

In the South, workers feel trapped at their jobs.

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Hi Lauren,

Recently, along with Alabama A&M and Jackson State Universities, Jobs to Move America [released a report](#) about the quality of manufacturing jobs in the South. The report found that job quality is generally lacking, but one thing stuck out to me: these jobs in Alabama and Mississippi are often the best-paying in the area. That might seem like a good thing, but in effect this puts what I like to call “golden handcuffs” on workers.

“They pay you enough knowing you can't find that type of base pay anywhere else in the tri-state area. Then treat you the way they want because they know you will probably take it,” one worker in the report said.

I’m thinking about this today on Juneteenth, the holiday commemorating the day enslaved people in Texas learned they were free (a full *two years* after the Emancipation Proclamation, I might add). When reflecting on this day last year, I asked if Black workers today are [truly free](#). If workers are holding two or three jobs at a time and still not making ends meet, giving them no time to spend with the family they’re working to support, I would argue they’re not.

That reminds me of another finding from the report: workers at these manufacturing facilities say that work-life balance is virtually nonexistent. One worker said:

“I work six days a week and hardly have any family time. Yes, I make more money, but we’re all exhausted and none of my coworkers are happy at all ... Everyone with a family feels trapped.”

Clearly, we have work to do to ensure that manufacturing jobs in the South and beyond are good jobs where nobody feels trapped or handcuffed.

That’s what we’re working toward at JMA, and we’re slowly making progress. It’s been a little over a year since we signed our community benefits agreement with New Flyer, and already the agreement is [making an impact](#). Workers who once faced barriers to good jobs—like Black and brown people, women, and those impacted by the criminal punishment system—are finding good jobs at New Flyer.

A good job is not just about pay. A good job should also provide a good work-life balance, safety and respect on the job, and opportunities for all workers to advance. These jobs should be able to sustain families and communities, and allow workers to lead a full life *outside* of work.

Thank you for your support in creating true freedom for all workers.

In solidarity,



Erica Iheme
Co-Executive Director

What We're Reading and Watching

- JMA Mississippi Community Engagement Coordinator Angela Dawson’s op-ed about systemic racism in the South was published by the [Jackson Advocate](#). **“Since it’s our tax dollars that are given away to these companies that perpetuate those plantation dynamics, we essentially end up funding our own exploitation.”**
- JMA Southern Policy Manager Patricia Todd’s op-ed on **the passing of the Transparency in Incentives Act** in Alabama was published on [AL.com](#) and [Alabama Political Reporter](#), and the one she wrote with [Good Jobs First’s](#) Kasia Tarczynska was published in the [Alabama Reflector](#) and [Montgomery Advertiser](#).
- In our latest installment of [JMA in a Minute](#), our Alabama organizer **Charles Croom breaks down Community Benefits Agreements**.

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