

The Episcopal Diocese of New York
Examines Mass Incarceration
In the United States

Through the Book Study of:

*The New Jim Crow: Mass
Incarceration in the Age of
Colorblindness*

By: Michelle Alexander

A Five (5)-Week Study Guide
Prepared by the Episcopal Diocese of New York's
Reparations Committee
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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
78th General Convention Resolution A183.....	3
About the Guide.....	4
What does the Church Say About Justice?	6
Recurring Concepts and Themes.....	8
Acknowledgements	9
In Her Own Words.....	10
Book Study Week 1, Introduction and Chapter 1	16
Book Study Week 2, Chapters 2 and 3	21
Book Study Week 3, Chapter 4	26
Book Study Week 4, Chapter 5	31
Book Study Week 5, Chapter 6	35
References Cited	38
Additional Resources.....	39

Introduction

We've got to . . . really build a movement, a grassroots movement, for the kind of reform that will dismantle the system of mass incarceration as a whole . . . I think the reality is that this entire system rests on a single belief which is that some folks, poor folks and poor folks of color especially, are disposable. They're just not worthy of our care, compassion and concern. When we challenge that core belief, this whole system will fall like dominoes. Once we begin to really cultivate a sense of care, compassion and concern and build kind of a **human rights consciousness** that *all* people no matter who you are, what color you are, how rich or poor you may be, what your background is, you have basic human rights, not to be disposed of and relegated to a permanent second class status because you're once caught with a small amount of drugs.

—Michelle Alexander, interview
with Dylan Ratigan, 2011 (our
emphasis)

The book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010/2012) by legal scholar and civil rights activist, Michelle Alexander, is a comprehensive exploration of the impact of the racialized and legally sanctioned discriminatory practices in the United States, that factor in the functioning of a systematically unjust criminal justice system. The result, Alexander posits, is that an astounding percentage of the African American community is warehoused in prisons, or languishing in a permanent underclass, or racial-caste system, left to live with relentless discriminatory practices that infringe on their civil and human rights. In essence, this book is a call to action, for moral consciousness raising, and for people everywhere to address and resolve this “unfinished business” of the ongoing quest for justice by people whose needs, dreams and rights have not been ascribed, mainly the poor, non-white and in particular, those of African ancestry.

The New Jim Crow has been described as “the most important book published in this century about the U.S.” It is one of the most talked about scholarly works written because its analysis and advocacy serve as the catalyst for the prevalent and changing dialogue on the histories of our policies, practices, systemic and institutional racism, and the wide-ranging economic, social and psychological costs in our communities and our nation. This clarion call has resonated on people and their leaders in many domains, and the Episcopal Diocese of New York has responded by enacting resolution A183 at the 78th General Convention last fall. Specifically, the resolution that passed follows:

A183

Recommended Book Study of the Triennium: “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness” by Michelle Alexander (2010/2012)

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church encourage all dioceses, congregations, schools, and other faith communities of The Episcopal Church over the next triennium to commit to studying one of the most pressing social justice issues of our time, “mass incarceration,” and be it further

Resolved, That dioceses, congregations, schools, and other faith communities consider using the New York Times bestseller, “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness” by Michelle Alexander as a common text that invites the people of The Episcopal Church into engagement; and be it further

Resolved, That Convention acknowledge that each Diocese in the U.S. and in the other 16 countries of The Episcopal Church may have different circumstances and disparities in the imprisonment of its racial and ethnic minorities when compared to its dominant population and therefore should adapt this triennial study to its unique circumstances by identifying and developing additional resources to address same, be it further

Resolved, That the Church instruct the DFMS Justice and Advocacy Ministry Team and the DFMS Diversity Ministry Team to work together to compile and distribute to Dioceses and make easily accessible on The Episcopal Church website a toolkit of relevant study and discussion guides; print, and video, and Internet resource materials; and other information.

About the Guide

But if not, then listen to me; be silent and I will teach you wisdom.
Job 33:33

The Episcopal Diocese of New York's Reparations Committee has prepared this study guide as an offering to parishes and congregations in observance of Lent. We thought it appropriate to recommend this five (5)-week unit of study during this spiritual period of stillness, listening and reflection, in which we hope to return renewed with a brighter more purposeful spirit within us. An examination of *The New Jim Crow* during Lent is a great way to go deep, and in our attentiveness, nurture and cultivate our internal life, while we increase our capacities for new understandings about our individual and collective histories, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy we are meant to do, and to love God, our neighbors and ourselves. While the Lenten Season is an ideal time to engage in this exercise, we ask that church communities respond to the Resolution when it is most convenient and you can best maximize the dialogue for your own congregation.

The guide was designed as a navigational tool to help facilitate larger conversations within the diocese starting at the parish level. This guide will help your congregation discuss, comprehend, and respond to Alexander's work while connecting with parishioners' personal experiences, the Episcopal Church, and the Bible. The questions and activities are only a framework, and should be adapted how you see fit. Upon completion of the book study, we envision parish level and diocesan-wide actions, planned and implemented (or to be implemented), to address the intersectionality of these issues of injustice in our attempts to make transformative change within society.

What to Expect

The success of the book study will depend on how well prepared both the facilitator and the participants are. We suggest that participants read the book to the best of their ability during the week prior to discussion, but it may be helpful if the facilitator has on hand copies of the chapter summaries, many of which are online (we provide a few links in the resources section of this guide). The guide is organized into five (5) 90-minute sessions. The lessons and activities are designed for whole and small groups, with some independent work. There will be opportunities for reading together, discussion, writing, drawing, and reflection, all in a collective and safe space. The lesson and activity weekly/session breakdown is:

Week 1: Introduction and Chapter 1
Week 2: Chapters 2&3
Week 3: Chapter 4
Week 4: Chapter 5
Week 5: Chapter 6

The program format generally starts with a prayer, an icebreaker, reading response discussion, followed by some type of activity, reflection, wrap up and closing prayer. You will need materials (copies of the book, chart paper, markers, easel, index cards, pens, notepads or paper for participants to use, copies of handouts, and **for week 4, a computer/projector/speakers/screen – A/V set-up**). Ask participants to bring their books with them each week for the duration of the book study.

How Do We Get the Book?

We suggest each church order the books in bulk, online from Amazon or Barnes and Noble for distribution among church participants. If your church is in a financial position that affords the luxury of distributing freely, by all means, do so. However, we suspect that most churches will have to ask participants to purchase the book for the retail price, plus shipping from the church. Any extras can be returned to the service provider, or you can keep them on hand for future sessions.

What Does the Church Say About Justice?

The New Jim Crow is a challenging and worthwhile read in both the dense content and the clarity in which injustice is described. To date, it is the most comprehensive presentation of the problems and impact of mass incarceration. *The New Jim Crow* paints a startlingly clear picture of racial bias in prison system and the ripple effect incarceration has on all communities. Alexander awakens her readers to a self preserving racial caste system that has and continues to grow.

As Christians we follow the life and teachings of Jesus, who was arrested, convicted and killed in his own day. Even before his own arrest, Jesus reminded his followers to remember those who are in prison. In Matthew 25, Jesus gets real specific and says “just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

In every age and in every place the task of a Christian is to first figure out who “the least of these” is. Who is falling through the cracks of society? In Matthew 25, Jesus gives us indicators to figure this out: who is hungry, homeless, thirsty, without clothing, and imprisoned? *The New Jim Crow* answers this question: people impacted by our prison system. Our prayer for your study is that our church would grow the *care, compassion and concern* Alexander knows we need to bring justice and healing to our country.

Below you will find a list of relevant scriptures to accompany this book study. Review them, and see how they correlate with the concepts in Alexander’s book. Which scripture(s) resonate the most in which sections/chapters/concepts and why? Can you find additional text to add to the list?

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”
Matthew 25:35-36; 40

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us in the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Proverbs 31:8-9

Christians reflect the heart of God when we have a passion for justice in the world and speak up for those who can't.

Zechariah 7:10-11; Psalm 146:7-9; Deuteronomy 10:17-18; Psalm 33:5

He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ‘ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:36



Recurring Concepts and Themes Worthy of Discussing and Defining

Facilitator's Note: Please review these, and any other noteworthy concepts with your group as they appear in the text. It is important to ensure that all participants have a clear understanding of the intended meanings.

Affirmative Action
Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988
Black Exceptionalism
Consent Searches
Conscious and Unconscious Bias
Debt Bondage
14th Amendment to the Constitution
Housing and Urban Development "One Strike Guide"
Invisible Punishment
Jena 6
Mandatory Minimum Sentence
New Jim Crow
Old Jim Crow
Political Disenfranchisement
Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1978
Racialized Caste System
Racial Indifference
Racial Profiling
Reconstruction
War on Drugs

Court Cases

McKlesky v Kemp

Alexander v Sandoval

Purkett v Elm

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Reparations Committee Definition of Reparations

Reparations is the process to remember, repair, restore, reconcile and make amends for wrongs that can never be singularly reducible to monetary terms. The process of reparations is "an historical reckoning involving acknowledgement that an offense against humanity was committed and that the victims have not received justice."

Offered by Bernice Powell Jackson, former Executive Minister for Justice Ministry, The United Church of Christ

In Her Own Words

Since the debut of her book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (The New Press, 2010), author, lawyer, Civil Rights activist and legal scholar, Michelle Alexander has been a leader in demand, tapped for multitudes of interviews, keynotes and public appearances at venues and institutions nationwide. This interview “Throwing Away the Key: Michelle Alexander On How Prisons Have Become the New Jim Crow” with Arnie Cooper, which appeared in *The Sun Magazine*, February 11, 2011, Issue 422, sheds light on the premise of her book, defines useful terms and concepts that appear throughout, and provides insight into Alexander’s background, and how she entered in and remains a force in the movement of this groundbreaking work of dismantling the current state of the criminal justice system in the United States, while offering alternatives for reform.

Facilitator’s Note:

We suggest that you make this document available to your book study group participants in the first session. If time permits, give them an opportunity for independent reading, or read as a group, perhaps as they settle in. This will help with orientation, and for those who have read, or in the process of reading the book, and find it dense with historical details and legal jargon, this may help with comprehending the bigger concepts. Of course, for those who may not have had any time to read the book, this serves as a good summary, and allows for a jumping off point of entry into the first discussion.

In 1998 Michelle Alexander had just been hired by the northern-California chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to head its Racial Justice Project. She was running to catch the bus to her new office when she glimpsed a bright orange poster proclaiming, “The Drug War Is The New Jim Crow.”

“Jim Crow” refers to local and state laws enacted between 1876 and 1965, mainly in the South, that mandated racial discrimination and segregation. At the time she saw the poster, Alexander considered it absurd. “I clung to the notion that the evils of Jim Crow are behind us,” she writes. But after a few years of working for the ACLU on issues of racial profiling and drug enforcement, she was forced to reevaluate: “I began awakening to the reality that this criminal-justice system is not just another institution infected with racial bias, but the primary engine of racial inequality and stratification in the U.S. today.”

*Alexander now believes that the “War on Drugs” was the creation of conservative political strategists who wanted to appeal to poor and working-class whites resentful of the gains African Americans made during the civil-rights era. That it resulted in disproportionate drug-arrest rates in poor communities of color may even have been part of the plan, she says. In her book **The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness** (The New Press), Alexander cites some alarming statistics: for example,*

in 2004, 75 percent of all people imprisoned for drug offenses were black or Latino, despite the fact that the majority of the country's illegal-drug users and dealers are white.

The child of an interracial couple (her mother is white; her father, now deceased, was African American), Alexander witnessed directly the challenges of racial integration. After her parents had married in Chicago in 1965, Alexander's mother was promptly disowned by her family and excommunicated from her church. The newlyweds ended up moving to Stelle, Illinois, a three-hundred-person progressive intentional community, where Alexander was born in 1967. When she was eight, her father, who worked for IBM, was transferred to San Francisco, and the family moved to the Bay Area. Although he was one of the office's top salespeople, he was unable to climb the corporate ladder and ended up leaving his job. Alexander attended many schools, both public and private, which exposed her to people from diverse backgrounds. Later, when she saw how severely black youths are treated by the criminal-justice system, she recalled how often she'd seen white teens participate in the same criminal activities. Alexander's maternal grandparents eventually did accept their daughter's husband and their granddaughter. Seeing them come around gave Alexander hope that society can change. "My grandfather was extremely hostile to my mother marrying my father," she says, "and he ended up voting for Jesse Jackson for president."

No longer a practicing attorney, Alexander currently teaches courses on race, civil rights, and criminal justice at Ohio State University. She stays busy caring for her three children and spreading the information in her book to those behind bars and to communities affected by mass incarceration.

Cooper: In the preface to your book you say you wrote it for "people like me — the person I was ten years ago."

Alexander: Before I began my work on criminal-justice reform at the ACLU, I believed a lot of our society's myths about drug use and crime in the black community. For example, I believed that people of color were more likely to sell drugs than whites. Not true. I believed that incarceration rates could be explained by crime rates. Not true. Only after years of working on these issues did my eyes open.

Cooper: You've written that "nearly a quarter of African Americans live below the poverty line today, approximately the same percentage as in 1968." The poverty rate among black children is actually *higher* now than it was during the civil-rights era. What went wrong?

Alexander: What happened is the movement of the 1960s was left unfinished. People assumed that mere changes to the laws would produce a major social transformation, even if our underlying consciousness didn't change. Martin Luther King Jr. repeatedly reminded us that there were going to be black mayors and legislators and other elected

officials, but these developments in and of themselves would not produce the necessary social change. We need a radical restructuring of our economy and our society in order to ensure that poor people of all colors gain equal access to opportunity, jobs, housing, and healthcare.

The energy and passion of the civil-rights movement dissipated once lawyers took over and attention shifted to the enforcement of antidiscrimination laws and the implementation of affirmative action. A sprinkling of people of color throughout institutions of higher learning and in positions of power created the illusion of greater progress than had actually been made. It also helped distract us when the backlash to the civil-rights movement gave birth to the “get tough on crime” era and the rise of mass incarceration.

Cooper: But you do agree that reform had to begin with changes in the laws?

Alexander: We certainly needed antidiscrimination laws. Absolutely. It’s not as if the laws in and of themselves were a mistake. What *was* a mistake was the abandonment of the poor-people’s movement that King and others were launching at the end of his life. Civil-rights activists didn’t anticipate that the right wing and former segregationists would build a new system of control that literally locked up those who were left behind.

Cooper: You’ve said that a racial caste system — slavery — was written into the original Constitution.

Alexander: The Constitution was largely a compromise struck with the Southern states, which wanted assurance that they’d be able to retain their slaves as property. So the “three-fifths clause,” which counted each slave as three-fifths of a human being, was included in the Constitution. Without that compromise we would not have emerged as a unified nation. That racial caste system has remained with us in some form or another ever since.

Cooper: What do you say to those who view the Constitution as the final word on our freedoms?

Alexander: I believe in the Constitution as a living document. The original Constitution denied the right to vote to women, slaves, black people, and even white men who didn’t own property. That document isn’t much to be proud of, except that it contained the seed of an egalitarian democracy. It’s this seed that is deserving of our reverence and respect. But a blind loyalty to the original document amounts to a commitment to preserving the wealth and political power of a few.

Cooper: People are generally familiar with the term “Jim Crow,” but I’m not sure they know its origin.

Alexander: Jim Crow laws were state and local laws enacted after the Civil War mandating “separate but equal” status for African Americans. The most infamous example was the segregation of public schools, public restrooms, public transportation, and so on. These laws authorized discrimination in employment, housing, education — virtually all aspects of life.

