

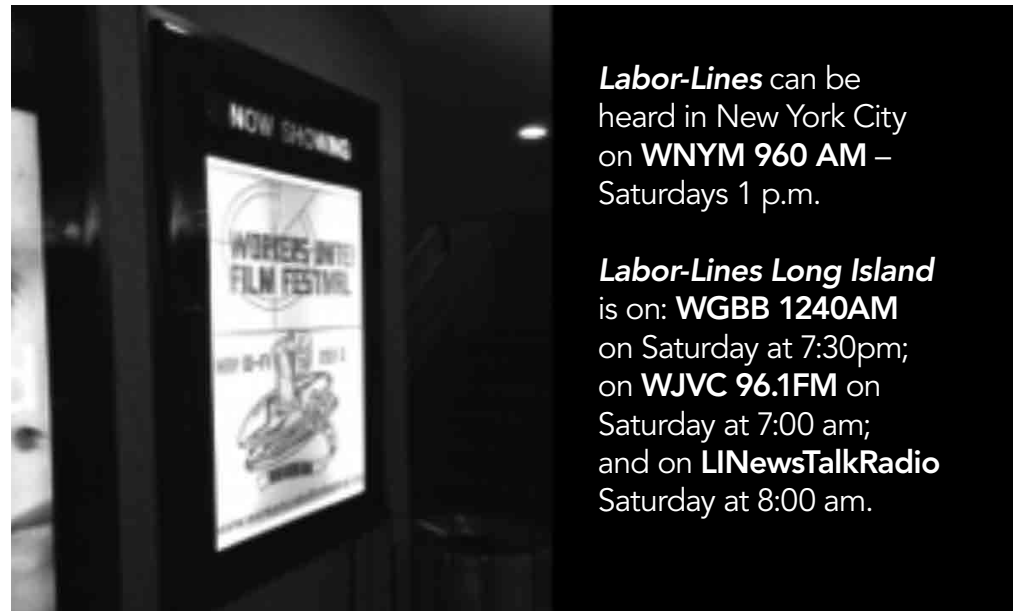
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#### NOTES:

- 1 Cannon, Lou. *Governor Reagan: His Rise to Power* (Public Affairs, 2003).
- 2 U.S. National Archives, *Vietnam War U.S. Military Casualty Statistics* (2008): www.archives.gov/research/military.
- 3 Pacific Studies Center would later bring my partner (let's call him "E") on board to research labor and transit issues.
- 4 Lamott, Kenneth, "In the Matter of H. Bruce Franklin," *New York Times Magazine* (1/23/1972).
- 5 In May 2019, 85-year-old Bruce Franklin returned to Stanford, unrepentant, to give a speech to undergraduates and publicize his new memoir: Franklin, H. Bruce. *Crash Course: From the Good War to the Forever War* (Rutgers U. Press, 2019). After his 1972 firing, he spent 3 years "blacklisted" in academia, before being hired onto the faculty at the Newark campus of Rutgers University. For another well-written, but sharply contrasting memoir of these events by the University's then-president, see: Lyman, Richard. *Stanford in Turmoil: Campus Unrest 1966-72* (Stanford U. Press, 2009).

- 6 US Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Union Members – 2019* (BLS, January 2020): www.bls.gov. 1970 density estimates are from: Hirsch, Barry, et al., "Estimates of Union Density By State," *Monthly Labor Review* (7/2001).
- 7 Mishel, Lawrence, et al. "Explaining the Erosion of Private Sector Unions," *EPI Report* (7/2020)
- 8 See Julia Reichert & Steven Bognar's excellent 2020 documentary film about the history of women organizing clerical workers: "9 To 5: The Story of a Movement."
- 9 Eidelson, Josh, "Union Power is Putting Pressure on Silicon Valley's Tech Giants," *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* (9/14/2017).



