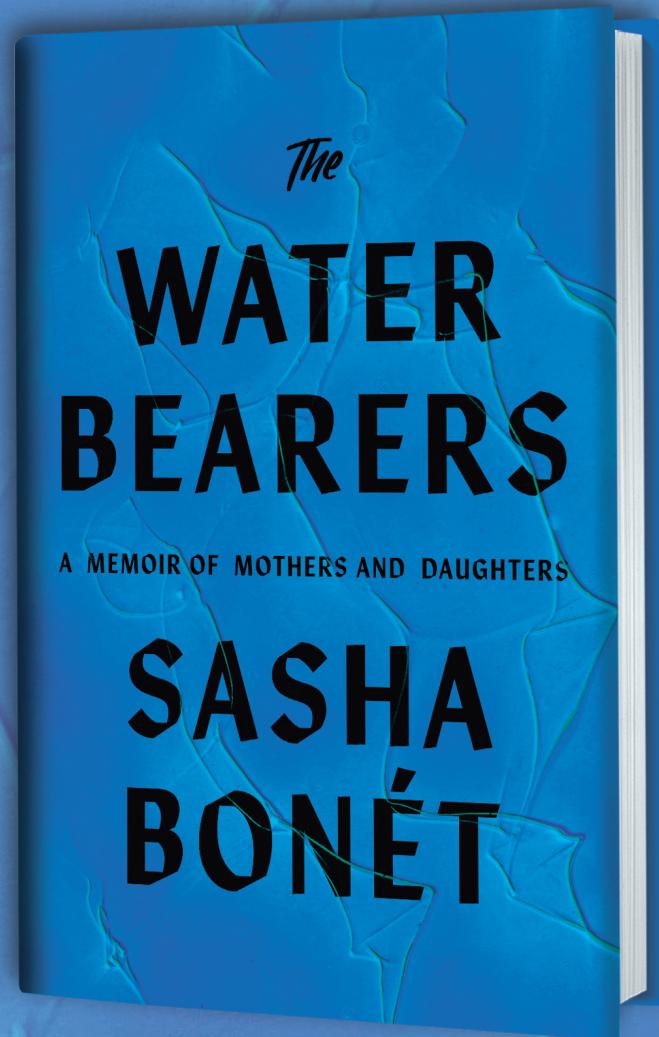


The
WATERBEARERS
Book Club Kit

Curated by Author **Sasha Bonét**



Dear Reader,

I am so thrilled to share this book with you.

Thank you for selecting *The Waterbearers* for your book group!

Writing this book was both a healing journey and a celebration. It allowed me to reconnect with my roots in Texas and Louisiana, to understand the sacrifices and triumphs of the women who came before me, and to find my own voice within that history.

I traveled back to the South from New York City to interview my grandmother, my mother, and my aunties, to dig through molded archives, and in each discovery and conversation I found profound stories buried deep. I hope that as you read, you find echoes of your own stories and those of the women who have influenced your life.

It's an honor to me that you have chosen this book. May it inspire a robust conversation among your group and beyond. Most of all, I hope you enjoy getting to know each of these complex women.

With gratitude,

Sasha Bonét



Four generations: myself, Betty Jean, and Mama Connie holding Sofia, 2017

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What does the title *The Waterbearers* mean to you after reading the book?
2. What themes do you recognize that are threaded throughout the book? How are these themes connected to what we are collectively experiencing in the world today?
3. How do you see motherhood and womanhood defined in this book? Do you feel there are any distinctions made between the two?
4. What differences and similarities do you see among Betty Jean, Connie, and Sasha?
5. Which one of Betty Jean's daughters stood out the most to you and why?
6. Connie built a life based largely on what she witnessed on television. Can you think of any films or shows that shaped you? In what ways?
7. What questions or ideas did this book raise for you about single mothers? Did these ideas reshape your thinking in any way?
8. What metaphors do you feel the water represents throughout the book?
9. Why do you think pop culture was not ready for Betty Davis, the funk musician?
10. Do you think that Iberia Hampton was justified in not wanting to make a monument of the place where her son was murdered?
11. What did you think of Pops keeping all of Betty Jean's memories? And do you think that this is a form of love? Can you think of other modest forms of love that are not often recognized in the fairy tales we've been told?
12. What do you think of the difficult decision made by the artist Camille Billops?
13. In what ways do you see grief as a unifier within this family story? And where do you see the joys within the family tribe?
14. Did you learn anything new about America in reading this book?
15. Does this book make you want to ask certain questions of your own family that haven't been previously discussed? If so, do you think they would be open to your questions?

