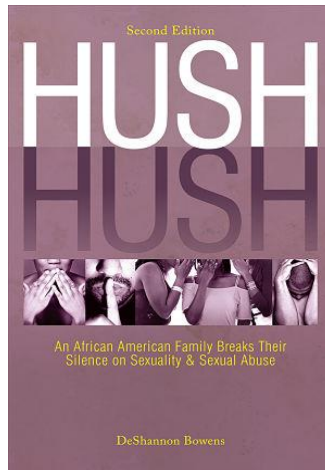




Hush Hush – The Healing Project



Hush Hush is a play written by Aquaila Barnes that explores how an African-American family deals with the disclosure of sexual abuse. It is inspired by a non-fiction book of the same title written by, DeShannon Barnes-Bowens.

Presentations can showcase a shortened version of the play with actors or video clips of *Hush Hush*, followed by discussion with the playwright and author on sexuality myths, sexual abuse in families and prevention.

Play Synopsis:

Set in present day, filmmaker Martha Kelli returns to her home town of Memphis, Tennessee to join her family in celebrating the arrival of a new baby. After staying away for many years, Martha Kelli's return to Memphis represents a special occasion for her mother. However, her Aunt Shirley hates the very idea of Martha Kelli stepping foot in their family home.

Hush Hush rings with drama and humor as Martha Kelli's arrival turns this household upside down. Her presence, though stirring and painful for some, is the impetus for healing within this family. Martha Kelli wants her family to cross the bridge of silence and talk about elephant in the room many have ignored. But do they have the courage to be vulnerable and meet her halfway?

Talkback & Educational Discussion:

The playwright and author facilitate talk back discussions after the performance to help people process their reactions, feelings and raise awareness on the prevalence of sexual abuse in families. The main objective is to begin coming up with answers to the following question: *How can we heal in our communities and break the silence surrounding sexual abuse?*



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Bios:

Aquaila Barnes - Playwright

As a playwright & director, Aquaila burst onto the scene in December 1996, with her critically acclaimed stage play, "My People, My People". It premiered at the historical Madame C.J. Walker Theatre in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Aquaila's commitment to addressing social issues that stimulate and entertain continues to be expressed in the development of her stage works: "The Cost" (a political drama); "Give Me the Mic" (a one-woman show about self-worth); and "Sisters" (a drama about illness & letting go). When she is not writing, she offers her creativity as a tax preparer and financial advisor for individuals, couples and small businesses. For more information visit www.aquaila.com.

DeShannon Barnes-Bowens - Author

DeShannon is a sexual trauma therapist, professional development trainer, Interfaith minister and founder of ILERA Counseling & Education Services. She has implemented workshops and programs at various agencies focusing on: sexuality & spirituality, healing from sexual abuse, vicarious trauma and wellness. The first edition of *Hush Hush* was published in 2007 and a revised 2nd edition was released in 2015.

DeShannon is 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. She is also the first recipient of the Bill T. Jones Award from the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT). Some presentations of her work have taken place at The Children's Aid Society, Washington University, New York Theological Seminary, University of Connecticut, Interfaith Center of New York and the Values Caucus of the United Nations. For more information about DeShannon and her work visit www.ilera.com.

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