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## BOOKSHELF



*Monica A. Coleman, The Dinah Project:  
A Handbook for Congregational Response to  
Sexual Violence.*

*(Cleveland, The Pilgrim Press, 2004), 177 pp.*

Debby Thomas-Gaskin

Reverend Monica Coleman, an ordained elder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, is the founder and former coordinator of "The Dinah Project" at Metropolitan Interdenominational Church, Nashville, Tennessee. Reverend Coleman's training, publications, and public appearances are a direct reflection of her commitment to providing spiritual insight, awareness and education on the issues of sexuality.

As the author of *The Dinah Project* Reverend Coleman in part portrays an autobiographical journey, one that exposes to a great degree her vulnerability and challenges, both spiritual and psychological, as a survivor of rape. This handbook serves as an informative and highly effective tool that can be used by local churches in response to sexual violence. While within its pages sexual violence and other related terms are defined, myths are dispelled, and detailed programmatic methods are provided; clearly questions are being raised regarding the church's role in providing 'help, hope and healing.' What is or should be of striking interest is whether or not those things upon which African Methodism is founded are missing from the AME churches and if so determine if this book will aid in our return to our 'roots.'

After statistics state that one in six women and one in six children are victims of rape or attempted rape it becomes clear that sexual violence is all around us and one of these victims may belong in your church. For the record sexual violence dates back to the biblical era, i.e. the stories of the gang rape of Lot's visitors, Tamar's incestuous rape, the rape of Jezebel and Dinah's rape, just to name a few. As startlingly silent as the response was then, so it is now; but it must stop! Tolerance is no longer an option nor is the church's minimal response. Due to the effects that far exceed what meets the eye and the need to be ministered to 'spirit, soul and body,' this becomes an area that only the church is qualified to address. The church can do its part not only within the walls, but also outside the walls of the church. Through the use of existing agencies and organizations and the use of spiritual creativity in church settings such as worship service, Bible study, counseling sessions and workshops this will provide unique opportunities to address and educate the church and community at large. The Dinah Project is in fact an organized church response to end the silence of sexual violence and to begin total healing.

To explore the great silences and deficiencies in an area of personal sensitivity, while providing possible solutions, is quite a commendable feat. The author shows heart and 'holy' boldness, both of which is neces-

sary to continue the walk of faith regardless of what lies in our path. I highly recommend this handbook as a support guide for ministers, counselors and persons affected by sexual violence. ■