PLAYLIST

This is a playlist related to what I listened to while writing this book and the songs that remind me of the women in this book.

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0hOCW9ePnZeqMnW8GCIPZ?si=b7uy0pBMT3mc-WfkOQCsoQ>

The Makings of You (*Live at The Bitter End NYC*)—Curtis Mayfield

(Sittin' on) the Dock of the Bay—Otis Redding

With God On Our Side (*Odetta Sings Dylan*)—Odetta

Baby—Donnie & Joe Emerson

Pyramids—Frank Ocean

You Don't Miss Your Water—Otis Redding

Your Mama Wants Ya Back—Betty Davis

Louisiana Blues—Muddy Waters

Lost Without—Kindness. Seinabo

Oh, Oh, Here Comes the Heartbreak—L

Late Nights & Heartbreak—Hannah Williams

The Affirmations

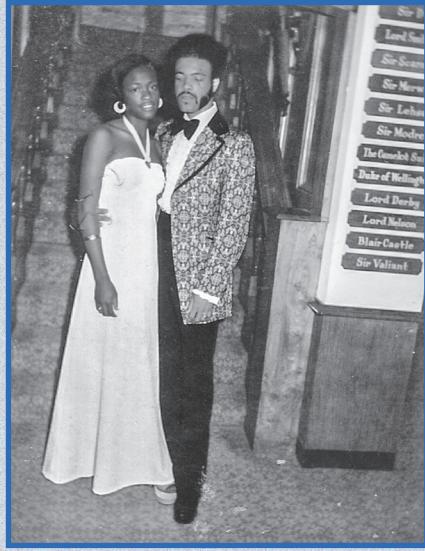
Beverly

Mr. 3-2

Top Drop Fav Fav

Nasty Gal *Betty Davis*

Pain in My Heart—Otis Redding



Black Thighs—The Last Poets

Louisiana 1927—Aaron Neville

Learning Forgetfulness—Magnog

Sophia—Ismaël Lô

I Put A Spell on You—Nina Simone

Sinnerman—Nina Simone

Don't Hurt Yourself (*Homecoming Live*)—Beyoncé

Set It Off—Juvenile

Sweet Thing—Rufus featuring Chaka Khan

Kofi—Donald Byrd

Brown Rice—Don Cherry

Trayra Boia—Codona

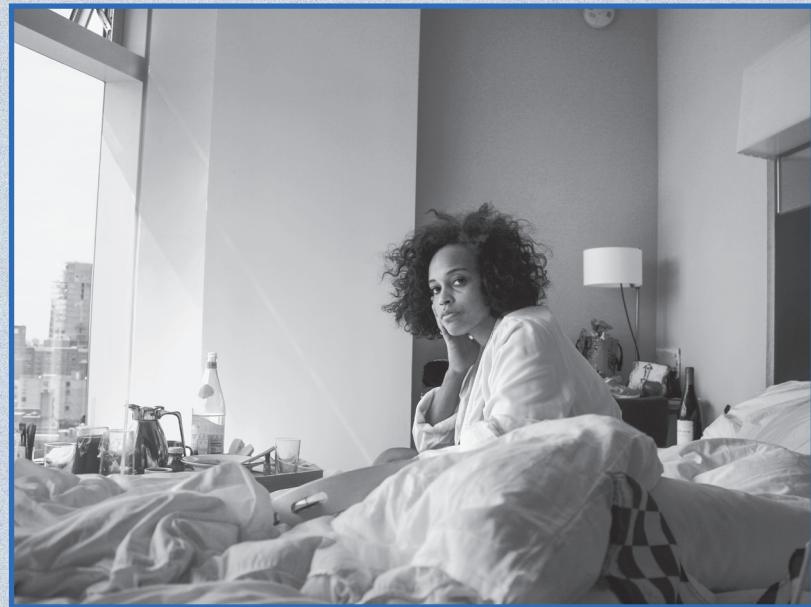
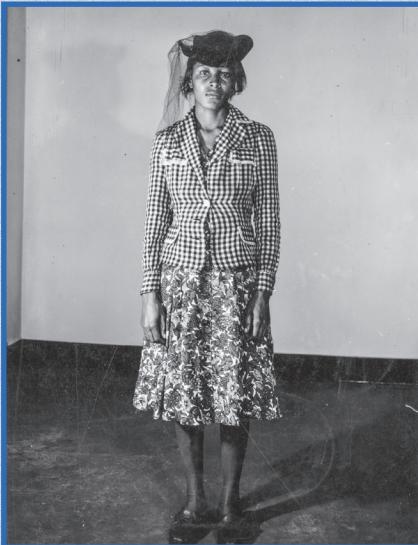
Green—Hiroshi Yoshimura

Them Changes (*Chopnotslop Remix*)—Thundercat, OG Ron C, DJ Candlestick

Pars—Grace Jones

If You Want Me to Stay—Sly and the Family Stone

Grandma's Hands—Bill Withers



RECIPES

Herbal Monthly Women's Tea

My grandmother and mother would make this tea for all the teens and women of our family for soothing comfort. Combine a teaspoon of each ingredient, steep for 15 minutes, strain, and pour. You will feel the love growing in your belly.

Vitex berries (also known as chasteberry, grown on the chaste tree in Louisiana; can also be used for jams)

Red raspberry leaf

Red clover

Hops

Nettle

Hibiscus

Sprinkle of cinnamon

Lemon peel

