

ONE BOOK, ONE READ

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN ONE BOOK, ONE READ!

One Book, One Read is a program many major cities across the country engage in. The aim is to get all of the people in an area reading, talking about, and engaging with the same book. The goal is to promote critical conversations, community building, and literacy all while having fun with your neighbors.

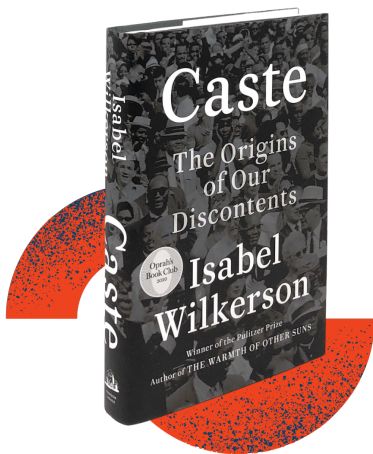
Register for our culminating event with 'Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent' author, Isabel Wilkerson on March 27, 2022, 3PM at Auburn Avenue Research Library:

afplf.org/one-book-one-read

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

Everyone! This year we are focusing on adults. Our book this year is *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*. We are looking for community members, thought leaders, and curious readers to engage in reading the book with your friends and community. Gather a group from your family, religious organization, civic group, sorority or fraternity, job, or friends to read and discuss the book together.

OBOR 2021 BOOK CHOICE:



In this brilliant book, Isabel Wilkerson gives us a masterful portrait of an unseen phenomenon in America as she explores, through an immersive, deeply researched narrative and stories about real people, how America today and throughout its history has been shaped by a hidden caste system, a rigid hierarchy of human rankings.

Beyond race, class, or other factors, there is a powerful caste system influencing people's lives and behavior and the nation's fate. Linking the caste systems of America, India, and Nazi Germany, Wilkerson explores eight pillars that underlie caste systems across civilizations, including divine will, bloodlines, stigma, and more.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Fulton County Library System along with the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library Foundation thanks you for participating in this year's 'One Book, One Read' book discussion. This reader's guide on Pulitzer Prize winning author Isabel Wilkerson's second book 'Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents' includes book discussion questions crafted by the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History - A Special Library of the Fulton County Library System.

Included in this reader's guide are 15 unique questions divided into three sections to support you on your reading journey. Though your book discussion group may choose to meet as it wishes to discuss 'Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents', our hope is that your group will read, meet, and discuss 'Caste' over three months:

- JANUARY - Part 1-3 (Chapter 1 - 9)
- FEBRUARY - Part 4 & 5 (Chapter 10 - 24)
- MARCH - Part 6 & 7 (Chapter 25 - Epilogue)

The discussions will culminate with Isabel Wilkerson appearing in person to lecture at the Auburn Avenue Research Library on March 27, 2022 at 3:00 PM.

As a facilitator/moderator for these discussions, it is suggested the facilitator do these 5 tasks:

PLEASE KEEP TRACK OF TIME

Whether you meet for an hour or two, discussions can get long and go over. Give each question a specific amount of time to provide open discussion and mingling at the end.

KEEP THE DISCUSSION GOING

Participants may begin sharing experiences that deviate from the topic; remember to respectfully rein people in.

ALLOW MANY VOICES

The key to a great discussion is participation and engagement. Don't be afraid to call on an individual who has not spoken during your discussion. They may just be shy.

MAINTAIN THE PEACE IF DISCUSSIONS BECOME INTENSE

Everyone's voice and opinions matter during a discussion. The most important thing is that they are shared and received respectfully. The moderator facilitates this level of respect.

SHARE WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA (IN FOOTER OF DOCUMENT)

We need you to spread the good word so others can be a part of this amazing initiative, bringing Fulton County residents together. [FACEBOOK.COM/AFPLF](https://www.facebook.com/afplf) | [INSTAGRAM](https://www.instagram.com/afplf_atl) / [TWITTER: @AFPLF_ATL](https://twitter.com/afplf_atl)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: ISABEL WILKERSON

Isabel Wilkerson, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Humanities Medal, has become a leading figure in narrative nonfiction, an interpreter of the human condition, and an impassioned voice for demonstrating how history can help us understand ourselves, our country, and our current era of upheaval.

Through her writing, Wilkerson brings the invisible and the marginalized into the light and into our hearts. Through her lectures, she explores with authority the need to reconcile America's karmic inheritance and the origins of both our divisions and our shared commonality.

Her debut work, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, won the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Heartland Prize for Nonfiction, the Anisfield-Wolf Award for Nonfiction, the Lynton History Prize from Harvard and Columbia universities, and the Stephen Ambrose Oral History Prize and was shortlisted for both the Pen-Galbraith Literary Award and the Dayton Literary Peace Prize.

She is a native of Washington, D.C., and a daughter of the Great Migration, the mass movement that she would go on to write about. She won the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing in 1994, as Chicago Bureau Chief of *The New York Times*, making her the first African-American woman to win a Pulitzer Prize in journalism. She then devoted fifteen years and interviewed more than 1,200 people to tell the story of the six million people, among them her parents, who defected from the Jim Crow South.

As for her new book, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, the venerable U.K. bookseller, Waterstone's calls it an "expansive, lyrical and stirring account of the unspoken system of divisions that govern our world."

