



## **The Siwe Project announces annual ‘No Shame Day’**

The Siwe Project is a global non-profit dedicated to promoting mental health awareness throughout the international Black community, a goal that is furthered through its annual No Shame Day. Each July, during BIPOC Mental Health Month, the No Shame Day campaign provides an opportunity for people around the world to rally around mental health care, with the purpose of encouraging more people to seek treatment without shame. Participants are encouraged to take part in discussions about mental illness stigma, diagnoses, and treatment options, and are provided a space and a supportive environment to share their stories.

In 2020, the ninth annual No Shame Day will be held on Monday July 13. This year, No Shame Day takes on new importance, with Black lives being so disproportionately affected by so much of what’s happening in the world: the effect of COVID-19 on Black and Brown communities, the public focus on the Black Lives Matter movement, and the everyday struggle to survive in a society that doesn’t support or protect Black lives and mental health. We are asking people to publicly share their mental health journeys or speak as allies for loved ones in their lives. Individuals can participate in the ongoing conversation about self-care and mental health options on a variety of platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. “We’re encouraging people to tend to their mental health that day without shame,” Ikpi explains. On No Shame Day, people are encouraged to unabashedly seek out community in order to empower their quest for mental health and wellness.

Siwe Monsanto, The Siwe Project’s namesake, would have been 24 on March 8th of this year. Instead, she took her own life on June 29, 2011. It was Siwe’s suicide that prompted Bassey Ikpi, a family friend, to found the non-profit. As a mental health advocate and a noted writer, Ikpi has maintained a transparent look into her own life with Bipolar II Disorder. “The aim is to create community; people who need support forging with those who support or have loved ones who live with neurodivergence,” says Ikpi. The Siwe Project believes that sharing stories not only fosters individual healing, but community transformation, and strategically uses social media to cultivate safe spaces to share new stories. Additionally, the organization works to widen the public dialogue regarding the mental health experiences of people of African descent.

Bassey Ikpi is a New York Times bestselling author and mental health advocate whose work has appeared in publications such as *Essence*, *Huffington Post*, and *The Root*. Her bestselling memoir *I’m Telling the Truth but I’m Lying* chronicles her illness, unflinchingly sharing her journey and deftly weaving the narrative of the stories in which mental illness is an ever-present supporting character.