

AMERICA
CAN BE
CHANGED.
IT WILL BE
CHANGED.

National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington D.C.

DISRUPTING CASTE

Knowing what radical
empathy is, its
importance, and how
to practice it

Magazine / January 2024 Issue 1

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DIFFERENCES ARE NOT INTENDED
TO SEPARATE, TO ALIENATE.
WE ARE DIFFERENT PRECISELY IN ORDER
TO REALIZE OUR NEED OF ONE ANOTHER.

DESMOND TUTU

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A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

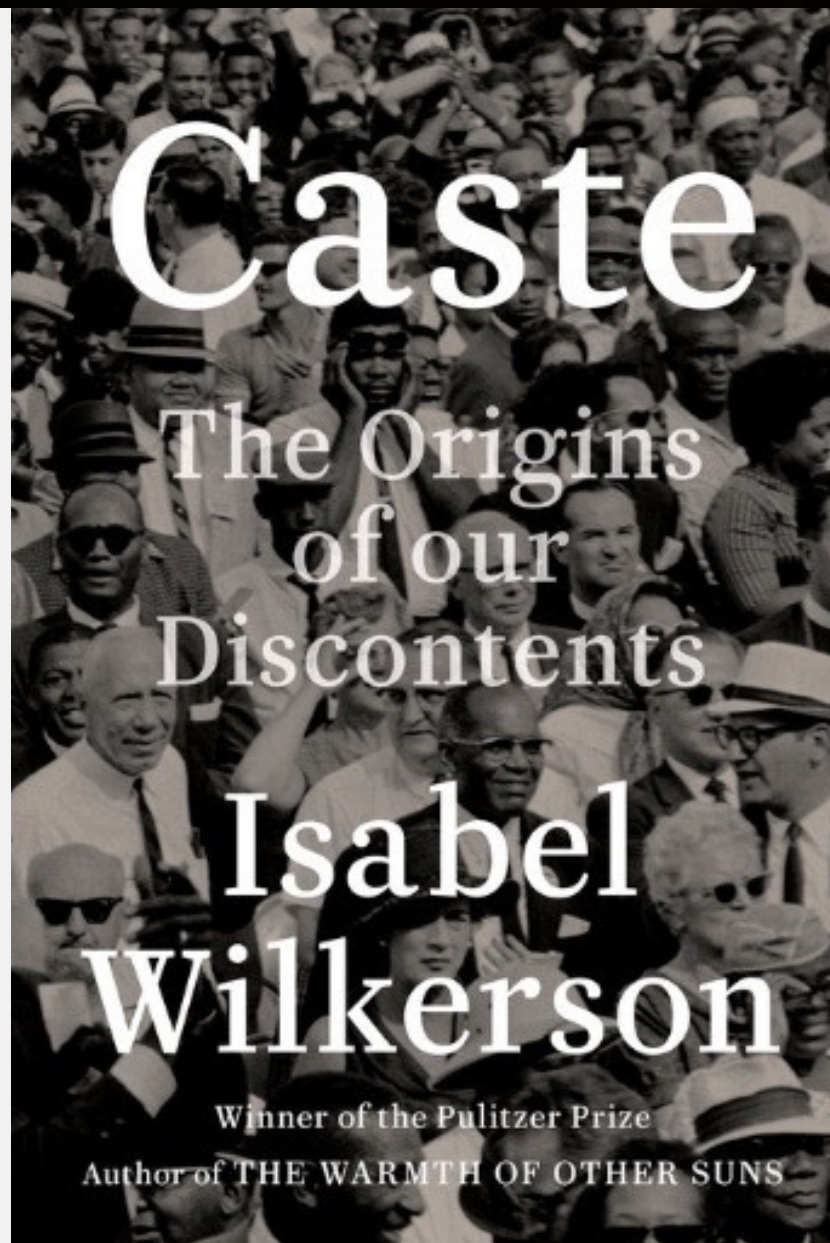
As a 20 year old White woman, I have struggled in the past to find my place and purpose in the fight against the injustice of racism.

