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ANNE BRADEN INSTITUTE
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE RESEARCH

University of Louisville
**ANNE BRADEN INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL
JUSTICE RESEARCH**

BOOK DISCUSSION KIT:

The Wall Between
By Anne Braden

INTRODUCTION

Dear Readers:

The Wall Between was first published in 1958, four years after the events that thrust Anne Braden into a life of social justice activism had transpired. It is Anne's first-person account of her and her husband Carl's decision in 1954 to purchase a home in an all-white neighborhood for Andrew and Charlotte Wade, who were black, and of the explosive consequences. Eloquent; filled with equal parts drama, intriguing characters, and psycho-social analysis; and packed with a sense of journalistic integrity, the book was a finalist for the 1958 National Book Award in Nonfiction.

This book discussion kit is based on the edition republished in 1999, which includes a foreword by Julian Bond and a new epilogue by Anne Braden. When *The Wall Between* was published in 1958, the U.S. was embattled in the African American Civil Rights Movement, a war against white supremacy and for human dignity that forced every citizen of the country to ask him or herself, consciously or subconsciously, "What kind of America do I want to live in?"

It is with this question in mind that we hope you approach *The Wall Between* now, in the 21st century. As of the publication of this book discussion kit, the President of the United States is African American. The days of bus boycotts, restaurant sit-ins, angry mobs throwing stones at black children trying to enroll in all-white schools and black men being prosecuted or mob-lynched for looking at a white woman with intent to rape seem light years past. And yet, our first black president has been labeled a Communist, a socialist, and an anti-American, foreign-born Muslim. The three times—once while campaigning and twice since being elected—that he has taken a stance on controversies in which race was either an overt or underlying factor, conservative politicians, commentators, and talk show hosts, most of them white, have accused him of "playing the race card" or showing a deep-seeded hatred of whites. At a time when employment among African Americans is double that of the general population and entire communities of low-income black and brown people have been decimated by racist economic and criminal justice policies, he has declared he is "not the president of black America" but of all of America. He and his wife have had to distance themselves from the topic of race so much that in her speech at the 2012 Democratic National Convention, the First Lady of the United States did not mention the abolition of slavery or the Civil Rights Movement among the list of great American fights for equality.

The United States is still in a fight for the rights of all. Poor people don't have the same rights, clout, or opportunities as the rich. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer citizens don't have the same rights as heterosexuals and traditionally-gendered persons. Women still have

personal decisions about their bodies and their healthcare decided by men. Immigrants and their children still fight to be seen as worthy of citizenship or even basic services, and citizens of other countries who do not attempt to establish residency in the U.S. fight to define democracy in their own countries, in their way, and in some cases in a manner not in the best interest of American power. Although racial discrimination is no longer enshrined in law, white supremacy's hand continues to aggravate the materialism, sexism, and imperialism that drive other forms of discrimination today.

Is this the American you want to live in? What caused this America to exist? What can you do about it?

Anne Braden challenges readers to do the same hard work she did before becoming an activist, and that she continued to do until the end of her life: examine herself, understand the group history and individual upbringing that made her who she was and turn those “values, assumptions, and policies upside down”(book jacket back cover).

We hope this book kit helps you to broaden your understanding of Anne Braden's life, of race relations in the U.S., and of yourself.

Sincerely,

Mariam Williams

Book Discussion Kit Author

On behalf of University of Louisville's Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research

