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## A Matter of Simple Justice: The Untold Story of Barbara Hackman Franklin and A Few Good Women by Lee Stout

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**Stout, Lee. *A Matter of Simple Justice: The Untold Story of Barbara Hackman Franklin and A Few Good Women*. University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Libraries, 2012. 232 pages. Cloth, \$24.95.**

Richard M. Nixon was elected president of the United States in 1968, at a time when black and female Americans were conceiving of previously unattainable levels of opportunity. Initially, policymaking positions in Nixon's administration, as in those of his predecessors, were filled with men. When a variety of women reporters, Republican activists, and women's-rights activists brought the inequity to his attention, Nixon recognized that he could make history by bringing more women into his administration. In 1969, he appointed a Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities, whose report, "A Matter of Simple Justice," advocated an agenda of facilitating the progress of women's civil rights in the United States. The last of five recommendations suggested that Nixon "[e]nd sex discrimination in the executive branch by appointing more women to positions of top responsibility and ensure that women were treated equitably in all matters of hiring and promotion" (p. 31).

Published in the summer of 1970, the report became a political football in the White House, as Nixon's aides attempted to influence the response to the task force's recommendations. In a September 1970 memorandum to Robert Finch, former California lieutenant governor who was serving as counselor to the president, Nixon wrote, "We have failed to grab the ball on the whole women's business and we need to do some things to see that women are properly recognized and we get credit for the things we do carry out with women" (p. 48). Finch, who had developed a record of being outspoken on women's rights, replied, "The Administration should take steps to recognize and engage the increasing competence and importance of women so that they will work for and in the Administration, rather than against it" (p. 49). Finch paved the way for the April 1971 appointment of Barbara Ann Hackman Franklin, then 31 years old, to be staff assistant to the president for executive manpower and to be responsible for the recruitment of women to serve in policymaking positions in the administration. Franklin was a 1962 graduate of Pennsylvania State University, earned an M.B.A. degree from the Harvard Business School in 1964, and was a vice president at First National City Bank (now known as CitiBank) in New York. Franklin went to work in the White House personnel office under Frederic V. Malek, who had been Franklin's classmate at Harvard.

Franklin developed a list of "Departmental Vacancies Targeted for Women." For example, six positions in the Department of State, including the position of director of the Office of Public Services in the Bureau of Public Affairs, appeared on the list. The personnel office devoted close attention to the recruitment process whenever a position on the list became open. Personnel Office liaison staff member Frank Herringer observed, "We did a pretty good job of getting younger women into jobs, particularly in the White House, who later developed into very senior accomplished women. . . . A lot of these women who were there in their twenties and early thirties, who were working in and around the White House, emerged to be sources to fill the pipeline later on" (p. 76). These women included Elizabeth Hanford Dole, who went on to serve as secretary of transportation, secretary of labor, and U. S. senator from North Carolina; Kay Bailey Hutchinson, who went on to serve as U.S. senator from Texas; Diane Sawyer, who assisted Gerald Ford's transition to the presidency in the wake of Nixon's resignation before returning to journalism; Sallyanne Payton, who went on to become chief counsel of the Department of Transportation's Urban Mass Transportation Administration; and Ann McLaughlin Korologos, who later served as director of the Environmental Protection Agency's

Office of Public Affairs, assistant secretary of the Treasury for Public Affairs, and secretary of labor. When, in 1972, an article in *Newsweek* said that “the person in Washington who has done the most for the women’s movement may be Richard Nixon” (pp. 90-91), one could credit Franklin’s work at Nixon’s behest as a significant factor. When Nixon stood for reelection in November 1972, his landslide victory was boosted by the votes of 62 percent of the female electorate. After two years of work in the personnel office, Franklin was appointed by Nixon to be the vice chair of the new Consumer Product Safety Commission. In December 1991, President George H. W. Bush appointed Franklin to be secretary of commerce.

Franklin listed a number of accomplishments that she attributed to her two years as staff assistant to the president. They “included creating a network of sources and a talent bank of one thousand women...” and “tripling the number of women in high-level jobs paying more than \$28,000 per year” (p. 98). Franklin invited high-ranking female appointees to the White House for regular networking events. In 1974, the network resulted in the creation of an organization, the Executive Women in Government, which continued to serve as a source of support and encouragement for high-ranking women in the executive branch. The sea change that Nixon and Franklin brought about would never be reversed. “In the Ford administration, 14 percent of all new appointments were women, and the activism persisted” (p. 100).

Author Lee Stout, librarian emeritus at Penn State, approached Franklin in the mid-1990s with the hope of obtaining her papers for the university’s archives. As they discussed Stout’s proposal, he expanded the idea to encompass the compilation of oral histories about Franklin’s work and the experiences of the women whom Franklin recruited. They named the project “A Few Good Women: Advancing the Cause of Women in Government, 1969-74.” The result of the project is this intriguing book and a contribution to the literature about President Nixon, whose ability, at one and the same time, to do imaginatively constructive things and to do inscrutably destructive things will never stop fascinating historians and political scientists.

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