

## Hog Wild: The Battle for Worker's Rights at the World's Largest Slaughterhouse

**Lynn Waltz**

University of Iowa Press (May 15, 2018)

Softcover \$24.95 (280pp)

978-1-60938-585-9

In Lynn Waltz's *Hog Wild: The Battle for Workers' Rights at the World's Largest Slaughterhouse*, the dangerous and exploitative meat-packing industry receives fresh focus through a fourteen-year campaign to unionize the Smithfield pork processing plant amid corruption, lies, and corporate greed.

When Smithfield Foods opened a pork processing plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina, in 1992, workers flocked to the plant hoping to find steady work and fair pay. However, as the plant grew and bosses resisted unionization so that they could keep wages low, injuries piled up and working conditions deteriorated. It wasn't until Sherri Buffkin, a top manager, was fired without reason and decided to expose the company that the full truth started to emerge.

A compelling combination of journalism, in-depth interviews, and exhaustive research, *Hog Wild* not only tells the story of the Smithfield slaughterhouse but also illustrates a much larger picture of the labor movement in the United States, which has a history of exploiting those who have the least means of fighting back.

In addition to giving a solid history of unionization, the book also shows a human side to the union power struggle and how peer pressure, intimidation, and misinformation can sway workers away from voting for what would most benefit them. In no-nonsense prose that lets actions speak louder than words, the book pleads the question: When does the safety of the worker matter more than profits?

Bringing in historic events such as Paula Deen's controversial endorsement of Smithfield's hams, Jesse Jackson's intervention in the Smithfield union vote, and how the opening up of US borders led to a sea change in the South's employment profile, *Hog Wild* is a comprehensive and fascinating look at what it means to be a poor worker in an area with few options.

ANGELA MCQUAY (May/June 2018)

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