For more information about Anne Braden, or for assistance in forming a book discussion group, please visit University of Louisville's Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research. The Anne Braden Institute seeks to advance public understanding of the U.S. civil rights movement, both its powerful history and its unfinished agenda of racial and social justice. The Anne Braden Institute is located at the University of Louisville Ekstrom Library on the 2nd floor in Room 258 or contact us at (502) 852-6142.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anne Braden (1924-2006) was a Louisville journalist, organizer, and educator who was among the earliest and most dedicated white allies of the post-World War II southern civil rights movement. For 60 years, Braden and her husband Carl used the power of the printed word to advance human rights movements across the U.S. South. She was commended by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his 1963 “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” and she was a key adult adviser to 1960s youth in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Her central message was whites’ responsibility to combat racism. A mentor to several generations of racial justice activists, in her final years Braden taught social justice history at Northern Kentucky University and at the University of Louisville. Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. said this of her: “When the civil



rights struggle engulfed the South, Anne Braden was one of the courageous few who crossed the color line to fight for racial justice. Her history is a proud and fascinating one...Anne Braden is indeed a ‘subversive southerner’—a label she can wear with pride because she spent her life fighting to build a New South, where all our people could live together in freedom and equality.”

BOOK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**** Questions are grouped by chapters. You may choose to use any or all of them. We suggest reading each section in its entirety before discussing its related questions. All quotes are by Anne Braden, unless otherwise noted. ****

CHAPTERS 1-3

- Which do you think is more harmful: the external effects of segregation and discrimination on the oppressed, or the internal ones on the oppressor? Why?
- Anne describes the people she grew up with as kind, good, God-fearing people.
 - * Are people who are capable of violence and/or racism against others good people? Discuss if and how these traits can co-exist.
 - * Consider Anne's story about the gentle man and the "good lynching" comment.
- Anne's revelation about equality stems from a meeting in which she got her first opportunity to talk with a black woman as an equal.
 - * In what contexts do people still not interact with people of other races as equals? Why is this still possible? What can be done to change it?
 - * Consider interaction in schools, public accommodations and faith communities.

CHAPTER 4

- Blacks in Louisville had certain freedoms, like the right to vote, but 84.4 percent of blacks in 1950 lived in poor housing, and discrimination in housing and job opportunities was rampant.
 - * What, in addition to voting, must be done to make change? How could these situations co-exist?
- Organized labor was more widespread in 1958 than it is today—an era when labor unions are on the decline and many industrial jobs have been replaced by machines or moved overseas.
 - * How do unfair wages, union-busting, and the assault on workers' rights affect race relations today? (see top paragraph of p. 48)
- Anne wrote that she long held the theory that "race prejudice being an emotional thing cannot be removed by intellectual arguments alone. There must be some emotional experience ..."
 - * What is the use of institutions like the ABI if emotional experience is necessary? Do you agree with Anne's theory?

CHAPTERS 5-6

- Rone reacted with panic to his financial security seemingly slipping away. (p. 60) We are at a point in the U.S. (2007-2013) where many middle class families are witnessing the same.
 - * Do you see middle class whites reacting in the way Rone did? Have blacks or other minority groups been scapegoated for the struggling economy? How is prejudice driven by fear? What can overcome this?
- The *Courier-Journal* didn't rush to the Wades' defense as it did the Filipino woman's. Anne wrote this was due to her not having the stigma that the word "Negro" carried with it.
 - * What did she mean by that? What stigma does "Black or "African American" carry with it today? Also consider:
 - * In May 2012, an Asian American man wrote a blog post entitled, "Why I, An Asian American Man, Fight Anti-Black Racism." He stated that "anti-black racism is the fulcrum of white supremacy." How do you think that statement relates to Anne's assessment?

CHAPTER 7-8

- Consider what the role of the press should be in a democracy.
 - * Did the C-J live up to that role in how it reported on the Rone Court situation? What about the editorial?
 - * Discuss how corporate media, or the interests of media as a business, affects what's covered and what isn't today.
- How was a small, neighborhood press able to have the effect it had? What does this say about the power of localized media (including blogs) to change the status quo today?
- In what ways do you see people today finding other factors to justify their racism?
 - * For the people in Shively, it wasn't hat the Wades were black; it was that they were caught in a Communist plot to stir up trouble. (p. 90-91)
- These events took place at a time of widespread anticommunist fear.
 - * What analogies might be made here with the measures taken by the U.S. since 2001 in the interest of fighting terrorism?