The phrase “Jim Crow” is typically attributed to “Jump Jim Crow,” a song-and-dance caricature of African Americans performed by white actors in blackface in the early nineteenth century. The laws themselves were part of an effort by the political and economic elites in the South to decimate a growing coalition between poor whites and former slaves and their descendants during the agricultural depression of the late 1800s, when the Populist movement was born. This movement challenged the corporate power of railroads and the plantation owners. It was one of the first major, meaningful political alliances between poor whites and blacks in the country, and it was having amazing success. The white ruling class was alarmed and proposed laws that would disenfranchise blacks. It waged campaigns that appealed to racial biases, resentments, and stereotypes of black people — essentially persuading poor whites not to align themselves with poor blacks, because whites were “better than that.” Poor whites also feared that the disenfranchisement laws aimed at African Americans could be aimed at them as well if they failed to distance themselves from their black allies. So many poor whites joined the effort to secure the Jim Crow laws, believing that removing blacks from politics would help facilitate economic reforms.

Cooper: Let’s talk about the “new Jim Crow”: the rising incarceration rates among young black men. In a sense this is more insidious, since it’s covert.

Alexander: Yes, during the original Jim Crow era WHITES ONLY signs hung over drinking fountains, and black people were forced to sit at the back of the bus. There was no denying the existence of the caste system. But today people in prison are largely invisible to the rest of us. We have more than 2 million inmates warehoused, but if you’re not one of them, or a family member of one of them, you scarcely notice. Most prisons are located far from urban centers and major freeways. You literally don’t see them, and when inmates return home, they’re typically returned to the segregated ghetto neighborhoods from which they came, leaving the middle class unaware of how vast this discriminatory system has become in a very short time.

Adding to prisoners’ invisibility is the fact that they are erased from unemployment and poverty statistics. If you factor in prisoners, the black unemployment rate shoots up by as much as 24 percentage points.

Cooper: And this all started in the 1980s with the U.S. government’s War on Drugs?

Alexander: Yes. Most people imagine that the War on Drugs was launched in response to rising drug crime. In fact, when the drug war was officially declared in 1982 by President Ronald Reagan, drug crime was on the decline. The drug war was part of a

conservative political strategy designed to appeal to poor and working-class whites who were anxious about busing, desegregation, and affirmative action. Beginning in the 1960s, when the civil-rights movement was in full swing, segregationists and conservative politicians found that they could successfully appeal to racial resentments by using “get tough” rhetoric on issues of crime and welfare. This tactic convinced many poor and working-class whites to defect from the Democratic to the Republican Party.

Cooper: So where were the liberal Democrats at this time?

Alexander: Many liberals didn’t want to talk about crime in poor black communities because they were afraid it would distract from their antidiscrimination agenda. They were also busy pursuing affirmative action, litigation, and lobbying strategies for enforcing the gains that had been achieved. Once the get-tough movement was underway, Democrats decided they needed to use similar tactics to appeal to white swing voters, and they began competing with Republicans to see who could be tougher on crime. President Bill Clinton escalated the drug war far beyond what Reagan had done.

Cooper: Were *any* politicians on the other side of the issue?

Alexander: There were voices, but they were lonely ones. New York senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan had been maligned by the Left for his 1965 report on the state of the black family, which many believe served to reinforce the worst racial stereotypes about African Americans. But when the War on Drugs was unleashed, Moynihan foresaw the outcome and said that if this were a conspiracy, it would be one of the most brilliant ever devised: encourage people to believe that crack is the source of all social ills in the black community, offer harsh punishment as the solution, and all the while ignore the problems of poverty and despair.

Cooper: You’ve said yourself that crack was a “godsend to the Right.”

Alexander: Reagan declared his War on Drugs a few years before crack hit the streets. As soon as it emerged, the administration recognized an opportunity to build support for the drug war. They hired staff whose job was to find reports of inner-city crack users, crack dealers, crack babies, and crack whores and to feed those horror stories to the media. The media-saturation coverage of crack was no accident. It was a deliberate campaign that fueled the race to incarcerate. Legislators began passing ever harsher mandatory-minimum sentences in response to the media frenzy.

Cooper: Cocaine had an almost glamorous image in the eighties, with beautiful people snorting it through hundred-dollar bills, whereas crack, which is simply a different form of cocaine, was seen as a grimy street drug.

Alexander: That perception was directly responsible for the so-called hundred-to-one disparity in sentencing: to get a five-year sentence, you had to possess five hundred grams of powder cocaine but just *five* grams of crack.

It's fair to say that crack's association with inner-city black people is what made it possible for legislators, prosecutors, and the public to agree that such sentences were reasonable. The media campaign also gave rise to a lot of misconceptions about crack and its addictiveness and the harm it caused, which served to justify the sentencing disparity. Since then science has shown that crack cocaine is not significantly more dangerous and addictive than its powder counterpart, if it's more dangerous at all. Last year the *New York Times* reported that alcohol is more harmful to a fetus than cocaine, yet the "crack baby" image is synonymous with hopeless birth defects.

Cooper: Is crack used more often by blacks than by whites?

Alexander: Studies do indicate that, although people of all races use and sell drugs at remarkably similar rates, there are slightly higher rates of crack use among African Americans and slightly higher rates of meth use among white Americans. So the drug of choice may vary somewhat by race, but in raw numbers there are more white crack users in the United States than there are black crack users.

Cooper: What are some other myths promoted by the drug war?

Alexander: A big one is that the war is aimed primarily at violent offenders and drug kingpins. In truth the drug war has primarily resulted in the incarceration of nonviolent, low-level offenders. One reason for this is that federal funding for the War on Drugs flows to state and local law-enforcement agencies based on the sheer number of drug arrests, not the "quality" of the arrests. In other words, law-enforcement agencies are rewarded as much for arresting addicts as they are for bringing down the big bosses. This gives them an incentive to go into poor communities and round up as many users as possible by employing mass stop-and-frisk operations, or by stopping cars and searching them for drugs, or by sweeping housing projects. In 2005 about four out of five drug arrests were for possession; only one in five was for sales. Almost half of all drug arrests are for marijuana offenses. In the 1990s, the period of greatest expansion in the drug war, 82 percent of the increase in drug arrests could be attributed to arrests for marijuana possession.

The other big myth is that most people who use and sell drugs are African American. When we picture a drug dealer, we typically imagine an African American kid on a street corner. But studies have consistently shown that people of color are no more likely than whites to use or sell illegal drugs. Users typically buy drugs from someone of their own race, and plenty of drugs are sold in suburbs, in rural white communities, on college campuses, and so forth. But the drug war has been waged almost exclusively in poor communities of color.

Week 1: Introduction and Chapter 1

*Make sure to invite your participants to read the Introduction and Chapter 1 before your first meeting.

Materials

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

Index Cards,

Colored Markers

Pens

Chart/Poster paper

Colored Post-it Packs (5 different colors)

Name tag labels

***Optional Handouts: Collects, the opening and closing prayers can be printed out if you would like the participants to read them together. Sheets can be reused each week.**

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

(Prayers may be read together, or facilitator may read prayer alone.)

Almighty God, who created us in your image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Determining Our Comfort Levels Talking About Race

We can't begin to tackle our understandings of mass incarceration and related issues that are raised by Alexander without understanding our own inner workings. That includes race, racism, white privilege, implicit bias, stereotypes, prejudice, microaggressions, etc. While it is true, thorough insight of these issues is indeed important to explore, and would greatly improve our conversations, but due to time constraints, groups involved in the Lenten book study, may not have occasion for a comprehensive exploration of the damaging by-products of the racial caste system. That said, we suggest a brief exploration and acknowledgement of our individual and collective knowledge, and our emotional responses to these issues, and the explicit historical analysis outlined by Alexander will suffice. Then after the book study, congregations can delve deeper into the complexities of race, racism, white privilege, etc. through further examination, by using other books and curricula that address the content.

