



**SESSION FIVE:  
GOD DISMANTLES CASTE SYSTEMS**

**Part One: The Restoration of Dignity in Jewish Law**

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| <p>Michelle Alexander: ‘We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it.’</p> <p>‘[Nicholas Kristof has] taken on a particularly unpopular task: trying to convince whites who’ve often inherited opportunity that America has just as systematically passed on disadvantage to blacks. “One element of white privilege today,” Kristof wrote..., “is obliviousness to privilege, including a blithe disregard of the way past subjugation shapes present disadvantage.”’<sup>1</sup></p> <p>‘Residential segregation is the institutional apparatus that supports other racially discriminatory processes and binds them together into a coherent and uniquely effective system of racial subordination. Until the black ghetto is dismantled as a basic institution of American urban life, progress ameliorating racial inequality in other arenas will be slow, fitful, and incomplete.’<sup>2</sup></p> | <p><sup>10</sup> You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. <i>It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family...</i> <sup>13</sup> <i>On this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his own property...</i></p> <p><sup>23</sup> <i>The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me.</i> <sup>24</sup> Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land. <sup>25</sup> If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold. <sup>26</sup> Or in case a man has no kinsman, but so recovers his means as to find sufficient for its redemption, <sup>27</sup> then he shall calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and so return to his property. <sup>28</sup> But if he has not found sufficient means to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hands of its purchaser until the year of jubilee; but at the jubilee it shall revert, <i>that he may return to his property...</i></p> <p><sup>39</sup> If a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to you that he sells himself to you, you shall not subject him to a slave’s service. <sup>40</sup> He shall be with you as a hired man, as if he were a sojourner; he shall serve with you until the year of jubilee. <sup>41</sup> He shall then go out from you, he and his sons with him, and shall go back to his family, <i>that he may return to the property of his forefathers.</i> <sup>42</sup> For they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt; they are not to be sold in a slave sale... <sup>54</sup> Even if he is not redeemed by these means [his relatives pay his debt], <i>he shall still go out in the year of jubilee, he and his sons with him.</i> <sup>55</sup> For the sons of Israel are My servants; they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 25)</p> |
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**Historical and Cultural Background**

- *Jubilee as Reintegration:* Recall that Israel saw a parallel between their own existence and God’s original plan for humanity: Adam and Eve spreading a garden over the earth with God. God invited Israel to come out of slavery in Egypt and live in another garden land with Him.
- *Was Israel a Racial or Religious Caste?:* No. Israel was a faith community which people could join. They would be incorporated into households through adoption, marriage, and/or hired help for farming.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Emily Badger, ‘Nicholas Kristof On What ‘Whites Just Don’t Get’ About Racial Inequality,’ *Washington Post*, November 20, 2014; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/11/20/nicholas-kristof-on-what-whites-just-dont-get-about-racial-inequality/>

<sup>2</sup> Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of an Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p.8. They also write on p.2, ‘Black segregation is not comparable to the limited and transient segregation experienced by other racial and ethnic groups, now or in the past. No group in the history of the United States has ever experienced the sustained high level of residential segregation that has been imposed on blacks in large American cities for the past fifty years. This extreme racial isolation did not just happen; it was manufactured by whites through a series of self-conscious actions and purposeful institutional arrangements that continue today.’ See my collection of articles under “Race and Housing Discrimination” at [http://nagasawafamily.org/archives\\_question\\_race.htm](http://nagasawafamily.org/archives_question_race.htm), including: Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Ghetto is Public Policy,” *The Atlantic*, March 19, 2013; Nikole Hannah-Jones, “The Missionary,” *NPR This American Life Radio*, November 22, 2013 about George Romney’s attempt to reverse housing discrimination as Secretary of HUD; Melissa Harry-Perry, “Imagining a U.S. With Fair Housing,” MSNBC, July 11, 2015

