



DISCUSSION GUIDE



Overall Questions

Wanting What's Best: Parenting, Privilege, and Building a Just World
by Sarah W. Jaffe

- Were there any parents' stories in the book that particularly resonated with you? In what ways did they feel relevant to your family or situation?
- Were there any parent's stories that you felt like were particularly hard for you to identify with? Which ones?
- Were there topics that you felt like were relevant to the book that weren't addressed? What were they?
- The book asserts in the introduction that "Decisions about childcare, schools, and how we use our time and money may not feel like political decisions, but they are. They either further calcify inequality, contributing to a system where only a few can thrive, or take a small step toward dismantling it." **Do you agree with that statement? Why, or why not?**
- Was any of the research that you encountered in the book particularly surprising to you?



Chapter Questions

Childcare

- What have you found/did you find to be the most difficult part of navigating the childcare system?
- What would a fair hourly wage be for someone who works at a childcare center? For a nanny?
- Tatiana Bejar from Hand in Hand asks “how does the way you treat your domestic employee express your feminist values? How are you building the solidarity that begins at home?” **If that’s relevant for you—how would you answer those questions?**

Additional resources available
at SarahWJaffe.com



Chapter Questions

Schools

- Sarah asserts at the beginning of this chapter that private schools are not a primary driver of inequality and that, instead, “the deeper problem is how privileged parents hoard resources within the public school system.” **Does this resonate with your experience? Why, or why not?**
- **What ideas did you have about school segregation before reading this chapter? Did this chapter challenge or confirm any of those ideas?**
- **Have you ever had “awkward conversations” about school choice? Did the Awkward Conversation Guide feel like a useful tool?**
- Megan Hester says that, when privileged parents talk about schools “everything we define as ‘great for our kids’ is connected to privilege and entitlement.” **Did that feel true to you? What else could a “great school” mean?**

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Chapter Questions

College

- What lessons did you get growing up about the role that college played in my future?

What is a “good college?” What would it mean (or has it meant for you) for your child to get into a “good college?”

- The book has an extensive discussion pushing back on the idea that college admissions were really a meritocracy. **Did that seem fair?**
- What feelings, if any, did you have about the Varsity Blues scandal, both before and after this book?
- Do you think that legacy admissions should be used? Why, or why not?

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Chapter Questions

Activism

- This chapter told stories of different kinds of activism. There were parents who who achieved major policy victories (the PTA equity project, the Portland childcare initiative) and those who were living out their values in smaller ways (Jess and Dan trying to reduce their environmental footprint, Hayley in how she was thoughtfully engaging with being a foster parent). **Which of these forms of activism resonated the most?**
- **What did you think of the concept of the “altruistic shield?”** Have you ever deployed it? Seen other people deploy it?
- **What are your biggest obstacles to supporting the causes you believe in?** How, if at all, could you help address those?

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Chapter Questions

Money

- Sociologist Rachel Sherman writes about people as either “upward oriented” (tend to be focused on those who have more resources) or “downward oriented” (who “compare their own lifestyles to a broader range of other possibilities.”) **Which are you? Which was your family growing up?**
- The chapter includes two interviews with extremely wealthy people—Stephen Prince and Karen Pittelman. **What reaction did you have to those interviews? Were you put off by them? Was there anything that resonated?**
- The book includes two interviews that discuss reparations. **Did you have any particular feelings about that topic before reading those interviews? Did those interviews bring up anything or change your point of view?**
- **Do you feel like you’re happy with your family’s relationship with money? Was there anything in the chapter that felt like something you might want to incorporate into how your family uses money?**



HELLO,
I'M SARAH



I CARE ABOUT HELPING PARENTS MAKE OUR WORLD MORE EQUITABLE FOR ALL CHILDREN.

I'm Sarah Jaffe, author of the book *Wanting What's Best: Parenting, Privilege, and Building a Just World*.

As a mother and a former attorney for children in foster care, I faced a dilemma many parents do: **Was my only duty as a parent to get "the best" for my own daughter? Or did I have an obligation to try to make decisions that would help make a more equitable society?**

I interviewed everyday parents, as well as experts, to try to understand what it might look like to make parenting decisions through a lens of justice and equity. I focused on how parents can engage with our education system (from daycare to college), as well as how they can use their time, energy, and money. The result is a book that gives parents straight answers on some of the most complex issues we face, along with actionable ideas, and considerations to help them make future parenting decisions with perspective, parity, and purpose.

More at [SarahWJaffe.com](https://www.SarahWJaffe.com)