

Gregory Ellison II, Michelle Alexander, and Matthew Desmond share a red vinyl booth

Who I'd invite to my writers' dinner party

by [Barbara Brown Taylor](#) in the [May 10, 2017](#) issue

My dream dinner party would take place at the all-night Majestic Diner on Ponce de Leon Avenue in Atlanta, where I would stake out a red vinyl booth for the entire evening. My guests would be Gregory Ellison II (professor of pastoral care and the author of *Cut Dead But Still Alive: Caring for African American Young Men*), Michelle Alexander (civil rights lawyer who wrote *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*), and Matthew Desmond (sociologist and the author of *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*). All three are teachers at distinguished universities who exercise their privilege on behalf of those who have none. One is in his 30s, one just turned 40, and the third is not yet 50. All three write with great heart as well as magnificent brains.

I plan to say not a word all night long. I just want to listen to the three of them get to know each other, finding their ways to the center of what motivates and sustains them, while I make sure their coffee cups stay full.