<sup>3</sup> In *Genesis*, each son of Jacob married Canaanite women except Joseph, who married an Egyptian woman. In *Exodus*: Other people joined Israel in Egypt. Passover observance was open to others (Ex.12:7 – 13). ‘A mixed multitude’ from Egypt accompanied Israel during the Exodus (Ex.12:38). An Israelite woman is noted in passing to have married an Egyptian man (Lev.24:10). Caleb, one of Moses’ two servants, was a Kenizzite, one of the Canaanite tribes (Num.32:12; Gen.15:19)! In *Joshua*: The Canaanite woman Rahab and her whole household joined Israel



- *Could Israel Forcibly Enslave Other People?:* No, because God commanded Israel to never kidnap anyone (Ex.21:16; Dt.24:7) and help runaway slaves run away (Dt.23:15 – 16)! In all ethical and legal dimensions, Israelites were to treat foreigners the same way they treated fellow Israelites (Lev.24:22). So in Lev.25:44 – 46, the Jewish law was referring to hired help. Contracts could be maintained even through the jubilee year. In that sense, their labor (not their personhood or their bodies per se) could be their ‘possession.’ The Hebrew word *ebed* is translated *slave* in some English translations, but its meaning was very different.<sup>4</sup>

### *Possible Policy Inspirations from the Relationship between God and Israel in Scripture*

It is not straightforward or easy to translate the vision of life in Old Testament Israel into modern day life.<sup>5</sup> We have to do some serious biblical and sociological analysis to understand the major institutions in Israel’s life. Yet we find that God did want the Gentile nations around Israel to be inspired by principles found in Israel’s law (Dt.4:6 – 8).

Leviticus 25 placed each individual and family into God’s vision from creation, where each person had dignity because s/he was made in the image of God. Furthermore, Israel’s laws placed the crime of theft into a restorative justice framework. Thieves had to repay their victims two to five times the amount they stole (Ex.22:1 – 14). This served to restore trust between victim and offender, and deter other theft, of course. Jesus seemed to honor that principle when he commended Zaccheus for his repentance from theft and desire to restore relationship (Lk.19:1 – 10). If we are to glean principles from the Jewish law, especially in light of the problem of mass incarceration in the U.S., what might we take away?

If our goal today is to restore ex-convicts to community, we can:

*Re-enfranchise ex-offenders:* Michelle Alexander points out that stripping ex-cons of their voting rights amounts to a type of poll tax in the old Jim Crow. President Obama called for full voting rights to be restored to people who served their time in prison.

### **Part Two: Reenvisioning Land, Finance, Labor**

But is that enough? Note that if we go beyond the immediate issue of mass incarceration and consider the bigger question of caste systems, as well as restoration for past injustice done against the black community for centuries, the restorative vision illustrated in Jewish law is powerful.

‘For the past 25 years, Congressman John Conyers Jr., who represents the Detroit area, has marked every session of Congress by introducing a bill calling for a congressional study of slavery and its lingering effects as well as recommendations for “appropriate remedies.” A country curious about how reparations might actually work has an easy solution in Conyers’s bill, now called HR 40, the Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act. We would support this bill, submit the question to study, and then assess the possible solutions... Charles Ogletree, the Harvard Law School professor, argues for... a program of job training and public works that takes racial justice as its mission but includes the poor of all races.’<sup>6</sup>

Break up into three groups. Each group take one section below. Please read through the section. For 15 minutes, discuss among yourselves how you can see the principles of Leviticus 25 showing through (regarding labor, land ownership, finance). Give a 3 – 5 minute presentation on your topic to the other groups.

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(Josh.6:17 – 25). Rahab married Salmon – of the tribe of Judah. The entire Gibeonite tribe became part of Israel and God protected them from attacks by other Canaanites (Josh.9 – 11). In *Ruth*: Ruth was a Moabitess who married Boaz – who was of the tribe of Judah (Ruth 4:13) – and became an ancestor of Jesus (Mt.1:5). In *2 Samuel*: Bathsheba the Hittite became a wife of King David (2 Sam.11 – 12). God’s design for Israel was to be a microcosm of all humanity, so Jesus could be multi-ethnic and represent all humanity. He was born from the most diverse tribe (Judah) and had Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba as ancestors (Mt.1:5 – 6).

