



National Organization to Save the Grant Family Farm

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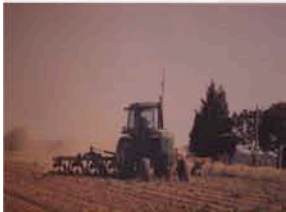
Dear Friends:

We invite you to become a part of civil rights history by supporting the struggle to save the Grant family farm in Tillery, North Carolina. The farm is threatened with foreclosure by the US government following decades of racial discrimination against the Grants and other black farmers. The Grants are not alone in their grievances, but they have been singled out due to their leadership in black farmers' struggles for over 50 years. The Grants have been active champions for justice at all levels from the local USDA offices where officials held black farmers' loans until planting season was over, to Washington DC and the nation-wide 15,000 member class action civil rights suit, *Pigford v. Glickman and the US Department of Agriculture*. Now we need to come together to support this strong family in their time of need.

Matthew and Florenza Moore Grant began farming in the Tillery Resettlement Community in 1947. Over the next five decades, officials in local USDA offices discriminated against black farmers by delaying delivery of loans, requiring excessive collateral, and intimidating black borrowers. As farmers and business owners, Matthew and Florenza fought these injustices. They helped found the Halifax County NAACP chapter, and Florenza was the first black woman in the county to register to vote. Local USDA officials targeted the Grants and other local leaders in efforts to maintain white supremacy. In 1981, the US Department of Justice pressured the Grants into an agreement that prevented them from rescheduling debts. Although the USDA admitted their discrimination in 1998, Matthew and Florenza died in 2001 before the family's civil rights case was settled. Now the Grant family farm is threatened with foreclosure unless the family can raise \$40,000.

The long struggle for equality and justice for African Americans continues to this day. Persistent inequalities in education, health, and incarceration are all too prevalent. So too are equally pervasive inequalities in wealth. Between 1865 and 1985, African Americans increased their percentage of the nation's wealth from around one half of one percent to around only one percent. This disparity in wealth stands as a significant barrier to solving other racial disparities. Importantly, farmland is a major component of the African-American wealth base. In rural communities, landowners are the middle class. An attack on black landowners is an effort to create a permanent underclass of impoverished and vulnerable rural African Americans. Rural black leadership is not trivial. Throughout the long struggle for racial equality, black landowners have played invaluable roles. These farmers had the courage and independence from the white power structure to house civil rights volunteers and freedom riders during the 1950s and 1960s. Black farmers and business owners like the Grants stood as an underappreciated core of the freedom movement. In many cases they were the only individuals who possessed enough assets to post bond for arrested demonstrators and activists. Their record of paying taxes, employing people, and producing commodities established them as significant contributors to many rural economies and communities. In defiance of an unjust system, they stood as citizens long before *Brown v. Board* and the Voting Rights Act of 1964. They continue to stand as leaders today.

In response to the decades of discrimination, and without meaningful responses from Washington, black farmers successfully sued Secretary Dan Glickman and the Department of Agriculture in the now historic *Pigford v. Glickman* 1997 suit. The result was the largest class-action civil rights settlement in the history of the country. Black farmers had led again, this time challenging one of our largest public institutions, the US Department of Agriculture. The



Pigford v. Glickman lawsuit stands as a civil rights case of nearly the same magnitude as Brown v. Board of Education. While Brown v. Board of Education overturned the famous Plessy v. Ferguson decision by declaring that one cannot have separate and equal, Pigford v. Glickman challenges the use of discriminatory lending practices to segregate rural America. Rural land ownership remains a key component of the persistent wealth inequality between African Americans and Whites, and in rural communities it remains a significant source of power. The loss of nearly eight million acres of black farmland since 1920 has been devastating to the African-American community.

The Grant family was part of the leadership cadre and core group of claimants in the historic Pigford v. Glickman lawsuit. They have steadfastly refused to be silenced by accepting piecemeal and insufficient settlement offers from the USDA. Like Fannie Lou Hamer who “didn’t come all this way for no two seats” and was “sick and tired of being sick and tired,” the Grants have stood their ground in heroic form.

Matthew and Florenza left the farm to their children. While the civil rights case brought by their parents continues to be delayed in court, the Grant children were forced into a consent agreement in 2008 that required them to pay \$100,000 to the US government. Although they have paid \$60,000, they are now without funds. Matthew and Florenza’s farm, the land for which they fought so hard, home to our friends Evangeline and Gary, will be lost unless the family can raise \$6,000 per month through September.

Now is the time for you to act. Join with other people who believe in civil rights and social justice to help overcome racism in rural America. Like so many civil rights leaders before them, the Grant family has been working for us all. Please join us in repaying them for their leadership by making a gift today.

Make checks payable to:

National Organization to Save the Grant Family Farm
1228 Westloop Place #133
Manhattan, KS 66502-2840

(To prevent a tax assessment on the family all donations must be considered gifts and are not tax deductible.)

If you have questions or need further clarification, please feel free to contact any of us.

Sincerely,



Spencer D. Wood
Steve Wing
Waymon Hinson
Co-Directors of the National Organization to Save the Grant Family Farm