



### **Chalice Lighting**

In a racist society it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist. *Angela Davis*

**Check-in** *Share your highs and lows since we last met focusing on what drains you and what lifts you up. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.*

**Spiritual Exercises:** *It's one thing to analyze a theme; it's quite another to experience it. By pulling us out of the space of thinking and into the space of doing*

### **Option 1: Examine Your Own Involvement: Deep Dive**

"To understand the causes of poverty, we must look beyond the poor. Those of us living lives of privilege and plenty must examine ourselves. Most government aid goes to families that need it the least. If you add up the amount that the government is dedicating to tax breaks, mortgage interest deduction, wealth transfer tax breaks, tax breaks we get on our retirement accounts, our health insurance, our college savings accounts; you learn that we are doing so much more to subsidize affluence than to alleviate poverty. And this is the way we designed it."  
*Matthew Desmond*

This exercise asks you to read Matthew Desmond's highly celebrated book, [Poverty, by America](#). It is a book that challenges those of us in the middle and moderately affluent classes to look at the ways we knowingly and unknowingly keep poor people poor. This is not a role we are used to. When it comes to economic injustice, we privileged liberals are much more comfortable naming the problems than being named as the problem.

But alongside that discomfort lies a feeling of being liberated. Desmond is not out to guilt his reader. Rather, his aim is empowerment and understanding. You will leave this book with more compassion, more commitment and a clearer path forward. To help make this a spiritual exercise, not just an interesting read, here are some questions to examine:

- **How did it change your mind?**  
What assumption about the poor did it invite you to re-examine?
- **How did it validate your experience?**  
If you grew up in poverty, or are struggling with it today, how did the book help you better understand or better articulate your experience? What is the one idea that you most want non-impooverished people to understand?
- **What did it call you to do?**  
Desmond calls us all to become "poverty abolitionists" and lists many ways to go about that. Of all the poverty abolitionist strategies he mentions, which do you feel called to make a commitment to and why?

### **Option 2: Examine Your Own Involvement: Get Started**

*If reading the book is too much this month, consider engaging here to get started:*

- [America Is in a Disgraced Class of Its Own](#)
- [Why Poverty Persists in America](#)
- [America's Addiction to Poverty, The Ezra Klein Show](#)
- [How the rest of us benefit by keeping others poor](#)
- [Five things we can all do to help end poverty](#)
- [End Poverty in America.org](#)

## **Quotes for Inspiration/Readings**

If one really wishes to know how justice is administered in a country, one does not question the policemen, the lawyers, the judges, or the protected members of the middle class. One goes to the unprotected – those, precisely, who need the law's protection most! – and listens to their testimony. [James Baldwin](#)

When we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else's oppression, we'll find our opportunities to make real change. [Ijeoma Oluo](#)

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.  
*Desmond Tutu*

You've heard the old saying, "You give a person a fish and you feed him for a day; but if you teach him to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." [Well...] we've also got to ask, "Who owns the pond? And who polluted the pond? And who built the gates up? And why does a fishing license cost so stinkin' much?" [Dr. John Perkins](#)

**Questions:** *Pick the one question that speaks to you most.*

1. What was your first moment of fighting injustice?
2. What personal or societal injustice has most shaped your life?
3. How have you changed your mind about what it takes to achieve justice? What tactics seemed central earlier in your life, but no longer appear so now?
4. What has most helped you heal from an injustice?
5. When the enormity of injustice looms, what enables you to hold onto hope?
6. What's your question? What question speaks to you that may not be listed above

**Sitting in Silence** *Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

**Sharing/Deep Listening** *Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.*

**Reflection and Gratitude** *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared. Consider lifting up one comment or experience for which you are particularly grateful.*

## **Singing**

Click [here](#) for the Spotify playlist on [The Gifts of Justice & Equity](#)

Click [here](#) for the YouTube playlist on [The Gifts of Justice & Equity](#)

## **Extinguishing the Chalice**

I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept. *Angela Davis*