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Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women: Race and Beauty in the Twentieth-Century South

Blain Roberts

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Blain Roberts : Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women: Race and Beauty in the Twentieth-Century South before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women: Race and Beauty in the Twentieth-Century South:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Pageant "Yaya"By TalibaThis book was very informative but more politically informative than I originally thought it would be. I wanted it to be more more about the actual pageants and how it affected the women in them but this was more of a hisotrical point of view and concerning the issue of Black females. I think the author missed some cultural points because she hadn't lived the life of the African American women she researched (she is a Southern white female); but there was a lot of information. For example I don't think she understood just how powerful the Afro was for Black girls interms of their beauty esteem. I thought I was absolutely gorgeous in my (Angela Davis style) Afro as a teen and even more so, when I finally got to the braid wearing era after college (felt seriously like Cleopatra), LOL. It was still a good read. I hadn't realized how big a part pageants actually played in my life and the life of my descendants! I have a pageant-girl granddaughter right now. Wow!4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. WELL DONE HISTORY OF BEAUTY AND POLITICAL EFFECT RECOMMENDBy M. NicholsThis well-researched book ties together attitudes toward women and beauty in the south and how women were used as vehicles to advertise or promote products and ideas. Special attention to beauty pageants and the role of the beauty parlor. Haven't finished it yet, but excellent read for making sense of segregation, weaving together the black and white threads of the history. Blain Roberts is a skilled scholar who has produced an informative and thought-provoking book.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Interesting!!!By Annie R WalkerThis was one that was purchased for my daughter andshe just loves it, some history that she is really enjoying, so happy I could get it for the price I got it for..(smile)

From the South's pageant queens to the importance of beauty parlors to African American communities, it is easy to see the ways beauty is enmeshed in southern culture. But as Blain Roberts shows in this incisive work, the pursuit of beauty in the South was linked to the tumultuous racial divides of the region, where the Jim Crow-era cosmetics industry came of age selling the idea of makeup that emphasized whiteness, and where, in the 1950s and 1960s, black-owned beauty shops served as crucial sites of resistance for civil rights activists. In these times of strained relations in the South, beauty became a signifier of power and affluence while it reinforced racial strife. Roberts examines a range of beauty products, practices, and rituals--cosmetics, hairdressing, clothing, and beauty contests--in settings that range from tobacco farms of the Great Depression to 1950s and 1960s college campuses. In so doing, she uncovers the role of female beauty in the economic and cultural modernization of the South. By showing how battles over beauty came to a head during the civil rights movement, Roberts sheds new light on the tactics southerners used to resist and achieve desegregation.

A most significant addition to the scholarship on southern beauty culture.--Arkansas Historical Quarterly[A] fascinating book [that] explores the products, rituals, institutions and beliefs surrounding female beauty to elucidate the economic and cultural transformations of the Jim Crow and Civil Rights South.--Louisiana HistoryThe expression that 'beauty is only skin deep' is put to the test in this well-researched examination of women, race, and standards of attractiveness in the 20th-century US.--ChoiceIlluminates how Southern culture has imagined a constitutive relationship between race and beauty.--Journal of American CultureAn important book of American social history and a fine addition to the literature on women of the South in the years between the institution of Jim Crow and its demise.--H-Net sRoberts has chosen to look at many of the issues of the 20th century through the intimate world of women's beauty regimens and the public world of beauty pageants.--American PressWell researched and will be of interest to those concerned with gender, race, southern history, and beauty practices.--Register of The Kentucky Historical SocietyA Notable African-American Title--Publishers WeeklyA fresh and valuable contribution to a well-established body of scholarship on the history of modern beauty culture in the United States.--Journal of American History[Roberts] provides a well-researched and engaging account of beauty, both as a weighty prescription and a tool used by women to widen their spaces of living despite white dominance and patriarchy.--Women's of BooksRoberts's compelling narrative challenges historians to integrate the pursuit of beauty in their examinations of race and politics in the modern South.--The Southern RegisterRoberts uncovers the toils and economic effects of feminine beauty in the South during the 1950s and '60s.--EbonyThe good, the bad and the lovely.--Chicago Tribune Printers Row Journal We've needed Blain Roberts's book for a very long time, and she abundantly delivers the goods—on southern beauty and on women's beauty generally. Looking on both sides of the color line, Roberts sees the moral resonances of beauty, whose work was about power as well as appearance. A great book for oh so many reasons!--Nell Irvin Painter, author of *The History of White People* and *Sojourner Truth, A Life, A Symbol*This book fills an important gap in the scholarship on southern women's history. Meticulously researched, it is well grounded in a wide range of secondary sources and supported with evidence from a variety of primary sources including diaries and memoirs, print culture, corporate records, and even political speeches. Roberts demolished a lot of my erroneous assumptions about southern beauty culture. A fascinating and important work.--Melissa Walker, *Converse College*A compelling, illuminating, and well-written book. . . . An innovative study that will make an important contribution to gender history, histories of the body, American studies, and the history of the twentieth-century U.S. South.--Michele Mitchell, *New York*

UniversityAbout the AuthorBlain Roberts is associate professor of history at California State University, Fresno.