ViE - Black Women and Da Rona

**Keisha:** You wrote about Black women are haunted, alluding to pandemics of the past and the historical context that challenges the ideas that we're all in this together, that was that common myth at the early part of the pandemic, we're all in this together, covid doesn't see color. Could you give us some history or some context of how you think about pandemics from colonialism, enslavement to now, or any, any blend answers a question you wanna answer

**Shamara:** Yeah. Thank you so much for that question. I think it goes back to something that Julia said about how she received the call, that the ancestors wanted to speak. And I think one of the reasons why was because, It previously in other pandemics that, you know, the 1918 Spanish flu, as well as pandemics that we know happened during slavery, during colonialism.

A lot of them, we don't necessarily have Black women's stories, right, we don't necessarily have Black women reflecting on how they were able to survive, or even statistics about how many Black women disproportionately died in these different, pandemics. what we do know though is that Covid 19 exposed that structurally if you don't have housing in place, if you have rampant medical racism, which, the American, medical Association came out with a whole, what, like 50 pages of text about how they wanna revamp the medical system, in the United States. And you know, I think countries, different countries during Covid 19 we're forced to reckon with, we don't have the infrastructure.

One, we don't have the infrastructure to take care of most of the population, but certainly those of us who are most vulnerable, the frontline workers, people who live in close quarters and can't, socially distance schools that have too many students in the classroom, so they still cannot, socially distance. People who don't have internet access, so when the school shut down, you know, their, their learning loss is much greater than other people who have access to the internet and such things.

So I think the, the Covid 19 pandemic is really instructive in sort of having a historical glance at what life must have been like for Black women who live through the Spanish flu to through any of the pandemics during enslavement and colonialism because of all of these structural issues.

So that for me was one of the most eye-opening things about writing this book and about even thinking about some of the statistics around housing, around, mental illness that Julia actually had gathered together in, in the introduction and really, went in to think about each of the categories and the ways that Black women were disproportionately affected.

And so I think this was our way of really trying to honor those ancestors that were not able to speak before and making sure that we did not just disappear in Covid 19, that we did have a voice that we did survive, that some of us did also perish but our stories are gonna be memorialized in these texts.

**Keisha:** Yes. Yes. Did you have anything else you wanted to add there?

**Julia:** You know, in, in theory I'm a political scientist, I don't always claim it. Okay. But in theory, I'm a political scientist, and once I went to a political science meeting or a big meeting, annual meeting, and I believe I was the only person speaking about HIV and aids, and the only person talking about HIV and AIDS in Black women.

And that struck me, right? Because we know that Black women continue to be disproportionately impacted by HIV and AIDS and not just outside of the US. One only has to look at some parts in New York, Baltimore for.

**Keisha:** North Carolina

**Julia:** North Carolina. Right, right, right. So, in my second book, in Shadow Buddies, I write about Black women in HIV and aids because to me it was one of those, and I call it a pandemic, even though we think about pandemics as impacting everybody in the world.

But my argument is that because Black women are disproportionately impacted and the impact is not only relegated to the Black community, because what happens is that you are losing people from society, right? Children are losing their parents. That has to constitute some sort of pandemic because it touches all of us, directly and indirectly, right? You know, I was reflecting on that experience of being at APSA and being the only person to talk about HIV and AIDS, and Black women's experiences with HIV and aids.

And it really, you know, it, it kind of dawned on me and, and people say, oh, you're always so passionate about Black women. You know, you're biased. I'm like, I'm not biased. I'm just telling you that there's something grossly wrong in society. You have a group of women that can be disappeared,

**Keisha:** Exactly.

**Julia:** a population that can be disappeared

**Keisha:** it shows up in HIV, it, it shows up, look, we, we just had the case that came out a few weeks ago where the community was saying, Black women are disappearing. I believe it's in Ohio, and the police were like, eh, they're probably somewhere. And in fact, they were. And it was dozens of women. And it wasn't until someone escaped. And so this is something that I'm so glad you're talking about Black women disappearing from the statistics, from the news stories, from how we engage when we talk about HIV, when we talk about heart disease.

Even up until recently when we talked about pregnancy, even though Black women were disproportionately affected, we were not there, which is what makes this book even more important, because you still see how Black women are not being talked about, even as we're expected to come up and fight for everyone but ourselves.

