

Unpacking *Boxes*

Racism Discussion Guide

1. Describe the ways in which Peter Hu encountered racism, both overt and subtle. Who was the primary person who mistreated Peter Hu based on race? What motivated the encounters?
2. Peter considers how Grandfather Hu most likely experienced racism when he came to America. How might racism be different for newly arrived immigrants versus first-generation Americans? How much do you believe racism in society has changed from generation to generation?
3. *Boxes* mostly avoids presenting blatant racism directly against Hunter Davis, Reggie Butler, Willie Freeman, Clarence Thompson, and Hunter's niece Hope. Instead, racism against black citizens is discussed in terms of targeting and brutality by Philadelphia police. Why might the author have chosen this approach? As such, does *Boxes* turn a blind eye to the most pervasive racism in America? In depiction of the characters listed above, does *Boxes* fall into using any racial stereotypes?
4. How might racism have influenced the lives of the characters below as demonstrated by their behaviors, personalities, and accomplishments?

| Character | Effect of Racism |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Peter Hu | |
| Grandfather Hu | |
| Hunter Davis | |
| Ricardo Mendez | |
| Raymond Ramirez | |
| Clarence Thompson | |

5. How might the subtle actions or speech of each of these characters exhibit underlying racism? Why do people engage in racist behaviors?

| Character | Underlying Racism |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Monsignor Rathburn | |
| Delores Pagara | |
| Vinnie Primo | |

6. How do you see racism being played out in your surroundings and relationships? How does racism affect your life? How does it impact our society?
7. Do you think racism can be overcome in American society? If so, what will it take? What can you do?

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