

Mass Incarceration Materials and Resources for Individuals and Congregations

During the past 40 years, millions of people have been locked in cages and stripped of basic civil and human rights—the very rights supposedly won in the Civil Rights Movement. A blatantly biased and unspeakably cruel “War on Drugs” combined with a “get tough” movement, has resulted in millions being treated as disposable and entire generations lost in many urban communities....

Across the country, people of faith and conscience are waking up to the magnitude of harm that has been inflicted by the War on Drugs and the “get tough” movement. We are beginning to acknowledge that our collective silence about the moral dimension of this crisis has made us complicit. Study groups, action committees, and coalitions are forming from coast-to-coast led by people of faith and conscience who are raising their prophetic voices and acting with courage, emboldened by the conviction that anything less threatens the future of generations to come.

Michelle Alexander in her Forward to *Bearing Witness: A Nation in Chains*, pp.5-6 (see below for order details).

Law professor Michelle Alexander lays out the root causes and the damaging societal consequences of mass incarceration in her bestselling book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Revised Edition (New York: The New Press, 2011). Order from Amazon: <http://tinyurl.com/04r349j>

A study guide to *The New Jim Crow* is helpful for small groups and congregations that wish to read and discuss the topics laid out by Michelle Alexander in her book. *Study Guide to The New Jim Crow, Updated Edition* (N.p.: Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, 2013). Order from: www.sdpconference.info

General information from United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries, including resolutions from General Synod and links to numerous resources can be found starting at: <http://www.ucc.org/justice/criminal-justice/>

Findings from nine state Justice Commission Hearings on mass incarceration are compiled in *Bearing Witness: A Nation in Chains* (N.p.: Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, 2014) Order from: www.sdpconference.info

Washington Post reporter Max Ehrenfreund describes how “Mass incarceration is making the Federal Reserve’s job harder” because the growing number of young males who have a criminal history is skewing jobs data. He notes that “A prison sentence is a lost opportunity to learn

useful skills on the job, but even someone with a felony conviction who has never been to prison may face legal barriers to working.” <http://tinyurl.com/llw7osl>

The Native Hawaiian Justice Task Force formulates policies and procedures to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Native Hawaiians in Hawai`i’s criminal justice system by looking for new strategies to reduce or avoid unnecessary involvement of these individuals with the criminal justice system. Minutes of proceedings of the Task Force, along with oral and written testimonies, reports and resources can be found at:

<http://oha.org/nativehawaiianjusticetaskforce>

A particularly helpful report that shows how mass incarceration affects Native Hawaiians, as well as other Pacific Islander groups, can be found in: “The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System,” *The Native Hawaiian Justice Task Force Report* (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2010)

http://oha.org/sites/files/2012NHJTF_REPORT_FINAL_0.pdf