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CASTE READER'S GUIDE JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. Indian Civil Rights Leader, Ambedkar is referred to as the “Martin Luther King of India” by Wilkerson as a quick descriptor to a young man who was not familiar with him. Unlike the more easily recognizable Gandhi, Ambedkar is a much less known figure to many within the United States. Has the caste systems in both India and the United States played a role in Ambedkar being unknown to many in the states in comparison to Gandhi, whose achievements are a part of the popular culture and education curriculum in the United States?
2. When comparing the overt racism and casteism experienced by Wilkerson during her formative years in the South, to the subtle racism and casteism she experienced during her college years in the North, what were the noticeable differences and similarities? Should these two different examples of negative experiences be fought in a similar manner?
3. “Africans are not black,” she said. “They are Igbo and Yoruba, Ewe, Akan, Ndebele. They are just themselves. They are humans on the land. That is how they see themselves, and that is who they are.” A Nigerian-born playwright made this declaration to Ms. Wilkerson during a talk in London, England. Are all people of African descent the same, or are they afforded the ability to define themselves as being from a specific nation/region or a cultural/religious group like their European counterparts? Is the idea of Blackness a construct of the experiences of Africans in America that is now being forced upon all members of the African diaspora? How does this relate to the impact of the internet on globalization?
4. Wilkerson states the American caste system was “an accelerated one, compressed into a fraction of the time that India’s caste system has been in existence”. What made it possible for the American caste system to develop in a shorter period of time?

CASTE READER'S GUIDE FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. Post World War II Germany took an approach of remembrance of those most affected by the cruelties of the Nazi caste system and World War II. This rectification of past wrongs has assisted Germany in making huge strides in acknowledging and condemning its hate-filled past. What do you make of the United States’ approach to acknowledging and condemning its past wrongs? Do you believe there is a better way to ensure such atrocities are never repeated?

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2. Wilkerson states that “Color is a fact. Race is a social construct” Is this true? Why or why not?
3. Davis and Gardner’s *Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class* (discussed on pages 245-255) was overshadowed by two earlier released works produced by White counterparts and with less extensive research. Were Davis and Gardner victims of the very caste system that they were documenting?
4. In 1959, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. visited and toured India. During his trip, Dr. King visited with a group of Dalits or Untouchables, who represented the lowest group of the Indian caste system. When referred to as a “fellow Untouchable,” Dr. King was at first shocked. What do you believe led to Dr. King’s shock? What does his reaction say about the caste system in India and the one in the United States?

CASTE READER’S GUIDE MARCH QUESTIONS

1. At the end of World War II, the United States saw many German Jews immigrate to cities across the country. Within the complicated structure of the American caste system, there was a vague distinction of Whiteness. Italians, Irish, and those of Jewish heritage were considered as being lower within the American caste system’s hierarchy. How do you imagine Jewish Holocaust survivors interpreted the American Caste system upon arrival? How would it relate to what they had experienced before?
2. Can class stratification (a form of social stratification in which a society is separated into parties whose members have different access to resources and power) be considered a key component of all caste systems? Can you give examples of this in our society?
3. As the world grows ever smaller due to technology, will India’s caste system continue or will it languish in the near future? As some Dalits or Untouchables find success within this new world, will their achievements be met with praise or disdain within Indian society? Is it realistic to believe the caste systems in both the United States and India can be eradicated?
4. In both Wilkerson’s airport (pages 219-223) and department store stories, she is met with assumptions, stereotypes, and a refusal to acknowledge her identity though all signs point to her being who she said she was. What are some assumptions others have made about you? How did these assumptions make you feel?

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5. How can people work to eliminate the practices of caste systems if members of a society do not consider themselves a part of a caste?

For more resources and reading lists, visit: afplf.org/one-book-one-read

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I get involved?

Sign up at your local library to be a part of their book club. Each branch will be leading its own book club. Local community leaders and book clubs are also engaging in book clubs to read the book. Start your own book club by filling out this form. You will then be invited to join a webinar in December which will walk book club leaders through the book guide created by Auburn Avenue Research Library. Read the book January through March. Meet with your book club monthly. The culminating book club will be a lecture by Isabel Wilkerson at AARL on March 27th at 3 PM. The event is free. Please secure your tickets here.

What is the book for this year?

Our book this year is *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson.

Will this be happening again?

We plan on making this an annual event.

What is the time commitment?

Leaders have the option of attending a webinar walking them through the facilitation guide. Book clubs meet once a month January through March with the culminating meeting being a lecture from Isabel Wilkerson on March 27, 2022 at 3PM.

Does this cost money?

It is free and open to the public! We are accepting sponsorships. Please contact Aarti Sharma at asharma@afplf.org if you are interested in sponsorships.

Where can I get the book?

ONE BOOK, ONE READ

There are approximately 400 copies in circulation in the Fulton County Library System. Local retailers including, The Vibratory, Charis, A Capella Books, and Barnes and Noble are committed to having copies of the book in stock.

Tell me about the book that was chosen.

This year we are focusing on adults. Our book this year is *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*. The book centers around drawing comparisons between the caste system in India, the rise of the Third Reich in Germany, and the American race system. It also talks about the current state of race politics in the United States and how history has led us to this point. The book was on the longlist for the National Book Award, an Oprah's Book Club pick, and an Obama best book of the year pick. By choosing such a timely and thought-provoking piece, we hope to engage a broad swath of the county in meaningful dialogue across lines of race.

I am interested in being involved, but I am no expert. Is there any guidance or help for people looking to start or join a book club?

Sign up at your local library to be a part of their book club. Each branch will be leading their own book club. Local community leaders and book clubs are also engaging in book clubs to read the book. Start your own book club by filling out this form. You will then be invited to join a webinar in December which will walk book club leaders through the book guide created by Auburn Avenue Research Library. Read the book January through March. Meet with your book club monthly. The culminating book club will be a lecture by Isabel Wilkerson at AARL on March 27th at 3PM. The event is free. Please secure your tickets [here](#).

What is the timeline for this event? When do I need to sign up?

There is no deadline to sign up. To join a book club, see above. December 2021 Webinar for book club leaders information will be posted to the www.afplf.org website.

January - March 2022 - Read! Book clubs meet every month.

March 27, 2022 lecture at 3pm

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