

1 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
2 CIVIL RIGHTS CUSTOMER LISTENING FORUM
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5 **ORIGINAL**
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7 2:00 P.M.
8 JANUARY 10, 1997
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11 SHERATON HOTEL
12 10918 EAST 41ST STREET
13 TULSA, OKLAHOMA
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19 REPORTED BY:
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LINDA FISHER, CSR-RPR
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1 MR. CLARK: Good afternoon. I'm Ron
2 Clark, state conservationist with National
3 Resource Conservation Service, headquartered in
4 Stillwater. I'm also acting as Chairman of the
5 Oklahoma USDA Food and Agriculture Council this
6 year. I would like to welcome everyone to Tulsa.
7 This is the Oklahoma Civil Rights Customer
8 Listening Session.

9 We would like to thank you for taking the
10 time to be here with us today to voice your
11 concerns and air any comments that you might have
12 to the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, Richard
13 Rominger, and the Secretary Civil Rights Action
14 Team. Just as you are here today committed to
15 letting us know what changes need to happen, I'm
16 pleased to see the commitment from the secretary,
17 the deputy secretary and the civil rights action
18 team to make these changes a reality.

19 We have several panel members here today to
20 initiate a dialogue with you and the folks that
21 you represent. I would like to introduce my
22 counterparts with USDA here in the state. Terry
23 Peach, he's the Executive Director for the Farm
24 Services Agency in Oklahoma; and also Charles
25 Rainbolt, Executive Director for Rural Development

1 in Oklahoma. Are there other members of the Food
2 and Agriculture Council here that we need to
3 recognize? Yes, sir. Hi, Rick. Thanks for being
4 here.

5 MR. CLARK: Next, I would like to
6 introduce Pearlle Reed, the civil rights action
7 team leader.

8 MR. REED: Good afternoon. The first
9 thing I would like to do is to ask the action team
10 members to make self-introduction, excuse me
11 self-introductions. So can we start with you,
12 Randy?

13 MR. WEBER: My name is Randy Weber. I'm
14 the Associate Administrator for the Farm Service
15 Agency.

16 MR. PEER: Good afternoon. I'm Wilbur
17 Peer, Associate Administrator of Rural Business
18 Services in the rural development commission area.

19 MS. MESSMORE: My name is Karen
20 Messmore. And I'm with the Food, Safety and
21 Inspection Service, Human Resources in Washington,
22 D.C.

23 MR. BOTTUM: I'm John Bottum. I'm with
24 the Research and Extension mission area.

25 MR. BARBER: My name is Jerry Barber.

1 I'm the Director of Executive Services for the
2 Office of Chief Financial Officers.

3 MR. PEARLIE REED: We also have four of
4 our executive staff with us, Kathy Gugulis, who is
5 the chief of staff of this operation; Sonya Neal,
6 who is on the staff; Jerry Gonzales, who is on the
7 staff; and Rebecca Delatori (phonetic), who is on
8 the staff. So without further ado, I would like
9 to ask all of you to help me welcome the Honorable
10 Richard Rominger, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture.

11 MR. ROMINGER: Thank you, Pearl, and
12 thanks to all of you for coming here today. I
13 would like to introduce another one of the members
14 of the subcabinet of the U.S. Department of
15 Agriculture. That's Jill Long Thompson who heads
16 our rural development mission area. Thanks for
17 being here, Jill.

18 Today at USDA, civil rights compliance has
19 really shifted into overdrive because there's
20 nothing more important than assuring that we treat
21 all people with dignity and with civility. We
22 want to see the department dedicated to creating
23 an environment in which every customer who comes
24 to a U.S.D.A. office is treated fairly and
25 effectively and efficiently. And we also want to

1 insure that we provide the same sort of treatment
2 to our own employees in the department.

3 So with the new year, we intend to focus on
4 how all of USDA manages our civil rights issues.
5 So toward accomplishing this goal, as you know,
6 Secretary Glickman has established this Civil
7 Rights Action Task Force. And the team consists
8 of representatives of each of the mission areas at
9 USDA.

10 And this team will take a close look at
11 how things are working at all organizational
12 levels and recommend ways to solve these problems.
13 During January this team is holding a total of 13
14 listening sessions around the country. And these
15 forums are on the delivery of U.S.D.A. programs.
16 And all of the farm program agencies, including
17 extension, at headquarters, state and county
18 levels, are going to be involved in this
19 discussion.

20 So these forums will serve as a national
21 dialogue on U.S.D.A. service to minority
22 communities and will provide an opportunity for
23 minority and socially disadvantaged farmers to
24 discuss their concerns about U.S.D.A. program
25 delivery. We'll also seek to identify new ways

1 that we can build partnerships and improve the
2 department's outreach and service. Three of these
3 listening sessions will be devoted to listening to
4 the concerns of our own U.S.D.A. employees because
5 we know we have problems within U.S.D.A. as well.

6 So this civil rights action team is charged
7 with preparing a report for the secretary,
8 including recommendations, and to do that no later
9 than about mid February. So we're on a very fast
10 track here. And we're going to hold our senior
11 staff personally responsible for cooperating fully
12 in this entire effort.

13 So the bottom line is that we have a real
14 opportunity to make some positive changes in the
15 area of civil rights enforcement. I think we can
16 insure that U.S.D.A. is a diverse civil department
17 to its employees and to all of you, its customers.
18 So the secretary and I are devoted to solving this
19 department's civil rights problems and we're
20 committed to bring about the changes that are
21 necessary. So thank you for being here.

22 MR. CLARK: At this time I understand
23 that we do have several native American tribes
24 that have representatives in the audience. At
25 this time I would like to offer them the

1 opportunity to introduce themselves and let us
2 know who you are.

3 (Introduction from the floor of tribal
4 representatives participating.)

5 MR. CLARK: Thank you, very much. I
6 know that there is some reported snow around the
7 state. I was in Tulsa last night so I didn't face
8 those bad roads coming in, but it is good to see
9 such a good turnout. This is a listening session
10 being held so that this panel and the action team
11 can hear your comments and concerns. We'd like to
12 go over a few things that will help us stay on
13 track and allow as many people as possible to have
14 their chance to speak.

15 I would like to ask those speaking to keep
16 their comments to a maximum of five minutes. We
17 have a timer over here, and that timer will help
18 us keep track of how much time is being spent by
19 each speaker. At about four minutes, what we will
20 do is hold up a sign and I will give you a sign
21 that you have one minute left.

22 I would also like to inform you that we are
23 recording comments at this meeting. A transcript
24 of the meeting will be provided to the Secretary
25 of Agriculture and the Civil Rights Action Team.

1 For those of you who do not get a chance to speak,
2 and hopefully, everyone that wishes to will, or
3 would prefer to provide written comments, we have
4 comment forms available and they are over here, if
5 you would like to use those.

6 Written comments can be deposited in the box
7 over here to my right and they will then, in turn,
8 be mailed to the action team. This is a meeting
9 to listen to you. We won't be able to respond or
10 discuss any questions or comments at this session.

11 We do have some ladies here that have agreed
12 to sign. Is there anyone here that needs that
13 service? If not, well, we can dispense with that.
14 Thank you, very much.

15 We will now begin the secretary's listening
16 forum. When registering, you were asked if you
17 wanted to speak, and you were asked to indicate
18 that on the sign up sheet. I'll use that list to
19 determine the order of those making comments. If
20 we get to everyone on the list and have time left,
21 others in the audience then would be given an
22 opportunity to speak.

23 I would ask each of you that wants to make
24 comments to come to the microphone or if you can't
25 come to the microphone, that would be the

1 preferred option, if you can't come to the
2 microphone, then we will bring the mike to you.
3 But we would ask you to give us your name, where
4 you are from and if you represent a group, an
5 organization, tribe or if you're speaking as an
6 individual. Let's begin. The first name on the
7 list is James Thompson from Miami, Oklahoma.

8 SPEAKER 1 - JAMES THOMPSON: I wasn't
9 quite sure about what you were going to talk about
10 here today because this is about me personally,
11 what happened to me. And now, in my office, FMHA
12 foreclosed on me, but when they sent out them debt
13 servicing packets, I chose not to fill mine out
14 because I knew I was done so I didn't fight it.

15 So I got to reading in that 1962-1 about debt
16 settlement. So I went back down to the county
17 office, that was then run by Jackson
18 Hollingsworth, and asked him about debt
19 settlement. He said no, absolutely not. So I
20 went on home.

21 MR. ROMINGER: What year was this?

22 SPEAKER 1 - JAMES THOMPSON: '92, I
23 guess it was. And in '94, I got -- we had a -- I
24 got hold of the U.S.D.A. regulations. And I got
25 to reading in there. And I found out that he was

1 supposed to assist me in making application to the
2 state director, which he did not do, he just
3 turned me down flat.

4 And then in '94, in the fall of '94, I got a
5 letter from Secretary Espey, wanting to know if
6 there had been anything wrong with my -- the way
7 they done me. And I told them I didn't believe
8 there would be anything in the file because he
9 wouldn't write down anything, he just -- And then
10 I explained to him in there, in the letter, about
11 the debt settlement and everything and that had
12 been two and a half years ago.

13 And in the meantime, of course, they
14 foreclosed, took the equipment and sold it. And
15 I -- in the meantime, I talked to the banker along
16 this time and I could have got the money to pay
17 him out at appraised value which I ought to have.
18 And they wound up, when they sold it down here,
19 they turned about \$4,000. And I offered them
20 \$50,400 to settle it. And I'm still waiting for
21 them.

22 They claim now that they sent me a letter,
23 finally sent me a letter from the U.S. Attorney
24 down here and said they had debt against me and in
25 the meantime on that there, they took money. I

1 had a supervised checking account; they took that.
2 And the IRS took money from me for my fuel tax
3 returns for two years. They sold part of my
4 equipment to my dad at appraised value but they
5 never applied it to the debt.

6 I didn't figure it would do any good to write
7 Secretary Glickman since it didn't do any good to
8 write Secretary Espey. And since this came up
9 down here, I figured maybe I could maybe get some
10 kind of result from this.

11 MR. ROMINGER: Okay. Well, thank you
12 for bringing that to our attention.

13 MR. CLARK: Thank you, James. Joey
14 Schmidt? We would also ask folks to speak
15 directly into the mike so we can hear a little
16 more clearly.

17 SPEAKER 2 - JOEY SCHMIDT: Hi. I'm Joey
18 Schmidt. I'm an attorney in Norman, Oklahoma and
19 I represent farmers throughout this state. I've
20 represented over 600 farmers in foreclosures in
21 this state in the last decade. Generally, I have
22 a pretty good working relationship with U.S.D.A.
23 and primarily, we work out most disputes that come
24 out throughout this state.

25 Over the last several years, U.S.D.A. has set

1 up an appeals agency to resolve certain disputes
2 that from time to time come up. And that appeals
3 agency has worked very well out here. Over the
4 last year, however, we've had a lot of problems in
5 Oklahoma. A lot of these problems involve
6 minorities and other groups where we are denied
7 loan servicing or loans or other problems that
8 come out and it washes out in financial problems.
9 And we appeal those decisions, we take them to the
10 local agencies to be resolved. And when we win
11 those decisions, they're sent to Washington.

12 That's where I've had the problems. We've
13 gone up there and U.S.D.A. and the NAD people in
14 Washington have overturned most of the decisions
15 that have been ruled in our favor in the last
16 year. A lot of these are applications for loans
17 for minorities, applications not to foreclose on
18 people's farms, even simple things like
19 applications for release of proceeds. And right
20 now I'm afraid that we can't win any appeals that
21 go to Washington. And I think that's a real
22 problem and I would like for you to look into it,
23 if you can.

24 MR. ROMINGER: Thank you.

25 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Next speaker is

1 Jack Thompson.

2 SPEAKER 3 - JACK THOMPSON: I'm a farmer
3 from Ottawa County, Miami Oklahoma. And I'm not
4 here on behalf of myself, I'm here on behalf of
5 some regulations that have been not fulfilled in
6 our county. In 1992, there was packets sent out;
7 we had 60 days to respond or you lost all your
8 rights. Well, there was farmers up there that did
9 respond in the 60 days. According to law set
10 forth by Congress, you people had 90 days to
11 respond to them. Well, guess what? Four years
12 ninety days later, they have decided to start debt
13 servicing.

14 Well, when they had done this debt servicing,
15 if they had done it in 1992 when land values were
16 at a reasonable rate, these farmers would have
17 cash flowed. Now today they cannot cash flow
18 because due to the increase in the price of land
19 in our area. Land has gone up 40 to 50 percent
20 due to the people wanting to move to the country.
21 No longer do we look at land at productivity, we
22 look at land at what the intrinsic value of it is
23 for the expansion of homes and whatever they want
24 to do with it. I think that if the U.S.D.A. wants
25 to do something to help these farmers, they should

1 go back to under the old law of 1992 and under the
2 old appraisals so these farmers can at least
3 halfway have a decent chance to cash flow and to
4 save their farms.

5 It seems to me, that there has been a
6 conspiracy among U.S.D.A. to put the farmers off
7 the land. And another thing, the farmers that go
8 through bankruptcy, and last year under the
9 Bankruptcy Law Code it says that you cannot
10 discriminate because if you file bankruptcy.

11 In 1996 the Congress wrote a law that said
12 due to you filing bankruptcy or if you took a
13 write-down from U.S.D.A. or to save your farm,
14 now, you no longer can qualify for any programs
15 offered by U.S.D.A. Now, if you talk about
16 blatant discrimination, you're talking about one
17 law overriding the other law. So I think the
18 people in the U.S.D.A. and the Congress need to
19 get their act together and try to figure out if
20 we're out here to save the family farm or are we
21 going to put them all out of business. And I
22 thank you for coming and I thank you for letting
23 me have the time to speak.

24 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Thompson.

25 Tim Tarvin.

1 SPEAKER 4 - TIM TARVIN: Thank you. Let
2 me join Mr. Thompson in congratulating and
3 commending this body for organizing both this
4 meeting and those that will take place across this
5 nation this month, for emphasizing this particular
6 topic.

7 Gentlemen, I'm especially appreciative that
8 you came this close to me so that I could be here
9 today. I am Tim Tarvin. I'm a professor with the
10 University of Arkansas School of Law in
11 Fayetteville. I have practiced law for over 20
12 years, 15 of that as a trial judge. The last four
13 years of my life I have spent in a full-time
14 professorship there in the clinical program.

15 The responsibilities that I have currently
16 are for the Federal Practice Clinic. It is a
17 clinic conceived and designed four years ago with
18 the idea that there are family farmers and
19 individuals out across America who need help and
20 are not getting it, that are unrepresented or who
21 are unrepresented. We packaged that idea in
22 grants to the Department of Education and the
23 Legal Services Corporation and won two national
24 grant competitions to fund what the law school
25 could not fund.

1 For the last three years, with the help of
2 Joey Schmidt and other professors, we have
3 developed a curriculum to train students to be
4 sensitive to these issues. We felt particularly
5 qualified because we house at Fayetteville the
6 National Center for Ag Law Research and
7 Information. We house the Executive Director for
8 the American Ag Law Association. And we have the
9 only L.L.M. or advanced law degree program in
10 America in agricultural law.

11 What we did not have, until this program, was
12 a program devoted specifically and solely to
13 advocacy for these people. This program still
14 exists. But it is in its third year and the
15 Congressional budget cuts that have been made by
16 the Republican Congress have eliminated the
17 assistance we were receiving from other legal aid
18 attorneys who were trying to represent these
19 people. And it has meant that there is no longer
20 a funding source at DOE or LSC for this program.
21 We are hopeful that we may find other funding
22 sources.

23 For the moment we still represent farmers,
24 and not merely in Arkansas but we have also
25 represented farmers in Oklahoma. And as we speak,

1 I have applications on my desk from farmers in
2 Florida, from Missouri, from Texas. There is a
3 need for this help and there are commonalities to
4 these problems across the country.

5 One of our struggles now is to determine how
6 to export the legal services that these people
7 need. There may be others that are doing this,
8 gentleman, but I am not aware of them. It is
9 important to me, but not for reasons that I will
10 provide to you statistically which you may already
11 know. It is important to me in part because of
12 what I discovered in the practice of law in the
13 Delta where I grew up.

14 I cannot divulge to you names because that is
15 confidential and privileged information. But I
16 will tell you that before the law changed, I did a
17 million dollar write down. The farmer happened to
18 be white. And that's okay. I went by the book
19 and it was a good deal and that's fine.

20 But I also chose to accept representation for
21 an elderly black farmer who was functionally
22 illiterate who drew a disability check. And I
23 went in with my skills as best I could to cut a
24 deal in that case. And the only thing he asked me
25 to do was to keep his home because he needed a

1 place to live. He stood to lose his land, his
2 equipment, his crops and everything that he had
3 worked all his life for.

4 The appraisal on that home, such that it was,
5 and I doubt if anybody in this room lives in
6 anything quite like where he was living, was
7 \$12,000 and he couldn't do it. And I said we need
8 to negotiate, work with me, do not -- I cannot do
9 this. They ran the software. I said that's fine,
10 that's fine that you run the software and that we
11 have rules and we have the regulations. But I
12 said, "Gentlemen, I can't cut that deal, I can't
13 cut that deal and I'm not going to cut that deal."

14 Now, I've seen the potential that you have
15 and the discretion that you have to act and I want
16 you to do this. But I did not prevail. But I
17 decided at his age that I thought if my health
18 held up, I could litigate that question until he
19 passed away if I had to and that's what we set
20 about doing.

21 That is not a pleasant story for me to tell
22 you but it should be informative to you that there
23 are situations in which common sense needs to
24 prevail. And in the commercial setting, people on
25 both sides know the difference in what it means to

1 settle and what they stand to lose. And there
2 needs to be that sense in the bureaucratic
3 setting.

4 Gentlemen, I appreciate it. For those who
5 are interested in our brochure, I have them.
6 Thank you again for coming and for listening.

7 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Dick Fowler?

8 SPEAKER 5 - DICK FOWLER: It's an honor
9 for me to speak with such heavyweights. My story
10 is known by maybe several people. It goes back 37
11 years of wrongdoing by the U.S.D.A. I'm 75 years
12 old. And to borrow a Nixon expression, "You won't
13 have long to kick the farmer around much more."
14 They have been lied to about the law, they have
15 lied about my character.

16 Not until two years ago did I discover a
17 county agent took a farm away from me in 1960 and
18 put it in a store bank. In order for him to get
19 possession, he hired a farmer to plow up my crops
20 trying to force me off the land. I was forced to
21 go to the Supreme Court and won legal possession.
22 The U.S.D.A. still gave his 13-year-old son an
23 illegal soil bank contract. I attempted to sue
24 the county agent but the district judge threatened
25 my lawyer, the county agent threatened my lawyer

1 to where my suit was never filed.

2 Then in 1970, I tried to get -- it's
3 difficult to talk about this -- I had 75 cows to
4 starve to death. The Farm Loan said I was
5 ineligible because I had this lawsuit with a
6 county agent. I did not have a lawsuit with a
7 county agent. I attempted to sue him for plowing
8 up my crops. They continue to hold this against
9 me up until today.

10 I have hundreds of places that I can show you
11 where they have violated the law. And the appeals
12 system, we attempted under the new law, appeals
13 law that says I'm entitled to equitable relief,
14 the hearing officer barred me from talking about
15 it. That's a violation of our rights. I went to
16 put the land in a CRP. The county FHA guy told
17 the ASE man that my land was in appeal and that
18 all the appeals would be turned down and they were
19 going to foreclose so the county ASE man said that
20 the land was in foreclosure which it was not.
21 That was 10 years ago.

22 The Office of General Council wrote the
23 county man and said don't approve it, delay as
24 long as possible, that it is in immediate danger
25 of losing possession. That was 10 years ago. If

1 you don't think this is a violation of civil
2 rights, I appreciate hearing from all you people,
3 but the appeals the farmers have made on the new
4 appeal system, 95 percent have been turned down.
5 There's something rotten. You've got the fox
6 watching the henhouse while the skunks are killing
7 the chickens.

8 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Fowler. The
9 next speaker is Vernon Hunter.

10 SPEAKER 6 - VERNON HUNTER: Thank you
11 for coming, your staff to listen to our concerns.
12 My name is Vernon Hunter. I'm the Acting Chairman
13 of the Caddo Tribe, in the southwestern part of
14 the state. There are probably about 24 tribes in
15 that area; predominantly in our area there are
16 seven tribes.

17 I received a notice that this meeting was
18 going to happen the sixth. I see it was mailed
19 out on the third and the meeting was going to be
20 on the tenth. So there should have been more
21 people involved from our tribes in this area here.
22 So there was a delay in notifying people or we
23 would have had more people here to talk to you.

24 First of all, I would like to ask permission
25 from the elders here to speak, from the tribal

1 members and also nontribal members. This is the
2 way we usually do it; we ask for permission to
3 speak. Thank you.

4 In our area, the Anadarko and Binger
5 (phonetic) area, there is no rural development
6 guaranteed housing loan listings at the banks
7 there. There's about 192 banks that are listed
8 and in our area there's seven tribes and we wanted
9 to know why there's no -- the banks in our area
10 are not listed on the list. I would like to know,
11 in our local satellite farm centers here, they are
12 they seem receptive to Indian community concerns
13 and so forth but way out in the satellite areas,
14 there seems to be no interplay between the tribe
15 person and the local farm soil conservation
16 people.

17 Each government agency is required to have an
18 Indian liaison. We would like to know a list of
19 those persons' addresses and phone numbers in our
20 area.

21 Conservation practice in our area is
22 unacceptable from an environmental and
23 conservation perspective. We have an EPA person
24 that I just hired that's going to be looking at
25 the land, the air, and the water. Fencing is not

1 adequate to maintain the leases that we have. You
2 can almost look and see where a native American
3 tribe's land is by looking at the fencing and so
4 forth which is not kept up like it should be.

5 Alternate farming practice should be
6 investigated in our community. We would like to
7 see experimental work done in areas such as public
8 education and other endeavors. We would like to
9 find out more how other tribes are working in our
10 area through some of their farming problems that
11 they have. Particularly, we're interested in
12 cow-calf operation, tree (phonetic) farming, et
13 cetera.

14 We need marketing expertise that will allow
15 us to use variable alternatives for our products
16 that are involved. In our part of the state we
17 raise cotton, peanuts and so forth. There seems
18 to be a lot of farming in that area and what we
19 would like -- you said you had 13 areas that they
20 were going to go to. We came a long way to come
21 to this meeting here. And we would like to have
22 somebody come to our area on our side, on the west
23 side because of all the farming that is done
24 there.

25 Because as I drove from Oklahoma City back

1 this way, I didn't see too many farms and so
2 forth. I seen a lot of trees and everything but
3 where we're at in our area there's a heck of a lot
4 of farming going on. I think Caddo County leads
5 the area in peanut production and so forth. So we
6 would like you to look at that.

7 So again, I appreciate your time for coming
8 this far. And also my EPA person, we talked about
9 EPA products that we're going to run into. Thank
10 you.

11 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Hunter. I
12 also -- did you have another comment?

13 I might just mention here that if you do have
14 comments, we appreciate everyone staying within
15 the five-minute limit, but if you do have comments
16 after that, then we do have staff available that
17 will record those comments and make sure that they
18 do get to the Civil Rights Action Team. So I
19 guess we would just step to the side or step out
20 in the hall and we can record those. Terry, would
21 you just stand up? And she can record those
22 comments for us. The next speaker is Rebecca
23 Davidson.

24 SPEAKER 7 - REBECCA DAVIDSON: My name
25 is Rebecca Davidson. I'm currently working for

1 the Caddo Tribe as their Environmental Education
2 Director. Both my family and my husband's family
3 have been in Oklahoma for a long time. My
4 husband's family homesteaded here before the turn
5 of the century and my grandmother was born on a
6 reservation so we have been here for a long time.

7 And in our family of six kids, five of them
8 are farmers and we can just about see each other's
9 house from grandma's house. So most of the
10 farms -- we have been through the process where
11 our land was condemned and taken from us so that
12 we could have a state park. I also know the
13 Indian issues of condemning their land so that we
14 can have electrical power.

15 I'm very concerned at this point with the
16 conservation and ecological practices that are
17 practiced by the leaseholders on Indian lands. I
18 know for a fact that those principles are not
19 proper conservation measures. I don't know if
20 it's a problem of education or money.

