

LETTER

## "SLAVERY BY ANOTHER NAME"

Douglas A. Blackmon's new book, *Slavery by Another Name—The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (Doubleday, 2008) has unearthed ugly chapters of US history that have been buried for decades. In graphic and truthful detail, Blackmon's powerful book reveals the widespread use of bonded labour after the Civil War—and how this amounted to a new form of slavery that incorporated many of the same inhuman conditions of brutal confinement like shackles, whippings, hog-tying, and water torture.

Douglas A Blackmon, the Atlanta Bureau chief of the Wall Street Journal, has written about race and especially the interplay of wealth, corporate conduct and segregation. In 2000, the National Association of Black Journalists recognized Blackmon's stories revealing the secret role of J P Morgan & Co during the 1960s in funneling funds between a wealthy northern white supremacist and segregationists fighting the Civil Rights Movement in the South.

"What began to happen in the South, particularly after federal troops were removed in 1877...the state legislatures of every state passed laws which began to effectively criminalize Black life and to create a situation in which African American men found it almost impossible not to be in violation of some misdemeanor statute at almost all times. And the most broadly applied of those was that it was against the law if you were unable to prove at any given moment that you were employed. So vagrancy statutes were used to arrest thousands of Black men, even though thousands of white men could have been arrested on the same charges but they hardly ever were. And then, once arrested, the judicial system had been re-tooled in such a way as to coerce huge numbers of men into commercial enterprises as forced workers through the judicial system.       **A**

**Reader,**  
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