<sup>4</sup> See my paper *Slavery in the Bible*: <http://nagasawafamily.org/article-slavery-in-the-bible.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> For an excellent study, see Christopher J.H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004)

<sup>6</sup> Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 2014; see also Blair L.M. Kelley, “‘The Case for Reparations’ Reignited an Important and Long-Standing Debate,” *The Root*, May 24, 2014



(GROUP 1) Reduce Residential Segregation; Create More Affordable Housing and Livable Spaces

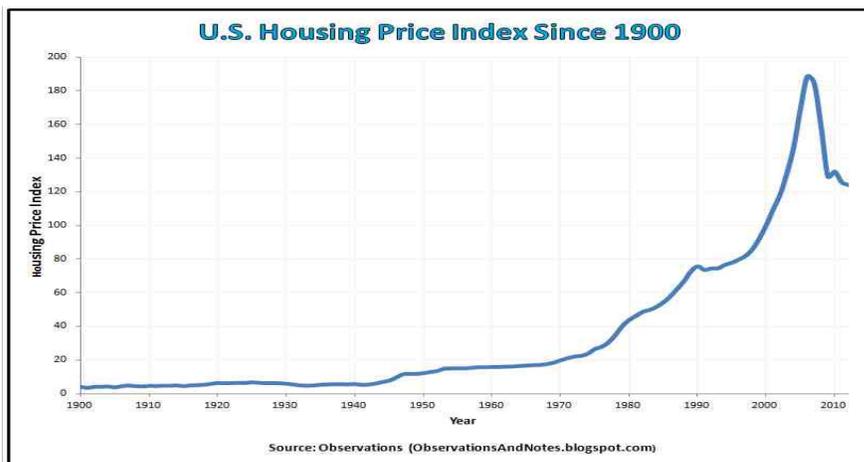
The laws of Israel cared about living space and rootedness for all people, as a connection to the original garden of Adam and Eve. But the U.S. has always had a racist approach to residential segregation, which exacerbated inequalities in education, health, public transportation, home equity asset growth, and law enforcement.

*Make ex-offenders eligible for public assistance, like Section 8 housing assistance and food stamps.*<sup>7</sup> Currently, keeping ex-felons ineligible for this assistance hurts them in many ways, including not being able to be reunited with a significant other and/or children. HUD is pursuing the question of housing discrimination against people with criminal records.<sup>8</sup>

*Fund more Housing First initiatives:* ‘Through Housing First programs, chronically homeless individuals [families needs more work] are using fewer hospital resources, spending less time in costly incarceration and requiring fewer emergency room visits. Studies in New York City and in Utah have shown that every homeless person housed in programs such as Housing First saves taxpayers \$10,000 and \$8,000 a year, respectively. A research study at University of Northern Carolina also reported that a housing project for the chronically homeless called Moore Place had saved the county \$2.4 million.’<sup>9</sup> HUD reported a 30% drop in chronically homeless individuals from 2005 to 2007.

*Create more low and moderate income housing in mixed income areas:* ‘The Housing Act of 1949 [called] for the government to realize “as soon as feasible . . . the goal of a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.” Federal legislation over the next several decades continued to support public housing and the government’s role in maintaining it. By 1973, the US had more than 1.5 million units of subsidized housing, a threefold increase from 1961... Between 1980 and 1988, the Reagan administration decreased funding for [HUD]... by 76%. Predictably, when the government began to starve public housing programs of necessary resources, public housing infrastructure deteriorated and quality of life for many residents declined.’<sup>10</sup>

*Change banking laws to reduce private debt and segregation by the wealthy.* In the 1970’s, two changes occurred: (1) Bank mortgage lending laws took 2 incomes rather than just 1; (2) Federal tax code deducted interest on mortgages. Real estate developers simply built bigger, more expensive houses. Banks charged more for them.<sup>11</sup>



