

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Was Deacon's employer, the American Dream party, right to remove him from his job? Should he have fought them and sued for discrimination? Why or why not?
2. Do you know anyone who stutters? Why do you think they stutter? Would you hire them to work for you? Why or why not?
3. When Deacon felt disrespected by his son's principal, how should he have handled the situation? Have you ever had a tense meeting with your child's teacher or principal? How did you handle it similarly or differently from Deacon and Candy?
4. Maria gave Jamil to Thomas because she feared she'd be as unfit as her own mother had been. When she couldn't get her drinking under control, did she make the right decision by giving Jamil away?
5. Once she gave Jamil to Thomas and Lucille, should Maria have insisted on being up front with Jamil about her identity from the start? Why or why not?
6. Because Deacon's stuttering was relatively mild, he managed to hide it during most of his young adult life, until it caught up to him. What types of secrets have you attempted to hide from others, until circumstances forced you to be open about them and seek help?
7. When Deacon and Maria were nearly caught in their affair at the clinic, should they have just confessed? Why or why not?
8. Discuss Deacon's father and Deacon's evolving view of him. Was Frederick just another "failed" black leader or a sincere hero with a few human flaws? How have your own views of your parents shaped your life?
9. Should Maria have even entertained filing suit to get custody of Jamil? Was she right to blame herself for Guy's reappearance and kidnapping of Jamil?
10. Why do you think Deacon's marriage to Mercedes didn't work out? Should he have considered her offer to reconcile?
11. What do you think of Deacon's mother and the ways she walled herself off from her family, after Frederick's death? Was she just protecting herself, or being selfish?
12. Considering the many ways he tried to help her, could Maria still maintain a working relationship with Ramsey?
13. Was Maria right to meet Guy and Jamil on her own, without Deacon's help?

14. Why do you think Deacon's pending marriage to Maria will be more successful than his first? Or, why not?
15. Should the truth about Frederick Davis's death ever be revealed? Would it help or hinder the leaders like Perry Hooks, who are trying to follow in his footsteps?