

# #EndTheException

## A CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH SLAVERY FOR ALL

"The first time I went to the fields was on my third day in prison. I was 19. They called our squad out to work, rolled the cell doors and we sprinted to the back gate, between a gauntlet of guards who swung batons at our legs and backs as we ran past. They loaded us onto trailers and drove us to the fields where we lined up, 25 men back to front and pounded clods into dust, for 10 hours until our hands blistered and bled. They called it flatweeding and it was make-work, useless and without reason other than to remind us of who we were not – humans with the power to decide our own destiny and subject to whatever whims our field boss felt to impose on any given day." - *Jorge Renaud, Texas*



"For 12 years, I worked at the prison infirmary as a nurse's aide for \$0.2583 an hour. I would clean blood, feces, and bodily fluids throughout the facility. For cleaning a blood spill — resulting from an accident or violence — I would be paid \$0.75. With every incident, I would be forced to play Russian Roulette with my health for these wages. If I refused, I could receive a disciplinary infraction." - *Gonzalo, New York\**

"I truly understand that I, and I alone, committed the crimes that have incarcerated me over and over again, but to be treated this way is down right wrong. Prison slavery is inhumane and mentally life changing. We endure what many people on the outside can't believe is real." - *Eugene, North Carolina\**



"I had been in prison for two months when one of California's coldest winters hit. I was assigned to landscaping and ordered to hoe through frozen dirt. I was just 19, and the devastation of a 20-year sentence loomed over me as I stood in the freezing cold in just a thin pair of pants, a sweater, and cloth tennis shoes – no coat. An officer threatened me with disciplinary action if I refused the illogical and painful instruction. I hoed, and I didn't earn a penny that winter." - *April Grayson, California*

*\*Last names have been withheld for people who are currently incarcerated to prevent retaliation.*

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"There is no purpose here in prison when you can't even make some kind of wage to support yourself. We are forced to work in extreme cold, rain, heat with nothing in return. Where is the rehabilitation in this? A lot of us will be released one day, yet don't know what it's like to work and be rewarded with pay. To learn to support yourself and manage money are two major keys to succeed, yet prison doesn't help you do that." - *Roxanne, Texas\**

"Of the collection of traumatic experiences I live with daily from when I was incarcerated, it is the forced labor under threat of violence or "Box" time that I still struggle with more than fifteen years later. I still struggle with an overwhelming sense of fear and only my supportive, therapeutic, and loving community has been able to help me get through." - *Steven Mangual, New York*



"I worked for the state corrections industry, sewing officer uniforms and other municipal clothing for \$12 every two weeks. It was like the sweatshops you see in movies, except it had an overseer in a dirty gray uniform with a patch on his sleeve authorizing him to enforce the state's business model: pay grossly low wages, forcing maximum output under the constant threat of punishment. There were disciplinary consequences for any action that slowed productivity. During those six-hour work shifts we could not eat, get up from our sewing machines without permission, or talk to each other much. In a society that respects the humanity and dignity of every person, no one should be expected to work, let alone forced, in those conditions." - *Sean Kyler, New York*

"My first job in the prison system was on the yard crew, digging through trash bags to collect recyclables. The only PPE we were provided was a single pair of latex gloves. Some positions got pay, as little as 8 cents an hour, while others did not. I remember feeling degraded and humiliated." - *Tasha, California\**

"I am a janitor. I am a slave. I feel this is meant to keep the relics of the confederacy alive, at the expense of the poor, illiterate, and mostly minorities who make up the prisons... It is a violation of our human rights. They force us to conduct hard labor to take up all of our time and energy, so we have no more left to educate ourselves. We are left with nothing but resentment." - *Alex, Texas\**

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