

*a novel*

# The Light on HALSEY STREET

VANESSA MILLER

**BOOK CLUB KIT**



*DEAR READER,*

Thank you so much for spending your time reading *The Light on Halsey Street*. This coming-of-age novel, about love of community and friendship that is tested by time, betrayal and unforgiveness was like writing a beautiful medley. Dana and Lisa spoke volumes as I wrote their stories. These two women truly helped me to examine my heart.

I hope you had an examine-your-heart moment as well as you read their story. I know first-hand that life gets hard sometimes, and that people can hurt us in ways that cause us to feel entitled to hold a grudge and become bitter. But in the end, we pay the price for holding bitterness in our hearts.

My friends, if Dana and Lisa's story taught you nothing else, I pray it taught you to release, let go and let God. Because God knows how to take those lemons that life hands us and zest up the rest of our lives with them.

I hope you enjoyed *The Light on Halsey Street* as much as I enjoyed writing this story. This was the first time I ever wrote a book that spanned almost forty years. Going back to the 80s was a blast, because I was a teenager in the 80s and I remembered all those things that we used to have in the 80s that we don't use these days. If you grew up in the 80s, I hope some of the nostalgia put a smile on your face as well.

If you enjoyed this story and believe others should read it as well, please tell your friends about *The Light on Halsey Street* and/or write a review for the book. It is greatly appreciated.

Blessings,  
Vanessa Miller



# REVIEWS and PRAISE

“*The Light on Halsey Street* is an emotional story that takes you on an up close and personal journey across the decades with two friends. The plot is woven with friendship, forgiveness, and faith. An unforgettable read from cover to cover by Vanessa Miller.”

—Tia McCollors, bestselling author

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“Vanessa Miller delivers a poignant story of friendship and betrayal, bringing Lisa and Dana full circle, with an uplifting ending that proves there is power in prayer.”

—Lacey Baker, *USA TODAY* bestselling author

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“Riveting and redemptive, *The Light on Halsey Street* vividly transports us back to 1980s Brooklyn with an unforgettable cast of characters and leaves you with the firm belief that light can truly never be extinguished by darkness.”

—Joy Callaway, international bestselling author of *All the Pretty Places*

# REVIEWS and PRAISE

“Vanessa Miller serves a heartfelt and fulfilling, Brooklyn, New York, literary buffet in this 1980s coming-of-age journey through friendships and hardships, all nourished by ‘The Light on Halsey Street.’”

—Pat G’Orge-Walker, ESSENCE and national bestselling author and creator of the Sister Betty Christian comedy series

“Vanessa Miller set *The Light on Halsey Street* in Bedford-Stuyvesant, New York, but she takes readers on a decades-long exploration of the heart. In her coming-of-age story, two women learn about the impact of bitterness and resentment and the power of love to heal and restore what was lost. Readers will find it hard to put this novel down, and they’ll hold on to these life lessons long after they turn the last page. Well done!”

—Robin W. Pearson, Christy Award-winning author

“*The Light on Halsey Street* is not only a story of times gone by but the resiliency of friendship, family, and faith. This redemptive story of two friends, Lisa and Dana, poignantly demonstrates that we need not be a product of our circumstances and that the power to change is within all of us. Miller has created a timeless tale that will resonate long after the last word is read.”

—Donna Hill, author of *Confessions in B-Flat* and *I Am Ayah: The Way Home*



# THE LIGHT ON HALSEY STREET BBQ BLOCK PARTY

For this book club discussion, invite your book club members to a block party, book club style. How do you do a block party? Here are some tips:

1. Decide who will host (Host should have a barbecue pit)
2. Decide which food you'll throw on the grill
3. Crank up the music (You can't have a block party without music)
4. Get out the games (We've included a Word Search Puzzle and Name 10 Things From the Book game but you can also use your own)
5. Have a prize ready for the winner
6. Use the discussion questions for a lively discussion while eating
7. Have Fun!

For your block party barbecue, use whatever you normally throw on the grill:

- Ribs
- Chicken
- Hot dogs
- Burgers or veggies



And here's a recipe for an easy, sweet treat that's perfect to share while your group talks about the book.

