

Discussion Guide

Questions from the authors

***Today I Gave Myself Permission to Dream:***

***Race and Incarceration in America***

**Envisioning Social Justice: From Theory to Practice,**

**Reggie Daniels**

1. What do you know about patterns of incarceration in the United States? What are some assumptions about who is incarcerated and why?
2. Can you think of examples of how art has provided opportunities for expression, empowerment, and connection for currently or formerly incarcerated people?
3. How does deficit thinking affect how organizations approach solutions?

**Where You Can’t Be Colorblind: Race, Incarceration, and Reentry,**

**Kimberly Richman**

1. Is it possible to separate incarceration and race? Why or why not?
2. Can prisons be reformed to discourage rather than encourage racial divides? What would these reforms look like?

**Reconstructing the Moral Claim of Racially Unjust Mass Incarceration,**

**Alison Benders**

1. From your knowledge of history and current events, can you identify common features of racism in our nation’s four eras of slavery, Jim Crow, ghettoization and mass incarceration?
2. Do you agree with Loïc Wacquan’s claim that the US has created a “genuine prison society”, i.e., a society that imprisons its people of color through a variety of social, political and physical restraints?  Why or why not?
3. What difference does it make to our worldview if we believe people are (a) autonomous individuals who make their own way in the world or (b) socially and interpersonally constituted, i.e., shaped by culture and community?
4. The author claims: “Human freedom is no longer untethered and privatized, but is located within a social nexus and the overarching obligations of solidarity and common good.”  How are we free if freedom is 'located within' the common good? Can you give an example?
5. How do you respond to the author’s assertion in chapter three that we are responsible to reform our racist culture?  Where should this reform start? Should this reform start with a better understanding of human beings responsible to each other in community or somewhere else?

**Art Between the Bars: In Search of Self and Fellowship,**

**Larry Brewster and Cuong Tran**

1. What is something that you learned from Cuong’s story in chapter five?
2. Do you think artistic expression changes the way inmates (or anyone) see themselves, and how others see them? Explain.
3. Should we support prison arts programs? How would you construct an argument for or against these programs?
4. What role, if any, does art practice play in rehabilitation? Development of empathy? Kinship? Explain.

**Our Racist Reality: How Ignatian Spirituality Can Help Inmates and Prison Ministers Positively Deal With the Stressors of Racism In An Inmate’s Life, John Booth**

1. Is Pedro's transformation outcome oriented, i.e., would things have been different if he lost his motion to suppress and had to have his case tried before a jury?  What if the jury found him guilty?
2. What are some of the "culturally defined goals, purposes and interests" in America today? Do they differ geographically such as by region or neighborhood?  Do they differ by race, class, culture, ethnicity, gender?
3. Have you ever suffered a loss of positive stimuli and/or an introduction of negative stimuli in your life?  If so, how do you live with this/come to terms with it? What did or didn't help you process and live with it?  What else could have helped?
4. What are some of the factors that define/contribute to the "cultural mistrust" amongst people?
5. Can empathy help bridge the cultural/racial divide?  What else might help to bridge the divide? What types of changes in our thinking do we need?
6. What types of people/personalities might be more attracted to Ignatian spirituality?  What types might not? For those who are not, what other approaches to living out one's spirituality might be more helpful for such people?
7. Has the author "come to terms with our racist reality?"