

**NON-FICTION BOOK CLUB**

*April 2019 Selection*

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***We're Going to Need More Wine* by Gabrielle Union**

One month before the release of the highly anticipated film *The Birth of a Nation*, actress Gabrielle Union shook the world with a vulnerable and impassioned editorial in which she urged our society to have compassion for victims of sexual violence. In the wake of rape allegations made against director and actor Nate Parker, Union—a forty-four-year-old actress who launched her career with roles in iconic '90's movies—instantly became the insightful, outspoken actress that Hollywood has been desperately awaiting. With honesty and heartbreaking wisdom, she revealed her own trauma as a victim of sexual assault: "It is for you that I am speaking. This is real. We are real."

In this moving collection of though provoking essays infused with her unique wisdom and deep humor, Union uses that same fearlessness to tell astonishingly personal and true stories about power, color, gender, feminism, and fame. Union tackles a range of experiences, including bullying, beauty standards, and competition between women in Hollywood, growing up in white California suburbia and then spending summers with her black relatives in Nebraska, coping with crushes, puberty, and the divorce of her parents. Genuine and perceptive, Union bravely lays herself bare, uncovering a complex and courageous life of self-doubt and self-discovery with incredible poise and brutal honesty. Throughout, she compels us to be ethical and empathetic, and reminds us of the importance of confidence, self-awareness, and the power of sharing truth, laughter, and support.

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## **Discussion Questions:**

1. In the book's opening chapter, Gabrielle describes growing up in two separate worlds: spending the school year at home in Pleasantville, a mostly white California suburb, and the summers in a black neighborhood in Omaha, Nebraska, with extended family. How did this duality affect her? How did she behave in each of these worlds? What did she learn from each? What accounts for the diversity of these worlds? What does it mean to "be black" or to "be white"? Can we ever escape the notion of "race"—and should we?
2. When she returned to Pleasantville, she recalls that she didn't share the stories of her friends in Omaha being killed by gang violence, or going to prison, or dealing drugs because the white students "didn't deserve to hear them." What do you think she means by this statement?
3. In the chapter "Black Girl Blues," Gabrielle describes an early moment in her career when she went to a modeling shoot and found a hairdresser who clearly didn't know how to work with hair like hers. Why didn't she speak up? Are we born with confidence or can it be learned? How can one build assurance and belief in one's self? Have you ever experienced a moment like this—when someone makes a choice that you didn't agree with, but you didn't push back? Why do you think women especially do this?
4. In the chapter "Open House" Gabrielle reflects on her parents' relationship. She describes how her mother finally reached her breaking point and decided to leave her father, after years of disconnect in their marriage. What finally propelled her decision to leave? Why do you think her mother stayed in the marriage for so long? How did both of these choices affect Gabrielle and her siblings?
5. Gabrielle bravely speaks out about her rape in "Code 261." One intriguing question she is asked, even now is "What were you wearing?" Why does this question trouble her? Does it bother you? Why do you think the idea that a woman's clothing—how she dresses—is an invitation for sexual violence remains prevalent in our society?

6. When she looks back at her first marriage, Gabrielle admits that she entered into the union with many reservations. She confesses that, from the moment of the proposal, she felt she was making the wrong decision. Why did she go through with the wedding? What compels women to continue in relationships, engagements, and even marriages that they know are wrong for them? Why do so many people sacrifice their own happiness in the name of “saving face”? Can anyone who settles truly be happy?
7. After giving a speech about negativity and the culture of competition at the luncheon for Essence’s Fierce and Flawless Award, Gabrielle is applauded and praised for her honesty. In this chapter, she writes that “there’s always an audience for negativity.” Why does she say this? Do you agree with her? Do you think negativity and pain drive our culture more than joy and goodness today? What can we do to change this?
8. As a celebrity, and one half of a very high-profile couple, Gabrielle constantly contends with rumors about her relationship, and especially about whether or not she is pregnant. The stepmother to Dwayne’s two sons, she is often asked if she and her husband will have children. How does she react to this question? Are her feelings of frustration justified? Is this question an invasion of her privacy? Why doesn’t her husband get questioned the same way?
9. Describe the woman you met in the pages of *We’re Going to Need More Wine*. What impressions did you take away reading the book? What did you learn about Gabrielle? What can her experiences teach us about our own lives?



### **Review or Comment about this book:**

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### **Recommendations:**

- If you liked *We're Going to Need More Wine*, you might like *The Last Black Unicorn*  
(<http://www.booksamillion.com/p/9781501181832>)
- You might also enjoy *Becoming*  
(<http://www.booksamillion.com/p/9781524763138>)