

Second Cup of Wine: Employment Discrimination Against People With Criminal Records

Contributed by [Eli Allen](#)

Source: Baltimore Social Justice Seder

Leader: With the second cup of wine we remember God's promise to save the Israelites from the forced labor of the Egyptian taskmasters. With this cup we turn our thoughts to those in our community who have been forced back into the underground economy. We think about the returning citizens among us who so desire a fresh start and a family-sustaining job, but who are forced by society's discrimination to return to the illegal drug trade so that they can provide for their families.

Many employers require job applicants to check a box, indicating whether or not they have been convicted of a crime, and then the employers screen out any applicant with a conviction. These applicants are defined solely by their criminal record, and denied the opportunity to demonstrate their qualifications and put the record in a broader context. Employment scholars have found that a criminal record reduces the likelihood of a job callback or offer by almost 50 percent, and such a disadvantage is even more pronounced for African American men than for white men.^{ix} As a result, returning citizens face an unemployment rate of between 60% and 70%.^x As African Americans are disproportionately branded with criminal records, they are then subject to staggering levels of employment discrimination. This has contributed in Baltimore to an unemployment rate for African Americans that is more than double that of whites.^{xi} This represents one of the most damaging aspects of our growing civil rights crisis.

(Fill the second cup of wine or juice.)

Recite together:

Baruch ata adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei pri hagafen.

ברוך אתה יי אלוקינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן

(Drink the second cup. Refill immediately.)