



ABHM Book Club Discussion Guide

April 25th, 2024

***Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower* (Graphic Novel Adaptation) by Damian Duffy and John Jennings (2021)**

How to Use this Guide:

[America's Black Holocaust Museum](#) staff created this guide to assist in reading and discussion of *Parable of the Sower* graphic novel. 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. *Parable of the Sower* begins in 2024 and ends in October 2027, which is very close to home considering that is our *now*. How did knowing that while reading make you feel? What criticisms was Butler making of a looming future and which speak most truly to our current reality? Do you think it is worthwhile for Butler and other science fiction writers to try to predict or forewarn of certain futures? See pages 1, 90, 97, 149, 251, and 265.
2. What is life like in the society that has been created in Robledo where Lauren grows up? How does this, along with familial dynamics, form her personality and perspective on the world? What kind of expectations are put on her in this society and how and why does she resist them? See pages 7, 40, 65, 75, 104, and 115.
3. What was your initial response to Earthseed as a religion and did it shift as you made your way through the graphic novel? How does Earthseed compare to existing religions? How does it serve Lauren's reality? How does the society and community she envisions compare to the one she witnessed in Robledo? See pages 13, 19, 21, 49, 59, 82, 108, 159, 183, 187, 201, 218-9, 228, 237, and 261.

4. Throughout the novel, we see excerpts of Lauren’s diary in tandem with the development of Earthseed. What particular events and experiences in her travels encourage her to write? How do these push the concepts/tenants of Earthseed? What is the importance of literacy in this story? See pages 44, 55, 98, 118, 128, 130, 164-5, 177, 180, and 205.
5. Lauren reveals to us early on that she has a condition called “hyperempathy,” which results in her feeling others’ physical pain along with them. Why do you think Butler made this character choice? Why does Lauren keep this a secret through most of the novel? What do you think the world would look like if we all felt the pain inflicted on others? See pages 9, 11, 35, 77, 92, 156, 158, 199, and 229.
6. What qualities make Lauren a good leader for Earthseed? What does this novel have to say about generational divides and shifts? About the role of young people as activists and leaders of social movements? How do the older people in Lauren’s life react to her ideas and leadership? See pages 45-46, 60, 171, 185, 195, 203, 216, 220, and 256-7.
7. There are several comparisons in the novel to the system of slavery in the United States. What are some examples of this? Where do you see similar forms of resistance? See pages 95, 181, 234-6, and 258-9.
8. In the introduction, Nalo Hopkinson writes that this story insists on “bearing witness, insists on being heard,” which is similar to how Dr. Cameron talked about his memoir, *A Time of Terror*. What does it mean to “bear witness”? How is this particularly true as a graphic novel? See page v.
9. This was the first graphic novel we have discussed as part of the ABHM Book Club. Did you like it? Did you have to adjust the way you read or take notes? Did you have a favorite illustration or find one that was the most powerful to you? How does it relate to [other titles](#) we have read for this book club? The authors of this book have adapted a previous selection for this book club, *Kindred*. Should we read it?
10. *Parable of the Sower* is a speculative science fiction novel. It portrays a very grim possibility, but what lessons can we take from it that can help provide hope? In what ways can people find hope or form community even when society feels like it is collapsing or “going insane”? How are people helping each other to survive and are there parallels to that in our current reality?