriage and family, they believed, would far outweigh their careers outside the home. Upon making the unusual decision, at the time, to move beyond high-school teaching and attend graduate school, few grasped the extent to which men dominated the field of history or that they would be perceived by many as little more than objects of sexual desire. The work/home balance proved problematic for them throughout their careers, as they struggled to combine the needs and demands of their families with the expectations of the profession.

These women had no road maps to follow. The giants who preceded them—Gerda Lerner, Anne Firor Scott, Linda K. Kerber, Joan Wallach Scott, A. Elizabeth Taylor, and others—had breached the gates but only with great drive and determination. Few of the contributors to *No Straight Path* expected to undertake such heroics or to rise to that level of accomplishment. They may have had modest expectations when entering the field, but with the help of female scholars past and present, they kept climbing and reached a level of success within the profession that holds great promise for the women who follow.

Elizabeth Jacoway is the author of *Yankee Missionaries in the South: The Penn School Experiment* and *Turn Away Thy Son: Little Rock, the Crisis that Shocked the Nation*.

Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore is the Peter V. and C. Van Woodward professor of history, African American studies, and American studies at Yale University. She is the author of several books, including *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*.

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Women's History / Historiography

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