



Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (Working Class in American History)

Melinda Chateauvert

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The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was the first national trade union for African Americans. Standard BSCP histories focus on the men who built the union: few acknowledge the important role of the Ladies' Auxiliary in shaping public debates over black manhood and unionization, setting political agendas for the black community, and crafting effective strategies to win racial and economic justice. In this first book-length history of the women of the BSCP, Melinda Chateauvert brings to life an entire group of women ignored in previous histories of the Brotherhood and of working-class women, situating them in the debates among women's historians over the ways that race and class shape women's roles and gender relations. Chateauvert's work shows how the auxiliary, made up of the wives, daughters, and sisters of Pullman porters, used the Brotherhood to claim respectability and citizenship. Pullman maids, relegated to the auxiliary, found their problems as working women neglected in favor of the rhetoric of racial solidarity. The auxiliary actively educated other women and children about the labor movement, staged consumer protests, and organized local and national civil rights campaigns ranging from the 1941 March on Washington to school integration to the Montgomery bus boycott.

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