1950: 983 square feet  
 1960: ~1200  
 1970: ~1400  
 1980: almost 1800  
 1990: ~2100  
 2000: almost 2400  
 2008: 2519

<sup>7</sup> See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Era of Colorblindness* (New York, The New Press, 2011), ch.4

<sup>8</sup> Camila Domonoske, ‘Denying Housing Over Criminal Record May Be Discrimination, Feds Say,’ *NPR*, April 4, 2016

<sup>9</sup> Wikipedia, ‘Housing First’; last accessed April 28, 2016

<sup>10</sup> Tiffany M. Gardner, Alec Irwin, and Curtis W. Peterson, “No Shelter From the Storm: Reclaiming the Right to Housing and Protecting the Health of Vulnerable Communities in Post-Katrina New Orleans,” *Health and Human Rights Journal*, August 29, 2013

<sup>11</sup> Average home size data distilled from <http://www.census.gov/const/C25Ann/sfttotalmedavgsgft.pdf>;

[http://switchboard.nrcd.org/blogs/kbenfield/us\\_home\\_size\\_preferences\\_final.html](http://switchboard.nrcd.org/blogs/kbenfield/us_home_size_preferences_final.html); compare to Germany’s housing policy: Eamonn Fingleton, “In World’s Best-Run Economy, House Prices Keep Falling -- Because That’s What House Prices Are Supposed To Do,” *Forbes*, February 2, 2014



(GROUP 2) Make Financial Laws That Serve the Poor, Including Ex-Convicts

In the Ancient Near East, debt, especially exorbitant interest rates on loans, was the chief cause of people being sold into slavery.<sup>12</sup> Israel saw interest rate lending as taking advantage of someone else's vulnerability (Lev.25:36 – 38) and a form of slavery. An Israelite might have fallen on hard times and 'sold' family land or become an indentured servant in another household (Lev.25:23 – 34; the Israelite would have had to work in someone else's household, since there was no transportation system for commuting). So God commanded the Israelites to be generous to the needy (Lev.25:35; Dt.15:7 – 10), to forgive debts every seven years (Dt.15:1 – 2) and also on the fiftieth year, the year of jubilee (Lev.25:13), when land returned to its original family boundaries. Thieves had to repay the debt they incurred for their crimes (Ex.22:1 – 14), but the goal was to re-establish healthy relationships.

*Abolish fees and penalties that lead to re-imprisonment:* Alexander also points out that drug offenders are often made to pay for their own drug testing, drug treatment (which is required as a condition for parole), public defender recoupment fees, probation service fees, accumulated child support, and frequently, the interest on all these fees and penalties!<sup>13</sup>

*Stop the most egregious financial exploitation of the poor: high interest loans.* Nina McCarthy took out a loan which she normally was able to pay on time. But the interest was 24.9%, and one missed payment quickly got out of control. 'She went to her pastor, Rodney Hunter, at Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church in Richmond. Hunter helped her borrow \$700 so she could make a dent in paying off her mounting credit card debt, then about \$8,000. Here's how it worked: McCarthy's church offered funds as collateral so that she could qualify for a loan through the Virginia United Methodist Credit Union. McCarthy agreed to repay the loan at an annualized interest rate of about 6 percent – meaning monthly payments of \$25 for about 2 1/2 years, drawn right out of her bank account... The program is called the Jubilee Assistance Fund. In 7 1/2 years, it has helped parishioners of the United Methodist Church secure 14 loans – from \$500 to \$8,800. Similar initiatives run by faith-based organizations across the country are shifting the way churches approach charity. These programs offer parishioners an alternative to commercial lending agencies, which often charge triple-digit annualized interest rates.'<sup>14</sup>

