



PRISON TRANSPARENCY PROJECT REPORT:

The Injustice of Modern Slavery in Prisons

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THE INJUSTICE OF MODERN SLAVERY IN PRISONS

The 13th Amendment and Its Caveat

- **Historical Context:** The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, ratified in 1865, officially abolished slavery following the Civil War. However, there was a significant caveat within the amendment: "except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." This clause effectively allows for the continuation of slavery within the prison system.

- **Modern Implications:** This loophole has led to the exploitation of incarcerated individuals, many of whom are forced to work for minimal wages under conditions that would be unacceptable in the free labor market. This gives government a financial incentive to incarcerate as many people as possible for as long as possible, to ensure their own career field and job growth, rather than focusing on the benefit of society.

Modern Slavery in the Prison System

- **Inhumane Conditions:** Many incarcerated individuals are compelled to perform difficult, dangerous, or degrading jobs for mere cents per hour. This is not only inhumane but also a stark contradiction to the ideals of freedom and dignity that the United States purports to uphold.

- **Exploitation by Private Industry:** The prison labor system allows private industries to profit immensely from the difference between the value of the labor provided and the negligible wages paid to prisoners. This profit-driven exploitation is morally and ethically indefensible, and it perpetuates a system of modern slavery that should have no place in a just society.

The Need for Reform in Prison Labor Practices

- **Fair Wages:** Prison jobs should offer reasonable wages that reflect the value of the work performed. This would not only provide incarcerated individuals with a sense of dignity and purpose but also help them save money for their reintegration

into society upon release, or to ensure their children and families have the resources needed to survive during their absence.

- **Workplace Rights:** Incarcerated individuals should have the right to file workplace complaints without fear of retaliation. They should also have the ability to quit a job if they are in a toxic or dangerous situation that could lead to conflict or harm. Basic workplace protections that are standard in the free labor market must be extended to those working within the prison system, and labor should not be forced. Indentured servitude is rampant in America and being done to our citizens en masse by government. This is an unacceptable state of affairs.

Ethical and Economic Considerations

- **Moral Responsibility:** As a society, we have a moral responsibility to ensure that no human being is exploited or enslaved, regardless of their status as an incarcerated person. The current system not only violates basic human rights but also undermines the very principles of justice and equality.

- **Economic Impact:** The exploitation of prison labor distorts the labor market and allows for the commodification of human lives. It is deeply concerning that we can essentially invest in human slavery on the stock market through companies that profit from prison labor, and that our government is perpetuating modern-day slavery. This practice must be critically examined and reformed as quickly as possible.

Ending Involuntary Servitude in America Once and For All

- It is not the place of government bodies, whether they are Federal, State, or local governments, to be in the business of indentured or involuntary servitude of its citizens. Therefore, forcing labor upon prisoners is inherently immoral. If prisoners are expected to contribute to their local community for the betterment of its functioning or residents, that is to be expected; that is simply taking care of one's own living environment, as should be expected from able-bodied adults. However, forcing them to work in factories or other jobs so other people can rake in the profits off of their labor is inherently immoral, and needs to become a practice that is completely halted in the United States of America. The Civil War our country endured in the 1800's was over the issue of slavery, and enslavement of human beings has no place in modern society.

This report is part of a series produced by the Prison Transparency Project, aimed at uncovering and addressing issues within the prison system. For additional reports and recommendations, please visit our website at <https://prisontransparency.com>.