## NO BAKE BANANA PUDDING RECIPE

### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups Milk (2%)
- 2 – 3.4 oz boxes Vanilla Pudding Mix
- 1 tsp Vanilla Extract
- 4 Bananas
- 1 – 11 oz box Vanilla Wafers
- 2 cups Heavy Whipping Cream

### INSTRUCTIONS:

In a large bowl, beat the cold milk with vanilla extract and vanilla pudding until it thickens.

In a separate bowl, (you may want to use an electric mixer) beat the heavy whipping cream until stiff peaks form. Add the whipped cream into the pudding and gently fold in with a spatula.

Slice bananas. Add about 1/4th of the vanilla wafers into the bottom of your trifle bowl and about 1/4th of the bananas.

Spread 1/4 of the pudding over the bananas and wafers. Repeat with remaining layers until you have four layers.

Add the remaining whipped cream over top of pudding and decorate as desired. Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours before serving.



# ACTIVITIES

While your food is grilling, add even more fun to your event with a few block party games. We've added a couple in the book club kit, but you can also add games that your book club enjoys. Have fun and enjoy the discussion!

## THAT'S SO 80s

Name 10 things mentioned in *The Light on Halsey Street* that was popular in the 80s but not so much now? The first person to name at least 10 wins. Answer key can be found on page 11.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

# COMMUNITY SERVICE

While reading *The Light on Halsey Street* you discovered that community service was extremely important to Lisa Whitaker Coleman. She admired women like Elise Richardson and Representative Shirley Chisolm. Both these women helped to revitalize the Bedford Stuyvesant area in the sixties. So, Lisa grew up hungering to do something to bring that spark back to her community after the destructive years of the 80s tore it down.

My church does something called a Mission Blitz. We take one Saturday out of the year and do things in the community that is a blessing to those in need. We've handed out coins at the laundromat, put together toiletries for women's shelters, served food to the homeless, put together reading kits at libraries, cleaned the homes of the elderly or disabled, painted homes and so much more.

So, now I challenge you to find something that you and your book club members can do within your community this year that would be helpful to someone in need? Spending time with friends while doing something useful for others is a way to make memories that will last a lifetime. Remember how much fun Dana and Lisa had while building their community project? Go on, put a smile on someone's face, God will bless you for it.





# WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Complete this fun puzzle with key words from the book.

The answer key can be found on page 12.

U U F G I G O M E B Z T Y H E B J H U Q A B E D F O R D Y V  
U A A K A B R O O K L Y N Y B X X F V L R R V K N V C U P J  
O B I M G N G G C F C Y Y V X D A B O Z Q V Q X Z W M K G Z  
C P B X O C K V C I I S V A V R H O L H X D C R O W V D V L  
I R W B I H R U B O Y S A N D G I R L S H I G H S C H O O L  
A W A J V D U N Z P A Z F C U Z B X U G X I W Z P N L J Z X  
R R I Z R D W Z B P L I N R W G E I E U V D U U J A A L F K  
U U P V S P A I V D U O W U N R W B T Z L W F R T M P J X I  
M U M O G B U K U Q Q C J V J G N G G A P Y R V I N K S P E  
H B S K V O N Z A K N P L V Q Q K M R H Z U W K W D I Y S J  
J G D P G L F C S T U Y V E S A N T P Q R K B E P O P J D G  
M G B O B M J W I U Q J F M K T F X R R S H Y A R L G D R O  
E X N Y J V F H I O R F U M Q Y B Z L Q P N L E W I S X N P  
G V P U O V N D C R D N E X A N M A A L Q C H Q D V J R H F  
X Y Q O I W I F A O M I C I O R Q A C H X C M F R U H U L C  
S C U X Y A N V Y T R I P O R K C U C V P P Y K M F Q L B O  
L P B P A R D R L Z H N X F M F R Y O O C S O O S H N J Z Z  
V U D P M U Q G R U C A E A O M M J P Y N H A B X M E H D R  
T O M P K I N S D T V G L R Q H U G U R D L P R M D T D C O  
F X G Y O N A E C T R J S S S K U N H O O A I R I I C S H F  
N M T X A R X R B Y G E P I E T M T I P H J T B H I X E K P  
U O A J A U Y S S A U P L O K Y O U H T D I E B R P T W O S  
T J S T U F Y O D B B Y H W G A J R A J Y O K C L A P S G R  
V J Z T F S V U T T C Z H L X B L E E C L S Q M T A R F K S  
I H S L R W I Z B U P R Q L G X C E W F B N E G B S L Y G P  
Z V P X O A M R S M A X F B E H H F F N E A W R O O H A V V  
I T J I V S N Q F U W C D N L K L X A B F W Q J V A I L P J  
K E H V Z O R D V Q G E J D V K S B F T W U C S G I F S R V  
A H S C V T U R K I V N I J I O K O R U R G X Y X B C H A F  
K S R P H D G F X N Z S I D S L C P Z T K E W H X Y B E A T