21 The Caddo Tribe alone, if they're having
22 problems, our farmers are having problems, we, as
23 a tribe, don't have that financial backing. And
24 often we don't know the proper procedures to go
25 through to get -- to access either U.S.D.A. money

1 or those educational services. We're interested
2 in obtaining that assistance. And we would also
3 like to be able to verify statistically the
4 lending practices of our local banks.

5 Obviously verbal reports that come to us are
6 negative so we hear the negative side, but if we
7 could have access to that statistical information,
8 we would be very interested in seeing that. We
9 would be interested in seeing how the BIA gets
10 their money from U.S.D.A. and how that money is
11 spent. We also would like to know those practices
12 where we can access that money sometimes.

13 We feel like it stops at the BIA when it gets
14 there. It could be just like this, the
15 communication system is slow or too fast. I'm not
16 sure which one this was, how it went. But my boss
17 said, "We're going Friday" and I said, "Okay".

18 Often people that farm independently don't
19 realize maybe some of the problems that those
20 Indian landholders go through and how their land
21 is held in a trust situation with the BIA. At
22 this current time it's my understanding from my
23 local natural resource man that unless we are at a
24 lease time, it would be -- we would be unable to
25 participate in programs such as Equip. Should it

1 ever get off and going, when the application time
2 comes available, if we're not out of our lease
3 situation, then cannot participate.

4 At this current time, actually it was on the
5 trip up here and some conversation for this
6 meeting, I'm getting conflicting answers so I
7 really do need some upfront answers of how we can --
8 and maybe go about those leases and do some things
9 like that. Then, of course, if we ever are able
10 to, we have very small farms as Caddo farmers.
11 We're not running 100,000 head, we're talking
12 about five head. Maybe we just have 80 acres. We
13 would like to know some marketing, we need expert
14 marketing expertise, maybe some co-op plans. I
15 know that not everybody's a big ranching
16 operation, farming operation and we could use that
17 help. Thank you.

18 MR. CLARK: Thank you very much. Martha
19 Long?

20 SPEAKER 8 - MARTHA LONG: My name is
21 Martha Long and I'm with the Sac and Fox Tribe.
22 And part of our problem is that, to my
23 understanding, we've never had any U.S.D.A. money
24 spent on our allotted lands. How long we've had
25 these allotted lands everybody knows. I think to

1 follow up on what Rebecca said about Equip, I sat
2 at the telecommunications conference for the last
3 two days. And I heard that on that
4 telecommunications that NRCS put on on the 1996
5 farm bill the tribes being reemphasized over and
6 over again. But yet I have sat with these
7 gentlemen and I said, "Find me a loophole, I want
8 in the Equip program." And that's my concern.

9 Why is it I have to put the local county
10 district people on the hot seat? Why do they have
11 to find a loophole for me to get into the Equip
12 program for these allotted lands? It shouldn't
13 have to be that way. If you're reemphasizing that
14 you're going to assist tribes, then I shouldn't
15 need lawyer's jargon, I shouldn't have to have
16 them look in their books and find a place for me.

17 I have had difficulty when trying to create
18 Sac and Fox producers. We acknowledge that we
19 need to be more actively involved with FSA, RD,
20 NRCS. And yet I keep running into walls. Nobody --
21 I guess the major problem is that U.S.D.A. is not
22 educated about us. I approached one of the county
23 officials and he said -- well, he said, "We're
24 told that we need to reach out to the minorities,
25 but frankly, I don't know who my contact is."

1 And I said, "Well, you're looking at her."
2 That's a problem. They don't know anything about
3 us. They don't understand what it is to be
4 endowed with tribal responsibility to protect
5 these allotted lands, to protect the landowner's
6 interest. And that's an issue that needs to be
7 addressed.

8 However, I am thankful that we've had Ed
9 Kephart and Bluford Miller. They came down the
10 other day because we got this little message in
11 the mail saying we needed a strategic plan from
12 RD. Well, they wanted our needs. And I'm
13 thinking, "I've got a thousand needs; which ones
14 do you want?" And they came down, they assisted
15 us, and I'm glad that you did finally come up with
16 a native American liaison officer, Bluford Miller.
17 That's going to simplify the process that when I
18 have a problem, at least I have someone I know who
19 to go to. Because I continually knock at doors at
20 the local, at the state level and I can't get a
21 response. And I need responses. And I need
22 assistance.

23 I want to be in the Equip program. I want to
24 put these allotted lands in the Equip program.
25 And I hope that's going to happen. But much like

1 Rebecca said, these leasing dilemmas that we're
2 in, we have to face those issues. But I don't
3 want to put our local county agents on the hot
4 seat. And I shouldn't have to. I like these
5 fellows and I want to work with them. I do not
6 want to create any animosity. Thank you.

7 MR. CLARK: Thank you.

8 MR. PEARLIE REED: Mr. Secretary, I
9 would like to ask Lloyd Wright to follow up with
10 Ms. Long at the break or immediately after.
11 Lloyd, would you stand up so she can recognize
12 you? Lloyd is the person that's in charge of
13 writing all those rules.

14 MR. CLARK: Next speaker is Frank Jones.

15 SPEAKER 9 - FRANK JONES: Well, I'm just
16 a poor white farmer that FHA foreclosed on me in a
17 situation that should have never happened. That's
18 why these systems that you guys, the last three,
19 when you had the FHA, ASC and Soil Conservation,
20 all three of these were a joke. Now, people they
21 were a joke.

22 I hope you people combine these. I don't
23 know how you're going to do it to make it run any
24 better because the whole situation is not letting
25 people -- it's a secret -- like they're a secret

1 organization. They don't want you to know what's
2 going on. They don't want you to know what's
3 coming down the pike. So therefore, the few
4 that's on the board or their kinfolk or friends
5 get all the goodies and the rest do without.

6 Now, I have three minority girls and that's
7 one of the reasons I am here. They wouldn't let
8 them participate in the program. When I lost my
9 farm, I want you to listen to this, people, I was
10 almost two years ahead on my payments. I had an
11 ice storm that took two of my big turkey houses
12 down, my wife died of cancer and I had three major
13 operations all within 16, 18 months. And any one --
14 and then we had a drought in there in the
15 meantime. Any one of those I was supposed to have
16 gotten help through FHA. Not a -- the first thing
17 I knew, they come up with a foreclosure on me.
18 And like I said, I was over a year, almost two
19 years ahead on my payments.

20 I had a neighbor that's beat the Federal
21 government, or you people, out of your money, tax
22 money, out of millions. And they let him buy out
23 on the last buy out \$7 million. He paid \$170,000,
24 I'm sorry, 70,000, 70,000, \$7 million. Me, I had
25 to come up with \$170,000 on a little less than

1 300,000. I've never missed a payment in 10 years.
2 He never made a payment in 10 years. Never made a
3 payment in 10 years.

4 On top of that, a lot of years he would get a
5 million dollars on some type of disaster. We're
6 not talking about -- we're just talking about FHA,
7 we're not talking about Federal Land Bank, what he
8 beat them out of. But let's go on. This appeal
9 system, people, it's a joke, it's a joke. Do you
10 think their people are going to go against their
11 own? That's like asking a doctor or a lawyer to
12 go against another one. They're not about to.

13 I've been through so many appeals systems,
14 it's a -- you wouldn't believe it. But never
15 again will I ever go through one. Election, we
16 had an election just before Christmas down home.
17 You talk about a joke. They didn't get some of
18 their own people back in on the election so, if
19 I'm not mistaken now, Peach, what did you say, "No
20 harm, no foul, we'll just have another election."

21 MR. ROMINGER: Are you talking about the
22 county committee election?

23 SPEAKER 9 - FRANK JONES: Yes, yes. And
24 boy, someone should have went to jail. It's not
25 funny, people. It's not funny when you go down

1 and by -- go down to Muskogee to the VA Hospital
2 or go down by Fort Gibson, the National Cemetery
3 and see what those boys fought for and you think
4 it's a joke. We'll just have another election.

5 I'm telling you these -- this -- I don't care
6 if you do combine this FHA and ASE, it will never
7 work until you get some qualified people in there
8 or take it away from them and give it to the banks
9 so you will have someone that can keep track of
10 where the monies are going.

11 You're going to have to do something. I hope
12 this meeting accomplishes something, I really do.
13 But I'm afraid before it gets back to Glickman, it
14 will be so watered down, he will never get the
15 true story. Now people, I got a chance to go to
16 Washington with this boy right here. He's opened
17 many a door, many doors, whites, blacks, pinks,
18 whatever. And how come every office we went in up
19 there they said there was monies... Why didn't you
20 people come after it? Why isn't your state coming
21 after it?

22 All right, there's only three departments
23 that you can -- that should be doing this, and
24 that's your state, your district and your county,
25 is that right? Aren't they the ones that are

1 supposed to be proposing years ahead for monies?
2 If they have got all this money up there, why not
3 get it out and spend it? Hell, we gave it to
4 Mexico, \$40 million, and you'll never get a dime
5 of that back. You'll never get a dime of it back.

6 And that's just like on this foreclosure here
7 a minute ago. That's a joke on these people. You
8 can give these farmers a flat, clear deed to a
9 place and come out ahead rather than taking a farm
10 away from him, because he will be out there buying
11 whatever, I don't care if it's fertilizer,
12 carpets, cars.

13 You found out back there a few years ago they
14 were taking them all off and putting -- this state
15 was taking over 3,000 a year. Look what happened
16 to John Deere. Look what happened to
17 International Tractors and all them. So people,
18 this whole thing could be good but I don't think
19 you will ever make it roll. I had an old man tell
20 me one time that was retired from the ASC office.
21 He said, "Frank, it will never change." I said,
22 "Well, why?"

23 He said okay, he said, "They don't hire
24 qualified people to do it." And he said, "They
25 teach them to lie, they teach them to do

1 anything." He said, "They're so appreciative for
2 a little old job, they will do it." People,
3 that's sad we don't have qualified people.

4 MR. CLARK: Thank you.

5 MR. ROMINGER: Thank you. I would just
6 like to add that Secretary Glickman and I are
7 attending these meetings. As we indicated, we've
8 got 13 of them in a little over two weeks here and
9 so either Secretary Glickman or I are at every one
10 of those meetings. He's already done three of
11 them in the last -- in this week, earlier this
12 week. So we are out listening and we talk to each
13 other after these sessions so we are getting the
14 messages back to Washington.

15 The secretary today happens to be on the West
16 Coast with the vice president looking at the storm
17 damages out there.

18 MR. CLARK: Next speaker is Bill John
19 Baker.

20 SPEAKER 10 - BILL JOHN BAKER: I'm here
21 representing the Chief of the Cherokee Nation,
22 Chief Joe Bird. I spoke with him this morning and
23 he asked me to bring his greetings and salutations
24 and tell you how appreciative he is that you have
25 come to Oklahoma and that he appreciates the

1 secretary meeting with Charles Head (phonetic) and
2 Dr. Gourd (phonetic). And hopefully, the Cherokee
3 Nation will get the opportunity to fully
4 participate.

5 I wear two hats, though. I'm also a farmer.
6 And I have seen the abuses at the county level
7 personally and for many other farmers. Mr. Peach
8 and I have gone around and around several times.
9 You know, I believe that the people in Cherokee
10 County, I don't know if they're just bigots or
11 ignorant or if it's just such a tight-knit group
12 there that they don't want minorities to
13 participate.

14 Cherokees, by and large, if you tell them no,
15 they will go home and they won't be back. I'm not
16 your typical Cherokee. I serve on tribal counsel.
17 I'm seven parts white. But nonetheless, my
18 children are being discriminated against on the
19 minority program. If you're going to have a
20 program, then fund it. If you're going to have a
21 program -- if you have the programs for minorities
22 and when they sign up and they hear about it, then
23 it's not funded. Or it comes down the pike and
24 they have -- it's like pulling teeth to find out
25 if it's there. And there's supposed to be this

1 pot of money for minorities.

2 But, you know, in our tribe, you know, we've
3 seen the lightning and we've heard the thunder but
4 the rain hasn't ever come. And that's for
5 individuals. And Terry, you know it's that way.
6 And I've talked to you about it and I've told you
7 about it. And you think that the people in the
8 local office can do no wrong. And they are doing
9 wrong, in my opinion, every day. And you could do
10 something about it. You don't have -- you don't
11 need these people here. You're the state
12 director. And it's your people that we're having
13 the problems with that will not get the money out,
14 will not get the information out.

15 And yes, we can go to Washington, D.C. and
16 you know, the tribe, I mean, we represent 180,000
17 people, taxpayers every one. And we, as a tribe,
18 are probably going to participate. But how about
19 the individual Cherokees out there that are trying
20 to make a living for their family? That money is
21 not coming down, it is not being gotten out.

22 If there's a government buy-down on milk,
23 then the producers that are related to the county
24 committee, they know what the buy out is and they
25 may be getting 10, \$12 a hundred more than the

1 Cherokee farmer out here that's just trying to
2 figure, you know, what can I do and be fair with
3 the government with. Thank you.

4 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Baker. Phil
5 Givens.

6 SPEAKER 11 - PHIL GIVENS: Well, I'm
7 glad to speak and I'm going to say something; I
8 want everybody to listen. I am a minority farmer
9 from Tahlequah who is half black and half Indian
10 who has firsthand experience at racism. I am the
11 only minority farmer in this room that says he
12 flew to Washington, D.C. 23 times, met everybody
13 sitting at that table, met the Secretary of
14 Agriculture, had lawyers, 21 program specialists
15 come to Tahlequah, Stillwater, to meet with you
16 all. I can tell you some horror stories.

17 We have filed 72 civil rights complaints.
18 Not one complaint has ever been answered.
19 Nepotism, Terry Peach, is rampant in your office,
20 brother-in-law sitting on the county committees,
21 brother-in-law as a Federal Credit Act officer.

22 Now, everything I'm saying, people, is true.
23 I had councilors beg to fly out of Washington,
24 D.C. with me. October 25 I sat down with the
25 Secretary of Agriculture. Ninety percent of the

1 farmers in Oklahoma are like me, are black and
2 Indian descent. If you people knew anything, we
3 started farming with the native Americans. Our
4 people were brought here as slaves, Chickasaws,
5 Choctaws, Cherokees or Chickasaw-Choctaw freedmen.

6 I farm 1500 acres restricted Indian land. I
7 flew to Washington, D.C. 17 damn times this
8 summer. Everybody at that table knows it. And
9 when my Indian land finally got in the computer,
10 Terry Peach, Rainbolt, Pearlie Reed and Ron Clark,
11 is when a review team came to Tahlequah. I'm mad.
12 I've got a Cherokee council member so upset he
13 can't talk. Six months to get his Indian daughter
14 a loan. Six months is too long.

15 Can anybody in this room tell me why racism
16 is rampant? I'll tell you why. All the white
17 board members. I had to fly to Washington, D.C.
18 and file a civil rights complaint to get a damn
19 election overturned. We're just now having
20 elections. I go in there today and turn a ballot
21 in, the ballot's done wrong, they want to throw it
22 out.

23 First thing Gale Garth (phonetic) from the
24 state office said, "Mr. Givens, we're going to
25 take care of that." The largest milk buy outs,

1 the largest FMHA write downs in Oklahoma have been
2 done in Cherokee County. We have never put one
3 acre of Indian land in the computer. I had a
4 director from the Secretary Espey, I had John
5 Stinsell (phonetic), tell Terry Peach four times
6 to put my Indian land in the computer. You just
7 now started doing it. Yes, we're in a lawsuit and
8 yes, we're going to win.

9 Pearlre Reed, I met you in Washington, D.C.
10 three times. Ron Clark had to file a civil rights
11 complaint on you to get you to come to Indian
12 country. Ron Clark, Terry Peach, Mr. Rainbolt,
13 you're real familiar with me, aren't you?
14 Everybody at that table. And what I'm telling you
15 is gospel.

16 I'm going to tell you this, though. I met
17 with 100 black and Indian, Hispanic farmers Monday
18 in Washington, D.C. and you people are going to do
19 business different, you're going to listen to us
20 or we're going to all be in the court. Because
21 this is one minority farmer that knows how to
22 exhaust administrative remedies. You don't file a
23 civil rights complaint. If you do, you're labeled
24 a troublemaker. Well, when I file mine, I get on
25 a plane and fly to Washington, D.C. to hand carry

1 it to the secretary. Stinsell, Bunrock
2 (phonetic), and everybody up in Washington, D.C.
3 knows who I am.

4 So from now on I'm going to put everybody on
5 record sitting at this table from Washington,
6 D.C., I have spent enough money flying up there 23
7 times this year to buy a damn farm. Last year I
8 spent \$6,000, boys, just to get a conservation
9 plan because it was on Indian land. And Ron
10 Clark, Peach, you know that to be true. Pearl
11 Reed, you sat down, said the first thing you said
12 was you would fire the man that done it. Do you
13 remember saying that? He's still there.

14 So what I'm saying, when I see Secretary
15 Glickman, he promised me some things October 25.
16 You all had a meeting November 21 and the 20th in
17 Tahlequah to deal with Phil Givens. This is one
18 minority farmer that is going to stay hooked with
19 you and make you do right. You didn't have a
20 problem with my color when I went to Viet Nam, so
21 don't have a problem with my color now. Thank
22 you.

23 MR. CLARK: We'd appreciate, we're
24 trying to record this, so it would be helpful if
25 you would use the mike. Sam Combs.

1 SPEAKER 12 - SAM COMBS: Thank you very
2 much. Let me say that it's a pleasure to appear
3 before this committee. I'm here wearing two hats
4 as representing the Reap Program and the Oklahoma
5 Landowners and Tenants Association.

6 Let me start with the Oklahoma Landowners and
7 Tenants Association. That is a newly formed
8 organization primarily. And I say "primarily",
9 but truthfully, minority landowners that are
10 banding together in Oklahoma to address the
11 drastic decline of minority landowners,
12 particularly native Americans in Oklahoma. And we
13 know what the history of that is, not only in
14 Oklahoma but all across the United States.

15 There's been an accelerated rate in the -- in
16 African Americans losing and leaving their land.
17 And if something isn't done, then it's going to
18 be -- it's not going to be long before we have
19 virtually no African American landowners. Most of
20 these people in here are members of the Oklahoma
21 Landowners and Tenants Association. You can go to
22 any African American community in Oklahoma, and I
23 suppose all over the United States, and you will
24 find the same thing occurring.

25 Well, the point is that something needs to be

1 done about this, and I'm not talking about the
2 good old Texaco mentality, you know, where you've
3 got all the memos in place, you know, and you have
4 a civil rights meeting occasionally, you know, and
5 all of that. But there needs to be something done
6 out on the land. We know how to do it. U.S.D.A.
7 has got the money and we ought to get about doing
8 it.

9 Now, there are many African American
10 organizations out here. The Oklahoma Landowners
11 and Tenants Association is one. You've got Prince
12 Alamusadi's Lodge (phonetic), you've got NAACP,
13 and all these various organizations all over the
14 state who have members who are landowners and who
15 have cousins and other relatives who are trying to
16 stay in the agriculture business. And what I'm
17 saying to you folks is they need some help. You
18 know, we've been the last to get the news on many
19 of these programs. And so oftentimes, by the time
20 we get it, the money is gone.

21 And so if we are sincere, if you are sincere,
22 as we meet here in Oklahoma and you meet all
23 across this country, then that needs to be
24 addressed. I remind you, and this is no deference
25 to the members of this committee, but some of you

1 may remember, this isn't the first task force
2 we've had to look at this thing. You know, we had
3 one back in the eighties. But all that one served
4 for was a -- the effect of it was, it was just a
5 cooling off sort of thing, you know, things got
6 cooled down and we went back to business as usual.

7 I hope that isn't the case this time. I
8 think that there needs to be some real sincerity
9 out here. And I think all of you who represent
10 the various agencies, you need to take a look at
11 what's going on out where the rubber meets the
12 road. I'm talking about at your county level
13 where service is delivered, and stop accepting
14 excuses from these people who somehow some way
15 don't get anything done for minorities.

16 Now, it's -- somebody, some minority, some
17 minorities out here in this community qualifies
18 for every program that U.S.D.A. has got available,
19 you know. But what's happening is they go around
20 because they're mandated to visit, you know, and
21 they record that and send it to Washington, you
22 know, and it looks good. But all they have done
23 is call the person up on the telephone and saw him
24 at the mailbox and say, "Hi", you know, and they
25 record that. Well, see, that's nonsense. And

1 that's not going to get the job done.

2 We need some -- but I've got some written
3 comments that I'll supply to this committee. But
4 let me say one thing right quick. The Reap
5 Program, Reap is just an acronym for Retired
6 Educated Agriculture Program that was started by
7 five black farmer 4-H teachers who got concerned
8 about the almost total disappearance of African
9 American youth from vocational agriculture. And I
10 remind you, as you look about U.S.D.A., you will
11 find, I think you will find that vocational
12 agriculture is a pipeline that's fed African
13 Americans into the U.S.D.A.

14 We started with nothing. And we got some
15 help from -- some financial help from the Oklahoma
16 Department of Vo-Tech and the Natural Resource
17 Conservation Service. We got summer internship
18 from NRCS.

19 But let me tell you something, that's about
20 the only branch of U.S.D.A. that has given us any
21 help. I want to tell you something, folks. If
22 somebody doesn't do something about the
23 disappearance of African American youth from
24 agriculture, in 10 years you're not going to have
25 any to hire. There's not a black boy teacher in

1 this state. It's not better in other states that
2 you go to. There's one black extension agent in
3 this state but yet FFA membership and 4-H
4 membership is at an all-time high. I live in a
5 county where we have a very active 4-H program,
6 for example. There's not a black youth in the
7 program.

8 Now, something is wrong. So that says to me,
9 and it ought to say to all of us, that we've got
10 to do something besides put up these, you know,
11 these signs that say, "We don't discriminate."
12 That's not going to get the job done, folks.
13 Somebody has got to get out there and get to work
14 with these kids where the rubber meets the road.

15 And I will go on. I wish I had more time.
16 But let me say this that U.S.D.A. needs to get
17 your message out. You're not going to reach black
18 folks by putting something in the Daily Oklahoman.
19 What's wrong with the Oklahoma Eagle and the Black
20 Chronicle, and the black radio station, you see?
21 I mean, we've got to get real.

22 If we want to get it done, we're sincere
23 about it, these are the things that you would have
24 to do. And let the folks in the local community
25 organization help you. We will help you. There's

1 a lot of interest out there, people sitting in
2 this room that give hours and days of their time
3 trying to help African American youth. Mr.
4 Chairman, I thank you.

5 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Combs. If
6 you have any written comments, we would certainly
7 appreciate those. Next speaker is C.D. Ashley.

8 SPEAKER 13 - C.D. ASHLEY: Mr. Chairman,
9 I'm C.D. Ashley. I've spent 35 years as county
10 agent of Creek County working with Negro farmers.
11 I'm going to start with some of the problems. We
12 had ponds to build, Bermuda grass to plant, 10
13 months to destroy it. All these programs. But
14 when it came to Negros, they were on the tail end,
15 money ran out. That's the problem.

16 Now, the soil conservation, ACS and the FHA
17 have boards. Now, there's one deal that the
18 problem could be corrected. The Negros are about,
19 we say, 10 or 15 percent of the population. It's
20 impossible for a Negro to run and get elected in
21 that -- with that population.

22 Now, you appoint somebody. So I would
23 suggest that you appoint a person, a Negro on that
24 board so that the Negros would be represented with
25 all the farm projects you have and they would get

1 the message. Soil conservation, we have one now
2 in Bristow, and Creek County. I believe we had
3 one on the FHA board, which it helped a lot, then
4 the people would know.

5 Now, a lot of information is coming down that
6 it don't get to our farmers. We have a lot of
7 disaster programs that they didn't get anything
8 out of. We had soil bank, one person. We had
9 CRP, and I was the onliest person in Creek County
10 that had CRP, \$40 to retire land for 10 years, no
11 Negro with it. They don't get the message across
12 to our people. The monies are appropriated but
13 where does it go?

14 Now, I think that if we can get the
15 information out to them, we, when we was at
16 extension service, we had group meetings and then
17 farmers, we had a disaster program, fire burn out,
18 people from Missouri brought hay down here. Boy,
19 we couldn't get none of that hay, Negro farmers.
20 Cows want it, need it.