Activity (10 minutes)

A) Prior to the gathering, write the following statements on chart/poster paper, each on its own page and post on wall:

- 1) I have not and do not like to talk about race and race related issues
- 2) Talking about race/racism and privilege makes me uncomfortable
- 3) I'm generally uncomfortable talking about race/racism and privilege
- 4) I'm just a bit uncomfortable talking about race/racism and privilege
- 5) I'm very comfortable and welcome opportunities to talk about race/racism and privilege

B) Assign colored Post-its to represent the different statements, for example:

- 1) Yellow = Don't like to discuss
- 2) Green = Very Uncomfortable
- 3) Blue = Sometimes Uncomfortable
- 4) Orange = Slightly Uncomfortable
- 5) Pink = Comfortable and welcome

C) Ask participants to think about which statement best reflects their comfort level. Have participants select the colored Post-It note that best corresponds to their comfort level, and place it on that page.

D) Once the Post-Its are placed, notice any patterns that occur based on the visuals. Embark on a discussion about the feelings the group may encounter based on the results. Note that talking about race makes people uncomfortable. In her book Alexander says "One study found that some whites are so loath to talk about race and so fearful of violating racial etiquette that they indicated a preference for avoiding all contact with black people." (238)

It is okay to feel uncomfortable. We are making our covenant so that we can learn and grow together, respecting each other even in the uncomfortable moments.

Create a Group Covenant (10 minutes)

Like our Baptismal Covenant serves as the guide for how we live out our faith, our Group Covenant will be a guide for how we interact within our group.

Write these covenant points on chart/easel paper prior to meeting:

- We agree to speak from our own experiences and perspectives.
- We agree to listen respectfully to the experiences and perspectives of other people.
- We agree to pay attention to the group process, making sure that everyone has the opportunity to speak and to listen.

- We agree to use this time as an opportunity for ethical, religious, and spiritual discernment, rather than as a time to debate politics or public policy.

Read the covenant points. Post the covenant points after they have been introduced. Propose them as guidelines. Ask if any points need to be clarified, added, or amended. Note changes on chart/easel paper. When the covenant is complete, invite participants to voice or signal agreement.¹

Introductions and First Impressions (20 minutes)

Facilitator's Note: Have participants sit in a circle

1. Pass out 1 index card and a pen to each participant. Give them a few minutes
2. On one side, ask participants to write down their hopes for this experience
3. On the flip side, ask participants to write down their fears
4. Have participants place their cards on the floor in the center of the circle
5. Have participants select a different card and return to their seats
6. In the circle, have participants introduce themselves by name, and then read the hopes and fears from the card they have selected

Facilitator or recorder should note key words and phrases that emerge on chart/easel paper. Discuss any commonalities that may have trended.

Collect the cards at end of sharing. (The Reparations Committee would love to see copies of the cards collected to gain a better understanding of our diocese.)

Book Discussion - Introduction & Chapter 1

Ask participants to take a moment to think about one idea, impression, or question that was provoked from the Introduction and 1st Chapter. Allow silence for two or three minutes for people to find their words. Then, invite each person in turn to speak briefly uninterrupted, asking them to name only a single point. Mention that for this conversation and any others, each person reserves the right to pass.² (Record the points on chart/easel paper.)

Connect the items people brought up to the next paragraph as a segue.

Sharing (20 minutes)

Ask participants to turn to page 2 in their books. (This is a good time to emphasize that participants should bring their books to each session.)

¹ Discussion Guide, The New Jim Crow © UUA 2012

² Ibid.

Read from Alexander's introduction:

What has changed since the collapse of Jim Crow has less to do with the basic structure of our society than the language we use to justify it. In the era of colorblindness, it is no longer socially permissible to use race, explicitly, as a justification for discrimination, exclusion, and social contempt. So, we don't. Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color "criminals" and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind. Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways that it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you're labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination- employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, denial of the educational opportunity, denial of food stamps and other public benefits, and exclusion from jury service- are suddenly legal. (page 2)

Invite participants to share their reaction to Alexander's thesis, without interruption. If there is time, invite participants to respond to what others have shared. Remind the group a covenant has been made to speak from personal experience and perspectives rather than challenging another's experiences or perspectives. (Record responses on chart/easel paper.)

- What thoughts or feelings arise?
- What information was new to you? What insights have you gained?
- In what ways has reading the Introduction and 1st Chapter helped you see a past experience or story in a new light?

Begin with 2-3 minutes of quiet reflection for participants to gather their thoughts and examine their feelings.³

Conversation (20 minutes)

Invite participants to respond to what others have shared. Record their responses. Remind them that the group has made a covenant to speak from personal experience and perspectives, rather than challenging the validity of another's experiences and perspectives.⁴

Final Reflections

What is one idea or feeling you need to explore about more this week?

³ Discussion Guide, The New Jim Crow © UUA 2012

⁴ Discussion Guide, The New Jim Crow © UUA 2012

Invite participants to meditate on their take away for the week. Summarize the session and **remind participants to read chapters 2 & 3 for the next week.**

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart and especially the hearts of the people of this land, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Week 2: Chapters 2 & 3 - The U.S. Criminal Justice System

Materials

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

Index Cards,

Colored Markers

Pens

Chart/Poster paper

Colored Post-it Packs (5 different colors)

Nametag labels

Covenant Poster from prior week

*Optional Handouts: Attached Pyramid Diagram, The Rt. Rev. Michael Curry's Sermon, *The New York Times* Article, Collects, the opening and closing prayers

Opening Prayer

Creator God, help us to follow the commitments made at our baptism to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves. Help us to strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being. Amen

Introduction

Go around the circle and have people re/introduce themselves.

Review Group Covenant

Reading and Activity (30 mins)

In The Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's Installation Sermon he said:

God has a passionate dream for this world. Jesus came to show us the way. Out of the darkness into the dream.

That's what is going on in the passage from the Acts of the Apostles — the movement! The Apostle Paul and Silas, his partner in ministry, have been preaching, teaching and witnessing to the way of Jesus in the city of Thessalonica. While their message finds some resonance with many, it is troublesome to others. A riot breaks out because of the tensions. Our text describes those who are troubled by the teaching about The Way, as the Jesus movement was first called.

Listen to this description of the first followers of Jesus:

These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also.... They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus. (Acts 17:6b-7)

Notice that the activity of Paul and Silas was seen not as an isolated incident in Thessalonica, but as part of a greater movement of revolution. “These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also.” Paul and Silas by themselves might not have been of much consequence. But as part of a movement, they posed a problem.

This movement was perceived as somehow reordering the way things were, “turning the world upside down.”

The reason the movement was turning the world upside down was because members of the movement gave their loyalty to someone named Jesus and committed themselves to living and witnessing to his way above all else. “They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus.” That’s what we did at the beginning of this service when, in the Baptismal Covenant, we reaffirmed our commitment to be disciples, living by and witnessing to the way of Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

The Way of Jesus will always turn our worlds and the world upside down, which is really turning it right side up!⁵

In chapters 2 and 3 Alexander describes each layer of the criminal justice system. In what ways is the criminal justice system “upside down” compared to the Way of Jesus described by Bishop Curry? (Answers without interruption or response.)

Facilitator Note: The goal of the activity is to have participants illustrate the *pyramid to describe “how the legal rules that structure the [criminal justice] system guarantee discriminatory results.” Page numbers have been included to help the facilitator and can be provided to participants.

Activity

- 1) Divide people into small groups.
- 2) Give each group chart/easel paper and markers.
- 3) On the paper, have an inverted pyramid with 5 empty spaces drawn (or have participants draw) for participants to fill in.