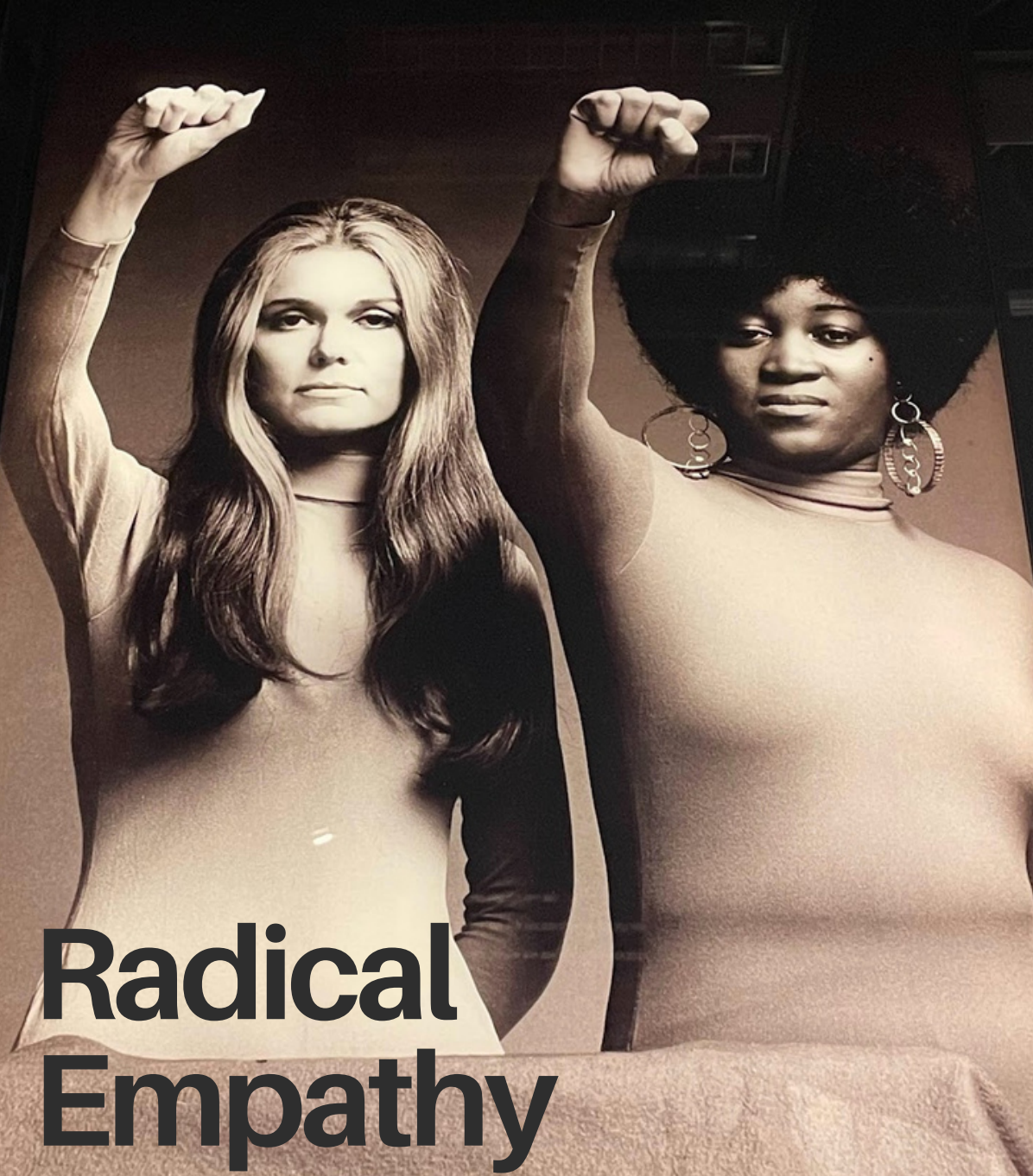
After reading *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson and partaking in the course, *Rocking the World: Disrupting Stereotypical Notions of Race, Class, and Religion*, I have become more enlightened.

Reading and learning about radical empathy was something that stuck with me and helped me to find a place where I can be in a position to do my part.

I am sure I still have more to learn and definitely more room to make active efforts, but I hope what I have written here helps others to see the importance of radical empathy in our world today and encourages you to take action.

With gratitude, Nicole Marie Huff





Radical Empathy

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Radical empathy is not sympathy.
Radical empathy is feeling so
deeply for another's
circumstance that you put
yourself on the line by taking
action to help them or their cause.
Radical empathy is
understanding that ensuring
peace requires taking risks.

**"Inspiration
untethered
from action
loses all
value." -
Bayard
Rustin**

During the Holocaust, every family, stranger, business, teacher, or doctor who offered hiding places or altered medical documents to protect Jews from the German police were risking their own lives as well.

Historical Moments Displaying Radical Empathy

HISTORY, DESPITE ITS WRENCHING PAIN,
CANNOT BE UNLIVED,
BUT IF FACED WITH COURAGE,
NEED NOT BE LIVED AGAIN.

MAYA ANGELOU

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In 1955, 14-year-old [Emmett Till](#) was kidnapped and brutally murdered based on false allegations of harassment. Till's lynching is the event that inspired Rosa Parks to not give up her seat on the bus. Parks felt such empathy for Till and the Black community she knew she had to take action to stop the perpetration of violence to African Americans.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington was a moment in history where White people who marched with them showed they were not just bystanders who believed in equality, but active members fighting for African American's equal rights.

