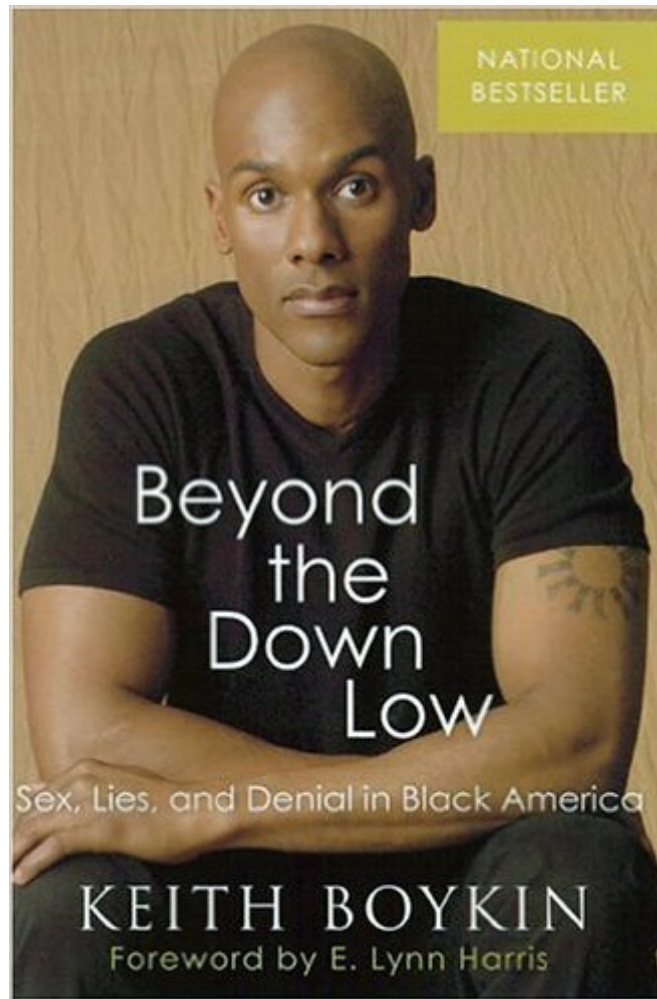


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Beyond The Down Low: Sex, Lies, And Denial In Black America



Synopsis

Keith Boykin, a former Clinton White House aide, syndicated columnist, and AIDS activist, breaks new ground by going beyond the hype with the first responsible, eye-opening look at the down low sensation. Unlike all previous accounts on the topic, *Beyond the Down Low* refreshingly presents the DL not merely as a problem of gay and bisexual men living in the shadows and endangering women, but more broadly as a telling example of the African-American community's overall failure to engage in critical but uncomfortable conversations about sexuality. Boykin details how the virtual silence from black leaders on sex matters has helped to create an environment where gay and bisexual men feel compelled to lead double lives. Meanwhile, the dialogue that has occurred both inside and out of African-American circles encourages an unhealthy battle of the sexes, ignores the complexities of the closet, demonizes homosexuality and bisexuality, disempowers women from personal responsibility to protect themselves from STDs, and misdirects public resources and attention at vilifying down low men.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Black men historically were portrayed as sexual predators. Harper Lee's classic novel 'To kill a mockingbird' after all had a black man standing trial in a deep south courtroom for allegedly assaulting a white woman, also realizing that his fair trial was a long-shot. The father, Atticus Finch became a town pariah only for believing that his client deserved justice. Yet, America likes to believe that we have moved beyond this and 'Willie Horton'. In our schools, mass media, and pop culture,

we desperately want to believe that people are being treated fairly. This and the black community's historic memory of 'savagery/respectability' portrayals are not helping the intended audiences. Keith Boykin clarifies that America is still hung up on the intersection of sex, sexuality, and ethnicity. He also argues the hang-up prevents black men and communities from having a needed dialogue about sexuality and civil rights. Black people who find themselves outside the heterosexual binary are being attacked by the dominant society, but also face resistance from within their own communities. Some black churches who easily grasp (and were in the forefront for) racial equality are silent on sexuality, or worse---promote hatred. Boykin also takes on the recent inroads which white conservatives are making to black churches to downplay their past support for segregation. Because these same people have attacked and/or are attacking civil rights, Boykin is skeptical of their motives. He believes that the white conservatives are only trying to divide black communities and thus prevent real equality for all communities from being realized. Boykin argues that Black churches should not support movements which argue on behalf of discrimination.

"Part of what concerned me [about King and the "Down Low" phenomenon being publicized in the media] was that the connection between the down low and black women seemed a bit illogical. There were two ways to look at it. Either the down low was new or the down low was old, but either way it did not make sense. If the down low was new in 2001, it could not have been responsible for an epidemic that was twenty years old. On the other hand, if the down low was old in 2001, then we should have been alarmed about HIV infection rates among black women ten to fifteen years earlier when the epidemic was raging out of control..."The AIDS community of funders, researches, activists...had a problem...some activists [in the early 90's] decided to market the epidemic for Middle America... 'There was definitely an effort to make AIDS more compelling to the Black community' [Phil Wilson] recalled, 'and that process entailed a de-gaying of the epidemic'..."Keith Boykin BEYOND THE DOWN LOW From Chapter Five "When a Disease Becomes an Excuse" "Governor McGreeley [of New Jersey]'s wife must have been going through a full range of emotions the day she stood next to her husband at his press conference... McGreeley also admitted to 'an adult consensual affair with another man' which he said 'violates my bonds of matrimony'. That was the real bombshell...dropped that day...By announcing his affair with another man, Governor McGreeley...proved that the down low is not just a black thing...We should have known that black men were not the only ones who cheated on their wives. Or had we bought into the myth of black male identity that constructs black manhood solely as pathology?

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