

# FOUR HUNDRED SOULS

## — DISCUSSION GUIDE —

1. Drs. Kendi and Blain formatted the book to honor the diverse voices of Black Americans and to celebrate the importance of the communal approach to the spirit of Black History. How did the book's structure shape your reading experience?
2. As Dr. Kendi writes in the Introduction, the writing community includes Black people who identify or are identified as women and men, cisgender and transgender, younger and older, straight and queer, dark-skinned and light-skinned, immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Africa and the African diaspora, and descendants of enslaved people in the United States. How did you see yourself reflected in the book?
3. The story of Black History Month is one of communal history. Carter G. Woodson founded what was originally called Negro History Week in 1926 to teach the general public about Black History. With *Four Hundred Souls*, Drs. Kendi and Blain wanted not only to reflect on history but to *make* history. What do you think future generations will be able to understand about our present time?
4. The rich history of African America is often left out of mainstream narratives. After reading, how does understanding this history shape your understanding of America today?
5. *Four Hundred Souls* covers history that will be familiar to many readers; what moments or figures were new to you?
6. The book's narratives reveal the historical roots of some of today's most entrenched racist systems. How does looking back help us in building a different, better future?
7. What did reading about the places, people, and events highlighted in *Four Hundred Souls* help you understand about resilience, agency, and hope in Black America?
8. Dr. Blain explains in the conclusion that she is not quite certain that she is—as the popular saying goes—“living her ancestor's wildest dreams.” In what ways does the saying ring true for you?