

**Passover and Antiracism 2024**  
***Go Down Moses: Bringing a Racial Justice Lens to the Seder***

**Wednesday, April 10, 2024, 12-1 pm**

How do we sing and talk about slavery and liberation during our Passover seders? How does the legacy of African-American enslavement show up at our Seder tables as we recount the Exodus story? Cantor Vera and the Antiracism Working Group hosted a conversation about bringing a racial justice lens to the Passover Seder. This handout is for those who participated in the conversation, and those who missed it.

**RESOURCES**

***Sources for the session***

- [Passover Song Acknowledgment Project: Let My People Go](#), Anthony Russell & the Western Massachusetts Passover Song Acknowledgement Project Committee
- [What to the Black Jew is Passover?](#), Dr. Chanda Prescod-Weinstein

***Giving opportunities***

- [The Black Literacy and Arts Collaborative Project](#)
- [Castle of Our Skins](#)

***Action opportunities***

- [The Reform Movement's Racial Justice Campaign](#)

***Learning opportunities***

- [Wade in the Water: Follow up Resources From Anthony Russell](#)
- [Greeting guidelines](#) for your Seder and more
- Explore cultural appropriation vs. appreciation:
  - ['Go Down, Moses': Engaging With My Complex Musical Heritage at Passover](#) by Anthony Russell
  - [This church is paying 'royalties' when it sings spirituals composed by enslaved Africans](#) by Craig Lemoult
- Explore these resources on Beth El's [Antiracism Resource Page](#):
  - [Resources on Racism and Antisemitism](#)
  - [Beyond the Count: Perspectives and Lived Experiences of Jews of Color](#)
- [Additional Pesach resources for song and more](#)

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**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 1. When introducing songs at your Seder, how might you start a conversation about a song like “Let My People Go?” which tells two different stories at the same time: one is the Exodus story, the other is the story of enslaved Black people’s experiences.**

*“[Non-Black Jews] should also ask themselves: How would they feel about gentiles taking Jewish traditions and treating them as their own — without any Jews in the room to be accountable to as they do it? There is a difference between singing side by side with Black people as you put your body on the line to fight the forces of white supremacy and doing the same at a festive celebration where there are likely no Black people at all.”*

- Dr. Chanda Prescod-Weinstein, *What to the Black Jew is Passover?*

- 2. What questions might you ask at your Seder (or what readings might you bring to the table) to get participants reflecting on how the Black Atlantic experience is/was integrated into their family’s Seders, and how they might do it differently now?**

*“Yet Black Atlantic experiences are deeply integrated into American seders. I think the two most common justifications for this are: “But we do this because we recognize the journey of Black people through slavery and segregation” and “Jews sang these songs side by side, arm in arm, as they marched for freedom.” “*

- Dr. Chanda Prescod-Weinstein, *What to the Black Jew is Passover?*

- 3. What questions might you ask at your Seder (or what readings might you bring to the table) to get participants reflecting on how and why Black Jews experience the Seder story differently from non-Black Jews?**

*“It took me a long time to realize that white Jews don’t quite have the same experience — and can’t. Intergenerational slavery did not systematically happen to their biological ancestors. They do not have to negotiate the complexity of color the same way that Black Jews do — wading through understanding our skin color as a mark, as a site of danger, as a representation of legacies of rape and dehumanization.”*

- Dr. Chanda Prescod-Weinstein, *What to the Black Jew is Passover?*

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**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, Continued**

- 4. How might making a yearly Passover acknowledgment contribution make a difference to you and to those who receive the contribution?**

*“The names of the composers of ‘Go Down Moses’ and over 6000 other Spirituals were lost to history by the time the words and music to the songs were written down at the tail end of 400 years of slavery.*

*As an artform, these African-American Spirituals created the bedrock of many forms of American music that have enriched our culture, including Jazz, Gospel, and the Blues.*

*Those who wrote these Spirituals deserve to be acknowledged. Descendants of Africans enslaved in the United States have often been last in line to receive recognition and compensation for the extraordinary contributions they’ve made to American culture.”*

- Anthony Russell & the Western  
Massachusetts Passover Song Acknowledgment  
Project Committee, “PassoverSong  
Acknowledgement Project:  
Let My People Go”

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