⁵ The Rt. Rev. Michael Curry, Installation Sermon, Episcopal New Service, <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2015/11/01/video-currys-sermon-at-installation-of-the-27th-presiding-bishop/>, (November 1, 2015)

- 4) After the pyramids have been completed, bring the groups together as one whole and invite the participants to share by explaining their interpretations at each level at the end of the activity.

*See attached Pyramid Diagram for example. They can be printed and distributed after the activity.

Discussion

- How did the War on Drugs target poor people of color? (Give people a couple minutes to gather their thoughts.)
- Who benefits? What happens to communities that have been impacted?

Facilitator's Note: You may want to provide copies or the link to the *New York Times* article listed under "Current Events" about the changing attitudes around the War on Drugs. To help with the exercise, you may wish to point out, as more white people are at the center of the growing U.S. heroin epidemic, attitudes around policing and care are changing. Calls for rehabilitation, saving lives, and police interventions are being invoked, instead of harsh, punitive and life altering mass incarceration. The contrast between how white and black drug users are viewed by dominant society, law and policy makers and presented in the media highlights the racial bias integral to the drug war.

- **Current Events:**
 - o http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/31/us/heroin-war-on-drugs-parents.html?_r=0
 - o *When the nation's long-running war against drugs was defined by the crack epidemic and based in poor, predominantly black urban areas, the public response was defined by zero tolerance and stiff prison sentences. But today's heroin crisis is different. While heroin use has climbed among all demographic groups, it has skyrocketed among whites; nearly 90 percent of those who tried heroin for the first time in the last decade were white. And the growing army of families of those lost to heroin — many of them in the suburbs and small towns — are now using their influence, anger and grief to cushion the country's approach to drugs, from altering the language around addiction to prodding government to treat it not as a crime, but as a disease.*
 - o *Some black scholars said they welcomed the shift, while expressing frustration that earlier calls by African-Americans for a more empathetic approach were largely ignored. This new turn to a more compassionate view of those addicted to heroin is welcome," said Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, who specializes in*

racial issues at Columbia and U.C.L.A. law schools. “But,” she added, “one cannot help notice that had this compassion existed for African-Americans caught up in addiction and the behaviors it produces, the devastating impact of mass incarceration upon entire communities would never have happened.”

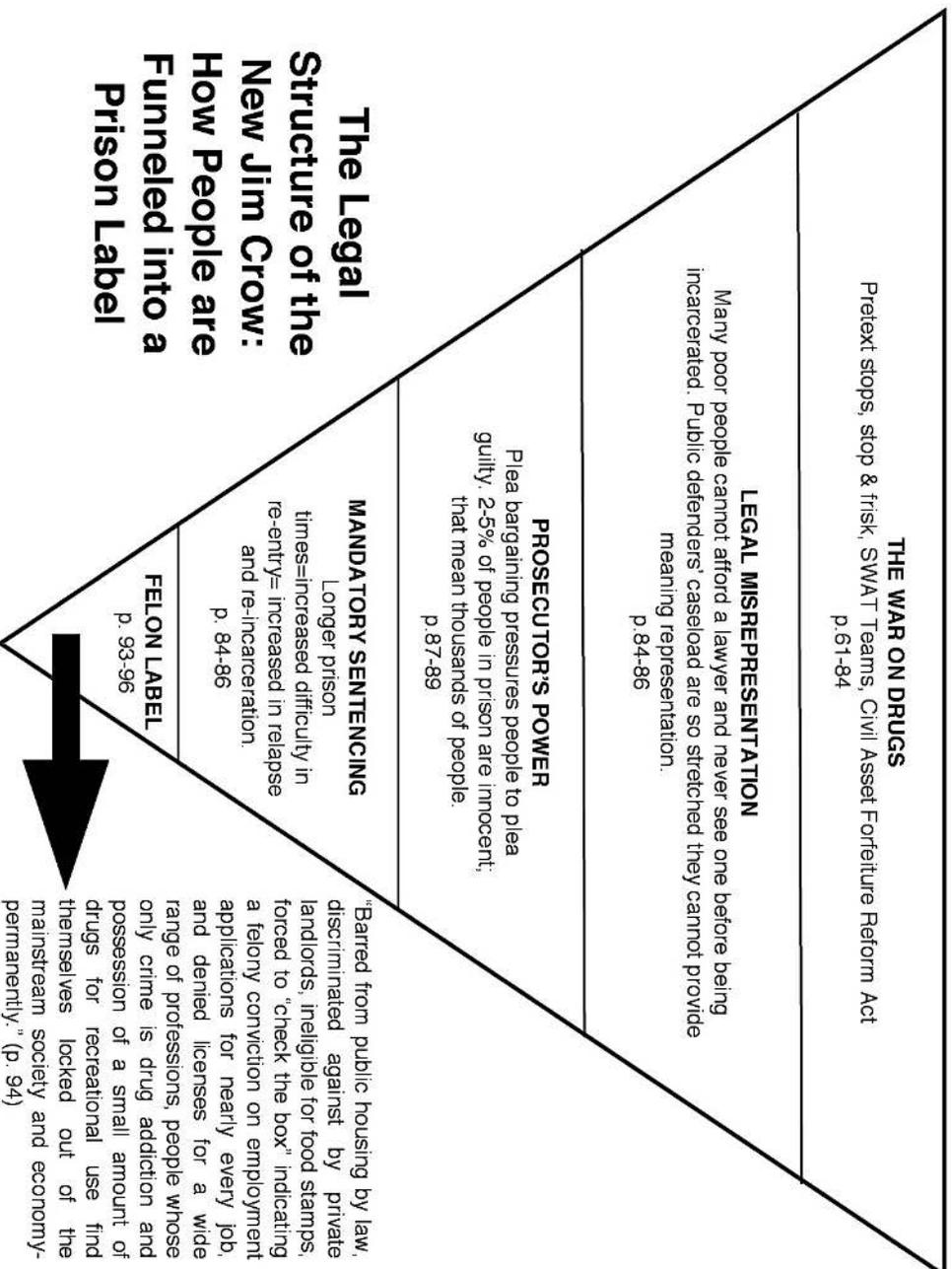
Final Reflections

In what ways is Alexander’s information turning your world/preconceived notions about the criminal justice system and the war on drugs upside down?

Facilitator invites participants to meditate on their take away for the week. Summarize the session and **remind participants to read chapter 4 for the next week.**

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart [and especially the hearts of the people of this land], that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



The Legal Structure of the New Jim Crow: How People are Funneled into a Prison Label

Week 3: Chapter 4 - The Criminal, Stigma and Bias in Society

Materials

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

Index Cards,

Colored Markers

Pens

Chart/Poster paper

Colored Post-it Packs (5 different colors)

Name tag labels

Covenant Poster from prior week

*Optional Handouts: Collects, the opening and closing prayers, discussion excerpt/Alexander & Kirwan on conscious/unconscious/implicit bias

Facilitator Action

Prior to gathering, write this statement on chart/poster paper and hang in a conspicuous location. As participants gather in the space, ask them to reflect on the statement.

Mass incarceration is fueled by a highly funded and minimally constrained criminal justice system that traps people branded as “criminals,” even individuals without a criminal record, into a permanent undercaste.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, who created us in your image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Review Group Covenant

Introduction and Discussion (30 min)

Invite participants to think of a time you broke the law (or many). Go around the circle and say your name and share one of those moments. (sharing is always optional)

Facilitator’s Note: The purpose of the introductory activity is to acknowledge one’s own criminality. The group may find that as people share, there will be a variety of types of crimes, from vehicular moving violations to DWIs to more serious offenses; however it is likely that only petty or nominal violations will be shared.

Discussion

This excerpt illustrates “decades of cognitive bias research demonstrates that both unconscious and conscious biases led to discriminatory actions, even when an individual does not want to discriminate.” Share the following excerpt with the group and discuss how this relates to the introductory activity.

