



# Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America

By Charisse Jones, Kumea Shorter-Gooden

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Based on the African American Women's Voices Project, *Shifting* reveals that a large number of African American women feel pressure to compromise their true selves as they navigate America's racial and gender bigotry. Black women "shift" by altering the expectations they have for themselves or their outer appearance. They modify their speech. They shift "White" as they head to work in the morning and "Black" as they come back home each night. They shift inward, internalizing the searing pain of the negative stereotypes that they encounter daily. And sometimes they shift by fighting back.

With deeply moving interviews, poignantly revealed on each page, *Shifting* is a much-needed, clear, and comprehensive portrait of the reality of African American women's lives today.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

USA Today correspondent Jones and psychologist Shorter-Gooden initiated the African American Women's Voices Project and recorded the experiences of 333 survey respondents and 71 interviewees. The results are here compiled to form an urgent narrative, doggedly chasing the hypothesis of the book's title: that the twin bigotries of race and gender force black women to constantly "shift" between identities in order to accommodate the expectations thrust upon them by black men and white America. "From one moment to the next, they change their outward behavior, attitude, or tone, shifting 'white,' then shifting 'Black' again, shifting 'corporate,' shifting 'cool!'" The authors argue that the contemporary survival tactic of shifting is rooted in slavery, but history does not figure strongly, with the bulk of the book composed of quoted testimonies from the research subjects, tracking their shifting experiences in the realms of communication, mental health, beauty standards, romance, child-rearing and religion. Compelling and educational tribulations are piled on, but the authors rarely pause to reflect on the contradictions or solutions the stories present. Yet the book makes a real contribution, as men and women of all races will find it an illuminating if sometimes shocking record of life between two "isms."

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From [Booklist](#)

Jones, national correspondent for *USA Today*, and Shorter-Gooden, a psychologist, team up to examine how black women cope with racism, sexism, and the myths--from the image of hypersexuality to long-suffering strength--that govern their lives. Based on research garnered from the African American Women's Voices Project, the largest study to date of black women, the authors detail these women's survival strategy of "shifting" as needed into different roles, personas, and even language appropriate to corporate America or black communities. Drawing on surveys of a cross section of black women, the authors cite troubling statistics on dissatisfaction with their image and their treatment. The authors intersperse the statistics with excerpts from interviews that illustrate how individual women are coping. The poignant individual portraits provide a glimpse into the lives of black women in the church, in their families, at work, in personal relationships, as the women behind the statistics speak with their own voices about the personal cost of the need for "shifting." *Vanessa Bush*

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Review

"A deeply moving, intimate and important book about the emotional costs for Black women in white America." (Harriet Lerner, author of *The Dance of Anger*)

"Always moving, at times haunting, and often inspirational, *Shifting* provides a richly textured look at the lives of Black women." (Bebe Moore Campbell, author of *What You Owe Me*)

"Searing...as I read *Shifting*... I wanted to rip out chapters and send them to nearly everyone I know." (Gwen Ifill)

"Jones and Shorter-Gooden are wise, warm and candid, breaking new ground.... An important and powerful book for us all. (Mary Pipher)

"Meaningful and poignant...this well researched and beautifully written book is a must read." (William

Pollack, Ph.D., author of *Real Boys* William Pollack, Ph.D., author (Booklist)

“Poignant...based on research garnered from the African American Women’s Voices Project, the largest study to date of black women.” (Booklist)

“Stress is a common theme...the authors found good news...’We’re learning that we don’t have to lose ourselves.’” (Essence)

“Urgent...compelling and educational...a real contribution.” (Publishers Weekly)

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **William Martel:**

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important work, like looking for your favorite guide and reading a book. Beside you can solve your trouble; you can add your knowledge by the e-book entitled *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America*. Try to make book *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America* as your friend. It means that it can to get your friend when you truly feel alone and beside associated with course make you smarter than before. Yeah, it is very fortuned in your case. The book makes you much more confidence because you can know every little thing by the book. So , let me make new experience along with knowledge with this book.

#### **Lily Winstead:**

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#### **Carole Houston:**

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