

The Southern Cooperator

THE FEDERATION OF SOUTHERN COOPERATIVES/LAND
ASSISTANCE FUND QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Fall Edition
2019

2019 Fall
Cooperative Development * Land Retention* Advocacy



As we celebrate National Co-op Month, we are also reminded of the contributions made by the cooperative movement during the battle for civil rights. Historically, cooperatives have operated as vehicles for people to unify and lift themselves up above any challenges they face. In African-American communities in the South, cooperatives were born out of necessity. The need for equal opportunity, fair prices, and equal access to land and other resources represents the prejudice from which cooperation in the South was conceived. The cooperative movement helped usher in an era of resiliency for underserved farmers, landowners, and rural communities in the South.

At the turn of the century, there were only roughly 18,000 black farmers owning about 2.3 million acres. Racial prejudice quickly changed the circumstances for the region's black farmers forcing them to band together to work their way around many socioeconomic hurdles.

In Tennessee, farmers were forced to pool their resources and travel across state lines to purchase the gasoline they needed after local suppliers denied them access. In Alabama, sharecroppers who rightfully sought their fair share of government payments for the crops they had planted were booted from their land. These sharecroppers and their families unified by forming a land-buying cooperative to acquire land without the fear of being evicted. In Louisiana and Mississippi, farmers created cooperatives to transport their produce to the North in order to get the fair prices they were being denied in their own backyard.

The resilience exhibited by black farmers in the South and the cooperation they leveraged exemplifies the principles of the cooperative movement. The array of co-ops that formed in the South during the civil rights movement were the building blocks for what is now the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund.

While many things have changed since the civil rights movement, limited resources and rural communities still face immense pressure. These communities are always hit the hardest by economic downfall but cooperatives and their collective work as a Federation are effective in providing those who struggle with a platform to lift themselves up.

In the South, cooperatives are still being formed out of necessity to combat issues that are relevant to today's economic, social, and political landscape. Access to credit and markets, food security, land preservation, and climate change are all issues directly impacting the longevity of southern black families. Cooperatives in the South, and their collective work as the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, are vital and continue to enable these families to retain their land, expand upon it and pass it on to a new generation of farmers, landowners and Southern cooperators.

JOIN US FOR OUR 2ND ANNUAL NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH SYMPOSIUM

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OCTOBER 25TH 2019:

9am- 10am Registration
10am Program Begins
Noon Lunch & Networking

**POLITICAL ADVOCACY:
STRENGTHENING THE
NATIONAL COOPERATIVE
MOVEMENT**

Location:
The Rural Research & Training Center
575 Federation Road
Gainesville, AL 35464
For more information and to register
Phone: 205-652-9676
Email: audreyhaskin@federation.coop



Highlights

Thank You For A Successful 52nd Annual Meeting

The Estelle Witherspoon Lifetime Achievement Award Dinner Honored the Legacy and Philanthropic work of the Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson on

The Federation honored the legacy of the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr., founder and president of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition with the Estelle Witherspoon Lifetime Achievement Award. The Rev. Jackson has a long history working with the Federation and is one of America's foremost civil rights, religious and political figures. Rev. Jackson's contribution to the Federation's legacy is based on his civil rights work and in very specific partnerships. Rev. Jackson was unable to travel due to health challenges. His son, Johnathan Luther Jackson accepted the award on his father's behalf and gave a dynamic moving acceptance speech challenging the audience to push forth and create a legacy to remember. Jackson ended with two profound questions to the banquet audience, "What have you done to advance the society? What have you done to make this a more peaceful and harmonious world?"





COOPERATIVES ARE THE LIFEblood OF OUR FEDERATION

These are exciting times for cooperative development in our organization, nation and world. Now more than ever, people are realizing the value and impact of cooperatives on our communities. The question is...do we realize the value of cooperatives to our organization and the potential impact for our lives and the South.

Cooperatives are the lifeblood of our organization. The Federation is owned & controlled by its member cooperatives; which are owned and controlled by their individual members. Thus, we must continue to develop and grow cooperatives if we are to grow the Federation. Our focus continues to be on serving individual farmers and landowners as part of their coops as well as strengthening coops and building strong state associations.

Our efforts this past quarter have been centered around rebuilding our staff to better serve our individual as well as cooperative members; working with our partners, such as NCBA/CLUSA, to advocate for better coop policies and laws in the South; and continuing to build our regional marketing system in order to aggregate and collectively market our products as a Federation.

Our mission is to be a catalyst for the development of self-supporting communities via cooperative development, land retention and advocacy. Coops are a critical part of this and the key to sustainable rural communities in the South. Furthermore, coops are already a vital part of the U.S. and global economy and their unique structure and characteristics lend itself to various business opportunities, including agriculture marketing coops, credit unions, affordable housing, childcare and other forms of sustainable businesses that are rooted in and support our communities. However, the unique structure and characteristics of coops also present regulatory and funding challenges that need to be fully understood so that appropriate policies are created and strengthened in order for cooperatives to thrive.

Moving forward, our focus will be on better educating you, our member-owners, on the coop model; creating awareness among the general public & elected leaders that represent us on our cooperative movement, its challenges & needs as well as why coops are needed in our communities.

Cooperatives are the lifeblood of the Federation, anchors of our communities and vehicles for stronger economies and a better world!
Cooperatively,

Get Ready For Heirs Property Boot Camp

Forward 2020 will offer landowners an opportunity to attend interactive master classes and one-on-one meetings with resource professionals. This conference will be a one stop shop with everything heirs need to create a path FORWARD!