*Reform our approach to higher education and student debt.* Student debt is huge, growing, enslaving, and without other polices even counter-productive. 'A report from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York suggests that federal student aid programs are doing more harm than good... [U]niversities respond by raising tuition to collect the newly available cash...: The researchers found that each additional dollar of Pell Grant or subsidized student loan money translates to a tuition jump of 55 or 65 cents, respectively. Of course, the higher tuition also applies to students who don't receive federal aid, making college less affordable across the board. The report also found that subsidized federal loans do not appear to increase enrollment. "[W]hile one would expect a student aid expansion to benefit recipients," the study authors wrote, "the subsidized loan expansion could have been to their detriment, on net, because of the sizable and offsetting tuition effect."<sup>15</sup> We might have to limit administrative costs, as with health insurance companies. Many European universities are almost fully funded publicly. Germany, Austria, and Switzerland use apprenticeships quite successfully.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, editors, 'Slavery', in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Downers' Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003)

<sup>13</sup> Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Era of Colorblindness* (New York, The New Press, 2011), p.154 – 158

<sup>14</sup> Rebecca Robbins, "Churches Step In With Alternative to High-Interest, Small-Dollar Lending Industry," *Washington Post*, January 9, 2015. See also Aaron Souppouris, "The Church of England Wants to Oust Loan Sharks By Competing with Them," *The Verge*, July 26, 2013; Jamie Doward, "Church of England Launches Credit Union Network In Payday Loans Fight," *The Guardian*, February 22, 2014; Aaron Weaver, "Religious Groups Announce Coalition to Combat Predatory Lending," *Cooperative Baptist Fellowship*, May 14, 2015; Tom Strode, "Payday Loans Targeted by ERLC, Others in Coalition," *Baptist Press*, May 15, 2015

<sup>15</sup> Bonnie Kristian, "Study: Federal Student Loans Increase Tuition, Not Enrollment," *The Week*, July 7, 2015; Paul F. Campos, "The Real Reason College Tuition Costs So Much," *NY Times*, April 4, 2015 blames bloated college administration costs but not pressure on students to gamble by investing in a college education (information asymmetry); Susan Dynarski, "Why Federal College Ratings Won't Rein in Tuition," *NY Times*, September 20, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Eric Westervelt, "The Secret to Germany's Low Youth Unemployment," *NPR*, April 4, 2012; Bielefeld, "What Germany Offers the World," *The Economist*, April 14, 2012; Natalia Aivazova, "Role of Apprenticeships in Combating Youth Unemployment in Europe and the United States," *Petersen Institute for International Economics*, August 2013



### (GROUP 3) Spread Work Opportunities

In Israel, land was wealth but also the opportunity and obligation to work. Hence God gave the Israelites a baseline share of land as a way to participate with Him in cultivating life, advancing goodness in the earth, and making something beautiful. He restored people to land, the dignity of work, and the capacity to produce wealth. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: ‘Our needs are identical with labor’s needs. Decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old-age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children and respect in their community.’ And at a speech before the Illinois AFL-CIO: ‘The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. Out of its bold struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old age pensions, government relief for the destitute, and, above all, new wage levels that meant not mere survival but a tolerable life.’<sup>17</sup>

*Reduce discrimination against ex-offenders:* ‘Ban the box’ (<http://bantheboxcampaign.org/>) on forms that require job applicants to check a box for having a felony record (especially for non-violent offenses).

*Tie worker and executive salaries together:* We might give higher priority to workers’ wages over CEO’s wages and shareholders’ earnings, and probably in trade negotiations with other countries. ‘According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics], only 27 percent of us need college degrees for our jobs. Yet, 47 percent of the workforce currently has a college degree.’<sup>18</sup> Making the cost of living possible for people in vocational trades (electricians, plumbers, etc.) is therefore vital.

