

Secular Women of the Triangle Book Club Discussion Questions

We Have Never Been Woke by Musa al-Gharbi

1. As a group, we've found this book a little dense and at times hard to read. Do you think this style of writing was necessary for the topic? How do you think al-Gharbi could make the book more accessible?
2. Has this book changed your perspective on anything? Were there any key takeaways for you in particular or any parts you found particularly interesting?
3. Were there any moments that you felt "called out" and how did that sit with you? Do you agree with the author's statements around that topic or disagree? Were there any topics that you were excited or felt validated to see him call out?
4. Al-Gharbi suggests that "religiously unaffiliated white liberals are increasingly leaning on politics to replace religion" and as a way to find "purpose, transcendence, and community in the absence of religion." Do you think that this is true?
5. In the introduction, al-Gharbi states that his book "is a work by a symbolic capitalist, about symbolic capitalists, primarily *for* symbolic capitalists." Are you the intended audience of this book (i.e. a symbolic capitalist)? If so, did this book, and al-Gharbi's descriptions of symbolic capitalists and their ideologies resonate with you? If not, what did he get wrong or do you disagree with? If you're not a symbolic capitalist, how do you feel about the book and the depiction of non symbolic capitalists?
6. *We Have Never Been Woke* was published prior to Trump's second term and the subsequent gutting of DEI initiatives in many government institutions and private companies. Do you think these changes affect the veracity of al-Gharbi's narrative on "wokeness"? If al-Gharbi wrote his book today, what, if anything, do you think he would change?
7. Al-Gharbi discusses elites, noting that "in contemporary America, it seems no one wants to adopt this label" and may see themselves as cogs in the machine instead of having real power. Al-Gharbi spends much of chapter 3 arguing that you, the reader, are in fact an elite. Did you previously consider yourself an elite? Did this book change your mind on your elite status? Do you agree with al-Gharbi's classification of who constitutes an elite?
8. Al-Gharbi admits that he doesn't really end the book with any real catharsis or solutions, and that other experts like philosophers, policy makers, and scientists are better suited to offer solutions. Do you think it's fair to spend so long on a problem without discussing any solutions? How do you think we make real changes? How will this book change how you approach social justice/activism in the future?
9. Al-Gharbi concludes the book restating "Throughout this text I have insisted that symbolic capitalists are likely being sincere when they espouse social justice commitments. However, just because an expressed conviction is *sincere* doesn't mean it's particularly *important*. ... One's priorities are manifested through action". What are your thoughts on this statement? Do you agree or disagree? What can we do to make our actions match our convictions?