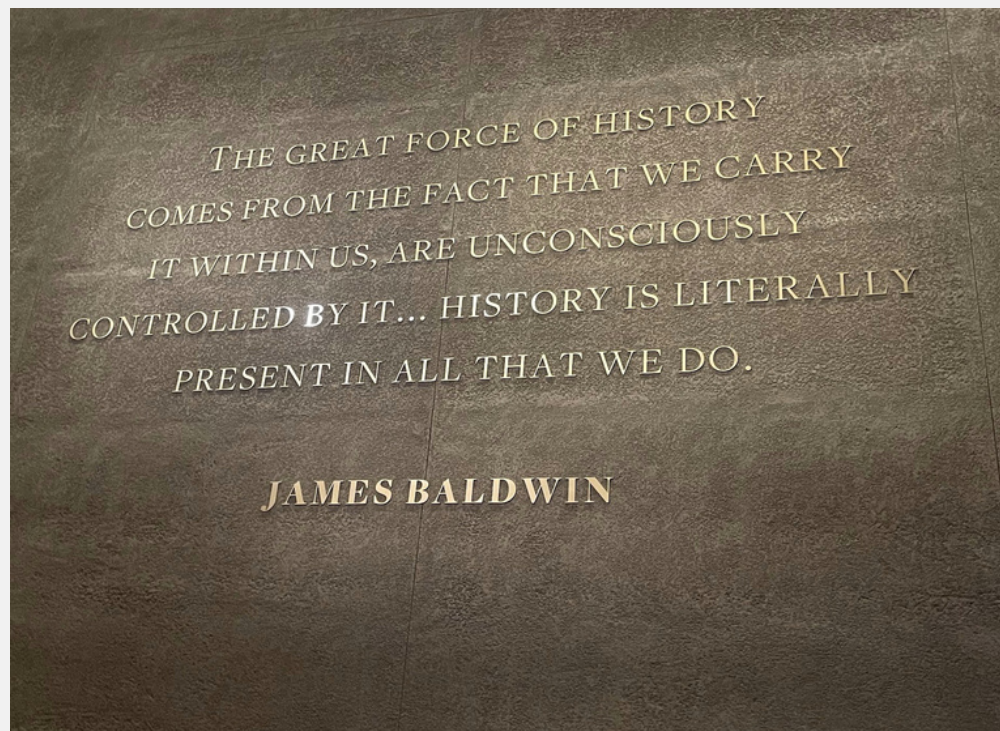
"Rosa said she thought about going to the back of the bus. But then she thought about Emmett Till and she couldn't do it."

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Educating yourself is the first step in understanding how to practice radical empathy. We cannot make real change if we do not know why the injustice of the caste system began in the first place. When we fully understand its structure, we are able to disrupt it. We just have to be courageous enough to do so.



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“Ignorance is no protection from the consequences of inaction.” - Isabel Wilkerson

Our world is based on our history and every day we have the choice to be on the right side of it. We are born with stereotypes embedded in us whether we are aware of them or not. It is our duty to find ways to disrupt those culturally learned stereotypes.

FIRST THEY CAME FOR THE SOCIALISTS, AND I DID NOT SPEAK OUT—
BECAUSE I WAS NOT A SOCIALIST.

THEN THEY CAME FOR THE TRADE UNIONISTS, AND I DID NOT SPEAK OUT—
BECAUSE I WAS NOT A TRADE UNIONIST.

THEN THEY CAME FOR THE JEWS, AND I DID NOT SPEAK OUT—
BECAUSE I WAS NOT A JEW.

THEN THEY CAME FOR ME—AND THERE WAS NO ONE LEFT TO SPEAK FOR ME.

MARTIN NIEMÖLLER (1892–1964), LUTHERAN MINISTER AND EARLY NAZI SUPPORTER
WHO WAS LATER IMPRISONED FOR OPPOSING HITLER'S REGIME

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Ways to Practice Radical Empathy.

- Never stop learning. Always look for ways to educate yourself about both history and today's world.
- Be willing to take risks for yourself and others.
- Make efforts to correct people in their stereotypes.
- Be courageous and have uncomfortable conversations.
- Be the person to bridge the gap between separated groups of people.
- Talk to family and friends about what you learn.
- Stand up for someone you see being discriminated against.

Conclusions

FOR THE DEAD AND THE LIVING
WE MUST BEAR WITNESS

ELIE WIESEL

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Practicing radical empathy is not an easy task. [However, it is of incredible importance that we partake in it.](#) The foundation of our country is built upon discrimination, injustice, and violence. We now live with the repercussions of those injustices and have to find ways to make those burdens lighter for the sake of justice and equality.

Being aware of the problem means nothing if no action is taken. I encourage you to take the first step into finding your place in the fight against discrimination and inequality by educating yourself and practicing radical empathy. You would help to bring our world one step closer to peace.