A survey was conducted in 1995 asking the following question: “Would you close your eyes for a second, envision a drug user, and describe that person to me?” The startling results were published in the Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education. Ninety-five percent of respondents pictured a black drug user, while only 5 percent imagined other racial groups. These results contrast sharply with the reality of drug crime in America. African Americans constitute only 15 percent of current drug users in 1995, and they constitute roughly the same percentage today. Whites constitute the vast majority of drug users than (and now), but almost no one pictured a white person when asked to imagine what a drug user looks like. The same group of respondents also perceived the typical drug trafficker as black.

There’s no reason to believe that the survey results would have been any different if police officers or prosecutors - rather than the general public - had been the respondents. Law enforcement officials, no less than the rest of us, have been exposed to the racially charged political rhetoric and media imagery associated with the drug war. In fact, for nearly three decades, new stories regarding virtually all straight crime have disproportionately featured African American offenders. One study suggests that the standard crime news “script” is so prevalent and so thoroughly racialized that viewers imagine a black perpetrator even when none exists. In that study, 60 percent of viewers who saw a story with no image falsely recalled seeing one, and 70 percent of those viewers believed the perpetrator to be African American. (p 106)

Read Alexander on conscious or unconscious bias:

You may honestly believe you are not biased against African Americans, and that you may even have black friends or relatives, does not mean that you are free from unconscious bias. Implicit bias tests may still show that you hold negative attitudes and stereotypes about blacks, even though you do not believe you do and do not want to. Alexander goes on to describe a study on shooter bias where, “black participants showed an amount of shooter bias similar to that shown by whites. Unfortunately, a fairly consistent finding is that punitiveness and hostility almost always

increase when people are primed — even subliminally— with images or verbal cues associated with African Americans. In fact, studies indicate that people become increasingly harsh when an alleged criminal is darker or more “stereotypically black”; they are more lenient when the accused is lighter and appears more stereotypically white. This is true of jurors as well as law enforcement officers.

Group Activity (30 mins)

Distribute chart/easel paper and markers to groups comprised of 4-5 people. Based on the excerpts, in your group, write a definition of your understandings of conscious and unconscious bias.

Tie to Scripture (15 mins)

Facilitator’s Note: This scripture reading is introduced to describe a response to cultural and ethnic bias in the early church.

In Acts, we are told the story of the early church. People from many different ethnicity and culture have come together to follow the way of Jesus. The Greek Christians are being neglected in the daily food distribution. The Hebrews’ response isn’t to doubt the Greek’s claim, but to try and rebuild broken trust. The team of seven men appointed to distribute food all have Greek names: Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus. The Hebrews not only correct the error. The biased, conscious or unconscious, food distribution is corrected. Amends have been made and because of this the church grows.

Read Acts 6:1-7

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. ²And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, ⁴while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.” ⁵What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Questions:

- How can we acknowledge our own biases in ourselves and in our institutions?
- Once acknowledged, how can we use the text from Acts to guide us on our journey towards reconciliation, building trust and making amends?

More on Understanding Bias

Defining Implicit Bias

Also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection.

The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations.

A Few Key Characteristics of Implicit Biases

- Implicit biases are **pervasive**. Everyone possesses them, even people with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges.
- Implicit and explicit biases are **related but distinct mental constructs**. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.
- The implicit associations we hold **do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs** or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.
- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that **favor our own in-group**, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our in-group.
- Implicit biases are **malleable**. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques.

The Kirwan Institute strives to provide innovative, compelling and strategic research to both academic audiences and the broader community. Much of the Institute's research is applied and policy oriented, providing informed direction and assistance to social justice advocates, communities, funders and policy makers. The following provides information on our core strategic initiatives, research, and provides a comprehensive index of recent Institute projects.⁶

Closing Activity (15 mins.)

On index cards, each participant should write a one sentence prayer related to the topics explored today. The sentences will be woven into one group prayer. (The Reparations Committee would like to collect each group's prayer.)

Facilitator summarizes the session and **reminds participants to read chapter 5 for the next week.**

Closing Prayer

Have the group read their prayers. (Ask them to meditate on their prayers throughout the week.)

Facilitator's Note:

Gather the cards and number them in the order in which the collective prayer was composed. During the week, type out the sentences in consecutive order to produce the group prayer. Bring prayer with you to the next session and plan to open the fourth (4th) week book study with that prayer.

⁶ <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/researchandstrategicinitiatives/>

Week 4: Chapter 5 - Jim Crow and Mass Incarceration (The New Jim Crow)

Materials

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

Index Cards,

Colored Markers

Pens

Chart/Poster paper

Colored Post-it Packs (5 different colors)

Name tag labels

Covenant Poster from prior week

Laptop, LCD projector w/ speakers, Screen or clean wall, Internet connection, extension cord, surge protector (router, optional)

*Optional Handouts: Collects, the opening and closing prayers

Opening Prayer

Begin with Closing prayer written at the end of last session.

Welcome each other by stating names

Review Covenant

Opening Quote (10 mins.)

“When the system of mass incarceration collapses (and if history is any guide, it will), historians will undoubtedly look back and marvel that such an extraordinarily comprehensive system of racialized social control existed in the United States. How fascinating, they will likely say, that a drug war was waged almost exclusively against poor people of color—people already trapped in ghettos that lacked jobs and decent schools. They were rounded up by the millions, packed away in prison, and when released, they were stigmatized for life, denied the right to vote, and ushered into a world of discrimination.

“Legally barred from employment, housing, and welfare benefits—and saddled with thousands of dollars of debt—these people were shamed and condemned for failing to hold together their families. They were chastised for succumbing to depression and anger, and blamed for landing back in prison. Historians will likely wonder how we could describe the new caste system as a system of crime control, when it is difficult to imagine a system better designed to create—rather than prevent—crime.” (pages 175-176)

Move to a discussion about the quote and the following statement, which has been written on chart/poster paper and posted in conspicuous location ahead of time

Mass incarceration is a system of racialized social control that, like slavery and Jim Crow before it, operates to discriminate and create a stigmatized racial group locked into an inferior position by law and custom.

Written Reflection Time (10 mins)

Activity Preparation

Facilitator will write the prompts on chart/easel paper and post conspicuously for everyone to see. Provide paper and pens for a time of individual written reflection. Participants may respond to as many questions as they'd like.

Questions to Guide Written Reflections

- What are the most salient similarities between Jim Crow and mass incarceration?
- How has racial caste perpetuated in the form of mass incarceration, despite the achievements of the civil rights movement?
- How has the evidence Alexander presents of a radicalized caste system, a new Jim Crow in the United States, deepened or given you a new perspective?
- Does her work confirm the experience of a system of which you were already aware? Explain.
- In what ways has reading *The New Jim Crow* informed your understanding of the drug laws and criminal justice system, race and racism, and United States history?
- What stories or experiences, recent or perhaps long in the past, have come to the forefront for you?
- In what ways have you become aware of your own conscious or unconscious bias? In recognizing conscious or unconscious bias what steps will you take to reconcile?
- When have you been silent, or turned away, from evidence of this system?⁷

⁷ Discussion Guide, *The New Jim Crow* © UUA 2012

Discussions (25 mins.)

Encourage participants to share their thoughts during reflection.

Reflections Part II (Group)

- 1) Break into small groups of 4 or 5 to answer more questions.
- 2) Make sure someone records the conversation in writing so the ideas can be shared with the group. Use the questions that seem useful for your group:
 - What have the previous lessons and chapters inspired you to do in a faith based community?
 - What are steps you can do as a congregation?
 - What struck you the most about these systems of oppression? How does this challenge you as Christians?
 - What role can the Episcopal church play in turning this system upside-down? How can we create real change that benefits all parties?

Video Clip Screening: Michelle Alexander's Speech at Union Theological Seminary, March 2015 (10mins.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ioTQqfElks>

Start and finish: 43:00-51:34

Reflect: Discussion/Write/Draw (20 min.)

