

Congregational Read of *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson

As our shared reading of *Caste* draws to a close, you are invited to respond to the following prompts. Consider writing your responses to share anonymously with others in the congregation, or to return to for your own reflection.

1. Summarize your experience reading *Caste* and the one or two take-aways that you believe are most critical for you in terms of your perspective and what you do moving forward.
2. Name some of your multiple identities, personal stories, and societal influences and reflect on how they affected your reactions to this book.
3. In the Acknowledgements, Isabel Wilkerson says “This is a book that I did not seek to write but had to write, in the era in which we find ourselves.”

Consider what you know of Wilkerson’s lived experience and reflect on how that experience shaped this book she says she had to write.

4. Notes from Wilkerson’s February 17th IU-sponsored discussion about her book captured the statements “caste is a matter of life and death” and “radical empathy can save lives while we work toward true structural change.” In her book, Wilkerson writes “The hierarchy of caste is not about feelings or morality. It is about power—which groups have it and which do not.”(pg 17) and “Caste is the powerful infrastructure that holds each group in place.”(pg 19)

Supplement the insights you gained through reading *caste* with [this piece](#) on white supremacy culture.

Reflect on how you and institutions you are part of create and maintain hierarchies that give some groups more power than others. What might true structural change look like in these institutions?

5. Reflect on whether you have, consciously or unconsciously, considered Wilkerson to be the definitive voice for the Black perspective at this time in our country. Is there someone you consider to be the definitive voice for the white perspective at this time in our country? Are you surprised by these prompts or your responses to them?

In *Pillar Number Six: Dehumanization and Stigma*, Wilkerson writes “Individuality, after all, is a luxury afforded to the dominant caste. Individuality is the first distinction lost to the stigmatized.”

The IU-sponsored [“Race, Caste, and Inequality - A Student-Focused Discussion”](#) offers one opportunity to hear different Black perspectives as participants bring their own lived experience and reflect on Wilkerson’s book. Watch this entire video and notice points in the video when you find yourself wanting to stop watching. Can you identify what was said / what you were feeling at those points? Reflect on how your reaction to the student discussion was shaped by your own lived experience, including your reading of *Caste*.

6. What are some ways we can support each other in our 8th Principle commitment?
We, the members the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington, Indiana, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.