**Julia:** Right, right. That whole notion of listen to Black women, but I keep saying, but are y'all hearing Black women?

**Keisha:** Exactly. Exactly.

**Julia:** And do y'all want to hear Black women? Because that's the other thing, right? Do you genuinely want to hear Black women? So I always tell people, you know, this is not a bias. This is not to suggest that other people aren't suffering. Other people are suffering. And we, and we, we recognize that and we honor that, right? But what we're trying to do, and what we try to do in this book is we saying, here's a very specific population. And it's not just in the US, because what I try to do is I try to gather statistics across the African diaspora. Right? Which is really hard to do. You would think in 2022 we would have better data collection.

**Keisha:** Nope.

**Julia:** This chit chatter about intersectionality to data collection is horrible, you know? And social scientists, I'm like, oh my heart.

**Keisha:** And there's, there are assumptions that are made, right? Even in places Like Brazil where we know that there are these racial stratifications and hierarchies, you still see it, but you manage to get those stories included, which is fantastic.

**Julia:** Yes. We tried. We tried.

**Keisha:** Oh, so let's talk back to the idea of care, community and consciousness. What do these themes mean to you? And I think that's a perfect segue after we talk about how people have, Black women have been disappeared or attempted, there's have been attempts to disappear us. Going into this care, community and consciousness, what does it mean in this broader concept of the book.

**Shamara:** Care, community and consciousness were all really core pillars of the text. And one of the things that I really loved about the method that Julia employed in creating this book was this ethics of care. We had an ethic of care. The, the authors also had an ethic of care that basically spoke to how we were going to be together in this, in this space. How are we going to be forming this space? and one of the things that, I think was really grounding about that was that people were not writing in isolation.

And, Julie could talk more about how she paired people together to write together. but people were not writing in isolation. And that's why you have such a cohesiveness in the text where you have people who are literally speaking to each other and drawing from each other as they're going through the process. Because as we know, Covid was such a life altering state and very, very isolating. And I think one of the really great things that came out of like, Practicing this type of communal writing was pulling us out of this quarantine mentality or this isolation mentality to say that we are actually together as Black women going through these experiences, and we can hold each other up and lean on each other in these ways.

And that was the same type of relationship that I think Julie and I were also able to develop as editors, who were able to, you know, constantly just be in communication. Like, I don't know if I would've gotten through the pandemic with anyone else.

**Keisha:** Well, you know, but, but that's a key point, right? Is that, and to be clear, we're, we're talking about this now, so we know the pandemic is still going on, but because this is recorded, and people may listen to this years from now, I want it to be clear that the writing was occurring during the pandemic.

So this is not a retrospective, this is people writing in real time and having to care for each other. It's very trans. Your style of even writing it and building this volume is a transformative experience. I don't know if the writers will write in the old islands of excellence isolation way again, after you get this feeling of, of care, this ethics of care, it really changes your perspective. Sorry, I was reflecting on that. Go ahead, Juliet.

**Julia:** You know what I'll say is that I'm still in communication with quite a few of the authors and quite a few of them are still writing together.

**Keisha:** Mmm.

**Julia:** one of the authors reached out to me and said, and this is very recent, and I'm paraphrasing, she said, I found my voice. She said, you allowed me to explore and to find where I wanted to be in the academy. She says, you never told me something was impossible. And one of the questions, so there's a lot of care and attentiveness in this text, right? And I talked about a little bit about that in another podcast. So this involved, for example, having Zoom meetings with the authors and asking questions such as, what is your legacy?

Not what do you wanna write? But what is the legacy you want to leave? Right? And that totally reshaped writing. It totally reshaped for some of 'em, reshaped their relationship with the academy. You know, some of the writers, you know, would reach back out and say, I took a risk and left this job because I realized it wasn't allowing me to flourish. And I, you know, in writing with you, I realized it could be a different model.

**Julia:** Right? There are moments where you, you look back at a project and you think the project is one thing when you're in the midst of it, and then you have a little bit of perspective, a little distance between the project and you realize that you were wrong about what the project is about.

