

CIVIL RIGHTS LISTENING FORUM

HALIFAX, NORTH CAROLINA

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 1997

John Boyd, National Black Farmer Association, Riegelwood NC

Secretary Glickman, good afternoon, Congresswoman Eva Clayton, ———. I'm gonna first ask the panel and it might take me a little bit longer on behalf of the black farmers that we represent here today I'm gonna ask the panel for just a little bit longer than five minutes, it shouldn't be much longer than five minutes, but if you'll grant me that time I think on behalf of all the farmers I think they need to hear what I have to say today. Is that alright with the panel? And I also express this interest in a conversation with Mr. Reed last week by telephone. My name is John Boyd, president of the National Black Farmers Association and it gives me great pleasure to be here to address you today. I'm here on behalf of the organization's concerns as it relates to the plight of the black farmer. The black farmer is not the only farmer that's experiencing problems in the 90's, but also the small and disadvantaged farmer, be it black, white, Native American, blue, green, brown, etc. We all have experienced problems on the farm, but I can speak from the heart today blacks are less than 1% of the nation's farmers. 67% of that 1% are tied up with the Farmers Home Administration. What this tells us here today is it plays a tremendous role in the future of the black farmer, but discrimination, racial disparities, unfair lending practices, all these things together has driven us off the farm in some sort of way be it wholly or partly. As I travel through the South everyone says Mr. Boyd, can you give me an example of some type of discrimination that the farmers are experiencing. The farmers are experiencing poor processing time as per one investigation. It

takes 60 days to process white loans and it takes 222 days to process black loans. The programs are a real problem. It's called program delivery in other words. Blacks are not participating at a 1951S, loan servicing or land ownership loans, but this process can never change without eliminating the person who eliminates, excuse me, who administers the discrimination. Any person that administers the discrimination should be terminated, they should not have three strikes to keep discriminating against the same person. If that discrimination happens then that person should be fired and terminated on the spot and this is the message that I came to give you today people, but in Brunswick County alone we had 60 farmers. We had 66 farmers on that program. Today only 6 farmers participate in that federal program and it could be partly or wholly to the State Director as the State Director sent a memo to Washington, D.C. to have those cases closed and started to foreclose on all of these farmers down in Brunswick County and I tell you something today people that's a serious problem. That's a serious problem that the State Director wasn't sensitive enough to take the time to look into these individuals' eyes and here their stories and concerns and went ahead on and foreclosed on those peoples' farms. I tell you that is wrong. That's wrong, people. What I want to tell you is something has to be done about this. It was an example of denial, denial of his race, denial of where he is coming from, and denial of where he is going. The discrimination that takes place only happens because we allowed it to happen. That's right. Take a look at this photograph that I found inside USDA, let me turn it upside down so ya'll can read it. NAACP, now apes are called people. This type of discrimination is systemic in the Department of Agriculture and it needs to stop and it needs to stop today. This kind of place, ah, of racism has to come to an end, but as you know people this is serious. This is

serious as all of us come from the farm. We came from the mothership in shackles and tied together and worked in the fields for free, but now we have an opportunity, a real opportunity to participate in a farm on your own as a business, but we need to be treated on a fair and equal basis at USDA and participate in those federal programs. But I'd like to challenge each and every one of you here today to stand up for what is right. You don't need to be afraid of what's going to happen to you if you don't stand up for what is right, but I need your help today. I need you to help us fight our battle and to build on our future. Our civil rights movement has come to a halt, only because we have no voice. We have no voice people, but the farmers have a voice now. Their voice is the National Black Farmers Association. Thank you so very much. And it was much needed, it was much needed, but our voice is tired of the racism, our voice is tired of the neglect, our voice is tired of the judgement for the color of our skin and not the content of our character, but we must let our voice be heard as one today. Our voices will be heard from the outhouses, to exist prominently throughout the South, our voices will be heard in such a way that all discrimination and racism, all the racial disparities will come to an end, and the barricade will be open on the doors of the last plantations so that we can participate in a federal program. God bless each other. Thank you.

Dick Fowler

Thank you Mr. Boyd. I failed to mention this in the procedural notes that I have. We would ask the remaining speakers if you would to go to a mike on the floor, I think it would help to move through the program more quickly and allow us to hear from more of you with following that if you will. The second individual will be Mr. Archie Hart.

Archie Hart, NC Department of Agriculture

Good evening. Honorable Congresswoman Eva Clayton, Honorable Secretary Dan Glickman. I welcome you to North Carolina. My name is Archie Hart, special assistant to Commissioner Jim Graham. I bring you greetings from our distinguished Commissioner of Agriculture Jim Graham who had a previous commitment with another organization tonight and he sends his regards and apologies that he cannot be here. Mr. Secretary, I read a newspaper article announcing this meeting and in addition to this announcement it addressed the numerical fall of blacks on the farm and I quote, "many have just not been efficient on the farm". And I don't know what's going to be the outcome of these meetings, whether land is restored or whether financial compensation is given these — deal with efficiency and profitability or we will continue to revisit this issue again. We at NCDA will do all that we can or all that we are mandated to do, but in addition we must make sure that funds are, that go into educational programs for this audience that in addition someone mandated so that there will be accountability not just the numbers, but make a real impact so that these farmers will truly be helped through our educational program so that they will be profitable and so that land will be saved and small family farms will be saved and also small minority farmers and this is my comment and just save a little — time for George. Thank you.

Dick Fowler

I have been made aware of a change that you need to know if you don't mind. At the bottom of your agenda when I mentioned the address to mail in your comments and a fax number

that fax number has changed. Technology changes rapidly. Please note this change if you will. The new fax number is 202-720-0119 and I will offer that several times during the forum because we have a chance of people coming in and out of the room. Yes sir. (someone asking a question regarding the short time to send comments in writing to the Washington D.C. address) Well I would ask you may want to consider overnight mail or get it in as quick, as soon as to that date as you possibly can. Thank you. Mr. Matthew Grant. While he is coming to the podium the next person that I will call will be Mr. Cecil Brewington.

Matthew Grant, Concerned Citizens of Tillery Land Loss Fund, Tillery NC

Mr. Secretary, Ms. Clayton, we are so glad to have you in this county and I don't, I've been here 50 years and I don't remember ever having somebody to come that was interested and we're certainly glad to have you and I'm sorry that you have to come on such a case, these people are in real, in real trouble and I've come here today and in 1976, 1972 and we me and my wife we continued with FHA, can you hear me now? I borrowed from FHA in 1972 and stayed with them for four years, five years three of them was disaster years and we tried to work out a plan several times these last few years, work out a plan to pay and we worked the plan, took a judgment and wanted me to pay —besides the regular payment and just worked out every year, '78 to '85 were bad years, so they cut me off in '77. Cut my credit off from everybody and cut, just cut, so I couldn't operate and wouldn't help me and the only thing they would say you have to pay it all, could not bring part can't pay something every year-, you have to bring it all or we're gonna sell you out and you how the interest runs on around \$100,000.00 at 8 1/2% a year so that's what got me out, I farm each year, have good crops and

gave them everything the crop needs every year. took none out from living expenses through the winter (change in tape -inaudible) department said no more foreclosures for a while and that ————help us, too. In 1988 I changed my program and I rented my land out, part of it and I worked part of it and I rented a little to the hog business and during that time I was able to pay off all the outside debts, all the ———— land payment with the federal land grant, but FHA wouldn't work no problem so I could pay them something. All they were demanding every cent even up to December of this year and had to bring it all or nothing. So that's where we're at now and I hope my son gets a chance to talk 'cause he can tell you better than I can and I wish he would be next so you could get the whole story.

