

LIFE'S SPICES FROM SEASONED SISTAHs: A COLLECTION OF LIFE STORIES FROM MATURE WOMEN OF COLOR

VICKI L. WARD, Nubian Images Publishing, El Cerrito, Ca., \$14.95 US, paperback, (275p)

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Winner of the 2005 Los Angeles Black Book Expo (LABBE) Best Anthology Award, "Life's Spices from Seasoned Sistahs" is a compilation of over sixty inspiring and uplifting real-life stories and poems that celebrate the sisterhood of women. Edited by author, poet and publisher Vicki Ward, this anthology contains contributions from mature women of color from across the United States and from one sister in India. These seasoned sisters share their wisdom and insight, joys and heartaches, and tragedies and triumphs in order to empower other women. The editor hopes these personal experiences will encourage sisters of different cultures and ages to bond with each other and help them "find bits of seasoning and spice to use on their journey toward self-fulfillment, as they travel the same roads dotted with potholes, and fraught with danger, joy, and pain."

This anthology is organized into eight themes: "Sistahs' Joys and Struggles with Family; Sistahs' Joys...Life's Pain; Love, Humility, and Other Spices That Flavor Relationships; Mothers Use Love, Forgiveness, Compassion, Wisdom...; Seasonings for Our Self-Esteem; Sistahs Survivin' and Workin' It Out; Death Can Be an Awakening;" and "The Spirit...Always Present." In these stories, seasoned sisters share their accomplishments, their philosophies of life, their trials with puberty and menopause, their stories of true love, their tales of marital bliss, their experiences with broken marriages, their relationships with their female relatives, the joys and pains of bringing up children, and their grief over the deaths of loved ones. They describe their bitter experiences with racism, their battles against alcoholism, the pressures of being overweight, the trauma of abuse and rape, and pitfalls into which they fell that others can avoid. The sisters also discuss the power of forgiveness, boosting self-esteem, healing old wounds, journeys of self-discovery, survival strategies, the role of spirituality, and their triumphs over various adversities.

The stories are interspersed with powerfully evocative poems that express the heartfelt feelings and emotions of some seasoned sisters. "Rebirth of a Woman" is about a woman who walks out on her husband "after a lifetime of living in misery." In another poem, a woman "rejoice(s) with the reflection of freedom / Much like the Negro slave of the old," when the shackles binding her soul are cut off. In the insightful poem "Transformation," one sister realizes, "I need to forgive the pain I have inside. / I need to do the hardest thing, / I need to forgive myself. / Only then... / will I be able to make a change." Vicki Ward looks back on her life in the closing poem and feels content that she has "Moved forward assured. / Climbed out of potholes, tamed fears, / Enemies slain, loves won."

These unique and compelling real life accounts will touch the hearts and stir the souls of readers. Women all over the world will be able to relate to the experiences of these mature women and feel reassured they are not alone in their personal journeys. This book is enhanced by appendices containing biographies of the contributors as well as addresses and online resources for women that provide valuable information on services across the country and in some U.S. territories.

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