**BOYS AND GIRLS**

**HIGH SCHOOL**

**STUYVESANT**

**MARCY PROJECTS**

**MACON LIBRARY**

**NOSTRAND**

**CORNER STORE**

**TOMPKINS**

**HALSEY**

**BROOKLYN**

**BEDFORD**

**LEWIS**

**COMMUNITY SERVICE**

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These discussion questions can also be found on pages 351 - 353 of the book.

1. This book begins in 1985 when the two main characters are eighteen years old. Do you remember your teen years? If you were given the chance to change one thing from your teen years, what would it be? (If it's too personal, just pray about it.)
2. Dana hated her mother's choice in men, but found herself with a boyfriend who was a thief and caused her to spend four years in prison. Why do you think people sometimes run toward the very thing they know is not good for them?
3. When Dana attended church with Lisa, the pastor preached a message titled, "Your Struggle Is About to Change Your Whole World." Dana's struggle was poverty and lack of self-worth. Lisa's struggle was unforgiveness. Their struggles did indeed change their world, but was there anything Lisa or Dana could have done to eliminate some of the things they struggled with?
4. Lisa seems to have it all together. She's from a two-parent home, college educated, married with a child, and she loves God. It is not until she faces adversity that we see her struggle to forgive and how that struggle affects her in devastating ways. In your opinion, is there ever a just reason to hold unforgiveness?
5. When Dana first meets Jeff, she looks at him through the lens of past relationships. If she had kept her guard up, she could have missed out on a good man. But how easy is it to let your guard down once you've been hurt? And how much do we miss out on by holding people at arm's length?

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These discussion questions can also be found on pages 351 - 353 of the book.

6. Even though Dana and Lisa grew up in the same community, they had very different experiences. And they were both a product of their upbringing. What did you think of these two characters? Did you feel for Dana even though she betrayed her friend? Did you understand Lisa, even after she became bitter? Or did you not get one or the other at all?
7. One of the themes in *The Light on Halsey Street* is “What You Owe Me.” Have you ever done something to someone . . . knew you owed them, but couldn’t figure out how to repay the debt you owed? What did that feel like?
8. When Lisa discovers she has been betrayed by a friend, it seemed that was a bridge too far and she could not forgive such an act. How do you think you would respond after a hurtful betrayal?
9. At one point in the book, John told Lisa, “What happened to you wasn’t right, but you need to pray about how you’ve decided to respond to this situation.” So, now I ask you, what length will you go to get vengeance on someone who betrayed you? Can you let it go, or will it fester forever until it kills you?
10. Dana tried to capture beauty in her world with her camera, but kept running into the ugliness of life. It was not until she gave her life to the Lord that she was able to finally see good in herself and in the world. What about you . . . are you looking for beauty in all the wrong places? You’ll never know just how much beauty is within you until you allow God to cleanse you from within.
11. Dana’s pursuit of her mother’s love was heartbreaking. I felt so bad for Dana after she thought she saw her mother, only to discover that she had died and things would never get better between them. What did you think of Dana and Vida’s relationship? Did your heart break for Dana as mine did?



# THAT'S SO 80s ANSWER KEY

Name 10 things mentioned in *The Light on Halsey Street* that was popular in the 80s but not so much now? – **Answer Key** (17 things are listed below. The first person to name at least 10 wins.)