Dick Fowler

Mr. Brewington and then next will be Mr. Sherman Witcher.

Cecil Brewington, National Black Farmer Association, Willard NC

Good afternoon ladies and gentleman, Congresswoman Clayton, Mr. Dan Glickman, Mr. Fowler. My name is Cecil Brewington and I'm from the state of North Carolina, Willard, North Carolina. I'm here with members of the National Black Farmers Organization. Let me tell you a little bit of my adventure with FHA, USDA Department of Agriculture. In the last of '82 I came out of high school in '81, the last of '82 I walked in to get an application to apply for a farm ownership loan. Well at that time I was too young, I didn't understand that so I continued farming on the farm that was my father's and in '83 I farmed with him. I went to get a loan through FHA to farm. I was denied, in '84 I was still farming there I applied to get a

loan. I managed to get an application filled out then to be ah, I guess what they call fill the application out and they said it had to go before a committee to be proven eligible and you know from the information I read the only thing I'd be eligible for was to give a citizen of the United States and a high school graduate and have some farming background of course I had that because my family's farmed all their life. My family's farmed for generations. In '83 I filled out one, '84 I was granted eligible, but I never sent it in to get a feasible plan of operations from the County supervisor. In '84 I farmed with my father and I had my friend's farm and I applied from '84 to '88 and never been able to get a loan so I listened to a lot of other farmers I don't know whether they were fortunate or unfortunate considering what they've been through with the Department of Agriculture, but that's what I've been through. I've been denied loans all this time, I still farm a little bit, I work a job, I farm the family farm there, but through those years I have been denied, I have been with several organizations that have been trying to, you know, trying to resolve these problems, getting to some members of the Department of Agriculture to try to resolve this discrimination problem. I'd just like to, you know, the times that I've ever got any response was when, you know, like I said was a term that people always used that it took an act of congress. You got to make all kinds of calls and raise every sort of kind of noise for someone to even give you a call and say well, you need to go down and fill out another application, we'll see if we can solve that problem, but it's never been solved. I've been with several organization has been up in Washington over the years, they have, you know, came here to resolve this problem, never been able to get anything done so we're here today still fighting it. My, what I would like to know is you know after, after me there is none. I don't see any young black farmers. I'd love to know what

the Department of Agriculture is going to do about getting young black farmers back into farming because at my age there I none so I'd like to know what they're gonna do about this problem about all these farmers are having. You got, most of the farmers here are from age 40, 45 and up. There is none young. I would like to see if they can design a way to weed out all the young black farmers and I know there's plenty of young blacks out there that would love to farm, but going through the problems that I've been through with the Department of Agriculture there is none and if it keeps going like this there won't be any so I'd like to see some response and I'd like to see what the Department of Agriculture is going to do about helping blacks get back into agriculture. My feeling is that through the work of our ancestors we have created this agricultural industry with our bare hands, with the modern technology we have today I think blacks are entitled to share in this farming and agriculture. I think we should get an opportunity like all other farmers with the modern technology that we have to show you that we can, we can farm, show you that we can have a feasible plan of operations and that we can operate and manage a farm so I would love for Eva Clayton in our area I would love to hear some response, Secretary of Agriculture I'd love to hear some response on this because these farmers are hurting, black farmers are hurting and there is none. I feel we have a lot of emphasis on a lot of different things, that people always up in Washington rallying for all different types of things. You've got animals out there that can raise so much money and put so much money out there because they're extinct, you know, but what about the black farmer? I think, I think we need to set up a program where we could try to train young black farmers, get them back to the farm because there's a lot of them out there that

love farming, but through this process the USDA has created over the years has totally designed the system to wipe us out and I think something needs to be done about it.

Dick Fowler

Thank you so much.

Secretary Glickman

Let me just, Cecil, most of the time tonight we're just gonna be listening, but I wanted to mention two things to you, one is the action team that Mr. Reed is chairing, is sitting over there, they're gonna make specific recommendations to me within about 30 days and they're pretty much unlimited to the kind of recommendations, they're gonna recommend that part of it may be having improved the operation as far as agriculture, part of it may be on how to improve our programming to encourage people to get into agriculture, minority farmers, we had a program, the 2501 program, that has not been funded very well, but it's authorized to do just the kind of thing that you're talking about. It's the kind of thing that we're gonna here more about in 30 to 45 days.

Dick Fowler

Thank you so much. We've had a note that some of you in the back of the room are having difficulty hearing. I need to be reminded of that so I speak directly into the mike and I would remind those of you who are speaking to do the same. Get close to the mike and if you start getting feedback from the speakers we'll certainly try to take care of that. I'm gonna, ya'll

have done a great job so far in sticking to your time limits, to help us do that I'm gonna ask George to move up here so ya'll can see him a little bit easier and don't have to worry about looking over to the side. Mr. Sherman Witcher and then next will be Herbert Banner.

Sherman Witcher,

I've got some information that I'd like to take the time to read...

Dick Fowler

Excuse me before you get started some of you depending on where you are it may be easier for you to go to the middle mike in the aisle or even the end mike, just to remind you of that.

Secretary Glickman

I think the folks can hear better if you talk in this middle microphone.

Sherman Witcher - National Black Farmers Association, Virginia

(technical difficulties -- microphone failure, the following is from the transcriber's notes)

I had a long drawn out speech, but since we only have 5 minutes, I want to know what can we do to help Black Farmers and help the situation. This gentleman said we need to learn how to manage money; well my answer is we got to have some to manage first. I am a small (by force) disadvantaged Black Farmer. We are here for a purpose. I have traveled approximately 4 hours to get here tonight. When you leave this meeting tonight, go tell your friends, your brothers, or anyone who will listen to what the problem is. Don't get excited, this is not a

racial thing. I don't hate my fellow white man; I love my fellow white man. The system works but sometimes the people in the system do not do what they are suppose to do. Most everyone is farming for wealth, not their health. I am struggling because the system makes me struggle. I don't know these farmers here, but we are all saying the same thing. Most of us here are well educated people. Do not educate us and not help us. I do not need a hand out all I need is a helping hand.

