

Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction: Finding Politics in Unexpected Places:
The Matrix of Beauty, Business, and Activism 1

1. Beauty Pioneers: Racial Uplift and Gender in
the Creation of a Black Business Community 7
2. “Link Up with Us”: Black Beauty Culture, Racial Politics,
and the Complexities of Modern Black Womanhood 32
3. “This Industry Is not Typical, but Exceptional”:
Redefining Entrepreneurship and Activism in
the 1930s and 1940s 61
4. “We Could Turn the Whole World Over”:
The International Presence of African American
Beauticians in the Postwar Era 82
5. “Black Beauticians Were Very Important”:
Southern Beauty Activists and the Modern Black
Freedom Struggle 98
6. “Among the Things that Used to Be”: Beauticians,
Health Activism, and the Politics of Dignity in the
Post–Civil Rights Era 121

Notes 137

Bibliography 169

Index 187