



LISTEN TO ME GOOD: THE STORY OF AN ALABAMA MIDWIFE (WOMEN & HEALTH C&S PERSPECTIVE)

By MARGARET CHARLES SMITH

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Margaret Charles Smith, a ninety-one-year-old Alabama midwife, has thousands of birthing stories to tell. Sifting through nearly five decades of providing care for women in rural Greene County, she relates the tales that capture the life-and-death struggle of the birthing experience and the traditions, pharmacopeia, and spiritual attitudes that influenced her practice. Believed to be the oldest living (though retired) traditional African American midwife in Alabama, Smith is one of the few who can recount old-time birthing ways.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Even in recent times, poor African American women living in the rural South often had no access to healthcare. Local women serving as midwives were an important part of the community; they assisted with birthing and helped with household chores while the new mother recovered. Smith, a 91-year-old retired midwife, offers readers a firsthand account of rural lay midwifery and life in a small Alabama town. She describes her formal and informal training, the laws that allowed her to practice and later prohibited her work, the respect of the few local doctors for the lay midwives, and her views on civil rights issues. Smith's dedication, strong religious faith, and dignity are evident throughout this tribute to a tradition of self-care and community support. This fascinating oral history will interest students of the health sciences, women's studies, and history, as well as general readers. Highly recommended for all collections. *?Barbara M. Bibel, Oakland P.L., Cal.*

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From Booklist

While engaged in a year's research on southern black midwifery, Holmes met Smith, the oldest living midwife in Alabama and a revered health professional in her own small town. A decade later, Holmes interviewed Smith extensively; those conversations make up a book that encapsulates the era when most black women in Alabama relied on one another as well as a variety of indigenous healers and folk practitioners. The interviews cover Smith's childhood, herbal healing substances and practices, birthing practices, and the social changes that changed Smith's life during the time she delivered almost 3,000 babies, not once losing a mother and only rarely a child. In 1976 state law ended the practice of lay midwifery, causing 150 black Alabama women to lose their permits to practice during the ensuing five years. In between the enactment and this book, Smith was honored for her achievements by the first Black Women's Health Project Conference in Atlanta in 1984. *Whitney Scott*

From the Back Cover

An inspiring and engaging oral history of a wise woman who truly understands the value of life. As Margaret Charles Smith says herself: 'This book here is ready.' *Evelyn C White*

Users Review

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Kimberly Moore:

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