Herbert Banner, Alberta VA

(technical difficulties – microphone failure)

Offa Jenkins, Littleton NC

I am so pleased to be here this evening among people who are interested in the welfare of our country. Ms. Eva Clayton not only has tenacity, but integrity. Mr. Glickman and Mr. Reed and all of us are here because we must survive together on this planet Earth. I have begged and pleaded that our schools include, I have worked with Mr. Mack Edwards at Northwest High School, I have seen his agriculture go down, down, down. You cannot beg young people to get in there. We could not get one person to go to Kansas City this year at Northwest High School. That has never happened before. If we do not build up our resources just as this gentleman who preceded me said I would like to thank you also for coming here to Halifax County. Our Halifax County, north of Warren County, I am a native of Warren County, my farm property is Warren County. I went to the FDA first there a couple of years ago. I said I have a tobacco allotment which I inherited. I want to sell it. I think it's obscene to be selling

tobacco allotment so that people can grow stuff that's gonna kill 'em. He said well that's your choice Mrs. Jenkins. I said I've made it and I'm getting rid of it, but I'd like to raise one acre of strawberries. You cannot borrow any money, you cannot get any insurance on those that are not approved unless you have your tobacco growing and make, I don't even grow peanuts because I have cousins that can do it much better than I. I have a cousin that does no-till, no-till, his crop this year was so wonderful, but he was laughed at five years ago when he went to say this is the best way. Now we see it on TV, this is the way to go to save our three inches of crop soils that exist in many of our areas. We don't have five foot of top soil in North Carolina. In some parts of Brazil they do, so we have to wisely use whatever we have. I am here because I am a widow, I do not have anyone except myself and my two sons who are raising young children. There is no way that you can work on a farm and come out when beef is today selling at 25 cents a pound on the hoof. This is ridiculous. To live in a nation like this and have beef bring brought in here and sold in competition with people who are trying to exist. You can't continue to defeat our people. I will also affirm that all of us are American citizens. We are in this together to either work together or fail together and when we continue to say black, white, red, yellow, this, that and the other I am weary of it. I am not a white woman. I am a woman of color or I would be an albino running around here with thick glasses on. This is absolutely ridiculous. I work and grew up on a dirt farm of which I inherited one-ninth of it. My family has been farming here since 16 and 14 on one side of my family and 16 and 91 on the other side when Warren County was Duke County. We've been here, we've farmed, and we know what it is. We never were people living in town. When I went to Lewiston High School I was considered a country kid and I was discriminated against

if any person has ever been and I want you to know that, but that's over and done. We are people who now should be out voting. In the May primary in Halifax County we had fewer than 10% of the registered voters to vote. In the November election we had no more. If we don't vote and get the things done that we need done, I have one minute, then we are going to lose the right to vote. I plead with you people please let's work together so that our representatives Clayton, our Senator —, our Mr., the man from the Governor's office that works with us, he is such a dear, we have wonderful people. I have not been hurt by people because I have worked 44 years I've worked and I'm drawing my retirement, that's all I have. When my husband died our income was cut in half; therefore, I have to do fewer and fewer things and work harder and harder. I will mail to you some of the things Ms. Clayton has tried to help us stop that Virginia Beach from getting the water from Lake Gaston. If we had a drought there would be no irrigation. When Lake Gaston was flooded in 1964 only two people were given the opportunity. No one realized that irrigation can make the difference. We could be, in California my son's water bill a month was \$7.00 no matter how much he used. I'm ready to stop. Thank you and God bless you.

Dick Fowler

And Mrs. Jenkins please accept my apologies for my blunder. Glen Slade, following him will be Benny Bunting.

Glen Slade, Smithfield VA

I ought to say good evening to everybody here. My name is Glen Slade from Surry, Virginia. I just want to say that I don't really have a problem with FIIA exclusively. I have a problem with the whole lending institution we have set up and the system it operates. To me it seems like farmers are really fifth class. Black youths, for example, it'd be about two years ago I received a letter from Nationsbank saying that I was automatically pre-approved for \$25,000.00 to buy a new car. All I'd have to do is go pick out the car, come in, sit down, thank you sir, I could be riding it. Well, at the time I didn't particularly wanted a car, but I did want to apply for \$10,000.00 to try to get my peanuts, seed peanuts, seed corn, my crop in the ground. This application was denied. They said I didn't have enough cash flow. Well, my problem is I don't quite understand how I could have cash flow to buy a car, but not continue my farming operation. I, you know, I just wanted to propose those comments to you hoping you can do something, work together and improve the situation for the farmers. Thank you.

Dick Fowler

Benny Bunting, following Benny Bunting will be Julia Seaward.

Benny Bunting, Oak City NC

Mr. Secretary, I am a farmer's advocate from Oak City, North Carolina. I work with a non-profit group in Rural Sampson Fund International. Farmers are offered no cost director's assistance in the re-structuring of debt improving 1951S and administrative appeals. From networking with other advocates across the country and personal experience I've perceived

inequities in the National Appeals Division director's review process and that prompted me to do a Freedom of Information request for an add decisions. I have attached some forms I'll leave with you, five sheets of that information I've received. In analysis of this information reveals that according to Mr. Cooper that National Appeals Division Director, when the hearing officers rule for the agencies they were competent 98% of the time, but when they ruled for the farmer these same hearing officers were incompetent over 50% of the time. The year prior to Mr. Cooper's assuming directorship the reversal rate was 16% if the review was requested by the agency and 9% if you were requested by the farmer. This is indisputable evidence of bias and discrimination against a whole class of farmers by one of your subordinate employees. That attitude and bias should be unacceptable. Congress gave these farmers the right to an impartial review of adverse agency decisions. The hearing officers in face to face evidentiary hearings have ruled in favor of the farmer. In an ad Director Mr. Cooper and his review staff reversed the hearing officer's decision in a very unfortunate manner. This discrimination is clearly a violation of those farmers' civil rights. I was directly involved in a large number of those hearings. I am very much aware of the director's disregard of regulations and statutes on behalf of the agency and have case files to document this charge. Although they shouldn't be needed because the review reversal rate favored the agency over 50% of the time is in itself enough evidence of unfair, unequal treatment. Mr. Secretary, Mr. Cooper's review reversal rate prompted us to make another inquiry. This was in a hearing officer's annual job performance evaluation is decision reversal rate a determining factor? The answer was yes so now we have hearing officers and for self-employment protection are being intimidated to compromise their impartiality due to the discriminatory

practice of their directors. Mr. Secretary, you were quoted a few weeks ago by Inside Agriculture it said "it is simply unacceptable to me if the potential loss of a farm stems from any unequal treatment". Mr. Glickman, can you keep on listening to this discrimination and unequal treatment and abuse of authority? If the answer is no the next question is is Mr. Cooper and his review staff still employed by you? Some action is suggested. I would also suggest another need of action and that would be for you to personally send all hearing officers a letter of apology and offer the opportunity that if they thought any of their decisions (tape ends)

(from the transcriber's notes)

Some of their decisions should be reversed. Moneys and land should be returned to those unjustly hurt by these biased people.

Dick Fowler

Ben Hillsman, following Ben Hillsman will be Zelma, excuse me, Charles Tyner.

(speaker inaudible)

Secretary Glickman

A little louder, a little more direct.

Ben Hillsman, Roanoke Rapids, NC

I will be very brief, most of the statements earlier mentioned we have the same concerns. I'll turn it over to my wife.

Zelma Hillsman, Roanoke Rapids NC

We happen to be one of those farmers who have experienced late processing —at the local level. This year we received our crop loan on September 13 and I have to say that Mr. Paper worked very diligently trying to get it done, but as a result of us getting our loan late this year we lost our entire peanut crop to freezing because we weren't able to get our crops into the ground in time. And in addition, we had to have our supplier supply us at 18 percent interest and that sort of takes an added burden because out three out of the last five years were disasters so we're really feeling the pressure right now.

