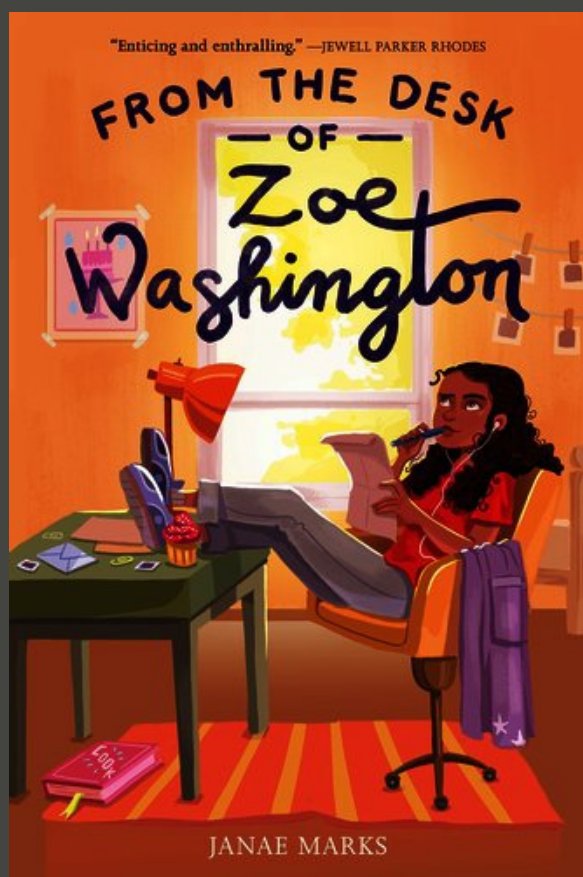


Community Matters Family Book Club

Discussion Guide

Monthly Book Pick:

From the Desk of Zoe Washington
by Janae Marks



Season Dates and Times

Thursday, November 18th @ 6 pm CST



This Month's Theme: Wrongful Convictions

This November we will discuss wrongful convictions. Use this guide, along with Janae Marks' novel From the Desk of Zoe Washington to explore the ways wrongful convictions affect children, families and the community. Like any book club, please navigate these conversations with patience and kindness. Our intent is to better understand ourselves and the world around us.

Sincerely,
Michelle, Jenny, Mary, Tiffany, Christina, Sam
The Community Matters Planning Team

JOHNSON COUNTY
KANSAS
Library



Photo of Author Janae Marks

Conversation Starters

What surprised you about this book?

What is a wrongful conviction?

Zoe's father makes her a playlist of all his favorite music. What is your favorite song?

Zoe's loves to cook and dreams about auditioning for Food Network's Kids Bake Challenge. What do you dream about?

Themes

- Wrongful convictions
- Race and the justice system
- Bias/stereotypes
- Black lives matter movement
- Mixed race families
- Representation

Discussion Questions

1. Zoe thinks “why did Marcus sound so nice...he seemed normal.” What do you expect people in prison to be like?
2. At first Zoe does not believe Marcus when he says he is innocent. Zoe asks herself “[do] innocent people go to prison?” What do you think? Is this possible?
3. When Zoe goes out alone with her stepfather people stare. What do people think when they see family members that look different from each other? Why?
4. When Zoe looks at a chart that shows the different races of people the Innocence Project helped she notices most of them are Black. Does this surprise you? Why do you think that is?

Discussion Questions: Continued...

5. When Zoe and Trevor are working at the bakery together Zoe is bored folding boxes and Trevor speaks up so Zoe gets a chance to do more. Do you speak up when something is important to you?
6. Zoe hasn't seen many Black pastry chefs on tv or in books. Is it easier to dream about doing things when you see other people who seem similar to you doing them?
7. Some of Trevor's basketball teammates say mean things about Zoe and Trevor does not defend her. How did Trevor fix his friendship with Zoe?
8. Zoe's Grandmother said Marcus did not have enough money to hire a lawyer so he had to use a public defense lawyer who "wanted him to plead guilty". Do you think Marcus would have gone to jail if he had the money to hire his own lawyer? Why? Why not?
9. Zoe thinks "it was hard not to see him as a criminal when he was in that jumpsuit." Is it harder to see someone as innocent if they look the way you would expect a criminal to look? Where does the idea of what criminals look like come from?
10. Zoe's Grandmother quotes Maya Angelou when she says "when someone shows you who they are believe them." What does she mean? How did Marcus show Zoe's Grandmother who he was?

Additional Resources

[The Stanford Prison Experiment](http://www.britannica.com/event/Stanford-Prison-Experiment)

www.britannica.com/event/Stanford-Prison-Experiment

[The Innocence Project](http://Innocenceproject.org)

Innocenceproject.org

[Rutgers National Resource Center](http://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/resources/directory/national-programs)

nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/resources/directory/national-programs

[Sesame Street - Coping with Incarceration](http://Sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/incarceration)

Sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/incarceration

