

## **Prison Slavery and Forced Labor: National Work Stoppage in the U.S.**

Presented by Ben Turk and Colleen Hackett

The institution of slavery, in conjunction with a genocidal colonialist expansion across the land now known as the United States, solidified a white supremacist racial order that continues to persist in many varied ways, including through the modern penal system. The 13th Amendment of the U.S. constitution abolished slavery *except* as a punishment for a crime and as a result, state and federal governments as well as private corporations are able to forcibly extract labor from the country's extremely large incarcerated population. This extraction is done in coercive ways and in abusive conditions for very little pay. The Free Alabama Movement (FAM), in conjunction with IWW labor activists and other prison supporters and organizers, have called for a national work stoppage across prisons and detention facilities to disrupt the prison industries and to demand fair wages and fair working conditions. FAM is led by prisoners incarcerated in Alabama and successfully initiated a statewide work stoppage in 2014 that helped to galvanize support for the end of prison slavery and the momentum to implement actions across the United States. The presenters are outside supporters and are helping to coordinate a national work stoppage (date of the protests to be announced) and want to see if there can be any connections made with the Ecuadorian context (and possibly for other South American countries). We will discuss strategies, tactics, challenges, and attempt to make this presentation more of an active engagement with organizers in the room who might want to take collaborative action with this protest.