## BOOK REVIEW

### Class, Caste and Race in the U.S

*Caste: The Origin of Our Discontents*, by Isabel Wilkerson (Random House, 2020)

Reviewed by Rachel Horowitz

Here is a bold investigative attempt to unearth how oppression functions in society and, if, through tracing the workings of different caste systems, we can find a universal element to certain kinds of suffering. Isabel Wilkerson is the first African-American woman to win a Pulitzer Prize in journalism and the author of *The Warmth of Other Suns: the Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. In *Caste*, she compares three hierarchical societies: America, India, and Nazi Germany. With three distinct "subordinate castes", across three continents, Wilkerson uses these societies with very different histories in order to determine the universal elements of a caste system. The author provides a societal definition of caste that deviates from what she perceives as individualistic accounts of racism. She argues that caste 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". Therefore, race is America's arbitrary permutation of a caste system, in which the power of the dominant caste restricts the physical and financial security, the happiness, and the health of the subordinate caste on the basis of random variables that we, as a society, have collectively endowed with so much weight.

Whether it be the Untouchables, or Dalits, in India or Jews in Nazi Germany, Wilkerson argues that a caste system upholds a tight order of domination and labor exploitation on the lowest rung of society. The upper caste reaps the benefits while dehumanizing the group they've deemed undeserving of human dignity. Her comparison to Nazi Germany breaks down slightly when one considers that the Nazi's goal was to exterminate Jews, rather than to maintain a continued hierarchy of domination and labor as in American and India. But her comparative stance allows for a fundamental analysis of the social mechanics behind caste. Unlike racism, which she describes as "fluid and superficial", Wilkerson theorizes that casteism is the structure upon which racism is built, and that caste and inequality are so fixed, so entrenched in society, that our entire way of being is determined by where we fall in the caste hierarchy.

The book hinges on the question of immutability— can we escape the fate of the caste in which we were born? The author dismisses class as an example of caste since, she argues, certain determining

elements of class like education, taste, or socioeconomic status "can be acquired through hard work and ingenuity or lost through poor decisions or calamity. If you can act your way out of it, then it is class, not caste". In contrast to this simplistic rationale, Wilkerson argues that there is no true mobility, no opportunity for Black people to truly transcend being lower caste in the American caste system.

As an incredibly accomplished Black woman, Wilkerson's statement seems deeply personal. She includes many powerful anecdotes of caste systems in America, India, and Nazi Germany, but her own experiences of running up against the walls of race and caste seem at the heart of her book. She includes several stories of her experiences working as a journalist for *The New York Times* that involve demeaning treatment while flying first class on assignment. Even though flying first class is a statement of class position, on several occasions, Wilkerson was made to feel as though she didn't belong to that elite club of the "upper caste" who fly first class, despite literally being in the same cabin as everyone else.

This leads to her central question and her ultimately disappointing response. Can there be mobility for the lower caste to rise into the dominant? According to Wilkerson, the answer is no, at least not right now. She illustrates the hardship of those deemed subordinate who do rise in class, but who, she argues, can never achieve a true sense of belonging. She includes a scientific study that found the nerves of upwardly mobile Black people were frayed from the stress of this situation, in comparison to the nerves of lower-class Black people, which don't show the same degeneration. Thus, while Wilkerson interrogates caste in India, Nazi Germany, and Black people in America generally, and builds a convincing case, the status of upper-class Black people in America seems to be what personally drives her. How can she, a woman who has accomplished so much, be so easily put down on a first-class flight, on which she has every right to be? The book asks if there's a kind of predetermination in play, in which all members of a subordinated caste, despite all efforts to rise, will remain fixed in their hierarchical assignment, and seen not as individuals, but as inescapable caste positions.

