



▶ YOUR HEALTH



Kimberly Seals Allers
Credit: Courtesy Photo

Kimberly Seals Allers gives tips for a fabulous pregnancy

by Nakia Herring
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As an African-American woman who is or used to be pregnant, have you ever wondered how other women dealt with pregnancy? Have you ever wondered how pregnant women deal with stress, insensitive partners, raging hormones, or even the decisions to perm or not to perm your hair? Well, Kimberly Seals Allers has written *The Mocha Manual to a Fabulous Pregnancy* to answer your questions.

The *Mocha Manual to a Fabulous Pregnancy* is a first-of-its-kind guidebook geared towards helping African-American moms-to-be meet the ups and downs, joys and challenges of pregnancy.

Allers, who is the senior editor of *Essence Magazine* said, "I wanted to write a book that spoke to black women that addressed all the issues in their life. That is why I am so proud of *The Mocha Manual*, because it really is the first book that looks at pregnancy as a whole. It looks at an understanding of the way that we deal with things in our community, in our relationships, in our work places. It looks at all the things that can contribute to how our pregnancy will turn out."

As a pregnant woman, Allers began to look for books that would speak to her as a black woman based on what she was going through and where she was in her life. While doing her research, Allers found out some startling statistics about black women and pregnancy.

"Some of the statistics out there are scary," she says.

African-American women were four times more likely to have a low birth-weight baby; Twice as likely to have premature babies; and four times more likely to die in childbirth.

"What I realized for many years, the medical profession had attributed this disparity to social economic issues. With black women, they tend to be from poor neighborhoods, and have lack of access to healthcare. But in a new study, The Rawlings School of Public Health showed how college-educated black women were having the same physical outcomes. It was strange to me that we were such a medical mystery. And simply by being black, you are at a greater risk during pregnancy. It became clear to me that black women were in need of something just for them," she said.

In her manual, Allers discusses issues such as: high blood pressure, raging hormones, fibroids and anything that affects African-American women during pregnancy.

"I talked about to perm or not to perm, little things like that you would never find in another book. I talked about things that happened to my neck, the blackening. These are things you would never find answers to in traditional pregnancy books. These things are so unique to us; we have a lot of hair and skin issues. Knowing when to perm or not to perm, coloring our hair, texture changes. I was able to find a space to get those questions answered, because no one else would know."

And, as for those insensitive partners, Allers says, "Men aren't used to showing emotion. A lot of them are scared. In my book, I talked about my husband's aloofness and how that upset me. They don't know what to do, they can't figure out their role in this pregnancy thing; all the attention is on us. They are worried that if something goes wrong, they are not going to be able to do anything. They are going through a lot as well. It was a revelation to me."

In *The Mocha Manual*, Allers includes pearls of wisdom from celebrities, doctors and others regarding their experience with pregnancy.

"As black women, we like our sister circles. Since we look to each other for advice, I wanted the book to have more than just my voice. I wanted to bring in all these voices of women and share their stories. I interviewed close to 500 women, and they were just so excited to share their stories. Some of them said I wish this was out when I was pregnant."

Allers was recently one of the nominees for Outstanding Instructional Literary Work at the 38th Annual NAACP Image Awards.

"I was so excited. Obviously, the book is relatively new and I was so honored that they recognized what *The Mocha Manual* stands for, what it is trying to do. It is really about creating a new conversation about pregnancy and motherhood amongst black women. That has been my mission for some time. I recognized that the NAACP saw that, and it was so exciting and amazing," said Allers.

"*The Mocha Manual* is a brand that I am looking to develop. For me, *The Mocha Manual* would be a brand that expands to everything that is going on in a black woman's life. Anything black women need to know about, I hope to have a manual for it," said Allers.

For more information about *The Mocha Manual* to a Fabulous Pregnancy visit www.mochamanual.com.