Even though this proposal did not pass, it’s worth noting. ‘Voters in Switzerland rejected a referendum that would have limited executive pay at Swiss companies to 12 times that of the company’s lowest-paid employees... 65 percent of Swiss voters said thanks but no thanks to the measure, even though they voted earlier this year to clamp down on CEO pay in other ways, banning so-called “golden parachutes” and giving shareholders more power to veto executive pay packages. Those pushing for the so-called 1:12 initiative said they did so because, in the last three decades, the ratio in pay between the highest and lowest-paid Swiss citizens has increased from 6-to-1 to 43-to-1. For CEOs, the ratio is even higher: The average Swiss CEO makes about 148 times that of the average worker, with some companies clearing 200-to-one. But those ratios are tame compared to what’s going on in the United States. Here, the average CEO makes an eye-popping 354 times the pay of the average worker’<sup>19</sup>

‘Market Basket’s formula proves that executives and managers and cashiers can all profit, together. Employees get the benefits of a 15 percent profit sharing plan provided by Market Basket, while the groceries the store sells are less expensive, on average, than Walmart’s... Stories include [Arthur T.] granting months of paid sick leave to cancer-stricken workers. Arthur S.? Notably less generous. In one instance, after Arthur T. replenished nearly \$50 million in employee profit shares that bottomed out in 2008, the Arthur S. contingent cried foul. A comparable dispute came last year when, to his cousin’s consternation, Arthur S. moved to pay out \$300 million in dividends to shareholders. Protesting employees fear that losing Arthur T. will lead to liquidation and, then, an erosion of Market Basket’s benevolent company culture. Part of that culture, for example, is ensuring guaranteed annual raises, a high starting salary, vacation time and a profit sharing plan for employees at the supermarket. And those protestors are probably right. As was just reported this past Friday, Arthur S. has entertained a sale to the private equity behemoth Cerberus, which already owns such major grocery store chains as Shaw’s, Safeway, Star Market, Acme, Jewel-Osco, and Albertsons.’<sup>20</sup>

*Tie labor and capital together:* Dudley Dough pizza shop in Roxbury, MA is using the ‘worker-owned company’ or ‘worker cooperatives’ model. Adam Smith believed in that model, as do other ‘libertarian socialists’ like Proudhon and Bakunin (peers of Karl Marx who critiqued him for suggesting the state should own the means of production

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez, “All Labor Has Dignity: King’s Other Legacy,” *Huffington Post*, January 16, 2015

<sup>18</sup> Anthony Carnevale, et.al., “Too Many College Grads - Or Too Few?” *PBS*, February 21, 2014

<sup>19</sup> Pat Garofalo, “What We Can Learn From Switzerland’s CEO Pay Cap Vote,” *U.S. News*, November 25, 2013

<sup>20</sup> Chris Faraone, “The Last Stand for the Middle Class Is Taking Place in a Parking Lot in Massachusetts,” *Esquire*, July 29, 2014



instead of workers) and modern thinkers like Noam Chomsky, Ron Paul, and Yanis Varoufakis. It corrects the incentives of capital investors *and* workers to use the corporation for their short term gain.

‘Smith, indeed, predicted what might happen in the *Wealth of Nations*, when he supported the idea of private companies (or copartneries) against joint stock companies, the equivalent of today’s limited liability firm. In the former, Smith said, each partner was “bound for the debts contracted by the company to the whole extent of his fortune”, a potential liability that tended to concentrate the mind. In joint stock companies, Smith said, shareholders tended to know little about the running of the company, raked off a half-yearly dividend and, if things went wrong, stood only to lose the value of their shares. “This total exemption from trouble and from risk, beyond a limited sum, encourages many people to become adventurers in joint stock companies who would, upon no account, hazard their own fortunes in any private copartnery. The directors of such companies, however, being the managers rather of other people’s money than their own, it cannot well be expected that they should watch over it with the same anxious vigilance with which the partners in a private copartnery frequently watch over their own.”<sup>21</sup>

‘Researchers and practitioners conservatively estimate that there are over 350 democratic workplaces in the United States, employing over 5,000 people and generating over \$500 million in annual revenues.’<sup>22</sup>

