**BHM 2024 Theme: RESOURCES (Books, Videos, Other)**

**Non-Fiction**

**Isabel Wilkerson, Author: Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents**

# Isabel Wilkerson’s ‘Caste’ is an ‘Instant American Classic’ About Our Abiding Sin

**By**[**Dwight Garner**](https://www.nytimes.com/by/dwight-garner)

* Published July 31, 2020Updated Jan. 21, 2021

(Excerpts from Dwight Garner’s NYT article:)

“I had these thoughts while reading Isabel Wilkerson’s new book, “Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents.” It’s an extraordinary document, one that strikes me as an instant American classic and almost certainly the keynote nonfiction book of the American century thus far”.

“Wilkerson’s book is about how brutal misperceptions about race have disfigured the American experiment. This is a topic that major historians and novelists have examined from many angles, with care, anger, deep feeling and sometimes simmering wit.

Wilkerson’s book is a work of synthesis. She borrows from all that has come before, and her book stands on many shoulders. “Caste” lands so firmly because the historian, the sociologist and the reporter are not at war with the essayist and the critic inside her. This book has the reverberating and patriotic slap of the best American prose writing”.

“This is a complicated book that does a simple thing. Wilkerson, who won a Pulitzer Prize for national reporting while at The New York Times and whose previous book, [“The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration,”](https://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/05/books/review/Oshinsky-t.html) won the National Book Critics Circle Award, avoids words like “white” and “race” and “racism” in favor of terms like “dominant caste,” “favored caste,” “upper caste” and “lower caste.”

“A caste system, she writes, is “an artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value that sets the presumed supremacy of one group against the presumed inferiority of other groups on the basis of ancestry and often immutable traits, traits that would be neutral in the abstract but are ascribed life-and-death meaning.” **(read more):**

nytimes.com/2020/07/31/books/review-caste-isabel-wilkerson-origins-of-our-discontents.html