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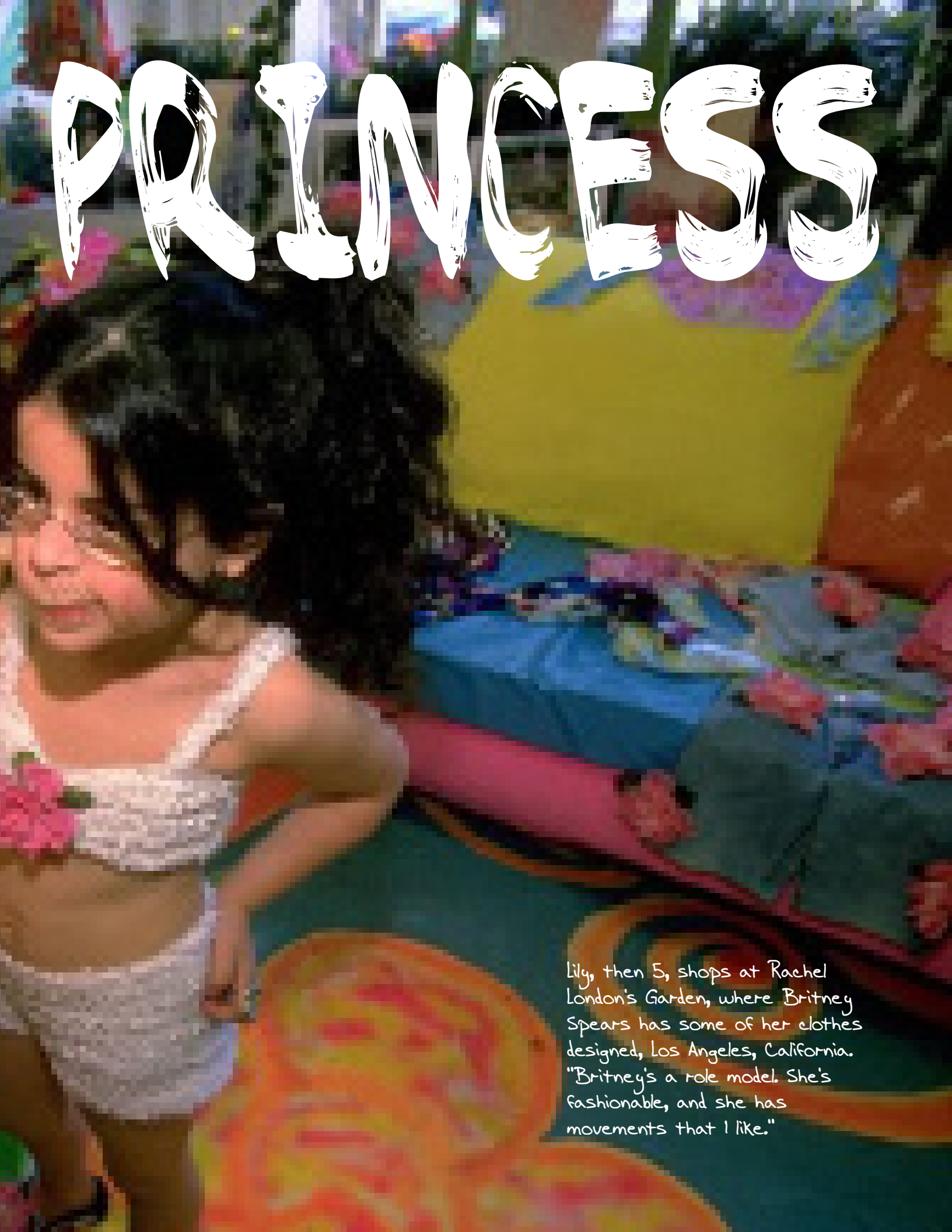
A GLIMPSE INSIDE GIRL CULTURE

