



Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923

Eric Arnesen

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Bridging the gaps between African-American and labor history, this compelling study focuses on ten thousand black and white waterfront workers in New Orleans, and class and race relations through the turbulent Civil War and Reconstruction years, the racially flexible 1880s, the racially violent 1890s, and the early twentieth century's age of segregation. Arnesen explores the role of black unions in the city's larger African-American social network; the connection between race relation and union work rules; the political culture that alternately encouraged and discouraged biracial collaboration; and the rise and fall of two biracial labor federations (the Cotton Men's Executive Council from 1880 to the early 1890s, and the Dock and Cotton Council from 1901 to 1923). A pragmatic response to the reality of a racially divided work force, biracial unionism provided a strong framework for mediating racial tensions and ensuring limited cooperation across racial lines. By the early twentieth century, New Orleans' waterfront workers had forged a powerful movement that violated the basic tenets of the segregationist era. This unique study will appeal to students and scholars of African-American, labor, social, southern, or urban history.



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