Secretary Glickman

Can I just ask you the lateness of your loan, in your mind, what attribute that too? Is this every year been like this or this year?

Zelma Hillsman

We've had loans that probably varied from 60 to 90 days. This year I think the Farm Bill had something to do with it, as I said, Mr. Paper worked with us, but there was a sever credit crunch, and one, I think I can share with you that it took 60 days for an appraiser to come to our land and appraise our property and they wouldn't do anything at the local office until that appraiser came from the state office, 60 days between the time the application went in and the time the appraiser came and our and our crops had been grown in May and they came around July 5th.——(inaudible)

Dick Fowler

Thank you, let me, those who have spoken so far let me thank you for doing two things, helping us stay on time, you're doing quite well and also let me thank you for recognizing when someone else has already made their comments for you because we're interested in hearing a wide variety of comment and we do appreciate that very much and appreciate you're staying very close to your time limits. Charles Tyner, next will be Rev. James Johnson.

Charles Tyner, Murfreesboro NC

Thank you, I'm Charles Tyner of Northampton County. Certainly appreciate ya'll coming to this area of the country and hearing us today. Our major concern and my concern is that I grew up in Northampton County, was born in Northampton County. We own a 300 acre farm. We work that farm and FHA was good to us back in 19, when I was born in 1950, '55', '60. I used to hear my father praise FHA at that time and all the things they'd done for us. Purchase the farm for us, we lived on it and I got my education and my two sisters off that farm. A year ago, really February 9, 1994 we received this letter from FHA. "You lack sufficient training and experience and education to be successful in farming to assure reasonable re-payment for the loan requested." Shock, if we've ever received one, the letter was sent to my son who is Charles R. Tyner, Jr. who is a graduate of A&T State University with a major in agricultural education. Our family sent him there so that he could come back home and operate the farm. Along with our farm we have some other family members who have farms. He came back to operate a farm, the only thing he was asking for was operating

money, not equipment. My father passed five year ago and left a shelter with equipment. My father left him also the land, wasn't asking for FHA to purchase any land, just asking them for one thing. Please give me enough money to buy my seeds, a few fertilizers that I need to operate this farm. I've read to you the letter that I received, February 9, 1994 saying to him who was a graduate with a degree and passed them his resume with the application so they would understand, he was 23 years of age, but he has a degree in agricultural education. A&T, we sent him there, disappointing to us, but let me tell you what else happened along with that. We then had to go out and seek other loans so we determined that we're gonna save some black farms. Black farmers in Northampton County, there are only a handful of us left. Only a handful of us left in Northampton County. Only a handful of us left, only a handful. We are determined that we're gonna save some black farmers, help some young black farmers who participate and be productive. So then we went out and, of course, we got other loans 'cause I worked somewhere else and my son's just a farmer, that's all he does, we produce chickens, hogs, the entire operation. So then, he did that, but then I appealed this process and I wrote a letter to Washington, D. C. to the appeal officer and I got a letter back saying that I was one day too late. The time had expired. One day, the time, and I really didn't have time to do this 'cause this was February now. We need to start plowing the fields March so we really didn't have a lot of time. I was so shocked for one thing, but then I called and no one ever even picked up the telephone to even to have sympathy with me to say we're sorry, we just can't help you at this time and try again next year. This was all and I thank you for coming because I've had this on my mind, I kept this letter, I'm gonna keep it 'cause if I ever, you know, retire, I might even write a book about how black farmers are being treated and for the opportunities

that were not available for black farmers in our, Northampton County, and I have a letter and I have all the applications, I have it, it's typed. I got the entire process that we followed in doing this and I wanted you to know that it wasn't fair and I'm telling you it wasn't fair because I've got neighbors down the road who farm with FHA who are buying land and who're buying equipment and buy, and getting the money they need and yet they're able to do so, but we own our land and we can't even get operating money from FHA. When it says in the pamphlet, for young farmers, I got a pamphlet, got it in here, young farmer. You're interested in being a young farmer then FHA want to help. Where is the help? Thank you.

Dick Fowler

Rev. Johnson is next and then following Rev. Johnson will be Gladys Hodge.

Rev. James M. Johnson, Littleton NC

Mr. Chairman, if I might, I would like to yield my time to Mr. Gary Grant. If that's not permissible I will speak.

Dick Fowler

I'm sorry....

Rev. Johnson

I would like to yield my time to Mr. Gary Grant. If that is not permissible I will speak.

Dick Fowler

You may yield your time.

Gary Grant, Concerned Citizens of Tillery Land Loss Fund, Tillery NC

Thank you Rev. Johnson. Congresswomen Clayton and Secretary Glickman, this is the second meeting in 30 days with Mr. Glickman and I'm still waiting for some of the people who sent you letters to hear from your office regarding my father and my brother. I now will not only have to speak for my family and the Concerned Citizens of Tillery Land Loss Fund, but I also have to speak now for the Halifax County black farmer. Before I do I don't want to turn this into a shouting match. We gotta keep things on the straight and narrow. The young man who came from the State Department of Agriculture I don't think that the secretary, the State secretary should not be here with you because this was another type setting. He would not have sent you, but he would have been here himself. To my sister, Offa Lou Jenkins who thinks that color makes no difference I wonder why I have on my answering machine from her for me to locate a fair skinned Negro for her to put on the Human Relations Council in 1995. (off mike comment by Ms. Jenkins) Yes ma'am, I do. I'm not out of order. We're getting things straight here. We're talking about racism that keeps black people from being able to survive. I wish for to make it known to you from the outset that I am speaking to you today on behalf of the concerned citizens of Tillery, Land Loss Fund and that I am the son of Matthew Grant, Forenza Grant, and the brother to Richard D. Grant who is incapacitated to the point that he cannot be here this evening and incapacitated to the point that he has no more faith in this system of government that has taken his land away from him while he was

trying to make a settlement. My family and I have worked long and diligently for the past 20 years to see such an event take place in Halifax County, North Carolina, where officials from Washington, D.C. actually appeared at our doorstep to hear our excruciating details and the valid complaints against the local, regional, and state and national agencies for the Farmers Home Administration. We have learned to think of every move on the part of the U. S. government as a trick, a pre-text, and a way to subterfuge action and ——— for the black farmers and landowners, but one more time and I think your Congresswoman Clayton for bringing this to Halifax County, thank you Secretary Glickman for coming. As a blacks we are going to trust that your motives for being here are sincere and —————. We hope for and we demand swift and decisive action to correct and rectify the recent practices that have long characterized the relation between black farmers and local FmHA officials in the South. Hopefully, these problems will be seriously addressed and resolved at this Regional Listening Civil Rights Forum being held throughout the South. In Halifax County the issues are deep and monumental, total school segregation in 1997. The court system, the police and Sheriff's Department are still use in insidious ways to control and oppress black people. 40% of African-Americans and 33% of Native Americans have income below the poverty level. In fact, South African Apartheid does not even describe the clandestine and openly racist actions against blacks and other minorities in Halifax County. Because the three major races here do not go to school together, do not worship together and, therefore, have no true social activities together not even basketball and football, blacks are still considered baboons, ignorant, and nobody wants to say this word today, but just plain niggers, that's the quote that's been floating around here, who don't deserve land and civil rights and if my family and the others

