



The Joseph Priestley District of the Unitarian Universalist  
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## **Faith Development and Racial Dialogues**

Recently, I saw the movie, *Lincoln*, and it reminded me of the many resources that are available for congregations that use dialogues on race as a form of continuing education and community building. If your congregation has a racial dialogue group, I encourage you to set a date to discuss the film and invite people to go see the movie to prepare for the discussion.

If your congregation does not have an active racial dialogue group, this movie would be a great way to reconvene the dialogue or to begin a new group. Dialogue groups often meet monthly or for a series that covers several weeks or months.

From this movie, one can make the connection between the issue of state succession during the civil war and also, post November 2012 election. You can explore Thaddeus Stevens as a key elected figure and a famous Unitarian. You can discuss Lincoln's motives for ending the war and signing the Emancipation Act. You can look at governance as an institutional system and as a system of personal values and relationships that elected officials exercise(d) while supporting or opposing policies that impact(ed) our lives.

While there is no end to the topics to choose from for addressing racial justice and inclusion in adult Lifespan Faith Development, now would be a good time to organize a group to read and discuss the book chosen for the UU Common Read, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color-blindness*, by Michelle Alexander. Janet Tillman from the First UU Church of Wilmington, DE, and her community partner, Fran Livingston of Mother Africa Union Church, shared their approach to using this

book for faith and community development. You will be able to access their presentation at the JPD website.

*Janet's Reflection*

*"I'm participating in a study group with members of my church, First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, and members of Mother Africa Union Church (the first African American church in Wilmington, Delaware) to explore a new generation of institutional racism. We are studying the groundbreaking book by Michelle Alexander, The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness. We are a Study, Plan, and Act group which will hold itself accountable to not only study/discuss but to ultimately act on what we have learned.*

*Reading the book, especially chapters 2 and 3 which outline in great detail the Supreme Court's erosion of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 14<sup>th</sup> amendments of the US Constitution for people of color, has made me more keenly aware of my white privilege. As I read the book, I keep asking myself, "why didn't I know this?"*

*I recommend that everyone who self-identifies as white read The New Jim Crow and think seriously about how they can use their white privilege, as Michelle Alexander recommends, "to ensure that America's current racial caste system is its last."*

Contact me if you would like to include a racial dialogue in your Lifespan Faith Development for adults. I'd be happy to work with you.

Respectfully submitted,

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