

Discussion Guide for
Roosevelt Park Rising
by Reggie Smith

1. What were your overall impressions of the book?
2. What specific stories resonated most deeply with you?
3. After the stunning story that begins chapter 2, Reggie writes, “I could not afford to get angry. I could not be an angry Black man. Not if I wanted to be their pastor.” Why do you think Reggie felt that way?
4. Reggie introduces the term “managed racism” in chapter 3. How do you understand that term? Where else in the book do you see examples of managed racism? What are some examples of managed racism you can think of?
5. How have you felt when you’ve crossed racial lines? In chapter 3, Reggie names three people who crossed racial lines with ease. Tell about people you are aware of who have crossed racial boundaries.
6. Does the book remind you of any stories from your own history?
7. What decision would you have made given the choice Reggie faced in “Solomonic Softball”?
8. In the remarkable chapter about the excommunication of Hendrik Schut, Reggie says that Hendrik’s anger covered his grief. What does that mean? Can you think of other times when you or someone you know who has experienced loss reacted by becoming angry?
9. Explain why you think Reggie and the church made the right or wrong decision by excommunicating Hendrik Schut.
10. Why do you think the church’s lay leaders wanted to end the Keep It Real service?
11. On different occasions in the book, Reggie mentions having taken a vow of stability to stay in Roosevelt Park. How might making a vow like that help or hurt someone’s ministry?
12. If you could ask Reggie anything, what would it be?
13. What surprised you?
14. What will you remember about this book?
15. In chapter 15, Reggie writes of an encounter with a man named Michael. Tell about a time an epiphany like that happened to you.
16. What do you think Reggie or the church council might have done differently that could have led to a different outcome for the Roosevelt Park Community Christian Reformed Church?
17. In the last pages of the book, Reggie tells of receiving a call from a former elder from the Roosevelt Park church named Chuck, who apologized for the church’s treatment of Reggie and Sharon. Why do you think the apology meant so much to Reggie? What would it look like if apologies were more forthcoming in churches?
18. Is this a book about success or failure? Tell about what lessons you’ve learned when things didn’t turn out the way you wanted them to.