**Keisha:** Mm-hmm.

**Julia:** Right? I was wrong about what this project was about.

**Keisha:** When you started, what did you think this project was going to be about compared to how it ended up being?

**Julia:** All right, so in Lavender Fields, I have a 10-year-old who wrote a piece.

**Keisha:** Hmm.

**Julia:** And Lavender Fields consists of Black women, various ages doing various things. They're not all academic, et cetera. While you know, Black women, da Rona is more academic contributors.

They're all kind of auto ethnographic and to some extent, right, which, which is something that I didn't expect to privilege, right? That, that the kind of methodology of the, texts, but what I didn't imagine was that it was an opportunity to encourage individuals to live deeper in their truth. now that's the part I didn't anticipate.

**Keisha:** yes.

**Julia:** Right. but to watch people grow through the process of writing and, and Shamara, I know you can probably speak to this, but just to watch how people grew as writers, and then I'm reminded, you know, and, and I journal a little bit about this, how Black women write because writing is important and we do it for the academy, but we write to save our souls. And there in light the ethic of care. We wrote this through the pandemic to save our souls.

**Keisha:** Exactly. Because who else is gonna save us?

**Julia:** Right?

**Shamara:** Exactly.

**Keisha:** Yes. And, and I think it's going to come through for the readers as well, that you're going along with this journey, and even thinking about you know, I've written a lot of chap book chapters and how. Usually, I don't know what else has been written in the book until the book comes out.

And so it's so unusual and it's a great, it's great because then you can be in conversation with each other as you're writing, but also I'm sure for those who wrote the chapters in the book, that they could also see their own growth. And it comes through in how they write, like the start to the finish.

And so how, how did you decide the topics? Because there, there's no shortage, of topics when it comes to how Black women are continuing to be affected by Covid 19, or The Rona, how did, how did you make those decisions?

**Julia:** That was not easy by any stretch of the imagination. You know, I, I, I freely admit that I did something that was not environmentally sound. I printed all of the proposals and it literally was like a jigsaw puzzle. So I would color coordinate. So I had different color sticky notes. Well this goes with this. And we knew that we wanted a diasporic view,

**Keisha:** Mm-hmm.

**Julia:** Right? We didn't just want this to be a US-based black woman's text. And, and I was really intentional about writing the story of my mother, her little friend in the introduction. You know, her little friend that cried cuz she couldn't hug her, you know?

**Keisha:** Mm.

**Julia:** Cuz I wanted to tell as best as we could, a story that was wide without losing the depth of it, if that makes sense. And I wanted to be able to capture the various ways that we found ourselves having to deal and coexist with Covid, right? So like Shamara is writing about breathing literal and figurative breathing, right? Figuratively, breathing right was part of our struggle. But the other part of the struggle was how do we care for those little girls that residing us? like the little girl who resided my grandmother's neighbor, right?

**Keisha:** Mm-hmm.

**Julia:** So we went to the kitchen table. We went back in time and pulled it forward, which is something I still love about Black women, how they bend time,

**Keisha:** Mm-hmm.

**Julia:** So in the book, there's this reaching back in the past and pulling forward things, but there's also this forward motion.

**Keisha:** Absolutely.

**Julia:** Black women are living in the future right here, right now, while they're living in the past. I'm like, oh man, only a black woman can do that, right?

**Keisha:** Yes.

**Julia:** you know? and so, you know, I, I literally saw this as a puzzle. Putting together a puzzle of fitting things together in a way that will try to tell a nuanced story, right? Cuz I didn't want this, I wanted people to see the complexity of black womanhood,

**Keisha:** Absolutely. I mean, you're talking about health, you're talking about sex lives, like sex became complicated. it's particularly if you weren't in a partner relationship. Shamara, you look like you wanna say something. I wanna let you roll.

**Shamara:** Oh, well, you know, I think one of the things that I really wanna emphasize, the intentionality, with which the book was curated was one of the things that Julia would always say is that, you know, Yes, like the world is falling like we're feeling, like this sort of sense of angst and a lot of negative energy that's going on with just everything that was happening, particularly in 2020, 2021. But how can we lean into the care work that we are practicing? How can we privilege that over

**Keisha:** yes.

**Shamara:** You know, the impending demise?

**Keisha:** Absolutely.

**Shamara:** This book could have been a really different book if, you know, everybody was just writing from that place of like, oh my God, like the world is falling down. but instead you get, you know, these so innovative chapters on letter writing and through the pandemic dancing, you know, sex as you mentioned, breathing, you get mother schooling. There's all of these different.