Chamomile flower



Water Is a Body Too, Sasha Bonét, 2020

Red Beans & Rice

In Louisiana, this dish is usually prepared on Mondays because, traditionally, Monday is washday. The beans could soak and simmer while my grandmother did chores around the house. And typically, the bones left over from Sunday dinner could be thrown into the pot with the beans for added flavor and to eliminate waste. It's simple, filling, and delicious.

INGREDIENTS

1 pound dry red kidney beans	Creole seasoning to taste
½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter	Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 yellow onion, diced	1 bunch of fresh thyme, chopped
1 green bell pepper, diced	2 bay leaves
2 celery stalks, diced	6 cups water or chicken broth
6 garlic cloves, minced	Cooked white rice, for serving
1 smoked andouille sausage, sliced into full moons (can be taken out for vegan option)	Sliced green onions and hot sauce, for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Soak the beans overnight in water to cover in a large bowl.
2. In a large pot, heat the butter over medium heat. Sauté the holy trinity (onions, bell peppers, and celery) and garlic, until soft.
3. Add the sausage, and sear until browned. Remove the sausage mixture and set aside.
4. Add the soaked beans, thyme, Creole seasoning, salt, pepper, bay leaves, and water.
5. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, until the beans are tender, stirring occasionally. Add more water if needed.
6. When the beans are soft, remove a few and blend them in a blender, then return them to the pot to thicken.
7. Return the sausage and veggie mixture to the pot and adjust the seasonings to taste.
8. Serve over the rice with green onions and hot sauce.

Tastes better the next day!

(Other meat substitutes can be used.)

Adapted from the recipe by Chaz Williams: <https://www.instagram.com/chasingchaz/>

Thank you!