

## **Discussion Questions for *Down on Both Sides: Growing up in America and Ethiopia***

1. Imagine the author's father declining the invitation to go to Ethiopia with his young family. The circumstances of her childhood would have been different. Might there have been deeper differences in her life as well? Might her personality have been shaped differently? How so?
2. The author grew up physically in Ethiopia. What part did the United States play in her growing up? How did that influence take place?
3. The author's generation of missionary, diplomatic and business families' children were studied by psychologists to figure out why some adjusted to life when they returned to the US and why some did not. What do you think the studies might have discovered?
4. Many young people say about their parents, *I would never do that to my children!* How did a vow like this turn out for the author? How did it turn out for you?
5. What advantages did the author have upon returning to Ethiopia to work as an adult?
6. How might the author have been a different parent to her own third culture kids, in the area of culture adjustment, than her parents were to her? Why?
7. Do you think the author's family the decision to stay in Addis Ababa when Tigrayan guerillas were approaching was made based on faith, wisdom, or foolishness?
8. Can you apply the title of the book as a metaphor for the author's life between two cultures?
9. In what ways have you bridged cultures—race, class, ethnic background, politics?
10. Did it make your life richer or harder—or both?

## **Discussion Questions for *Today is Tomorrow***

1. What did you think of the author's tolerance for her husband's episodes of depression and anger? What might she have done differently?
2. Can you think of other examples of a person finding themselves caught in a tangle with their own needs and those of a spouse and their children?
3. Do you think paying the traffic police in Kenya could be considered a tip, or is it bribery, pure and simple?
4. Is it possible that the Sudanese pastors are right, under conditions of war, refugee status and trauma normal conventions of granting and reporting can be suspended?
5. Before you finished the book, what did you think the title might mean?
6. Do you agree with Chief Isaac, that sometimes time and space are immaterial?

7. How does the author's adhering to the expiration date of the commander's papers contradict the title of the book?
8. Is one or the other perspective always right?
9. When is it permissible for an individual to ignore the letter of a law in favor of their interpretation of the spirit of the law?
10. Have you ever found yourself caught in the crack between the letter and the spirit of a law?