**Keisha:** Technology, all of it.

**Shamara:** and one of, one of the contributors even says, you know, there was this, I guess a New York Times article that had come out sometime in 2020, where. this, woman had written that, oh, well, she was just gonna give up because, you know, she just couldn't do anything else.

And, you know, the black woman who wrote this particular chapter was co-authored by I think five different women we're like, well, we have never had a choice but to innovate. You know, but to be creative. And so that's where I think, you know, drawing on that, those legacies, those ancestral legacies, as well as connecting to the present in terms of the innovations that Black women were able to form was so important.

I think in the, I think that's one of the reasons why maybe you were able to feel such warmth coming out of the text was because we really tried to reorient the reader to think about not coming from a place of lack, but from a place of abundance. And Black women have always had an abundance, even during a pandemic.

**Keisha:** Yes, and I love that word abundance, that I, at the start of this, calendar year in 2022, I kept saying that this is gonna be a year of abundance. This is, that's how I look at it. This is a year of abundance. So I love that that's the phrasing that you use as you think about this book, that we can also enter next year into abundance as well.

So now that we are wrapping up the second year of this pandemic, if you were to think about writing this book this year about Black Women and Da Rona, like, because like I said, you were writing this book in the moment in real time, is there anything in hindsight like, oh, maybe we should have talked about this more, or maybe we should, you know, come from this angle or thought about this, was there anything that I guess was either left on the cutting room floor, so to speak, or that was unexpected, that maybe should have been talked about or could have been? Could not, should have, but could have been talked about.

**Shamara:** I mean, I think whenever you reflect on a project, there are always things that, you know, could have been said. But one of the things that I'm really proud of is that I think what was in this book was supposed to be said at that particular time, and I think it really comes from, you know, this sort of ancestral, wisdom that Julia keeps drawing from.

Um, but one of the things that you. I think about in hindsight was, I was actually pregnant and I had a baby in, 2020 during the pandemic. And one of the things that I think, you know, in future texts, what I would love to sort of read more about is different Black women's experiences birthing during the pandemic.

 I think because, you know, at some point in time, Nobody was allowed in the maternity ward with you. literally like, so in some states you had to be birthing by yourself, you know, and we know of course, as you mentioned at the top of the, podcast that, black woman's mortality rate, in, in delivery is like astronomic is like out of this world, right?

**Keisha:** Absolutely.

**Shamara:** So I'm just wondering about, you know, what the impact of that was or is and continues to be and how that reverberates. As Julia mentioned, you have a whole slew, a whole generation of children that are growing up without their parents. either with their mothers because they were lost to Covid, or their fathers were lost to Covid or because of these other types of losses during delivery.

Right? so that's something that, you know, I, I think in the future I would love to hear more about. And then one of the things that I was trying to write about in the chapter that I wrote, um was about long covid. I think more people are talking about long covid now. we know more about it.

At the time when I was writing, it was hard to find a lot of information around long covid and specifically how long Covid was impacting Black women. There was only sort of like a handful of news articles around that time. but now there's more information about these sort of long-term illnesses, symptoms, the fatigue. You know, people talk about sort of long term covid.

And so I think, you know, that's another area where I would love there to be more emphasis on the ways that Black women are dealing with long covid, and what their sort of recovery time is and how we can further support Black women who are continuing to suffer. Cuz as you said, the pandemic is not over unfortunately.

**Keisha:** Exactly. Exactly.

**Julia:** I remember when I first talked to an editor, a publisher about this book, the response was, well, how could you be writing a book in the middle of Covid? What are they gonna write about? Their experiences? I'm like, you know, I have to.

**Keisha:** Because a lot of people thought that Covid was gonna be like y2k, right? That it was gonna be something that happened and it was one, you know, small like blip in time and we would all laugh about how crazy things were for a month or so, or how concerned we were, and it was really nothing. But clearly that's not the case.

**Julia:** that's not the case. That's not the case. When you asked that question, I had to think, the book, like Shamara said the book is what it needed to be. It's not a complete story, right? Because that volume will be too big. The fact that One Press decided to publish two volumes, is, is I'm like, okay, somebody trusted, you know?