who have suffered the same actions and discriminations stop to think or relent for one moment we would be criticized, we would be praised with hopelessness and helplessness. Federal marshals and the County Sheriffs have invaded our land and privacy at almost any unannounced time. FmHA has also stopped all credit by suppliers and other lending institutions. The local Halifax office denied a black farmer living expenses because he refused to ask his wife to withdraw from college, but instead of getting our guns like a lot of the farmers in the Midwest have done we have tried to find constructive and legal ways to address our problems. We have tried to address how we could develop strategy to overcome the short-term and long-term crisis of black land loss. We have sponsored annual Miss Black Earth pageant with fund-raisers out of these small amounts of moneys, we have been to welfare and social agents of farmers who could not purchase groceries, pay utility bills, buy wood for heating, and pay legal fees. We have paid these bills for black farmers out of fundraising by the Land Loss Fund and the Concern Citizens of Tillery. We have sponsored local and regional Land Lock Forums to provide information, legal resources, and to teach farmers how to write wills and how to avoid pitfalls of heired land and assisted them in the maze for paper work for the appeal process of FmHA. The Grant family has found it imperative to hold monthly family meetings so that we can keep each family member abreast and versed on every action against us by the U. S. Farmers Home Administration instead of watching our children perish academically and in self-esteem we sought to teach even our youngest family members the value of the land and to seek occupations like becoming lawyers. Five minutes is indced much to short a time in which to convey the hardships the black farmers endure every day at the hands of the racist agents of FmHA. We leave you with

these suggestions and demands. Enough studies have been done about black farmers, but it is time for the USDA to take the leadership role in addressing this public policy issue from the social, economic, environmental, and political and public health impact on farmers and the farm community. Loan data from farm service agency should be made available to academic researchers for quantitative studies with appropriate safeguards to protect confidentiality. I have two letters here, from the University of North Carolina, one from North Carolina A&T, two professors who are willing to take this a step further. The short-term emergency funds be made available for black farmers is currently in trouble. In the long-term, financial and land compensation for black farmers who have lost their land in the past due to FmHA's denial of their civil rights. This money should be comparable to the \$205,000.00 loans in 1964 to the Scott Hill Recreation Association in Scotland Neck, North Carolina by Farmers Home Administration at 5% interest for 40 years, to build a private golf club and course and the \$15,250,000.00 a guaranteed loan in March of 1976 by Farmers Home Administration to Frank Perdue to finance the construction of Perdue Poultry Plant in Lewiston, North Carolina that now cripples the greater majority of black women in this area. We also make note that if these huge loans were being made is when the greatest attack on black farmers began in this region. That money be made available for the special programs to help teach young people about the value of land and the profitability of agricultural and non-agricultural land develop and to help replenish a black landowning population of young black farmers. That the office of Congresswoman Clayton and Secretary Glickman send representatives to the upcoming Black Land Lost Summit March 20, 21 to be held in Tillery, North Carolina in 1997. To immediately release Matthew Grant and Richard D. Grant from the clutches and personal vendettas of these

local FmHA racist agents. This statement includes letters attached to you to help you, I'm sorry, this statement includes attached letters for your help from people across the country and finally, Mr. Secretary, we the Grant family, want the job and the position and the pension taken away from Billy Batchlor, Richard T. Duke, Marilyn C. Holleman, William R. Daniels, Sydney Long, Jr. who as recently as the other day referred to my family, I'm getting emotional right now, I'll get there, who referred to my family, and I quote, "as the most worrissome family he had ever dealt with, always squawking to some agency or other" and this has been within the past 10 days. We want the job of Robert Cable who had the audacity to wear that necktie depicting that confederate militia marching in victory with the Confederate Flag waving at my father's final appeal hearing, and for their abuse and participation in the long suffering and destroyed lives, not only of my family, but of all the black farmers that they have put out of business in Halifax County and making it impossible for black farmers to provide for their family. Thank you very much.

Dick Fowler

Gladys Todd and then next will be Jasper Jones.

Gladys Todd, Zebulon NC

Good evening everyone. I praise God this evening from who all blessings flow because truly it's a blessing that He has provided individuals like Congresswoman Pyle, ah, Miss Clayton and our Secretary Glickman, to give us an opportunity to sit down and talk together cause really my family, I'm here on the, my name is Gladys Todd from Zebulon, North Carolina and

I'm here on behalf of my family and so many other families that I have heard of and that I know about that have lost their homes and their property because of funds that they received from the Farmers Home Administration. I have two questions I would like to address this evening. Number one, what qualifies a farmer to have a debt set aside or canceled interest? We were told that we had collateral; therefore, our debt could not be set aside. We had a family of six children, four in college at one time, two in high school. They were in college only because they were smart enough, we taught them to be smart enough to work their way through because we were not making enough to send them. Therefore, they were in college, we had to work, also. Day and night just to keep things going at home and to keep, help keep them going. Bill collectors were calling, we could not satisfy all of them. My husband, when the three boys became old enough to work we heard about Farmers Home Administration had all these funds that they were gonna help the farmers; therefore, he increased his tobacco allotment. I was working with the Anti-Poverty Agency tried to help other people with problems. I hardly knew what was going on at home and all of a sudden my husband told me we had to go to Farmers Home because we're about to lose everything we had and I didn't know what to do but cry. I has been a tremendous experience for my family. We had to get a second loan from Farm Credit in order to satisfy some parts of some of the loans that we received from the Farmers Home Administration. The, we had to make those payments each year, we had to make the Farmers Home loan payments each year because we couldn't get money, get any additional funds to farm with. My husband was a good smart farmer when we first got married, but he became so disgusted until he didn't even want to look at a farm and I can understand it. We also live under the threat of losing some of the property that we

had accumulated together in addition to some property from his mother, we were threatened by Farmers Home to lose some of that if we didn't make the payments. Question number two, if a farmer has been forced to cease farm operations yet pay their awesome accumulated debt where is the money coming from plus pay the interest? Why this interest I would like to know, can't you cancelled it? We waited two years to get the final information on what we would have to pay Farmers Home annually. We waited, now, two years to get this information then when we got the information we are having now to pay \$20,000.00 a year. We are, both of us are in our 60's, pay \$20,000.00 a year for this interest that we waited for for two years which was not our fault and the other debt that we owe to Farmers Home Administration. Now, I would like to know if anything can be done about this interest, if nothing else. It has been so depressing to me, I have prayed, I even asked the Lord for this day and then when this day came I didn't even know where I was coming to this morning, today, I was just following my husband and my son, but I'm so glad I'm here and got a chance to say the few words that I have said, but I do plan to send more information because this last year I started writing a letter to President Clinton because I have been very, so depressed that I asked the Lord what should we do? And the only relieve that I got was, the Spirit spoke to me and said I own a chapel on 1,000 hills and if you will serve me I will take care and that and that is just what the Lord has done, he has helped us, he enabled us to send our children to college, our oldest daughter is a pediatrician in Charleston, South Carolina and is doing well, all the others are out of college. If it was not for them helping us we would have lost everything that we ever owned, but we are not their responsibility. Thank you.

