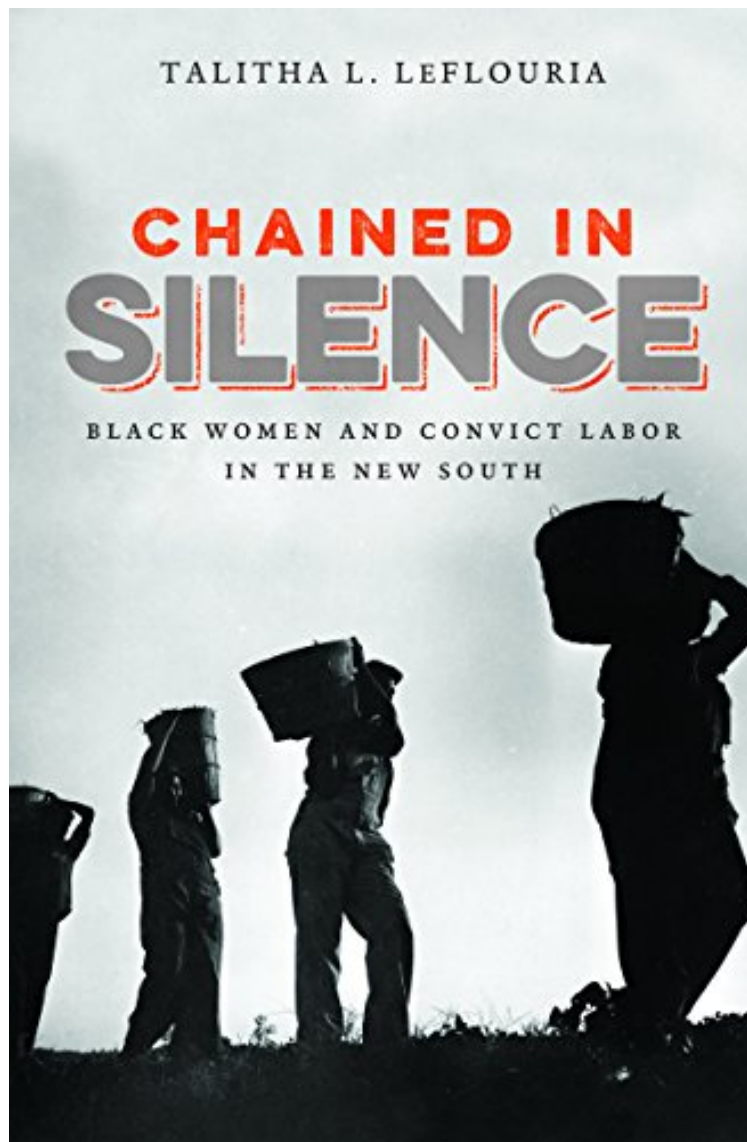


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Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South (Justice, Power, and Politics)

Talitha L. LeFlouria

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In 1868, the state of Georgia began to make its rapidly growing population of prisoners available for hire. The resulting convict leasing system ensnared not only men but also African American women, who were forced to labor in camps and factories to make profits for private investors. In this vivid work of history, Talitha L. LeFlouria draws from a rich array of primary sources to piece together the stories of these women, recounting what they endured in Georgia's prison system and what their labor accomplished. LeFlouria argues that African American women's presence within the convict lease and chain-gang systems of Georgia helped to modernize the South by creating a new and dynamic set of skills for black women. At the same time, female inmates struggled to resist physical and sexual exploitation and to preserve their human dignity within a hostile climate of terror. This revealing history redefines the social context of black women's lives and labor in the New South and allows their stories to be told for the first time.

A meticulously researched, and immensely illustrative record of the understudied labor efforts made by thousands of black female convicts in the post-Civil War South.--Punishment and SocietyA much-needed and distinctly gendered perspective on carceral roots of both antiblack racism and resistance to it, a history that can be silenced no longer.--Journal of American HistoryShows how attention to the experiences of incarcerated women--nearly all of them African American--casts new light on a neglected corner of the New South's cruel penal system.--Social HistoryA deeply researched and carefully crafted mouthpiece for black female convict laborers.--American Historical Leaves us with a radically new understanding of the historical dimensions of racism, gender, and state violence.--Elizabeth Hinton, The NationReads as a tour de force--a gripping history that insists on speaking the names and remembering the lives of long-forgotten working-class black women caught up in the violent, exploitative system of convict labor in post-emancipation Georgia. . . . Painstakingly researched, beautifully written, and certain to become a classic in the literature on labor, race and the criminal justice system, as well as black women's history. --Social Service Highly recommended.--ChoiceAn indispensable reference point.--Journal of Southern HistoryA well-written, accessible, provocative study of black women's lives in Georgia's convict-labor system at the dawn on the New South. . . . Surely one of the best books out on southern women's history in years.--Register of the Kentucky Historical SocietyThis beautifully written book leads its readers on the journey from Emancipation to the devastating convict-leasing system in Georgia. . . . [and] examines the exploitation of black women's bodies, the beginnings of mass incarceration, and the rise of the modern New South.--Erica Armstrong Dunbar, The NationCenters black women's incarceration and more profoundly their forced labor and lives during [Reconstruction] as a way to imagine the possibility of black history in the face of the prison, in the face of history.--Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory Every page of Chained in Silence is a revelation. The author connects the hideous conditions that black female convicts endured with the emergence of white business supremacy and the modernization of the South. LeFlouria skillfully illuminates the ties between gender, racism, and labor exploitation in the making of the New South. This book is destined to play an integral role in contemporary debates on mass incarceration and prison reform.--Paul Ortiz, University of FloridaThis bold, brilliant, beautifully written book--a significant contribution to the fields of prison history, southern history, African American history, and gender studies--shows why charting the struggles in convict women's lives matters for understanding the emergence of modernity in the New South. Talitha L. LeFlouria rejects a recent and popular thesis that convict labor was simply slavery that persisted, while also illuminating how beliefs about race and sex forged in slavery carried on to shape modernity and the prison system.--Mary Ellen Curtin, American UniversityChained in Silence is a pathbreaking addition to the growing body of historical research on black women and the U.S. justice system. Dr. LeFlouria's riveting work powerfully unearths the experiences of Georgia's exploited and often overlooked labor force, namely black female convicts. Through painstaking, exhaustive research, she maps black women as sentient beings (humans who had lives, loves, triumphs, and sorrows) and as prison laborers brutalized by the vicissitudes of convict leasing. Moreover, by historicizing the evolution of convict leasing and black women's plight therein, LeFlouria ultimately provides a much-needed raced and gendered context for the agro-industrial penal complex operating in parts of the South today.--Kali Gross, University of Texas at AustinAbout the AuthorTalitha L. LeFlouria is associate professor of African American Studies in the Carter G. Woodson Institute, University of Virginia. Her research was featured in the documentary Slavery by Another Name, based on Douglas A. Blackmon's Pulitzer Prize-winning book.