



When the BP oil gusher mess first began, BP hired prison labor in order to reap tax benefits instead of hiring coastal residents whose livelihoods crashed with the explosion of the wellhead. When the community expressed their outrage, BP did not stop the practice of using prison labor.

No, apparently BP simply tried to literally cover-up the use of prison labor by changing the clothing worn by the inmates to give the appearance of a civilian workforce. Big surprise.

According to The Nation article, during the first few days of this cleanup, cleanup workers for Louisiana beaches wore “scarlet pants and white t-shirts with the words ‘Inmate Labor’ printed in large red block letters.” This is how coastal residents learned that BP hired prison labor rather than them. After community outrage was expressed at public meetings, the “outfits disappeared overnight.”

However, Abe Louise Young, author of the article in The Nation, was not convinced that BP had actually stopped using prison labor in Grand Isle, Louisiana because “nine out of ten residents are white, [but] the cleanup workers are almost exclusively African-American men.” Ben Jealous, the president of NAACP, also demanded to know “why black people were over-represented in ‘the most physically difficult, lowest paying jobs, with the most significant exposure to toxins.’”

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