



# **Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood, Labor, and Social Development in Colonial Lagos**

## **(New African Histories)**

*Abosede A. George*

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—Winner of the 2015 Aidoo-Snyder Prize from the Women's Caucus of the African Studies Association—

“The significance of *Making Modern Girls* in African studies is uncontested—it is by all standards one of the most sophisticated studies of girlhood in colonial Africa.”—*American Historical Review*

In *Making Modern Girls*, Abosede A. George examines the influence of African social reformers and the developmentalist colonial state on the practice and ideology of girlhood as well as its intersection with child labor in Lagos, Nigeria. It draws from gender studies, generational studies, labor history, and urban history to shed new light on the complex workings of African cities from the turn of the twentieth century through the nationalist era of the 1950s.

The two major schemes at the center of this study were the modernization project of elite Lagosian women and the salvationist project of British social workers. By approaching children and youth, specifically girl hawkers, as social actors and examining the ways in which local and colonial reformers worked upon young people, the book offers a critical new perspective on the uses of African children for the production and legitimization of national and international social development initiatives.

*Making Modern Girls* demonstrates how oral sources can be used to uncover the social history of informal or undocumented urban workers and to track transformations in practices of childhood over the course of decades. George revises conventional accounts of the history of development work in Africa by drawing close attention to the social welfare initiatives of late colonialism and by highlighting the roles that African women reformers played in promoting sociocultural changes within their own societies.



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