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### Corporate Responsibility for Reparations

Author: STEPHEN L. ESQUITH

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This essay looks at one aspect of the Holocaust and American slavery: the responsibilities of corporations that have benefited from these practices and often have continued to benefit. By clarifying these responsibilities and considering possible ways in which they can be met, I hope to shed light on the inter-dependence of genocide and slavery when viewed as practices whose legacies for beneficiaries, not only survivors persist long after their official conclusion. The idea that corporations were usually just innocent bystanders to genocide and slavery or else coerced to participate against their will is comforting, but hardly captures the complex way in which responsibility depends upon future benefits as well as past deeds. On March 30, 1908, Green Cottenham was arrested by the Shelby County, Ala., sheriff and charged with vagrancy. After three days in the county jail, the 22-year-old African-American was sentenced to an unspecified term of hard labor. The next day, he was handed over to a unit of U.S. Steel Corp. and put to work with hundreds of other convicts in the notorious Pratt Mines complex on the outskirts of Birmingham. Four months later, he was still at the coalmines when tuberculosis killed him.

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