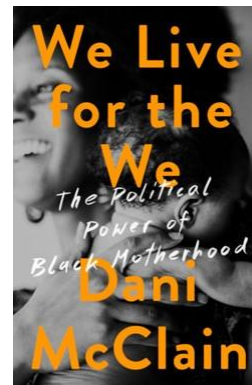


## Discussion Guide

### *We Live for the We: The Political Power of Black Motherhood*

By Dani McClain

1. In Chapter One, McClain describes the process of developing trust in her obstetrician and others she encounters during prenatal care. She also interviews black birth workers and writes about the importance of finding culturally appropriate circles of support with other expectant parents. Did these interview and reflections help you better understand the challenges black families face around pregnancy and birth?
2. Early in the book, McClain writes, “When pressed, [white] parents often admit that they don’t know how to talk about race and are scared that if they try, their kids will say the wrong things in the world. Black mothers, on the other hand, are scared not of talk of race but of the impact of racist oppression.” (p7) Have race and power been common topics of conversation in your family? Why or why not? If so, who’s initiated those conversations, and how have they gone?
3. In Chapter Three, McClain writes, “Mothers transmit culture.” Have you found that to be true? When have you witnessed a mother passing on lessons that shaped a child’s understanding of the world around them?
4. Certain cities play an important role in the book, namely Cincinnati, Detroit and the San Francisco Bay Area. How has rootedness in one community or experiences in various communities shaped your parenting or your childhood? Has choosing where to live been an important decision in your family’s life?
5. Throughout the book, McClain expresses a sense of anxiety. The emotion is a consistent presence in her experience of early motherhood, whether she’s choosing a childcare provider, choosing a school, or acknowledging the persistent threat of police violence. Can you relate? To what extent do fear, worry and anxiety play a role in your family life?
6. McClain describes wanting her daughter to know that she is in charge of her own body. This commitment to supporting the child’s bodily autonomy means the family has to reject certain practices, such as spanking or always giving grandparents hugs upon request. Have you or members of your family had to unlearn long-held beliefs around consent or effective discipline? How has that been for you?
7. In Chapter Nine, McClain shares this quote from organizer and mother Cat Brooks of Oakland: “Our job as black mothers is to keep pushing the liberation ball down the court. Our obligation is to leave the world better for them and to ensure that they are equipped with the tools that they need to fight... I tell my daughter all the time — and it’s harsh — but we don’t live for the I. We live for the we.” (p. 201) What does the book’s title mean to you?



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8. In the conclusion (p. 228), McClain writes: “The most important dividing line today is between those who believe our greatest resource is our imagination and those who think unbridled imaginations are dangerous, a threat to existing ways of organizing power.” Do you agree? What is the role of imagination in your own life?
9. Can you point to specific passages that struck you personally?
10. What impact has this book had on you? How has it changed the way you think about your own story of parenting, family life and community life? Who is the “we” that you are living for?

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