

EBONY

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COLLECTOR
EDITION

*"I am America. I am the part you
won't recognize. But get used to
me. Black, confident, cocky, my name
not yours; my religion, not yours; my
goals, my own; get used to me."*

*— Muhammad Ali
1942-2016*

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The Power of the Pen

By ASHA FRENCH

Mightier than a sword, the written word has the ability to change

the way we think about ourselves and how the world receives us. In fact, National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) award-winning author Sil Lai Abrams is an example of that very sentiment. Her new memoir, *Black Lotus: A Woman's Search for Racial Identity* (\$24.99; Gallery Books/Hunter Publishing), explores the joy of choosing and possessing her own Blackness when "multicultural" isn't enough. Abrams was a teenager when her parents told her the truth: Her biological father was not the White man who raised her. This fact sent her on a journey to find and embrace the heritage that had been hidden



Sil Lai Abrams

from her, the history she'd needed to understand the root of anti-Black racism that checkered much of her childhood.

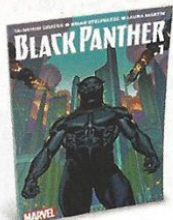
Abrams shares that writing this novel helped her embrace her background. "One cannot truly be empowered without accepting all of himself or herself. If I did not become secure with my Blackness, I would be accepting the ideology that stigmatizes being Black around the globe and other people of color. Theoretically, I could have chosen otherwise, but what would I have chosen? When you look at my picture, I'm definitely not White, and I'm not Asian. But there's Black in there. Why not accept all of me?"

For Abrams, cultural acceptance is also about connection. "My work as a domestic

violence activist is about being with my people. If you have any amount of personal authority, you need to educate others because it will help them find their freedom and stand in their truths. If I can speak up and prevent myself from being defamed, then I can do the same for other women. Community is what helped save my life when I moved to New York City. For the first time ever, I was able to walk up to a group of people and have them say, 'You're one of us,' which was part of my personal restoration."

Abrams hopes that others who have similarly complex backgrounds will find healing and the courage to embrace their full selves after reading her book. "Freedom," the author says, "is yours to choose."

MUST-READS



1 **Black Panther: A Nation Under Our Feet (Volumes 3-5)** by

Ta-Nehisi Coates (FROM \$3.99 EACH; MARVEL) Marvel comics continues the story of its first Black superhero with the help of MacArthur Genius Award-winning journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates, who called the project "the realization of [his] dreams as a 9-year-

old." The Black Panther is the king of Wakanda, a mythical African country that must fight to survive the superhuman terrorist group "The People." Even in comic book form, Coates continues to wrestle with the nature of leadership in the age of Black power.



2 **Tell the Truth & Shame the Devil: The Life, Legacy, and Love of My Son Michael Brown** by **Lezley McSpadden**

with **Lyah Beth LeFlore** (\$26.95; REGAN ARTS) Few know more about the intersections of race and class than a Black parent who has witnessed a law enforcer take his or her child's life. For these parents, the devil, a mixture of willful blindness and systemic rac-

ism, is bigger than a red monster with horns. McSpadden's memoir shames her Satan as she tells her story before and after the clip of her son being murdered went viral. This book is about Mike Brown and the village that raised him, the village that mourns him still.