

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

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### **BASIC**

1. Who are the main characters in this story?
2. Describe what happened to Michael.
3. Why does Michael's lawyer need to give him a ride?
4. Where is Michael living? Why do you think he is living where he is?
5. As they two men drive to San Francisco, what does Michael say about how black men are treated in society? Do you agree or disagree with what he is saying?
6. How does Michael feel about the fact that he was arrested? Does he seem upset? Would you feel upset? Why?
7. Michael says that he wished he could turn back time. Why does he say that?
8. What did you see the officers do to Michael after he was on the ground? Do you think the officers acted correctly from what you could see?
9. When they are at the Public Defender's office, Michael asks his lawyer what a motion is. What does his lawyer tell him a motion is?
10. When they go to court, Michael's lawyer argues the case to the jury. What does he ask the jurors to do?

### **INTERMEDIATE**

1. Do you think that Michael did anything wrong? What did he do that you agree/disagree with?
2. What would you have done differently when the police first approached Michael?
3. Do you think that the police did anything wrong when they approached Michael and ordered him to get down on the ground?

4. What are some of the other options or alternatives the police could have used in that situation other than ordering Michael to the ground?
5. Should the police have explained to Michael why they were stopping him? What could they have said to him? Why is it important to explain why they were stopping him?
6. The 9-1-1 caller reported that Michael had tried to rob him and that Michael had a weapon. It later turned out that this report was false. Who should be held responsible if false or incorrect information is given to the police? Why?
7. Michael was charged with seven crimes. Why do you think that charges were brought against him? Do you think that was the right decision?
8. When Michael was on the ground, he cries out something. What does he say? Why does he say it? Why do you think he said what he did at that point? Would you have taken the same actions Michael did if you were in that situation?
9. When Michael is taken up to the street level, he begins yelling. Do you remember what he was saying? Who is he yelling at? Why do you think he was yelling?
10. Do you think that the verdict was the right outcome in the case? How would you feel if Michael had been found guilty of all charges?

## **ADVANCED**

1. Were Michael's constitutional rights violated? Which rights and why?
  - a. Fourth Amendment right to be free of unreasonable searches and seizures?
  - b. First Amendment right to free speech?
2. When an officer orders a person to do something, must the person always comply? If a person does not comply, is that person then guilty of resisting arrest?
3. Did the officers act in a way that protected other members of the public who were present on the train platform? Do you think the officers should have pointed their guns at Michael? Why or why not?

4. Was Michael justified in asking the officers why they were stopping him? Do you think he was wrong because he did not immediately comply with the officers' commands to get on the ground.
5. Did the police make any assumptions about Michael because of how he looked? Do you think that they would have treated a person who was elderly and white the same way they treated Michael, if they received a similar report regarding an elderly white person who committed a robbery and had a weapon?
6. How do you think that implicit bias may have affected the officers' perception of Michael having a weapon or being dangerous?
7. The officers who took Michael to the ground were of different backgrounds and ethnicities. How do you think their backgrounds affected how they perceived and treated Michael during the arrest?
8. What level of force should an officer be allowed to use against a person he suspects committed a crime? What if it turns out the officer is wrong? Should that affect the force that the officer used against a person?
9. Do you think that the officer who struck Michael was using too much force, or do you think his response was justified? Why or why not?
10. If you were making a closing argument in this case for the defense, what would you say? If you were arguing for the prosecution, what would you say?