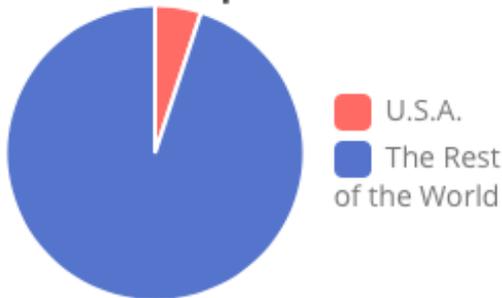


# The Passover Pine Cone - Putting Prisons on the Seder Plate

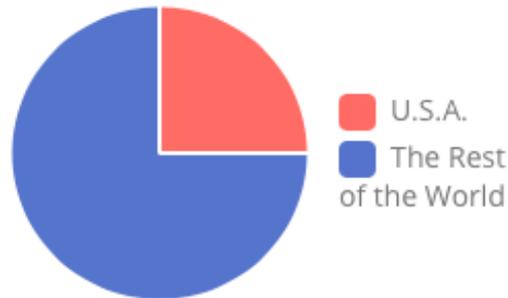
Contributed by [Temple Israel of Boston](#)

Source: Temple Israel of Boston

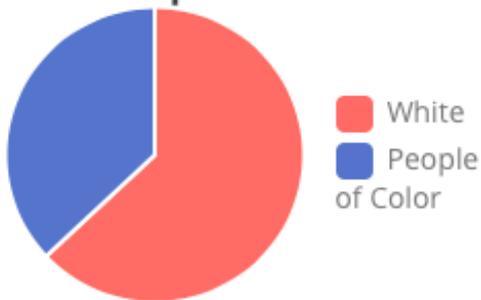
## World Population



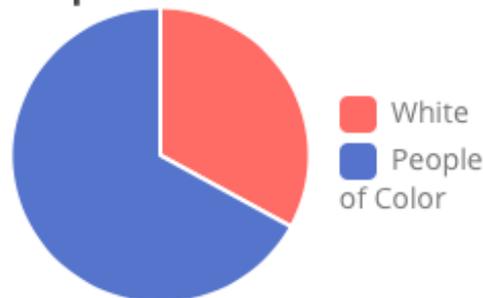
## Prisoner Distribution



## U.S. Population



## U.S. Prison Population



*LEADER:* We “pass over” pine cones every day. Inside each of these pine cones is among the most precious of all nuts – the pine nut. Most of us pass more pine nuts in a single day than one could count in a year. Yet, they remain hidden, unseen. Moreover, they’re nearly impossible to extract with our own hands. The pine cone “imprisons” its seeds, and only hard work on the part of nature compels it to open up. The cones of Fire Pines, for instance, are glued shut by resin, and only a raging fire can force the cone to release its seeds. Thus these seeds, the glorious pine nuts all around us, remain “out of sight, out of mind.”

We pass over prisons every day as well, and so rarely do we ever see what is inside. Inside U.S. prisons are approximately 25% of all prisoners in the world, despite that our country amounts to a mere 5% of the global population (United States Census Bureau and International Center for Prison Studies). People of Color constitute approximately 67% of the incarcerated even though they make up less than 37% of the U.S. population. Black men are imprisoned at more than 6 times the rate of White men (sentencingproject.org). Through inhumane, excessive punitive laws, unfettered institutional racism, and widespread ignorance and apathy, our system of laws and justice has lost its way: we have “recidivated” back into Egypt.

*Leader holds up the Pine Cone from Seder Plate and continues.*

*LEADER:* Therefore, this year we add a pine cone to our Seder Plate, as a reminder of mass incarceration and the work it will take to repair this injustice.

*ALL:* This Passover, we refuse to pass over the pine cone because we know that hidden inside is something

precious.

*LEADER:* This Passover, we refuse to pass over our prisons because we know that inside is God's most precious fruit of all: the human soul.

*ALL:* This Passover, we recognize that God passed over Israelite homes on the eve of their liberation for a reason: So that we, the community of Israel, will forever serve the continuous movement from darkness to light, cruelty to compassion, slavery to redemption.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh HaOlam Matir Asurim.* Blessed are You, Eternal Our God, who frees the captive. Amen.

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Are you putting a pine cone on your Seder plate this year? Share it with us on social media with the hashtag **#PassoverPineCone**.