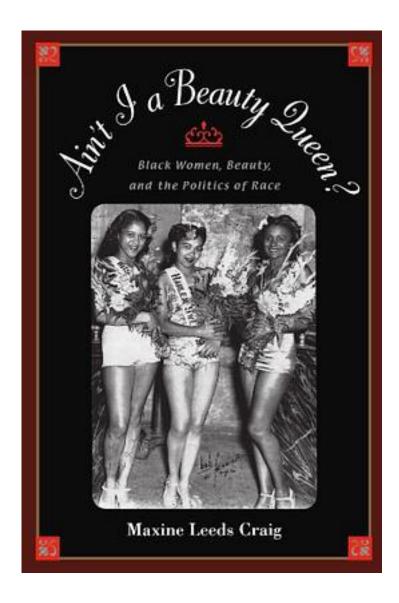
Ain't I a Beauty Queen?



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Ain't I A Beauty Queen? is a study of black women as symbols, and as participants, in the reshaping of the meaning of black racial identity. The meanings and pracices of racial identity are continually reshaped as a result of the interplay of actions taken at the individual and institutional levels. In chapters that detail the history of pre-Civil Rights Movement black beauty pageants, later efforts to integrate beauty contests, and the transformation in beliefs and practices relating to black beauty in the 1960s, the book develops a model for understanding social processes of racial change. It places changing black hair practices and standards of beauty in historical context and shows the powerful role social movements have had in reshaping the texture of everyday life. The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements led a generation to question hair straightening and to establish a new standard of beauty that was summed up in the words "black is beautiful". Through oral history interviews with Civil Rights and Black Power Movement activists and ordinary women, the author documents the meaning of these changes in black women's lives.

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