Alexander has challenged us to carry on the legacy of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by committing ourselves to the work of racial and social justice, working to dismantle the system of mass incarceration. What little steps will **your group** take to ensure that it is "all of us or none?" In your group, be creative with this reflection. Write a spoken word piece, draw a group mural, write a pray, etc. but work together.

Facilitator: Display the works around the room and conduct a gallery walk.

Facilitator summarizes the session and reminds participants to read chapter 6 for the next week.

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, who created us in your image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Week 5: Chapter 6 - Call to Respond/Act & Final Reflections

Opening Prayer

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart and especially the hearts of the people of this land, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Welcome one another, group participants re/introduce themselves by name

Covenant Review

Discussion (50 mins.)

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has called the church to be reconcilers, but what does that mean in the face of mass incarceration?

Bishop Curry states: “Real Reconciliation Realizes Justice”

“Whether we take small steps or large leaps, reconciliation is a process. We can state the problems with precision, proclaim the biblical mandate with eloquence, and commit ourselves to the principles, but unless we actually engage in a process, we will never experience reconciliation. I believe that the process of reconciliation must include the following steps: taking responsibility, seeking forgiveness, repairing the wrong, healing the soul, and creating a new way of relating.”⁸

We have to choose whether we will engage in Costly and Cheap Reconciliation.

Cheap Reconciliation⁹ puts a veneer over injustice, while injustice continues. Costly Reconciliation takes time and thoughtfulness, self-examination and honesty, it takes the willingness to be wrong and to change course.

- When have you seen or experienced Cheap Reconciliation? What did it look and feel like?
- When have you seen or experienced Real Costly Reconciliation? What did it look and feel like?

⁸ The Rev. Dr. Curtiss Paul DeYoung, *Reconciliation: Our Greatest Challenge-Our Only Hope*, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1997), 88.

⁹ DeYoung, *Reconciliation*, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1997), xvii.

Chapter 6 uncovers the challenges we will face if we choose to seek the path of justice:

- How does colorblindness prevent us from engaging in Real Reconciliation? (page 240-244)
- What is “The Racial Bribe”? How does the bribe lure us into Cheap Reconciliation? (page 245-251)
- How can we continue to shed our racial indifference? (page 202-204)
- What will it take to dispel the racial stigma associated with criminality? (pages 197-200)

Conversation (10 minutes)

Facilitator Notes:

So much information has been discussed and learned by studying *The New Jim Crow* that participants may be feeling overwhelmed, confused, angry, transformed or moved to take action. To jump-start the closing reflections, the facilitator may choose to sum up the entire book study experience. This comment might help in getting notes and ideas together:

From its founding, the United States was structured by a racial caste system. Systems of slavery, Jim Crow and Mass Incarceration, or the New Jim Crow, were intentionally designed, sustained and evolved as forms of social control by the dominant social class, over people of African heritage. Throughout her book, Alexander instructs readers by providing a historical overview, evidentiary of the persistence of the racial hierarchy noting the growth and development of the United States racial caste systems. At the end of the journey, readers, through Alexander’s analysis, learn that if the desire to change, or radically eliminate racial caste in the United States permanently, the country cannot rely solely on legal and policy solutions, because such methods of racial control within the system are sanctioned, and to the majority of its uninformed citizenry, the discriminatory nature is not apparent. Alexander’s position for eradicating mass incarceration as we know it, is to create a social movement that confronts the role of race and cultivates an ethic of care.

Group Activity

Invite the group to consider how this conversation can be continued in your congregation, group, community, or family. What partners in your local community might you work with to bring information about the new Jim Crow to public attention? What contribution might you, your congregation, your group, or your community make to building the movement Alexander envisions is necessary to dismantle this racialized system of social control?

Present a range of possible actions:¹⁰

- Invite others to read the New Jim Crow and organize more discussion groups, perhaps including those from other faith communities and civic or community organizations.
- Find out which partners in your local community you might work with to bring information about the new Jim Crow to public attention and begin to build partnerships.
- Find out which organizations and faith communities in your area are serving and supporting young people of color and building coalitions with those groups and partner in their work.
- Join advocacy efforts for ending mass incarceration (including three Strikes legislation and mandatory minimum drug laws).
- Start a prison ministry program in your congregation.
- Explore Restorative Justice as a paradigm for social change and healing justice based on right relationship.
- Purchase The New Jim Crow study guide published by the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, which represents a cross section of progressive African American faith leaders and their congregations in the United States. Use the chapter by chapter guide to engage more fully the questions raised by Alexander's book.
- Study Canon Stephanie Speller's book *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, the Other, and the Spirit of Transformation* if The New Jim Crow study has you asking questions about how to make your church a place where all are welcome. http://www.amazon.com/Radical-Welcome-Embracing-Spirit-Transformation/dp/0898695201/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8

Closing Reflections

In one word sum up how reading and studying *The New Jim Crow* has impacted you. Have the facilitator begin and go around the circle.

Facilitator solicits final thoughts about the book and the process. Facilitator thanks everyone for their willingness to participate in the Lenten book study.

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, who created us in your image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

¹⁰ Discussion Guide, The New Jim Crow © UUA 2012 - 5

References Cited

The guide was compiled based on many other guides and reference materials including:

Alexander, Michelle, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, (New York: The New Press, 2010,2012).

Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research, University of Louisville. Book Discussion Kit, 2011. University of Louisville, created by Tytianna N.M. Smith

A Biblical Response to Mass Incarceration and the New Jim Crow. The Correctional Ministries and Chaplains Association Summit, May 2013

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Research and Strategic Initiatives.
<http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/researchandstrategicinitiatives/>

The Diocese of New York Examines Slavery: Talking About Reparations, Repair and Reconciliation, A Facilitator's Guide Prepared by the Diocese of New York's Reparations Committee © Diocese of New York, 2008

The Campaign to End the New Jim Crow: "No to Prisons, Yes to Caring Communities" *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* – A project of the Riverside Church for Prison Ministry, prepared by Pamela Wood

Discussion Guide, *The New Jim Crow* © UUA, 2012

Additional Resources

The New Jim Crow Book/Chapter Summary Links

Daily Kos: <http://bit.ly/1QCta1P>

Scribd: <http://bit.ly/1JTSKQt>

The New Jim Crow Study Guide & Call to Action, a Publication of the Veteran's of Hope Project, 2013.

<http://www.newjimcroworganizing.org/ebooks/StudyGuide.pdf>

Recommended Book List - Classics to New and Noteworthy

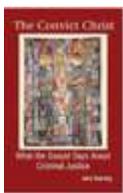
Beyond Prisons: A New Interfaith Paradigm for Our Failed Prison System Paperback – April 1, 2006



by [Lauraet Magnani](#) (Author), [Harmon L. Wray](#) (Author)

This strong indictment of the current prison system, undertaken by two respected experts on behalf of the American Friends Service Committee, traces the history and features of our penal system, offers strong ethical and moral assessments of it, and lays out a whole new paradigm of criminal justice based on restorative justice and reconciliation. The book puts forward a 12-point plan for immediate changes. Beyond Prisons opens a long-needed national dialogue on our responsibilities as citizens and as a nation to provide remediation rather than mere retributive incarceration, answerable to the common good and the justice of God.

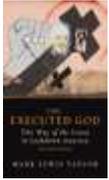
Convict Christ: What the Gospel Says About Criminal Justice Paperback – April 28, 2006



by [Jens Soering](#) (Author)

An inmate for life, Jens Soering tells stories of prison life that are shocking and inspiring. He confronts us with Jesus' challenge to love not only the least amongst us but those who are perceived as the worst amongst us. Anyone interested in what goes on behind the walls of our nation's prisons and in seeing the face of Christ in everyone will value this authentic, harrowing, and visionary search for redemption. "Jens Soering confronts the everyday realities of prison life with mercy, compassion, and forgiveness. I recommend "The Convict Christ" to those willing to become more deeply sensitized to the failures and injustices in our jails and prisons today. It is fascinating and enriching!" - Walter F. Sullivan, Bishop Emeritus of Richmond.

