



Eating While Black: Food Shaming and Race in America

Psyche A. Williams-Forson

The University of North Carolina Press (Aug 16, 2022)

Hardcover \$26.00 (264pp)

978-1-4696-6845-1

Written from a womanist liberation perspective, Psyche A. Williams-Forson's *Eating While Black* calls a cease and desist on policing Black Americans' food choices and habits.

Unpacking the ugly history of racist stereotypes, exclusionary agricultural policies, and the cultural assumption that Black people's lives need monitoring, this is a book that celebrates the diversity of Black American food culture across the United States. It covers different religious backgrounds and eras to dispel common myths about what constitutes "soul food," holiday meals, and other foodways. It also notes that Black Americans are too often criticized by doctors, school officials, food bank workers, and coworkers who say that the foods that they enjoy are "unhealthy, unclean, and even harmful." Indeed, Williams-Forson names food shaming as a way of asserting privilege and power—an extension of racial aggression.

The book is enlivened by incisive examples of how Black American food is demonized and scrutinized. These come from scholarly and popular culture sources, interviews, newspaper articles, social media surveys, and pointed personal anecdotes. The text is deft at gliding from summarizing academic and theoretical ideas into lively dissections of scenes from television series like *The Wire* and *Boardwalk Empire*. A noteworthy chapter about urban farmer's markets digs into the messaging to Black residents, shoppers, and potential market vendors, underscoring the need to redirect preachy lecturing about eating more vegetables and locally grown produce to actively listening to, and working with, targeted groups on market designs and operations. Doing so, Williams-Forson says, will cultivate more inviting "Black food energy," as well as expanding affordable, healthy food options at neighborhood stores.

Written to raise awareness, *Eating While Black* is a thoughtful text with insights into how much unwelcome extra tension and "heaviness" lands on Black Americans' plates.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (July / August 2022)

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