



Colorado Book Club Resource

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR WHITE LIKE ME: REFLECTIONS ON RACE FROM A PRIVILEGED SON BY TOM WISE

1. How does Wise define whiteness and how does his definition differ from a strictly biological definition?
2. Discuss privilege, oppression, and power in terms of race. What are some other privileged identities in our society other than whiteness?
3. Give an example of how someone in a privileged group might experience life differently than someone not in that group.
4. How do we create a more just and sustainable society according to Wise?
5. Why might it be a good thing for whites to examine in-depth how people of color experience race and racism in our society? Is it also important for people of color to understand how whites experience race? Why or why not?
6. What did it mean to be white in the time of Wise's ancestors? How did these historical circumstances eventually affect Wise's life?
7. Why does Wise say that "colorblindness" is not the solution to dealing with race?
8. How did Dr. Wise's whiteness factor into his childhood/adolescence? What significance did this have in shaping the path his life took?
9. Why is it important for white, upper middle class and affluent individuals to really hear the voices of economically and racially marginalized persons? How can this apply not only to debate teams, but also to classroom discussions and the workplace?
10. Explain the following statement "to be white is to rarely find oneself feeling out of place". How is it different to be a person of color in an all-white space than it is for whites in black/brown spaces?
11. What is the "psychic tax of color" or the "psychic subsidy of whiteness"?
12. What are some of the reasons that whites tend to think that racism is a thing of the past?
13. There is an inherent contradiction between the promise of equal opportunity and the deep inequalities we see between whites and people of color. What are the two ways we can choose to resolve this contradiction and what does this have to do with denial?
14. What is "argument from exception" and why is it invalid when discussing larger social realities?



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15. Students in chapter four claim that there are no racial issues in Minnesota because of their “Minnesota Nice” doctrine. Why are individual attitudes largely irrelevant in ensuring racial equality?
16. In what way is choosing to resist racism similar to choosing to correct environmental damage or choosing to pay down national debt? Along these same lines, come up with your own analogy.
17. Wise says that, “tradition is a choice we make”. Discuss this in terms of the tradition of using American Indian mascots in sports or flying the confederate flag in the South. Did Wise’s discussion of these issues change your view on them in any way? Why or why not?
18. Why does Wise say that it is important to know the history of the anti-racist movement?
19. Explain Wise’s assertion that white anti-racists have to learn to be good listeners and to resist this urge to take-over.
20. Think of a time when you saw/heard racism in action. How did you react? How do you wish you had reacted? If there is a difference between the two, using some of Wise’s techniques, devise a clear strategy to more effectively handle that situation in the future.
21. What type of person does Wise claim is the most dangerous?
22. What is institutional racism?
23. How is it that “good” individuals can end up collaborating with racism?
24. Why does Wise argue that any anti-racist struggle should be lead by people of color?
25. Why does Wise say that becoming an anti-racist ally is a “lifelong process”? If this is true, what does it mean for you or how you view (other) whites?
26. If whites are privileged, why would they want to get rid of that? Outline the main points of Wise’s argument. Do you have any reasons of your own to add?
27. How has racism been used to divide and conquer the working class? What then are the social implications of uniting across racial lines?
28. Is there such a thing as “white culture”? Explain your argument and compare your view to Wise’s.



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