The Executed God: The Way of the Cross in Lockdown America Paperback, 2nd Edition – November 2015 by [Mark Lewis Taylor](#) (Author)



Winner, Best General Interest Book for 2001, Association of Theological Booksellers Between 1980 and 2000, the number of prisoners in the U.S. has tripled to over 2 million people, 70 percent of them people of color. Indeed, by 2000, 3,600 people were on America's death rows. This growth industry currently employs 523,000 people. Among abuses that Mark Taylor notes in this "theater of terror" are capital punishment, inordinate sentencing, violations of fairness in both process and results, racism in the justice system and prisons, prison rape and other terrorizing techniques, and paramilitary policing practices. With twenty-five years of involvement with prison reform, Taylor passionately describes and explains the excesses and injustices in our corrections system and capital punishment to foster compassionate and effective Christian action. His book convincingly relates the life-engendering power of God - demonstrated in Jesus' cross and resurrection - to the potential transformation of the systems of death and imprisonment.

Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race Paperback – September 26, 2008



by [George Yancy](#)

Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race

understands Black embodiment within the context of white hegemony within the context of a racist, anti-Black world. George Yancy examines themes such as double consciousness, invisibility, and corporeal malediction that capture the lived reality of Black bodies under tremendous existential duress. He demonstrates that the Black body is a historically lived text on which whites have inscribed their projections, which speak equally forcefully to whites' own self-conceptions.

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome Paperback – January 1, 2005



by [Joy Angela Degruy](#) (Author)

The Theory of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome suggest that centuries of slavery followed by systemic racism and oppression have resulted in multigenerational adaptive behaviors—some of which have been positive and reflective of resilience, and others that are detrimental and destructive. In brief, Dr. DeGruy presents facts, statistics and documents that illustrate how varying levels of both clinically induced and socially learned residual stress related issues were passed along through generations as a result of slavery.

Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation (Prophetic Christianity) Paperback – November 26, 2014

by [Jennifer Harvey](#) (Author)



In this provocative book Jennifer Harvey argues for a radical shift in how justice-committed white Christians think about race. She calls for moving away from the reconciliation paradigm that currently dominates interracial relations and embracing instead a *reparations* paradigm.

Harvey presents an insightful historical analysis of the painful fissures that emerged among activist Christians toward the end of the Civil Rights movement, and she shows the necessity of bringing "white" racial identity into clear view in order to counter today's oppressive social structures.

A deeply constructive, hopeful work, *Dear White Christians* will help readers envision new racial possibilities, including concrete examples of contemporary reparations initiatives. This book is for any who care about the gospel call to justice but feel stuck trying to get there, given the ongoing prevalence of deep racial divisions in the church and society at large.

Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do (Issues of Our Time) Paperback – April 4, 2011

by [Claude M. Steele](#) (Author)



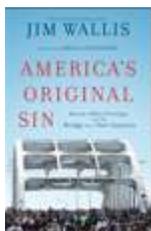
The acclaimed social psychologist offers an insider's look at his research and groundbreaking findings on stereotypes and identity.

Claude M. Steele, who has been called "one of the few great social psychologists," offers a vivid first-person account of the research that supports his groundbreaking conclusions on stereotypes and identity. He sheds new light on American social phenomena from racial and gender gaps in test scores to the belief in the superior athletic prowess of black men, and lays out a plan for mitigating these "stereotype threats" and reshaping American identities.

New and Noteworthy

America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America Hardcover – January 19, 2016

by [Jim Wallis](#) (Author), [Bryan Stevenson](#) (Foreword)



America's problem with race has deep roots, with the country's foundation tied to the near extermination of one race of people and the enslavement of another. Racism is truly our nation's original sin.

"It's time we right this unacceptable wrong," says bestselling author and leading Christian activist Jim Wallis. Fifty years ago, Wallis was driven away from his faith by a white church that considered dealing with racism to be taboo. His participation in the civil rights movement brought him back when he

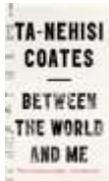
discovered a faith that commands racial justice. Yet as recent tragedies confirm, we continue to suffer from the legacy of racism. The old patterns of white privilege are colliding with the changing demographics of a diverse nation. The church has been slow to respond, and Sunday morning is still the most segregated hour of the week.

In *America's Original Sin*, Wallis offers a prophetic and deeply personal call to action in overcoming the racism so ingrained in American society. He speaks candidly to Christians--particularly white Christians--urging them to cross a new bridge toward racial justice and healing.

Whenever divided cultures and gridlocked power structures fail to end systemic sin, faith communities can help lead the way to grassroots change. Probing yet positive, biblically rooted yet highly practical, this book shows people of faith how they can work together to overcome the embedded racism in America, galvanizing a movement to cross the bridge to a multiracial church and a new America.

Between the World and Me Hardcover – July 14, 2015

by [Ta-Nehisi Coates](#) (Author)



In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of "race," a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden?

Between the World and Me is Ta-Nehisi Coates's attempt to answer these questions in a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares with his son—and readers—the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory experiences, from Howard University to Civil War battlefields, from the South Side of Chicago to Paris, from his childhood home to the living rooms of mothers whose children's lives were taken as American plunder. Beautifully woven from personal narrative, reimagined history, and fresh, emotionally charged reportage, *Between the World and Me* clearly illuminates the past, bracingly confronts our present, and offers a transcendent vision for a way forward.

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption Paperback – August 2015

by [Bryan Stevenson](#) (Author)



Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases

was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn't commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and legal brinkmanship—and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever.

Just Mercy is at once an unforgettable account of an idealistic, gifted young lawyer's coming of age, a moving window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice

(All above listings and blurbs are from amazon.com, where books are available for purchase)

Articles

Alexander, Michelle. (2010) *The New Jim Crow*. *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law*
<http://bit.ly/1nJwzmn>

Cox, Robynn J.A. (2015). *Where Do We Go from Here? Mass Incarceration and the Struggle for Civil Rights [Executive Summary]*. Economic Policy Institute
<http://bit.ly/1sH5rFE>

Forman Jr. James. *Racial Critiques of Mass Incarceration: Beyond the New Jim Crow*, 87 N. Y. U. L. Rev. 21 (2012).
<http://bit.ly/20lnEZs>

Websites/Video/Podcasts

The Sentencing Project

A Website for research and advocacy reform; contains up-to-the-minute news on criminal justice issues in the United States. The site is interactive with informative maps, charts, graphs, statistics and much more.

<http://www.sentencingproject.org/>

The Zinn Education Project

Great site for youth, and adults who want to learn about “the people’s history” – perhaps history you were never taught, but wish you had learned in your secondary education experience. Go to the site, and in the search box, type in “mass incarceration” (or a variety of social history topics, to learn about their critical analysis and approach for

teaching and learning about the New Jim Crow.

<http://zinnedproject.org/>

Michelle Alexander at Union Theological Seminary, 4 March 2015

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T79I1PLT5Ks>

This American Life, with Ira Glass (Host). (2014, October 17). 538: *Is This Working?* [Audio podcast] Retrieved from: <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/538/is-this-working>

Stories of schools struggling with what to do with misbehaving kids. Act One, “Time Out,” is particularly disheartening. Listen to and/or read the transcript, both available on the site.

The Eastern State Penitentiary

Considering Mass Incarceration: A 2016 Exhibit to Foster Dialogue

A upcoming exhibition at the renowned penitentiary in Philadelphia. According to the Website, “it is time to examine the history, effectiveness and fairness of the U. S. criminal justice system.

<http://www.easternstate.org/support/considering-mass-incarceration-2016-exhibit-foster-dialogue>