Dick Fowler

Jasper, Jasper Jones, next will be J.C. Cooper, Elsie, I'm sorry.

Jasper Jones, Gaston NC

Mr. Chairman, I'm Jasper W. Jones. There must be a mistake. There must be another Jasper Jones. I didn't....

Dick Fowler

Thank you sir. Mr. Cooper, next will be Delores Amason

L. C. Cooper, Warrenton NC

Congresswoman Clayton, Secretary Glickman, I'm L. C. Cooper from Warrenton, North Carolina, Warren County. I appeared in one of these program in September of 1993. Secretary Moose was there and glad to see Dallas Smith here again, Dallas. I got the same speech again, history might repeat itself, you might get the message this time again. I'm not gonna read I am going to leave time for somebody else, but I do want to say that the Department of Agriculture promotes the _____agriculture. I'm the immediate past President of North Carolina Organic Crop Improvement Association which is recognized throughout the world. I grew peanuts in 1993, I shipped 32 tons of peanuts to the Netherlands for more than 80 cents a pound. I was penalized by the USDA over \$15,000.00 for growing these peanuts because I didn't have an allotment, yet the market was in Netherlands, not in the United States. Now we were creating a market outside of the country and you promoted and sending money for

the stable agriculture, organic is more intense than _____, but yet you are doing a disjustice to the organic grower by penalizing them for growing organic products which is not even marketed in the United States. By the same token you are receiving in the United States peanut butter and other peanut by-products by the way of Canada and you help deplete the market for your commercial peanuts, but yet at the same time you want to penalize farmers for growing organic crops and shipping them abroad. I did not file a lawsuit for this because my lawyer was, had turned to a judge and brother Frank Banner wanted a retainer fee, so I didn't have the money to pay him that after I paid 14, \$15,000.00 to even sell my crop so I'm gonna put in a request for a refund Secretary of my \$15,000.00. Thank you very much.

Dick Fowler

Delores Amason and then next will be Stanley Hughes.

Delores Amason, Halifax NC

Good evening Congresswoman Clayton, Secretary Glickman and others on the panel. We appreciate your being here. We're glad you're here. We are hoping you are not a dollar short and a day late; nevertheless we're glad your here. I am Delores Harvey Amason. I'm a member of the Harvey family. I live in Halifax County, specifically in Tillery, North Carolina. If you can't find us just look on the Internet. We've been on our land for, since 1944. You've heard most of the comments that I was planning to make and I just want to add a couple of things. A country that can bail out any foreign country, that can bail out any auto industry, and find a reason to justify it cannot come up with any resources to help the people to put food

on your table this morning and who are responsible for most of the clothes you are wearing tonight there is something wrong with that system. Now the older Farmers Home Administration my understanding was supposed to be a lender of last resorts. I know 'cause I used to work, I worked right in the farm ownership loan division, I've seen many a loan docket. Mr. Glickman, I used to work for the Secretary's office, too. I've seen many other complaints. It's supposed to be a lender's last resort, but in my estimation it seems to me that we shifted from that last resort thing to an opinion of kick 'em bankruptcy, wait for them to default, and then take their land. Well, my father has been on this land since 1944 and one of the major mistakes he made was he had all girls and you know the business world doesn't recognize women for anything, much less for farming so nobody wanted to help we women play this farm and as I said, there's four generations of us, we're still on the same land and there's a lot of his sweat, my mother's sweat, tear, and hard work went into this land. Bankruptcy was not the answer for anybody. If you could pay the bankruptcy you could have paid it on your note, but nobody wanted to hear that, that was the thing and then the other problem I have is that the bankruptcy laws, the Chapter that was written specifically, expressly for farmers was poorly written, it was poorly phrased and most of the attorneys you couldn't even interpret it much more administer it, but still, people were charged that exorbitant fee for the bankruptcy. Most of the people who got into bankruptcy had to end up just like we did suffering. (end of side 1).... how are you gonna farm if you don't have any equipment? Tell me how you're gonna do it. Example, back in the early 70's the same Farmers Home Administration advised my father you need to expand, you need to have more collateral in order to qualify for operating funds. Specifically, they told him to go down on

Roanoke River and build a boat ramp. Now you know where Roanoke River is in Tillery, build a boat ramp, OK? Later on in the 80's the State Officers from Raleigh came down and met with us and conceded that that advice was not good advice, but later they further determined that it was not done intentionally with any harm in mind. In order to get operating funds we had to buy more land. Not able to borrow money as other farmers. Still managing to pay off that note so I'm saying if you're thinking that I sound emotional this evening you're right, OK, and if you're thinking we're concerned about working to help save this land you're right and if you think we're gonna get weak or give up you're wrong.

Dick Fowler

Stanley Hughes. Following Stanley Hughes will be Evelyn Powell.

Stanley Hughes, Hurdle Mill NC

Good afternoon. I'm Stanley Hughes, a farmer from Orange County and I have a great outstanding loan with FHA my mother mortgage her 50 acres so I could build a hog house and it went unsuccessful and then I filed bankruptcy. That hasn't phased out and I'm back to square one. I think all farmers here, I've been thinking about this all week about how farmers are just like cocaine addicts, they got any money to put on a farm, if they've got \$2,000.00 in farm needed, they put it out there. I have been working two jobs for 15 years and that's been going on with farm, on the farm trying to make it and I haven't made it and my thing is if you gonna take the farm from me you'll take it and sell it to another farmer for the appraised value

why can't I get the money and let me have it back for the appraised value. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

Dick Fowler

Evelyn Powell and next will be Oscar Gary.

Evelyn Powell, Rocky Mount NC

Good afternoon, honorable panel I'll hurry up. My name is Evelyn Powell. I am here representing the concerned citizens of Edgecombe County and my grievance is a little bit different from what you've heard previously. I'm here grieving about the hogs, OK. I have, I am a lifelong resident of Edgecombe County, I have lived in my present home for 15 years, my family and I, and I have a daycare center adjacent to my home. It has been in operation for 10 years. A hog farmer decided he wanted to put 6,000 hogs in front of my daycare center and I'm here also across the street from my daycare center is the church that I attend, so the hog farm would be right behind the church across from my center. I have already lost business, I am threatened to have to shut down. I was there before he was, I'd like to know if there is anything that you can do or anything you can say to help us in the community to help stop these hog farmers from coming in and polluting our air, our water, our land. We are now being forced to relocate. We need to stop. They can come in, they don't have to get any permits or anything. I'm a daycare operator and owner. I'm licensed by the State of North Carolina. Every, in any and everything that I do I have to be, get permission from somebody. Now he can come in and shut me down in a matter of months and I've spoken before the

Legislature, I have spoken to my County Health Board, my County Commissioner, Water Quality out of Raleigh, had a demonstration in front of the Hen Lo Farms in Rocky Mount. Nobody seems to hear us. It's not only happening in my community, it's happening in other surrounding communities and there's got to be something that we can do or you can do to help us stop this contamination of our livelihood. So if there is anything I will forward more information to you about that for the sake of time and I would like to see or talk with somebody relative to this as soon as possible. Thank you.