21 We had a disaster program for signing up.
22 They didn't get the information out to them. I
23 went down and signed up and got some payment. But
24 the messages are not getting down to the people
25 who need it. Now, some of the big boys are

1 getting it, you can bet that. And we've got a
2 pecan deal coming on. I went down there, and I
3 said, "Well, I've got some pecans." Well, so and
4 so done signed up. The man who was carrying it,
5 he hadn't informed the little boys down here who
6 have got the pecans. Go down there, sign on the
7 disaster program. It's not getting the
8 information to our people.

9 Now, we need people from our group on these
10 committees, the soil conservation, with the ACS,
11 FHA and extension service, all, then we know that
12 you will get the information and you will be heard
13 because I think that's where our problem is.
14 Thank you for this time.

15 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Ashley. The
16 next speaker is Lawrence Breckenridge.

17 SPEAKER 14 - LAWRENCE BRECKENRIDGE: I
18 am Lawrence Breckenridge, third and fourth
19 generation from homesteaders, farmed all our
20 lives. But we need help. You go down to the
21 office to sign up for a loan, the money is gone.
22 They send you down for a guaranteed loan, the
23 banker goes out the door. So what's going on?

24 We're going into the twenty-first century
25 here. Discrimination is a great poison to this

1 country. And we need help, we need something done
2 about it. So we appreciate what you people are
3 starting to do and it should have been done years
4 ago.

5 I had a government loan once before. I
6 needed to upgrade my bulls. It took an act of
7 Congress to get that done. They sent down a man
8 from D.C. I think Mr. Ashley was in the pasture
9 with me when he came. And they told this man to
10 get me these bulls. So 30, \$40 a head on my
11 cattle. But it -- something has got to be done or
12 we're going out. Thank you.

13 MR. CLARK: Thank you. The next speaker
14 is Norman Bufford.

15 SPEAKER 15 - NORMAN BUFFORD: Pass.

16 MR. CLARK: Pass? Jean Ann Casey?

17 SPEAKER 16 - JEAN ANN CASEY: I'm Jean
18 Ann Casey. I live in Hennessey, Oklahoma. And
19 I'm basically representing myself. But I will
20 also speak for an organization in the state of
21 Oklahoma called Sooner Citizens for a Clean
22 Environment.

23 What I would like to emphasize is the
24 corporate hog scene coming to the state of
25 Oklahoma. I won't go through the gory details

1 that I'm sure most of you saw on 60 Minutes right
2 before Christmas, but that is also happening in
3 Oklahoma. And they keep saying you can't go back
4 and forth between the states, but I think you
5 people in Washington could begin to level the
6 playing field because the minority farmers do have
7 a problem in this state. But we're all going to
8 be out of business if corporate farming takes
9 over.

10 I also will bring up as immigrants coming to
11 this country, they have to drive cars. And in the
12 process to get a driver's license, they also get a
13 motor vehicle -- or as they get the driver's
14 license, they are given a motor voter registration
15 card. I don't know that it changed the size of
16 the elections in northwest Oklahoma and the
17 panhandle, but it could ultimately change county
18 commissioner elections in some of the local things
19 that will completely change the way we deal as a
20 democracy in this country. Thank you.

21 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Next speaker is
22 Charles Smotherman.

23 SPEAKER 17 - CHARLES SMOTHERMAN: I'm
24 Charles Smotherman out of Wewoka in Okfuskee
25 County. I'm not a bitter person so what I'm

1 saying is not bitter. I hope it's positive. But
2 however, I would like to see my tax dollars work
3 efficiently. And I'm going to give you some of
4 the things in my own opinion I would like to see
5 happen. One of them, I would like to see the
6 people in Washington represent the people. We're
7 the people who elect you, we are the people who
8 pay taxes. We would like to see our tax dollars
9 work efficiently, not inefficiently.

10 I have a blue piece of paper here from
11 Okfuskee County that I received yesterday. It
12 tells me the office is going to be closed New
13 Year's Day. That's the way communications arrive
14 to me. It's funny to some people. It's not funny
15 to me. I don't have an answer for you on how to
16 improve the communication flow back to the farmers
17 from the offices locally or back to Washington.
18 Hopefully, that's why you're hired by the U.S.
19 government so that you may be able to answer these
20 questions. I'm going to give you the questions
21 but I can't give you the answers. Hopefully, you
22 can answer those or put a remedy to it.

23 I would like to see in the state of Oklahoma
24 and each state, at least one program designated
25 that is knowledgeable in the farm program that

1 could get the information to our communities or to
2 any community so that we could be a functional
3 part of that program. That's what we are about.
4 We are about progress. If there's money available
5 for anybody, make all of them aware of it, not
6 just a select few.

7 Also I would like to see a court system put
8 about for the small and minority farmers that will
9 work, not something just to show on paper. Needs
10 for the minority and the small farmer is very
11 different from the big farmers. We need someone
12 that has knowledge that can help us and not hurt
13 us and not communicate information to us. We need
14 someone that's trained to work with us, not
15 someone that is hired just for a job to support
16 his livelihood. We would like qualified people
17 when we deal with these people. I don't know how
18 to answer that question. Hopefully, you guys do.

19 Another situation that I would like to bring
20 up, award for the work to be accomplished through
21 the FC office, awarded to one individual, if that
22 individual cancels, then they call another one. I
23 would like to see if there's an award set up, they
24 have one through X amount of people in line. If
25 the first one cancels, the next one will know he's

1 in line, not that you give him two weeks to get
2 the project accomplished. If he don't, he can't
3 take it either. The money goes someplace else
4 after that. I've been involved with that program.

5 That's all I have, gentlemen. I appreciate
6 your time. I appreciate your coming to Oklahoma.
7 And I hope you can accomplish something that will
8 help us. Thank you.

9 MR. CLARK: Thank you, very much. We
10 have 19 additional folks that have signed up to
11 speak so that's about another hour and a half, or
12 somewhere in that neighborhood, but we would like
13 to take at this time about a 10-minute break.
14 Let's be back in 10 minutes.

15 (Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

16 MR. CLARK: The next speaker is Buddy
17 Cranford. Okay, Mr. Cranford, we would appreciate
18 you making your comments.

19 MR. BUDDY CRANFORD: Mr. Chairman, it is
20 a privilege to have all of you people in our state
21 that are from Washington and our panel. We are
22 certainly glad that you have taken your time out
23 to listen to our problems.

24 My name is Buddy Cranford. I represent all
25 the conservation districts in the state of

1 Oklahoma. And one of the things that I see as I
2 travel across the state, you can pick out tribal
3 lands and minority lands because they're not up to
4 snuff on conservation. So I'm hearing some things
5 today that may be part of the reason that they're
6 not receiving information as fast as possible and
7 funds as fast as possible.

8 And as the state president of all the
9 districts across the state, I pledge to you people
10 in this room that we will work with Washington
11 people on whatever it takes to keep conservation
12 on the land. There's nothing I can do to help get
13 government checks out or get you signed up, Phil,
14 however you need to be, but I can pledge to help
15 you with conservation on this land of ours. And I
16 will report, Pearlie, on this meeting to our
17 national leaders in NACD and I'm sure they will
18 have people that will have input on this.

19 But my concern is if you don't get your fair
20 share of the pie, the last thing you're going to
21 take care of is the land. And my goodness, folks,
22 we don't want to lose our land. We're having a
23 big enough battle keeping it when everything is
24 great. And we're all in a depressed area or
25 depressed times.

1 So I really thank you for coming today and I
2 thank all the people that have testified and have
3 been here to have input and I think we're all
4 going to have our eyes open. Personally, I
5 have -- I enjoy farming and what it gives to our
6 lives, so we've all got to work together. And I
7 thought maybe we had that team put together,
8 Pearlie. And I hope it gets strengthened from
9 this meeting.

10 Anything I can do to help anyone as state
11 president of our districts, you get hold of me and
12 I'll spread the word on up. Thanks alot for your
13 time.

14 FROM THE FLOOR: Give us a name.

15 MR. BUDDY CRANFORD: A. Buddy Cranford.
16 And you can reach me at Sentinel, Oklahoma, and
17 that's in western Oklahoma, area code
18 405-393-4892.

19 And I've met Phil and a lot of these people
20 around here before. I know Sam right here; I sat
21 with his wife for just a minute and here he comes.
22 But I appreciate your time and look forward to
23 working with the rest of this group. Thank you.

24 MR. CLARK: Thank you very much, Mr.
25 Cranford. Vallard Cambell.

1 SPEAKER 18 - VALLARD CAMBELL:

2 Greetings. Well, it appears that -- well, first
3 of all, I'm Vallard Cambell from Fort Coffee,
4 Oklahoma down near the Arkansas state line. I'm a
5 small farmer and a rancher. And it appears that
6 I've got the same problem that most people in this
7 room in this meeting today has got and that's
8 money problems. Every time I go into the bank,
9 like someone said earlier, the banker runs out.
10 So there we go.

11 But I get my ground worked up, say, for
12 instance, go down to get some money then I don't
13 have the money to get my seed and fertilize it.
14 So this is a problem, you know. And if the
15 Federal government can kind of speed things up.
16 If you've got to put the seed in the ground,
17 you've got to put it in there. You can't say
18 well, come back tomorrow or next week and next
19 month and get some monies. So the pressure should
20 be put on the banks to go ahead and get these
21 loans out expeditiously. Thank you.

22 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Our next speaker
23 is Virginia Autry.

24 SPEAKER 19 - VIRGINIA AUTRY: My name is
25 Virginia Autry. I'm a producer in a family

1 farming operation in Kingfisher County basically
2 growing small grains and cattle. I have a real
3 concern for the direction of family farms. The
4 (inaudible) thing for our product is not covering
5 the cost of the operation. I think I hear that
6 from everyone in this room.

7 You may not be aware, but the 1996 book,
8 "Field Without Dreams" by Victor Davis Hanson says
9 it better than I can word it: "The most
10 conservative farmers in America were obliterated
11 by the farm shakedown of the 1980s. By the new
12 gospel, that food was to be quite lucrative for
13 everyone except those who themselves were to grow
14 it."

15 One of the farm newsletters also hit the nail
16 on the head when it talks about Congress
17 desperately needs a new farmer-owned reserve. The
18 quote from this letter is, "Grain stocks should be
19 held by farmers, not the conglomerates, not the
20 ADMs and the CONAGRAS of the world."

21 It is also evident to me that the packer
22 concentration has affected the beef market. Even
23 though it has been suggested this is a myth, it
24 has had a real impact on the price of the
25 commodity to the producer.

1 I was in the county office recently, and I
2 would like to know what Equip is all about. The
3 local offices have the book of regs but is it in
4 effect, is it funded? We keep hearing tidbits
5 about it, but what is the real information? I
6 guess I'm asking to have information that is privy
7 to a few.

8 MR. ROMINGER: Just briefly, Equip was
9 part of the 1996 Farm Bill. The money did not
10 become available until January 1 of this year but
11 we are soon putting out the regulations for Equip
12 and then it will be available this year.

13 SPEAKER 19 - VIRGINIA AUTRY: Thank you.

14 MR. CLARK: Next speaker is Kenneth
15 Battles.

16 SPEAKER 20 - KENNETH BATTLES: My name
17 is Kenneth Battles. And I'm a conservationist for
18 the Choctaw Nation. And I would iterate what Mr.
19 Cranford said a while ago, that you can identify
20 some Indian land by its appearance when you drive
21 by it.

22 But that's not what I'm here to comment about
23 today. I was wanting to tell you about a program,
24 a grant that we received through the Choctaw
25 Nation with Eastern Oklahoma State College and

1 also the extension service, and it's funded by
2 FSA. And it's a grant to help needy farmers,
3 minority and socially disadvantaged farmers. And
4 we're into our -- about our -- winding down our
5 second year in it.

6 And I just want to make a few comments about
7 it and tell you that it's something that most of
8 you probably, from what I've heard today, might be
9 something that you could use. I will admit that
10 what I've heard today is one problem that you have
11 is contacting these people and getting them to
12 come out and get education, find out about the
13 programs and things like that. And that's what
14 this program is about. And we've used it to reach
15 mainly small Indian farmers and ranchers. And
16 like I said, we've just now got into our second
17 year; I think we were funded the first time in
18 '94.

19 I would want to say that we're using all the
20 resources we can come up with. Like I said, we
21 used the college, we've used the Extension
22 Department, OSU Extension Department. And some of
23 the benefits, I feel like that after we -- after
24 we assess other benefits, we are going to see that
25 we are doing some good although we've been through

1 some -- we're going through some bad times right
2 now, low cattle prices, high price feed, high
3 price fertilizer. And we also had the drought
4 there in the last half of '95.

5 So we went through some bad times, folks.
6 But I might say that in contacting your people
7 probably one of the best ways is one-on-one
8 contact. You can put all you want to on the radio
9 and the newspaper, and sometimes that helps, but
10 it don't do what a one-on-one contact will do.

11 So I just feel like this is a program that
12 has worked for the Choctaw Nation and helped our
13 farmers and ranchers and I feel like it's one that
14 needs to be refunded and continued with good
15 supervision and good working people. Thank you.

16 MR. CLARK: Thank you, sir. Next
17 speaker is Levester McKesson.

18 SPEAKER 21 - LEVESTER MCKESSON: Thank
19 you, Mr. Chairman. I'll make my comments very
20 brief. My sentiment has been conveyed by
21 everybody here. I would just like that you
22 representatives would take the message back to
23 level the playing field for us borrowing money for
24 the very small farmer because that's what we need.

25 When it comes to feeding animals, they don't

1 know anything about balancing the budget. If we
2 can go in and balance the budget for Mexico, we
3 can let a small farmer have two or \$3,000 to buy
4 some hay. That's what -- or equipment or
5 fertilizer. This is what we're talking about. So
6 I would like for the message to be carried back to
7 your boss. And I'm going to ask this because I
8 supported him before he got the first combination,
9 that we need help. And we need it now.

10 Now, if this is any kind of indication,
11 what's happening here is happening all over the
12 United States. So I appreciate the opportunity to
13 speak to you. And I would like to have a copy of
14 this entire meeting, if there's any way possible,
15 and I would like to give my address to her to have
16 it sent. Thank you, very much.

17 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. McKesson.
18 And we'll have to check and see if we can make
19 those -- a copy of the minutes available.

20 MR. PEARLIE REED: We will give you a
21 copy.

22 MR. CLARK: Okay. You'll get it. The
23 next speaker is Muhammad Robbalaa.

24 SPEAKER 22 - MUHUMMAD ROBBALAA: Peace
25 be unto you. Gentlemen, it's a pleasure to be

1 here in front of you today. I'm also from the
2 same area that Levester McKesson is from.

3 My being here is a little different than
4 maybe most of the guys that have spoken
5 previously, but basically our problem is the same,
6 finances is the big thing. I'm a residential
7 builder. I graduated from Oklahoma State
8 University back many years ago and I build low
9 cost housing. I know in the Muskogee area,
10 Farmers Home Administration, it seems that they
11 don't want to make loans to black or African
12 American descendents.

13 I've had at least ten Africans at one time
14 and I can't think of the gentleman that's director
15 over there, what his name is, but he's from
16 Muldrow, Oklahoma; that's his home. Terry Buford
17 should not be a director. I will personally stand
18 up here and say that this guy should go back, that
19 you all should retire him immediately. He's a
20 racist. He is a bigot and he will laugh in your
21 face and he will even lie to you. And I will say
22 that to him because I've been there several times
23 and talked to this gentleman.

24 I never could get a loan approved in Eufaula,
25 Oklahoma over there where the resort area is. The

1 black folks live basically on one side of the town
2 over there. They never could get a home built on --
3 at least I couldn't build one over there.

4 Now, it seems that we are an ethnic group and
5 this is a diverse group here. Everybody is having
6 money problems. And I really -- I cry for a lot
7 of these people. I really can't -- I don't have
8 anything else to say. But we have some big
9 problems in the state of Oklahoma. You know, back
10 a few years ago, Oklahoma was rated fiftieth as
11 loaning money to minority people. It probably
12 still is 50. Thank you.

13 MR. CLARK: Thank you, sir. The next
14 speaker is Fauntilla Miller.

15 SPEAKER 23 - FAUNTILLA MILLER: Thank
16 you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Fauntilla -- very
17 hard to pronounce.

18 MR. CLARK: I'm sorry.

19 SPEAKER 23 - FAUNTILLA MILLER: I'm from
20 Boynton, Oklahoma, and I live on a farm, my son
21 and I. About 10 years ago my husband was killed
22 in an accident and it left me just simply
23 devastated. However, I've gone through the
24 different programs of refinancing. And I
25 appreciate everything, but I can still use some

1 help. And whatever could be done to help me,
2 especially keep my payments where they are, I
3 would be very grateful. Thank you.

4 MR. CLARK: Thank you, very much.

5 Willis Robedeaux?

6 SPEAKER 24 - WILLIS ROBEDEAUX: It's
7 good to see you people here. Mr. Rominger, good
8 to see you again. And the panel, I appreciate
9 you. My name is Willis Robedeaux. I'm a member
10 of the Otoe Missouri Tribe. I'm a board member of
11 the IAC, Intertribal Ag Council. I'm also an
12 outreach worker for U.S.D.A. I have worked with
13 the people in Stillwater and they have treated me
14 fine. But there's lots of work that needs to be
15 done towards the farmers, the people that's going
16 to -- the people that made this country.

17 This country was made with farmers and we're
18 getting away from it. You've got about five,
19 you've got about five companies controlling the
20 grain, you've got about five people controlling
21 the cattle. They go just down the line. It's big
22 corporations. Now they're having a big deal out
23 in western Oklahoma about the hogs. They're
24 ruining our water, they're ruining our natural
25 resources.

1 And about this meeting, this (indicating)
2 came out in the Ponca City paper day before
3 yesterday; I cut it out. That's how big it is,
4 just -- hell, you couldn't find it if you wasn't
5 looking for something. Anyway, that's what
6 happens to all of our meetings. There's not
7 enough time and you need to make time to get these
8 people together.

9 I called my tribal chairman and he's a first
10 cousin of mine. I said, "Raymond, are you sending
11 somebody to the meeting?" He said, "Hell, you're
12 going. You can represent us."

13 I said, "Okay, I'll represent you as best I
14 can." And I got up here, I was going to tell a
15 story. When I first started on this outreach
16 program, I was going through some stuff and my
17 eight-year-old granddaughter said, "Grandpa, what
18 are you doing?"

19 I said, "I'm trying to get my thoughts
20 together. I'm not an educated man; I'm trying to
21 get something together where I can tell these
22 people." She said, "Grandpa, you're a good BSer,
23 so BS them." So here I'm BSing you. That's my
24 story.

25 Anyway, I've been farming since 1946. I'll

1 soon be 72 years old. I spent my time in the
2 Navy. I was in Russia, China, Japan, Korea, the
3 Aleutians, all the islands. I came home and I
4 started farming.

5 On Indian land you couldn't get a loan. They
6 just wouldn't even talk to you. I wanted a loan
7 to build my house. So I went to the bank and I
8 said, "I want to borrow some money and I want a
9 turnkey job on a house. I've got my plans."

10 They said, "We can't do that; that's on
11 Indian land." So I went to the Indian department.
12 They said, "We're not making loans on Indian
13 land." So I was sunk.

14 So I started to build my house a little bit
15 at a time. Finally I got it built, and when I got
16 through, I owned that sucker because I worked in
17 the oil field and farmed in the daytime and I
18 built that sucker and I owned it when I got
19 through. But that's what it's going to take,
20 people, is a lot of determination, a lot of hard
21 work.

22 And for God's sake, go see these people, fill
23 out the papers. And when they turn you down,
24 don't say, "That's all, I'm not going back, them
25 suckers ain't going to loan me nothing anyway."

1 Go back and say, "Hey, Ronnie Clark, you didn't
2 give me nothing last time I'm up here, I'm looking
3 you right in the eye; I want to know what's
4 wrong." Terry Peach, let's work this damn thing
5 out.

6 I'll tell you one thing. I get carried away.
7 When we had Phil's deal, I went to him and I said
8 "Phil, now, don't lose your temper. Don't get up
9 there and raise hell. I'm going to come over
10 there and tap you on the shoulder and tell you to
11 shut up."

12 Well, he got to getting a little loud so I
13 went over there and tapped him on the shoulder and
14 I said, "Phil." Okay, okay. So then I got up.
15 My wife was looking at the deal where we had --
16 they had put it all on tape, and she said, "I want
17 to tell you something, you was the only one using
18 cuss words." I said, "Yes, and I heard about it
19 from Phil," Phil and the wife.

20 But I do get carried away. I love my job. I
21 enjoy working with you guys. And most of the
22 people, if you will give them half the chance,
23 they will work with you. But I've got one guy
24 down in the BIA that's giving me fits.

25 Now, he had the laws on me, said I threatened

1 him. I didn't threaten him. I said I'm 70 -- I
2 was 70 years old then -- I said, "I'm 70 years old
3 and you're about ready to retire. I'm going to
4 make you a promise. When you retire, I'm going to
5 hunt you up and I'm going to try and whip your
6 ass." I said, "I'm not threatening you. I'm just
7 making you a damn promise." Thank you. That's
8 another one of my stories.

9 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Willis. The next
10 speaker is Sherman Shanklin.

11 SPEAKER 25 - SHERMAN SHANKLIN: I want
12 to thank you for this opportunity. I was going to
13 write my congressman and senator and by accident I
14 picked up the newspaper and saw this meeting was
15 going to be held. However, I have a guilty
16 conscious. I feel my concerns are minor compared
17 to the other people in the room.

18 But what my concern is today, I come from
19 Nowata County. My name is Sherman Shanklin. I'm
20 a farmer and also I have a farm and ranch real
21 estate business and I'm also a full-time
22 firefighter for the City of Bartlesville. I've
23 been elected to the COC committee in the past when
24 it was ASCS. And then, as we well know, the
25 systems come together with FMHA and ASCS, and now

1 as Farm Service Agency.

2 I was nominated, not because I was requested
3 to be nominated, and elected again to my county
4 committee and was told in December I had been
5 elected. I did not solicit, I did not advertise
6 for it but I was honored by my fellow producers
7 that I could help represent them and give some of
8 my help back to my community.

9 However, I received a memo back from Mr.
10 Stinsell in Washington, D.C. saying that he had
11 set a policy that anyone in farm service agencies
12 could not participate on the COC because of
13 conflict of interest in dealing in agricultural
14 real estate. You could participate in commercial
15 or residential.

16 Well, we all know that anything that isn't
17 zoned in the city could fall under any guidelines
18 for the Farm Service Agency. And I could accept
19 that, but I didn't ask for the position to be
20 elected and I don't look for it for monetary gain.
21 The only problem that I have that I would like for
22 Mr. Stinsell to review the program is from the
23 county, from the state committee which is
24 politically appointed down to all of my other
25 fellow COC committee members throughout the 77

1 counties to ask how many of those gentlemen and
2 ladies provide customer services as far as custom
3 farming, selling hay to other people that have
4 their farms in the Farm Service Agency programs,
5 sell seed, sell livestock equipment, farming
6 equipment and see if they have the same interest
7 that I do.

8 I only feel that it's wrong to segregate
9 someone out that is interested in selling farm and
10 ranch real estate and not look at other committee
11 members that provide services that help the
12 community with people that are involved in Farm
13 Service Agency programs. I thank you for your
14 time.

15 MR. CLARK: Thank you. The next speaker
16 is W.G. Parker. Not here? We'll go to the next
17 one, then. James Johnson. He had to leave, too?
18 All right. Willard Earl Davis?

19 SPEAKER 28 - WILLARD EARL DAVIS: Good
20 evening. First of all, I would like to thank all
21 of my fellow farm friends. Some of them had to
22 leave, I guess, to go home and feed the cattle,
23 but at least they made it and I hope they were
24 able to voice their opinion.

25 My name is Willard Earl Davis. And I farm --

1 I rent about 300 acres of land and I own 500 acres
2 of land. And I remember back in 1969 I went and
3 tried to apply for a loan with Farm Home
4 Administration. I told them that, you know, my
5 father was a farmer because his father was a
6 farmer and his father was a plantation slave so my
7 idea was to let them know I knew a lot about
8 farming and that even though I was a professional
9 person, I do handle two roles, that I am in
10 farming and I am there to stay.

11 Now, they lied to me and told me that, you
12 know, we don't let loans out to professional
13 people, that you will have to be a full-fledged
14 farmer, full-time farmer. While I was in
15 Washington, D.C. I talked to a black gentleman
16 there; he said that was not the truth. He said
17 you need to go back down there. He said if you
18 make a certain percent, a certain percent of your
19 income comes from the farm, then you are entitled
20 to all of the facilities that Farm Home
21 Administration has.

