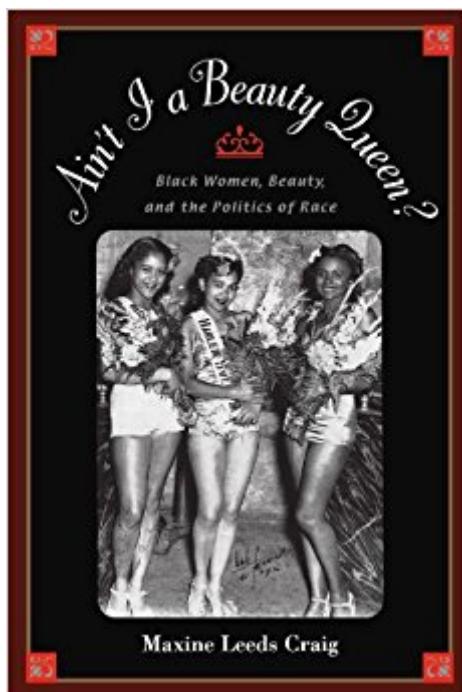


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# Ain't I A Beauty Queen?: Black Women, Beauty, And The Politics Of Race



## **Synopsis**

"Black is Beautiful!" The words were the exuberant rallying cry of a generation of black women who threw away their straightening combs and adopted a proud new style they called the Afro. The Afro, as worn most famously by Angela Davis, became a veritable icon of the Sixties. Although the new beauty standards seemed to arise overnight, they actually had deep roots within black communities. Tracing her story to 1891, when a black newspaper launched a contest to find the most beautiful woman of the race, Maxine Leeds Craig documents how black women have negotiated the intersection of race, class, politics, and personal appearance in their lives. Craig takes the reader from beauty parlors in the 1940s to late night political meetings in the 1960s to demonstrate the powerful influence of social movements on the experience of daily life. With sources ranging from oral histories of Civil Rights and Black Power Movement activists and men and women who stood on the sidelines to black popular magazines and the black movement press, *Ain't I a Beauty Queen?* will fascinate those interested in beauty culture, gender, class, and the dynamics of race and social movements.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"An important and engaging text. Craig is to be commended for taking on and admirably carrying out an ambitious project of tracing the very nonlinear relationships between class, race, gender, political activism, and beauty."-- *Gender & Society* "Maxine Leeds Craig masterfully blends archival research and interviews to explore the changing meanings of black female beauty and to place

these changes in the context of race, gender, and class politics. The book is impeccably researched and written, pulling together a wide range of materials into a coherent and convincing argument. It should be read by anyone interested in social movements, cultural change, racial politics, gender, or the sociology of the body."-- *American Journal of Sociology*"Impeccably researched and written, pulling together a wide range of materials into a coherent and convincing argument. It should be read by anyone interested in social movements, cultural change, racial politics, gender, or the sociology of the body."-- *American Journal of Sociology* "With fists raised to demand black power, black women redefined black beauty. Using ethnographic interviews, autobiography, newspapers and magazines from black communities across the country, *Ain't I A Beauty Queen?* shows us how beauty pageants, afros and conks became weapons in a war waged against ideas of black inferiority. The stories Craig tells about why hair and beauty matter so much are the reason you should pick this book up. They are also the reason you will have a hard time putting it down. Stunning!"--Noliwe Rooks, Princeton University and author of *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture and African American Women*"This is a well-written and well-researched book that argues for a theoretical exchange between sociologists of culture and social movement theorists. It is a much-needed book, one that will ultimately fill a gap in both areas. Moreover, it will contribute to our understanding of African American cultural forms of resistance."--Belinda Robnett, author of *How Long? How Long?: African American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* and the University of California, Irvine

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very good book about women and beauty!

This is a very interesting dissection of the politicization of black female beauty in America. It is a take-no-prisoners look that shows the pressure on women to represent values and worth in a world besieged. The author is unorthodox and her style is very readable.

This is a well written, well research book that combines a political and historical analysis of race. While examining black women the reader gets the bitter taste of racism in American politics. This book crosses multiple genres and will be useful in virtually any social science and humanities courses. I also think that the lay reader will find this book interesting.

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