88 Unashamed Black Mental Health Stories

THE BACK STORY: I wanted to provide a safe space for Black writers and creatives to tell our stories and start conversations about mental health and how it impacts us. I am grateful that working with Inlandia Institute as the anthology editor, I was given complete freedom in the book content and design. These are the titles for the different topics in the book: Family Dynamics, Faith and Mental Health, Mind and Body Wisdom, Living in Black Skin, Abuse and Resilience, Diagnosis Does Not Define Me, We Are a Quilt (symptom descriptions), Voice for the Voiceless, and Internal Struggle for Life. After I decided on topic categories for the stories, poems, and artwork, I wanted the readers to linger, reflect and have discussions about the stories, so I created questions at the end of each section.

WHY THIS TITLE: I usually create a handful of titles and will ask for input and feedback from friends. One friend was adamant about the word unashamed being used in the title to convey boldly expressing one's truth. Pulling from her journalism experience she felt the book needed to clearly let the readers know what to expect – so Black Mental Health Stories followed Unashamed. I still felt like something was missing. A different friend asked me how many stories are in the book. I went through the table of contents and there are eighty-eight stories. She said – that is your title. It felt like a sizeable offering to readers.

WHY SOMEONE WOULD WANT TO READ IT: Although this is a collection of works by Black writers, and historically there are barriers and cultural references that are Black-centered, I believe communities of color, those who have been othered, and that is anyone with mental health challenges, will be able to relate. The voices are honest, encouraging in the truth they express, have lived through and write about it. I didn't feel so alone in my own journey as I read the submissions and have talked with several of the authors. I think it has a specific and universal experience and anyone who reads the book will be enriched in empathy, understanding and self-acceptance.

WHERE TO BUY IT: Amazon Bookshop.org

PRICE: $20.00