



The White Lake Beacon Book Club

February 2021 Pick:

The World According to Fannie Davis: My Mother's Life in the Detroit Numbers

by Bridgett M. Davis

*The White Lake Beacon is pleased to announce the launch of a new community "Beacon Book Club", a monthly collaboration with The Book Nook & Java Shop and the White Lake Community Library. The first weekend of the month, The Beacon will announce the book selection along with a summary and questions posed for readers. Replies to the questions and commentary can be sent to the editor at: editor@whitelakebeacon.com Chosen replies will be published in The Beacon on the last weekend of the month. The monthly book will be available to borrow from the White Lake Community Library and for sale at The Book Nook for 20% off. Additionally, readers are invited to discuss the book safely in person at the Book Nook or via zoom the 1st Wednesday of the following month at 6pm. **The author, Bridgett M. Davis, has agreed to join the monthly discussion of the book via zoom on March 3 at 6:00.** More information about the meeting, including the zoom link, is available on the Book Nook website www.thebooknookjavashop.com.*

The first selection for the Beacon Book Club is *The World According to Fannie Davis: My Mother's Life in the Detroit Numbers* by Bridgett M. Davis in honor of Black History Month. From the publisher:

In 1958, the very same year that an unknown songwriter named Berry Gordy borrowed \$800 to found Motown Records, a pretty young mother from Nashville, Tennessee, borrowed \$100 from her brother to run a numbers racket out of her home. That woman was Fannie Davis, Bridgett M. Davis's mother.

Part bookie, part banker, mother, wife, and granddaughter of slaves, Fannie ran her numbers business for thirty-four years, doing what it took to survive in a legitimate business that just happened to be illegal. She created a loving, joyful home, sent her children to the best schools, bought them the best clothes, mothered them to the highest standard, and when the tragedy of urban life struck, soldiered on with her stated belief:

"Dying is easy. Living takes guts."

A daughter's moving homage to an extraordinary parent, *The World According to Fannie*

Davis is also the suspenseful, unforgettable story about the lengths to which a mother will go to "make a way out of no way" and provide a prosperous life for her family — and how those sacrifices resonate over time.

Davis fondly recounts her comfortable, charmed childhood made possible by her mother. However, she contrasts nearly every detail of the good life with the slow decay of Detroit around her: housing segregation and white flight, aggressive policing, the spread of drug abuse and targeted neglect by the surrounding white communities and politicians. Particularly fascinating is Davis delving into the Great Migration, America's underground economies, post-civil rights movement politics, and the history of lotteries.

Discussion Questions

1. Bridgett M. Davis writes that their "family secret became the paradox of [her] life." Bridgett is proud of her mother's accomplishments, yet she is also fearful of the family's secret coming to light. What made Davis decide finally to share her mother's story?
2. When the Davis family left the South to make a better life for themselves in Detroit, they learned that life in the North was not going to be easy. How does Fannie overcome the challenges the family faced?
3. Fannie's family described her as "smart and honest." How did those skills help her business to survive and even flourish?
4. The author explains that many in the underground Numbers business used their proceeds to help their community. In what ways did Fannie contribute to others?
5. The author writes that she "loathed comparisons" between illegal lotteries and drug dealing, although both are considered criminal activities. How does she distinguish the two from each other?
6. How was Fannie Davis's life an example of her motto, "Dying is easy. Living takes guts"?
7. How did the legalization of the lottery by the state of Michigan change Fannie's business?
8. In what ways did Fannie Davis sacrifice for her family?



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