

Presented by:

National Benevolent Association Prison and Jail
Ministries

and

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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Mass Incarceration and a Call to End Solitary Confinement: How the Church Can Respond



National
Benevolent
Association



National Religious Campaign
Against Torture

We've Got a Problem...

The United States has more people incarcerated and under supervision per capita than any other country in the world.

1 out of every 31¹ Americans is in prison, jail or on supervised release. The racial demographics are even more disturbing. 60%² of those incarcerated in the United States are people of color.



Mass Incarceration and Solitary Confinement

- People of color in the United States face incarceration at profoundly disproportionate rates.⁵
- A recent report from The Sentencing Project states that "African-American males are six times more likely to be incarcerated than white males and Hispanic males are 2.5 times more likely."⁶
- According to a 2011 survey sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, "nationwide, the residential placement rate for black youth was more than 4.5 times the rate for white youth, and the rate for Hispanic youth was 1.8 times the rate for white youth."⁷
- Limited data reported on racial ethnic identity and solitary confinement suggests that solitary confinement disproportionately impacts people of color.⁸
- Data from 2011 from New York suggests "non-white prisoners are substantially overrepresented in the highlighted facilities; statistical testing confirms that the difference is statistically significant."⁹



The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Responds

Resolution 1525 - A Call to End Solitary Confinement

- Approved for Reflection and Research: During the 2015-2017 biennium, a reflection and research process accountable by report to the Administrative Committee, the General Board, and the 2017 General Assembly
- To encourage the church to engage in reflection, prayer, education, and possible action around the practice of solitary confinement of incarcerated youth and adults.
- Disciples' congregations and prison and jail ministries will serve as venues where discussion, discourse and discernment can occur as we examine and explore the issue of solitary confinement.



Solitary Confinement: The Reality

- According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, on any given day, roughly 80,000 incarcerated adults and youth are held in solitary confinement in the United States.¹⁰

- However, this figure likely fails to capture the breadth of the use of prolonged solitary confinement in U.S. prisons and jails, and does not include those held in solitary confinement in immigrant detention. Given the lack of data made publicly available by state Departments of Correction and the Federal Bureau of Prisons about the use of prolonged isolation, including the total numbers of those held in Administrative Segregation and protective custody, the numbers are likely much higher.
- For instance, in California, the American Friends Service Committee found in 2008, on any given day, there were more than 14,600 people in solitary confinement units when totals included women and men held in Administrative Segregation and protective custody.¹¹
- In addition, whole institutions are locked down for months at a time, in which inmates are confined to their cells for 22 to 23 hours per day. Most recently, in North Carolina, at the Scotland Correctional Institution, nearly 800 men had been on indefinite lockdown for over eight months.¹²

Solitary Confinement: The Reality

- According to the British Columbia Civil Liberties Union, "Over the last five years, the number of federal prisoners in solitary confinement in Canada has increased by 6 percent."¹³
- The Ombudsman for federal offenders in Canada says, "there were 8,221 federal inmates in segregation (solitary confinement) across Canada in 2012-2013. Many suffer mental health problems, and a third of them, according to the Ombudsman's same statistics, are aboriginal."¹⁴
- In addition, annual reports on conditions of confinement in Canada by the Office of the Correctional Investigator note growing issues with solitary confinement across the federal prison system.¹⁵

Solitary Confinement: The Reality

- While in isolation, individuals are locked in a cell for 22 to 24 hours a day with no meaningful human contact -an hour alone in a cage or dog run may be permitted. Prisoners face these conditions for months, years, even decades. Cells are small, often windowless and without access to natural light, typically between 48 and 80 square feet. Access to books, phone calls, visitation and programs are often severely limited. Food is pushed through a slot in the solid steel door.
- Many studies have documented the detrimental psychological and physiological effects of long-term isolation.¹⁶ According to several state and national studies, at least half of all prison suicides occur in solitary confinement.¹⁷ Recognized expert Dr. Stuart Grassian documented that nearly a third of the prisoners he evaluated experienced perceptual distortions, in which objects appear to change size or form.¹⁸ This is particularly alarming since this symptom is more commonly associated with neurological illnesses, such as brain tumors, than with primary psychiatric illness.¹⁹