Dick Fowler

Thank you very much. Oscar Gary, following Oscar Gary will be Emily Perkinson. Is Oscar Gary in the room? You may be making your way to the mike and I may not recognize you.

OK, let's move to Emily Perkinson, next will be Charles White. Is Emily Perkinson, Emily Perkinson? OK, Charles White, following Charles White will be Mark Reese.

Charles White, Lawrenceville VA

Mr. Chairman, Congresswoman Clayton, and Mr. Secretary. My name is Charles White. I'm from Brunswick County, Virginia. The things that I have heard here tonight they're true. Back in 1984 I went into the Brunswick County FHA office and applied for a loan to procure land. You're not gonna believe what they said, but it happened. The day I walked in the first thing he told me was you don't qualify. Cannot use our services because you're in the military. I said yeah, but your book says as long as I'm farming three years after the close of the land I qualify. They took the application and I guess about 30 days they called me to come in. They

wrote me a letter and told me to come in, come on in, said we can't allow you to use our services because you don't have any experience. I said no, I wasn't raised on a farm, but I was raised in a farm area and I've been around farming all my life and my wife was raised on a farm so I don't have the experience she has. What they didn't know was that I had contacted some people that worked there in FHA, me having been in the military I had met a lot of different people and I have a tendency to make a roster of people I meet so when I need these services I can always call them. One guy I met was a County Supervisor, the other one I met was a District Director so anyway, we, one of them supplied me with federal regulations and by being in the military I'm used to getting regulations and I am use to keeping records so I kept records and I dealt with these regulations. So then I met this little white boy and he was doing what I wanted to do so he gave me a copy of his farm plan that they had financed the year before so when I presented my farm plan told me it would fly cause I didn't have a cash flow, but what I had done I had gone back and I had changed 50 cents here and 50 cents there and a dollar there, told me it wouldn't fly. So then I went to see ah, I was talking to Mr. Lee, gentleman right here, he told me to go see a man by the name of Stirts which was looked upon, probably an expert on writing farm plans, cash flows, so I went and he wrote me a plan a couple of weeks later when I got back said it wasn't gonna fly. But what I couldn't tell him was hey, you're lying man, so I went to see the man overtop of him which was the District Director, he sent me back to the County, said you gotta go back. Then I go to Richmond, they send me back to the County man, I said no! Then I end up going to D. C. They wouldn't talk to me, either. They sent me back to the County man. Racism is imbedded in FHA, just like we had Jim Crow laws, FHA has supervisors that have I would say unwritten laws that are

designed to hinder blacks. Now, in Brunswick County we have blacks that are good farmers. We had a County Supervisor that was one, now I hate to say this, no I don't hate to say this either 'cause it's true. There was one of the lyingest men that ever walked the face of God's green earth and I proved it. Now I have a file on him and the things that I'm telling you I can prove. I went step by step utilizing some of, was supposed to be some of the best minds in FHA and I went by, his supposed guidelines. I don't want a handout. The only thing I want is for FHA to go by the guidelines. If FHA goes by the guidelines we black farmers could make it, but when they deviate and when they does things under the table from behind closed doors they are designed for us to fail, yeah we gonna fail, and there's one thing I'd like to say to Mr. Grant, right on and I'm in your corner. I don't know what good I can do for you, let me know. I'd like to say to the man that was talking about the banks sending the loans, sending the pre-approved application about a car, I can tell you why they did that, buddy. 'Cause they know in three years that car's gonna end up on the junk pile. The car will end up on the junk pile, but land is a natural resource and they don't want you to have it, thank you.

Dick Fowler

Mark Reese. Following Mark Reese will be Vivian Warren.

Mark Reese, Kenbridge VA

Good afternoon good Congressman Eva Clayton, Secretary of Agriculture Dick Glickman. We have spent all evening listening to the various complaints and I think that all of us are old enough to realize that we live in America, there has always been discrimination, there will

always be discrimination. The question is what are we going to do about it? What is the USDA going to do? This particular forum is a pro-active step in the right direction. What we need to do as a whole is take all of these complaints that we have heard, sort them out, and put the most competent people in the places to help make the most profitable decisions for our farmers. I am not a big farmer. I got in to, I grew up on the farm and got farming accidentally from another business, but I'm glad because the Lord has a way of directing us in a particular direction that we can be most effective. In our particular farm and listening to the individuals with the horror stories you have to really acquire taste to be a farmer. The easy way out is get a good job working with Government, that you get good benefits, that you can dress, look good, smell good, and do all of the things that we all would like to do in life. Unfortunately, all of us don't choose that particular route. The people that decide to be farmers are the ones that majority of the time grew up farming and that was a passion for them. Farming teaches us a lot of good things in life, responsibility, teaches you work ethics, and it teaches you about the independence of entrepreneurship. What all of us are really saying here today is that we would like to have a farming operation that creates enough profit so we won't have these unnecessary problems of economic failure. What I think needs to be done is the USDA can look favorably toward developing programs whereby the farms that have inadequate cash flow and does not have the allotments necessary to create enough profit and cash income to substantiate you and your family's living expenses and to pay your principles and your interest on your loan. When I listen to all of these stories I hear about the hardship that we had based on the money that we received. As I said again this country has a history of racism. We're not going to eradicate this tonight, tomorrow night, and I'm regretful to say that this is a

problem that's going to be with us until we die. What can we do about it? We need alternative cash crops for farmers that have land, but they do not have the allotment that this gentleman spoke of to do anything with and you are greatly penalized, \$15,000.00 is a whole lot of money. I could live on that for a year. Most of us could that's on a farm because of the activities that we're involved in. We have to as young farmers and after going back to the farm and with tobacco and horses and other things that I'm experimenting with, I'm in the automobile business, so what you said about the automobiles is right. Unfortunately, I'm in the industry, but it's also an industry that could take everything that you and your family would ever own so we as a group of people need to develop alternative cash crops. Alternative crops needs to be marketed, it needs to have support organized through the USDA. Back some years ago when the universities and colleges in our surrounding areas was assisting our local farmers and I heard stories about the 50's and the 60's when things were good something went wrong then. At that particular time a lot of the funds was funneled away from the small institutions that gave us hands on experience and help and it was a local investment from these local institutions by having individuals that went to school that grew up in the community, that went to these schools and worked hands on with these schools to develop programs to make farming profitable. Regardless of what kind of game plan we put together until there's enough cash and profit in the crop that we are raising to service our debt we are never gonna be able to overcome the stigma of year after year of loss in our farms. Now, whoever designed the program I don't know. It's really irrelevant now. Unfortunately, for a lot of us we're a day late and a dollar short and until we develop as a group an alternative cash crop to help use the land and to make our land profitable there's no loan

necessary, there's no ability that any, it's nothing anybody can do to actually make your farm play, work. The only thing that will really happen is you'll go deeper and deeper in debt and until we get an allotment re-worked and ability for individuals to make a decent living profitably joint, in hand in our community and I will set that after this. Virginia State University and I'm from Virginia, as long as you have the community and the institutions not being funded correctly so that information can be gotten out to the farmers for their pilot programs and demonstrations set up to help encourage, not to just say we have a program that's available for money, but a program that can be viable, that can create the profit and income needed to make a farm operating profitably. Now, allotments will need to be increased, funds needs to be accessible, and I've worked with FHA for a couple of years and the stories that I heard about all of them are the same all over this country, so USDA, what are you gonna do about it?

