

# Farmers Gathered To Discuss Discrimination

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Among minority farmers, stories of discrimination by banks and government lenders abound, as do sad tales of losing inherited family land to the courts.

New congressional legislation, drafted in consultation with minority farmers, proposes to stem decades of discrimination and losses that have created an alarming decline in the number of minorities in U.S. agriculture.

About 25 minority farmers from Southern states, farm advocacy groups, and social and religious organizations gathered here July 19 at the Dirksen Senate Building to meet with congressional leaders and to show their support for the passage of the Minority Farmers' Rights Act. The act is aimed at addressing the disappearance of minority-owned farms in the United States.

U.S. Rep. Mike Espy, a Mississippi Democrat, introduced the bill in June as an amendment to the 1990 Farm Bill Act. "Small farmers constitute a dying way of life," he said, and "have

been targets of, if not discrimination, benign neglect. We should be concerned when part of our culture diminishes."

A similar Senate bill is expected to be introduced by Sen. Wyche Fowler of Georgia.

According to John Zippert, director of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, "The investigation provides a program of affirmative action and survival for black, Hispanic, Indian and Asian family farmers who are losing their land at a rate three times faster than other farmers."

The bill, HR 5198, provides for: immediate halt to minorit-owned land loss; restoration of black land ownership to 15 million acres by the year 2000; increase of land ownership to levels in line with the rural minority population in each region of the nation; eradication of racial discrimination in all U.S. Department of Agriculture programs and hiring; and assurance to minorities of a fair share of all federal resources in farming and rural development.

"This legislation," said Ralph Paige, executive director of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, "results from hundreds of grassroots community meetings, farmer-to-farmer consultations, administrative appeals with the USDA agencies, hearings and anguished testimonies of thousands of black and minority farmers displaced from the land."

Paige, a United Methodist layman from La Grange, Ga., testified in February before the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Agriculture Credit on behalf of the federation and of Interfaith Action for Economic Justice, an advocacy group of 34 religious agencies. Paige told the committee that "many barriers must be removed if minority land ownership is to be maintained and restored."

"Our contacts with farmers in a 10-state region reaffirm for us daily that historical patterns of discrimination, lack of access to credit and other resources, and limited education and training still exist for the vast majority of minority farmers," he added.

Donald, Stokes, a third-generation farmer from Alabama, spoke of instances of the USDA withholding funds for disaster and other farm-related programs from black farmers "until the last minute."

The Rev. Chester Jones, a United Methodist pastor from Little Rock, Ark., speaking at an April conference linked to passage of the 1990 Farm Bill, said minorities can no longer stand by, "watching land being raped by pimps and institutional prostitutes [while] the church is saying there is no word from the Lord."

"People who are part of the

religious community... have already judged and condemned many of our small farmers, saying they got themselves in trouble; that they are overextended... Can we maintain what these small farmers gave us—church buildings, colleges, institutions—with nickels and dimes and quarters?"

Of the nation's 38,851 farmers

younger than 25, 17% are black. In 1920, 14 percent of farmers were black; today, fewer than one percent.

If that rate of decline continues, Paige said, "we will soon fulfill the prophecy of the 1963 U.S. Civil Rights Commission report which stated, 'If no changes are made in government policies, blacks will own no farm land by the year 2000.'"

## Shoneys, Bank Agrees On Revolving Line Of Credit For Minority Banks

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Shoney's Inc. recently announced the establishment of a \$10 million revolving line of credit with a syndicate including five minority banks headed by Nashville's Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Co. Loans made under the line of credit will be used for working capital purposes. The interest rate on the overall loan facility is based on the prime rate.

Taylor H. Henry, Jr., vice president for finance and chief financial

officer of Shoney's, Inc., said, "We are extremely pleased with the terms of the loan agreement. Citizens Bank has done an outstanding job in putting the lending syndicate together. We always are pleased to be doing business with another Nashville-based company."

Rick Davidson, president and chief executive officer of Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Co., stated, "We are happy to have the opportunity to do business with Shoney's and ap-

preciate the confidence they have shown in us. We look forward to a long and mutually beneficial relationship with them."

Shoney's, Inc. operates and franchises a chain of more than 1,400 restaurants and 56 motels in 31 states. Its stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol SHN. Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Co., founded in 1904, is the oldest continuously owned minority-owned financial institution in the United States.

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## A&M Vows Fight Against School Merger Attempt

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (AP)—Officials and alumni of Alabama A&M University are strongly objecting to any forced merger of the school with another college or any attempt to close its doors.

Attorneys representing Gov. Guy Hunt and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education have filed documents questioning the future existence of A&M and another predominantly black school, Alabama State University in Montgomery.

Attorneys for the state last week filed a document with U.S. District Judge Harold Murphy in response to renewed charges by the Justice Department that vestiges of segregation remain in Alabama's public colleges and universities.

Murphy is presiding over the federal government's higher education desegregation lawsuit against the state. The case is scheduled for retrial in October in Birmingham.

"It is admitted that desegregation of institutions of higher education is required," the state document reads. "These defendants do not admit, however, that the goal of desegregation can be accomplished through the continued existence of the present form of governance and administration of A&M and ASU, or even through the continued existence of those two institutions."

The state's reply to the court also states that "...ASU and A&M are governed by their boards and administrations in such a manner that those institutions are maintained as predominantly black institutions," and that the two schools "exercise a disproportionately large political role in the state."

A&M President Carl Marbury said last week that no other state involved in similar desegregation lawsuits has made the existence of the predominantly black institutions an issue.

The state action seems to say to A&M and ASU, "We'll teach you. We'll get you," Marbury told the Huntsville Times.

Taylor Byrd, Jr., president of the A&M national alumni organization, said the state's goal is to have A&M merge with a majority white university.

"We were not surprised," he said. "We knew the state felt that way about us, but we didn't think they would have the nerve to come out and state it publicly."

Byrd said the alumni will oppose the state's attempt. "There is no way we are going to sit by and let that happen," he said.

The state's document states that Alabama is not required by law to operate A&M and ASU as institutions comparable to the University of Alabama and Auburn University as a remedy for pre-1964 segregation.

In the mid-1980s the case was tried and the state was found guilty, but on appeal the trial judge was removed and his findings thrown out.

## Local Serviceman Arrives For Duty

Army Pvt. Walter C. Haynes, Jr. has arrived for duty at Fort Campbell, Ky.

Haynes is a military police specialist. He is the son of Walter C. and Patricia G. Haynes of 3318 Octavia St., Raleigh.

His wife, Amy, is the daughter of Glenn D. Fogleman of 2112 Broad St. and Nancy T. Fogleman of 2920 Chapel Hill Road, both of Durham. The private is a 1987 graduate of Athens Drive High School, Raleigh.



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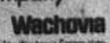
"My daughter was demanding her past, but I could not give it to her without discovering my own."  
—Dorothy Sprall Redford



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## life style



Days...Wake Tech graduate Bill Bishop works with a telecommunications company. Evenings and other off-work hours...he plays guitar with a local rock band. The programmer/musician is a 1987 graduate of Wake Tech's Computer Engineering Technology program.

At Raleigh Technology Group, Bill is working on a real estate software system which allows realtors to dial into a central database and pull up color pictures of houses on their PC computer screens. It's another example of using the computer for better communication, he says.

"Every time I write a program, I approach it the same way I would write a song," he says. "I can't sleep until I finish. Writing songs and writing computer programs both require creativity, discipline and problem-solving abilities."

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