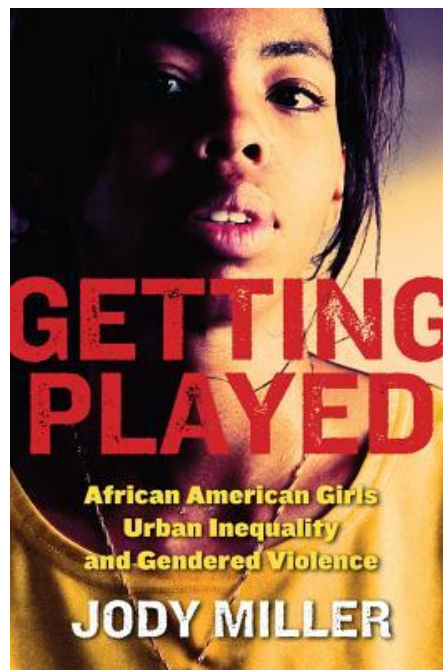




Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, and Gendered Violence

Jody Miller , Ruth D. Peterson (Foreword by)

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2010 Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Book Award from the American Sociological Association; Race, Gender, and Class Section

2008 Finalist, The Society for the Study of Social Problems C. Wright Mills Award

Much has been written about the challenges that face urban African American young men, but less is said about the harsh realities for African American young women in disadvantaged communities. Sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and even gang rape are not uncommon experiences. In *Getting Played*, sociologist Jody Miller presents a compelling picture of this dire social problem and explores how inextricably, and tragically, linked violence is to their daily lives in poor urban neighborhoods.

Drawing from richly textured interviews with adolescent girls and boys, Miller brings a keen eye to the troubling realities of a world infused with danger and gender-based violence. These girls are isolated, ignored, and often victimized by those considered family and friends. Community institutions such as the police and schools that are meant to protect them often turn a blind eye, leaving girls to fend for themselves. Miller draws a vivid picture of the race and gender inequalities that harm these communities--and how these result in deeply and dangerously engrained beliefs about gender that teach youths to see such violence--rather than the result of broader social inequalities--as deserved due to individual girls' flawed characters, i.e., she deserved it.

Through Miller's careful analysis of these engaging, often unsettling stories, *Getting Played* shows us not only how these young women are victimized, but how, despite vastly inadequate social support and opportunities, they struggle to navigate this dangerous terrain.

Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, and Gendered Violence Details

Date : Published March 1st 2008 by New York University Press (first published 2008)

ISBN : 9780814756980

Author : Jody Miller , Ruth D. Peterson (Foreword by)

Format : Paperback 292 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Feminism, Social Issues, Politics, Race



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Gendered Violence Jody Miller , Ruth D. Peterson (Foreword by)**

From Reader Review Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, and Gendered Violence for online ebook

Mark says

This is a book that describes the cultural adaptations to structural inequalities found in urban poverty areas of St. Louis based upon interviews with juveniles that live in the area. Feminist approach that does not offer a lot of insights into how these areas arrived at this condition, but a good book that describes the condition as it exists.

Sope Kahn says

This book reviews really important information about ecological and systematic cycles of violence as it affects urban African American girls.

ralowe says

it took me a long time to read this book, because it is written as a study for parties whom it frightens me to wonder. i would recommend this book because it is familiar to drill subject matter that one is already familiar with but at times it was difficult to dissociate realizing this was written as a study for legal scholars to whom the nuances of these issues are probably entirely alien. when i got over how depressing the general subject matter is, relayed through transcribed interviews of black youth in a continuing education program in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood of St. Louis, i started wondering about all this which would be particularly triggering for a lot of folks i know, and wondering what was this white woman's investment in it. her suggestions towards this end manages to act as if queerness doesn't exist, plus she presents a holistic solution which would include neighborhood improvements while stabilizing housing as a way to foster community. my experience has been that neighborhood improvements tend to operate as mutually exclusive from stabilized housing, particularly in areas with very high real estate speculation. this book must be read with lots of the appropriate political context and with a grain of salt.

O. says

Book Review (By O. Ayes)

Jody Miller's *Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, and Gendered Violence* (New York University Press, 2008)

I wanted to read *Getting Played* without bias. Although I'm outside of the criminological discourse community, I have read enough scholarly works to be troubled by academia's oft-unchallenged objectification of marginalized populations. Mainly, I had trouble reconciling the book's intention (to explore the "understudied" population of African-American girls who reside in "one of the poorest sections of St. Louis") and my personal experience growing up in what scholars deem an "at-risk" school district. Would Miller be similar to other social scientists who impose their "expert" perspectives upon a

“problematic” community? Was Miller compelled to study this population out of pure concern and sympathy for the girls or was her impetus to complete research in order to satisfy academic duties? Although I agree that gendered violence is a problem in these types of communities, how much impact do scholars like Miller actually have on the populations they spend years, decades analyzing?

I know my concerns extend beyond the scope of this review, so I’ll stick to my visceral reaction to the book: it was predictable. I was neither enlightened nor surprised by her qualitative analysis and excerpting of the interviewees’ accounts. As I read, I was troubled by not being able to differentiate one participant from another because the information presented was selective and detached. Here’s a group of delinquent teens; let’s find commonalities and reasoning for why they act and live the way they do.

Another issue that bothered me was how Miller claims that she was able to gain access to “at-risk and delinquent youths fairly easily” yet not others: “Despite considerable effort, we were unable to gain access to a comparative group of youths in the same neighborhood contexts who were thriving academically and socially...[T]he gatekeepers at churches and mainstream schools were much more reticent, and ultimately refused, to expose these youth to our research” (13). Perhaps institutions could be blamed for the partiality of information available to be studied, but why glaze over the fact that only “at-risk” youths are fully available for researchers to poke and prod at? It seemed integral to the central concern of the book: who is watched over versus who is discarded. The discrepancy is addressed again, indirectly, in the final section of the book, which emphasizes solutions to the problems she illuminates.

There are positives, however. Miller is fully aware of the prejudices that hover around issues of race and gender in America. She covers her bases early on: “My intent is not to further perpetuate the myth of the Black rapist” (xvii). She also points out that there is “critical gap in knowledge” about the population she studies (35) and touches on some of the systematic causes of “urban disadvantage” as the result of “deliberate policy decisions” (197). Moreover, Miller elucidates ways to enhance the collective efficacy of the community and schools in order to improve the conditions in which these youths develop, thereby empowering them to rise above the societal ideologies that shape gendered violence and other inequalities.

I cannot say that *Getting Played* is unnecessary—of course it is and who am I to determine that it isn’t? I hope it is taught in classrooms and read by those largely unaware of anything outside of their own privilege. *Getting Played* is a reminder of what is necessary: progressing beyond research that only fosters theoretical non-action. Miller means to stir us into action by adding her research among the pool that addresses gender inequality and offers her recommendations to the “researchers and policy-makers dedicated to ameliorating the problems associated with urban disadvantage” (221). Perhaps this is how solutions will happen: policy-makers will read this book and others like it to frame their decisions about what is the most imperative to address and what has been neglected long enough.

Shari Bye says

I found the book to be an accurate depiction of life in an AA environment. As a young girl (70’s), many of the scenarios that played out for these young ladies, were my story as an AA girl/teen/woman. Misogyny as rite of passage, antipathy toward my clueless lack of provinciality whilst living in the hood and the quiet gaze of onlookers who were either predator or prey themselves. I had to actually stand my ground against dudes who wanted to fight me sometimes cause their misogyny was so entrenched. I really started to trust none of them. The 80’s magnified this so well.