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The Face of Our Past: Images of Black Women from Colonial America to the Present

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Ordinary black women, more than any other group in America, have been left out of history. As Darlene Clark Hine points out in her introduction to this powerful and affecting book, ""disseminating a visual history is more important with Black women, perhaps, than with any other single segment of the American population. We know all too well what this society believes black women look like. The stereotypes abound, from the Mammy to the maid, from the tragic mulatto to the dark temptress. America's perceptions of Black women are colored by a host of derogatory images and assumptions that proliferated in the aftermath of slavery and, with some permutations, exist even today. We have witnessed the distortion of the image of black women in movies and on television. We have seen black women's faces and bodies shamed and exploited. What we have not seen is the simple truth of their lives. This book will help to eradicate, or at least to dislodge, the many negative and dehumanizing stereotypes and caricatures of Black women that inhabit our consciousness.

What do black women look like? What do they look like at work or with their families? What faces do they choose to present to the world, and what faces has the world forced them to acquire? We can look in vain to most pictorial histories of America and even of African America for images of Black women. With noteworthy exceptions, even scholarly studies in Black women's history tend to include few, if any, photographic images. Of the images that previously have been presented in print, the majority have been of famous Black women.

The Face of Our Past brings the ordinary Black woman to center stage, showing how she lives, loves her family, works to survive, fights for her people, and expresses her individuality. In addition to 302 cartefully chosen images, Kathleen Thompson and Hilary Mac Austin provide quotations from letters, diaries, journals, and other sources

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