

BOOKS Q&A

MAMA KNOWS BEST

A high five to writer Kimberly Seals Allers, who offers keep-it-real tips for expectant sisters in her new book, *The Mocha Manual to a Fabulous Pregnancy* (Amistad, \$14.95), a user-friendly road map that's essential for anybody having a little one.



Author Allers with her kids

Essence: With all the pregnancy titles crowding bookstore shelves, what prompted you to write this one?

Kimberly Seals Allers: During my first pregnancy in 1999, I read as many books as I could get my hands on, but none addressed a pregnant woman's emotional needs. We have

so many pressures—from our roles in the family, the church and the community and, let's be real, financially. So I wrote the book that I wanted, one I hope will connect with readers.

Essence: You offer a wide range of perspectives. There's a sister sharing the drama of her unplanned pregnancy as well as Lela Rochon's moving account of losing a baby. Was this intentional?

K.S.A.: Yes. I think we all—pregnant or not—love and appreciate other Black women. I wanted this book to feel like a conversation among girlfriends.

Variety is important. It's who we are as Black women.

Essence: Expecting or not, so many of us are stressed out but unable to ask for help. Why do you think Black women take on so much?

K.S.A.: The dangerous myth of a Black woman's being unflappable is so embedded in our society that we have internalized it as truth. In the book I quote a sister who talks about the big difference

between a Strong Black Woman and a Strong Black Fool. The more you take on, the more folks expect you to take on. The biggest step we can take to reduce stress is to practice saying no.

Essence: You have something like four jobs—writing, teaching, you're a busy mother and wife, and you're active in your community. Are you practicing saying no?

K.S.A.: Let me just say that I've mastered the art of finding balance, and while it isn't always easy, it's something we should strive for, mothers and fathers alike.

—YLONDA GAULT CAVINESS



Want to see Kimberly during her upcoming book tour? Visit mochamanual.com. ▸