

## SLAVERY BY ANOTHER NAME

Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning nonfiction book,  
*Slavery by Another Name:*  
*The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*

### **A Ten-Part, Ten-Hour Limited Series for Television**

By Jeanne Veillette Bowerman & Douglas A. Blackmon



**Logline:** A limited series based on the true stories told in the nonfiction Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Slavery by Another Name*. Forty years after the Civil War, the economically downtrodden South falsely arrests thousands of black men on trumped up charges, forcing them into the newly created “perfect” business model – prison leasing. Reconstruction merely reinvented slavery by another name.

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The 10-hour limited series is based on true events in the early 1900s, exploring the loophole in the 13th Amendment – that slavery was illegal “except as a punishment for crime.”

The decades after the Civil War saw a brief rise in African American standing. Blacks voted, held political office and purchased land. However, the success of the post-slavery generation came at a price for the overall Southern economy. Free labor was no more and cotton was dying on the vine. The threat of economic collapse, combined with deep-rooted racism, united the most powerful people in America to do something we would never be taught in school: Slavery was resurrected and a new “business model” was born.

Southern states created trumped up laws to arrest African-Americans for talking too loudly in front of a white woman, not being able to prove they had a job, or merely walking the railroad tracks. Since “slavery” was legal if based on “punishment of a crime,” sheriffs leased the new convicts to plantations, coalmines and factories that used the free labor to not only increase their profits, but to also crush unions and break strikes. State by state, blacks’ right to vote was abolished. Human auctions resumed. Slavery was an addiction the south couldn’t shake.

There is no such thing as “freedom.”

The series begins mere weeks after President McKinley is assassinated and THEODORE ROOSEVELT takes office. President Roosevelt shocks the nation by inviting BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, the most influential black leader of the time, to be the first black man ever to dine at The White House. His goal? To earn the black vote come re-election. What seems like a simple dinner strikes a match of indignation in the South, pushing fragile race relations and paranoia to greater heights. While Roosevelt believes he’s healing the country, and blacks feel a great sense of hope from this historical event, politicians in the deep South state clearly the outrage of most whites, “*Now 1000 niggers will have to be killed to put them back in their place.*”

The following storylines are intertwined into each episode:

STORY A: In the midst of that rising terror, GREEN COTTENHAM, son of former black slaves, struggles to find his place in this new world, determined to not only thrive, but to far exceed any obstacles put before him. He’s what they call a “cigarette dude,” tossing dice at the train station. He’s his own man. No way can he imagine why his father didn’t fight back when he was a slave, or try to run. He simply can’t wrap his brain around succumbing to another man’s hand. He’s a black Cool Hand Luke.

Courageous and proud to a fault, he constantly butts heads with his older brother, JESSE, who is content picking cotton and staying out of trouble. Jesse shames Green into searching for a job, but Green plays dice at the train station with his buddies

instead. DEPTUTY EDDINGS swoops in and arrests Green for the trumped up charge of “riding the rails without a ticket.”

What happens to Green is far different than anything we’ve ever seen on screen.

The Deputy tosses him in jail, leases him to Tennessee Coal where he’s catapulted deep into the catacombs of Pratt Mines, not seeing the light of day for stretches at a time and given an unimaginable quota of pulling out eight tons of coal a day, or suffer severe punishment.

Life in the coalmines is like no other “slave” experience. Infectious diseases run rampant as Green works standing in his own waste. Prisoners take ownership of young boys who act as runners, making them their GAL BOYS, dragging them into the shafts and raping them daily. Green keeps his guard up at all times, protecting one of the Gal Boys who becomes his replacement family. Pushing back at every turn, Green repeatedly attempts escape. Even though his failed efforts tire the other laborers, Green won’t give up believing he can find a way out of this hell.

While in the mines, white union workers torment Green and the others, furious the free labor stifles their power to get raises and better working conditions. When the miners eventually strike, free black workers break the picket lines to replace them. Among them is Green’s brother, Jesse. It takes being in the tortuous underworld for the brothers to finally learn to respect one another, only to part each nightfall – one free; one in shackles.

The outrage of Alabama boils over when white workers strike alongside black miners. Tennessee Coal orchestrates the lynching of the black union leader, crushing the strike and all hopes of the prison laborers at Pratt Mines to be rescued. The white union miners return, and Green’s spirit collapses. He falls ill to syphilis, dying in the arms of Gal Boy.

Tennessee Coal loses their leasing contract and all of their prisoners to a competing mine, all but Gal Boy, whose contract is up. When they take Gal Boy to the courthouse to process his release and pick up more much-needed laborers, all they are given are five white men, one being JOHN WILLIAMS, the first white man convicted of murdering a black man in over 80 years. A guard removes Gal Boy’s shackles and slaps them onto Williams.

Green’s journey is one of survival, taking him from a selfish, naïve boy to a hardworking “slave,” willing to push all boundaries to survive. The Cottenham brothers’ rebuild their relationship in those grim catacombs to the point when Jesse begs Green to trade clothes with him and go free in his stead. Their storyline illustrates the challenges of young black men to ever achieve their dreams.

STORY B: Devoted father, husband and farmer, JON DAVIS, owns his own land. Despite not being able to sign his name, he teaches his children the importance of

family, faith, and education. He promises them more than they ever dreamed once they can afford to move north. On an ordinary day of selling eggs to trade for medicine for his gravely ill wife, the sheriff arrests Davis, simply because he can.

Since Davis is unable to pay the cost of his arrest, the sheriff leases him to the barbaric plantation owner JOHN PACE.

We follow Davis through the horrors of plantation life. But what makes Davis' story different than others we've seen is the unprecedented moment President Theodore Roosevelt receives hundreds of letters from African American families, hopeful after Booker T. Washington's dinner at The White House. They claim disappearing family members and of their imprisonment on plantations. Roosevelt orders an investigation, sending one of the first black U.S. Deputy Marshals, CHIKE BEAUREGARD, to the office of the prejudice U.S. Attorney General of Alabama, WARREN REESE.

While Reese only investigates half-heartedly, Davis lives the horrors of the rebirth of slavery first hand. It's far worse than anything Davis' ancestors experienced or Marshal Beauregard imagined uncovering. The plantation owners are ruthless, stubborn and always a step ahead of the law. Marshal Beauregard faces the impossible odds of not only fighting a slavery-addicted society, but also of fighting it as a black man with legal authority no one is willing to recognize... not even the slaves he is trying to free. He's an outsider on every level. Davis must start trusting Beauregard and stop accepting this horrific treatment as blacks' "fate" and stand up to the system enslaving them.

Beauregard ultimately gets the evidence to arrest John Pace, but Pace's henchmen kidnap Davis' young son to keep Davis from testifying. Reese pushes past his own deep-rooted prejudices and joins forces with Beauregard. Together, Beauregard and Davis organize a dramatic rescue of Davis' son and the remaining hidden slaves, but Beauregard dies during the escape. The trial has twists and turns with Reese facing his biggest opponent in a courtroom yet: Prejudice.

Beauregard's courage and evolution inspires Davis to testify, leading to the ultimate conviction of his captor, enraging the community. A mob quickly forms, leaving Davis the opportunity to battle it out with the man who shot and killed Beauregard. The Davis children flee to safety on a train to the north and freedom.

Intertwined are stories of love, the women behind the powerful men, black female sex slaves' heroic actions, and the politics embedded in the prison leasing system, from the local sheriff, to Wall Street moguls, and right up to the President of the United States. *Slavery by Another Name* exposes the economic addiction to slavery and how financial desperation manipulated the social addiction to racism.