



ILERA[™]
Counseling and Education Services

"INCREASING AWARENESS, CHANGING LIVES"



Iya Rev. DeShannon Barnes-Bowens, M.S. (*Iyanifa Iwalewa Ifasalewa Fasina*), is the founder of ILERA Counseling & Education Services, and works as a spiritual psychotherapist, professional development trainer, and writer. Through ILERA, she offers workshops, programs and written content focusing on spiritual injury, vicarious trauma, sustainable self-care, spiritual development and wellbeing. Iya DeShannon received a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Missouri - St. Louis, and a master's degree in counseling from Pace University. She has practiced Ifa-Orisa spirituality since 2001 and is an initiated working priest. Iya DeShannon was also ordained as an Interfaith Minister through One Spirit Interfaith Seminary in 2010 where she served as a first-year dean, Assistant Director and Co-Director of the program. She worked with a wonderful team to ordain 130 ministers during her tenure.

Iya DeShannon is the author of *Hush Hush: An African American Family Breaks their Silence on Sexuality and Sexual Abuse* (2007, 2015) and served as a member of CONNECT Faith's Ending Child Sexual Abuse Collaborative and coordinated their Safe Faith Community Project to help religious communities in New York City prevent sexual abuse. In 2018, she was published in the Journal of Interreligious Studies 23rd issue, *The Color of God*. Other works include writing the forward to *Black and Menopausal* (2023) and contributing an article to the anthology *Interspirituality – The Future* (2025).

Iya DeShannon was the first recipient of the Bill T. Jones Award from the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT). She has taught classes or been a guest lecturer at Union Theological Seminary, Blanton Peale Institute, Manhattanville University, and University of Connecticut. Some international and national presentations of her work have taken place in South Africa, United Kingdom, Portugal, the Parliament of World's Religions, American Academy of Religion, LGBT Center in New York City, Episcopal Diocese of New York, Religious Coalition of Reproductive Choice, African Diasporic Religious Studies Association, Interfaith Center of New York, Children's Aid Society, New York Theological Seminary, and the Values Caucus of the United Nations. For more information about her work visit www.ilera.com.