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## READING GROUP GUIDE

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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- 1. Though his daughter is only three years old, Laurence Ralph worries about the difficulties she might face growing up as a result of her race, describing how Black girls are often “pushed out” of schools. Similarly, he recounts other racial disparities in the criminal justice system. Where do these disparities begin? How might we effectively address these issues nationally and in our own communities?**
- 2. Ralph describes how Rene runs into one of Sito’s old teachers, who is now regretful about Sito’s wrongful imprisonment. This comment enrages both Rene and Sito. Why? How do schools perpetuate the cycles of racism and inequality?**
- 3. Sito and Miguel agree to go on patrol, but Miguel pushes Sito to go further into Army territory in order to impress the older gang members who are exclusively men. How do gender and gender stereotypes play into gang culture?**
- 4. After Sito is released from juvenile hall and struggles to reacclimate into his community, Ralph writes: “In retrospect, Sito’s arrest seemed inevitable.” What factors contribute to this supposed inevitability? Was there any institution or individual who could have made a difference in Sito’s trajectory?**

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5. During the meeting with San Francisco DA Chesa Boudin, Ralph finds himself torn between Boudin's campaign pledge and Sito's family's desire for accountability. How does the personal complicate how we address systemic issues?

6. Ralph describes a professor whose demonstration of reforming the criminal justice system versus transforming it profoundly impacted him. How has Sito's story changed the way you think about criminal justice? What areas of the criminal justice system do you think can be reformed? What areas need transformation?

7. After Sito's death, Rene urges Sito's friends not to take revenge on his killer. What steps does Rene take to break the cycle of violence, and how effective are they? What cultural and societal norms make it difficult for him get through to these teenagers?

8. Rene tells Sito's friends that intercommunity violence is what the cops want, saying, "They want us to kill each other so they don't have to." Ralph later explains how the San Francisco DA's office never ended up finding or charging Rashawn's killer, despite having the resources to do so. What do these examples reveal about the ways that race and class impact how families are treated within the U.S. justice system?

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**9. Reflecting on Julius' sentencing hearing, Ralph writes, "Both the prosecution and the defense refused to conceive of a world where Julius was both talented and troubled." What are the dangers of presenting monolithic narratives about Julius, Sito, or Rashawn?**

**10. Throughout the book, Ralph shares stories from Yoruban mythology. What are some of the common themes in the Yoruban religious tradition? How does that inform Ralph's vision of justice?**