

# DON'T YOU WORRY 'BOUT A THING

**BLACK WOMEN'S MEMOIRS  
OF MEDITATION AND WELLNESS**



**Stephanie Y. Evans**

*Cover Art: "My Cup Runneth Over." Used by permission of the Annie Lee Foundation.*

**Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing:  
Meditation and Wellness in Black Women's Memoirs**  
Forthcoming book by  
*Stephanie Y. Evans, PhD*

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**Book Description**

Anxiety is African American women's most common mental health issue and the World Health Organization reports gender disparities for depression and anxiety around the globe. Four decades of medical research has shown meditation significantly reduces anxiety. So, how do Black women meditate?

*Don't Worry 'Bout a Thing: Meditation and Wellness in Black Women's Memoirs* offers groundbreaking insight into the range of ways in which Black women address anxiety in four areas: personal stress, interpersonal stress, social stress, and political stress. Over 150 life stories reveal how Black women from diverse geographic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds have defined meditation as mindfulness (mind), yoga (body), and prayer (spirit). Numerous public figures such as Ruby Dee, bell hooks, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Coretta Scott King, Queen Latifah, Audre Lorde, Miriam Makeba, Rita Marley, Toni Morrison, Rosa Parks, Alice Walker, and Venus and Serena Williams join dozens of writers who provide new understanding about wellness. As mental, physical, and spiritual health, wellness in memoirs and autobiographies serves as a much needed strength-based guide. Centenarian educator Anna Julia Cooper and artist Annie Lee are highlighted as portraits of Black women's quest for inner peace.

As Audre Lorde wrote, Black women's self-preservation is a political act. These narratives about peace in mind, body, and spirit contribute to the regeneration of Black women activists who struggle against racism, sexism, poverty, violence, and human rights abuses which are foundational contributors to health disparities. Meditation lessens anxiety and, by reducing stress, also impacts the leading causes of death for Black women: heart disease and cancer. Accordingly, culturally-appropriate, values-based approaches are needed to effectively educate about healthy practices of conflict management. Exploring reflections of radical self-care, Dr. Stephanie Evans expands her research on Africana memoirs and Black women's intellectual history. *Don't Worry 'Bout a Thing* identifies "blue zones" for Black women and addresses both morbidity and longevity. By gathering together a chorus of mindful and reflective authors, this collection builds on Black women's health movement work by Byllye Avery. Evans offers an inspirational resource and shows how meditation practices like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) are relevant in communities of color. Readers learn definitions, case studies, themes, and lessons as this collage of voices creates a roadmap for those who seek to improve ecologies of health.

Byllye Avery's activism spawned national and local movements including Black Women's Health Imperative (BWHI) and Center for Black Women's Wellness. In 2012, BWHI published *Health First!: The Black Woman's Wellness Guide*. The book was dedicated, "To the fearless and faithful Black women who started the National Black Women's Health Project in 1983. You taught us that the health and wellness of Black Women—MATTERS." A portion of author's proceeds from *Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing* will be donated to several foundations that contribute to Black women's wellness, including [CBWW](#) and [BWHI](#). Jamea Dorsey, CBWW Executive Director provides the preface for this book.