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End Prison Slavery in Texas Now! (2018)

by Keith 'Malik' Washington the Deputy Chairman of the New Afrikan Black Panther Party, Prison Chapter, Texas Region. More information about him and more follows the article.

“For years we were called Niggers to indicate we had no value or worth and that anything could be done to us. Then the word ‘nigger’ became politically incorrect. So, they began calling us criminals. When you say a person is a criminal it means that what happens to them does not matter. It means he or she is a nigger. It means that he or she is a nigger. It means they deserve what they get.”

—Melvin Ray ‘Bennu Hannibal Ra-Sun’ Spokesperson / Free Alabama Movement
Revolutionary greetings!

In **Texas** we know that we are being exploited, mistreated, degraded and abused. Many prisoners in Texas are content with the modern day slave plantation system, which is managed and operated by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. However, many prisoners are not content; in fact, they are frustrated and angry. The strategies utilized by prisoners in other states that have similar conditions to Texas don’t necessarily apply here. More accurately stated, we cannot do what others have done because we have not reached the level of solidarity and political development prisoners in other states such as California have reached.

This is not to belittle or degrade my fellow prisoners in Texas; I’m just stating facts. The hunger strike and work stoppage in California forced prison officials to re-assess the oppressive policies which have led to the inhumane treatment. Many human beings are trapped in Pelican Bay and numerous other solitary confinement units in California.

Solitary Confinement is torture, whether it is utilized by CDCR or TDCJ. Abolition of this form of punishment is the only correct solution. The question which has plagued prisoner rights activists such as myself is: “What is the best strategy for Texas?” How do we initiate a movement that will be embraced by Texas prisoners and their families alike? Texas is a family oriented state. You cannot proceed with a serious initiative without including family members who will lobby the state legislature and speak to the media on behalf of their loved ones. I was very impressed with the support that California prisoner and Pelican Bay Freedom Fighter **Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa** received from his sister. Every time I opened the Bay View, there she was – at protests, speaking to the media, legislators, truly awesome!



Rally by Hunger Strike Solidarity at Oscar Grant Plaza, downtown Oakland

The Slave State

I strongly support abolition of the prison industrial complex; I would like to see an end to mass incarceration. I am a multi-racial New Afrikan Black mixed with Arab and Latino. It is our populations that have been hurt the most by the so-called “war on drugs.” Texas is the most racist and oppressive state in Amerika.

Texas did not want to recognize the emancipation of Black slaves in Amerika; that is why Juneteenth was created, to celebrate Texas’ two-year-late recognition of federal law. You see, Texas has a history of ignoring the human and civil rights of disadvantaged

minorities.

If Texas can usurp or circumvent federal law or the U.S. Constitution in order to oppress Blacks, Latino/as or even poor whites, it will. The uniforms that Texas Department of Criminal Justice employees wear are patterned after Confederate soldier uniforms! This is the truth.

Texas wants to remind you constantly that it supported and still supports the subjugation of New Afrikans. When prisoners are taken to the fields to pick cotton, green beans and corn, among other crops, TDCJ officers sit on horses with cowboy hats on and hold shotguns, screaming at you, "You better get your cut, Washington, or I'm writing you a case!" I am not lying. This is the reality here in Texas.

The current conditions in Texas dictate that we must address our treatment as slaves and the inability of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles to recognize our good time and work credits. We want these credits directly applied to our sentences, so we can return to our families and communities. What Texas has engaged in is a form of sophisticated deception.

The main individuals being deceived are our family members. Most of us prisoners are well aware of the deceptive practices perpetrated by the Parole Board. Their actions are promoted, sanctioned and condoned by the Legislature and the Texas Board of Criminal Justice.

The slave model in Texas is perpetrated by what TDCJ calls TCI or **Texas Correctional Industries**. On paper, TCI is set up as a non-profit that provides job skills and on-the-job training for prisoners who work in various factory and light industrial jobs throughout Texas. The model is deceptive and TDCJ spends a lot of time and resources giving the general public the impression that rehabilitation is its focus.

However, once a person starts digging and researching the financial records and transactions being made, you will uncover something else. You see, I spent time as an accountant working in the office of the now defunct Stiles Unit Metal Fabrication Plant located in Beaumont, Texas.

What I discovered is that TDCJ and Texas is making a huge profit on the backs of prisoners who provide free labor. Palms are constantly greased; back-door deals are being made in order to keep investors, corporate representatives, and independent contractors happy. It is all a very elaborate system.