What I would love to see, because I'm realizing that this is more and more of an issue, and if we knew during Covid, but I didn't have any chapters, any proposals on this issue is the kind of covid and intimacy, right? So what does covid mean for partnering? And unfortunately, I know of one too many cases where marriages fell apart during covid. You know what I mean? What does that mean for the notion of the Black family?

**Julia:** And I don't want this to seem patriarchal, like, you're talking about, you know, male woman kind of intimacy. No, I'm talking about intimacy across the board. What was partnering like for Black women during Covid, and I'm really curious about partnering for, high achieving Black women. So when you are that one in the community that people see as high achieving, and maybe Covid might have fractured a little bit of that high achieving partnering, how do you reconcile that?

**Keisha:** Exactly.

**Julia:** Because in community I know that, you know, I'm listening to some of the people I know there, there's a lot of guilt, right? Why couldn't I not have done this or done it differently? Right? I wish also there was a bit more, I think we hint at it, but it's not great detail about mental health.

**Keisha:** You know, I, I think you're right. That's something folks are realizing now how much more mental. Needed to be discussed because mental health is not just, some things can be handled with Zoom, but as humans we need physical touch, and hugs, you know, and you know, we had even, there were times when you could be in the same house with someone and you can't touch them because of fear of disease or exposure.

If you work with someone who has a what an essential worker. And, and when I, and oftentimes in the black community the essential workers are also the disposable workers, so you know, the thing, the risk you can't take. and, and oftentimes that sacrifice was touch in mental health. So getting back to mental health and intimacy, about how covid can affect that. Building the community that you can build comes into place.

**Julia:** Right. I know of instances where partners had to sleep in separate rooms.

**Keisha:** Yes.

**Julia:** And I also think. I, I always make fun, I'm a grandmother's baby and my grandmother's 94 and frail. I couldn't see my grandmother for fear that I was gonna bring Covid home, you know what I mean? And so, you know, yeah, I'm talking about intimate relationships like, you know, partners, but I'm also talking about those intimate relationships with family members, right?

And what that, and the toll that that took, cuz I remember, you know, I would sit and cry cuz I couldn't see my grandmother.

**Keisha:** Yeah.

**Julia:** you know what I mean? It, it was, you know, or, or I even think about how like my daughter coped with it. That poor dog must have went on so many walks, I know that poor dog, you know what I mean? But maybe those kind of stories of where, where it gets, it just becomes a little bit more intimate, if that makes sense. Yeah. I think that's where, you know, I mean, I don't, I don't, I, I love the texts as is

**Keisha:** Oh yeah, it is

**Julia:** You know what I mean? There's a lot of risk taking. There's a lot of bearing oneself, in these texts. Particularly in lavender fields, where we really? getting to The, nitty gritty of people's fears and stuff like that. Right. I think there needs, and I'm not doing this, I don't, that the ancestors can come calling from now till

**Keisha:** I was gonna say, look, don't look. Don't go out in the garden.

**Julia:** Right, but there needs to be a text on intimacy during Covid.

**Keisha:** Yes, yes,

**Julia:** and Black intimacy during covid.

**Shamara:** Yeah. And I think, you know, well, one point I wanna make about that and then Julie, I wanna also go back to when we were shopping the book and just how hard it was to actually find publishers that were interested in publishing books on Black women.

**Keisha:** yes. As a, as a, as a niche audience.

**Shamara:** right, right. Because we're always assumed to be this niche audience that doesn't have anything to contribute to generalizable knowledge. But, you know, thinking about thinking, Hey, you know?

**Keisha:** Look, I, I know it's the, I know it's, it's the world we live in, but it is every time I, I, I hear it. I still shake my head like, really? The, really y'all, but I know it's true. I know it's true.

**Shamara:** it was so difficult. It was so difficult to find, you know, a home and for these books and to, you know, for publishers who really got it right and, and, and, and saw the importance in making sure that Black women's voices were elevated. And I remember at some point I, I was a little bit frustrated, you know, cause I was like, Julia, like, is this the normal like, you know, process like when you're shopping at book?

