

# SEE ME NAKED

## Black Women Defining Pleasure in the Interwar Era

"A bold feminist examination of pleasure in the Interwar Period through some of our most enduring feminist legends – Ma Rainey and Moms Mabley among others – Green's astute and captivating assessment here will open doors for new imaginings of blackness."

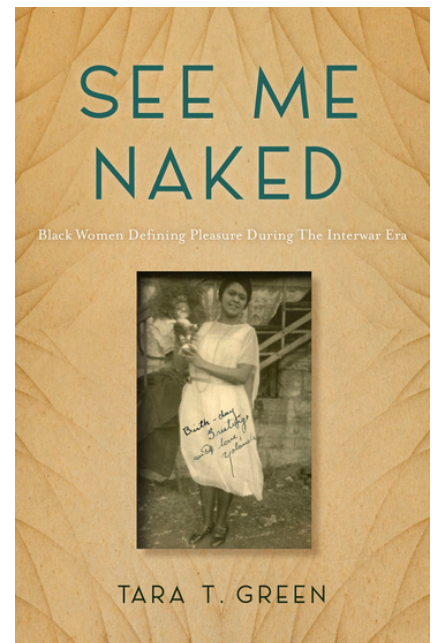
—Sharon P. Holland, author of *The Erotic Life of Racism*

"Tara T. Green's *See Me Naked* offers a groundbreaking exploration of black women's pursuit of pleasure during the interwar years. Her careful exploration of pleasure's fundamental relationship to black women's self-making offers a necessary intervention into the fields of black studies, feminist studies, and sexuality studies."

—Jennifer C. Nash, author of *Birthing Black Mothers*

Pleasure refers to the freedom to pursue a desire, deliberately sought in order to satisfy the self. Putting pleasure first is liberating. During their extraordinary lives, Lena Horne, Moms Mabley, Yolande DuBois, and Memphis Minnie enjoyed pleasure as they gave pleasure to both those in their lives and to the public at large. They were Black women who, despite their public profiles, whether through Black society or through the world of entertainment, discovered ways to enjoy pleasure. They left home, undertook careers they loved, and did what they wanted, despite perhaps not meeting the standards for respectability in the interwar era.

*See Me Naked* looks at these women as representative of other Black women of the time, who were watched, criticized, and judged by their families, peers, and, in some cases, the government, yet still managed to enjoy themselves. Among the voyeurs of Black women was Langston Hughes, whose novel *Not Without Laughter* was clearly a work of fiction inspired by women he observed in public and knew personally, including Black clubwomen, blues performers, and his mother. How did these complicated women wrest loose from the voyeurs to define their own sense of themselves? At very young ages, they found and celebrated aspects of themselves. Using examples from these women's lives, Green explores their challenges and achievements.



TARA T. GREEN is a professor and former director of African American and African diaspora studies at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro. She is the author or editor of several books, including *A Fatherless Child: Autobiographical Perspectives of African American Men*, winner of the 2011 Outstanding Scholarship in Africana Studies Award from the National Council for Black Studies, and *Reimagining the Middle Passage: Black Resistance in Literature, Television, and Song*.

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