While Wilkerson's book offers a novel, thought-provoking framework for how to think about race in America as a hierarchical caste system, it falters in its handling of nuances or of the "middle

castes” of groups like Hispanics or Asians, or structural issues of economic inequality, operating more comfortably in a binary of Black and white. That said, she does operate well in this binary. However, after arguing that caste has seemingly all of society in its grip and that it structures much of our worldview, her prescription for dismantling it is individual acts of connection. Wilkerson writes that “each time a person reaches across caste and makes a connection, it helps break the back of caste. Multiplied by millions in a given day, it becomes the flap of a butterfly wing that shifts the air and builds to a hurricane across the ocean”. This is a surprising turn of vague optimism given her bleak outlook of relative immutability as it leaves the deeper problems of structural racism, such as the large wealth gap between Black and white families or the disparity in incarceration rates, unresolved. Ultimately, this unexpected optimism causes her cumulative argument to stop short of any concrete call to action for a systemic structural reckoning.

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*Rachel Horowitz is a History Major at Williams College*

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## BOOK REVIEW

### *Confronting Sexual Harassment in the Corporate Workforce*

*#Me Too in the Corporate World*, by Sylvia Anne Hewlett (HarperCollins, 2020)

Reviewed by Lauren Sanford

This is a powerful study about the history of sexual assault in the workplace and how companies can move forward to create a safer and more inclusive work environment. While the #MeToo movement of the past has largely focused on victims who were white women, author Sylvia Ann Hewlett wants this movement to include men, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Not only are sexual harassment and assault scarring for the victims, but companies themselves can suffer from hits to the talent pipeline, the bottom line and can result in top executives being nervous to hire young women.

The author herself was a victim of sexual assault at the beginning of her career. She reveals how news of the incident spread quickly throughout her office, and Hewlett’s coworkers distanced themselves from her to avoid any involvement in the situation. This prolonged harassment and isolation made it exceedingly difficult for her to do her job, forcing her to quit. Flash forward to October of 2017, and Hewlett was a speaker at a conference for women on sexual harassment. This occurred at the time the Uber scandal was unraveling, and it was here that Hewlett gathered her courage to share her experiences. Ultimately, the support she received from others inspired her to write this book and conduct research to help the #MeToo movement have a larger impact.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the topic of sexual harassment and assault being a very personal one for Hewlett, her arguments are not swayed by her emotions and instead rely heavily on research. Hewlett is not only an economist but is the CEO of Hewlett Consulting Partners and founder of the Center for Talent Innovation. She is a Cambridge University graduate with a PhD from the University of London, and has written 14 books, including *The Sponsor Effect and Executive Presence*.<sup>2</sup>

Her latest book is extremely relevant in today’s work environment. Not only is it an important read for victims of workplace assault to feel less alone, but it’s crucial for employees to understand what is and is not acceptable at work. Furthermore, Hewlett wants top

managers and executives to understand how their companies can be impacted by sexual misconduct and what steps they can take to prevent future misconduct. The book first details the findings of Hewlett’s research, including groups who are more likely to be victims as well as those more likely to be attackers. She then explains how these incidents can impact the company and finishes with action steps both individuals and companies can take.

It is no secret that the #MeToo movement is a hot topic right now. But its wide publicity over recent years has not evolved from thin air and is rather the consequence of a long chain of events related to gender discrimination in the workplace. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed gender discrimination, but did not explicitly ban sexual harassment. Technically, the term “sexual harassment” did not even exist until the 1970s. Since then, the world has seen the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal unfold and learned how victims are often shamed while predators receive little more than a slap on the wrist. Additionally, in 2002 news broke of the molestation of children at the hands of Catholic priests, and even more recently in 2017 Harvey Weinstein was accused of sexual misconduct by 87 women.<sup>3</sup>

These various incidents and many others have resulted in a lot of positive change. Victims have found the courage to come forward and share their experiences, societal attitudes in terms of believing victims have changed drastically, and companies are starting to come clean in terms of misconduct in their offices. However, a major issue that Hewlett points out is the image associated with sexual harassment and sexual assault victims. Usually, people picture victims as young white women, and while there are many victims who fit this description, this view ignores thousands of others. And when people do not feel represented in any given movement, they are more likely to feel that they do not belong and therefore do not speak up.<sup>4</sup>

Hewlett brings attention to those who have too long been overlooked in popular accounts of #MeToo and explains which