



South Side Girls: Growing Up in the Great Migration

Marcia Chatelain

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In *South Side Girls* Marcia Chatelain recasts Chicago's Great Migration through the lens of black girls. Focusing on the years between 1910 and 1940, when Chicago's black population quintupled, Chatelain describes how Chicago's black social scientists, urban reformers, journalists and activists formulated a vulnerable image of urban black girlhood that needed protecting. She argues that the construction and meaning of black girlhood shifted in response to major economic, social, and cultural changes and crises, and that it reflected parents' and community leaders' anxieties about urbanization and its meaning for racial progress. Girls shouldered much of the burden of black aspiration, as adults often scrutinized their choices and behavior, and their well-being symbolized the community's moral health. Yet these adults were not alone in thinking about the Great Migration, as girls expressed their views as well. Referencing girls' letters and interviews, Chatelain uses their powerful stories of hope, anticipation and disappointment to highlight their feelings and thoughts, and in so doing, she helps restore the experiences of an understudied population to the Great Migration's complex narrative.

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