Book Discussion

The Other Wes Moore by Wes Moore

1. Share the excerpt that you brought to class: a passage that you found interesting and explain what it means to you.

2. Consider how their fathers’ involvement in their lives affected the two Wes Moores. Did other male role models take their places? How did their siblings and extended family members influence their lives? Who are your main influences?

3. Wes describes attending the private school, Riverdale, as living in two worlds. Explain how these diametrically different experiences influenced his identity formation. Did the other Wes also experience conflicting identities? How so?

4. On page 82, Wes describes his relationship with his mother, “My desperation for her support was in constant tension with my desperation for independence and freedom.” Give examples from the book where this is apparent. How is this changing relationship with his mother similar or dissimilar to other adolescents’ relationships with their parents?

5. On page 126, the two Wes Moores consider whether their life paths were a product of their environments, expectations, or both. Find some examples of how these influences played a part in each of the boys’ lives. How do these influences relate to personal choice and responsibility?

6. When Wes lived in South Africa, he compared the transition from adolescence into adulthood in both the U.S. and South Africa. What are some ways that this is accomplished in both countries? Who were the people and what were the experiences that guided you as you moved from adolescence to adulthood?

7. The other Wes continues to claim that he is innocent. Do you believe that he participated in the crime that he was convicted of? Why or why not? What might have been his reasons for getting involved in the robbery?

8. The story of both Wes Moores forces the reader to question what was different in the lives of both boys that produced such variant outcomes. What do you think were the reasons that one boy has become a respected and productive adult and the other is in jail for the rest of his life? In what ways can the family, school and community scaffold children who are at risk or who are falling between the cracks?