A Call to End Solitary Confinement



National Religious Campaign
Against Torture

A Call to End Solitary Confinement

- Promoting human rights rooted in human dignity
- Working to end torture in U.S. policy, practice and culture
- Founded in 2006
- National interfaith membership organization
- Representatives from the Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i, Buddhist, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, and Sikh communities
- Members include national denominations and faith groups, regional organizations and local congregations





Ending torture in U.S. prisons

Principles guiding interfaith work to end solitary confinement:

- Following the leadership of those most impacted by solitary confinement and mass incarceration
- Restorative justice
- Mental health implications
- Recommendation of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture: prohibit solitary beyond 15 days, ban it for the most vulnerable
- Impact of solitary on incarcerated people, families, correctional staff
- Human rights and human dignity
- Racial justice
- The Mandela Rules
- Public safety

Leading the Movement: Survivors of Solitary and their Families

"This victory was achieved by the efforts of people in prison, their families and loved ones, lawyers, and outside supporters. Our movement rests on a foundation of unity: our (2012) Agreement to End Hostilities.

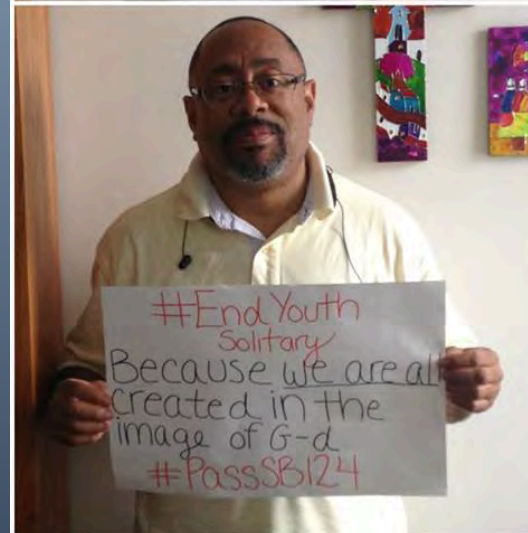
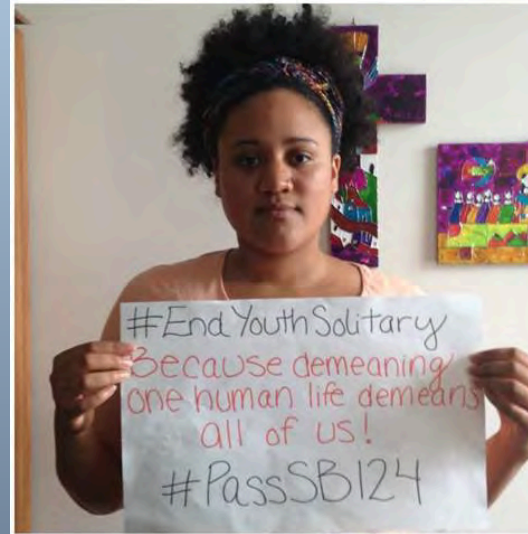
It is our hope that this groundbreaking agreement to end the violence between the various ethnic groups in California prisons will inspire not only state prisoners, but also jail detainees, county prisoners and our communities on the street, to oppose ethnic and racial violence. From this foundation, the prisoners' human rights movement is awakening the conscience of the nation to recognize that we are fellow human beings."

--Plaintiffs in the Ashker v. Brown federal class action suit, respond to the historic settlement. Learn more [here](#).



Supporting Legislation State by State

More states passed solitary
confinement reforms in 2014
than in the past 16 years.



NRCAT Shadow Report: Submitted Sept. 2014

Torture in U.S. Prisons: Interfaith Religious Coalition Calls for End to Widespread Use of Prolonged Solitary Confinement

September 2014

A Shadow Report Prepared for the United Nations Committee Against Torture in Connection to its Review of the United States Compliance with the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

- “In the United States, the continued widespread practice of holding prisoners, disproportionately people of color, in prolonged solitary confinement in U.S. prisons constitutes torture, in violation of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).”

Full report available [here](#).

