

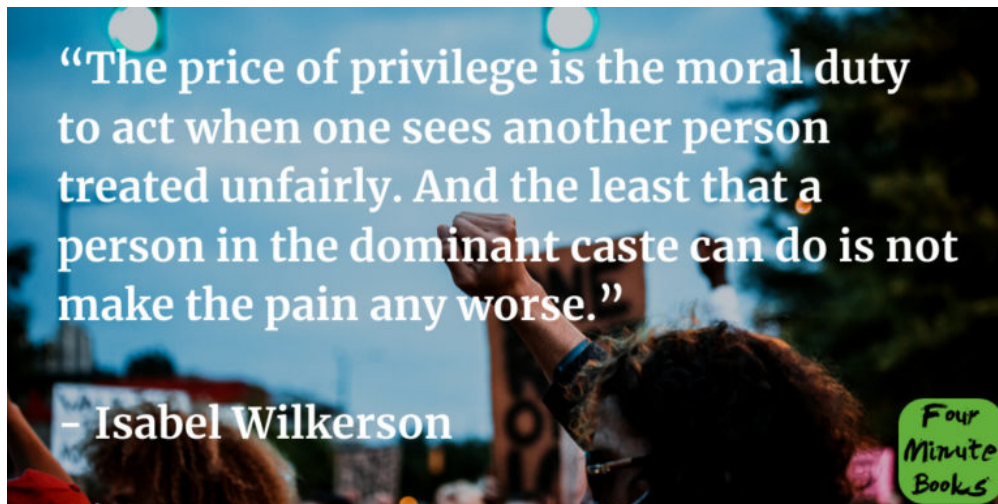
Caste Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Caste* unveils the hidden cultural and societal rules of our class system, including where it comes from, why it's so deeply entrenched in society, and how we can dismantle it forever and finally allow all people to have the equality they deserve.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Imagine you inherited an old home. You freshen it up with paint and a new roof, but soon you notice plaster cracking in the ceiling. At first, you brush it off as unimportant, but soon it grows larger, so you bring in a specialist to tell you what's wrong.

They tell you that stress cracks in the foundation are bending the ceilings. It's not your fault since you inherited the house. But because it's your home, it's now your problem. Until you address this problem, it's a hazard to everyone.

Racism in America is a lot like this. After three hundred years, we can see the stress fractures all around us. These come in the form of income gaps, police brutality, a lack of healthcare access. The reason it's so hard to get rid of systemic racism because America has a hierarchical system underlying it.

In *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, Isabel Wilkerson explores the phenomenon that is the hidden caste system in American society. She shows parallels between the US caste system others and teaches the principles that underlie all caste systems. Through her story, you will better understand how we got here and what still needs to be done.

Let's see how much we can discover in just 3 lessons:

1. There are eight foundational pillars of a caste system, and the first four are Divine Will and Laws of Nature, Heritability, Endogamy, and Purity vs Pollution.
2. The last four pillars of the caste system deal with hierarchy, dehumanization, terror, and superiority.
3. We can dismantle the caste with monuments and memorials and support all who try to break it down.

Ready to learn all about social classes and how to dismantle them? Let's get to it!

Lesson 1: The first four pillars of the caste system are Divine Will and Laws of Nature, Heritability, Endogamy, and Purity vs Pollution.

Wilkerson believes eight pillars that make up every caste system are:

1. **Divine Will and the Laws of Nature.** This is when religious beliefs make it hard to change the way things are. In India, Hindu texts describe a caste system that places a series of groups in order. Those at the bottom are stuck for life paying off a karmic debt. Canaan – one of Noah's three sons, is a curse to be a slave-based on the old testament. Some people interpret Canaan to have dark skin.
2. **Heritability.** This means you are born into whatever caste your parents belong to. In America, people made this pillar work by making it, so the mother's social status determined the child's caste. This made it so children who slave masters fathered couldn't rise in caste.
3. **Endogamy and the Control of Marriage and Mating.** Endogamy which means marrying within your caste was strictly enforced, especially in US history and India. There were times in America when a black man's mere accusation even touched a white woman ended in lynching.
4. **Purity vs Pollution.** This is when people insist on maintaining a "pure" bloodline. In Nazi Germany, Jewish people are forbidden to go near any water that might touch a pure Aryan German. Also, African-Americans are ban from swimming pools. Then, if a black person ever was found in the water, it had to be drained and cleaned.

Lesson 2: Hierarchy, dehumanization, terror, and superiority are the last four pillars of the caste system.

5. **Occupational Hierarchy.** Maybe you've heard people claim that someone has to do the hard and menial jobs in society. People argued that low-status jobs were for Blacks.

6. **Dehumanization and Stigma.** Some groups dehumanize other groups to elevate themselves. Nazis did this to the Jewish community, and America has done the same to African-Americans. In both cases, the lower-class people are subject to torture and medical experiments, just for the higher caste's enjoyment.

Blacks and Jewish people were also greatly stigmatized. They blamed Nazi's for Germany's loss in World War I and the economic downturn that came after. Crime Rate and economic challenges were blamed on African-Americans.

7. Terror as Enforcement and Cruelty as Means of Control. Tragically, whippings, burnings, and hangings were things both Nazis and American slave owners did as a means of control. They often did brutal whippings in full view. That can serve as a warning. This often happened on plantations. Hangings and burnings continued even after they abolished slavery. This is to show who was in control.

8. Inherent Superiority vs Inherent Inferiority. This is a long list of unspoken things that dominate interactions between the higher and lower castes. Caste's inferiority was what these expectations are meant to remind everyone, which causes lasting damage in society.

Lesson 3: If we want to take down the caste system, we have to support those trying to destroy it.

A few years ago, the US had around 230 memorials commemorating Robert E Lee, the commander of the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Despite being tolerated and even honoured for a long time, people finally feel brave enough to say they should be taken down.

When hearings in one city were held whether to take down a statue of the general, there was some pushback. While Nazi general Erwin Rommel was a gifted military leader, Germans didn't erect statues. This is what Richard Westmoreland, a retired Marine lieutenant colonel, pointed out. He poignantly said, "They're ashamed. Why aren't we?"

In contrast, Germany has many memorials to victims of the Nazis. This includes markers with names on the sidewalk outside of homes from where they took them. In short, they humanized people.

But in America, merely removing a statue of a Confederate leader leads to death threats, showing how far we still have to go. It won't be simple to tackle the caste problem. The first thing we can do is make people aware of its existence.

The next thing that we can do is support people who find ways to break free of a lower caste. We can also highlight the things we have in common to view each other as unique individuals. The more we see each other as individuals, the easier it will be to break free of castes.

Caste Review

Social classes and the people that try to uphold them make me sick. We're all human beings, we are *all* equal, and we *all* deserve equal rights, opportunities, and treatment. Caste made me angry not because it was wrong or a bad book, but rather because it identified a huge

problem with society that I can't wait to tear down.

Who would I recommend the Caste summary to?

The 67-year-old white supremacist, the 33-year-old who wonders why racism is still a thing, and anyone tired of the persistent and pervasive onslaught of inequality in society.