And she was like, you would be surprised actually. you know how many publishers you have to kind of go through and that don't really value. Unfortunately, Black women's contributions. And so I think it's, we would be remiss to sort of not talk about that side of the process, the back end of things. so I don't know if Julia wanna say a word about that.

**Julia:** I'll start out by saying that, and this is, you know, Arizona Press is not paying me, but Arizona Press is, has always been for me, lovely to work with, particularly the feminist wire because they actually have a particular kind of consciousness and, and, and a keyer. So this is not my first book with Arizona Press and the feminist wire, and yeah, Shamara was starting to get a little nervous and I was like, eh, we'll be okay.

**Keisha:** It'll find a home.

**Julia:** yes. Because I'd been down this, this road before, you know what I mean? and, and, and Shamara, I think I told you the story of like my first book where, you know, the, the, the publisher was like, oh, nobody's gonna buy it. And you know, people ask me, is there enough to write an entire book around Black women? I'm like, oh, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. I mean, we're, we're, wait, what? I didn't even bother to answer that question.

**Keisha:** Good, good. You, you shouldn't have to, you shouldn't have to.

**Julia:** I was like, gimme my book, right? Because clearly you don't have a particular kind of understanding of black womanness.

**Shamara:** Okay.

**Julia:** And so I remember like with my first book, they said, oh, I one sell, and you know, it was published in 2008 and you know, I can still get a check to go buy a large fry. I'm not gonna be wealthy, but you know,

**Keisha:** for, for a for an academic book. Look, you could look the fact that you're still getting checks for number one and they're not for 7 cents. Cuz I have seen those 7 cent checks.

**Julia:** Like why? Right.

**Keisha:** Yeah. It's like it cost you more to mail this check

**Julia:** You know, so I think, I think it was a lot calmer in comparison to Shamara. And, and the other thing was I didn't wanna separate the two books.

**Shamara:** Mm-hmm.

**Julia:** right? And I didn't wanna combine them. So there were presses that said, oh, combine it, make one volume, drop people out. I was like, Uhuh, Uhuh, Uhuh, these books both have a tale to tell and it's a very valid tale to tell.

Right. And so it was, it's a process and, and I, and I think it's always a process to get people to, to recognize the value of telling a black woman's story. That there's value in that. You know, the question is, well, who's gonna buy it? I'm like, just trust me. You do good work. It's gonna find a home.

but I would say, you know, and this was something my mentor told me really early in my career, and it came through again in this book, is to build your work on a foundation of truth. It's not gonna make it easy. And you know, cuz you still have to go through all these hoops cuz they're gatekeepers and you know, boards and stuff like that.

I'll, I'll tell you a little story and Shamar, I don't know if I told you this and this is why I wasn't necessarily worried about this. So for my second book Shadow Bodies, I'm not gonna name the press. Don't worry. I got, and I still kept these reader reports, right? I mean, I got by what Perfect reader reports. Perfect. Never in my life, and I will probably never get that again. Right? The editor, the, the publisher, the editor at the press was like, yes, we're gonna do this. Let's do this.

The board said no. Mm-hmm. the board said it's not coherent. Yeah. So when, when we see Black women persevering and writing about Black women, trust,

**Shamara:** yes.

**Julia:** trust, there's a story that can be written behind

**Keisha:** Well, the process, this is the process is a story in and of itself.

**Shamara:** Yes. Yes.

**Keisha:** It really is. It's a guidebook. You know, to, to other folks to, to know, to keep pushing forward.

**Julia:** Right.

**Keisha:** We are, we are gonna be wrapping up soon, but I have, this is a question that's, you know, that I have for you. I think I may have asked this the first time I met you a few years ago. How do you get the covers?

I mean, I know this is a podcast, but Julia consistently has the most beautiful covers. Academic presses are known for having horrific plain, stock image photos that they use, but you always have these beautiful, meaningful artwork, photography. How, how did you. If you could describe the cover, for our listening audience, because I, yeah. When I saw it, I, I, I started clapping while I was looking at it.

**Julia:** Shamara, Shamar, you might be better suited. I am. I am horrible at describing images

she wanted.