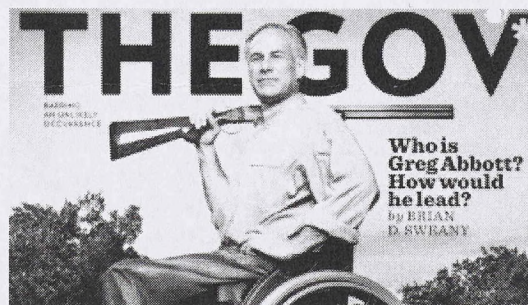
The senior wardens of these prisons in Texas act as CEOs ensuring a constant flow of slave laborers to run "the factory." It may be a tire plant, meatpacking plant, furniture factory, textile factory, computer recovery plant, mattress factory, or metal fabrication plant. Profits certainly are being generated, but prisoners in Texas don't get paid! Why is that?

Prison officials and legislators say TCI is providing valuable job skills and training for free. All right then, if that is the case, why won't the Parole Board recognize the good time and work time credits of all Texas prisoners?

Anyone who has worked in one of these factories knows you can't be a "bad actor" to work in the factory. If I'm being forced to work for free, I want to get back to my family as soon as possible so my family can benefit from my new job skills. But that is not how the slave model is set up. No! It is not working like that.

I have met numerous men who have toiled in these various factories for years, some even decades, yet here they remain, still working for free and the work conditions continue to get worse. Some prisoners work 8- to 12-hour shifts at various factories throughout Texas; many like to drink coffee or work out during breaks in order to relieve stress.

TDCJ officers who are assigned to "the factory" make it a point to be extra harsh in their management style because they know these factory jobs are preferred by prisoners. I mean you're stuck here! Texas doesn't give a damn about you and they certainly aren't interested in paroling you, so if you had a choice between working like Kunta Kinte in the field or in a factory job, which would you choose? Prisoners in Texas are caught between a rock and a hard place.



The Texas philosophy

For those who are well versed in Texas history, you will know that Texas was founded on the precept of white supremacy.

The current governor of Texas, **Greg Abbott**, subscribes to a eugenic type of thinking in which Black and Brown people are inferior to whites, and this thinking justifies our current enslavement and inhumane treatment. Alexander Stephens, the vice president of the Confederate States during the U.S. Civil War, best described the philosophy of Texans like Gov. Abbott and Brian Collier, the executive director of TDCJ, when he said in an 1861 speech:

"The Confederacy cornerstone rests upon the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and moral condition." I

This is what we are up against in Texas.



Our philosophy and strategy

In Texas as throughout Amerika the so-called low class “Negro” comes in various colors, shapes, sizes and genders. There are white, Black, Latino, Asian and Arab “Negros” trapped inside Texas prisons. Original Black Panther Comrade **Fred Hampton** best illustrated this point when he entered a white bar in the late ‘60s to recruit white people to take part in socialist change.

I want you to understand exactly where I am coming from so there won’t be any confusion. So, I ask you to read and analyze this quote from Comrade Fred Hampton; it comes from a speech he made in 1969:

We got to face some facts. That the masses are poor, that the masses belong to what you call the lower class, and when I talk about the masses, I’m talking about the white masses, I’m talking about the Black masses, and the Brown masses and the yellow masses too. We’ve got to face the fact that some people say you fight fire best with fire, but we say you put fire out best with water. We say you don’t fight racism with racism; we’re gonna fight racism with solidarity. We say you don’t fight capitalism with no Black capitalism: you fight capitalism with socialism. 2

This quote embodies the theory, philosophy and revolutionary practice of the New Afrikan Black Panther Party, Prison Chapter. Of course, we love and respect New Afrikan Black people, but we shun this uber Black Nationalism which is embraced by other groups passing themselves off as Panthers. You can’t brutally attack an elder in this movement and say you are representing the best interests of the people. No! That’s not Pantherism – but I digress. Let’s stay on point.

As prisoners in Texas, we have to grab the bull by the horns and take control of our own destiny. Free world supporters can’t do this for us. They can help, but ultimately the grassroots organizing, and effort must be done by us. First, we must educate our family and friends in reference to the nature of the problem. We must show them the deception and illusion of this imaginary pay and fraudulent good time and work time credit system.

Truthfully, all Texas prisoners have to do is send their family and friends a print-out of their time slip. There are thousands of men and women trapped inside Texas prisons. They possess time slips which clearly show accrued flat time, good time and work time credit percentages which equal 100 percent of their current sentence or more!

Texas has built a system which has systematically weakened and destroyed inner city and urban communities. These communities have been targeted by the state and corporate entities for gentrification. The inhabitants of these communities are predominantly Black and Brown.

In Houston, Texas, we have even seen a school superintendent get in on “the action.” HISD Superintendent Terry Grier did all he could to weaken the schools in Houston that service Black and Brown inner city youth. And when you deny people adequate access to quality education opportunities, you create conditions which push them into the waiting arms of the criminal justice system. Mr. Grier has announced his resignation. Let’s hope Houston chooses an HISD superintendent who will have a vested interest in our success.