NATIONAL HEIRS PROPERTY CONFERENCE

A CONFERENCE DESIGNED FOR BOTH HEIRS PROPERTY OWNERS LOOKING TO USE FAMILY LAND TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES AND GENERATE LONG-TERM WEALTH, AND FOR PRACTITIONERS IN THE FIELD WHO WORK TO ASSIST THEM.

DECEMBER 4-6TH 2019

ATLANTA, GA

THE EMBASSY SUITES BY HILTON

\$350 FOR CONFERENCE, LUNCH & MATERIALS

REGISTER ONLINE AT FEDERATION.COOP
LODGING GROUP RATE AVAILABLE AT EMBASSY SUITES BY HILTON

404- 765-0991
INFO@FEDERATION.COOP

FORWARD 2020
NATIONAL HEIRS PROPERTY CONFERENCE

**Registration and
Sponsorships Opportunities**

www.federation.coop



Recently we see youth activism exploding on topics of food sovereignty, global warming, farming, and agroecology on a worldwide stage. Young people are proving that they have a lot to say about important subjects affecting their future. In this opinion piece, Briar Blakley shares her thoughts on the topic of heirs property/land ownership from the millennial perspective. We have heard very little from these future black landowners and young members of FSC/LAF. These conversations will continue in many newsletters and emails of the Federation in months to come. Please share them with a young person in your family and have open conversations on land ownership. **Donna DeCaille, Director of Communication & Member Relations**



Millennial Involvement and Understanding Could Help Stem the Tide of Black Land Loss

Essay by Briar Blakley

On a crisp fall November evening, at the age of 23, my family was gearing up for the Thanksgiving holiday. My mom was preparing and sampling her famous pecan pie as she made a call to her brother. While assisting my mom and listening to the sounds of holiday chatter throughout the house I was able to hear my uncle say through the phone “What’d the timber guys say?” I couldn’t understand the reason for such a question; was my family interested in purchasing timber? Were they considering starting a timber company? As the conversation continued, my curiosity grew until finally, I heard my mom say “It’s done and I’ll call you and let you know when they’ll start cutting”. The call ended but my curiosity continued to grow. I finally asked her what the conversation meant, hoping not to overstep a boundary that could be interpreted as being disrespectful. The answer was shocking, inspirational and educational. At the same time, my consciousness was raised far beyond that associated with most millennials today such as pursuing fame and fortune. My mother’s willingness to openly discuss land-related business with me made me realize the need for elders to include the next generation in conversations around land – after all, it is they who could be the heirs to this valuable resource.

Since that eye-opening conversation with my mom, there appears to be a growing trend of millennials becoming interested in all aspects of agriculture especially sustainable farming but also land-based community economic development with a focus on all things “green”. This trend is driven in part by the need to know the source of their food and to have a choice of what kind of food they will eat.

Monica Rainge, Director of Land Retention and Advocacy for The Federation of Southern Cooperatives contends that "Millennials have become one of the fastest-growing groups of new landowners and farmers."

Because so many millennials could eventually own their family farms and land, intergenerational conversations on succession planning and other land retention tools are paramount and could ensure the transference of this wealth-generating asset for generations to come. The Federation authored a research study that found that African Americans have owned 15 million acres of land in 1910, today, that number has dwindled to less than 3 million acres. According to Rainge, one of the primary reasons for the drastic decline in black land ownership is heirs property. Heirs property is the result of a landowner dying without a will or other form of estate planning. Heirs are left without clear title and the land is susceptible to tax or partition sales among other barriers. A recent report from PewSocialTrends.org showed that In the United States today, 76% of African Americans do not have a will; consequently, their land will likely become heirs property.

The question becomes - how can the conversation on Black land ownership, retention, and wealth-building amongst black families help millennials protect this transformative asset for themselves as well as future generations? An article titled "Progressive Governance Can Turn the Tide for Black Farmers" by AmericanPress.org stated, that "Black households hold about 10 percent of the wealth of white households". This is due primarily to a lack of resources. Landownership and sustainable development can go a long way toward closing the racial wealth gap. Therefore the conversation with millennials about land ownership needs to be centered on economics as well as history and culture.

This essay is the first in a series as I attempt to provide a Black millennial perspective on issues related to Black land tenure and stimulate a more focused solution based intergenerational discussion.

FOR MORE OF THIS ESSAY VISIT WWW.FEDERATION.COOP



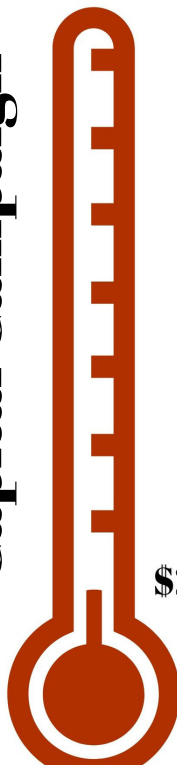
The Federation of Southern
Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund
2769 Church Street
East Point, GA 30344

Upcoming Events:



GOAL! \$5 MILLION

Capital Campaign



- ▶ **\$1 Million**
Renovate & expand the Rural Training and Research Center
- ▶ **\$1 Million**
New Capital for the Revolving Loan Fund
- ▶ **\$2 Million**
Forty Acres And a Mule Endowment and the Ralph Paige Memorial Fund
- ▶ **\$1 Million**
Basic Program & General Support

\$20,000

Building The 50th Anniversary Capital Campaign Brick by Brick to Support Rural Family Farms, Landowners & Cooperatives

