

BLACK FARMERS & AGRICULTURALISTS ASSOCIATION



& THE LAND LOSS FUND

P.O. Box 61

Tillery, NC 27887

Ph. 252-826-2800

Fax: (252) 826-3244

E-mail:

tillery@aol.com

www.bfaa-us.org

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U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA)
B40D Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Sen. Warnock:

My name is Gary R. Grant, a 77-year-old highly frustrated and invisible African American farmer, a lifelong registered Democrat, and the son of lifelong registered Democrats in North Carolina's 1st Congressional District, Halifax County, a Tier 1 county.

I am also the founding president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association (BFAA), organized by Black Farmers in response and to address the racism at USDA for the Pigford Class Action. From the age of four years, I also grew up and continue to live in the USDA former project called the F. D. Roosevelt's 1935 New Deal "Tillery Farms Resettlement Community." My parents joined some 350 African American families in the Tillery Farm Project in January 1947 and began the process to purchase Farm Unit #51.

As a community and as a family, we became struggling but independent landowners, community activists, cultural icons, educational scholars and thinkers, and sensory and practicing expressions of God's existence.

Even though I am president of BFAA and an active supporter of Black and Brown farmers and landowners, my public activism has been limited in the last couple of years due to illness, primarily "Congestive Heart Failure." Mr. Lawrence Lucas and Mr. Waymon Hinson have been most helpful in keeping me posted on the bill.

You have my most fervent appreciation for sponsoring the Black Farmers Bill as part of the American Rescue Plan, for standing with Black farmers so they can make a living, and for keeping Black farm communities in some stage of progression.

I realize that in this bill, the devil is in the details. My main purpose here is to stress to you the dire need to include a set of Black farmers who had previous discrimination and financial agreements with USDA but were never honored. If memory serves me correctly, there were 17 such cases, including the case of my parents, the late Matthew and Florenza Moore Grant.

As a matter of fact, the Matthew and Florenza Moore Grant's case was one of the oldest, if not the oldest, and largest discrimination cases filed against USDA. My parents kept impeccable farm records, and bravely repeated their story of appeals, record of discrimination to paid lawyers, the media, community groups, and whomever would listen, and thereby relegating the Grants as "dangerous troublemakers" and an unreasonable infringement on the "necessary order and destructive harmony" of USDA to destroy Black farmers and to illegally confiscate massive acres of black owned land.

It would be my dutiful pleasure to meet with you and/or your representative to provide the details of the pressing dilemma of these cases. There is no legislative accountability to the trail that leads to the purposeful downfall of these particular 17 farm cases, the heart break, the early deaths, the financial ruin, the intentional wreckage of the lives of future generations like those of me and my two sisters and their children.

My 1997 historic appearance (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?garygrant>) before the U.S. Congress addressed many of our issues and the issues of Black farmers as an oppressed group with an appropriate theory of hope and revolution, only to be mocked by the likes of some Congressional leaders.

In the midst of this real and threatening power grab, we were actually afraid to leave home to seek stronger financial jobs to abate the onslaught of USDA. Our personal homes and the advance education and mental health, and self-realization of our children were threatened by this contemptible new form of bondage. One final blow was that my sisters and I entered a \$130,000 agreement to pay USDA, instead of them making us whole for 30 or more years of discrimination.

During this reprehensible sphere of madness, not one single USDA or local FmHA employee is known to have lost a job, an opportunity for advancement, nor job benefits or pensions for their grievous actions, while Black farm families like ours struggled with no health insurance, to buy food, to keep the lights on, to heat the home, and to eke out a yearly crop with all benefits of previous credit avenues shamelessly cut off by local USDA farm offices.

Our local chapter of BFAA for several years sponsored an annual "Ms. Black Earth Pageant," where older African American women proudly competed for the title by raising money and displaying their beauty and talents. The funds were used to pay the emergency bills for local Black farmers.

It was painful to see the dreams and security of our beautiful and unflappable mother fade into early Alzheimer's, and the withering will and health of a dedicated and astonishingly insightful husband, our father, because he felt he had failed a loving partner of some 60 years plus to provide a secure home and environment.

The two of them died one day shy of four months apart in 2001. Mama was the first to transpire. Some words in her obituary from Daddy included:

“ODE TO MY WIFE”

...If I could turn back the time
And start our life anew
I'd plant some roses near the path
I have led you through;
There'd be no thorns to pierce your heart
No tears to dim your eyes
I'd leave no stones to bruise your feet
There'd be no sad goodbyes
But father time will not turn back
The hours that have passed us by ...
I cannot live my life again
But dragons I would slay
If I could be your shinning Prince
For only one more day.

My family and I are so proud of you, and anxiously await a just resolution for our family and for others.

I remain yours for the survival of Black Farmers and Landowners,

Gary R. Grant, President