CHAPTER 9

- What's the value of integrated neighborhoods today? Why don't we have them everywhere? How can they be achieved?
- What does an integrated neighborhood look like vs. a diverse one? What has been integration's effect on non-racial diversity in black neighborhoods?

CHAPTERS 10-11

- “The people who might have had more influence never moved.” (pp. 125-126)
 - * Can a movement by non-influential people really work? Who are influential people today, in your community or nationally? What does “moving,” in light of social media, mean today?
- The Wades and other African Americans fighting for integration were accused of trying to leave their own because they didn’t think black neighborhoods and schools were good enough. (pp. 125-126)
 - * Does the continued fight for integration of schools and neighborhoods send a mixed message to non-whites?
- At what point do you give up on your cause? Should Andrew Wade have moved after the dynamiting?

CHAPTER 12

- Carl Braden commented, “We know that putting people in jail isn’t going to eliminate race prejudice.”
 - * Discuss his and Andrew Wade’s tentative plan for a peace bond for the accused bombers as an example of restorative justice. (p. 144-145)
- Is it fair, in terms of how the justice system should work, for public demand to influence police and/or justice proceedings? (p. 150-151)
 - * We’ve seen this several times in the last decade or so in the case of white- or police-on-black violence (i.e., Trayvon Martin, Oscar Grant, Shawn Bell, Amadou Diallo); protests continue until there is at least an arrest.
 - * Shouldn’t we expect the justice system to work without public outcry? How long should people reasonably expect to keep up protests or pressure on our justice system? Does this actually deny justice by interfering with the process?
- Talk about the importance of police having good relationships with African American communities.

CHAPTER 13

- Is Charlotte Wade pro-segregation? Is it problematic that she has no interest in being friends with whites, only in living in the house of her choice? (pp. 156-158)
- Compare and contrast what the women were going through vs. the men during this time (i.e. the emotional strain, the threat of miscarriage vs. threats to livelihood, physical threats, etc.). Are women’s roles, especially the woman as homemaker role, recognized enough in civil rights history?
- See Andrew Wade’s speech on p. 165. What is the responsibility of everyone living now to future generations? What should we be willing to give up for social and racial justice?
- (pp. 166-167) Who are today’s Andrew Wades? What would they have to be willing to give up? Is social change today possible without great personal sacrifice?

CHAPTERS 14-17

- Discuss Hamilton’s appointment of a black prosecutor in relation to how some organizations, institutions, political parties, etc., make such appointments for appearances’ sake. (pp. 175-176)
- Literature was used as evidence against Bown, Ford, and all those indicted. This is a free country in which people are allowed to read what they want, so why was this seen as evidence?
 - * What is the danger in seeing what a person reads as ideological sympathy rather than just exposure to different ideas? (p. 209)
 - * Are there or should there be limits to such freedoms?
- Talk about the law’s privilege not only on the basis of color but of class. (pp. 217-218)
 - * What examples have you witnessed of people using or abusing their societal position to get away with breaking the law?
- How did whites, especially liberal whites, reconcile their anger at the Bradens’ civil liberties being violated with their disinterest in the civil rights of blacks? (pp. 238-239)

CHAPTER 18

- The phrase “stir up trouble” is used throughout the book. On page 245, it is the crux of the prosecution’s case against Carl Braden. The prosecutor does not define this, but what, then, is “untroubled?” *Consider:*
 - * There was no “trouble” with blacks being enslaved or denied rights under Jim Crow. “Trouble” had to be “stirred up.”
 - * Can the status quo be changed without “trouble?”
- According to Patterson’s testimony (pp. 247-249), the Communist Party wanted blacks to build sort of a Negro Confederacy, overtake Southern governments, and take land and businesses from whites.
 - * If this is true and had it worked, would racial equality have been the result?
 - * *Consider this within the context of Anne’s definition of racism on p. 340.*
- What do you think about the notion that someone must be on top and someone at the bottom? That for me to have more, someone else, and preferably someone not like me, must have less?