So in a nutshell, TDCJ and the Board of Pardons and Paroles work in concert with capitalists in order to sabotage the self-determination of certain communities of color. What this amounts to is a not so subtle program of Social Control.

We want freedom!

What we are asking is that Texas prisoners have their families visit our Facebook pages and websites in order to see the information we have posted there which explains the issue in easy to understand terms and language. We have phone numbers of key Texas legislators available. What we are proposing is that prisoners encourage their family and friends to contact these legislators and urge them to craft legislation which will fix this fraudulent slave system.

The bottom line is this:

- We want our good time and work time credits counted! Stop telling us you are counting them when you are not.
- We want to be paid for our labor!
- We want our right to vote restored.

- Stop fudging the census numbers of the rural communities in which these prisons are located making it “look like” we are citizens when in reality we are slaves! Texas is “gaming the system,” making areas look like they have more constituents than they really have.

What benefits do we get? We’ve seen these games before. Texas loves to play with re-districting maps and the votes of disadvantaged minorities. Many people don’t see the connection between the Texas slave plantation system and the manipulation of the vote – I see it.

Solidarity is needed now!

There are approximately 150,000 prisoners housed in Texas prisons. If half of us can convince our loved ones to contact Texas representatives and senators in relation to this issue, we can make a significant impact. We need to start discussing this in the day rooms, on the rec yard, or while we are slaving in the fields or in these factories.

It is going to take all of us women and men. I’m not going to talk this issue to death; I’ve never been much of a “rapper.” I’m about that action! Are you about that action?

If you are serious about change, have your family

visit <http://www.facebook.com/comrademalikwashington> or <http://comrademalik.com/>. Look for Campaign to End Prison Slavery in Texas.

You see, comrades, I am not operating under any illusions. As I said at the beginning of this essay, some will be content with this slave-like existence; some won’t be content. Some may go tell the “boss man,” “That guy Malik is stirrin’ up trouble again, Boss” and, as always, the oppressors will do what they’ve always done – lock me up in solitary, transfer me, write bogus disciplinary reports, deny my parole or try to get some misguided street tribe members to assault me. I’ve been through all that and more. I am determined to improve our condition even if it kills me. For those of you who are sick and tired of being slaves, I ask that you help me End Prison Slavery in Texas Now!

I leave you with another quote from Comrade Fred Hampton:

“First of all, we say primarily that the priority of this struggle is class. That Marx and Lenin and Che Guevara and Mao Tse-Tung and anybody else that ever said or knew or practiced anything about revolution always said that a revolution is a class struggle. It was one class – the oppressed – against the other class, the oppressor. And it’s got to be a universal fact. Those that don’t admit to that are those that don’t want to get involved in revolution because they know as long as they’re dealing with a race thing, they’ll never be involved in a revolution. They can talk about numbers, they can hang you up in many, many ways.”^[3]

So what will it be, a life of involuntary servitude, helping to sustain this slave system, or freedom building up your communities and supporting your families?

We have nothing to lose but our chains! Dare to struggle, dare to win, All power to the people!

What’s Next in 2018!?

In 2018, Heshima Denham of Amend the 13th- Abolish Legal Slavery in Amerika- Movement and myself want to broaden and expand our support base. We would like to enter into a pact of mutual aid and solidarity with Nube Brown and the growing new abolitionist movement. We would like to invite interested members of Red Neck Revolt to join us in our struggle to abolish and end prison slavery in Amerika.

We want to continue working with the Free Alabama Movement, fight toxic prisons, and the entire ABC network. I would like to see more support from our LGBTQ sisters and brothers.

Personally, I have a vision for class solidarity which transcends Race, Creed, and Gender.

Lastly, I am suggesting that the IWOC and IWW aid us in organizing a rally and protest on June 19th 2018 (Juneteenth). We would like to do banner droppings, public service announcements, and webinars. Our focus will be to raise the public’s awareness concerning our abolition movements. Texas, California, Florida, Alabama, New York, Georgia, New Jersey, Colorado, and Virginia are some of the states we want to see get involved.

It is my sincere hope that in 2018 we can form relationships that are inclusive as opposed to exclusive. And the next time we call for a march on Washington we would like to attract tens of thousands as opposed to only 300 humyn beings!!

Multi-racial unity is certainly needed. As the crystal-methamphetamine and opioid addiction crisis ravage Amerika, we must realize our white sisters and brothers are hurting too! And I am seeing more white faces in these slave kamps and gulags every day!

So, what will it be, a life of involuntary servitude, helping to sustain this slave system, or freedom building up our communities and supporting our families?? We have nothing to lose by our chains!!

Dare to struggle, Dare to win,