



# **Crescent City Girls: The Lives of Young Black Women in Segregated New Orleans (Gender and American Culture)**

*LaKisha Michelle Simmons*

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What was it like to grow up black and female in the segregated South? To answer this question, LaKisha Simmons blends social history and cultural studies, recreating children's streets and neighborhoods within Jim Crow New Orleans and offering a rare look into black girls' personal lives. Simmons argues that these children faced the difficult task of adhering to middle-class expectations of purity and respectability even as they encountered the daily realities of Jim Crow violence, which included interracial sexual aggression, street harassment, and presumptions of black girls' impurity.

Simmons makes use of oral histories, the black and white press, social workers' reports, police reports, girls' fiction writing, and photography to tell the stories of individual girls: some from poor, working-class families; some from middle-class, "respectable" families; and some caught in the Jim Crow judicial system. These voices come together to create a group biography of ordinary girls living in an extraordinary time, girls who did not intend to make history but whose stories transform our understanding of both segregation and childhood.

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