



SUNDAY, JANUARY 24, 2010

Slavery in US Prisons --An interview with Robert Hillary King and Dr. Terry Kupers

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." --13th Amendment, 1865.



An 18,000-acre former slave plantation in rural Louisiana, the infamous Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola is the largest prison in the U.S. Today, with African Americans composing over 75% of Angola's 5,108 prisoners, prison guards known as "free men," a forced 40-hour workweek, and four cents an hour as minimum wage, the resemblance to antebellum U.S. slavery is striking. In the early 1970s, it was even worse, as prisoners were forced to work 96-hour weeks (16 hours a day/six days a week) with two cents an hour as minimum wage. Officially considered (according to its own website) the "Bloodiest Prison in the South" at this time, violence from guards and between prisoners was endemic. Prison authorities sanctioned prisoner rape, and according to former Prison Warden Murray Henderson, the prison guards actually helped facilitate a brutal system of sexual slavery where the younger and physically weaker prisoners were bought and sold into submission

physically weaker prisoners were beaten and sold into submission. As part of the notorious "inmate trusty guard" system, responsible for killing 40 prisoners and seriously maiming 350 between 1972-75, some prisoners were given state-issued weapons and ordered to enforce this sexual slavery, as well as the prison's many other injustices. Life at Angola was living hell -- a 20th century slave plantation.

Black Panthers Robert Hillary King, Albert Woodfox, and Herman Wallace are known as the "Angola Three." Woodfox and Wallace were co-founders of a Black Panther Party chapter at Angola in the early 1970s. These Panthers saw life at Angola as modern-day slavery and fought back with non-violent hunger strikes and work strikes. Prison authorities were outraged by the BPP's organizing, and retaliated by framing these three BPP organizers for murders that they did not commit. Woodfox and Wallace were both framed for the 1972 stabbing death of white prison guard Brent Miller, and have now spent over 37 years in solitary confinement. King was framed for a 1973 murder of another prisoner, and spent 29 years in solitary confinement until he was released from in 2001 after his conviction was overturned.

This new video released by [Angola 3 News](#) is the third part of an interview conducted with Robert King and Terry Kupers in October 2009, in Oakland, CA when King was in town for Black Panther History Month. In the first two parts King and Kupers discussed the psychological impact of imprisonment ([watch here](#)). In this new video, Robert King and Dr. Terry Kupers argue that slavery persists today in Angola and other U.S. prisons, citing the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which legalizes slavery in prisons as "a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." As King says: "You can be legally incarcerated but morally innocent."

Dr. Terry Kupers, M.D., M.S.P. wrote the introduction to Robert King's 2008 autobiography entitled [From the Bottom of the Heap: The Autobiography of Robert Hillary King](#), and is Institute Professor at The Wright Institute in Berkeley, California. Dr. Kupers is a psychiatrist with a background in psychoanalytic psychotherapy, forensics and social and community psychiatry. His forensic psychiatry experience includes testimony in several large class action litigations concerning jail and prison conditions, sexual abuse, and the quality of mental health services inside correctional facilities. He is a consultant to Human Rights Watch, and author of the 1999 book entitled [Prison Madness: The Mental](#)

[Health Crisis Behind Bars and What We Must Do About It.](#)

This video features archival photos from the Pulitzer Prize-winning book by Wall Street Journal editor Douglas A. Blackmon, entitled [Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II](#). The book's website states:

In this groundbreaking historical expose, Douglas A. Blackmon brings to light one of the most shameful chapters in American history—when a cynical new form of slavery was resurrected from the ashes of the Civil War and re-imposed on hundreds of thousands of African-Americans until the dawn of World War II.

Under laws enacted specifically to intimidate blacks, tens of thousands of African Americans were arbitrarily arrested, hit with outrageous fines, and charged for the costs of their own arrests. With no means to pay these ostensible “debts,” prisoners were sold as forced laborers to coal mines, lumber camps, brickyards, railroads, quarries and farm plantations. Thousands of other African Americans were simply seized by southern landowners and compelled into years of involuntary servitude. Government officials leased falsely imprisoned blacks to small-town entrepreneurs, provincial farmers, and dozens of corporations—including U.S. Steel Corp.—looking for cheap and abundant labor. Armies of “free” black men labored without compensation, were repeatedly bought and sold, and were forced through beatings and physical torture to do the bidding of white masters for decades after the official abolition of American slavery.

The neoslavery system exploited legal loopholes and federal policies which discouraged prosecution of whites for continuing to hold black workers against their wills. As it poured millions of dollars into southern government treasuries, the new slavery also became a key instrument in the terrorization of African Americans seeking full participation in the U.S. political system.

Based on a vast record of original documents and personal narratives, SLAVERY BY ANOTHER NAME unearths the lost stories of slaves and their descendants who journeyed into freedom after the Emancipation Proclamation and then back into the shadow of involuntary servitude. It also reveals the stories of those who fought unsuccessfully against the re-emergence of human labor trafficking, the modern companies that profited most from

neoslavery, and the system's final demise in the 1940s, partly due to fears of enemy propaganda about American racial abuse at the beginning of World War II.

SLAVERY BY ANOTHER NAME is a moving, sobering account of a little-known crime against African Americans, and the insidious legacy of racism that reverberates today.