



APRIL 2024

## RECONNECTING WITH VALUES

by: Shaundale Rénā

With so many wonderful reads to choose from, I found it difficult to pick only one to identify as this month’s featured New Release. I was able to settle on *Exactly How It’s ‘Sposed to Be* by Trent Walton.

*Exactly How it’s ‘Sposed to Be* rounds the corner as a #1 Amazon Bestseller in under a year. This book is “A Different World” in literary form. Read about the Black college experience at the fictitious Winton College, as four brothers embark on their HBCU journey from the many walks of life that separate us yet draw us closer when we meet on the yard.

*Exactly How it’s ‘Sposed to Be* is vividly depicted. I could see this campus as clearly as I saw Hillman College when Cliff and Claire talked about it on *The Cosby’s*. Packed with true-to-life situations (and situationships), Trent succeeds at delivering a timeless story of tested manhood through principles of loyalty and accountability, purity and friendship (with the occasional side of lust). Grab your copy today and dive into the Black college experience you never knew you needed. The author weaves a web of HBCU campus brotherhood, loyalty, confusion and chaos with the necessary relationship drama on every page. If you lived for step shows, new homecoming outfits, and the chance meeting of your next boo, then kick your feet up and grab the popcorn.

But, wait!

This book is not your average chic flick. It’s a straight-up bro-mance, too.

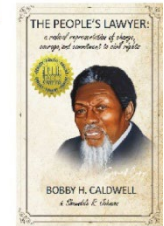
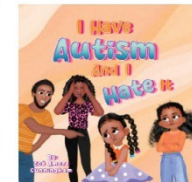
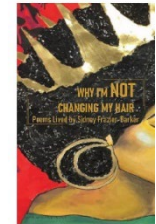
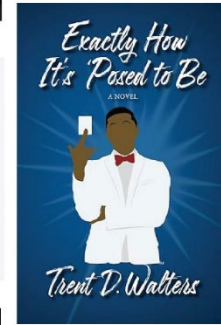
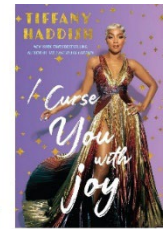
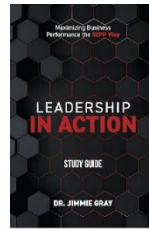
I enjoyed this story because it reminded me of my time at Grambling—the days of pledging, sleeping on my side with my head propped up to save a hairdo, and homecoming weekends in the 90s. But I recommend it because Trent pens an overwhelming case for male unity, generational reconciliation, and being true to who you are while being open to finding out you’re not who you thought you might be.

Let’s face it.

College changes us.

But with a little guidance, and a lot of prayer, we hope to experience young adulthood exactly how it’s ‘sposed to be.

In addition to *Exactly How It’s ‘Sposed to Be*, we want to shine a light on some of the other first-time self-published authors out there. Here’s my two cents worth on why these books matter, and why they should



unapologetically matter to you. Our writing is our culture—*your* culture. Writing brews in the belly of our collective Soul, crosses the ocean and carries us home—away from the chaos, into the earth, out to the land that cradles us and our ancestors alike.

As a developmental editor, it is my business to know a good book, but it is my bonafied love of reading that qualifies me to know a great story, a good writer and an excellent investment of \$20 or 72 hours from start to finish. *Yasssss!* I know a good story when I read one, and the following writers are no strangers to getting it right. No matter what your favorite genre is, these stories are sure to give you your daily dose of suspense or romance. And maybe even a little bit of inspiration or hope.

To scratch that suspenseful thriller itch, dive into *Brick* by Byron Harmon.

Want to read a good underdog story? You'll enjoy *Bag Girl* by Tozannee Smith.

In need of a poetry fix? *Why I'm Not Changing My Hair* by Sidney Frazier-Barker will have you snapping your fingers and rolling your neck to the rhythm and rhyme that echoes through the kinks, curls, coils and locs of our hair.

Be sure to check these authors out and leave your own book review wherever you make your purchase. It helps other readers make an informed decision, and it helps writers know what they did right, maybe got wrong, and to feel more closely connected to their audience. Reviews are a win. Even a seemingly bad review can help start an honest conversation among peers or spark a change in a writer's style. You never know. Your review might be the one to inspire the next great idea! So, don't be shy about whether a book spoke to you or put you to sleep. Just be honest.



Shaundale Rénā (@iShaundale) is a six-time award-winning developmental freelance editor and writer. Specializing in romantic comedy, historical and women's fiction, and nonfiction self-help and memoir, she enjoys the big picture aspect of connecting the story. While working to strengthen the work of indie and traditionally published authors alike, Shaundale has collaborated with imprints like Adams Media (Simon & Schuster) and Lake Union Publishing (Amazon). To date, her most successful self-published clients are Kimberlee Yolanda Williams, author of the IPPY, BIBA, and NGIBA award-winning book, *Dear White Woman*; NY Times bestselling author Queen Afua for her work on *Impeccable Listening*, and Zariah L. Banks the 2x-BookFest and 1x-Firebird award-winning author of *Beauty Beheld*.