Nationwide Actions on the 23rd of each month

Communities across the country are joining Together to End Solitary Confinement.

On the 23rd of every month, join people throughout the U.S. who are holding monthly actions to call for an end to the torture of solitary, at the recommendation of people incarcerated in Pelican Bay prison who led the momentous hunger strikes in California prisons.

Together we can end the torture of solitary confinement and make human rights a reality for all people. #together

Learn more at: togethertoendsolitary.org



BREAKING DOWN THE BOX

nrcat.org/breakingdownthebox

Breaking Down the Box

40-minute
documentary and
interfaith
discussion guide
available at:

nrcat.org/breakingdownthebox



Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America's Prisons

Recidivism is the act of reengaging in criminal offending despite having been punished.

The prison recidivism rate is the proportion of persons released from prison who are rearrested, reconvicted or returned to custody within a specific time period (according to studies, usually 3 years).



40%...

That's the recidivism rate for the first three years. According to one survey, 43.3%³ of people released from prison in 2004 were re-incarcerated within three years, either for committing a new crime or for violating conditions governing their release.



Back home....

95%⁴ of people currently incarcerated will be released at some point. Some will be under supervision. Others will not.



Reentry

When it comes to successful reintegration back into the community, it is not as simple as some think!



Housing, transportation, medicine, clothing, food, family reunification and employment are just a few of the issues returning citizens must overcome when returning to local communities.

The Missing Link to Successful Reentry?



The Body of Christ is the missing link....

The church has been called to set the welcome table.
It is the missing link to the successful reentry of returning citizens.



One Answer: Mission Behind Bars and Beyond www.missionbehindbarsandbeyond.org.

- Reentry
 - Begins behind the bars
 - Faith-based communities are the bridge
 - Continues beyond the bars



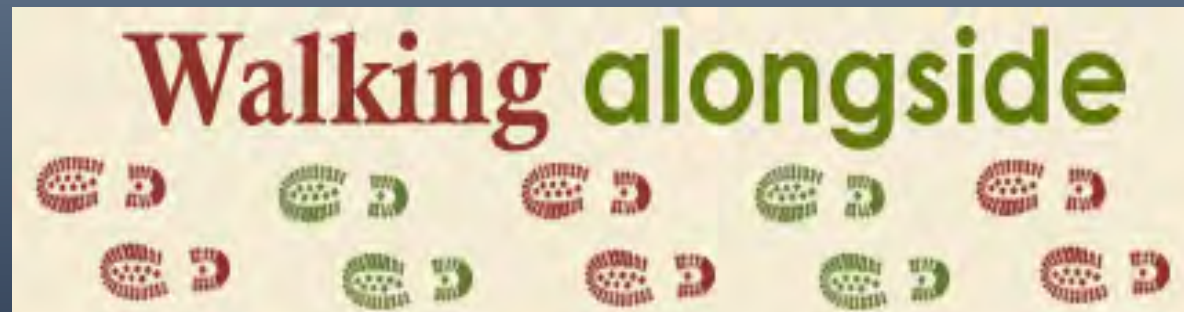
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A Holistic Approach

Holistic Ministry

- Spiritual
- Emotional
- Psychological
- Physical



Nurture, Support and Accountability Groups

Nurture

- Caring
- Accepting
- Forgiving
- Loving



Nurture, Support and Accountability Groups

Support

- Mentoring
- Teaching
- Sharing
- Equipping



Nurture, Support and Accountability Groups

Accountability

- Setting realistic (but high) expectations
- Living into the consequences
- Connecting with community resources
- Setting reasonable boundaries



