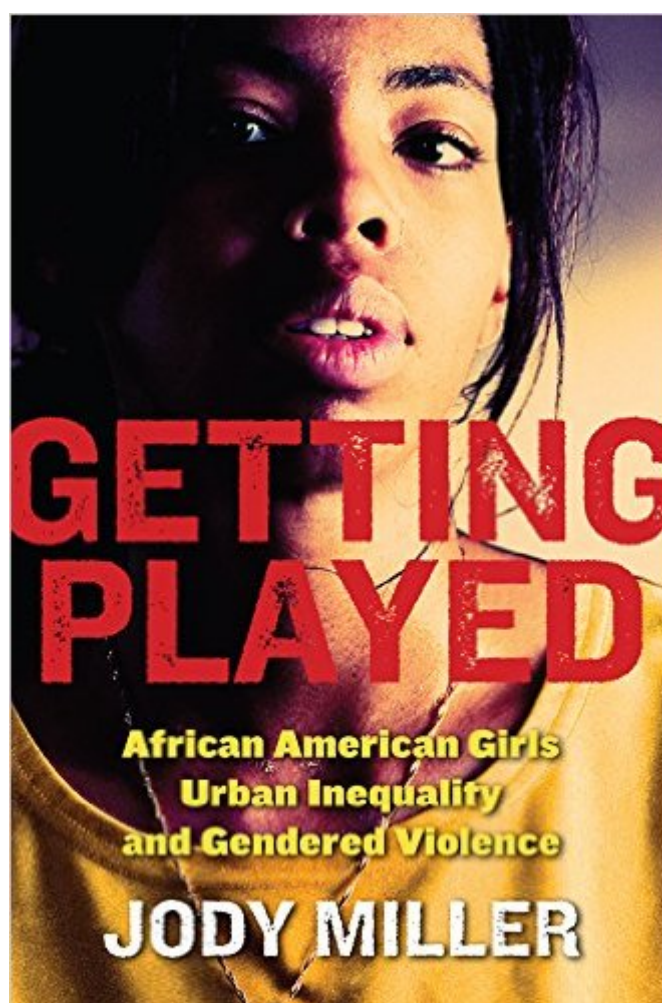


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# Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, And Gendered Violence



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“In *Getting Played*, sociologist Jody Miller presents a compelling picture of this dire social problem and explains how inextricably and tragically, linked violence is to their daily lives in poor urban neighborhoods.

-Harlem Book Fair

“It offers an in-depth examination of how class, race, gender, and educational inequalities place young African American girls in positions of powerlessness as they navigate an urban terrain that glorifies patriarchy and machismo. *Getting Played* is an eye-opening, emotional roller coaster that will capture your attention and heart from the first page.

-The Journal of African American History

Jody Miller is Professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Missouri, St. Louis. She is the author of *One of the Guys: Girls, Gangs, and Gender* and recipient of the 2001 Ruth Shonle Cavan Young Scholar Award from the American Society of Criminology.

*Getting Played* is a hugely significant book and can contribute to the discussion about the violent victimization black girls face. Miller captures the readers' attention by giving narratives from the girls she studies, and describing incidents of harassment and serious gender-based violence. She illustrates the way the perpetrators feel pressure to “play” girls in order to gain social status. Miller portrays the ways that community members, school administrators, and other class-mates victim-blame and do not intervene. She identifies the issues that are inherent in the “boys will be boys” mantra, and emphasizes that the daily violence black women and girls face is structural and situational, not the products of weak character. She does a really extensive examination of the influence of underprivileged neighborhoods with an unhelpful or unresponsive police system and also unpacks the way the real harm that results from encouraging the victimized girls to change style of dress or walk with company. She paints a vivid picture of victimization, but more than that, provides contributions to the study of criminology with a gendered lens. Miller interviews both girls and boys in order to include a full picture from both sides. It is interesting to see the way their narratives both are in tension and converge. Overall, I would really recommend this book because it sheds light on many obstacles that black girls face that tend to be overlooked.

This book is a must read for anyone who wants to know more about what it means to be a black girl in urban areas. While reading this book I was able to learn things that people went through that I have never thought about before. So many young girls are being left without any help in their

communities. It is a vicious cycle that is very hard to get out of, and to be able to help these girls we need to know their stories. Most of these stories are very hard to read, but Miller gives an honest account of what these black girls have been through. Miller is able to use the first hand accounts from her interviews to really help readers understand what some girls go through. After reading this book it made me feel very motivated to go out and make a difference in different communities. It is not a easy read due to the subject matter, but it is necessary to read.

“Interviewer: How often would you say stuff like that happens at school, where a guy touches a girl inappropriately? Alicia: Every day. Interviewer: What about saying inappropriate stuff to a girl? Alicia: every day.” This is a snippet of an interview from the book, which I would recommend to any city dweller. I am from St. Louis (where Miller conducted her research), and this book opened my eyes to the unique struggles and traumas that black girls face in my city. Though the information Jody Miller discusses is sometimes shocking, it is also incredibly enlightening. The book is also well-argued. For every point that Miller makes, she backs up her assertions with data and numerous personal accounts.

This book helped me understand the many facets of gendered violence that I oftentimes hear about among female youth work with. Miller’s cogent description of the sexual violence and harassment experienced in the setting where she works and the lack of acknowledgement among the girls to recognize structural factors related to this violence is a point too few scholars write about in similar work. It is a sympathetic analysis of the challenges faced in these types of communities and potential solutions to address these issues. I wish I read this sooner!

I had to read this book for class, while I was told I had to read the book I absolutely enjoyed learning about the struggles African American girls must go through it was very eye opening and saddening at the same time.

So worth the read and analyzing

Still poignant and relevant today.

I just wish it didn't sound like textbook

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