1. Boombox
2. Record player
3. Asymmetrical bob-style haircut
4. Bamboo earrings with the name engraved in the middle
5. Back to the Future movie crazy
6. McCrory's Department Store
7. The Wiz Record Store
8. Raspberry Beret by Prince
9. Stereo System
10. Floor model television
11. Minolta X-700 Digital Camera
12. Addias
13. La Di Da Di by Slick Rick
14. Mr. Telephone Man by New Edition
15. Michael Jordan's first Air Jordans
16. Pac-Man game
17. Centipede game

# PUZZLE ANSWER KEY

U U F G I G O M E B Z T Y H E B J H U Q A B E D F O R D Y V  
U A A K A B R O O K L Y N Y B X X F V L R R V K N V C U P J  
O B I M G N G G C F C Y Y V X D A B O Z Q V Q X Z W M K G Z  
C P B X O C K V C I I S V A V R H O L H X D C R O W V D V L  
I R W B I H R U B O Y S A N D G I R I S H I G H S C H O O L  
A W A J V D U N Z P A Z F C U Z B X U G X I W Z P N L J Z X  
R R I Z R D W Z B P L I N R W G E I E U V D U U J A A L F K  
U U P V S P A I V D U O W U N R W B T Z L W F R T M P J X I  
M U M O G B U K U Q Q C J V J G N G G A P Y R V I N K S P E  
H B S K V O N Z A K N P L V O O K M R H Z U W K W D I Y S J  
J G D P G L F C S T U Y V F S A N T P Q R K B E P O P J D G  
M G B O B M J W I U Q J F M K T F X R R S H Y A R L G D R O  
E X N Y J V F H I O R F U M O Y B Z L Q P N I F W I S X N P  
G V P U O V N D C R D N E X A N M A A L Q C H Q D V J R H F  
X Y Q O I W I F A O M I C I O R O A C H X C M F R U H U L C  
S C U X Y A N V Y T R I P O R K C U C V P P Y K M F Q L B O  
L P B P A R D R L Z H N X F M F R Y O O C S O O S H N J Z Z  
V U D P M U Q G R U C A E A O M M J P Y N H A B X M E H D R  
T O M P K I N S D T V G L R O H U G U R D L P R M D T D C O  
F X G Y O N A E C T R J S S S K U N H O O A I R I I C S H F  
N M T X A R X R B Y G E P I E T M T I P H I T B H I X E K P  
U O A J A U Y S S A U P L O K Y O U H T D I E B R R T W O S  
T J S T U F Y O D B B Y H W G A J R A J Y O K C L A P S G R  
V J Z T F S V U T T C Z H L X B L E E C L S O M T A R F K S  
I H S L R W I Z B U P R Q L G X C E W F B N E G B S L Y G P  
Z V P X O A M R S M A X F B E H H F F N E A W R O O H A V V  
I T J I V S N O F U W C D N L K L X A B F W Q J V A I L P J  
K E H V Z O R D V Q G E J D V K S B F T W U C S G I F S R V  
A H S C V T U R K I V N I J I O K O R U R G X Y X B C H A F  
K S R P H D G F X N Z S I D S L C P Z T K E W H X Y B E A T

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**VANESSA MILLER** is a bestselling author, with several books appearing on *ESSENCE* Magazine's Bestseller List. She has also been a Black Expressions Book Club Alternate pick and #1 on BCNN/BCBC Bestseller List. Vanessa has worked with numerous publishers: Urban Christian (Kensington), Kimani (Harlequin), Abingdon Press, and Whitaker House. Most of Vanessa's published novels depict characters that are lost and in need of redemption. Her books have received countless favorable reviews.

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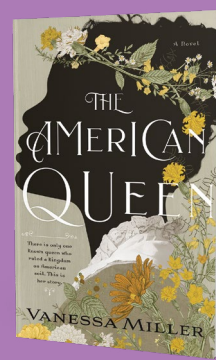
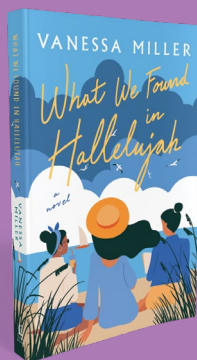
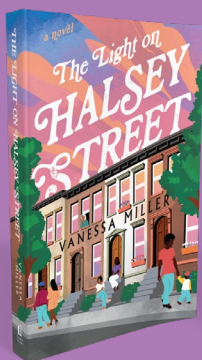


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January 2024



  
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