Secretary Glickman

You want to tell us what cash crops you have?

Mark Reese

Whatever cash crop I have, I have no specific cash crop. It's whatever that can be developed to make this idle land that's sitting around because the individual that's getting the majority of the compensation are the individuals that have the large farms and the farms that are small do not have enough allotment on them to substantiate their operating overhead.

Dick Fowler

Vivian Warren....pardon, that's fine, thank you.

Robert H. Cooley, III, Petersburg, VA (attorney for Vivian Warren, Sedley VA)

Chairman, Congresswoman, Secretary Glickman, and members of the panel. My name is Robert H. Cooley, III. I'm an attorney from Virginia and I'm happy to be here on behalf of Vivian Warren who's father is a client of mine and who's father was also a client of my father's. I've been knowing this family for about 20 years. My father represented them and now I do. We are here because of this invitation, but I'm also concerned that some other gentleman said that he had attended a previous program similar to this and not so sure anything changed, but on January 10, 1992 on behalf of the Warren family we submitted a complaint of racial discrimination by the Farmers Home Administration to U. S. Department of Agriculture, attention Ms. Jenny M. Phillips, Director. We've not heard a word since 1992 with respect to this complaint. As a matter of fact subsequent to that time this family has been threatened with foreclosure and so we filed another complaint in your office in May of 1995. Still haven't heard anything. In the meantime, the family has not had operating loans, we're not asking for any operating loans anymore, we haven't been able to get them since 1985 and so since then we've been able to finance the farm operation albeit not at the same level, but our problems are very, very representative of the systemic problems involved here. Mr. Warren is from Southampton County, Virginia, same county in which Nat Turner's insurrection in 1831 was suppressed. Since that time black people in Southampton County, Virginia have had hell to pay. Excuse me, but that's the only way I can put it. The Farmers Home system of allowing

local supervisors to have the virtually the entire, the complete control, you've heard someone speak about how he's gone to the Districts and the State, coming back to the local. The local supervisors here have been devastating to black people in Southampton County. Mr. Warren had a loan from a commercial bank in 1970, before 1970, but segregation was still in existence at that time so he approached the school board and asked the school board to allow his children to ride the school buses like the white kids were doing. The next day the local bank called him in and said what have you done? Do you realize you can't get anymore money from this bank? As a matter of fact we could have called in the loan and so no one else would give him credit and he had to go to Farmers Home. When he went to Farmers Home he got a loan. As a matter of fact, he was able to get quite a few up until 1982. Thereafter, he was unable to get loans, we've heard the reasons why, your Farmers Home plan is not adequate. I have Farmers Home plans which I've worked on personally. I've been a United States Magistrate for five years. I was the first black judicial officer in Virginia, on a federal bench, and I have seen regulations, I have been in the United States Army, I'm a retired lieutenant colonel. I have worked with regulations, governmental regulations, I've written some, but when I'm trying to explain to my client what attachment page 5 of attachment 1 to exhibit A of sub-part S section 1951, can you expect these farmers to understand what these things mean? Your system is designed to cause these people to be failures and so your regulations, while your regulations might have to be that way because of the funding, you can certainly create handbooks, you can certainly create learning opportunities so folks will know what they're signing and so when the local supervisor says here, sign that, they don't know what they're doing. They're putting their entirely livelihood at stake. Money was tight, bills were unable to

be paid. This lady, Ms. Warren's mother died in 1989, Mrs. Warren was the lady who was keeping the books and the records for her husband while he was farming. This man was a master farmer who for 50 years his farm was on land that his father owned for 50 years before him. All right, the point is I've run out of time. We've been charged now with default in the loans that this man never got. We pointed this out in our 1995 complaint to your office. The, Mr. Warren is illiterate. He cannot read or write. When we found out about this foreclosure business we looked in his file and we saw that he has been charged for loans that he never received and now he's being charged with defaulting on the loans that he never got because someone else must have charged loans to his account and the Farmers Home Administration has done nothing except subject this family to pressure. This lady died, I'm sure, because of the stress from not having been able to pay these bills and no relief from the government. Mr. Warren says if you can't trust the government whom else can you trust? I'm sorry I'm out of time I'll try to get to another section here where we can discuss this, but I'm praying, not only on behalf of the Warren family, but all these people, everybody in here's got the same problem except that I think we've got a criminal situation. Somebody stole some money and is charging it to these poor people. Please give us some relief. Thank you very much.

Dick Fowler

We have run out of time or very closely run out of time. As the facilitator of this listening forum let me personally thank all of you for being so good about staying on your time, about helping us move along. We heard from a little over half of those who signed up to speak. Let me remind you that those of you who were not able to speak those of you who are in the

audience that possibly did not sign up to speak we would still like to hear from you so let me remind you of that address that's on your agenda, let me also remind you once again of the fax number change, 202-720-0119. And we would like to do two additional things before we close. We would like to turn the podium back over to Congresswoman Clayton and then lastly we would like to hear again from Secretary Glickman. Ms. Clayton.

Congresswoman Clayton

I want to thank all of those who have come and I want to thank all of those who have come prepared to make a statement and who, indeed, made their statement and thank those who did not have a chance to make their statement and hope that they will be persistent and fill in the information and send it. I know the feeling, you say, we've done this over and over and you say nothing has changed, more things change, the more they stay the same and you're right and, but you know, you have to be persistent even in the face of all the evidence to the contrary. That's what I'm told and this is called faith and that's, you have to have the right will eventually win over so unless you are persistent in telling your story, indeed all of the efforts and the suffering that some of you have undergone and much of this is, review the nature of it and the details of it certainly is descriptive of a pattern that we hope to, we can change. Also, in the invitation after this meeting we had made a request and because some of you farmers particularly in the southeast who have suffered devastation in terms of Fran had asked to have some opportunity to make some overtures to the Secretary and some from the State government who has been studying the issue because you know farmers not only, you find it difficult getting loans, but you also find that the Government doesn't respond to you in

the same way as it responds to businesses when there is a disaster so again, the inequality how they treat farmers is not just in loans, but also insurance so when you lose your crop how the insurance is done is different than how it is done in other areas plus you're not treated as an entrepreneur although you should be so those are some of the issues and I know that one or two people from the State who would like to have it out, after we adjourn this meeting and because Secretary Glickman has to get back we probably will only have about a half hour, but we promise you those who were interested in that that opportunity will be afforded. Again, I want to thank you all and to say that this is one of I gather seven listening sessions that are going around the country. I was pleased that we were able to have it in my district. I am not pleased that the continuation of the patterns of discrimination warrant this hearing, but to ignore that it is happening would be less honest so at least we are dealing with something that needs to be dealt with. We need your patience, we need your persistence, but we need you to stay on the case and make sure you give us strength. The more you make those statements you give us strength. We can't do it alone, it won't be done overnight, won't be done with one case. Each case is important so tell your stories, but also collectively it makes a compelling story that indeed the Government must respond to and one person.(tape ends)

