



They said the railroad was no place for women...

but we came anyway.

With heels clicking like hammers on steel,

we turned “no” into a new beginning.

Where the sign read “For Railroad Men Only,”

we carved our names in the margin — and kept it moving.

1925 — Cora Abrahamson saw the spark in

Minnesota,

brought it home to Chicago,

and lit a movement that still burns today.

Hazel Cornell didn’t wait for an invitation

she made one.

November 13th, 1925

Chapter Two was born!

And the tracks were never the same.

Through the Great Depression and wartime tears,

we filled the gaps,

we ran the rails,

we kept this country moving!

250,000 women on the job

telegraphers, clerks, and change-makers

every whistle blow was a hymn

to the power of perseverance.

Hazel Cornell.

Bernice Koehler.

Bessie Ross.

Names that sound like thunder on the track

Chicago women with paper, pens, and purpose.

From Karst Ranch to convention halls,

we led the charge and rewrote the bylaws!

Steel beneath our feet,

but sisterhood — that’s the heartbeat.

1950 — 18 divisions strong!

One thousand women holding meetings,

planning, pushing, proving

that progress runs on her power.

1975 — we turned 50,

& birthed scholarships for women in management!

Hazelle Anderson

your vision lit the path,

so we could rise through education

and lead with intention.

Even when the rails went quiet,

automation came, and numbers fell —

Chicago women stayed on track.

We served.

We gave.

We stood for something greater.

From Ronald McDonald House

to Cradles to Crayons

we made community our next destination.



“Steel and Sisterhood: 100 Years on Track”

By: T’Aura The Poet

in honor of NARBW Chicago’s

100th anniversary

Then came 2015 — the rebirth.

Patricia Dunham, Theresa Harper,

Melanie McKim —

a new train, same purpose.

Every meeting, every painting night,

every family bowling strike —

proof that legacy doesn’t rust,

it just needs a little oil and faith.

And now... 2025!

One hundred years of women who built bridges,

broke barriers,

and left footprints on steel.

From Hazel to Jasmine Manley

we salute the hands that kept us on track.

Because this

this is more than history,

it’s her-story.

A hundred years of motion,

devotion, and promotion—

of women who refused to be sidelined.

So when you hear that train tonight...

listen close.

That’s not just steel against steel