

**Reading Guide for**  
**Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America**

*The following questions can help to guide your personal reflections and learning as well as to shape a group discussion:*

- 1. Which women's stories in the book most vividly captured your attention?** What is it about these women that was intriguing, distressing, or inspiring? What would you like to say to them? Are there any similarities between you and them?
- 2. What stereotypes about Black women are you aware of?** What impact do stereotypes of Black women have on you? On how you feel about yourself? On your relationships with other Black women? With Black men? With non-Black people?
- 3. Do you think Black women lead "double lives"?** In what ways?
- 4. What does "shifting" mean to you?** Do you shift? In what ways and in what situations? At work? At school? At home?
- 5. How do you feel about your own shifting?** Are you ashamed of it? Proud of it?
- 6. How do you feel about your skin color?** Your hair? Your body shape and weight? To what extent do you think that negative images of Black beauty affect how you see yourself?
- 7. Do you think that gender bias is a problem within the Black community?** Where do you see instances of it? How has this affected you?
- 8. Do you think that the Black community engages in "gender silence"?** Do you find it difficult to talk about or acknowledge gender bias within the Black community? Is it difficult to challenge Black men when they are sexist?
- 9. Do you ever shift in relationships with Black men?** In what ways?
- 10. Have you experienced racial or gender bias at church or in a religious community?** In what ways? Is sexism more acceptable to you in church than in other settings?
- 11. How can we raise Black girls and boys to withstand the negative images and messages about being Black?** What can we do as parents? As teachers? As church and community leaders? Should we teach Black children to shift?
- 12. How healthy is shifting?** What are the consequences of shifting for you? How does it affect you emotionally? When does it work for you? When is it damaging?
- 13. How can we keep racial and gender bias from affecting how we feel about ourselves?**
- 14. How might you be contributing to racial or gender bias, even unintentionally?** In your personal relationships? As a parent? At work? At church?
- 15. How can you challenge racial and gender bias?** In your family? At work or school? In your community? How can we work together to create a more just world?