

January 6, 2023

Dear friends,

Thank you for registering for our Village Common Conversations on Caste. We hope that by reading Isabel Wilkerson's book and hearing each other's experiences, we will better understand the struggles that have separated us for too long.

Several people have hesitated because the subject matter is hard, depressing, and often unspeakable.

But Ms. Wilkerson's answer is sound: "Few problems have ever been solved by ignoring them." She compares this to learning that alcoholism, depression, suicide, or the BRCA mutation for breast cancer may run in our family. Such discoveries, she writes, should prompt us to educate ourselves, talk with people who have been through the struggle, and get information from researchers (pages 13-14).

Among our experienced guides will be Jim Vincent, longtime president of the Providence NAACP, who plans share with us during these sessions.

I believe we'll all find opportunities to learn and grow in this series. We'll also learn techniques for confronting the cruelties of our caste system in America.

I hope you'll start reading *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*, which Isabel Wilkerson presents in seven parts. We'll address one part each week. Please start by reading "The Man in the Crowd" and Part One before we meet for the first time at 1:00 on January 16, the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We'll email you more information and a Zoom link shortly.

For a hopeful start, you may also want to watch the 60 Minutes story of how Fred Miller unknowingly bought a former Virginia plantation house where his ancestors had been enslaved <https://youtu.be/oPk2F3rxetk>.

With warm best wishes,

Phil West

P.S. If you have questions, please feel free to email me at hphilipwestjr@villagecommonri.org. Please put CASTE in the subject line.