Building Healthy Relationships

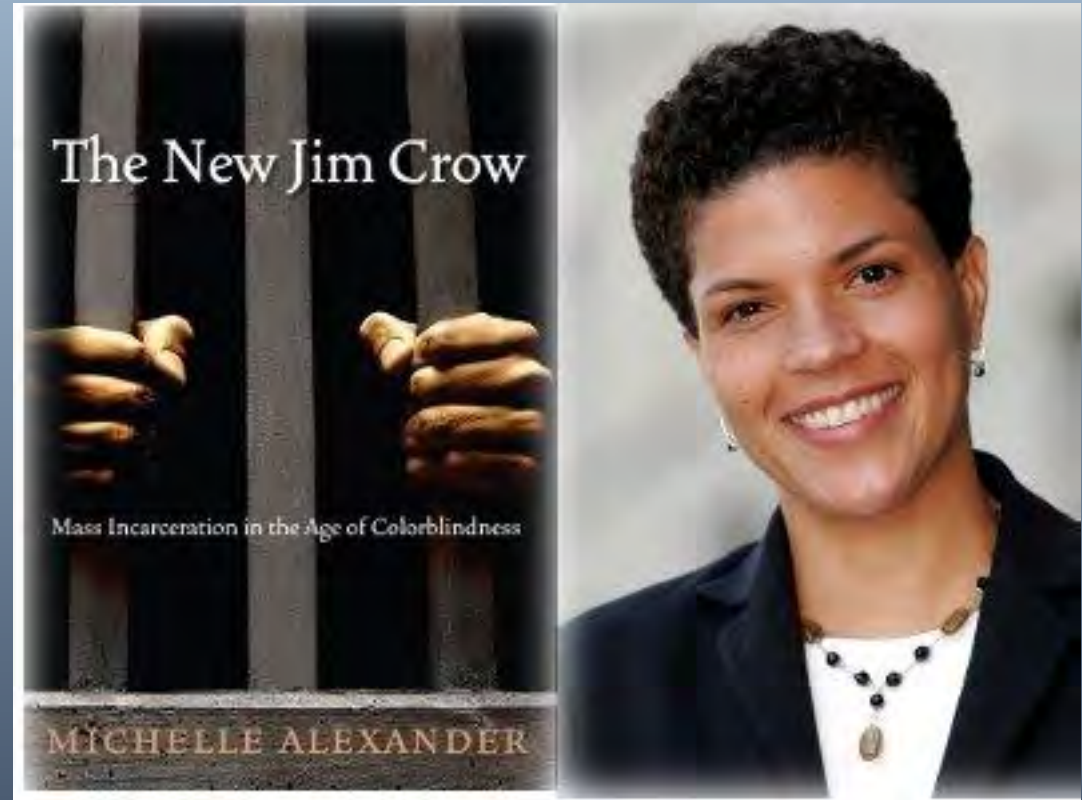


Educating the Congregation

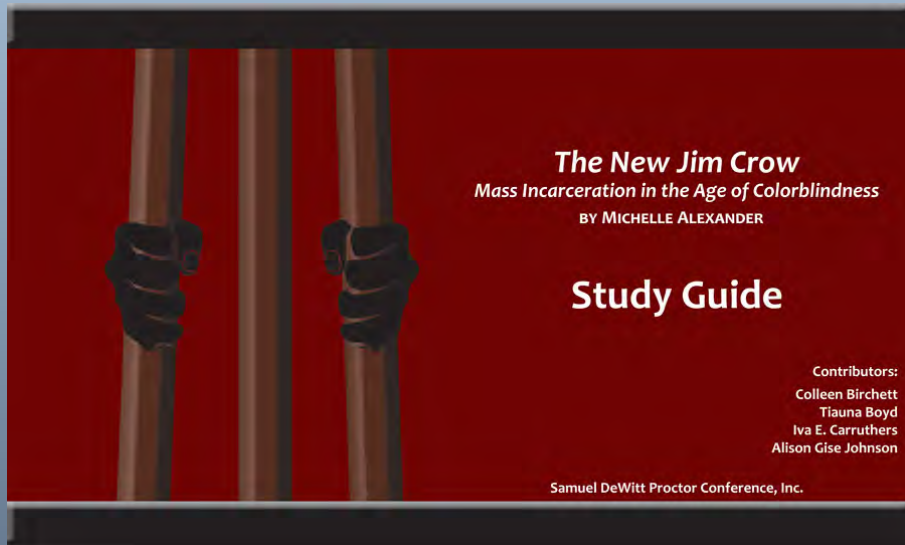
- Inviting congregation members to visit and worship inside prisons
- Welcoming returning citizens
- Understanding the life of those in prison
- Setting protocols for sex offenders
- Training members of Nurture, Support and Accountability Groups
- Exploring Restorative Justice

