

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

“Dolly Chugh applies the power of a growth mindset to work on equity and inclusion at a time when it is much needed. *The Person You Mean to Be* is essential reading.”

—CAROL DWECK, bestselling author of *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*

How Good People Fight Bias

The Person

You

Mean to Be

Dolly Chugh

FOREWORD BY LASZLO BOCK



HARPER
BUSINESS

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Think of a situation when you were trying to be a good person but your actions were perceived to be less than good. What was your initial reaction to this negative response? How, if at all, did your identity and the identity of others involved factor in?
2. Select one of the following section epigraphs from the text. Consider how the quote relates to your life and the person you mean to be. Include specific examples from your individual experiences.
 - Part I: “I embrace the label of bad feminist because I am human. I am messy. I’m not trying to be an example. I am not trying to be perfect. I am not trying to say I have all the answers. I am not trying to say I’m right. I am just trying – trying to support what I believe in, trying to do some good in this world, trying to make some noise with my writing while also being myself.” —Roxane Gay, *Bad Feminist*
 - Part II: “It’s not that I’m blind. Sometimes, I’m just not paying attention.” —Justin Simien, *Dear White People*
 - Part III: “One of the simplest paths to deep change is for the less powerful to speak as much as they listen, and for the more powerful to listen as much as they speak.” —Gloria Steinem, *My Life on the Road*
 - Part IV: “I know you didn’t do it, and I didn’t do it either, but I am responsible for it because I am a man and a citizen of this country and you are responsible for it, too, for the very same reason.” —James Baldwin, “Words of a Native Son”
3. How did you feel while you were reading this book? In what ways was the experience similar or different from what you expected?
4. 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?
5. Who do you see this book as most appropriate for? Are you part of that audience?
6. In what ways are you a builder versus a believer?
7. Are you more likely to use heat or light in a challenging situation? How do you feel about heat versus light? How do you feel about the author’s argument that both are important to respect and support, even if we lean towards one or the other?
8. 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?
9. Would you describe yourself as typically having a fixed mindset or a growth mindset regarding issues of diversity and inclusion? Contrast this with a different arena in which you consistently activate a fixed or growth mindset (e.g. math, public speaking, art). Do you notice any similarities between the moments where you utilized a growth mindset?
10. Do you think of yourself as a work-in-progress? Why or why not? How do you typically react when you learn that you have made a mistake?
11. How are implicit biases reflected in our culture, in laws, in history, and in our organizations and institutions?
12. Think of a time that you heard someone say they had “pulled themselves up by their bootstraps.” What was your reaction to this story? Knowing what you do now about the bootstraps narrative, how would you respond in the same situation?
13. Many people do not know about the differences in how the GI Bill affected white and black veterans. Did you? Why or why not? How did the GI Bill create tailwinds for some veterans and their families, while creating headwinds for others?
14. 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?
15. What ordinary privilege do you have? How does this ordinary privilege create positive benefits in your life? The author shared an example of understanding her own ordinary privilege when she stayed in a wheelchair-accessible hotel room. Think of a time that you became aware of your own ordinary privilege. Were you surprised by this experience? Did it affect how you thought about people who had ordinary privilege that was different from your own? How can you use this ordinary privilege for good?

16. Think of someone you admire or care about who is good at acknowledging his or her mistakes. How does this person address mistakes? Has this had any impact on how you feel about your own mistakes? Why or why not?
17. How do the four modes of otherizing behavior (savior, sympathy, tolerance, and typecasting) show up in your experience? Think of a time when you or someone you know demonstrated behavior from each of the four modes.
18. Many of our ideas about tolerance and colorblindness were formed when we were children. Think of a time in your childhood when you asked a trusted adult about someone who was different than you. How did the adult respond? How has this impacted your behavior today?
19. What are some examples of gateways and pathways that have positively or negatively impacted your own life?
20. How can we take steps to be more inclusive in our lives? How can understanding where the pathways exist help us to be even more inclusive?
21. How do media narratives act as windows and as mirrors? How does consuming media impact how you steer the conversation? Why does it matter when and how we consume media created by people from underrepresented groups?
22. How do parents impact the narratives that their children hear? What narratives did your own parent(s) or trusted adult share with you? How did this impact what patterns and imbalances you noticed? Explain your reasoning.
23. What does it mean to not speak for other people? How can one enter a conversation without making the moment about you? What is the difference between not centering yourself and being a bystander? What examples can you think of?
24. How can the 20/60/20 rule be helpful in confronting other people's biases?
25. How are you preparing yourself for moments when you may feel surprised by other people's biases and have to respond quickly?
26. When you are confronting biased behavior in others, do you tend to use light or heat in your approach? How does this impact your response?
27. How can you show support to someone who is in pain? Why is it more important to say something than to be silent? How do you prefer to be supported when you are experiencing pain?

ABOUT THIS GUIDE'S AUTHORS

Rachael Zafer is an educator, writer, facilitator, and organizational consultant. She is the author of discussion guides for several books, including *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson, *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, and *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* by Matthew Desmond. Rachael has led hundreds of creative and educational workshops in prisons and jails in Michigan, Illinois, and New York, was the founding director of the NYU Prison Education Program, and has worked on anti-violence initiatives throughout the United States. Rachael holds an Executive MPA from New York University and a BA in English Language and Literature from the University of Michigan. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Dolly Chugh is the author of *The Person You Mean to Be: How Good People Fight Bias*. She is an associate professor at the New York University Stern School of Business. She holds a BA in Psychology and Economics from Cornell University, an MBA from the Harvard Business School, and a PhD in Social Psychology / Organizational Behavior from Harvard University.