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The tax education of Lauryn Hill: Prison

By Alan Duke, CNN
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STORY HIGHLIGHTS

NEW: "If that's not like enough to slavery, I don't know," Hill told the judge

The singer must serve a year on probation and possibly three months of home confinement

She must report to prison on July 8, unless her lawyer files an appeal

Hill pleaded guilty last year to failing to file returns on more than \$1.8 million in taxes

(CNN) -- Lauryn Hill told the judge who sentenced her to prison that she planned to pay her taxes; it was just a question of when.

The judge reminded her that citizens don't get to choose when to pay the government just before ordering her to spend three months in a federal prison.

The Grammy-winning singer must report to prison on July 8 to begin serving the sentence for failure to pay federal income taxes for three years, followed by three months of home confinement and a year of supervised probation, the judge said. Hill must also pay penalties and taxes still owed and a \$60,000 fine.

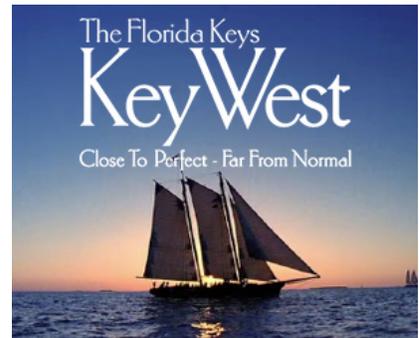
Hill pleaded guilty last year to three counts of failing to file tax returns on more than \$1.8 million between 2005 and 2007.

The artist appeared Monday before U.S. Magistrate Judge Madeline Cox Arleo in federal court in Newark, New Jersey, for sentencing.

Hill told the judge she lives "very modestly" considering how much money her music -- she has sold 16 million records -- earned for other people.

"Someone did the math, and it came to around \$600 million," she said. "And I sit here before you trying to figure out how to pay a tax debt? If that's not like enough to slavery, I don't know."

"This wasn't a life of jet-setting glamour," she said. "This was a life of sacrifice with very little time for myself and my children."



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Hill releases new music

The income in question was mostly from music and film royalties paid to companies she owned between 2005 and 2008, according to the U.S. attorney's office.

"Although Hill pleaded guilty to charges specifically related to those tax years, her sentence also takes into account additional income and tax losses for 2008 and 2009 -- when she also failed to file federal returns -- along with her outstanding tax liability to the state of New Jersey, for a total income of approximately \$2.3 million and total tax loss of approximately \$1,006,517," the prosecutor said.

Hill's lawyer, Nathan Hochman, told CNN that Hill has fully paid her taxes.

"I think the judge gave a fair and reasonable sentence," Hochman said.

Her lack of a prior criminal record and the fact that she has six minor children helped, he said.

"I think the government has let a number of celebrities off and never criminally prosecuted them, Willie Nelson being at least one example," he said. "I think that the court took that into account as well. Ms. Hill did not get a slap on the wrist and let off with just paying a certain amount of money but has had to go through this entire criminal prosecution."

Hill also used her sentencing to talk about her music.

"I didn't make music for celebrity status," she told the court. "I made music for artistic and existential catharsis, which was not just necessary for myself but it was also necessary for the generations of oppressed people who hadn't had their voices expressed like I was able to do it. Music is not something I do from 9 to 5. It's a state of being, and like a doctor who delivers babies, I'm on call all the time because that's the kind of work this is."

Hill revealed in a message posted to her Tumblr account last month that she's been working on new music.

"It has been reported that I signed a new record deal, and that I did this to pay taxes. Yes, I have recently entered into an agreement with Sony Worldwide Entertainment, to launch a new label, on which my new music will be released," Hill wrote. "And yes, I am working on

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new music."

Her fans have been waiting for new music from her since her 1998 solo album, "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill."

CNN's Doug Ganley contributed to this report.

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