

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

From a guide to recovering after heartbreak to a peek into the bedrooms of Black women around the world, these books aren't afraid to get intimate

BY KENRYA RANKIN



FANCY

Garcelle Beauvais has had a storied career, from moving to New York City and signing with Ford Models at 16 (and moonlighting at the Playboy Club to pay the bills), to her first *ESSENCE* cover and starring role on *The Jamie Foxx Show*. In her memoir **Love Me as I Am** (Amistad, \$27.99), the Haitian-American actress gives readers a behind-the-scenes look into her public and private life. Beauvais's vulnerability shines through as she talks about romantic relationships and her struggle to shake off her reserved upbringing and take charge of her pleasure. And she doesn't mince words in sharing her concerns about representing Black women on the *Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*, even as she remains steadfast in her resolve to honor and address her own needs, unapologetically.



KISS AND TELL

In 2009, Ghanaian writer Nana Darko Sekyiamah cofounded a blog about African women and sex. In her new book, **The Sex Lives of African Women: Self-Discovery, Freedom and Healing** (Astra House, \$28), she expands her focus, exploring sex and sexuality via intimate interviews with more than 30 Black women, ages 21 to 71, from across the African diaspora. Her subjects include Nura, a Kenyan living in Senegal with her husband and his other wives, and Solange, a queer transgender woman who came into her own in Canada.



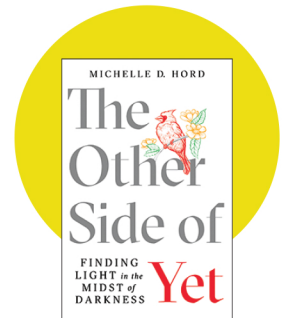
GLOW

In **Shine Bright: A Very Personal History of Black Women in Pop** (Roc Lit 101, \$28), author and Black Girl Songbook host Danyel Smith combines memoir, biography and criticism to illuminate Black women's contributions to American pop music. Highlighting little-known acts like the Dixie Cups, underappreciated ones like Stephanie Mills and superstars like Whitney Houston, Smith unpacks these artists' place in pop history and explores how their music—and her encounters with the women themselves—imprinted her life and career.



NOT FORGOTTEN

Sheila Williams's **Things Past Telling** (Amistad, \$25.99) recounts the story of Maryam Prescilla Grace, a formerly enslaved woman. The narrative is inspired by a 112-year-old author whom Williams discovered in 1870 Census records, and Williams's own ancestor. Following Grace's life from her birth in Edo, West Africa, through her stints as an interpreter and a spy and her work as a midwife, Williams crafts a beautiful reminder of how our forebears continue to live through us.



STILL STANDING

When producer Michelle Hord's ex-husband killed their 7-year-old daughter, she found solace in one Bible verse in particular: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15, KJV). In **The Other Side of Yet: Finding Light in the Midst of Darkness** (Atria, \$28), Hord lets us into her grief and provides a road map for leaning into the "yet"—the radical healing after loss that must occur as we seek to recover from unimaginable trials and tribulations.

COURTESY OF PUBLISHERS (5)