



Passing: When People Can't Be Who They Are

Brooke Kroeger

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Through the provocative stories of six contemporary "passers," and examples from history and literature, a renowned journalist illuminates passing as a strategy for bypassing prejudice and injustice. Despite the many social changes of the last half-century, many Americans still "pass": black for white, gay for straight, and now in many new ways as well. We tend to think of passing in negative terms -as deceitful, cowardly, a betrayal of one's self. But this compassionate book reveals that many passers today are people of good heart and purpose whose decision to pass is an attempt to bypass injustice, and to be more truly themselves. Passing tells the poignant, complicated life stories of a black man who passed as a white Jew; a white woman who passed for black; a working class Puerto Rican who passes for privileged; a gay, Conservative Jewish seminarian and a lesbian naval officer who passed for straight; and a respected poet who radically shifts persona to write about rock 'n 'roll. The stories, interwoven with others from history, literature, and contemporary life, explore the many forms passing still takes in our culture; the social realities which make it an option; and its logistical, emotional, and moral consequences. We learn that there are still too many institutions, environments, and social situations that force honorable people to twist their lives into painful, deceit-ridden contortions for reasons that do not hold. Passing is an intellectually absorbing exploration of a phenomenon that has long intrigued scholars, inspired novelists, and made hits of movies like *The Crying Game* and *Boys Don't Cry* .

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