Educating the Congregation

Studying Michelle
Alexander's book:
*The New Jim Crow:
Mass Incarceration in
the Age of
Colorblindness*



Recommended Resources



The New Jim Crow Official Study
Guide
released by
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference

School-to-Prison Pipeline:
ReconciliationMinistry.org

[A Lesson Before Dying](#) by Ernest J. Gaines –
may be used as an community read and
discussion model to examine injustice in the
prison system through fiction

[Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption](#)
by Bryan Stevenson - the author chronicles
lives impacted by a broken justice and prison
system through his own advocacy as attorney
and executive director of the Equal Justice
Initiative he founded

Footnotes and References

- 1 Pew Center on the States, one in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections (Washington, D.C.: The Pew Charitable Trusts, March 2009)
- 2 The Sentencing Project, www.Sentencingproject.org
- 3 Pew Center on the States, State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of American Prisons, (Washington, D.C.: The Pew Charitable Trusts, April 2011)
- 4 Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Reentry Trends in the U.S.," www.bjs.gov
- 5 THE SENTENCING PROJECT, Shadow Report of The Sentencing Project to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Regarding Racial Disparities in the United States Criminal Justice System, at 1 (2014). <http://bit.ly/1GZnmv>
- 6 Id. at 1.
- 7 Juveniles in Residential Placement 2011, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Resolution Regarding Solitary Confinement Prevention, Juvenile Offenders and Victims: National Report Series Bulletin, August 2014.
- 8 Schlanger 2013, supra note 1, at 241.
- 9 Schlanger 2013, supra note 1, at 245.
10. VERA INSTITUTE, Confronting Confinement, at 52 (2006) [hereinafter Confronting Confinement 2006] <http://bit.ly/1GCCbW6>
- 11 Laura Magnani, AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICECOMMITTEE, Buried alive: Long-term isolation in California youth and adult prisons, at 5-6 (2011). <http://bit.ly/1Nw6>
- 12 Lisa Dawson, From One North Carolina Prison, Reports of an Eight-Month Lockdown, SOLITARY WATCH (2014). <http://bit.ly/1OqDIzz>
- 13 Kathleen Harris, CBC News, August 06, 2013, Isolation of Inmates Rising in Crowded Prisons. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/isolation-of-inmates-rising-in-crowded-prisons-1.1310608>
- 14 Brett Story and Craig Desson, CBC News, September 8, 2013, Solitary confinement a growing issue in Canadian, U.S. prisons. <http://bit.ly/1Dalcqg>
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Footnotes and References

16. See e.g., Stuart Grassian & Nancy Friedman, Effects of Sensory Deprivation in Psychiatric Seclusion and Solitary Confinement, 8 INT'L J.L. & PSYCHIATRY 49 (1986); Craig Haney & Mona Lynch, Regulating Prisons of the Future: A Psychological Analysis of Supermax and Solitary Confinement, 23 NEW YORK UNIVERSITY REVIEW OF LAW AND SOCIAL CHANGE 477-570 (1997); Craig Haney, Mental Health Issues in Long-Term Solitary and "Supermax" Confinement, 49 CRIME & DELINQ. 124 (2003).
17. See e.g., Hayes, L. & Rowan, J. (1988), National Study of Jail Suicides: Seven Years Later. National Center on Institutions and Alternatives. Suto, I. (2007); Inmates Who Attempted Suicide in Prison: A Qualitative Study. School of Professional Psychology. Paper 46; Kupers, Terry. "Declaration of Terry A. Kupers, M.D., M.S.P." United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin, Case No. 00-C-421-C. August 9, 2001.
18. Stuart Grassian, Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement, 22 WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF LAW AND POLICY 325, at 335 (2006). <http://bit.ly/1IF1esj><http://digitalcommons.law.wustl.edu/wujlp/vol22/iss1/24/>
19. Id. at 338.

For More Information

If you have questions or want more information on how you or your ministry can respond, welcome and engage, contact:

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