

**Action ideas generated by participants at the “New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration In the Age of Colorblindness” (Michelle Alexander) book discussions on February 24th and 27<sup>th</sup> at Unity Church-Unitarian.**

- Recommend the book to neighbors and friends
- Recognizing that these kids belong to all of us
- Raise awareness within the congregation of the organizations that are doing this work (Amicus, Second Chance)
- Take a day or 2 and go to a county courtroom (adult) see what happens
- Educate casual users of illegal substances how they contribute financially to drug sellers and therefore support mass incarcerations
- What might this do:
  - We have power, churches, universities etc, so speak out. We need an agenda in writing: pardon non-violent criminals. The dialogue has to be to protect everyone’s rights
- People have to be made aware of MA’s thesis. Churches have the moral power
- What can an individual do?
- UU General Assembly speech by Michelle Alexander in Phoenix last year
- Encourage workers to work on anti-racist
- Point out racial disparities: salaries, etc
- Develop speeches others can use.
- Get together w other UU groups in TC’s to study and take action.
- MUUSJA
- Ted Talks: The Wire
- Develop speaker programs, public defenders and judges on the side of incarcerated to speak to UU’s in Twin Cities; Education
- Promote book, have conversations
- Start with children: educate them: RE (Religious Education)
  - In our RE have more focus on diversity
- Unity continue working with Monday group
- Educate ourselves and ultimately our legislators to change laws.
- Continue to have conversations within, among and beyond
- UU’s work to address the politics of fear-continue this!!
- Forums
  - Prosecutors
  - Judges
  - Public Defenders
- Partnerships not just UU’s
- Investments- How do we personally profit from for-profit prisons
- How does addiction relate to the ‘war on drugs’?
- Goal:
  - Review the consequences of mandatory sentencing- has it worked? What has been its impact?
  - What effect would decriminalizing drugs have?
  - What do other countries do?
  - What are we getting for what are pay for?
- What do local police do? Stops, searches, ride along with people in communities of color
- How to continue the conversation
  - Form groups, conversations circle
  - Concrete aims addressing laws/legislation

- Groups actively participate, knowing, connect to groups
- Written material for CommUnity
- Asking church to ascertain front was of active participation and large community
- ID all the pieces
- Year in life of church and dedicate towards one congregation wide focusing toward one action
- Do search to find out what has been done- Fresh Air? Other programs? TV Radio, etc.
- Michelle Alexander spoke at GA- what has UUA done as a denomination about this?
- Educate ourselves more on the question of felon's rights
- Open conversation on decriminalizing drugs
- Economics: supply and price, incentivizes criminal activity for both suppliers and consumers.
- If Republicans want to reduce spending, why isn't this factored in? Bring cost into conversation for those that don't see moral issues
- Need a focus for church members /participants
- Raise awareness
- Realization of our ignorance
  - We are susceptible to believing what we are told about the 'others'
  - I learned from peoples personal stories
  - The prison industrial complex systems requires people to be in it
- Exposure to the other

### **In the community**

- Get whole churches mobilized against further Voter ID actions
  - Get some Black leaders to talk to us
  - Know what is going on in our own neighborhood about services for ex-felons
  - How can we dismantle negative parts of system
  - Get to get inside a Black persons experience as much as we can
- Restorative Justice Team Initiatives:
  - Amicus
- Get to know all your neighbors, work together on issues
- Start with children: Obama Elementary? Other?
- Volunteer pen-pals with people in the prison system- letter writing ministry
- Deal with local incarceration issues
- Talk to people affected by this issue, not what we think they need, but what do they need?
- Amicus
- Communities working together on housing, education, jobs, build coalitions
- Spend time and money in communities of color "its personal"
- Build supports to rehabilitation/re-assimilation:
  - Mentoring
- Legitimize (?) citizenship, empowerment, voting, jury duty
- Raise awareness, build partnerships with local churches including black churches
  - Outline vision of beloved community and what we all have to lose
  - Make connections with police, judges, legislature to have conversations
  - Stand up for issues that affect communities of color
- Talk up MA's book with our friends

## Advocacy

- Politics is never irrelevant contact your representative about specific problems
  - Push for voting rights out of prison and in prison
  - End war on drugs, go to the street on this
- Demonstrate at Prosecutor's meetings (organizations, conferences) to raise awareness of their critical roles in incarceration.
- Stigmatization-Support Second Chance initiatives
  - Ban the box
  - Reinstate the voting franchise
  - Expunging juvenile criminal records
  - Re-entry programs
  - Education/job training programs
- Legislative Initiatives
  - Sentencing guidelines-mandatory
  - Budget priorities
  - Mental Health/Public Health Funding
- Take political actions- write our representatives
  - State, local, federal to end the war on drugs and close the prison-industrial complex
- Recommend the book to elected officials
- Talk to police about targeting African Americans
- Restore voting rights
  - Felons gets a certificate of Rehabilitation to vote, don't always know that they eventually can vote
- End War on Drugs
  - Decriminalize drugs
  - Prevention
  - Treatment vs. jail
- Create economic opportunity
  - Economic Justice
  - Job creation (jail costs \$500/day for detention alone)
- Church communities, faith communities then approach our lawmakers.
- Focus on the right to vote, not have to wait vote till off paper
- Lobby for changing drug laws
- Encourage local elected officials, corrections officers, police dept, etc. to attend MA's event at St Thomas
- Sensitize the courts
  - Observe court proceedings
  - Better understanding of prosecutorial discretions.
- Engage people like Mike Klobucher, former county prosecutor in conversation about power that prosecutors have
  - How/why they leave so much discretion? Get media involved about the book, raise awareness of problems
- Voter ID effort is not about fraud but should be about no rights for felons.
- How do we restore felon's rights? Contact politicians, state or federal
- End War on Drugs
- Expose 'machinery' of prison system/Federal funding/privatization
- Campaign similar to opposition to amendments: voter ID/Marriage

- Write letters to editor about flagrant abuses
- Bring attention (of MA's book and issues) to Keith Ellison's office
- Political action : "Ban the Box" , food stamps

**From small group reports back to large group at discussions**

- Sunday February 24
  - Open up conversation around decriminalizing drugs
  - Re assimilation post incarceration
  - Video tape arrests, don't allow police secrecy
  - Raise awareness within
  - Partner with area churches
  - Partner with community organization re: housing, education, jobs
  - Know what is going on in our neighborhood
  - Understand 'Circle of Peace'
  - Question 'no rights' for felons: voting
  - Political Action: Ban the box, work with Keith Ellison's office
  - Ask church group to identify all the ways, opportunities we can participate
  - Lobby the legislature on facets of this cause
- Wednesday February 27
  - Each can do something, read book, continue conversations
  - Employers- hire without bias
  - Encourage law enforcement and other to attend April 8 St Thomas Event
  - Collaborate with First U
  - Change drug laws- as a public health issue
  - Take a day to visit adult county court with friends
  - Certificate of rehab- encourage John Choy with county