



Ms. Charisse Jones

Shifting
ISBN13: 9780060090555

Like most African-American women, we, Charisse and Kumea, had always shifted, but we did not call it that. In fact, it had no name. It was just part of our day to day. You had to figure out the best way to deal with a rude sales clerk, or a cab driver who refused to pick you up, or the constant messages from the broader society that said you were less attractive, less capable, less valuable simply because you were Black and female. We conformed, compromised, challenged, and continued on, like generations before us.

But what is the price of having to constantly battle against stereotypes; of having to change what you say and how you say it in the split second between a meeting with your white colleagues and a phone call from your oldest friend; of having to prove your worth every day, no matter how often you have proved it before? In *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women*, we set out to shed light on all the ways that Black women cope with bigotry and the emotional fallout that lies in its wake. The nearly 400 women we interviewed and surveyed as part of the African American Women's Voices

Project speak of their trials in the workplace, in relationships, as parents, and within the church. They show all too clearly that dealing with prejudice takes a great toll on Black women, contributing to their high rates of hypertension, depression, obesity and myriad other ills.

And yet their voices also bear witness to the ingenuity and resilience that allows so many Black women to not only survive, but thrive and soar. They challenge bigotry when they see it. Or they lean on friends, family and faith for affirmation. Some join a support group or seek professional counseling when they have lost their way. Ultimately, many successfully find ways to stay centered and whole, nurturing their talents, celebrating their selves.

Because of the unique intersection of race and gender in their lives, and the singular legacy of Blacks in this society, African American women have more to overcome than others. They must go to greater lengths to sidestep stereotypes, to scale barriers, to be given a chance. But anyone who has ever felt unappreciated, overlooked or marginalized will see aspects of their stories in *Shifting*. And in a multicultural society, we can all benefit from recognizing the tremendous yet often hidden toll of bigotry. Knowledge can give us the power to bring an end to it, or at least to try.

Thank you for reading.

Charisse and Kumea