



ABHM Book Club Discussion Guide

August 21st, 2025 at 6 PM CT

***A Fool's Errand* by Lonnie G. Bunch III**

How to Use this Guide:

[America's Black Holocaust Museum](#) staff created this guide to assist in reading and discussion of *A Fool's Errand*. Please feel free to print a copy and keep it with your book as you lend to friends and others who are interested. Do not expect to get through all of the questions during the upcoming meeting nor in one sitting. Perhaps consider them as conversation starters or an invitation to reflect more deeply about this book.

Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How many of you have visited the National Museum of African American History & Culture before? If you visited, how was your experience? Did reading this book help you understand or process your visit and the importance of NMAAHC?
2. Like ABHM, NMAAHC is [a museum and a memorial](#), but it is also a monument. Why was so much thought put into the building construction? What message was sent by having the building on the National Mall along with the other monuments? See pages x, 5, 33, 34, 67, 69, 70, 82, 198, 200, 205, 227, and 250.
3. Both ABHM and NMAAHC aim to serve as conveners of difficult conversations, bringing "reasonableness" and historical context to contemporary debates. At what points in the book does Dr. Bunch describe NMAAHC playing this role? What other museum experiences have you had that do this? See pages 10, 52, 159, 231, 237, 252, 253, and 257.
4. Dr. Bunch makes it clear that his vision for NMAAHC was to create an institution that contributes to racial reconciliation and healing, which is also part of ABHM's

mission. Can museums “contribute to the greater good of the nation,” and be “tools for social justice”? Do you feel that museums can and do contribute to the greater good? If so, how do they do so? See pages x, 10, 25, 26, 31, 133, 223, 236, and 249.

5. Central to the creation of NMAAHC were Dr. Bunch’s connections to political representatives and advocating for the cause on Capitol Hill. Why was this kind of advocacy important? How can we advocate for museums in our own communities? See pages 7, 11, 20, 22, 118, 137, 144, 154, 195, and 251.
6. NMAAHC was the only Smithsonian institution to be created without collections at the beginning. Where did the robust collection ultimately come from and how did this help refute the notion that “little African American cultural patrimony” exists? What does it mean to NMAAHC and the country that people chose to take care of these things for so long in their basements? Why and how should museums help people take care of and interpret their belongings? See pages 8, 48, 56, 91, 93, 96, and 225.
7. In what ways is NMAAHC a global museum? Why and how did Dr. Bunch ensure the museum included international and transnational perspectives in interpretations, as well as framing African American history as American history? See pages 28, 29, 30, 50, 58, 81, 100, 103, 132, 158, 185, 186, and 232.
8. A thread throughout this narrative is the importance of museums to commit to sharing the “unvarnished truth” of our country’s history and helping tell the untold stories of everyday people. How would this approach contribute to healing and a better country for all? Do you think the museums you have visited have done a good job of this? See pages 4, 9, 10, 25, 26, 45, 127, 174, 215, and 234.
9. Throughout the book, Dr. Bunch discusses his experience in the museum field, which is overwhelmingly white. Why was it important for him to consider the diversity of the staff of this museum? Why is it important to have diverse museum staff at all levels? See pages 6, 9, 12, 38, 57, 69, 122, 177, 181, 184, and 242.
10. Did this behind the scenes account of the creation of NMAAHC change your perspective on the work of museums? If so, how? What do you think the role of museums can and should be in the future? See pages 22, 50, 159, and 258.