PHOTOS BY LAUREN GREENFIELD

STORY BY JOAN JACOB BRUNBERG

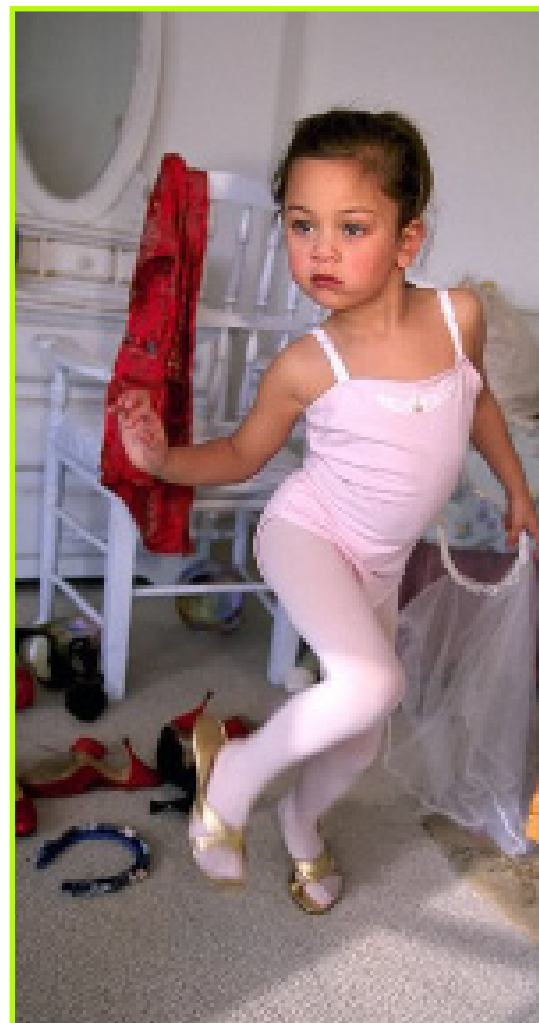
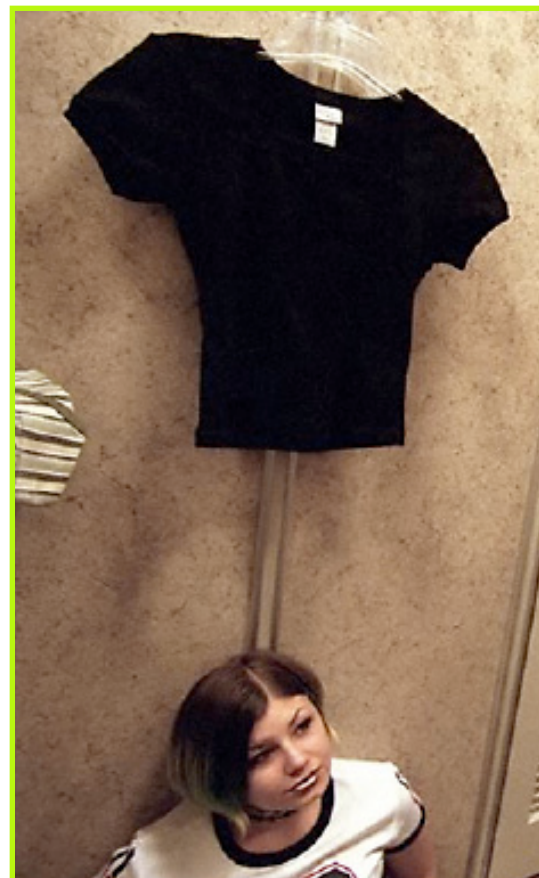
LAYOUT BY CAILIN PETERSON

PRINCESS



Lily, then 5, shops at Rachel London's Garden, where Britney Spears has some of her clothes designed, Los Angeles, California. "Britney's a role model. She's fashionable, and she has movements that I like."

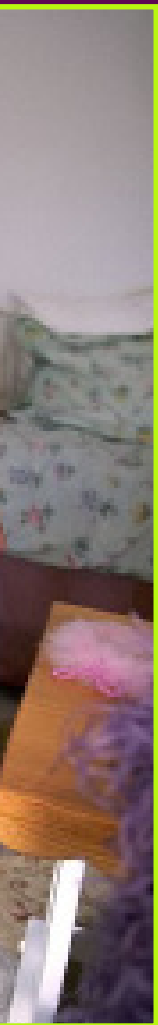
"IN THIS BUSINESS, BEAUTY HELPS. BUT IF ALL IT TOOK WAS A KILLER BODY AND GREAT HAIR, EVERYONE WOULD HAVE THEIR OWN TV SHOW."



