

## Unpacking *Boxes*

### Racism Discussion Guide

1. In *Boxes*, the author purposefully does not depict overt or violent racism against black people, except for a mention of targeting and brutality by Philadelphia police. Why might the author have chosen this approach? Does it turn a blind eye or have another purpose?
2. Describe the ways in which Peter Hu encountered racism, both overt and subtle. What motivated racist encounters, especially those with Johnny Talco?
3. Peter Hu reflects on the racism his grandfather experienced as an immigrant. How might racism be different for newly arrived immigrants and first-generation Americans? How about for Americans whose heritage is African, Asian, Indian, Native or Middle Eastern?
4. How might racism have influenced the lives of Hunter Davis, Ricardo Mendez, Peter Hu, Luciano Dante, and Raymond Ramirez based on their behaviors, personalities, and accomplishments?
5. Stereotypes contribute to perpetuating racism. Can you find examples of this in *Boxes*? Is the depiction of the Dantes, as an Italian-American family in Philadelphia, an amplification of stereotypes or is it accurate? How much truth is there in stereotypes? How do they influence our behaviors?
6. How might the subtle actions or speech of Monsignor Rathburn, Delores Pagara, and Vinnie Primo exhibit underlying racism? How much racism results from ignorance, conditioning, or malice? What factors influence how racism develops and is expressed?
7. *Boxes* is set in 1998 in Philadelphia, a city where white citizens are the minority. How does systemic racism occur there? How might it be different elsewhere? How much has racism changed since 1998?
8. How do you see racism being played out in your life, relationships, and surroundings? How does it affect you? How does it impact our society?
9. If you personally experienced racism, would be willing to share your experience? How did you feel?
10. Do you think racism can be overcome in American society? If so, what will it take? What can you do?