**Shamara:** No. Yeah, I mean, the cover, as you said, is amazing, and it's by this artist. I'm, I'm not remembering her name, but it's called Generations. It's Gold, and then featuring these sort of black, woman figures. And it's kind of like, kind of like the Russian dolls effect, where you have like, you know, the bigger, um,

**Keisha:** Stack dolls.

**Shamara:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. The stack dolls where you have like the bigger, black woman and then you have these sort of little smaller images of black woman like sort of in encapsulated by her. So you're right that Julia does consistently have the most beautiful colors in her book, and I think it's one of the reasons is she gives such beautiful descriptions to the publisher.

So everyone, we were thinking about, okay, like what, how, you know, what can be the image of the book? And I was like, well, I've never chosen the image for a book before, so I don't even know like where to where to start. and Julia was like, okay, you know, I'm thinking about a quilt and I'm thinking about ancestors and I'm thinking about and somehow you know, Arizona Press, you know, went out and like found this artist that beautifully encaptured all of the things that Julia was thinking about.

I was like, but yeah, it ended up being sort of the perfect representation of what we wanted to communicate with the book, which is why I'm. I'm so gratified that you used the word warmth when you first, were talking about how the book made you feel, and I think that is the, that is what we wanna communicate with the cover from cover to cover.

From when you actually first see the book as you're reading and, and going through the book, it was supposed to move people to feel that level of warmth, that level of care, that connectivity with the ancestors, that connectivity with the innovative contemporary legacies that, Black women are continuing to shape. and I think, I think that the cover really just, it spoke to all of that for. So

**Keisha:** Look, warmth and an academic book, an academic press book is, those don't usually go together.

I cannot underestimate how important it is to have a book that is warm, authentic, and still scholarly. Like that's those, those don't always come together. So it's an amazing accomplishment.

**Julia:** Thank you. So the artist is Gemma Morris. and we had two options for covers and it was hard, it was a hard one. But like Shamara said, you know, we can't be shy about defining ourselves. right? And having the images truly represent who we are. And I remember there was a particular cover that I had, and I, and I resisted the, the press because it was a very, what I perceived to be a very violent cover.

And I said, oh, no, no, no, no, no, no. We're not doing this. We are not doing this. And so I have learned to be very, very intentional about how I want to represent Black women.

**Shamara:** Mm-hmm.

**Julia:** and the legacy of that representation. Right? Because I know we talked a little bit about legacy because these books are gonna stay around for longer than I'm gonna be on this earth,

**Shamara:** Yes.

**Keisha:** yes.

**Julia:** and I want each part of the book to tell a story, right? Each part should tell its story of the complexity, the vibrancy, the beauty, the spirituality, the comfort, the love, hells by Black women in between Black women, and so that's how I choose covers.

**Keisha:** Well.

**Julia:** I get lucky too, know

**Keisha:** Well, I listen, you can call it luck, but I, I think it's a skill. You can probably, you know, do a workshop just on how to pick your cover and how to demand a good cover. When you know you've gone through all this effort to write a book and then the publisher will give you this stock image. I'm like, wait, you know how long, what I sacrificed? And that's what I have to have as a cover. So I appreciate, you know, you being very, you know, directive about what, how you will allow your work to be represented.

So, when will the book be released and how can people buy it?

**Julia:** The book is available for pre-order, and the University of Arizona press, you're able to pre-order there. And what I like, again, Arizona Press is not paying me, but what I like is that they publishing it in paperback And it's accessible. so the price for an academic book truly is accessible. cuz there are times when I've written stuff And I'm embarrassed to tell people I wrote it because I know they can't afford it.

**Keisha:** Yes.

**Julia:** but this is, this is accessible. Mm-hmm.

**Keisha:** absolutely, which means that it can be in your local bookstore. Whereas sometimes when academic books are so expensive, when you have a $90, you know, book, you know, it can be difficult, you know, for even your local book seller to purchase it. But this book, you know, a local book seller can actually have it and sell it, multiple copies of it.

Besides for of course, all the national Book Sellers, Black Women and Da Rona Community Consciousness and Ethics of Care, Shamara, Julia, it’s been a pleasure to have you here. Thank you so much for inviting me to be a part of this book. But I wanna thank you especially for sharing your process, your stories, about writing the book yourselves and bringing the authors together.

So thank you so much.

**Julia:** and thank you for joining us on this journey.

**Shamara:** Yeah.

**Julia:** We appreciate you.

**Shamara:** yes. Thank you.