22 So I wrote a letter to the president and he
23 sent that letter to Stillwater. And they had a
24 black guy there by the name of -- let's see, what
25 was his name? I can't think right -- Sim Drain.

1 So Sim Drain came down to the home office there in
2 Oklahoma City and he asked me to meet him there at
3 three o'clock. Well, when I got there, those same
4 people who had turned me down five times, man,
5 they welcomed me, and said, "Come on in because
6 you don't -- we've been looking for you for a long
7 time, guys like you."

8 Now, they had lied to me for about three
9 years before, then all of a sudden when I brought
10 this to the attention of the people in Washington,
11 D.C., the game changed. And what happened was
12 after about three weeks, they let me have
13 \$115,000.

14 And I told them no, I didn't exactly come to
15 get that kind of money. But they said no, we want
16 you to borrow enough money just in case you have
17 to lose that farm, you know, we want it to be in
18 better shape than it was before. Now, I know what
19 they meant.

20 And from 1976 to 1986 my assets was something
21 like a million -- a million and \$70,000 because of
22 it. Everybody was looking for a farm. You know,
23 I mean, you could sell a farm for 200 to \$2,000 an
24 acre, you could sell it for \$3,000 an acre.

25 People were coming in to Oklahoma City and that

1 area. Then we had a recession right after that
2 and some of that same -- and they was letting me
3 have all the money that I wanted then because it
4 was a valuable piece of asset.

5 But right after that, guess what? We had
6 sort of an oil crash, you know, the land, you
7 couldn't hardly give it away. That's when I got
8 in trouble. By then, you know, we're farming it,
9 but we just need some more money. I think
10 everybody has got this same problem. We need more
11 money.

12 So I went to those people, Farm Loan
13 Administration, went back to them. And every time
14 I went there, every type of loan they had, they
15 had what they call -- they've got farms set aside,
16 they had lease back pay back. I think you guys
17 know what I'm talking about, right? I was turned
18 down for every one of those loans. We're talking
19 about debt reconstruction. I was turned down for
20 that. You know, they told me -- they gave me
21 every reason why I could not apply for a loan to
22 get this loan. But at the same time there were
23 millionaire farmers, white farmers who was getting
24 this money.

25 And you know, I'm sitting here saying that

1 because I'm black, I was denied that loan. But I
2 must say this also: We did have two or three
3 white farmers who were denied that loan, too.
4 Because what they do is, you know, they get with
5 their friends and the friends already know you are
6 in trouble and then they send their friends out to
7 talk to you to see can they buy your farm.

8 So all of these things should be looked at.
9 And what we need, we need somebody on a local
10 level who are there to represent us as minorities
11 and see that the money is going to the people who
12 need it. Because I think the money is being
13 funneled down but it's going to millionaire
14 farmers, people who are already millionaires.

15 And gentlemen, I'm telling you, we're in
16 trouble. I think it's something like, we've got
17 about -- at one time in my neighborhood we had at
18 least 200 farmers, real live farmers. And now I
19 am the only certified farmer in that county. We
20 have some farmers who are doing hog farming and
21 cattle farming and things of that nature, but I am
22 the only certified farmer in that county. And I'm
23 saying to you today we need some type of
24 assistance and we need some money. Thank you.

25 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Davis. We

1 have Josephine and William Penn. Do you want to
2 handle that separately or --

3 SPEAKER 29 - JOSEPHINE PENN: Good
4 evening. I'm Josephine Penn. And I'm
5 representing my brother William Penn who could not
6 be here because of illness.

7 And I'll start back with my dad left us a
8 farm in 1967; at least William came there and
9 started farming in 1967 and my dad died in 1969.
10 And so he was trying -- got in farming, trying to
11 get on the farming program or trying to get
12 started and he needed equipment and he needed --
13 in fact, he needed everything. But he received
14 much and did not receive equal treatment when
15 trying to get assistance for the farm. For
16 instance, the cost sharing on the different farm
17 practices such as erosion control and grass
18 planting were always less than what was told.

19 And finally the local office would just
20 ignore his requests. Also experienced harsh
21 treatment from some of the nonminority farmers who
22 had poisoned his cows and they had been
23 investigated. And they also poisoned the fields
24 to try to kill the crops to stop him from farming
25 and tried to get him to sell the lands. So

1 finally William did have to stop because of
2 illness.

3 But similar to the other gentleman who spoke,
4 the county U.S.D.A. agencies would slander William
5 by telling all new people working in this office
6 that he was a troublemaker and don't go to his
7 place. They wouldn't, you know, send anybody out
8 to see about his needs. And I'm also standing in
9 for Ray Charles Penn also. And I'm reading
10 because I don't have this memorized.

11 Migrating from -- this is from Ray Charles.
12 Migrating from south central Georgia as a slave at
13 the age of 10, witnessed the emancipation of his
14 family which was left, what was left of it, as the
15 owner fled as the Union soldiers rode through.

16 This former slave came to Oklahoma to protect
17 his sons from being hanged or torched, and settled
18 south of Langston, Oklahoma in eastern Logan
19 County. He prepared through farming, using
20 techniques not practiced in Oklahoma at this time
21 known as terracing. At the death, he left seven
22 farms, one to each of his children. This former
23 slave died at the known age of 103 years old, thus
24 giving the great grandson the opportunity to know
25 him.

1 The legacy started by the former slave Alan
2 Park Senior is now being carried out by his great
3 grandson Ray Charles Penn who farms the only farm
4 left from the estate. The life on the family farm
5 is escaping and eroding the American dream in
6 rural America.

7 With the many programs created by Congress,
8 they have bypassed the minority family farm
9 through denial, discouragement and discrimination,
10 thus depriving me the means necessary to rural and
11 farm survival. Some of my contact (sic) with me,
12 the U.S.D.A. Farmers Home Administration resulted
13 in denial of farm operating and ownership plan
14 applied for 1980, denial of home improvement loan
15 and a grant for my 76-year-old mother in 1994 and
16 '95.

17 Control of the state. I contacted the state
18 department Farm Home Administration, Stillwater,
19 Oklahoma, in 1987. He only offered negative and
20 discouraging advice about getting started in
21 farming. The high costs -- he stated that one of
22 the reasons was the high cost of equipment and the
23 large amount of capital and the cuts by the
24 U.S.D.A. However, I continued to read and saw
25 pictures of young nonminorities starting farming

1 careers.

2 Number four, participated in 1992 disaster
3 relief program administered by U.S.D.A. and ASCS
4 office and received a 1099 income tax reported,
5 and reported a statement for \$90. However, I
6 never received the check. When questioning the
7 ASCS office in Guthrie, Oklahoma, the only answer
8 I received was that the 1099 income reporting form
9 was a mistake.

10 Okay, these following are some areas of
11 questionable financing that came to my attention.
12 Farm Home Administration, Logan County, Guthrie,
13 Oklahoma, loans to a private and segregated golf
14 and country club in Guthrie, Oklahoma
15 approximately 1980 where the funds were dispatched
16 into the bank known as the First National Bank in
17 Guthrie, Oklahoma. Farmers Home Administration,
18 Logan County, Guthrie, subsidizing home mortgage to
19 a nonminority underprivileged individual Carl
20 Kinney whose occupation was an office manager for
21 the local grain and fertilizer company in Guthrie,
22 Oklahoma with income in excess of \$70,000 whose
23 mortgage was accommodated at \$90 a month.
24 Respectfully submitted, Ray Penn.

25 MR. CLARK: Thank you very much. We had

1 William Penn and Ray Penn. I'm understanding that
2 you spoke for yourself and those other two
3 individuals?

4 SPEAKER 29 - JOSEPHINE PENN: Yes.

5 MR. CLARK: Okay. Jerry Keener is the
6 next speaker. Is Jerry here? Jerry Keener? He
7 had to leave? Okay.

8 SPEAKER 32 - GLEN BROOKS: Good
9 afternoon. It's a privilege to be here. I'm
10 pretty sure I'm the only one of this kind that's
11 here because I work every day for the Department
12 of Transportation, and I'm the Chief of Civil
13 Rights for about 2600 employees for the last 24
14 years. I'm also a military officer in the
15 Oklahoma National Guard. If you see me tomorrow
16 in uniform, you're still seeing the same person of
17 27 years.

18 I say that to let you know I do know
19 something about Oklahoma. And the reason I'm here
20 today is because a good friend of mine told me as
21 a farmer that I needed to be here today. I get a
22 lot of your calls. That's why I'm here. I'm
23 civil rights for the Department of Transportation
24 which is your highway system. But I get in
25 contact with a lot of farmers, especially black

1 farmers. And I would like for you to really put
2 in your minutes today that we are losing black
3 farmers in Oklahoma.

4 I travel all 77 counties at least, at least
5 twice each year. And I can tell you right now the
6 black farmer is in trouble. But I have some
7 answers for you. Because I get a lot of calls and
8 I have to tell them, you know, "I'm the Highway
9 Department; you need to call the other agency."

10 But I would say to you today that you need to
11 do a few things. Some of them I do. I have
12 friends in Washington and I contact them. Phil
13 Givens has been to me. He will tell you that we
14 get the business done. But I would say to you
15 that we can do a better job, you can do a better
16 job. And I'm in government and I can tell you all
17 it takes is reaching out and going out to visit
18 these homes and also these farms.

19 Oklahoma, if you don't know, has five all
20 black towns. Around them are black farmers. I
21 found out today that a lot of them don't even get
22 the message -- don't even get the message that
23 really affects their farms. One is banking
24 institutions. We have a system that we have in
25 place where we make sure that we contact the

1 banking institutions.

2 And I'm going to tell you, put some money in
3 some minority banks, black banks. You have one
4 right here in Tulsa, American State Bank. If you
5 don't know about it, put your money there. And
6 I'm pretty sure Leroy Thomas is going to get the
7 money out to some farmers. And for the Indian
8 farmers, that's for you, too, and some small white
9 farmers.

10 The other thing I have for you is
11 advertisement. You've got to go to some black
12 churches; that's where we meet. Because they're
13 farming all week, but if you go to church and put
14 it in their bulletin, they get the message,
15 believe me. We do it for highway construction;
16 that's how we get our minority contractors. They
17 work all during the week but, you know, they stop
18 and take time to pray on Sundays. So do that,
19 contact the churches. And if you don't know the
20 churches in Oklahoma, in all 77 counties, call me,
21 I've got them.

22 Also we have a lot of problems with EPA with
23 black farmers. It's killing them. It's running
24 them away. They got the sale. That's not right.
25 Do something for them.

1 My last point is condemnation procedures. We
2 do a lot of condemnation when we build a highway,
3 but it's a process. You should make sure that
4 these people in this room are afforded an
5 opportunity at the right time to have a hearing.
6 Don't put the hearing when they're out farming;
7 that's not right. Do it when they can make it to
8 the hearing at an appropriate time.

9 So I stand here today to tell you that yes,
10 we've got a serious problem in Oklahoma. And if
11 you really want to do something for all farmers in
12 Oklahoma in your administration, please go to the
13 farm and let's keep the farm going in Oklahoma,
14 especially for these minority farmers. Thank you,
15 very much, for coming today.

16 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Brooks. The
17 next speaker is Rudell Lee. Mr. Lee? Not here?
18 I had Lewis Bruner and Willy Wilson. Both those
19 names have been marked off. Are they gone? They
20 had to leave? Ronald Banks?

21 SPEAKER 36 - RONALD BANKS: I was
22 standing out in the hallway just a while ago and I
23 was telling them I was having little problem when
24 I was a minority. But I don't have -- really I
25 kind of understand it when I go to the bank and I

1 don't get any money and I will be the only one
2 leaving without any because I'm black. So I
3 realized then where the minority started.

4 But, okay, I have another thing I would like
5 for you all to help me on. There's a point that
6 there's quite a few black farmers that scuffle for
7 their land and stuff. In our time they would like
8 to turn it over to their kids.

9 At this point I own approximately 640 acres,
10 and I owe FHA \$12,000 on it. Now, I've paid on it
11 approximately 30 years. I'm not behind at the
12 time. But to turn it over to my son is the
13 problem. He don't have a job, and FHA don't think
14 he can handle it. But I handled it for 30 years
15 and he worked for me. And that shouldn't be a
16 problem.

17 I should have taught him enough in 30 years --
18 he's not that old, he's 20 -- but I should have
19 taught him enough in 20 years to know what he was
20 doing. I don't have a job and if I can make it,
21 he wasn't that dumb. At least he came to dinner.
22 So I don't think he was that dumb.

23 Another thing, you know, curiosity here,
24 every durn thing that I've got done, I got it did
25 through calling the state office. You all can

1 save us a lot of money; get rid of the county
2 office. Them suckers ain't doing nothing. You go
3 in there and you've got a program and you ask
4 them, say, hey, what about this program that you
5 have all got for this? What program are you
6 talking about?

7 You want to ask him, "Hey, when did you start
8 working? It must have been about an hour ago."
9 He doesn't know a damn what I do. You know, he
10 really don't know. And it's like we're going to
11 keep it a secret; we're going to hold the money.
12 You know, down in Okfuskee County they have got
13 this here Equal Opportunity Officer. I tried to
14 find it. That sucker was sick or something,
15 because he was one of the good old boys.

16 You know, when I left out of the office, one
17 of my white friends told me, hey that guy said you
18 didn't need it, you know. I'm down here fighting
19 for my -- I've got some cows on some CRP program
20 and they wasn't even my cows but he said I knew
21 about it and went on somewhere. This was the
22 Equal Opportunity Office. So you know, they
23 elected him and he's one of them that they pat on
24 the back, hey, we're going to talk about this boy,
25 just as soon as he goes, we'll handle that. He

1 ain't worth nothing.

2 So that's one of the main problems that we're
3 having. And Mr. Beacham (phonetic), if he
4 remembers me, I was down there at the county
5 office trying to talk to my county officer and he
6 just kind of told me, yes, yes, yes, go play. And
7 I called Mr. Beacham and he went up there and he
8 talked to him and he set me up a program, that's
9 in Stillwater. I think his name was Mr. Beacham.
10 And we worked out a program. I'm back on board
11 again.

12 But they acted like I had -- I bought some
13 cows and they all died, they got caught in the
14 snowstorm coming up here, and half of them threwed
15 their calves and all this here. But anyway, when
16 I got behind, the county office didn't offer no
17 kind of help. I did -- I called Stillwater one
18 day because they wasn't giving me my check and
19 some guy up there told me, call Washington; they
20 will give it to you. I made a long distance call
21 to Washington.

22 I went down there and Jo -- I will even tell
23 you what her name was -- she was down there crying
24 when I got back, but she had my check ready. So
25 you can save a bunch of money; get rid of the

1 county office. I've got this guy over here, I
2 paid all my money, \$8,800 to Okmulgee. We moved
3 over to Okmulgee. I went over and told him, I
4 said, I want to plant some seed. Now, he ain't
5 had no hands on the rest of my money because I got
6 hurt on the job and paid up my FHA loan and I'm
7 lacking \$800 to plant some seed and he said he
8 didn't see where it would create a hardship. I
9 don't have a job. But it's no hardship not to
10 plant my crop. Well, she said it's time.

11 But all of us black farmers that are, you
12 know, hung out here trying to keep these farms, a
13 lot of them was passed down through our family and
14 it is time for you all to give us a hand to try to
15 transfer it. The black farmer is leaving, he's
16 gone. If you don't think he's gone, go where they
17 used to be and see how many of them are left. As
18 you can see, count the days. If you don't believe
19 I'm gone, count the days that I ain't been here.
20 Or count the days I've stayed.

21 I feel kind of like -- and the terriblest
22 thing that happened was on this CRP program, the
23 average black farmer came out with 25, \$19 and
24 everything, and the white farmer came out with
25 \$48. My dad went through that same durn junk. He

1 didn't know no better. He is sitting over there
2 thinking you can rent land for \$5 an acre, so when
3 you offered him \$21, he jumped on it. He didn't
4 know no better.

5 But you go down there to the ASC office and
6 there's an old boy down there and if he's white,
7 you say hey, man what's the going price for this
8 land? Oh, man, put it down for \$48. And that
9 black man farmer, what are you all talking about?
10 What are we getting money for? These guys are
11 really lost. You know, and they're talking about
12 getting to us. You have already got all the way
13 to us, that's stone rape.

14 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Banks. We've
15 gone through the list of folks that have signed up
16 to make presentations. We've still got about, my
17 watch says, about 20 minutes till five. I wanted
18 to wrap this up by five o'clock but we would offer
19 the opportunity here, if someone has got some
20 thoughts that did not sign up. Did not sign up.
21 Let's give them the chance first.

22 We would offer you the opportunity to walk up
23 there to the mike and make some comments. No
24 takers? One gentleman over here wanted to make a
25 few more comments.

1 MR. FRANK JONES: I can't believe you
2 can't get this money down because they say it's up
3 there so why can't we get it? Now, Terry, I know
4 you and Charles stepped into a hornet's nest up
5 there. But, boy, if you're not tough enough, get
6 out of there or take you some nasty pills in the
7 morning or do something. You're going to have to
8 because it's serious. These people are telling
9 you something now, so do something.

10 Like this guy says, fire them. I would fire
11 them. I wouldn't fool with them five minutes. If
12 they didn't want to work, they didn't want to get
13 this information out, and like they said, get out
14 there one on one, see what's going on. If they
15 don't want to do it, get rid of them. Hell, I
16 used to fire them. I worked minorities, I've
17 worked -- I've been in administration in schools.
18 If they didn't work, get rid of them. But get
19 these people some help.

20 MR. CLARK: The last comments were from
21 Frank Jones; is that right, Mr. Jones? So for the
22 record here.

23 MR. PHIL GIVENS: Mr. Chairman, let me
24 say something. You know, I have a lot to say.
25 And what's really troubling me, we were in

1 Washington, D.C. Monday. The under secretary's
2 sitting right there. If I could ask you two
3 things to do today, these are the two things.

4 You've got Ron Clark and Terry Peach. You've
5 got all these black and minority farmers out
6 there. Why don't you come up with an advisory
7 board right now comprised of some of these black,
8 and native American farmers. And another thing,
9 nepotism, conflicts of interest, I'm tired of
10 U.S.D.A. hiding behind policy and procedure. When
11 the policy and procedure suits you all, it's fine,
12 but when we point out what the policy and
13 procedure is when it comes to nepotism.

14 And listen to this, to file a civil rights
15 complaint with U.S.D.A. means creating enemies
16 from here to Washington, D.C.; I know I've been
17 there 23 times. I would like U.S.D.A. to come up
18 with some type of policy and procedure that says
19 we will investigate the civil rights complaint in
20 a timely fashion and take care of it. In my case
21 filing 72 civil rights complaints, you all have
22 never done that.

23 We've got Terry, a county committee member
24 and a farm credit officer that's brother-in-laws
25 and that's all you've heard today about

1 brother-in-laws. This is not a fictitious deal.
2 I've called you twice, at home, and Washington,
3 D.C. and Stillwater. The people in Washington,
4 D.C. won't even have nothing to do with it.

5 As much problems as we've had in Oklahoma
6 with racism in the county committee's office, you
7 ought to immediately make that board member
8 resign. The state office can do that. Or
9 transfer that local FSA officer; that's the
10 policy. And you won't do your job.

11 I've told your boss in Washington, D.C. you
12 were a good administrator, but you couldn't do
13 your damn job. You need to transfer that board
14 member or transfer the credit officer. I have a
15 problem with the county committee board members as
16 brother-in-laws processing a loan and determining
17 eligibility. Under secretary, Terry Peach will
18 tell you what I'm telling you is true and correct.
19 U.S.D.A. doesn't know how to act in good faith.

20 MR. ROMINGER: Thank you, Phil.

21 MR. SAM COMBS: Mr. Chairman, my time
22 ran out, and I would just like to make a couple
23 more points that I didn't have time to make.
24 Number one, I think this is very critical as it
25 relates to our college education for minorities.

1 I think U.S.D.A. ought to use all the persuasion,
2 all the funds that they can muster to bring 1890
3 colleges up to speed.

4 Now, I'm well aware of what's going on in the
5 past. But now, and I'm talking about -- I'm
6 talking about curriculum, I'm talking about
7 faculty, I'm talking about libraries, I'm talking
8 about all facilities, equipment, et cetera, et
9 cetera, where minority kids. You see, most of the
10 minority kids in this country still go to black
11 colleges, mostly Africa American. That is a fact.
12 And we need to see -- U.S.D.A. needs to see that
13 these requirements are brought up to speed so that
14 the students that graduate from these universities
15 can be expected to compete on an equal basis with
16 people who graduated in 1862.

17 Now, if you wonder what I'm talking about,
18 and some of you have been to some of the 1890
19 colleges, you look at the plant, you look at the
20 faculty, you look at the libraries, and the
21 facilities, et cetera, et cetera and you are aware
22 what I'm talking about. And that needs to be done
23 and it needs to be done quickly if we are going to
24 make agriculture an attractive vocation for
25 minority youth.

1 And I reemphasize again that officials at the
2 top in the positions where you all sit need to
3 really monitor county offices because there's some
4 real atrocities going on out there in terms of
5 lacking information, absolute hiding of programs
6 and not passing the information on in a timely
7 fashion, et cetera, et cetera. It's happening and
8 the people who are suffering are the minorities.

9 There is a good old boy network that's in
10 U.S.D.A. that needs to be gotten rid of. There's
11 no doubt about it, it's there in every agency, you
12 know, you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.

13 And I was in a county office; I'm a retired
14 U.S.D.A. employee myself. I was in a county
15 office in my home town. I won't embarrass
16 somebody by telling you which one. It wasn't the
17 one I worked for; I will say that. If it had
18 been, I would have been ashamed. I walked in
19 there and asked for some assistance and the young
20 lady they had working there, I guess she was the
21 secretary or something, well, she didn't know
22 anything, you know. And the office manager or
23 whatever they call him, was sitting in the back
24 there, you know.

25 And I must have been in there for 30 minutes

1 or so. And I knew all about the program and the
2 young lady was trying to help me. It was no
3 deference to her. She absolutely did not know.
4 He never came out until he got ready to go. He
5 picked up his briefcase and he walked as close to
6 me as I am to this gentleman and he didn't even
7 speak, you see.

8 Now, let's look at this scenario. Had I been
9 a first time African American to have been in this
10 particular office, what do you think I would have
11 thought, you see. Now, believe me, that kind of
12 stuff goes on in county offices. And it goes on
13 on a daily basis.

14 And, you know, until -- I said this when I
15 was working and I will say it again. Until the
16 Department of Agriculture officials are willing to
17 let some heads roll, it's going to take some of
18 that before some folks get the message, and say to
19 them in no uncertain terms that if you do these
20 things, you will pay. Nothing else is going to
21 change. I could go on and on. But I will stop
22 right there.

23 MR. WILLARD EARL DAVIS: I am going to
24 make this short because I know because we are
25 about to close on time. But Mr. Joel Schmidt, is

1 he here or has he gone? Okay, now, he advised me
2 that there are a number of minorities just got
3 going. In other words, at this very moment
4 they're in foreclosure and the thing that I would
5 like for U.S.D.A. to do is to maybe get with him --
6 I'm pretty sure he will get with you -- and try to
7 get these loans, try to get a write down, in other
8 words, forgive these people for some of this
9 interest, at least the interest that they owe and
10 maybe give them a start.

11 The one thing I would like to leave with you
12 on your way back to Washington, D.C. or whatever,
13 is that, you know, we don't really own land. It's
14 not like owning a house or a car. Those things
15 can be destroyed by ordinary means. But land is
16 going to be here forever. We are just the
17 caretaker of this property, property that our
18 forefather's have owned and it has gone down from
19 generation to generation. And we are about to
20 lose that.

21 All I ask you to do is reconsider some of
22 these foreclosures for minorities because all we
23 ask to do is just be the caretaker. You can have
24 it in about 50 years, but let us take care of it
25 until then. Thank you, very much.

1 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Davis. One
2 more. I appreciate all the input.

3 FROM THE FLOOR: Mr. Chairman, I will
4 take five minutes and I'm just glad that you are
5 here. I represent Langston University. And I
6 didn't want to say anything here but since many
7 people are here, I would like to make this
8 observation and declaration.

