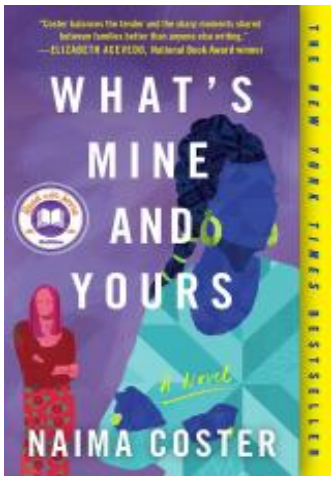
What's Mine and Yours

by Naima Coster



About the Book

From the author of HALSEY STREET, a sweeping novel of legacy, identity, the American family, and the ways that race affects even our most intimate relationships.

A community in the Piedmont of North Carolina rises in outrage as a county initiative draws students from the largely Black east side of town into predominantly white high schools on the west. For two students, Gee and Noelle, the integration sets off a chain of events that will tie their two families together in unexpected ways over the span of the next 20 years.

On one side of the integration debate is Jade, Gee's steely, ambitious mother. In the aftermath of a harrowing loss, she is determined to give her son the tools he'll need to survive in America as a sensitive, anxious, young Black man. On the other side is Noelle's headstrong mother, Lacey May, a white woman who refuses to see her half-Latina daughters as anything but white. She strives to protect them as she couldn't protect herself from the influence of their charming but unreliable father, Robbie.

When Gee and Noelle join the school play meant to bridge the divide between new and old students, their paths collide, and their two seemingly disconnected families begin to form deeply knotted, messy ties that will shape the trajectory of their adult lives. And their mothers --- each determined to see her child inherit a better life --- will make choices that will haunt them for decades to come.

As love is built and lost, and the past never too far behind, WHAT'S MINE AND YOURS is an expansive, vibrant tapestry that moves between the years, from the foothills of North Carolina, to Atlanta, Los Angeles and Paris. It explores the unique organism that is every family: what breaks them apart and how they come back together.

Discussion Guide

1. At the beginning of WHAT?S MINE AND YOURS, Robbie Ventura tells Ray Gilbert to get property that no one will ever take away from his children, in order to build a legacy. What other legacies do the parents in this novel leave their children? What would you want to leave your loved ones?

2. The parents and children of WHAT?S MINE AND YOURS exist with a significant chasm between them. Discuss the ways that the Ventura daughters and Gee don?t often see the motivations behind their parents? choices, nor the sacrifice, and how did it resonate with you and your own life?

3. When Inéz visits Noelle in Golden Brook, she?s afraid that her friend is losing her sense of self while out in the suburbs, especially after hearing the story of a Black woman and her son threatened with the police by a neighbor. How did you feel about the party?s reaction to that story and Inéz?s criticism of Noelle?s silence?

4. There are many versions of caregiving in this novel that go beyond just parent and child. Discuss the ways that these characters are playing the role of mother for one another.

5. The two mothers in the novel, Lacey May and Jade, both wanted what was best for their children, regardless of how it?s received by them and the broader implications of their actions. Do you believe Noelle and Gee ultimately reach an understanding as to why their mothers behaved how they did?

6. The town hall in which the school integration is discussed is set in 2002, yet this issue is still present today. How did this storyline relate to your understanding of the current school integration debate?

7. When Noelle, Margarita and Diane come together in their search for Robbie, Noelle attempts to heal the rift between them, despite their fraught relationship. She tells Margarita, ?I?ve been thinking. Our parents are always going to have their problems, but that doesn?t mean we have to stay away from each other. We can be family on our own terms.? Noelle is attempting to heal a long-standing wound. How do other characters in the book attempt to do the same with the people in their lives?

8. Noelle is labeled as white multiple times, most notably by Inéz and Ruth, which results in two different reactions in the moment. Why did Noelle?s response vary in each instance? Have there been moments where you have not been seen in the way that you identify?

9. Identity politics is an important thread throughout this novel. Discuss the ways in which Diane has internalized some of Lacey May?s prejudices. How does that affect her relationship with Alma?

10. Jade fights for her son?s place in the world, wanting him to have more opportunities than she or Ray had. Discuss how this influences Gee and shapes what he expects from the world and other people.

11. This novel is filled with mostly fraught relationships that ultimately show the depth and complexities of love. Was there a particular relationship in the novel that spoke to you the most? Did it remind you of a relationship in your own life?

12. When Noelle and Ruth speak about Lacey May?s acceptance of Alma, Noelle comments, ?It?s not the same as being Black.? Discuss what Noelle means by this.

13. By the final scenes at the wedding, it appears that Noelle has reconciled with her family. Yet she grapples with their limitations and the way they can progress in certain ways, accept some things but not others. Discuss what is meant by the line, ?They?d never admit how willingly they?d played their parts.?

Author Bio

Naima Coster is a *New York Times* bestselling author and a National Book Foundation 5 Under 35 honoree. Her novel WHAT'S MINE AND YOURS was a "Read with Jenna" pick and named a best book of the year by *Kirkus Reviews, Esquire, Marie Claire* and more. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times, Elle, Time,* and *The Cut*. Her first novel, HALSEY STREET, was a finalist for the *Kirkus* Prize. She lives in Brooklyn with her family. Her latest novel is TAKE WHAT YOU CAN.

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