CHAPTER 19-20

- Read the dialogue on pp. 266-268 between Anne Braden and Andrew Wade.
 - * What does racial healing mean? What is the responsibility of those who have been oppressed?
- “... issues which must find their solution, good or bad, in the hearts of men, are decided finally in the court of law.” (p. 280)
 - * What is the law’s role in resolving these issues? Which should come first, change of heart or change of law? Is the order ever reversed? Which order works better? (Also see p. 298)

CHAPTER 21

- Talk about how materialism, sexism/violence against women, and the struggle for power/political gain nourished slave society and segregation. (p. 290, first full paragraph)
- “People are always attracted to a mass crusade ...” (p. 292)
 - * What is that crusade today? What tools are being used to galvanize people?
- Describe race relations in your school, at work, in your community and in your country today.
 - * Are they “good?” How do you know? Is amicable or civil enough? (pp. 293-295)

CHAPTER 22

- What would you have done differently from Carl and Anne Braden?

EPILOGUE

- How did Zollinger end up on the other side? Discuss his argument that racist store owners were being persecuted.
- Anne’s activism goes from SCEF to SOC and expands to include war, economic injustice, and environmental destruction. How are these causes connected to race and to each other? (p. 327)
- Do you think Anne owed it to her parents not to reveal that the “good lynching” comment was made by her father?
 - * Does this change her story for you in any way? If so, how? (p. 332)
- Discuss the importance of whites speaking out against racism. (p. 335, also LaRue’s argument on p. 123)
- Look at Anne’s definition of racism on p. 340.
 - * What is your definition of racism? If non-whites have groups that are for them only and are run by them only, are those groups racist? Why or why not?
- Anne states (p. 341) that the process of rebirth happening to the nation in the 1960s was cut short (she explains why on p. 343).
 - * How can this rebirth that was happening happen again for the country and for the entire world?
- Have you heard the term “reverse discrimination”? (p. 344)
 - * Based on what you have read, is it a legitimate claim? Discuss how this passage shows the importance of the people within the movement controlling the movement’s message.

EPILOGUE CONTINUED...

- “Because this society has never ‘made room’ for African Americans, it is moving toward a situation in which it really does not have room for people of any color.” Anne wrote that in 1999, but today, non-whites are becoming the majority, in the U.S., as they are and all over the world. How is it possible to not make room for people who are the majority? Is this lack of progress people of color’s own fault? Have they not done enough for themselves?
- Has the movement Anne described on p.346-347 happened? What is that movement, or what was it? Is race at the forefront of the movement? Can the movement exist without being about race, without being led by people of color?

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY*

More about Anne Braden: *Subversive Southerner: Anne Braden and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Cold War South* by Catherine Fosl, and *Anne Braden: Southern Patriot*, a documentary film directed by Mimi Pickering and Anne Lewis

Civil Rights before 1950: *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Tradition* by Barbara Ransby (2003)

Organized Labor and Race: *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* by Robert Korstad (2003)

McCarthyism/Red Scare: *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anticommunism in the South, 1948-1968* by Jeff Woods (2004)

Women in the Movement: *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape and Resistance—a New History of the Civil Rights Movement* by Danielle McGuire

Race in a Multicultural U.S.: “Why I, An Asian Man, Fight Anti-Black Racism,” by Scott Nakagawa, online at:
<http://www.dominionofnewyork.com/2012/05/07/why-i-an-asian-man-fight-anti-black-racism/#.UGYtnpjA-IQ>

*The University of Louisville Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research houses Carl and Anne Braden’s book collection, including a number of the books used against them in their sedition trial. To schedule a tour of the institute, please contact us at 502-852-6142.

**For more information on this book discussion kit,
contact Mariam Williams at miwill01@louisville.edu.**