9 The U.S.D.A. has given Langston University
10 the outreach training and technical assistance
11 program and you have been only for sometime now.
12 I can see that some of the landowners and tenants
13 that you have worked with and many of them are in
14 this hall. Some went through a lot of
15 difficulties to get their monies and so on and so
16 forth. But what I'm just trying to say is that if
17 there's anybody who has been going through the
18 1951-S, you know that, and things like that, we
19 have a team that can help you out in packaging
20 that process so that you can push it through the
21 county office as soon as you can.

22 But most importantly, we are working in
23 several counties in Oklahoma and we would like, as
24 much as possible, to be involved in some of the
25 activities that you are dealing with. And that's

1 why we are being paid. The services are free.
2 And we are just there to help you out.

3 MR. CLARK: Thank you. We had a hand
4 right back here; this gentleman.

5 MR. CHARLES LONECHIEF: I want to thank
6 you gentlemen, for sending correspondence to the
7 tribe inviting us to be here. The Chairman of the
8 tribe wasn't able to attend today but anyway, I
9 came in his behalf. I live here in Tulsa and they
10 called and asked if I would represent the tribe.
11 I am a tribal councilman of the Pawnee tribe. And
12 what I have to say has nothing to do with the
13 feelings of the tribe, I'm sure, but what I
14 observed over the years growing up, and what I've
15 seen in government dealings and so on.

16 And what really bothers me is when I hear
17 people, whether the black or Indian or Asian,
18 whatever background or even, you know, Caucasian,
19 they're really hurting in this country. And our
20 politicians in their humanitarian efforts are
21 willing to send millions of dollars over to AT or
22 to Somalia or to Bosnia. Well, who is going to
23 speak for the people here? That's what bothers
24 me.

25 You know, somewhere in some point in time, I

1 think that the Americans will pull together and
2 start demanding or trying to get some avenue of
3 getting the same type of appeal to the human
4 conscience that we have people here in the country
5 that are hurting. You know, you can go over in
6 eastern Oklahoma or anyplace, as far as that goes,
7 and still find people living in shacks. I mean,
8 you can see daylight through the cracks in the
9 walls of the house or maybe stars through the
10 holes in the ceiling. And if money can be raised
11 for emergencies like floods or disasters, why
12 can't we save our people who are the grassroots
13 people, the farmers that have fed the nation, you
14 know, from the beginning? And that's the question
15 that really rolls in my mind.

16 And you know, borrowing a phrase, I wish I
17 could, you know, come up with some of these quotes
18 that some of the famous people have come up with,
19 but you know, you teach people to fish; if you
20 hand them the fish, they will never learn. And I
21 don't know, I would like to see not just with
22 Indian tribes but with other minority groups that
23 are wanting to learn, you know.

24 We send Peace Corps people overseas to teach
25 those people how to raise crops and how to do

1 things better. Why don't we have our inner Peace
2 Corps to reach out to the different entities here
3 in the United States?

4 Now, I thank you gentlemen. That's only food
5 for thought that I threw out.

6 MR. PHIL GIVENS: Pearlie Reed, let me
7 say this: Is there not a moratorium that the
8 secretary has on minority foreclosures?

9 MR. ROMINGER: Yes, there is. The
10 secretary --

11 MR. PHIL GIVENS: We're just now finding
12 that out. I had to fly 2,000 miles Monday to find
13 that out. Somebody should have put that in the
14 paper that there's a moratorium on the minority
15 farmers. You can explain that.

16 MR. ROMINGER: There's a moratorium on
17 foreclosures on minority farmers until they can be
18 investigated to see if there's been
19 discrimination. That's in place, yes.

20 MR. PHIL GIVENS: Good. Terry, you
21 should put that out. I mean, we didn't get a
22 newsletter from you or Ron Clark or anybody in the
23 state office telling minority farmers and this is
24 just part of outreach. I'm not being smart, but
25 all of us can't fly to Washington, D.C. to find

1 things out. But nobody in the state office told
2 any of these minority farmers this.

3 I knew and I've sat here through this whole
4 meeting to see if that was even going to come out
5 and it never did. And that bothers me. And when
6 I testify in front of the Senate Select Committee,
7 I'm going to bring that up and say that a state
8 director with the NRC, FHA never told a black,
9 Hispanic or Indian farmer about this moratorium on
10 the AFSA problems. And it was never brought to
11 this meeting till I brought it up. You remember
12 that, Terry Peach, and Ron Clark.

13 MR. CLARK: We'll take one more, then
14 we're going to wrap this up.

15 FROM THE FLOOR: Okay. I want to ask
16 the -- what I was dealing with in asking you
17 about, like, transfer forms. Just like -- I'm not
18 actually tired of it, but I'm ready to give it up.
19 And I would like to supervise and help my kid, you
20 know, to get a start.

21 You know, it don't look like it would be a
22 problem with it. After I paid on it -- actually
23 I'm on the downhill payment. There looks like
24 there ought to be some kind of way you could
25 transfer this farm without any problem with just

1 \$12,000 owed on it.

2 I don't see why you can't just say hey, I'm
3 tired, you know, son, you can have it now. That's
4 the way my grandpa -- he didn't give me a farm,
5 but he gave me the chance to start farming and I
6 could plant whatever I wanted to and do it when I
7 was, like, 11, 12 years old. He was 60 something
8 years old.

9 MR. PEARLIE REED: Can we meet with you
10 right after the meeting? And I'm going to ask
11 Randy Weber. Randy, would you raise your hand?
12 He's the Associate Administrator of the Farm
13 Services Agency in Washington, to if we can help
14 you.

15 MR. CLARK: We have one more hand in the
16 back.

17 MR. T.C. MONROE: Yes, I'm T.C. Monroe
18 from southeast Oklahoma. I'm actually speaking on
19 behalf of my wife, I guess. She -- there was an
20 ad in the paper on this inventory property with
21 FMHA. She put in an application for it. She was
22 immediately turned down because she had too much
23 experience or because of this, that and the other.
24 After two or three appeals, she got qualified to
25 buy it.

1 Well, in the meantime, when they ran this ad,
2 they had the price of the property, the interest
3 rate, the number of years. Well, after a year and
4 a half of appeals where she got qualified for this
5 property, she got turned down, she got approved
6 for the loan after a year and a half so there was
7 no money. What happened to the money? If the
8 money was there when this property was advertised,
9 why shouldn't it have been there until the
10 property was sold?

11 I understand that they got rid of county
12 boards to some extent, which I think is a good
13 thing; the county board in those offices has too
14 much control. They're sitting there on equal
15 terms as you are, but yet they can control who
16 gets a loan and who don't. I think that puts the
17 individual to a disadvantage. That's all I have
18 to say. Thank you.

19 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Time for one
20 more. I see a hand back there.

21 FROM THE FLOOR: Again, I would like to
22 thank the panel and everybody. I hope when I go
23 back to Okmulgee office to put in for another
24 loan, it won't be thrown in the trash after this
25 meeting. This man filled it out -- his group and

1 I know it was involved for you (sic). So
2 hopefully, after this meeting it will be better.
3 Thank you.

4 MR. CLARK: Thank you. That's what
5 we're all about. With that -- one more?

6 MS. MARTHA LONG: I noticed another
7 problem that we had is that native Americans have
8 no land grant college in Oklahoma. And you take
9 Langston University, for example, that has the
10 minority outreach program. Is that what we call
11 this, project outreach? There really is nothing
12 that concentrates on native Americans. And yet I
13 realize that you do them through the colleges, but
14 what do native Americans do? Because I know this
15 is sponsored through FSA and NRCS.

16 FROM THE FLOOR: Now, I'm native
17 American, and they gave me all kinds of help at
18 Langston.

19 MS. MARTHA LONG: Right. But I would
20 like to see more concentration, since we don't
21 have a land grant college in Oklahoma, if there's
22 a possibility of -- I know that they do help
23 native Americans. Well, they have been over to
24 the Sac and Fox. However, we don't have that
25 access, you might say, and I would like to see

1 more. Is there a possibility of getting a
2 minority outreach person down there to work with
3 the tribes?

4 MR. PEARLIE REED: The answer is yes,
5 and we will follow up with you.

6 MS. MARTHA LONG: I appreciate it.
7 Thank you.

8 MR. CLARK: Go right ahead, sir.

9 MR. O.C. SIMPSON: Thank you. I'm O.C.
10 Simpson, and I'm in charge of Research and
11 Corporate Extension Program at Langston
12 University. And I just want to say that we are
13 very sensitive about native Americans. However,
14 I'm not involved with the outreach program, but
15 just to show you our commitment to native
16 Americans in the Cherokee Nation area in
17 Tahlequah, we have an office there that's set up
18 purely to service primarily the Cherokee Nation
19 but that program is for youth.

20 But I offer this challenge today that if
21 someone that's in the Cherokee Nation area that
22 can locate for us a qualified person who is
23 willing to work in extension and work primarily
24 with the Cherokee and other tribes, then by
25 George, we'll employ them and locate them in our

1 office in Tahlequah. Thank you.

2 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Any other
3 comments?

4 MR. WILLIS ROBEDEAUX: Ronnie, one quick
5 comment. By the way, I'm Willis Robedeaux. I put
6 in for a loan at the Stillwater National Bank. I
7 got my feed and everything through the BIA, I got
8 it in my possession, I took it to Stillwater Bank.
9 And there's a deal that's supposed -- the banks
10 are supposed to work with you on a loan. And I
11 worked with this lady through the BIA. She got so
12 tired of working with them after two years, we
13 just gave it up.

14 So that's what we put up with, you know. The
15 program, it says that it's there and she was
16 willing to work with me, yet through the BIA and
17 everything, it was all turned down. She got tired
18 of messing with me. But I think somebody ought to
19 see somebody up there in Washington about the BIA,
20 too.

21 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Willis. With
22 that, let's wrap this up.

23 It's been a very informative session. And we
24 do appreciate your time and we do appreciate you
25 coming and being with us today and sharing your

1 concerns. With that, I would like to turn it back
2 to Deputy Rominger to make some final comments.

3 MR. SAM COMBS: Could I ask some
4 questions before we dismiss? Are transcripts of
5 this meeting going to be available?

6 MR. CLARK: Yes.

7 MR. ROMINGER: I want to thank all of
8 you for coming here today. Secretary Glickman is
9 serious about resolving problems at U.S.D.A. with
10 our programs with how our customers are treated.
11 This action team that he has appointed has a big
12 job, as you can see. They are hearing a lot of
13 things from you and others around the country.

14
15 I want to thank the members of the action
16 team here who are spending a lot of time, and will
17 be for at least the next month, in listening to
18 your concerns and then coming up with some
19 recommendations to the secretary on how we can
20 improve the situation at U.S.D.A. both for you,
21 our customers and for the employees in U.S.D.A.

22 So again, thank you all for coming, thank you
23 for hosting us here today. And we're going to be
24 working on these issues. Thank you.

25 (Whereupon, the proceeding was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

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STATE OF OKLAHOMA)
COUNTY OF TULSA) ss.

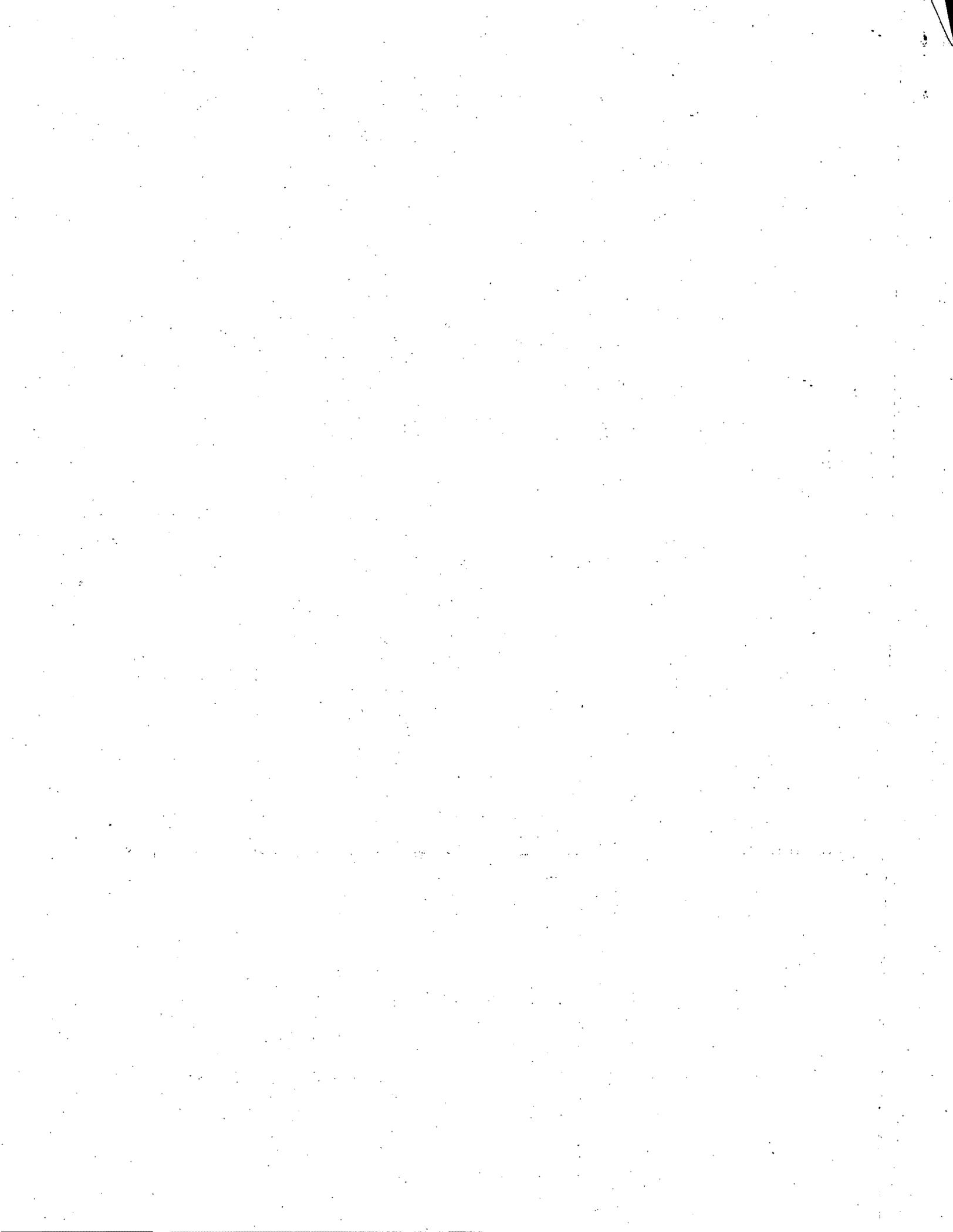
I, Linda Fisher, a Certified Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public in and for the State of Oklahoma, do hereby certify that on the 10th day of January, 1997, at the Sheraton Hotel, 10918 East 41st Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma, the within and foregoing proceeding was reduced to writing by me in stenograph, and thereafter transcribed by me and is fully and accurately set forth in the preceding 106 pages.

I do further certify that I am not related to nor attorney for any of the said parties, nor otherwise interested in the event of said action.

WITNESS my hand and official stamp this 15th day of January, 1997.

Linda Fisher
Linda Fisher, CSR-RPR

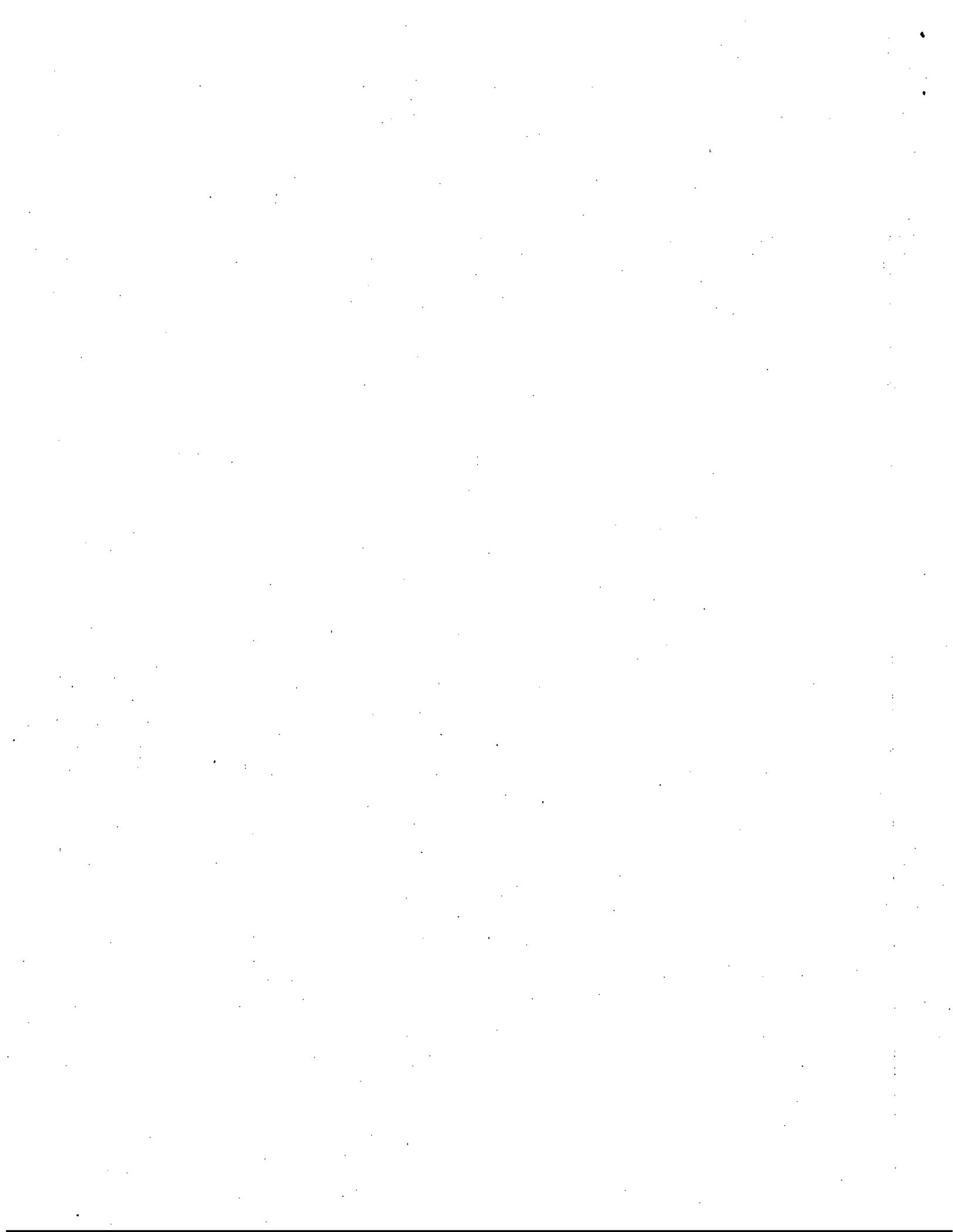
Linda K. Fisher
Oklahoma Certified Shorthand Reporter
Certificate No. 00866
Exp. Date: December 31, 1996



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
CIVIL RIGHTS CUSTOMER LISTENING FORUM

2:00 P.M.
JANUARY 10, 1997

SHERATON HOTEL
10918 EAST 41ST STREET
TULSA, OKLAHOMA



1 MR. CLARK: Good afternoon. I'm Ron
 2 Clark, state conservatichist with National
 3 Resource Conservation Service, headquartered in
 4 Stillwater. I'm also acting as Chairman of the
 5 Oklahoma USDA Food and Agriculture Council this
 6 year. I would like to welcome everyone to Tulsa.
 7 This is the Oklahoma Civil Rights Customer
 8 Listening Session.

9 We would like to thank you for taking the
 10 time to be here with us today to voice your
 11 concerns and air any comments that you might have
 12 to the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, Richard
 13 Rominger, and the Secretary Civil Rights Action
 14 Team. Just as you are here today committed to
 15 letting us know what changes need to happen, I'm
 16 pleased to see the commitment from the secretary,
 17 the deputy secretary and the civil rights action
 18 team to make these changes a reality.

19 We have several panel members here today to
 20 initiate a dialogue with you and the folks that
 21 you represent. I would like to introduce my
 22 counterparts with USDA here in the state. Terry
 23 Beach, he's the Executive Director for the Farm
 24 Services Agency in Oklahoma; and also Charles
 25 Rainbolt, Executive Director for Rural Development

1 I'm the Director of Executive Services for the
 2 Office of Chief Financial Officers.

3 MR. PEARLIE REED: We also have four of
 4 our executive staff with us, Kathy Gugulis, who is
 5 the chief of staff of this operation; Sonya Neal,
 6 who is on the staff; Jerry Gonzales, who is on the
 7 staff; and Rebecca Delatori (phonetic), who is on
 8 the staff. So without further ado, I would like
 9 to ask all of you to help me welcome the Honorable
 10 Richard Rominger, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture.

11 MR. ROMINGER: Thank you, Pearlie, and
 12 thanks to all of you for coming here today. I
 13 would like to introduce another one of the members
 14 of the subcabinet of the U.S. Department of
 15 Agriculture. That's Jill Long Thompson who heads
 16 our rural development mission area. Thanks for
 17 being here, Jill.

18 Today at USDA, civil rights compliance has
 19 really shifted into overdrive because there's
 20 nothing more important than assuring that we treat
 21 all people with dignity and with civility. We
 22 want to see the department dedicated to creating
 23 an environment in which every customer who comes
 24 to a U.S.D.A. office is treated fairly and
 25 effectively and efficiently. And we also want to

1 in Oklahoma. Are there other members of the Food
 2 and Agriculture Council here that we need to
 3 recognize? Yes, sir. Hi, Rick. Thanks for being
 4 here.

5 MR. CLARK: Next, I would like to
 6 introduce Pearlie Reed, the civil rights action
 7 team leader.

8 MR. REED: Good afternoon. The first
 9 thing I would like to do is to ask the action team
 10 members to make self-introduction, excuse me
 11 self-introductions. So can we start with you,
 12 Randy?

13 MR. WEBER: My name is Randy Weber. I'm
 14 the Associate Administrator for the Farm Service
 15 Agency.

16 MR. PEER: Good afternoon. I'm Wilbur
 17 Peer, Associate Administrator of Rural Business
 18 Services in the rural development commission area.

19 MS. MESSMORE: My name is Karen
 20 Messmore. And I'm with the Food, Safety and
 21 Inspection Service, Human Resources in Washington,
 22 D.C.

23 MR. BOTTUM: I'm John Bottum. I'm with
 24 the Research and Extension mission area.

25 MR. BARBER: My name is Jerry Barber.

1 insure that we provide the same sort of treatment
 2 to our own employees in the department.

3 So with the new year, we intend to focus on
 4 how all of USDA manages our civil rights issues.
 5 So toward accomplishing this goal, as you know,
 6 Secretary Glickman has established this Civil
 7 Rights Action Task Force. And the team consists
 8 of representatives of each of the mission areas at
 9 USDA.

10 And this team will take a close look at
 11 how things are working at all organizational
 12 levels and recommend ways to solve these problems.
 13 During January this team is holding a total of 13
 14 listening sessions around the country. And these
 15 forums are on the delivery of U.S.D.A. programs.
 16 And all of the farm program agencies, including
 17 extension, at headquarters, state and county
 18 levels, are going to be involved in this
 19 discussion.

20 So these forums will serve as a national
 21 dialogue on U.S.D.A. service to minority
 22 communities and will provide an opportunity for
 23 minority and socially disadvantaged farmers to
 24 discuss their concerns about U.S.D.A. program
 25 delivery. We'll also seek to identify new ways

1 that we can build partnerships and improve the
2 department's outreach and service. Three of these
3 listening sessions will be devoted to listening to
4 the concerns of our own U.S.D.A. employees because
5 we know we have problems within U.S.D.A. as well.

6 So this civil rights action team is charged
7 with preparing a report for the secretary,
8 including recommendations, and to do that no later
9 than about mid February. So we're on a very fast
10 track here. And we're going to hold our senior
11 staff personally responsible for cooperating fully
12 in this entire effort.

13 So the bottom line is that we have a real
14 opportunity to make some positive changes in the
15 area of civil rights enforcement. I think we can
16 insure that U.S.D.A. is a diverse civil department
17 to its employees and to all of you, its customers.
18 So the secretary and I are devoted to solving this
19 department's civil rights problems and we're
20 committed to bring about the changes that are
21 necessary. So thank you for being here.

