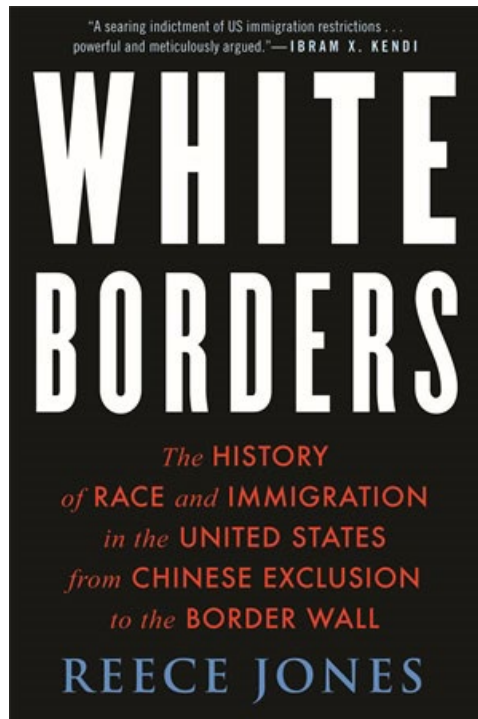


White Borders:
The History of Race and Immigration in the United States from Chinese Exclusion to the
Border Wall
By **Reece Jones**

Readers' Guide Discussion Questions



1. Reflect on Jones's decision to open the prologue with a description of the infamous 2017 hate rally held on the grounds of the University of Virginia, surrounding the statue of Thomas Jefferson. How does this moment in history encapsulate many of the histories of anti-immigration sentiment later discussed in the book? What does this moment indicate about the collective ideologies of hate groups in general and about the power of collective anti-immigration movements?
2. How does the founding of this country contradict the popular myth that the United States is "a nation of immigrants"? What makes this myth particularly harmful and who does this myth serve? Do you think a nation can ever truly progress beyond the legacy of its foundational practices? If so, how and by whom?
3. What do many of the immigrant histories in this book indicate about the pursuit of the American Dream when pitted against antagonism, violence, anti-immigration laws, and

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law enforcement? How do these histories affect your attitude toward the pronouncement of the United States as a “land of opportunity”?

4. To what extent were you familiar with the histories of violence enacted toward various immigrant populations? What factors allow for these histories to be obscured?
5. On page 23, Reece Jones details counterefforts to protect the white social order that had begun to slip away during the Reconstruction period. What do these counterefforts demonstrate about the linearity of progress when it comes to the fight for citizenship and naturalization? Where, in history, do you see other examples of backlash against inclusionary practices in US history despite what appears, at first, to be progress?
6. Put current projections of a future largely populated by mixed-race individuals in conversation with historical fears of miscegenation and “race suicide.” How have attitudes toward racial mixing transformed since the 1800s, and what factors have contributed to that transformation?
7. To what extent did you consider histories of enslavement and lasting anti-Black legislation as belonging to histories of immigration? How does the history of chattel slavery have a lasting impact on national racialized definitions of citizenship, both in the Constitution and in the lived experience of all immigrant groups up to the modern day?
8. Consider the rise to power of Maine Republican senator James G. Blaine, as detailed on page 42. What parallels do you see between Blaine and Trump’s political influence, motives, tactics, and popularity? What parallels do you see between Trump and other historical figures throughout this text? What conditions allow for leaders like this to rise to prominence?
9. Consider the historical tenets of anti-immigration sentiment, including fear of invasion or replacement, lack of assimilation, and cultural upheaval, to name a few. Which of these tenets do you believe are key to current attitudes toward immigration? How have these fears been translated into modern legislation?
10. How does the latest effort to close America’s borders to nonwhite immigrants—beginning with the grassroots environmental movement that arose in the 1960s—differ from movements with similar or identical goals in the past? What are your reactions to the origins of this current movement?
11. Consider your family history. How does the book shift your understanding of your own family’s position or sense of belonging in the country where you currently live?

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12. Beyond race, how do gender, dis/ability, and other identity factors play a role in the history of immigration? Where do you see these factors appear in the book?
13. Although a lesser-known name, John Tanton is described as one of the single most influential individuals behind current anti-immigration policy. What allows for individuals like Tanton to go relatively unrecognized by the public while still remaining a key player in the movement? To what extent were you familiar with John Tanton and the Tanton Network, and how does his influence illustrate the impact of behind-the-scenes wealth on legislation and democratic practices? How does Jones's overall focus on the emphasis of individual influencers inform your understanding of this history?
14. On page 192, Jones notes that "immigration laws are a central, but often unrecognized, part of the white supremacist vision of the United States as a white country." Given the ways in which Jones demonstrates the significance of immigration laws, why do you think they often go unrecognized? What can be done, on an individual or structural level, to bring attention to the significance of these laws? Why is it important to recognize their full nature and impact?
15. Reece Jones makes the case for the importance of the border as a symbol for white nationalism in the United States (page 106). To what extent do you agree or disagree with this claim? To what extent can you envision a future without borders, and what steps do you believe need to be taken in order to actualize that future?