

## Discussion Questions for *Becoming a Visible Man*

Thank you for reading *Becoming a Visible Man*. Consider the questions below as a starting point to generate discussion in your book club—or just for yourself—about the ideas and events described in this book, but please don't let these questions limit you. If you or your group has found particular topics stimulating or helpful, or if you have suggestions for additional or alternative questions we might pose, please let us know by writing to [info@jamisongreen.com](mailto:info@jamisongreen.com).

### Ch. 1 ~ How Do You Know?

- This chapter focuses on the basics of exploring sex and gender. What was your process for determining your own sex and gender?
- What questions or thoughts came up about your own identity as you read this chapter?
- How do you relate your ideas about your own sex and gender to the concepts explored in this chapter?

### Ch. 2 ~ Initiation

- This chapter is about initiation. It's about being inducted into the world of men as an adult and becoming a member of a burgeoning transgender community. What other themes did you notice in this chapter?
- What sorts of rituals, intentional or not, have you participated in to mark transitions in your own life?
- How did those rituals or transitions impact how you related to yourself, to your communities, or to the world?

### Ch. 3 ~ A Vision of Community

- In this chapter, Green gives voice to some of the diverse individuals he gets to know in the trans communities (men's and women's) he moves in. He focuses on the struggles of trans men in the 1980s and '90s to find safe places with people

who share a specific experience, and that is called community. Discuss your own experience of finding communities where you can safely explore the major issues of your life.

- Green’s initial experiences looking for and building communities took place in the 1990s, before the internet was ubiquitous. Was the internet available when you were doing your own identity formation and finding communities to be a part of? If so, how do you think a lack of the internet would have impacted you? Discuss your own experiences in finding communities as you “came of age.”
- Green wrote about a number of people whose vision and passion were critical to paving the road for the access and recognition and communities that are able to exist today. What did you already know about these groundbreakers and heroes? Many communities are aware that celebrating their heroes is an effective way to inspire others to do the hard work of organizing an under-represented community. It can be difficult for people to do that work when their daily lives can be such a struggle. What would be some effective ways to lift up these individuals in your communities and in national trans communities so future generations can continue to learn from their vision and be inspired to carry on the work?

#### Ch. 4 ~ Body of Knowledge

- This chapter answers the medical questions people typically have about changing their sex. Did you learn anything that you didn’t know or that surprised you?
- How did you feel about what you learned?
- Did the chapter leave you with any questions? Work with members of your group to find resources to help you answer those questions.

#### Ch. 5 ~ Transparent Feelings

- This chapter is about family relationships, about trans men as children and as parents. In what ways can you relate to Green’s experiences with his parents?

- How did you respond to Green's father, who, on finding out about Green's same-sex relationship with Samantha, apologizes for his attitude that made it so hard for Green to tell his father who he is?
- How did you respond to Green's mother, who resisted acknowledging her son's transition until the last months of her life?
- There are many questions parents, partners, and family members have for and about the trans person in their lives. Were there any particular questions that struck you as especially poignant or surprising? What questions have you heard from others or do you have yourself?
- Consider how one's experience of being transgender can enhance the experience of being a parent.
- Discuss the experiences of trans children such as Green presents or that you may personally be aware of, and contrast what you have learned with what you hear about trans children in the local and national media.
- Discuss your reaction to the stories about Matt Rice and Thomas Beatie, two of the many trans men who have given birth to children after they were living as men.

### Ch. 6 ~ Consummate Presence

- This chapter is about sexuality and intimacy, as well as how US society reacts with discomfort to those topics. What aspects of this chapter did you find enlightening? What aspects were troubling?
- Discuss how the "homosexual panic" defense (a.k.a. "trans panic" or just "the panic defense"), evades responsibility for crimes committed against LGBTQ+ people.

### Ch. 7 ~ Visibility

- This chapter focuses on trans people in the media, in academia, and some of the many efforts to communicate who we are to the broader world to make the world safe. Discuss some of the trans-related films you've seen, books you've read, or workplace diversity training you've experienced. How are trans people

portrayed, whether fictionally or in real life? What would Green say they get right? What's missing? What does that portrayal say about our evolution as a society toward acceptance of trans people as human?

- This book explores the dichotomy between trans men who tend to be visibly “other” before transition, but often “pass” as cisgender post-transition, and trans women who “pass” as cisgender before transition and are more often visibly “other” after transition. (As Green explained in Chapter 4, this is due to the effects of testosterone.) What do you imagine is the value, and the cost, of being visibly “other” and of “passing” in the society we live in today?
- Considering your personal expression of gender, in what ways do you express (or avoid expressing) who you are?

## Ch. 8 ~ Willful Destiny and Afterword

- The last chapter and the Afterword are about the universal struggle to assert ourselves. They build on some of the themes introduced in Chapter 7, as well as those discussed in the previous chapters. Consider why the “John/Joan” case is often thought to be relevant to transgender experience. How do you feel about the difference between what happened to David Reimer and what happens to transgender children?
- How do you feel about the historical and/or political position of transgender adults in your contemporary world?
- After reading *Becoming a Visible Man*, has your attitude about transgender people changed? How so?
- How has this book affected your own self-perception?