



RJAC Virtual Town Hall:
“Caste” by Isabel Wilkerson Self- Guided Discussion Questions

Group Information

Group Name

Group location or department

Number of people in your group

Questions for RJAC members to discuss in group setting:

- 1) What surprised you most about the book?
- 2) Discuss the differences and similarities between how Miss was treated in the South, where racism and casteism have historically been more overt, and in the North, where they still exist, but can be more subtle. Do you think these various forms of racism and casteism must be fought in different ways?
- 3) Isabel Wilkerson had many examples about misconceptions of race and America experiment? What are your thoughts?
 - o How did this make you feel?
 - o Have you or anyone you know experience brutal racism?
- 4) What are some of the steps that society, and each of us, can take toward dismantling the caste system?
- 5) Has this book affected the way you go about your life? If so, in what way?
 - o Who is affected?
 - o How can you help others who are or have been affected?
- 6) Wilkerson discusses three major caste systems throughout the book: India, Nazi Germany, and America. What are some of the differences that stood out to you among these three systems? What are the similarities? How did learning about one help you understand the other? For instance, did the fact that the Nazis actually



studied America's segregation practices and Jim Crow laws help underscore the depth of our own system?

7) What do you think motivated the author to share her story?

8) Wilkerson frequently uses her own experience as an African-American woman to illustrate her points regarding caste—and the confusion when someone “rises above” his or her presumed station.

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9) What do you think readers gain from hearing about Wilkerson's personal experiences in addition to her deep historical research?

10) Discuss how overt racism subtly transformed into unconscious bias. What are the ways that we can work to compensate for the unconscious biases inherent in a caste system?

11) Wilkerson uses many different metaphors to explain and help us visualize the concept of the American caste system: the bones inside a body, the beams inside a house, even the computer program in the 1999 film *The Matrix*, of these metaphors helped the concept click for you? Why was it successful?

[Polling Information from RJAC Facilitated Discussion](#) most common terms after reading “Caste”: Add terms that came to your mind.