22 MR. CLARK: At this time I understand
23 that we do have several native American tribes
24 that have representatives in the audience. At
25 this time I would like to offer them the

1 For those of you who do not get a chance to speak,
2 and hopefully, everyone that wishes to will, or
3 would prefer to provide written comments, we have
4 comment forms available and they are over here, if
5 you would like to use those.

6 Written comments can be deposited in the box
7 over here to my right and they will then, in turn,
8 be mailed to the action team. This is a meeting
9 to listen to you. We won't be able to respond or
10 discuss any questions or comments at this session.

11 We do have some ladies here that have agreed
12 to sign. Is there anyone here that needs that
13 service? If not, well, we can dispense with that.
14 Thank you, very much.

15 We will now begin the secretary's listening
16 forum. When registering, you were asked if you
17 wanted to speak, and you were asked to indicate
18 that on the sign up sheet. I'll use that list to
19 determine the order of those making comments. If
20 we get to everyone on the list and have time left,
21 others in the audience then would be given an
22 opportunity to speak.

23 I would ask each of you that wants to make
24 comments to come to the microphone or if you can't
25 come to the microphone, that would be the

1 opportunity to introduce themselves and let us
2 know who you are.

3 (Introduction from the floor of tribal
4 representatives participating.)

5 MR. CLARK: Thank you, very much. I
6 know that there is some reported snow around the
7 state. I was in Tulsa last night so I didn't face
8 those bad roads coming in, but it is good to see
9 such a good turnout. This is a listening session
10 being held so that this panel and the action team
11 can hear your comments and concerns. We'd like to
12 go over a few things that will help us stay on
13 track and allow as many people as possible to have
14 their chance to speak.

15 I would like to ask those speaking to keep
16 their comments to a maximum of five minutes. We
17 have a timer over here, and that timer will help
18 us keep track of how much time is being spent by
19 each speaker. At about four minutes, what we will
20 do is hold up a sign and I will give you a sign
21 that you have one minute left.

22 I would also like to inform you that we are
23 recording comments at this meeting. A transcript
24 of the meeting will be provided to the Secretary
25 of Agriculture and the Civil Rights Action Team.

1 preferred option, if you can't come to the
2 microphone, then we will bring the mike to you.
3 But we would ask you to give us your name, where
4 you are from and if you represent a group, an
5 organization, tribe or if you're speaking as an
6 individual. Let's begin. The first name on the
7 list is James Thompson from Miami, Oklahoma.

8 SPEAKER 1 - JAMES THOMPSON: I wasn't
9 quite sure about what you were going to talk about
10 here today because this is about me personally,
11 what happened to me. And now, in my office, FMHA
12 foreclosed on me, but when they sent out them debt
13 servicing packets, I chose not to fill mine out
14 because I knew I was done so I didn't fight it.

15 So I got to reading in that 1962-1 about debt
16 settlement. So I went back down to the county
17 office, that was then run by Jackson
18 Hollingsworth, and asked him about debt
19 settlement. He said no, absolutely not. So I
20 went on home.

21 MR. ROMINGER: What year was this?

22 SPEAKER 1 - JAMES THOMPSON: '92, I
23 guess it was. And in '94, I got -- we had a -- I
24 got hold of the U.S.D.A. regulations. And I got
25 to reading in there. And I found out that he was

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1 supposed to assist me in making application to the
 2 state director, which he did not do, he just
 3 turned me down flat.
 4 And then in '94, in the fall of '94, I got a
 5 letter from Secretary Espey, wanting to know if
 6 there had been anything wrong with my -- the way
 7 they done me. And I told them I didn't believe
 8 there would be anything in the file because he
 9 wouldn't write down anything, he just -- And then
 10 I explained to him in there, in the letter, about
 11 the debt settlement and everything and that had
 12 been two and a half years ago.
 13 And in the meantime, of course, they
 14 foreclosed, took the equipment and sold it. And
 15 I -- in the meantime, I talked to the banker along
 16 this time and I could have got the money to pay
 17 him out at appraised value which I ought to have.
 18 And they wound up, when they sold it down here,
 19 they turned about \$4,000. And I offered them
 20 \$50,400 to settle it. And I'm still waiting for
 21 them.
 22 They claim now that they sent me a letter,
 23 finally sent me a letter from the U.S. Attorney
 24 down here and said they had debt against me and in
 25 the meantime on that there, they took money. I.

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1 had a supervised checking account; they took that.
 2 And the IRS took money from me for my fuel tax
 3 returns for two years. They sold part of my
 4 equipment to my dad at appraised value but they
 5 never applied it to the debt.
 6 I didn't figure it would do any good to write
 7 Secretary Glickman since it didn't do any good to
 8 write Secretary Espey. And since this came up
 9 down here, I figured maybe I could maybe get some
 10 kind of result from this.
 11 MR. ROMINGER: Okay. Well, thank you
 12 for bringing that to our attention.
 13 MR. CLARK: Thank you, James. Joey
 14 Schmidt? We would also ask folks to speak
 15 directly into the mike so we can hear a little
 16 more clearly.
 17 SPEAKER 2 - JOEY SCHMIDT: Hi. I'm Joey
 18 Schmidt. I'm an attorney in Norman, Oklahoma and
 19 I represent farmers throughout this state. I've
 20 represented over 600 farmers in foreclosures in
 21 this state in the last decade. Generally, I have
 22 a pretty good working relationship with U.S.D.A.
 23 and primarily, we work out most disputes that come
 24 out throughout this state.
 25 Over the last several years, U.S.D.A. has set

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1 up an appeals agency to resolve certain disputes
 2 that from time to time come up. And that appeals
 3 agency has worked very well out here. Over the
 4 last year, however, we've had a lot of problems in
 5 Oklahoma. A lot of these problems involve
 6 minorities and other groups where we are denied
 7 loan servicing or loans or other problems that
 8 come out and it washes out in financial problems.
 9 And we appeal those decisions, we take them to the
 10 local agencies to be resolved. And when we win
 11 those decisions, they're sent to Washington.
 12 That's where I've had the problems. We've
 13 gone up there and U.S.D.A. and the NAD people in
 14 Washington have overturned most of the decisions
 15 that have been ruled in our favor in the last
 16 year. A lot of these are applications for loans
 17 for minorities, applications not to foreclose on
 18 people's farms, even simple things like
 19 applications for release of proceeds. And right
 20 now I'm afraid that we can't win any appeals that
 21 go to Washington. And I think that's a real
 22 problem and I would like for you to look into it,
 23 if you can.
 24 MR. ROMINGER: Thank you.
 25 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Next speaker is

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1 Jack Thompson.
 2 SPEAKER 3 - JACK THOMPSON: I'm a farmer
 3 from Ottawa County, Miami Oklahoma. And I'm not
 4 here on behalf of myself, I'm here on behalf of
 5 some regulations that have been not fulfilled in
 6 our county. In 1992, there was packets sent out;
 7 we had 60 days to respond or you lost all your
 8 rights. Well, there was farmers up there that did
 9 respond in the 60 days. According to law set
 10 forth by Congress, you people had 90 days to
 11 respond to them. Well, guess what? Four years
 12 ninety days later, they have decided to start debt
 13 servicing.
 14 Well, when they had done this debt servicing,
 15 if they had done it in 1992 when land values were
 16 at a reasonable rate, these farmers would have
 17 cash flowed. Now today they cannot cash flow
 18 because due to the increase in the price of land
 19 in our area. Land has gone up 40 to 50 percent
 20 due to the people wanting to move to the country.
 21 No longer do we look at land at productivity, we
 22 look at land at what the intrinsic value of it is
 23 for the expansion of homes and whatever they want
 24 to do with it. I think that if the U.S.D.A. wants
 25 to do something to help these farmers, they should

1 go back to under the old law of 1992 and under the
2 old appraisals so these farmers can at least
3 halfway have a decent chance to cash flow and to
4 save their farms.

5 It seems to me, that there has been a
6 conspiracy among U.S.D.A. to put the farmers off
7 the land. And another thing, the farmers that go
8 through bankruptcy, and last year under the
9 Bankruptcy Law Code it says that you cannot
10 discriminate because if you file bankruptcy.

11 In 1996 the Congress wrote a law that said
12 due to you filing bankruptcy or if you took a
13 write-down from U.S.D.A. or to save your farm,
14 now, you no longer can qualify for any programs
15 offered by U.S.D.A. Now, if you talk about
16 blatant discrimination, you're talking about one
17 law overriding the other law. So I think the
18 people in the U.S.D.A. and the Congress need to
19 get their act together and try to figure out if
20 we're out here to save the family farm or are we
21 going to put them all out of business. And I
22 thank you for coming and I thank you for letting
23 me have the time to speak.

24 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Thompson.
25 Tim Tarvin.

1 For the last three years, with the help of
2 Joey Schmidt and other professors, we have
3 developed a curriculum to train students to be
4 sensitive to these issues. We felt particularly
5 qualified because we house at Fayetteville the
6 National Center for Ag Law Research and
7 Information. We house the Executive Director for
8 the American Ag Law Association. And we have the
9 only L.L.M. or advanced law degree program in
10 America in agricultural law.

11 What we did not have, until this program, was
12 a program devoted specifically and solely to
13 advocacy for these people. This program still
14 exists. But it is in its third year and the
15 Congressional budget cuts that have been made by
16 the Republican Congress have eliminated the
17 assistance we were receiving from other legal aid
18 attorneys who were trying to represent these
19 people. And it has meant that there is no longer
20 a funding source at DOE or LSC for this program.
21 We are hopeful that we may find other funding
22 sources.

23 For the moment we still represent farmers,
24 and not merely in Arkansas but we have also
25 represented farmers in Oklahoma. And as we speak,

1 SPEAKER 4 - TIM TARVIN: Thank you. Let
2 me join Mr. Thompson in congratulating and
3 commending this body for organizing both this
4 meeting and those that will take place across this
5 nation this month, for emphasizing this particular
6 topic.

7 Gentlemen, I'm especially appreciative that
8 you came this close to me so that I could be here
9 today. I am Tim Tarvin. I'm a professor with the
10 University of Arkansas School of Law in
11 Fayetteville. I have practiced law for over 20
12 years, 15 of that as a trial judge. The last four
13 years of my life I have spent in a full-time
14 professorship there in the clinical program.

15 The responsibilities that I have currently
16 are for the Federal Practice Clinic. It is a
17 clinic conceived and designed four years ago with
18 the idea that there are family farmers and
19 individuals out across America who need help and
20 are not getting it, that are unrepresented or who
21 are unrepresented. We packaged that idea in
22 grants to the Department of Education and the
23 Legal Services Corporation and won two national
24 grant competitions to fund what the law school
25 could not fund.

1 I have applications on my desk from farmers in
2 Florida, from Missouri, from Texas. There is a
3 need for this help and there are commonalities to
4 these problems across the country.

5 One of our struggles now is to determine how
6 to export the legal services that these people
7 need. There may be others that are doing this,
8 gentleman, but I am not aware of them. It is
9 important to me, but not for reasons that I will
10 provide to you statistically which you may already
11 know. It is important to me in part because of
12 what I discovered in the practice of law in the
13 Delta where I grew up.

14 I cannot divulge to you names because that is
15 confidential and privileged information. But I
16 will tell you that before the law changed, I did a
17 million dollar write down. The farmer happened to
18 be white. And that's okay. I went by the book
19 and it was a good deal and that's fine.

20 But I also chose to accept representation for
21 an elderly black farmer who was functionally
22 illiterate who drew a disability check. And I
23 went in with my skills as best I could to cut a
24 deal in that case. And the only thing he asked me
25 to do was to keep his home because he needed a

1 place to live. He stood to lose his land, his
2 equipment, his crops and everything that he had
3 worked all his life for.

4 The appraisal on that home, such that it was,
5 and I doubt if anybody in this room lives in
6 anything quite like where he was living, was
7 \$12,000 and he couldn't do it. And I said we need
8 to negotiate, work with me, do not -- I cannot do
9 this. They ran the software. I said that's fine,
10 that's fine that you run the software and that we
11 have rules and we have the regulations. But I
12 said, "Gentlemen, I can't cut that deal, I can't
13 cut that deal and I'm not going to cut that deal."

14 Now, I've seen the potential that you have
15 and the discretion that you have to act and I want
16 you to do this. But I did not prevail. But I
17 decided at his age that I thought if my health
18 held up, I could litigate that question until he
19 passed away if I had to and that's what we set
20 about doing.

21 That is not a pleasant story for me to tell
22 you but it should be informative to you that there
23 are situations in which common sense needs to
24 prevail. And in the commercial setting, people on
25 both sides know the difference in what it means to

1 to where my suit was never filed.

2 Then in 1970, I tried to get -- it's
3 difficult to talk about this -- I had 75 cows to
4 starve to death. The Farm Loan said I was
5 ineligible because I had this lawsuit with a
6 county agent. I did not have a lawsuit with a
7 county agent. I attempted to sue him for plowing
8 up my crops. They continue to hold this against
9 me up until today.

10 I have hundreds of places that I can show you
11 where they have violated the law. And the appeals
12 system, we attempted under the new law, appeals
13 law that says I'm entitled to equitable relief,
14 the hearing officer barred me from talking about
15 it. That's a violation of our rights. I went to
16 put the land in a CRP. The county FHA guy told
17 the ASE man that my land was in appeal and that
18 all the appeals would be turned down and they were
19 going to foreclose so the county ASE man said that
20 the land was in foreclosure which it was not.
21 That was 10 years ago.

22 The Office of General Council wrote the
23 county man and said don't approve it, delay as
24 long as possible, that it is in immediate danger
25 of losing possession. That was 10 years ago. If

1 settle and what they stand to lose. And there
2 needs to be that sense in the bureaucratic
3 setting.

4 Gentlemen, I appreciate it. For those who
5 are interested in our brochure, I have them.
6 Thank you again for coming and for listening.

7 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Dick Fowler?

8 SPEAKER 5 - DICK FOWLER: It's an honor
9 for me to speak with such heavyweights. My story
10 is known by maybe several people. It goes back 37
11 years of wrongdoing by the U.S.D.A. I'm 75 years
12 old. And to borrow a Nixon expression, "You won't
13 have long to kick the farmer around much more."
14 They have been lied to about the law, they have
15 lied about my character.

16 Not until two years ago did I discover a
17 county agent took a farm away from me in 1960 and
18 put it in a store bank. In order for him to get
19 possession, he hired a farmer to plow up my crops
20 trying to force me off the land. I was forced to
21 go to the Supreme Court and won legal possession.
22 The U.S.D.A. still gave his 13-year-old son an
23 illegal soil bank contract. I attempted to sue
24 the county agent but the district judge threatened
25 my lawyer, the county agent threatened my lawyer

1 you don't think this is a violation of civil
2 rights, I appreciate hearing from all you people,
3 but the appeals the farmers have made on the new
4 appeal system, 95 percent have been turned down.
5 There's something rotten. You've got the fox
6 watching the henhouse while the skunks are killing
7 the chickens.

8 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Fowler. The
9 next speaker is Vernon Hunter.

10 SPEAKER 6 - VERNON HUNTER: Thank you
11 for coming, your staff to listen to our concerns.
12 My name is Vernon Hunter. I'm the Acting Chairman
13 of the Caddo Tribe, in the southwestern part of
14 the state. There are probably about 24 tribes in
15 that area; predominantly in our area there are
16 seven tribes.

17 I received a notice that this meeting was
18 going to happen the sixth. I see it was mailed
19 out on the third and the meeting was going to be
20 on the tenth. So there should have been more
21 people involved from our tribes in this area here.
22 So there was a delay in notifying people or we
23 would have had more people here to talk to you.

24 First of all, I would like to ask permission
25 from the elders here to speak, from the tribal

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1 members and also nontribal members. This is the
2 way we usually do it; we ask for permission to
3 speak. Thank you.

4 In our area, the Anadarko and Binger
5 (phonetic) area, there is no rural development
6 guaranteed housing loan listings at the banks
7 there. There's about 192 banks that are listed
8 and in our area there's seven tribes and we wanted
9 to know why there's no -- the banks in our area
10 are not listed on the list. I would like to know,
11 in our local satellite farm centers here, they are --
12 they seem receptive to Indian community concerns
13 and so forth but way out in the satellite areas,
14 there seems to be no interplay between the tribe
15 person and the local farm soil conservation
16 people.

17 Each government agency is required to have an
18 Indian liaison. We would like to know a list of
19 those persons' addresses and phone numbers in our
20 area.

21 Conservation practice in our area is
22 unacceptable from an environmental and
23 conservation perspective. We have an EPA person
24 that I just hired that's going to be looking at
25 the land, the air, and the water. Fencing is not

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1 adequate to maintain the leases that we have. You
2 can almost look and see where a native American
3 tribe's land is by looking at the fencing and so
4 forth which is not kept up like it should be.

5 Alternate farming practice should be
6 investigated in our community. We would like to
7 see experimental work done in areas such as public
8 education and other endeavors. We would like to
9 find out more how other tribes are working in our
10 area through some of their farming problems that
11 they have. Particularly, we're interested in
12 cow-calf operation, tree (phonetic) farming, et
13 cetera.

14 We need marketing expertise that will allow
15 us to use variable alternatives for our products
16 that are involved. In our part of the state we
17 raise cotton, peanuts and so forth. There seems
18 to be a lot of farming in that area and what we
19 would like -- you said you had 13 areas that they
20 were going to go to. We came a long way to come
21 to this meeting here. And we would like to have
22 somebody come to our area on our side, on the west
23 side because of all the farming that is done
24 there.

25 Because as I drove from Oklahoma City back

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1 this way, I didn't see too many farms and so
2 forth. I seen a lot of trees and everything but
3 where we're at in our area there's a heck of a lot
4 of farming going on. I think Caddo County leads
5 the area in peanut production and so forth. So we
6 would like you to look at that.

7 So again, I appreciate your time for coming
8 this far. And also my EPA person, we talked about
9 EPA products that we're going to run into. Thank
10 you.

11 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Hunter. I
12 also -- did you have another comment?

13 I might just mention here that if you do have
14 comments, we appreciate everyone staying within
15 the five-minute limit, but if you do have comments
16 after that, then we do have staff available that
17 will record those comments and make sure that they
18 do get to the Civil Rights Action Team. So I
19 guess we would just step to the side or step out
20 in the hall and we can record those. Terry, would
21 you just stand up? And she can record those
22 comments for us. The next speaker is Rebecca
23 Davidson.

24 SPEAKER 7 - REBECCA DAVIDSON: My name
25 is Rebecca Davidson. I'm currently working for

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1 the Caddo Tribe as their Environmental Education
2 Director. Both my family and my husband's family
3 have been in Oklahoma for a long time. My
4 husband's family homesteaded here before the turn
5 of the century and my grandmother was born on a
6 reservation so we have been here for a long time.

7 And in our family of six kids, five of them
8 are farmers and we can just about see each other's
9 house from grandma's house. So most of the
10 farms -- we have been through the process where
11 our land was condemned and taken from us so that
12 we could have a state park. I also know the
13 Indian issues of condemning their land so that we
14 can have electrical power.

15 I'm very concerned at this point with the
16 conservation and ecological practices that are
17 practiced by the leaseholders on Indian lands. I
18 know for a fact that those principles are not
19 proper conservation measures. I don't know if
20 it's a problem of education or money.

21 The Caddo Tribe alone, if they're having
22 problems, our farmers are having problems, we, as
23 a tribe, don't have that financial backing. And
24 often we don't know the proper procedures to go
25 through to get -- to access either U.S.D.A. money

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1 or those educational services. We're interested
 2 in obtaining that assistance. And we would also
 3 like to be able to verify statistically the
 4 lending practices of our local banks.
 5 Obviously verbal reports that come to us are
 6 negative so we hear the negative side, but if we
 7 could have access to that statistical information,
 8 we would be very interested in seeing that. We
 9 would be interested in seeing how the BIA gets
 10 their money from U.S.D.A. and how that money is
 11 spent. We also would like to know those practices
 12 where we can access that money sometimes.
 13 We feel like it stops at the BIA when it gets
 14 there. It could be just like this, the
 15 communication system is slow or too fast. I'm not
 16 sure which one this was, how it went. But my boss
 17 said, "We're going Friday" and I said, "Okay".
 18 Often people that farm independently don't
 19 realize maybe some of the problems that those
 20 Indian landholders go through and how their land
 21 is held in a trust situation with the BIA. At
 22 this current time it's my understanding from my
 23 local natural resource man that unless we are at a
 24 lease time, it would be -- we would be unable to
 25 participate in programs such as Equip. Should it

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1 ever get off and going, when the application time
 2 comes available, if we're not out of our lease
 3 situation, then cannot participate.
 4 At this current time, actually it was on the
 5 trip up here and some conversation for this
 6 meeting, I'm getting conflicting answers so I
 7 really do need some upfront answers of how we can --
 8 and maybe go about those leases and do some things
 9 like that. Then, of course, if we ever are able
 10 to, we have very small farms as Caddo farmers.
 11 We're not running 100,000 head, we're talking
 12 about five head. Maybe we just have 80 acres. We
 13 would like to know some marketing, we need expert
 14 marketing expertise, maybe some co-op plans. I
 15 know that not everybody's a big ranching
 16 operation, farming operation and we could use that
 17 help. Thank you.
 18 MR. CLARK: Thank you very much. Martha
 19 Long?
 20 SPEAKER 8 - MARTHA LONG: My name is
 21 Martha Long and I'm with the Sac and Fox Tribe.
 22 And part of our problem is that, to my
 23 understanding, we've never had any U.S.D.A. money
 24 spent on our allotted lands. How long we've had
 25 these allotted lands everybody knows. I think to

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1 follow up on what Rebecca said about Equip, I sat
 2 at the telecommunications conference for the last
 3 two days. And I heard that on that
 4 telecommunications that NRCS put on on the 1996
 5 farm bill the tribes being reemphasized over and
 6 over again. But yet I have sat with these
 7 gentlemen and I said, "Find me a loophole, I want
 8 in the Equip program." And that's my concern.
 9 Why is it I have to put the local county
 10 district people on the hot seat? Why do they have
 11 to find a loophole for me to get into the Equip
 12 program for these allotted lands? It shouldn't
 13 have to be that way. If you're reemphasizing that
 14 you're going to assist tribes, then I shouldn't
 15 need lawyer's jargon, I shouldn't have to have
 16 them look in their books and find a place for me.
 17 I have had difficulty when trying to create
 18 Sac and Fox producers. We acknowledge that we
 19 need to be more actively involved with FSA, RD,
 20 NRCS. And yet I keep running into walls. Nobody --
 21 I guess the major problem is that U.S.D.A. is not
 22 educated about us. I approached one of the county
 23 officials and he said -- well, he said, "We're
 24 told that we need to reach out to the minorities,
 25 but frankly, I don't know who my contact is."

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1 And I said, "Well, you're looking at her."
 2 That's a problem. They don't know anything about
 3 us. They don't understand what it is to be
 4 endowed with tribal responsibility to protect
 5 these allotted lands, to protect the landowner's
 6 interest. And that's an issue that needs to be
 7 addressed.
 8 However, I am thankful that we've had Ed
 9 Kephart and Bluford Miller. They came down the
 10 other day because we got this little message in
 11 the mail saying we needed a strategic plan from
 12 RD. Well, they wanted our needs. And I'm
 13 thinking, "I've got a thousand needs; which ones
 14 do you want?" And they came down, they assisted
 15 us, and I'm glad that you did finally come up with
 16 a native American liaison officer, Bluford Miller.
 17 That's going to simplify the process that when I
 18 have a problem, at least I have someone I know who
 19 to go to. Because I continually knock at doors at
 20 the local, at the state level and I can't get a
 21 response. And I need responses. And I need
 22 assistance.
 23 I want to be in the Equip program. I want to
 24 put these allotted lands in the Equip program.
 25 And I hope that's going to happen. But much like

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1 Rebecca said, these leasing dilemmas that we're
2 in, we have to face those issues. But I don't
3 want to put our local county agents on the hot
4 seat. And I shouldn't have to. I like these
5 fellows and I want to work with them. I do not
6 want to create any animosity. Thank you.

7 MR. CLARK: Thank you.

8 MR. PEARLIE REED: Mr. Secretary, I
9 would like to ask Lloyd Wright to follow up with
10 Ms. Long at the break or immediately after.
11 Lloyd, would you stand up so she can recognize
12 you? Lloyd is the person that's in charge of
13 writing all those rules.

