

Cora Du Bois

Anthropologist, Diplomat, Agent

SUSAN C. SEYMOUR



“This biography is a page-turner, with writing that is lively and vivid, and Cora’s own correspondence, journal entries, and poetry give the book a very ‘first-person’ feel. There’s a lot to learn here.” —Louise Lamphere, Distinguished Professor Emerita, Department of Anthropology, University of New Mexico, and past president of the American Anthropological Association

THE REMARKABLE STORY OF HARVARD’S FIRST TENURED FEMALE PROFESSOR

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Anthropologist, Diplomat, Agent

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“Susan Seymour has produced a captivating, extremely well-written narrative that has much to offer multiple audiences that include anthropologists and students of the history of ideas and social science, but also more general readers interested in the biography of a brilliant, independent gay woman who forged an important career in an era when social obstacles made such accomplishments very rare.”

—David H. Price, professor of anthropology and sociology at Saint Martin’s University and the author of *Weaponizing Anthropology: Social Science in Service of the Militarized State*

Although *Cora Du Bois* began her life in the early twentieth century as a lonely and awkward girl, her intellect and curiosity propelled her into a remarkable life as an anthropologist and diplomat in the vanguard of social and academic change.

Du Bois studied with Franz Boas, a founder of American anthropology, and with some of his most eminent students: Ruth Benedict, Alfred Kroeber, and Robert Lowie. During World War II, she served as a high-ranking officer for the Office of Strategic Services as the only woman to head one of the OSS branches of intelligence, Research and Analysis in Southeast Asia. After the war she joined the State Department as chief of the Southeast Asia Branch of the Division of Research for the Far East. She was also the first female full professor, with tenure, appointed at Harvard University and became president of the American Anthropological Association

Du Bois worked to keep her public and private lives separate, especially while facing the FBI’s harassment as an opponent of U.S. engagements in Vietnam and as a “liberal” lesbian during the McCarthy era. Susan C. Seymour’s biography weaves together Du Bois’s personal and professional lives to illustrate this exceptional “first woman” and the complexities of the twentieth century that she both experienced and influenced.

Susan C. Seymour is the Jean M. Pitzer Professor Emerita of Anthropology at Pitzer College in Claremont, California. She is the author of several books, including *Women, Family, and Child Care in India: A World in Transition*.

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