‘Worker-owned cooperatives are rare in the United States, but in Spain, where they are much more established, they’re often followed closely by a whole community. One study looked at the retail chain Eroski, which has both worker-run and traditional stores, and found that the worker-run Eroski stores grew “sales significantly faster” than those not run by workers. The reason? “Compared to workers in other firms, cooperative members have opportunities for substantial employee involvement and training and also strong incentives because they have a large financial stake in the firm,” the researchers concluded.’<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Larry Elliott, “Plc: Prerogative of the Unaccountable Few,” *The Guardian*, July 9, 2007

<sup>22</sup> *U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives* website; last accessed April 26, 2016

<sup>23</sup> Alana Semuels, “Getting Rid of Bosses,” *The Atlantic*, July 8, 2015



## SESSION FIVE: GOD DISMANTLES CASTE SYSTEMS

### Leader's Notes

#### Leader: Give Overview

This is a study and action group. We're reading through Michelle Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. This is Session Five. You'll recall that Dr. Alexander's argument is that the criminal justice system produces a racial caste system. A caste system is where people are basically socially stuck. We are going to see how God dismantles caste systems.

We'll look at a beautiful chapter in the mysterious book of Leviticus to see more about how God dismantled caste systems in Israel, as He prepared them for Jesus. There is a 2 page print out of Leviticus 25 which should serve as a reminder of what we covered last week, and a 4 page printout of actions that we'll discuss this week. There is a lot of material this time, so we're going to try to stick to a time budget. We'll spend 5 minutes in individual study of the passage, then discuss it for about 15 minutes. Then we'll spend 45 minutes looking at actions that we might take – individually and systemically – as we understand some principles from this passage. We're not going to become experts in law and economics. But I'm giving you more stuff because I want us to appreciate just how radical this word from God was for Israel, and still can be today.

#### Content Questions

1. Introduction: Watch Elizabeth Warren's speech *Why Black Lives Matter* (Sep 28, 2015; <http://www.vox.com/2015/9/28/9408329/elizabeth-warren-black-lives-matter>) from 15:25 min mark for about 10 minutes.
2. Remind people of the Leviticus 25 passage. Recall that it follows the principle of equal human dignity in Leviticus 24. It shows what happens if you design institutions and policies around that principle, and how to balance economics and freedom. What happens every jubilee year?
  - a. While Leviticus 25 covered many cases of non-criminal offenders, it did cover – in part – how to restore ex-offenders. (10 minutes)
  - b. God made Adam and Eve to bear His image, and part of that was to pass on an inheritance to their children, which would be a portion of the \_\_\_\_\_ (land). God made Israel to bear His image and pass on an inheritance to their children, which would be a portion of the \_\_\_\_\_ (land). So every jubilee year, *every Israelite family got a chance to be like God* and make sure that children and grandchildren got their inheritance: a portion of the \_\_\_\_\_ (land).
  - c. What did those who accumulated land and advantage gain when they had to give land back to the rightful families? *They got a chance to be like God: to bring people out of debt slavery and give them an inheritance in the garden land.*
3. Read through the last section, 'Give Reparations to the African-American Community.' That last part might generate a lot of good conversation. Keep in mind a few things: (1) The things we just talked about (labor, land ownership, finance) goes beyond what many scholars have suggested. (2) In 1992, the U.S. gave reparations to the Japanese-American survivors of the internment experience during World War II: a check for \$20,000 per person. (3) Other things have been attempted for Native Americans (paid college tuition, free health care, etc.), although one can criticize those efforts for not being comparable to the loss of land. (5 minutes)

Break up into three groups. Each group take one section below. Please read through the section. For 15 minutes, discuss among yourselves how you can see the vision of Leviticus 25 applied to the issue (labor, land ownership, finance). Give a 3 – 5 minute presentation on your topic to the other groups. (30 minutes total)

4. Reduce residential segregation, increase affordable housing and livable spaces
  - a. Housing First is a helpful movement and organization. They put forward a case that when people have housing, other good things happen: stability and peace of mind, reduction of alcohol and substance abuse, employment.
  - b. Glance at the HUD website (<http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD>).