14 MR. CLARK: Next speaker is Frank Jones.

15 SPEAKER 9 - FRANK JONES: Well, I'm just
16 a poor white farmer that FHA foreclosed on me in a
17 situation that should have never happened. That's
18 why these systems that you guys, the last three,
19 when you had the FHA, ASC and Soil Conservation,
20 all three of these were a joke. Now, people they
21 were a joke.

22 I hope you people combine these. I don't
23 know how you're going to do it to make it run any
24 better because the whole situation is not letting
25 people -- it's a secret -- like they're a secret

1 300,000. I've never missed a payment in 10 years.
2 He never made a payment in 10 years. Never made a
3 payment in 10 years.

4 On top of that, a lot of years he would get a
5 million dollars on some type of disaster. We're
6 not talking about -- we're just talking about FHA,
7 we're not talking about Federal Land Bank, what he
8 beat them out of. But let's go on. This appeal
9 system, people, it's a joke, it's a joke. Do you
10 think their people are going to go against their
11 own? That's like asking a doctor or a lawyer to
12 go against another one. They're not about to.

13 I've been through so many appeals systems,
14 it's a -- you wouldn't believe it. But never
15 again will I ever go through one. Election, we
16 had an election just before Christmas down home.
17 You talk about a joke. They didn't get some of
18 their own people back in on the election so, if
19 I'm not mistaken now, Peach, what did you say, "No
20 harm, no foul, we'll just have another election."

21 MR. ROMINGER: Are you talking about the
22 county committee election?

23 SPEAKER 9 - FRANK JONES: Yes, yes. And
24 boy, someone should have went to jail. It's not
25 funny, people. It's not funny when you go down

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1 organization. They don't want you to know what's
2 going on. They don't want you to know what's
3 coming down the pike. So therefore, the few
4 that's on the board or their kinfolk or friends
5 get all the goodies and the rest do without.

6 Now, I have three minority girls and that's
7 one of the reasons I am here. They wouldn't let
8 them participate in the program. When I lost my
9 farm, I want you to listen to this, people, I was
10 almost two years ahead on my payments. I had an
11 ice storm that took two of my big turkey houses
12 down, my wife died of cancer and I had three major
13 operations all within 16, 18 months. And any one --
14 and then we had a drought in there in the
15 meantime. Any one of those I was supposed to have
16 gotten help through FHA. Not a -- the first thing
17 I knew, they come up with a foreclosure on me.
18 And like I said, I was over a year, almost two
19 years ahead on my payments.

20 I had a neighbor that's beat the Federal
21 government, or you people, out of your money, tax
22 money, out of millions. And they let him buy out
23 on the last buy out \$7 million. He paid \$170,000,
24 I'm sorry; 70,000, 70,000, \$7 million. Me, I had
25 to come up with \$170,000 on a little less than

1 and by -- go down to Muskogee to the VA Hospital
2 or go down by Fort Gibson, the National Cemetery
3 and see what those boys fought for and you think
4 it's a joke. We'll just have another election.

5 I'm telling you these -- this -- I don't care
6 if you do combine this FHA and ASE, it will never
7 work until you get some qualified people in there
8 or take it away from them and give it to the banks
9 so you will have someone that can keep track of
10 where the monies are going.

11 You're going to have to do something. I hope
12 this meeting accomplishes something, I really do.
13 But I'm afraid before it gets back to Glickman, it
14 will be so watered down, he will never get the
15 true story. Now people, I got a chance to go to
16 Washington with this boy right here. He's opened
17 many a door, many doors, whites, blacks, pinks,
18 whatever. And how come every office we went in up
19 there they said there was monies. Why didn't you
20 people come after it? Why isn't your state coming
21 after it?

22 All right, there's only three departments
23 that you can -- that should be doing this, and
24 that's your state, your district and your county,
25 is that right? Aren't they the ones that are

1 supposed to be proposing years ahead for monies?
 2 If they have got all this money up there, why not
 3 get it out and spend it? Hell, we gave it to
 4 Mexico, \$40 million, and you'll never get a dime
 5 of that back. You'll never get a dime of it back.
 6 And that's just like on this foreclosure here
 7 a minute ago. That's a joke on these people. You
 8 can give these farmers a flat, clear deed to a
 9 place and come out ahead rather than taking a farm
 10 away from him, because he will be out there buying
 11 whatever, I don't care if it's fertilizer,
 12 carpets, cars.
 13 You found out back there a few years ago they
 14 were taking them all off and putting -- this state
 15 was taking over 3,000 a year. Look what happened
 16 to John Deere. Look what happened to
 17 International Tractors and all them. So people,
 18 this whole thing could be good but I don't think
 19 you will ever make it roll. I had an old man tell
 20 me one time that was retired from the ASC office.
 21 He said, "Frank, it will never change." I said,
 22 "Well, why?"
 23 He said okay, he said, "They don't hire
 24 qualified people to do it." And he said, "They
 25 teach them to lie, they teach them to do

1 secretary meeting with Charles Head (phonetic) and
 2 Dr. Gourd (phonetic). And hopefully, the Cherokee
 3 Nation will get the opportunity to fully
 4 participate.
 5 I wear two hats, though. I'm also a farmer.
 6 And I have seen the abuses at the county level
 7 personally and for many other farmers. Mr. Peach
 8 and I have gone around and around several times.
 9 You know, I believe that the people in Cherokee
 10 County, I don't know if they're just bigots or
 11 ignorant or if it's just such a tight-knit group
 12 there that they don't want minorities to
 13 participate.
 14 Cherokees, by and large, if you tell them no,
 15 they will go home and they won't be back. I'm not
 16 your typical Cherokee. I serve on tribal counsel.
 17 I'm seven parts white. But nonetheless, my
 18 children are being discriminated against on the
 19 minority program. If you're going to have a
 20 program, then fund it. If you're going to have a
 21 program -- if you have the programs for minorities
 22 and when they sign up and they hear about it, then
 23 it's not funded. Or it comes down the pike and
 24 they have -- it's like pulling teeth to find out
 25 if it's there. And there's supposed to be this

1 anything." He said, "They're so appreciative for
 2 a little old job, they will do it." People,
 3 that's sad we don't have qualified people.
 4 MR. CLARK: Thank you.
 5 MR. ROMINGER: Thank you. I would just
 6 like to add that Secretary Glickman and I are
 7 attending these meetings. As we indicated, we've
 8 got 13 of them in a little over two weeks here and
 9 so either Secretary Glickman or I are at every one
 10 of those meetings. He's already done three of
 11 them in the last -- in this week, earlier this
 12 week. So we are out listening and we talk to each
 13 other after these sessions so we are getting the
 14 messages back to Washington.
 15 The secretary today happens to be on the West
 16 Coast with the vice president looking at the storm
 17 damages out there.
 18 MR. CLARK: Next speaker is Bill John
 19 Baker.
 20 SPEAKER 10 - BILL JOHN BAKER: I'm here
 21 representing the Chief of the Cherokee Nation,
 22 Chief Joe Bird. I spoke with him this morning and
 23 he asked me to bring his greetings and salutations
 24 and tell you how appreciative he is that you have
 25 come to Oklahoma and that he appreciates the

1 pot of money for minorities.
 2 But, you know, in our tribe, you know, we've
 3 seen the lightning and we've heard the thunder but
 4 the rain hasn't ever come. And that's for
 5 individuals. And Terry, you know it's that way.
 6 And I've talked to you about it and I've told you
 7 about it. And you think that the people in the
 8 local office can do no wrong. And they are doing
 9 wrong, in my opinion, every day. And you could do
 10 something about it. You don't have -- you don't
 11 need these people here. You're the state
 12 director. And it's your people that we're having
 13 the problems with that will not get the money out,
 14 will not get the information out.
 15 And yes, we can go to Washington, D.C. and
 16 you know, the tribe, I mean, we represent 180,000
 17 people, taxpayers every one. And we, as a tribe,
 18 are probably going to participate. But how about
 19 the individual Cherokees out there that are trying
 20 to make a living for their family? That money is
 21 not coming down, it is not being gotten out.
 22 If there's a government buy-down on milk,
 23 then the producers that are related to the county
 24 committee, they know what the buy out is and they
 25 may be getting 10, \$12 a hundred more than the

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1 Cherokee farmer out here that's just trying to
2 figure, you know, what can I do and be fair with
3 the government with. Thank you.

4 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Baker. Phil
5 Givens.

6 SPEAKER 11 - PHIL GIVENS: Well, I'm
7 glad to speak and I'm going to say something; I
8 want everybody to listen. I am a minority farmer
9 from Tahlequah who is half black and half Indian
10 who has firsthand experience at racism. I am the
11 only minority farmer in this room that says he
12 flew to Washington, D.C. 23 times, met everybody
13 sitting at that table, met the Secretary of
14 Agriculture, had lawyers, 21 program specialists
15 come to Tahlequah, Stillwater, to meet with you
16 all. I can tell you some horror stories.

17 We have filed 72 civil rights complaints.
18 Not one complaint has ever been answered.
19 Nepotism, Terry Peach, is rampant in your office,
20 brother-in-law sitting on the county committees,
21 brother-in-law as a Federal Credit Act officer.

22 Now, everything I'm saying, people, is true.
23 I had councilors beg to fly out of Washington,
24 D.C. with me. October 25 I sat down with the
25 Secretary of Agriculture. Ninety percent of the

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1 farmers in Oklahoma are like me, are black and
2 Indian descent. If you people knew anything, we
3 started farming with the native Americans. Our
4 people were brought here as slaves, Chickasaws,
5 Choctaws, Cherokees or Chickasaw-Choctaw freedmen.

6 I farm 1500 acres restricted Indian land. I
7 flew to Washington, D.C. 17 damn times this
8 summer. Everybody at that table knows it. And
9 when my Indian land finally got in the computer,
10 Terry Peach, Rainbolt, Pearlie Reed and Ron Clark,
11 is when a review team came to Tahlequah. I'm mad.
12 I've got a Cherokee council member so upset he
13 can't talk. Six months to get his Indian daughter
14 a loan. Six months is too long.

15 Can anybody in this room tell me why racism
16 is rampant? I'll tell you why. All the white
17 board members. I had to fly to Washington, D.C.
18 and file a civil rights complaint to get a damn
19 election overturned. We're just now having
20 elections. I go in there today and turn a ballot
21 in, the ballot's done wrong, they want to throw it
22 out.

23 First thing Gale Garth (phonetic) from the
24 state office said, "Mr. Givens, we're going to
25 take care of that." The largest milk buy outs,

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1 the largest FMHA write downs in Oklahoma have been
2 done in Cherokee County. We have never put one
3 acre of Indian land in the computer. I had a
4 director from the Secretary Espey, I had John
5 Stinsell (phonetic), tell Terry Peach four times
6 to put my Indian land in the computer. You just
7 now started doing it. Yes, we're in a lawsuit and
8 yes, we're going to win.

9 Pearlie Reed, I met you in Washington, D.C.
10 three times. Ron Clark had to file a civil rights
11 complaint on you to get you to come to Indian
12 country. Ron Clark, Terry Peach, Mr. Rainbolt,
13 you're real familiar with me, aren't you?
14 Everybody at that table. And what I'm telling you
15 is gospel.

16 I'm going to tell you this, though. I met
17 with 100 black and Indian, Hispanic farmers Monday
18 in Washington, D.C. and you people are going to do
19 business different, you're going to listen to us
20 or we're going to all be in the court. Because
21 this is one minority farmer that knows how to
22 exhaust administrative remedies. You don't file a
23 civil rights complaint. If you do, you're labeled
24 a troublemaker. Well, when I file mine, I get on
25 a plane and fly to Washington, D.C. to hand carry

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1 it to the secretary. Stinsell, Bunrock
2 (phonetic), and everybody up in Washington, D.C.
3 knows who I am.

4 So from now on I'm going to put everybody on
5 record sitting at this table from Washington,
6 D.C., I have spent enough money flying up there 23
7 times this year to buy a damn farm. Last year I
8 spent \$6,000, boys, just to get a conservation
9 plan because it was on Indian land. And Ron
10 Clark, Peach, you know that to be true. Pearlie
11 Reed, you sat down, said the first thing you said
12 was you would fire the man that done it. Do you
13 remember saying that? He's still there.

14 So what I'm saying, when I see Secretary
15 Glickman, he promised me some things October 25.
16 You all had a meeting November 21 and the 20th in
17 Tahlequah to deal with Phil Givens. This is one
18 minority farmer that is going to stay hooked with
19 you and make you do right. You didn't have a
20 problem with my color when I went to Viet Nam, so
21 don't have a problem with my color now. Thank
22 you.

23 MR. CLARK: We'd appreciate, we're
24 trying to record this, so it would be helpful if
25 you would use the mike. Sam Combs.

1 SPEAKER 12 - SAM COMBS: Thank you very
 2 much. Let me say that it's a pleasure to appear
 3 before this committee. I'm here wearing two hats
 4 as representing the Reap Program and the Oklahoma
 5 Landowners and Tenants Association.

6 Let me start with the Oklahoma Landowners and
 7 Tenants Association. That is a newly formed
 8 organization primarily. And I say "primarily",
 9 but truthfully, minority landowners that are
 10 banding together in Oklahoma to address the
 11 drastic decline of minority landowners,
 12 particularly native Americans in Oklahoma. And we
 13 know what the history of that is, not only in
 14 Oklahoma but all across the United States.

15 There's been an accelerated rate in the -- in
 16 African Americans losing and leaving their land.
 17 And if something isn't done, then it's going to
 18 be -- it's not going to be long before we have
 19 virtually no African American landowners. Most of
 20 these people in here are members of the Oklahoma
 21 Landowners and Tenants Association. You can go to
 22 any African American community in Oklahoma, and I
 23 suppose all over the United States, and you will
 24 find the same thing occurring.

25 Well, the point is that something needs to be

1 may remember, this isn't the first task force
 2 we've had to look at this thing. You know, we had
 3 one back in the eighties. But all that one served
 4 for was a -- the effect of it was, it was just a
 5 cooling off sort of thing, you know, things got
 6 cooled down and we went back to business as usual.

7 I hope that isn't the case this time. I
 8 think that there needs to be some real sincerity
 9 out here. And I think all of you who represent
 10 the various agencies, you need to take a look at
 11 what's going on out where the rubber meets the
 12 road. I'm talking about at your county level
 13 where service is delivered, and stop accepting
 14 excuses from these people who somehow some way
 15 don't get anything done for minorities.

16 Now, it's -- somebody, some minority, some
 17 minorities out here in this community qualifies
 18 for every program that U.S.D.A. has got available,
 19 you know. But what's happening is they go around
 20 because they're mandated to visit, you know, and
 21 they record that and send it to Washington, you
 22 know, and it looks good. But all they have done
 23 is call the person up on the telephone and saw him
 24 at the mailbox and say, "Hi", you know, and they
 25 record that. Well, see, that's nonsense. And

1 done about this, and I'm not talking about the
 2 good old Texaco mentality, you know, where you've
 3 got all the memos in place, you know, and you have
 4 a civil rights meeting occasionally, you know, and
 5 all of that. But there needs to be something done
 6 out on the land. We know how to do it. U.S.D.A.
 7 has got the money and we ought to get about doing
 8 it.

9 Now, there are many African American
 10 organizations out here. The Oklahoma Landowners
 11 and Tenants Association is one. You've got Prince
 12 Alamusadi's Lodge (phonetic), you've got NAACP,
 13 and all these various organizations all over the
 14 state who have members who are landowners and who
 15 have cousins and other relatives who are trying to
 16 stay in the agriculture business. And what I'm
 17 saying to you folks is they need some help. You
 18 know, we've been the last to get the news on many
 19 of these programs. And so oftentimes, by the time
 20 we get it, the money is gone.

21 And so if we are sincere, if you are sincere,
 22 as we meet here in Oklahoma and you meet all
 23 across this country, then that needs to be
 24 addressed. I remind you, and this is no deference
 25 to the members of this committee, but some of you

1 that's not going to get the job done.

2 We need some -- but I've got some written
 3 comments that I'll supply to this committee. But
 4 let me say one thing right quick. The Reap
 5 Program, Reap is just an acronym for Retired
 6 Educated Agriculture Program that was started by
 7 five black farmer 4-H teachers who got concerned
 8 about the almost total disappearance of African
 9 American youth from vocational agriculture. And I
 10 remind you, as you look about U.S.D.A., you will
 11 find, I think you will find that vocational
 12 agriculture is a pipeline that's fed African
 13 Americans into the U.S.D.A.

14 We started with nothing. And we got some
 15 help from -- some financial help from the Oklahoma
 16 Department of Vo-Tech and the Natural Resource
 17 Conservation Service. We got summer internship
 18 from NRCS.

19 But let me tell you something, that's about
 20 the only branch of U.S.D.A. that has given us any
 21 help. I want to tell you something, folks. If
 22 somebody doesn't do something about the
 23 disappearance of African American youth from
 24 agriculture, in 10 years you're not going to have
 25 any to hire. There's not a black boy teacher in

1 this state. It's not better in other states that
 2 you go to. There's one black extension agent in
 3 this state but yet FFA membership and 4-H
 4 membership is at an all-time high. I live in a
 5 county where we have a very active 4-H program,
 6 for example. There's not a black youth in the
 7 program.

8 Now, something is wrong. So that says to me,
 9 and it ought to say to all of us, that we've got
 10 to do something besides put up these, you know,
 11 these signs that say, "We don't discriminate."
 12 That's not going to get the job done, folks.
 13 Somebody has got to get out there and get to work
 14 with these kids where the rubber meets the road.

15 And I will go on. I wish I had more time.
 16 But let me say this that U.S.D.A. needs to get
 17 your message out. You're not going to reach black
 18 folks by putting something in the Daily Oklahoman.
 19 What's wrong with the Oklahoma Eagle and the Black
 20 Chronicle, and the black radio station, you see?
 21 I mean, we've got to get real.

22 If we want to get it done, we're sincere
 23 about it, these are the things that you would have
 24 to do. And let the folks in the local community
 25 organization help you. We will help you. There's

1 the message. Soil conservation, we have one now
 2 in Bristow, and Creek County. I believe we had
 3 one on the FHA board, which it helped a lot, then
 4 the people would know.

5 Now, a lot of information is coming down that
 6 it don't get to our farmers. We have a lot of
 7 disaster programs that they didn't get anything
 8 out of. We had soil bank, one person. We had
 9 CRP, and I was the onliest person in Creek County
 10 that had CRP, \$40 to retire land for 10 years, no
 11 Negro with it. They don't get the message across
 12 to our people. The monies are appropriated but
 13 where does it go?

14 Now, I think that if we can get the
 15 information out to them, we, when we was at
 16 extension service, we had group meetings and then
 17 farmers, we had a disaster program, fire burn out,
 18 people from Missouri brought hay down here. Boy,
 19 we couldn't get none of that hay, Negro farmers.
 20 Cows want it, need it.

21 We had a disaster program for signing up.
 22 They didn't get the information out to them. I
 23 went down and signed up and got some payment. But
 24 the messages are not getting down to the people
 25 who need it. Now, some of the big boys are

1 a lot of interest out there, people sitting in
 2 this room that give hours and days of their time
 3 trying to help African American youth. Mr.
 4 Chairman, I thank you.

5 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Combs. If
 6 you have any written comments, we would certainly
 7 appreciate those. Next speaker is C.D. Ashley.

8 SPEAKER 13 - C.D. ASHLEY: Mr. Chairman,
 9 I'm C.D. Ashley. I've spent 35 years as county
 10 agent of Creek County working with Negro farmers.
 11 I'm going to start with some of the problems. We
 12 had ponds to build, Bermuda grass to plant, 10
 13 months to destroy it. All these programs. But
 14 when it came to Negros, they were on the tail end,
 15 money ran out. That's the problem.

16 Now, the soil conservation, ACS and the FHA
 17 have boards. Now, there's one deal that the
 18 problem could be corrected. The Negros are about,
 19 we say, 10 or 15 percent of the population. It's
 20 impossible for a Negro to run and get elected in
 21 that -- with that population.

22 Now, you appoint somebody. So I would
 23 suggest that you appoint a person, a Negro on that
 24 board so that the Negros would be represented with
 25 all the farm projects you have and they would get

1 getting it, you can bet that. And we've got a
 2 pecan deal coming on. I went down there, and I
 3 said, "Well, I've got some pecans." Well, so and
 4 so done signed up. The man who was carrying it,
 5 he hadn't informed the little boys down here who
 6 have got the pecans. Go down there, sign on the
 7 disaster program. It's not getting the
 8 information to our people.

9 Now, we need people from our group on these
 10 committees, the soil conservation, with the ACS,
 11 FHA and extension service, all, then we know that
 12 you will get the information and you will be heard
 13 because I think that's where our problem is.
 14 Thank you for this time.

15 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Ashley. The
 16 next speaker is Lawrence Breckenridge.

17 SPEAKER 14 - LAWRENCE BRECKENRIDGE: I
 18 am Lawrence Breckenridge, third and fourth
 19 generation from homesteaders, farmed all our
 20 lives. But we need help. You go down to the
 21 office to sign up for a loan, the money is gone.
 22 They send you down for a guaranteed loan, the
 23 banker goes out the door. So what's going on?

24 We're going into the twenty-first century
 25 here. Discrimination is a great poison to this

1 country. And we need help, we need something done
2 about it. So we appreciate what you people are
3 starting to do and it should have been done years
4 ago.

5 I had a government loan once before. I
6 needed to upgrade my bulls. It took an act of
7 Congress to get that done. They sent down a man
8 from D.C. I think Mr. Ashley was in the pasture
9 with me when he came. And they told this man to
10 get me these bulls. So 30, \$40 a head on my
11 cattle. But it -- something has got to be done or
12 we're going out. Thank you.

13 MR. CLARK: Thank you. The next speaker
14 is Norman Bufford.

15 SPEAKER 15 - NORMAN BUFFORD: Pass.

16 MR. CLARK: Pass? Jean Ann Casey?

17 SPEAKER 16 - JEAN ANN CASEY: I'm Jean
18 Ann Casey. I live in Hennessey, Oklahoma. And
19 I'm basically representing myself. But I will
20 also speak for an organization in the state of
21 Oklahoma called Sooner Citizens for a Clean
22 Environment.

23 What I would like to emphasize is the
24 corporate hog scene coming to the state of
25 Oklahoma. I won't go through the gory details

1 saying is not bitter. I hope it's positive. But
2 however, I would like to see my tax dollars work
3 efficiently. And I'm going to give you some of
4 the things in my own opinion I would like to see
5 happen. One of them, I would like to see the
6 people in Washington represent the people. We're
7 the people who elect you, we are the people who
8 pay taxes. We would like to see our tax dollars
9 work efficiently, not inefficiently.

10 I have a blue piece of paper here from
11 Okfuskee County that I received yesterday. It
12 tells me the office is going to be closed New
13 Year's Day. That's the way communications arrive
14 to me. It's funny to some people. It's not funny
15 to me. I don't have an answer for you on how to
16 improve the communication flow back to the farmers
17 from the offices locally or back to Washington.
18 Hopefully, that's why you're hired by the U.S.
19 government so that you may be able to answer these
20 questions. I'm going to give you the questions
21 but I can't give you the answers. Hopefully, you
22 can answer those or put a remedy to it.

23 I would like to see in the state of Oklahoma
24 and each state, at least one program designated
25 that is knowledgeable in the farm program that

1 that I'm sure most of you saw on 60 Minutes right
2 before Christmas, but that is also happening in
3 Oklahoma. And they keep saying you can't go back
4 and forth between the states, but I think you
5 people in Washington could begin to level the
6 playing field because the minority farmers do have
7 a problem in this state. But we're all going to
8 be out of business if corporate farming takes
9 over.

10 I also will bring up as immigrants coming to
11 this country, they have to drive cars. And in the
12 process to get a driver's license, they also get a
13 motor vehicle -- or as they get the driver's
14 license, they are given a motor voter registration
15 card. I don't know that it changed the size of
16 the elections in northwest Oklahoma and the
17 panhandle, but it could ultimately change county
18 commissioner elections in some of the local things
19 that will completely change the way we deal as a
20 democracy in this country. Thank you.

21 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Next speaker is
22 Charles Smotherman.

23 SPEAKER 17 - CHARLES SMOTHERMAN: I'm
24 Charles Smotherman out of Wewoka in Okfuskee
25 County. I'm not a bitter person so what I'm

1 could get the information to our communities or to
2 any community so that we could be a functional
3 part of that program. That's what we are about.
4 We are about progress. If there's money available
5 for anybody, make all of them aware of it, not
6 just a select few.

