

A More *JUST* Future

by Dolly Chugh

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. How have you learned about American history, both formally and informally? In what ways has your understanding of American history shifted over time, and why?
2. What did you learn, if anything, as a child from teachers, family members, and other adults about racism? What did you learn from lived experience, if anything, about racism?
3. Think of a situation when you were trying to engage with the past but struggled with the emotions that came up. What were those emotions? How did they affect your ability to learn/ (un)learn about the past?
4. Select one of the following section epigraphs from the text. Consider how the quote relates to your experiences and observations. Include specific examples from your individual experiences.
 - Chapter 1:** “You know the greatest lesson of history? It’s that history is whatever the victors say it is. That’s the lesson. Whoever wins, that’s who decides the history.”
—Anthony Doerr
 - Chapter 2:** “There’s no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing.”
—Alfred Wainwright
 - Chapter 3:** “How wonderful that we have met with a paradox. Now we have some hope of making progress.” —Niels Bohr
 - Chapter 4:** “The distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.” —Albert Einstein
 - Chapter 5:** “Where I’m from, we believe all sorts of things that aren’t true.” —Wicked
 - Chapter 6:** “America is an older house. We can never declare the work over.”
—Isabel Wilkerson
 - Chapter 7:** “At some point it is no longer a question of whether we can learn this history but whether we have the collective will to reckon with it.” —Clint Smith
5. How did you feel while you were reading this book? In what ways was the experience similar or different from what you expected?
6. The book features interviews and stories from a number of individuals. Whose stories resonated most with you? Whose stories did not resonate with you? Why?
7. Who do you see this book as most appropriate for? Are you part of that audience?
8. Is this a book your past self (You, one year ago? Five years ago? Ten years ago?) would have been open to reading? Why or why not?
9. What is something (unrelated to history) that you have had to unlearn? How did you approach the challenge? How did it go?
10. What comes up for you when you think about patriotism? Do you identify as patriotic? Why or why not?

- 11.** How does the concept of the patriot's dilemma land for you? Have you experienced this?
- 12.** What role does nostalgia play in your family? How does that affect your understanding of the past?
- 13.** What national holidays do you celebrate? Why? What was your reaction to Juneteenth becoming a national holiday? What is your reaction to the shift in many locales to celebrating Indigenous People's Day instead of Columbus Day?
- 14.** What racial fables have you detected? What led to the detection? How are those fables tied to your identity?
- 15.** How did you react when you learned about Americans' reactions in the 1960s to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Muhammad Ali? Were you surprised by this information? Why or why not?
- 16.** What cultures are you familiar with outside of the United States? How applicable are the concepts from *A More Just Future* to their relationship with history?
- 17.** While *A More Just Future* is not a history book, by any stretch, it does mention some historical events. How familiar were these to you? How did you experience reading about those that were not familiar?
- 18.** Historiography is the study of how we study history, and can teach us about whose viewpoints are presented and omitted from what we know today. Why do so many history textbooks omit many of the headwinds that black people experienced in the United States? How can this contribute to the idea of the United States as a meritocracy? What are the challenges in learning and teaching history?
- 19.** Think of someone you admire or care about who is good at reckoning with our country's past. What do you notice? How do they compare to the Anderson Cooper/Ben Affleck examples?
- 20.** What is a paradox from American history you would like to discuss? What is your experience trying to embrace the paradox mindset?
- 21.** How does the Long-Time-Ago Illusion show up for you? What is an "old" song that you still listen to . . . what else happened in the year of its release that feels like a long time ago?
- 22.** Who are your heroes from American history? To what extent do you see them as flawed versus flawless? How does it make you feel to hear about their flaws?
- 23.** What has changed in your vocabulary over time? How do you feel about updating your word use to reflect new knowledge and awareness?
- 24.** Why hasn't the United States apologized for slavery? Does it matter? What are your thoughts on reparations?
- 25.** What are your thoughts on gritty patriotism? In what ways are you or aren't you a gritty patriot?
- 26.** Author Dolly Chugh uses a number of metaphors in *A More Just Future*, including sports teams, parenting, and houses. Which, if any, worked best for you? Why or why not?

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