



**ABHM Book Club Discussion Guide**  
**October 24th, 2024 at 6 PM CT**  
***Risking Everything* by Michael Edmonds (2014)**

**How to Use this Guide:**

[America's Black Holocaust Museum](#) staff created this guide to assist in reading and discussion of *Risking Everything*. Please feel free to print a copy and keep it with your book as you lend to friends and others who are interested. Do not expect to get through all of the questions during the upcoming meeting nor in one sitting. Perhaps consider them as conversation starters or an invitation to reflect more deeply about this book.

**Suggested Questions for Discussion:**

1. This is the first primary source reader we have selected for ABHM Book Club. How do you think it compares to reading about history from secondary source narratives? Which of the 44 documents stuck out to you most? Or was there a particular section of the book that you found most compelling?
2. According to these documents, why did Freedom Summer need to happen? What did you learn about the legal system in the United States and how it does or does not address racial injustice? See pages 6, 13, 68, 87, 89, 93, 111, & 190.
3. These documents, many of which had not been published before this reader, belong to the [Wisconsin Historical Society](#) and are distinctive in their emphasis on local activists and grassroots organizations and because they were collected during the 1960s. How did this collection end up in Wisconsin? Why is it important to collect history as it is happening? Why are institutions like [ABHM](#), [WBSHM](#), and [WHS](#) important in this endeavor? See pages xvii, 156, 210, 211, 212, 218, & 209-223.
4. What role did the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) have in organizing Freedom Summer? Or the Council of Federated Organizations as a whole? What might learning about Freedom Summer mean to students today? What lessons can young people (and people of all ages) learn from this intergenerational movement? See pages xiv, 18, 23, 30, 41, 49, 127, 128, & 135.

5. Freedom Summer was an interracial movement as well as intergenerational. What was the dynamic between the Black leaders and the white volunteers at the beginning? How did this change over time? What can we learn about racial repair, reconciliation, and healing from this movement? See pages 36, 41, 42, 59, 122, 125, 129, 164, 169, & 184.
6. Although Freedom Schools were originally thought of as secondary to the voter registration effort during Freedom Summer, they eventually became central to the movement. Why do you think that is? Why was education in Mississippi so important to this movement? Do you think we need Freedom Schools today? Why or why not? See pages xiii, 4, 48, 119, 128, 136, 138, 140, 156, 160, & 167.
7. Both the leaders of the movement and its volunteers were uncertain about the likelihood of the project's success and were well aware of the real consequences for those involved. Why was it important to proceed with the project despite the threats of violence and reprisals? How did this movement show the rest of the country what was happening in Mississippi? What do you think motivated the organizers and volunteers? See pages xv, xvi, 60, 66, & 86.
8. What remnants of the fight for voting rights still exist today? Is the work left unfinished? Do you think that access to the ballot box is the way to overturn racist structures? Why or why not? See pages 10, 35, & 133.
9. The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was created as part of Freedom Summer's goals to challenge the racist political structures; they put forth two Black women as their candidates: Fannie Lou Hamer and Victoria Gray. Why was this so significant? What other major contributions were made by women involved in the movement, not just in Mississippi, but across the nation? Starting as early as 1870 with the ratification of the 15th Amendment, what were some of the obstacles that prevented women from voting? See pages 8, 25, 127, 174, 179, 182, & 204.
10. How can we continue to embody the tenants of Freedom Summer in our own lives (education, activism, diversity, nonviolence, etc.)? What can we learn from this movement to apply to our current struggle to expand and protect voting rights?

**Additional Sources:**

<https://www.abhmuseum.org/risking-everything-gallery/>

<https://www.abhmuseum.org/sources-for-risking-everything/>

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/freedomssummer/>

**Previous Discussion Guides and Picks:**

<https://www.abhmuseum.org/book-club-discussion-guides/>

**Next Book Club:**

<https://www.abhmuseum.org/events/abhm-book-club-presents-half-american-by-matthew-f-delmont/>