



Peacemaking Workshop
with guest speaker

Leonard J. Pitts, Jr.

an American commentator, journalist and novelist. He is a nationally-syndicated columnist and winner of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary.

April 12, 2015

First United Methodist Church
2723 N. 50th St., Lincoln, NE

Sponsored by Interfaith Peacemaking Coalition



Leonard Pitts, Jr. speaking at the Peacemaking Workshop at First United Methodist Church on Sunday, April 12, 2015, attended by over 1000 people.

Speaker: Race is the fallacy of poverty

America's "us" and "them" problem is not about race, culture, nationality or birthright.

It's about money -- those who have it and those who are prevented from getting it, according to Miami Herald columnist Leonard Pitts Jr. And until the 45 million impoverished Americans stand up and say they are not going to take it anymore, this us and them of white versus black, brown and minority, will continue the divide and conquer status quo.

Pitts, keynote speaker at the Interfaith Peacemaking Coalition's 29th workshop Sunday, addressed more than 1,000 people filling the pews and balcony of Lincoln's First United Methodist Church.

The syndicated newspaper columnist and 2004 Pulitzer Prize winning author did what he does so well -- tell it like it is.

His presentation, "Eating (Jim) Crow," took a historical, statistical and pointed look at how poverty, not race, is at the root of the country's social ills.

Pitts does not dispute that America has a racism problem -- he lists the names of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner and Walter Scott -- all African American men killed in part because of a fear-fueled perception that the color of their skin makes them a greater threat.

"Race is important. It is the most important thing in determining quality of life in this country," Pitts said.

Yet, race is a fiction, "It does not exist. We are all the same mix of flesh, blood and bone," he said.

There is only one race -- the human race, he said.

"'Race' is something made up by our ancestors and has more holes than a 6-year-old's grin," Pitts.

The problems often attributed to race -- crime, drugs, unemployment, bad schools, poor housing, lack of access to nutritious and healthy foods, and fewer opportunities -- are problems of poverty. In fact, the vast majority of people falling into these categories are white -- poor whites, Pitts noted.

But poor whites are taught to believe things could be worse -- they could be black. Pitts called it the social capitalism illusion: "No matter how bad you have it, you are still connected to the whiteness of the world," he said.

"If you are poor in this country, you would much rather be poor and white, than poor and anything else."

And so being poor and white is nothing like being poor and minority -- or at least that's what politicians and corporate bigwigs want people to believe. Race is a social construct, Pitts said.

"It is like a spotlight shined in your eyes. It is a distraction," Pitts encouraged people to look past the distraction.

"... Struggling and exploited people have more in common than in contention," Pitts said.

He encouraged people to join together -- and marveled at the effect 45 million poor could have, if they stood together.

"If 45 million Americans said we're not coming to work today; no I'm not spending money today. If 45 million poor took their money out of the economy for one day -- they (politicians and leaders) would listen," Pitts said.

Add in the voices of people seeking equality and justice for all, and he sees potential of re-inventing American politics.

"We underestimate the leverage and power we have and we need to make use of it," Pitts said.

Peacemaking Workshop
Sunday, April 12
1:00-5:30 p.m.

Keynote Speaker: Leonard J. Pitts, Jr.



Leonard Pitts, Jr. is an American commentator, journalist and novelist. He is a nationally syndicated columnist whose columns appear in the Lincoln Journal Star. Winner of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary, he writes for the *Miami Herald*. Pitts will speak on:

Eating (Jim) Crow

Divisions Created by Race & Divisions Created by Poverty.

2015 CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS—3:00-5:15 p.m.

- ONE, PART 1:** 3:00-4:00 **IMPLICIT BIAS**—ANNA SHAVERS, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA—LINCOLN, LAW COLLEGE.
Facilitators: Ron Bump and Arta Smith
- ONE, PART 2:** 4:15-5:15 **UNCONSCIOUS BIAS**—KAREN STARKWEATHER, CENTER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS.
Facilitator: Chris Blake
- TWO:** 3:00-4:00 & 4:15-5:15 **THREE BARRIERS TO RE-ENTRY FROM PRISON TO CIVILIAN LIFE**—
KATRINA THOMAS, REENRANT, & JIM JONES, OASIS
(OFFENDER ACCOUNTABILITY SYNERGISTIC INTERACTIVE SERVICES). FACILITATOR: PAUL OLSON
- THREE:** 3:00-4:00 & 4:15-5:15 **YOUTH ORGANIZING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**—VERNEE NORMAN, UNION COLLEGE &
KEIANA THOMAS, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA—LINCOLN
(MEETING IN MUNDEN PARLOR) FACILITATOR: MARTHA GADBERRY
- FOUR:** 3:00-4:00 & 4:15-5:15 **POVERTY AND ORGANIZING FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY:**
ECONOMIC JUSTICE—PATTY PANSING BROOKS, NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE & BEATTY BRASCH,
CENTER FOR PEOPLE IN NEED. FACILITATOR, PENNY GREER
- FIVE:** 3:00-4:00 & 4:15-5:15 **RACIAL PROFILING IN NEBRASKA**—REBECCA GONZALES, APPELESED CENTER, BENNIE SHOE,
NAACP, & AMY MILLER, ACLU.
Facilitator: Bob Reeves

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More information at

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