



ABHM Book Club Discussion Guide

January 26th, 2023

The Three Mothers by Anna Malaika Tubbs

How to Use this Guide:

[America's Black Holocaust Museum](#) staff created this guide to assist in reading and discussion of *The Three Mothers: How the Mothers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation* by Anna Malaika Tubbs (2021). 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 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 much did you know about these three women before reading this book? What surprised you about their lives? How were their lives different/similar? Of all the Black mothers in history, why do you think the author chose to write about Alberta, Berdis, and Louise? See pages 6, 7, 9, 58, 103.
2. What personal perspective does the author bring to this book? What is her personal connection to this research and how do you think that influenced this work? See pages 4-6, 201, 203.
3. A lot of this book focuses on how these women (and Black women, in general) resist, and the stories of many other Black women are included throughout. How did these women resist and what methods did they pass on to their children? How do these women illustrate the pain of generational trauma and the power of generational knowledge? See pages 25-26, 43, 48, 50, 101, 129, 154.
4. All three women outlived their sons, which is a devastating reality for a lot of Black women in this country. How do their stories relate to the last book we read, *Death of Innocence*? How did Mamie Till-Mobley and these three women's lives and decisions influence the Civil Rights Movement? See pages 29, 56-57, 152, 155.

5. What does this book teach us about how Black peoples' marriages and families are influenced by the effects of slavery, racism, and white supremacist violence? What challenges did they each face at home, in their relationships, and in their own work? Do you think marriages are still targeted to uphold white supremacy? See pages 66, 70-71, 77-79, 94, 99, 115, 118, 213.
6. What did you think about the quotes included at the beginning of each chapter? Why do you think the author often included quotes that are seemingly in juxtaposition to one another? Were there any that stuck with you or shocked you? Did the quotes influence how you read the chapter?
7. How do the stories of these three women illuminate the history of the U.S.? How were their lives impacted by both world wars, the Great Depression, the Great Migration, the Harlem Renaissance, race riots during the Red Summer, police brutality, welfare debates, and the politics of their time? See pages 9, 41, 51-52, 62-63, 102, 107, 121.
8. How does the author situate these women within the intellectual/liberation movements of their time? For example, Garveyism, the establishment of the NAACP, and the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement. Do you know of other Black women who have been overlooked despite their important roles in these national movements? See page 46.
9. For those of you that have read *A Time of Terror* or know Dr. Cameron's story, how did his own mother influence his path towards becoming a civil rights activist? How does she relate to these mothers? What about his wife, Virginia?
10. How can we work towards a world where Black women are recognized for their role in the history of this country? In what ways do you see Black women (and Black communities) resisting the same systems these three mothers were facing? How can we alleviate the burdens of resilience/strength still placed on Black women? See pages 207, 217.
11. What is the significance of seeking more hidden histories, stories, and perspectives? How might this change how we view the past and the present?

Please also see discussion guide at the end of *The Three Mothers* (pages 229-232)