Clockwise, starting from above: Cindy Margolis, the world's most downloaded woman according to the Guinness Book of World Records, in her bathroom, Studio City, California. Sheena tries on clothes with Amber, 15, in a department store dressing room, San Jose, California. Allegra, 4, plays dress-up, Malibu, California.



"I WANT TO BE A TOPLESS DANCER OR A SHOWGIRL. I THINK IT'D BE FUN. DANCING WITH MY TITS SHOWING OFF. IT'S LIKE A GOAL. IF I CAN ACCOMPLISH BEING THAT, THEN I CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING."



American girlhood ain't what it used to be. Maybe there are pockets of girls out there who still revel in the "Little House on the Prairie" books or dress up their dolls or run lemonade stands. But they aren't catching the eyes of sociologists, who seem to agree that girls today are growing up in a hyper-sexualized peer pressure-cooker — and they don't show up in "Girl Culture," a new book from photographer Lauren Greenfield (Chronicle Books; \$40.00). Even the youngest girls in Greenfield's gritty, gorgeous portraits are far too busy dressing up like Barbie dolls to play with them.

A gentle warning: this is not a book for parents desperate to maintain their naivete about what's happening in their daughters' lives: these accounts show you more than you've ever imagined about the sexual and social habits of girls. No matter how well you think you understand what goes on in adolescent life, it can be shocking to read first-hand accounts of the jealousy, pettiness, meanness and general anxiety that characterize female adolescence.

Girl culture is the key to understanding what it means to be a young woman today or in the past. In every historical epoch, girls have formed a unique set of activities and concerns generated by their

"I'm like the eighth Generation that's lived in Chattanooga. Being a Southern belle is part of the rule for the family," says Mary Cadfry, 19. Mary poses with her classmates in a May Day at Girls Preparatory School, Chattanooga, Tennessee.



Nkechi, then 17, was chosen by the New York Times Magazine to get "Oscar" treatment and wear a Versace gown to her Crenshaw High School prom for a fashion spread, L'Ermitage Hotel, Beverly Hills, California.



"MODELING IS AN AMERICAN DREAM. WE DON'T HAVE THAT INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA. BUT GROWING UP HERE, I'VE BEEN EXPOSED TO IT. AND THAT'S WHY I WANT TO DO IT. I JUST DON'T KNOW IF IT'S REALISTIC. THAT'S WHY I'M AT SCHOOL."



Contestants
in the Fitness
America
competition
pose for a
photograph,
Redondo Beach,
California.

developmental needs as well as the adult society in which they live. What girls do, how they think, what they write, whisper, and dream, all reveal a great deal about them and about us. Lauren Greenfield's photographic vision of contemporary girl culture is both a revealing documentary record and a disquieting personal commentary, infused with a distinctly sympathetic but biting point of view.

A century ago, the culture of girls was still rooted in family, school, and community. When they were not in school or helping Mother, middle-class American girls were reading, writing, and drawing, as well as playing with their dolls. Many young girls knew how to sew, knit, crochet, and embroider, generating homemade crafts to decorate their rooms or give to friends as they sipped hot chocolate and read aloud to one another.

In a girl culture dominated by concerns about the body rather than mind or spirit, familiar rites of passage—such as Bat Mitzvah,

A playboy
bunny tans
at the
Playboy
mansion.



quinceañera, graduation, and prom—are also transformed into shallow commercial events dominated by visions of Hollywood and celebrity magazines. These rituals are deeply important to girls, yet they no longer carry a great deal of emotional weight. Instead, they involve frenetic forays into the marketplace, worries about what to wear, and a preoccupation with the pictures that will document the event.

Young women flocked to

the Girl Scouts and the Camp Fire Girls, only two of many national and local single-sex groups in which they could learn critical skills under the close supervision of older women. When girls were together on their own, they chattered about new hair ribbons and dress styles and inscribed sentimental rhymes

in one another's autograph books. In private, many prayed and wrote earnestly in their diaries about how they wanted to improve themselves by helping others or becoming more serious people. Celebrated for their purity, innocence, and all-around

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Emilia, 10, sits at the beach at fat camp.

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