

Slavery by Another Name: A True American Story

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*Adaptation of the New York Times Best Seller and Pulitzer Prize-winning book
by Douglas A. Blackmon*



Logline: Forty years after Lincoln freed the slaves, a free but disillusioned black man is arrested and thrust into the prison labor system, immediately leased to a plantation owner. Slavery by another name. He must learn to trust the system that betrayed him to not only become free but also to help bring the very first white man ever to trial for holding a slave.

Synopsis: In rural Alabama, 40 years after the Civil War, a black farmer, JON DAVIS, is snatched from the bedside of his dying wife and sold to a barbaric plantation owner. President Roosevelt orders an investigation into allegations of slavery, sending one of the first black U.S. Deputy Marshals, BYRON COLQUITT, to aid the U.S. Attorney of Alabama, WARREN REESE. Reese must swallow his own distaste for the black community to do his job and secure Roosevelt's support for his campaign for governor. 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 Colquitt imagined uncovering. The plantation owners are ruthless, stubborn and always a step ahead of the law. Marshal Colquitt 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 Colquitt and stop accepting this horrific treatment as blacks' "fate" and stand up to the system enslaving them. Reese must push past his own deep-rooted prejudices, join forces with Colquitt, and find the courage to do the right thing. Together, Colquitt and Davis ultimately organize a dramatic rescue of the remaining hidden slaves, but gaining their freedom has unexpected costs. Will those costs keep Davis and other blacks from testifying? Even if they testify, can Reese get these plantation owners to trial and convince a jury of their peers that the only way of life they've ever known is illegal? Reese will have to face his biggest opponent in a courtroom yet: Prejudice.

Douglas, former senior national correspondent of The Wall Street Journal, spent eight years sorting through files in the dusty courthouse basements throughout the south, finding mountains of evidence that slavery existed for seven decades after the Civil War. His groundbreaking historical exposé has since been on the New York Times Best Sellers list, been reprinted more than a dozen times, won the 2009 Pulitzer Prize, and is now required reading in many universities across the country. A documentary based on the book appeared on PBS in 2012 and competed at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival.

Jeanne is the Editor of Script Magazine and co-founder and moderator of Twitter's screenwriter chat, Scriptchat. She consults with screenwriters and teaches webinars for The Writers Store on the business and craft of screenwriting.

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