



No One Ever Asked Discussion Questions

1. This novel opens with a quote by Claudia Rankine from her book *Citizen: An American Lyric*. “The world is wrong. You can’t put the past behind you. It’s buried in you; it’s turned your flesh into its own cupboard.” Do you think this quote is true? Why or why not? In what ways does the quote apply to this story? In what ways does this quote apply to our country?
2. From captivity to freedom, from ignorance to awareness, from counterfeit to real. Those are just some of the journeys that happen in this novel. What other journeys did the characters go on? Which journey impacted you the most and why? Who did you relate to the most? Are the two the same?
3. The title of this book is first used by Camille during the town meeting. Later, we see it again, only this time, from Anaya’s point of view. What did Anaya think and how did she feel about Camille’s complaints from the town meeting? Can you think of how the title might apply to Jen or Jubilee?
4. While reading a memoir called *The Grace of Silence* by Michele Norris, I came across an analogy, wherein racial trauma was compared to a repeated scratch on the back of a person’s hand. Any one scratch was tolerable. It was the accumulation of scratches that caused the trauma. When I read it, I immediately thought of the term micro-aggression. A *micro-aggression* is a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority. What are some of the micro-aggressions Anaya experiences throughout the story? Did these “scratches” surprise you, or could you relate to them?

5. What were Anaya's father's final words to her? How did they take on new meaning for Anaya as the story progressed? What do you think it means to be completely free? What did Anaya's mother have to say about freedom?
6. There is a scene where Anaya is remembering the death of 12-year old, Tamir Rice. What did her college roommate have to say about Tamir's death? Why was that hurtful to Anaya? Do you agree with the observation Anaya's grandmother made about it? What's your reaction when another black person turns into a hash tag? Why do you think this is your reaction?
7. Adoption plays a role in this story, particularly trans-racial adoption. While Jen and Jubilee's story certainly isn't everyone's adoption story, the first year home is almost always a very difficult and often isolating one. What insights—if any—did Jen and Jubilee's relationship give you into adoption?
8. What does Jen's brother, Brandon, represent in the story? Why do you think Jen's mother doesn't like to talk about Brandon? Is pointing to or talking about a problem the same as creating the problem? Why do you think racism is a topic so many would rather avoid?
9. There is a scene before Christmas, where Camille is sitting in church, wondering how Neil could still bring the kids to church. She doesn't understand how he can sit there and not feel the weight of his sin. Later, after Taylor is diagnosed with diabetes, Neil and Camille are sitting in the kitchen together in the middle of the night, and Neil mentions his faith. Camille wrestles with the same question all over again, only this time her perspective has changed. How so? What do you think about her observation?
10. Kyle Davis sexually harasses his student teacher, Ellie Sorrenson. What happens to her after she comes out and publicly announces what Kyle did? What happens to Kyle? Can you think of other instances in our culture when the victim is turned into a villain?
11. As I wrote this story, I was very aware of the "white savior" trope, wherein a white person "rescues" people of color. It's prevalent in both literature and film. Can you think of examples of books or movies that utilize this trope? Why is this trope problematic? Is anyone "rescued" in *No One Ever Asked*?
12. Extra Credit: Listen to the podcast episode that inspired the novel. This American Life: The Problem We All Live With. Follow investigative reporter, Nikole Hannah-Jones on Twitter (@nhannahjones). She covers race in America, more specifically—segregation in modern day American education. Find a timeline on the history of segregation in our country's education system. Was this a problem you were aware of before reading *No One Ever Asked*? Discuss Nikole's work, as well as the podcast.