

*****Press Release*****

Justice Center of Rensselaer County announces online discussion with Pulitzer Prize-winning author on issues of systemic racism

Douglas A. Blackmon, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*, will be the featured speaker at a webinar to be hosted by the Justice Center of Rensselaer County on March 25 at 7 pm. The event is part of the JCRC's on-going work to address systemic racism.

Published in 2008, *Slavery by Another Name* documents the use of the justice system to conscript Black men into unpaid labor for white-owned enterprises for decades after the Civil War. Using original documents, this ground-breaking work traces the lives of specific individuals and families to shine a light on an unseen, troubling past. A documentary film based on the book attracted more than 5 million viewers to its first broadcasts on PBS, and has been rebroadcast thousands of times since then.

The extensive research behind the book provides some of the first concrete, cohesive, accessible evidence of specific, systematic, official hijacking of the post-Civil War justice system to undergird a white-centric economy with uncompensated Black labor. Affirmed by Black leaders and scholars as supplying a critical, but long-missing link in the history of race relations in the US, it provides useful background as we assess where we are today and what we're going to do about it.

"Douglas Blackmon's work illuminated the role of law enforcement and the judiciary in the continuing denial of basic rights to Black citizens on a massive scale. With inescapable clarity, he documented the profound suffering and loss of life during a dark period of our history," according to Robert Doherty, president of the Justice Center of Rensselaer County.

Blackmon is currently a professor in the Creative Media Industries Institute at Georgia State University and is completing a new book co-authored with former U.S. Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr. Previously, he was a Presidential Studies Fellow at the University of Virginia's Miller Center. There he hosted the weekly television program, American Forum, broadcast over 300 PBS stations across the country. Previous to that assignment he was the long-time chief of the Wall Street Journal's Atlanta bureau and that paper's Senior National Correspondent. He has written

extensively over the past 25 years about the American quandary of race — exploring the integration of schools during his childhood in a Mississippi Delta farm town, lost episodes of the Civil Rights movement, and, repeatedly, the dilemma of how contemporary society grapples with a troubled past. Many of his stories in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post* explored the interplay of wealth, corporate conduct, the American judicial system, and racial segregation.

“I am delighted to participate in the work of the newly formed Justice Center of Rensselaer County as it addresses the long history of racism in the criminal justice system, as well as other important social matters,” stated Blackmon.

The March 25th event will begin with a presentation by Mr. Blackmon followed by a question and answer session. Guests can register for the event at the [Justice Center of Rensselaer County](#) website. Donations to further the work of the Justice Center of Rensselaer County will be gratefully accepted, but are not required. All are welcome to attend.

Participants are encouraged to read the book and/or watch the documentary. Books are available to registered participants through Market Block Books for a 20% discount. The documentary is available for viewing at no charge by clicking [here](#) or through the [Justice Center](#) website.