



***The First Ladies* by Marie Benedict  
Discussion Monday, 19 May at 5:30pm**

1. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt is a well-known historical figure in America, but were you familiar with civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune before reading this book? Having finished *THE FIRST LADIES*, what are your views on her and her role in history?
2. Eleanor and Mary were both so accomplished in their professional lives. What personality traits do you think helped them achieve this success?
3. Eleanor and Mary came from very different family backgrounds. How did their families and early experiences inform the women they became and the roles they chose to play in their communities?
4. Eleanor and Mary became close friends at a time when Black and white women were not often publicly friends. Why do you think they became such close friends? What inspired each of them to pursue the friendship? What interests and personality attributes drew them together?

5. Through the course of their friendship, Mary and Eleanor had challenging conversations about race, and they faced public and private opposition to their friendship. Why do you think Mary and Eleanor were able to have these difficult conversations and remain friends? How did they combat both the public and private opposition to their alliance?
  
6. How did Mary and Eleanor's friendship change over the course of the book? What factors influenced this transformation?
  
7. Eleanor and Mary both had husbands who were unfaithful to them. Each woman responded differently to her husband's infidelity. What life circumstances informed the decisions they made? What did you think of their choices?
  
8. Sara Delano Roosevelt, Eleanor's mother-in-law, could be very critical of Eleanor, but she also supported Eleanor and Mary at crucial moments. What motivated her actions and opinions?