

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Mighty Justice* begins with two stories of injustice, one suffered by Dovey's grandmother as a girl, the other by the young Dovey herself. It ends with a transcendent vision of justice. What are the turning points in Dovey's journey from experiencing an unjust world to envisioning a just one?

2. How was Dovey affected both as a child and over the course of her lifetime by the story of her grandma Rachel's broken feet and by participating in Grandma's nightly foot-washing ritual? What larger significance do you find in this story? How was Grandma Rachel a lifelong model of courage for Dovey?

3. During Dovey's Spelman College years she had crucial experiences with two white women who were polar opposites in terms of their racial attitudes—one sabotaged Dovey's educational aspirations by having her arrested for stealing; the other mentored her and loaned her the money to finish college. In what ways was Dovey changed by these contrasting interactions? How do you think Mae Neptune moved Dovey toward a wider vision of interracial harmony?

4. How were the seeds of Dovey's activism planted by her exposure to black intellectuals like W. E. B. Du Bois, Ira De Augustine Reid, and Rayford Logan? Why was she ambivalent about Du Bois's notion of the "talented tenth?"

5. In what ways was black Washington a "secret city" in the 1940s? Do you think that secret cities still exist, and if so, how are they different from the secret cities of the past?

6. How did Dovey evolve during her army career from what she calls “a girl . . . living out the dream of a great leader” to “a woman grown”? How did Dovey find her voice as an activist in the military?

7. Dovey was extremely proud of her military service. How did she eventually reconcile her anger at Jim Crow in the military and in the country with her patriotism and her desire to serve the United States? Would you consider yourself patriotic, and what do you think it means to be patriotic?

8. In what ways were Dovey’s struggles in her marriage reflective of the challenges faced by many ambitious women, particularly those in her generation? Do you think things have changed? How much?

9. How did sexism manifest itself in Dovey’s law school environment? What communities and individuals sustained her as she navigated this form of prejudice? How was her classmate and eventual law partner, Julius Robertson, different from the other men she met in law school?

10. Dovey referred to the 1896 Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* as a lie. What did she mean by that? How would you describe the larger consequences of Dovey’s limited win in her Jim Crow lawsuit on behalf of her mother and grandmother against the Southern Railroad?

11. What elements of *Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company* give it a historical significance comparable to that of the Rosa Parks case? How was it groundbreaking?

12. How did Dovey change, as a lawyer and a person, during the six-year period between the Interstate Commerce Commission issuance of the *Keys* ruling in 1955 and the eventual implementation of it in 1961?

13. What part did her Grandma Rachel and other individuals play in Dovey’s decision to study for the ministry in a church that did not at that time permit the ordination of women? What other factors propelled her in that direction? What were the origins of Dovey’s religious faith, and how do you think it gave her the ability to survive, to break barriers, to overcome anger, and to minister to others? How is the Benediction an expression of her faith?

14. How did gender prejudice rise up to confront Dovey in the wake of Julius Robertson's death, and how did she manage it?

15. How did the case of John Pledger challenge Dovey spiritually? How did it change her? How did her relationship with Peggy Pledger help Dovey heal in the wake of the loss of so many loved ones?

16. Over the course of her life, Dovey had many mentors, mostly black but some white. What role did each of these people play in Dovey's formation? What do you think makes for a good mentor?

17. In what ways is Dovey a role model for the next generation in the fight for social justice?