DEAR READER,

I am deeply honored that you have chosen to read my book, all the more because you have chosen to do so with others. A friend once told me art is not finished when it is completed, but when the first person sees and interprets it. So, my novel was not finished at the end of the two years of sweat, blood, and tears it took to write in the tumultuous 2016–2018 period. It was finished when it left the hands of its first reader. Now it will be finished again, possibly in a totally different way, by you and your community. Afterwards, you may disagree about what it is you’ve read, or what certain details mean, or what theme is most important, so that even within your circle you will bring into the world very different versions of this book. And not one of you will be wrong. Because to be an interpreter of fiction, as all readers are, is to contribute to the vast tapestry of the novel’s multiverse.

I do not know when or where you will be when you read this letter, but I am writing it in a city, in the summer of 2020, during a brief lull between protests against police brutality. Tomorrow would have been Breonna Taylor’s twenty-seventh birthday and this notion of communities coming together to (re)invent worlds is a hopeful light keeping me from dark thoughts—thoughts about Breonna and how twenty-six years is far too short to be someone’s forever, and thoughts about George Floyd and how eight minutes and forty-six seconds can somehow become an eternity when transformed by agony. I hope that, wherever and whenever you are reading this, this vicious ache has dulled, but the need to remake the world has not.

I was asked to talk about why I wrote this book, and there are many ways I could address this. Certainly, moving from a resource-less desert in the southwest to a major city in the northeast played a role. Also, much of my novel’s population is undoubtedly the result of being part of a generous community whose members must operate “illegally” for reasons of birthplace or occupation. Given the cultural moment in which I was writing, a time when the rhetoric of borders and walls cast long shadows in the media, the walled city in my world feels inevitable. And, given my stubborn refusal to accept even things that are impossible for me to change, my exploration of traversing in an age of travel bans feels inevitable too. Any one of these or a hundred other experiences could be said to be the “why” of The Space Between Worlds, but I would rather say this:

Why did I write this book?

I didn’t.

We did.

We are writing it right now.

Thank you for sparing time to collaborate with me,

MICAIAH JOHNSON
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Examinations of privilege, identity, and belonging are central to the foundation of *The Space Between Worlds*. In what ways does Cara embody these themes?

2. There are many different iterations of each character on the varying versions of Earth. What do you feel were the most important factors that shaped each character?

3. Relationships—with lovers, mentors, family, and even other versions of herself—are an integral aspect to Cara’s growth. Which relationships do you feel were the most impactful?

4. Share a favorite quote from the book. Why did this stand out to you?

5. The end of the novel lists the many different ways Cara’s future could play out. How did you feel about this ending?