

## ***The Unveiling*** **Our Little known History**



### **The Lost Cause.**

A campaign of misinformation and propaganda

If you can, think back to your school years. Your time of learning about this country. Bring to mind your early impressions of the American south and slavery. We'll wait. If you're like most white people, you pictured large peaceful estates, graciously smiling white mistresses, and in the background, black-skinned people contentedly going about their business. If these were images you naively carried into adulthood, there's a reason. Yes: the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

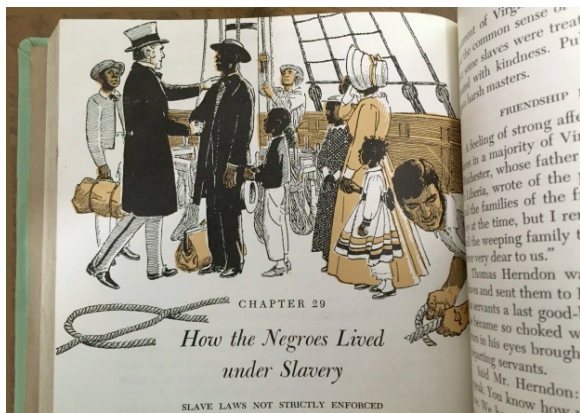
You, like thousands of students in the US, were probably taught history books that were influenced well into the 1970's and 1980's by the UDC'S Mrs. Mildred Lewis Rutherford and her textbook committees. Rutherford created a "Measuring Rod" that judged whether books were suitable or not based on the ideology of "The Lost Cause." Its major tenets were

- the Confederacy didn't start the war;
- slavery had nothing to do with it;
- enslaved people were generally well-treated and faithful to their masters;
- the United States only won because of its industry and manpower and a willingness to sacrifice the lives of its soldiers; and
- Confederate soldiers were uniquely heroic and Confederate women uniquely honorable.

Rutherford and the UDC were quite successful at getting only books that passed the measure into Southern and Northern schools. (Publishers wanted books that would appeal to both.) Thus we may have read passages describing slave women this way: "the faithful servers who stood behind our grandmothers' chairs and with picturesque and stately turkey feathers wooed the cooling breezes on a feverish

summer day, who sat at their footstools and placed the slippers on their slender little feet..." (From Mary Fairfax Childs, a Kentucky author who dedicated her book to the United Daughters of the Confederacy.)

And this from a 1961 Alabama history textbook: "It should be noted that slavery was the earliest form of social security in the United States." (a false statement.) Textbooks also showed positive images of slave life, such as this one from *Virginia: History, Government, Geography* which was taught state-wide well into the 1970's.



Note the well-dressed family arriving in this country upright, unchained, **together**. Note the respectful, benevolent master who greets them. Note the subtitle of the chapter: "Slave Laws Not Strictly Enforced." In this text, readers would find passages such as,

"The Negroes learned to enjoy the work and play of the plantations...In his new home, the Negro was far away from the spears and war clubs of enemy tribes. He had some of the comforts of civilized life: he had better food, a better house, and better medical care than he did in Africa. And he was comforted by a religion of love and mercy."

Imagine the impression that image and text would make on a child compared to the one below of slaves arriving in this country, an image which would have been forbidden by the UDC, though it's much closer to the truth.



When we view our country's resistance to racial awakening, which contributes to attitudes and policies that still exist and still do harm, we must give a large credit to the educational campaign of deceit spread by The United Daughters of the Confederacy.

\*\*For white women, it can be discouraging to learn the damage done by our foremothers. But it can also be a motivator: if they have that much power, maybe we can activate ours, too--for truth, for fairness.