

I would like to make a public statement at the Joint - Public Hearing of the Senate Agriculture, Labor and Social Services Committee on Diversifying Agriculture and Addressing Food Justice alongside Continuing Inequalities on our Food Systems scheduled for April 13, 2021.

I support Black Farmers United, and their 9 proposed solutions I would like to speak on behalf of our Farm, Fort Baptist Farm where we advocate for food justice and food sovereignty.

The challenges and inequities faced by Black Farmers in terms of land and resources access for agriculture is ingrained in the racialized history of the United States. The ability to address this issue by making funding and resources available to Black Farmers is of paramount importance to sustaining the livelihood of these enterprises now, and for the future generations. In 2012 of the Black Farmer represented 44,629 of the 3 million farmers in the USA. This number is 1.49% of all farmers in the USA.

The percentage represented is so miniscule as the food and agriculture system is inextricably interlinked to the racialized history of the USA; and that is inextricably linked to all our social, political and economic endeavors. Here are some problems and challenges I face as a Black farmer: Not enough persons of color in farming, this means BIPOC cooperatives are few to non-existent, markets for BIPOC produce may be difficult and dependent on geographical locations; and loans and other resources may be challenging to access. Instead of taking loans and incurring insurmountable debt, I experience the challenge of having to work at two additional professions in order to ensure that our small staff is paid a livable wage for their work during the summer. We have persons on our roster who face food insecurities, and housing and health insecurities due to systemic racism. Our efforts to help even one person at no additional cost to them means loss of revenue to us in markets that are dominated by larger entities. These larger entities are usually white-run, and have ease of access to the fundamentals of any economy: Land, Labor, Capital and Entrepreneurship.

In order to institute systemic change in support of Black farmers and growers statewide, our organization is in support of Black Farmers United - New York State (BFU-NYS) and we stand by BFU-NYS's "9 Solutions for Racial Inequity in New York Agriculture".

Due to this support, I would like to see adequate housing on farms that support seasonal, guest and migrant workers. I would like to see a path to migration for undocumented workers who work here, and the opportunities for them to have land access if they so desire. I would like to see land access of prime, arable land for Black Farmers, first-time BIPOC farmers. I would like to see current Black farmers in spaces where we can educate and pass on knowledge to the next generation. I would like to see permanent protection of Black Farms that are conservation easements. I would like to see better access to markets, loans, educational opportunities, and spaces that we as Black farmers never had access to due to systemic racism and the intergenerational difficulties posed by this scourge.

Thank you Donnette Baptist: Fort Baptist Farm April 13, 2021

Commented [DCB1]: