

## **Who Am I?**

*Who am I?*

I am the Latino teenager who works  
part-time in your mailroom.

You know

The one you think is in a gang,  
Just because I use street slang.

*Who am I?*

I'm the Black woman who works  
in your group.

You know

The one who wears her hair in braids,  
or a natural, or dreadlocks,  
the one you call a radical with  
an attitude.

*Who am I?*

I am your blind neighbor.

You know

The one you always speak loudly to,  
as though I had a hearing disability,  
instead of one of sightlessness.

*Who am I?*

I'm the Korean grocer in your  
neighborhood.

You know

The one you call unfriendly, just  
because I don't smile enough for you.

*Who am I?*

I am a lesbian, or the gay person  
who is your associate.

You know . . . oops, maybe you don't know.

I chose not to share that aspect of

W h o I a m ,

Because you and your friends are  
always joking about "Homo's", and  
"queers", and "lesbos".

If you only knew how closely I work with you.

*Who am I?*

I am the Japanese American who  
works in your sales department.

You know

The one whose name you make fun of  
and expect me to laugh.

*Who am I?*

I am the Christian woman who travels  
with you to make client calls.

You know

The one you keep apologizing to,  
every time you tell an off-color joke,  
or use God's name in vain.

Why do you apologize?

You obviously are not sorry, or you would  
change your behavior.

*Who am I?*

I am the older man.

You know

The one you get impatient with  
because I don't talk, move, or drive  
as fast as you do.

One day you will be old, unless  
you experience the only other alternative.

*Who am I?*

I am your administrative assistant.

You know

The one you always call "Hon" or "Sweetie"  
whenever you want coffee.

How many years will it take for you  
to learn my real name?

*Who am I?*

I am the new associate who just  
relocated to your office.

Y o u k n o w

The one you imitate all the time,  
because of my southern accent.

*Who am I?*

I am the American Indian.

Y o u k n o w

The one you call chief, and ask how's my squaw.

If you were interested in me as an individual,

you would know

that squaw is a derogatory French Canadian term,

and chief is not a word I joke about.

*Who am I?*

I am the Puerto Rican.

Y o u k n o w

The one who speaks Spanish to my

friends at work.

You think we are talking about you . . .

Don't flatter yourself.

*Who am I?*

I'm the African American man who  
works down the hall.

You know

the one you and your friends say,

I only got my job because of my  
color, of course not because I was the  
best candidate.

*Who am I?*

I am the Chinese American human  
resource specialist.

You know

The one you keep asking to help you with your computer,  
even though I don't understand that technical stuff either.

*Who am I?*

I am a White American.

You know

The one you blame for the errors  
made over 200 years ago,  
the one you think "has it made",  
the one you think "just doesn't get it",

even though I am your strongest  
advocate among my peers.

*Who am I?*

I am an American person  
I worry about the environment,  
education for my children, my next  
paycheck, crime, and crabgrass  
in my front yard.

I am the person who wants to know  
the real you, if only you would act  
interested in the real me.

—Lenora Billings-Harris, 1994