



# United University Church

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Dear Colleagues:

Next Wednesday, October 22, 2014, there will be a march in downtown Los Angeles to protest Mass Incarceration, Police Terror, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation. I plan to be at this march, because I believe that we have reached a critical moment in our national history when we need to say no to those who have turned our criminal justice system into a new form of domination and racial control. I hope that you will give serious thought and prayer to being there as well.

I haven't always been critical of the criminal justice system in our country. As a white clergyman, I live in a state of relative privilege. Like many, I simply assumed that the people being confronted by our police and locked up in our prisons were people who deserved much of the bad treatment they received. After all, people didn't get arrested for nothing. Or did they?

My attitudes began to change after I was appointed to serve as the pastor of United University Church on the northern edge of South Los Angeles. It was there that I began to meet people who had been incarcerated for significant lengths of time in state prison or in county jail, usually for what seemed like a minor drug related offense. These were not bad people; they were good people with problems. And, I soon realized that they needed help, not punishment. And, it did not take me long to see that most of those who were having problems with the law were people of color.

Reading Michelle Alexander's powerful and troubling book *The New Jim Crow*, gave me a way of understanding what I was observing. With her help and the help of several colleagues in ministry, I acquired new language to articulate the fact that our system of justice has been perverted to function as a new form of racial discrimination and control. Is it any wonder, then, that 60% of those incarcerated in our nation's prisons are Black or Latino? How shocked can we really be to learn that 1 out of every 3 Black males will spend time in prison at some point during their lives? Why should we be surprised that Black and Latino offenders tend to receive much harsher penalties for committing the same 'crimes' as white people? The deck is stacked against these brothers and sisters of color! And, it will continue to be so until we, the people, stand up and say, "No more!"

As a person of faith, I have to say "No more!" to the mass warehousing of God's children in jails and prisons. I have to say "No more!" to the widespread use of torturous punishments like solitary confinement. I have to say "No more!" to the school-to-prison pipeline at work in our inner cities and to the criminalization of our Black and Latino youth. I have to say "No more!" to the militarization of our police forces (especially in the inner cities) and to the police killings with impunity of unarmed Black and Latino youth in places like Ferguson, MO, Staten Island, NY, Beavercreek, OH, and Los Angeles, CA.

The March, which is being sponsored by the Stop Mass Incarceration Network, will begin at 2pm on October 22, at the corner of Olympic and Pico. We will conclude in front of LAPD Headquarters at 100 W. 1<sup>st</sup> Street. The religious community must be well-represented at this event. I encourage you and members of your faith community to take time out of your day on October 22 to be a part of this vitally important opportunity to make our voice known as we say "No more!" This is a crucial moment and our voices are tremendously important. Please let me know whether or not you will be able and willing to attend.

Sincerely,

Rev. Frank Wulf  
United University Church

*Passionately love God, Radically love Others*