



Downtown Ladies: Informal Commercial Importers, a Haitian Anthropologist and Self-Making in Jamaica (Women in Culture and Society)

Gina A. Ulysse

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The Caribbean “market woman” is ingrained in the popular imagination as the archetype of black womanhood in countries throughout the region. Challenging this stereotype and other outdated images of black women, *Downtown Ladies* offers a more complex picture by documenting the history of independent international traders—known as informal commercial importers, or ICIs—who travel abroad to import and export a vast array of consumer goods sold in the public markets of Kingston, Jamaica.

Both by-products of and participants in globalization, ICIs operate on multiple levels and, since their emergence in the 1970s, have made significant contributions to the regional, national, and global economies. Gina Ulysse carefully explores how ICIs, determined to be self-employed, struggle with government regulation and other social tensions to negotiate their autonomy. Informing this story of self-fashioning with reflections on her own experience as a young Haitian anthropologist, Ulysse combines the study of political economy with the study of individual and collective identity to reveal the uneven consequences of disrupting traditional class, color, and gender codes in individual societies and around the world.

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