7 Also I would like to see a court system put
8 about for the small and minority farmers that will
9 work, not something just to show on paper. Needs
10 for the minority and the small farmer is very
11 different from the big farmers. We need someone
12 that has knowledge that can help us and not hurt
13 us and not communicate information to us. We need
14 someone that's trained to work with us, not
15 someone that is hired just for a job to support
16 his livelihood. We would like qualified people
17 when we deal with these people. I don't know how
18 to answer that question. Hopefully, you guys do.

19 Another situation that I would like to bring
20 up, award for the work to be accomplished through
21 the FC office, awarded to one individual, if that
22 individual cancels, then they call another one. I
23 would like to see if there's an award set up, they
24 have one through X amount of people in line. If
25 the first one cancels, the next one will know he's

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1 in line, not that you give him two weeks to get
2 the project accomplished. If he don't, he can't
3 take it either. The money goes someplace else
4 after that. I've been involved with that program.

5 That's all I have, gentlemen. I appreciate
6 your time. I appreciate your coming to Oklahoma.
7 And I hope you can accomplish something that will
8 help us. Thank you.

9 MR. CLARK: Thank you, very much. We
10 have 19 additional folks that have signed up to
11 speak so that's about another hour and a half, or
12 somewhere in that neighborhood, but we would like
13 to take at this time about a 10-minute break.
14 Let's be back in 10 minutes.

15 (Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

16 MR. CLARK: The next speaker is Buddy
17 Cranford. Okay, Mr. Cranford, we would appreciate
18 you making your comments.

19 MR. BUDDY CRANFORD: Mr. Chairman, it is
20 a privilege to have all of you people in our state
21 that are from Washington and our panel. We are
22 certainly glad that you have taken your time out
23 to listen to our problems.

24 My name is Buddy Cranford. I represent all
25 the conservation districts in the state of

1 So I really thank you for coming today and I
2 thank all the people that have testified and have
3 been here to have input and I think we're all
4 going to have our eyes open. Personally, I
5 have -- I enjoy farming and what it gives to our
6 lives, so we've all got to work together. And I
7 thought maybe we had that team put together,
8 Pearlle. And I hope it gets strengthened from
9 this meeting.

10 Anything I can do to help anyone as state
11 president of our districts, you get hold of me and
12 I'll spread the word on up. Thanks alot for your
13 time.

14 FROM THE FLOOR: Give us a name.

15 MR. BUDDY CRANFORD: A Buddy Cranford.
16 And you can reach me at Sentinel, Oklahoma, and
17 that's in western Oklahoma, area code
18 405-393-4892.

19 And I've met Phil and a lot of these people
20 around here before. I know Sam right here; I sat
21 with his wife for just a minute and here he comes.
22 But I appreciate your time and look forward to
23 working with the rest of this group. Thank you.

24 MR. CLARK: Thank you very much, Mr.
25 Cranford. Vallard Cambell.

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1 Oklahoma. And one of the things that I see as I
2 travel across the state, you can pick out tribal
3 lands and minority lands because they're not up to
4 snuff on conservation. So I'm hearing some things
5 today that may be part of the reason that they're
6 not receiving information as fast as possible and
7 funds as fast as possible.

8 And as the state president of all the
9 districts across the state, I pledge to you people
10 in this room that we will work with Washington
11 people on whatever it takes to keep conservation
12 on the land. There's nothing I can do to help get
13 government checks out or get you signed up, Phil,
14 however you need to be, but I can pledge to help
15 you with conservation on this land of ours. And I
16 will report, Pearlle, on this meeting to our
17 national leaders in NACD and I'm sure they will
18 have people that will have input on this.

19 But my concern is if you don't get your fair
20 share of the pie, the last thing you're going to
21 take care of is the land. And my goodness, folks,
22 we don't want to lose our land. We're having a
23 big enough battle keeping it when everything is
24 great. And we're all in a depressed area or
25 depressed times.

1 SPEAKER 18 - VALLARD CAMBELL:
2 Greetings. Well, it appears that -- well, first
3 of all, I'm Vallard Cambell from Fort Coffee,
4 Oklahoma down near the Arkansas state line. I'm a
5 small farmer and a rancher. And it appears that
6 I've got the same problem that most people in this
7 room in this meeting today has got and that's
8 money problems. Every time I go into the bank,
9 like someone said earlier, the banker runs out.
10 So there we go.

11 But I get my ground worked up, say, for
12 instance, go down to get some money then I don't
13 have the money to get my seed and fertilize it.
14 So this is a problem, you know. And if the
15 Federal government can kind of speed things up.
16 If you've got to put the seed in the ground,
17 you've got to put it in there. You can't say
18 well, come back tomorrow or next week and next
19 month and get some monies. So the pressure should
20 be put on the banks to go ahead and get these
21 loans out expeditiously. Thank you.

22 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Our next speaker
23 is Virginia Autry.

24 SPEAKER 19 - VIRGINIA AUTRY: My name is
25 Virginia Autry. I'm a producer in a family

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1 farming operation in Kingfisher County basically
 2 growing small grains and cattle. I have a real
 3 concern for the direction of family farms. The
 4 (inaudible) thing for our product is not covering
 5 the cost of the operation. I think I hear that
 6 from everyone in this room.
 7 You may not be aware, but the 1996 book,
 8 "Field Without Dreams" by Victor Davis Hanson says
 9 it better than I can word it: "The most
 10 conservative farmers in America were obliterated
 11 by the farm shakedown of the 1980s. By the new
 12 gospel, that food was to be quite lucrative for
 13 everyone except those who themselves were to grow
 14 it."
 15 One of the farm newsletters also hit the nail
 16 on the head when it talks about Congress
 17 desperately needs a new farmer-owned reserve. The
 18 quote from this letter is, "Grain stocks should be
 19 held by farmers, not the conglomerates, not the
 20 ADMS and the CONAGRAS of the world."
 21 It is also evident to me that the packer
 22 concentration has affected the beef market. Even
 23 though it has been suggested this is a myth, it
 24 has had a real impact on the price of the
 25 commodity to the producer.

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1 I was in the county office recently, and I
 2 would like to know what Equip is all about. The
 3 local offices have the book of regs but is it in
 4 effect, is it funded? We keep hearing tidbits
 5 about it, but what is the real information? I
 6 guess I'm asking to have information that is privy
 7 to a few.
 8 MR. ROMINGER: Just briefly, Equip was
 9 part of the 1996 Farm Bill. The money did not
 10 become available until January 1 of this year but
 11 we are soon putting out the regulations for Equip
 12 and then it will be available this year.
 13 SPEAKER 19 - VIRGINIA AUTRY: Thank you.
 14 MR. CLARK: Next speaker is Kenneth
 15 Battles.
 16 SPEAKER 20 - KENNETH BATTLES: My name
 17 is Kenneth Battles. And I'm a conservationist for
 18 the Choctaw Nation. And I would iterate what Mr.
 19 Cranford said a while ago, that you can identify
 20 some Indian land by its appearance when you drive
 21 by it.
 22 But that's not what I'm here to comment about
 23 today. I was wanting to tell you about a program,
 24 a grant that we received through the Choctaw
 25 Nation with Eastern Oklahoma State College and

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1 also the extension service, and it's funded by
 2 FSA. And it's a grant to help needy farmers,
 3 minority and socially disadvantaged farmers. And
 4 we're into our -- about our -- winding down our
 5 second year in it.
 6 And I just want to make a few comments about
 7 it and tell you that it's something that most of
 8 you probably, from what I've heard today, might be
 9 something that you could use. I will admit that
 10 what I've heard today is one problem that you have
 11 is contacting these people and getting them to
 12 come out and get education, find out about the
 13 programs and things like that. And that's what
 14 this program is about. And we've used it to reach
 15 mainly small Indian farmers and ranchers. And
 16 like I said, we've just now got into our second
 17 year; I think we were funded the first time in
 18 '94.
 19 I would want to say that we're using all the
 20 resources we can come up with. Like I said, we
 21 used the college, we've used the Extension
 22 Department, OSU Extension Department. And some of
 23 the benefits, I feel like that after we -- after
 24 we assess other benefits, we are going to see that
 25 we are doing some good although we've been through

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1 some -- we're going through some bad times right
 2 now, low cattle prices, high price feed, high
 3 price fertilizer. And we also had the drought
 4 there in the last half of '95.
 5 So we went through some bad times, folks.
 6 But I might say that in contacting your people
 7 probably one of the best ways is one-on-one
 8 contact. You can put all you want to on the radio
 9 and the newspaper, and sometimes that helps, but
 10 it don't do what a one-on-one contact will do.
 11 So I just feel like this is a program that
 12 has worked for the Choctaw Nation and helped our
 13 farmers and ranchers and I feel like it's one that
 14 needs to be refunded and continued with good
 15 supervision and good working people. Thank you.
 16 MR. CLARK: Thank you, sir. Next
 17 speaker is Levester McKesson.
 18 SPEAKER 21 - LEVESTER MCKESSON: Thank
 19 you, Mr. Chairman. I'll make my comments very
 20 brief. My sentiment has been conveyed by
 21 everybody here. I would just like that you
 22 representatives would take the message back to
 23 level the playing field for us borrowing money for
 24 the very small farmer because that's what we need.
 25 When it comes to feeding animals, they don't

1 know anything about balancing the budget. If we
 2 can go in and balance the budget for Mexico, we
 3 can let a small farmer have two or \$3,000 to buy
 4 some hay. That's what -- or equipment or
 5 fertilizer. This is what we're talking about. So
 6 I would like for the message to be carried back to
 7 your boss. And I'm going to ask this because I
 8 supported him before he got the first combination,
 9 that we need help. And we need it now.

10 Now, if this is any kind of indication,
 11 what's happening here is happening all over the
 12 United States. So I appreciate the opportunity to
 13 speak to you. And I would like to have a copy of
 14 this entire meeting, if there's any way possible,
 15 and I would like to give my address to her to have
 16 it sent. Thank you, very much.

17 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. McKesson.
 18 And we'll have to check and see if we can make
 19 those -- a copy of the minutes available.

20 MR. PEARLIE REED: We will give you a
 21 copy.

22 MR. CLARK: Okay. You'll get it. The
 23 next speaker is Muhammad Robbalaa.

24 SPEAKER 22 - MUHUMMAD ROBBALAA: Peace
 25 be unto you. Gentlemen, it's a pleasure to be

1 black folks live basically on one side of the town
 2 over there. They never could get a home built on --
 3 at least I couldn't build one over there.

4 Now, it seems that we are an ethnic group and
 5 this is a diverse group here. Everybody is having
 6 money problems. And I really -- I cry for a lot
 7 of these people. I really can't -- I don't have
 8 anything else to say. But we have some big
 9 problems in the state of Oklahoma. You know, back
 10 a few years ago, Oklahoma was rated fiftieth as
 11 loaning money to minority people. It probably
 12 still is 50. Thank you.

13 MR. CLARK: Thank you, sir. The next
 14 speaker is Fauntilla Miller.

15 SPEAKER 23 - FAUNTILLA MILLER: Thank
 16 you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Fauntilla -- very
 17 hard to pronounce.

18 MR. CLARK: I'm sorry.

19 SPEAKER 23 - FAUNTILLA MILLER: I'm from
 20 Boynton, Oklahoma, and I live on a farm, my son
 21 and I. About 10 years ago my husband was killed
 22 in an accident and it left me just simply
 23 devastated. However, I've gone through the
 24 different programs of refinancing. And I
 25 appreciate everything, but I can still use some

1 here in front of you today. I'm also from the
 2 same area that Levester McKesson is from.

3 My being here is a little different than
 4 maybe most of the guys that have spoken
 5 previously, but basically our problem is the same,
 6 finances is the big thing. I'm a residential
 7 builder. I graduated from Oklahoma State
 8 University back many years ago and I build low
 9 cost housing. I know in the Muskogee area,
 10 Farmers Home Administration, it seems that they
 11 don't want to make loans to black or African
 12 American descendents.

13 I've had at least ten Africans at one time
 14 and I can't think of the gentleman that's director
 15 over there, what his name is, but he's from
 16 Muldrow, Oklahoma; that's his home. Terry Buford
 17 should not be a director. I will personally stand
 18 up here and say that this guy should go back, that
 19 you all should retire him immediately. He's a
 20 racist. He is a bigot and he will laugh in your
 21 face and he will even lie to you. And I will say
 22 that to him because I've been there several times
 23 and talked to this gentleman.

24 I never could get a loan approved in Eufaula,
 25 Oklahoma over there where the resort area is. The

1 help. And whatever could be done to help me,
 2 especially keep my payments where they are, I
 3 would be very grateful. Thank you.

4 MR. CLARK: Thank you, very much.
 5 Willis Robedeaux?

6 SPEAKER 24 - WILLIS ROBEDEAUX: It's
 7 good to see you people here. Mr. Rominger, good
 8 to see you again. And the panel, I appreciate
 9 you. My name is Willis Robedeaux. I'm a member
 10 of the Otoe Missouri Tribe. I'm a board member of
 11 the IAC, Intertribal Ag Council. I'm also an
 12 outreach worker for U.S.D.A. I have worked with
 13 the people in Stillwater and they have treated me
 14 fine. But there's lots of work that needs to be
 15 done towards the farmers, the people that's going
 16 to -- the people that made this country.

17 This country was made with farmers and we're
 18 getting away from it. You've got about five,
 19 you've got about five companies controlling the
 20 grain, you've got about five people controlling
 21 the cattle. They go just down the line. It's big
 22 corporations. Now they're having a big deal out
 23 in western Oklahoma about the hogs. They're
 24 ruining our water, they're ruining our natural
 25 resources.

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1 And about this meeting, this (indicating)
 2 came out in the Ponca City paper day before
 3 yesterday; I cut it out. That's how big it is,
 4 just -- hell, you couldn't find it if you wasn't
 5 looking for something. Anyway, that's what
 6 happens to all of our meetings. There's not
 7 enough time and you need to make time to get these
 8 people together.
 9 I called my tribal chairman and he's a first
 10 cousin of mine. I said, "Raymond, are you sending
 11 somebody to the meeting?" He said, "Hell, you're
 12 going. You can represent us."
 13 I said, "Okay, I'll represent you as best I
 14 can." And I got up here, I was going to tell a
 15 story. When I first started on this outreach
 16 program, I was going through some stuff and my
 17 eight-year-old granddaughter said, "Grandpa, what
 18 are you doing?"
 19 I said, "I'm trying to get my thoughts
 20 together. I'm not an educated man; I'm trying to
 21 get something together where I can tell these
 22 people." She said, "Grandpa, you're a good BSer,
 23 so BS them." So here I'm BSing you. That's my
 24 story.
 25 Anyway, I've been farming since 1946. I'll

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1 soon be 72 years old. I spent my time in the
 2 Navy. I was in Russia, China, Japan, Korea, the
 3 Aleutians, all the islands. I came home and I
 4 started farming.
 5 On Indian land you couldn't get a loan. They
 6 just wouldn't even talk to you. I wanted a loan
 7 to build my house. So I went to the bank and I
 8 said, "I want to borrow some money and I want a
 9 turnkey job on a house. I've got my plans."
 10 They said, "We can't do that; that's on
 11 Indian land." So I went to the Indian department.
 12 They said, "We're not making loans on Indian
 13 land." So I was sunk.
 14 So I started to build my house a little bit
 15 at a time. Finally I got it built, and when I got
 16 through, I owned that sucker because I worked in
 17 the oil field and farmed in the daytime and I
 18 built that sucker and I owned it when I got
 19 through. But that's what it's going to take,
 20 people, is a lot of determination, a lot of hard
 21 work.
 22 And for God's sake, go see these people, fill
 23 out the papers. And when they turn you down,
 24 don't say, "That's all, I'm not going back, them
 25 suckers ain't going to loan me nothing anyway."

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1 Go back and say, "Hey, Ronnie Clark, you didn't
 2 give me nothing last time I'm up here, I'm looking
 3 you right in the eye; I want to know what's
 4 wrong." Terry Peach, let's work this damn thing
 5 out.
 6 I'll tell you one thing. I get carried away.
 7 When we had Phil's deal, I went to him and I said
 8 "Phil, now, don't lose your temper. Don't get up
 9 there and raise hell. I'm going to come over
 10 there and tap you on the shoulder and tell you to
 11 shut up."
 12 Well, he got to getting a little loud so I
 13 went over there and tapped him on the shoulder and
 14 I said, "Phil." Okay, okay. So then I got up.
 15 My wife was looking at the deal where we had --
 16 they had put it all on tape, and she said, "I want
 17 to tell you something, you was the only one using
 18 cuss words." I said, "Yes, and I heard about it
 19 from Phil," Phil and the wife.
 20 But I do get carried away. I love my job. I
 21 enjoy working with you guys. And most of the
 22 people, if you will give them half the chance,
 23 they will work with you. But I've got one guy
 24 down in the BIA that's giving me fits.
 25 Now, he had the laws on me, said I threatened

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1 him. I didn't threaten him. I said I'm 70 -- I
 2 was 70 years old then -- I said, "I'm 70 years old
 3 and you're about ready to retire. I'm going to
 4 make you a promise. When you retire, I'm going to
 5 hunt you up and I'm going to try and whip your
 6 ass." I said, "I'm not threatening you. I'm just
 7 making you a damn promise." Thank you. That's
 8 another one of my stories.
 9 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Willis. The next
 10 speaker is Sherman Shanklin.
 11 SPEAKER 25 - SHERMAN SHANKLIN: I want
 12 to thank you for this opportunity. I was going to
 13 write my congressman and senator and by accident I
 14 picked up the newspaper and saw this meeting was
 15 going to be held. However, I have a guilty
 16 conscious. I feel my concerns are minor compared
 17 to the other people in the room.
 18 But what my concern is today, I come from
 19 Nowata County. My name is Sherman Shanklin. I'm
 20 a farmer and also I have a farm and ranch real
 21 estate business and I'm also a full-time
 22 firefighter for the City of Bartlesville. I've
 23 been elected to the COC committee in the past when
 24 it was ASCS. And then, as we well know, the
 25 systems come together with FMHA and ASCS, and now

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1 as Farm Service Agency.

2 I was nominated, not because I was requested
3 to be nominated, and elected again to my county
4 committee and was told in December I had been
5 elected. I did not solicit, I did not advertise
6 for it but I was honored by my fellow producers
7 that I could help represent them and give some of
8 my help back to my community.

9 However, I received a memo back from Mr.
10 Stinsell in Washington, D.C. saying that he had
11 set a policy that anyone in farm service agencies
12 could not participate on the COC because of
13 conflict of interest in dealing in agricultural
14 real estate. You could participate in commercial
15 or residential.

16 Well, we all know that anything that isn't
17 zoned in the city could fall under any guidelines
18 for the Farm Service Agency. And I could accept
19 that, but I didn't ask for the position to be
20 elected and I don't look for it for monetary gain.
21 The only problem that I have that I would like for
22 Mr. Stinsell to review the program is from the
23 county, from the state committee which is
24 politically appointed down to all of my other
25 fellow COC committee members throughout the 77

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1 I rent about 300 acres of land and I own 500 acres
2 of land. And I remember back in 1969 I went and
3 tried to apply for a loan with Farm Home
4 Administration. I told them that, you know, my
5 father was a farmer because his father was a
6 farmer and his father was a plantation slave so my
7 idea was to let them know I knew a lot about
8 farming and that even though I was a professional
9 person, I do handle two roles, that I am in
10 farming and I am there to stay.

11 Now, they lied to me and told me that, you
12 know, we don't let loans out to professional
13 people, that you will have to be a full-fledged
14 farmer, full-time farmer. While I was in
15 Washington, D.C. I talked to a black gentleman
16 there; he said that was not the truth. He said
17 you need to go back down there. He said if you
18 make a certain percent, a certain percent of your
19 income comes from the farm, then you are entitled
20 to all of the facilities that Farm Home
21 Administration has.

22 So I wrote a letter to the president and he
23 sent that letter to Stillwater. And they had a
24 black guy there by the name of -- let's see, what
25 was his name? I can't think right -- Sim Drain.

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1 counties to ask how many of those gentlemen and
2 ladies provide customer services as far as custom
3 farming, selling hay to other people that have
4 their farms in the Farm Service Agency programs,
5 sell seed, sell livestock equipment, farming
6 equipment and see if they have the same interest
7 that I do.

8 I only feel that it's wrong to segregate
9 someone out that is interested in selling farm and
10 ranch real estate and not look at other committee
11 members that provide services that help the
12 community with people that are involved in Farm
13 Service Agency programs. I thank you for your
14 time.

15 MR. CLARK: Thank you. The next speaker
16 is W.G. Parker. Not here? We'll go to the next
17 one, then. James Johnson. He had to leave, too?
18 All right. Willard Earl Davis?

19 SPEAKER 28 - WILLARD EARL DAVIS: Good
20 evening. First of all, I would like to thank all
21 of my fellow farm friends. Some of them had to
22 leave, I guess, to go home and feed the cattle,
23 but at least they made it and I hope they were
24 able to voice their opinion.

25 My name is Willard Earl Davis. And I farm --

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1 So Sim Drain came down to the home office there in
2 Oklahoma City and he asked me to meet him there at
3 three o'clock. Well, when I got there, those same
4 people who had turned me down five times, man,
5 they welcomed me, and said, "Come on in because
6 you don't -- we've been looking for you for a long
7 time, guys like you."

8 Now, they had lied to me for about three
9 years before, then all of a sudden when I brought
10 this to the attention of the people in Washington,
11 D.C., the game changed. And what happened was
12 after about three weeks, they let me have
13 \$115,000.

14 And I told them no, I didn't exactly come to
15 get that kind of money. But they said no, we want
16 you to borrow enough money just in case you have
17 to lose that farm, you know, we want it to be in
18 better shape than it was before. Now, I know what
19 they meant.

20 And from 1976 to 1986 my assets was something
21 like a million -- a million and \$70,000 because of
22 it. Everybody was looking for a farm. You know,
23 I mean, you could sell a farm for 200 to \$2,000 an
24 acre, you could sell it for \$3,000 an acre.
25 People were coming in to Oklahoma City and that

1 area. Then we had a recession right after that
 2 and some of that same -- and they was letting me
 3 have all the money that I wanted then because it
 4 was a valuable piece of asset.
 5 But right after that, guess what? We had
 6 sort of an oil crash, you know, the land, you
 7 couldn't hardly give it away. That's when I got
 8 in trouble. By then, you know, we're farming it,
 9 but we just need some more money. I think
 10 everybody has got this same problem. We need more
 11 money.
 12 So I went to those people, Farm Loan
 13 Administration, went back to them. And every time
 14 I went there, every type of loan they had, they
 15 had what they call -- they've got farms set aside,
 16 they had lease back pay back. I think you guys
 17 know what I'm talking about, right? I was turned
 18 down for every one of those loans. We're talking
 19 about debt reconstruction. I was turned down for
 20 that. You know, they told me -- they gave me
 21 every reason why I could not apply for a loan to
 22 get this loan. But at the same time there were
 23 millionaire farmers, white farmers who was getting
 24 this money.
 25 And you know, I'm sitting here saying that

1 have Josephine and William Penn. Do you want to
 2 handle that separately or --
 3 SPEAKER 29 - JOSEPHINE PENN: Good
 4 evening. I'm Josephine Penn. And I'm
 5 representing my brother William Penn who could not
 6 be here because of illness.
 7 And I'll start back with my dad left us a
 8 farm in 1967; at least William came there and
 9 started farming in 1967 and my dad died in 1969.
 10 And so he was trying -- got in farming, trying to
 11 get on the farming program or trying to get
 12 started and he needed equipment and he needed --
 13 in fact, he needed everything. But he received
 14 much and did not receive equal treatment when
 15 trying to get assistance for the farm. For
 16 instance, the cost sharing on the different farm
 17 practices such as erosion control and grass
 18 planting were always less than what was told.
 19 And finally the local office would just
 20 ignore his requests. Also experienced harsh
 21 treatment from some of the nonminority farmers who
 22 had poisoned his cows and they had been
 23 investigated. And they also poisoned the fields
 24 to try to kill the crops to stop him from farming
 25 and tried to get him to sell the lands. So

1 because I'm black, I was denied that loan. But I
 2 must say this also: We did have two or three
 3 white farmers who were denied that loan, too.
 4 Because what they do is, you know, they get with
 5 their friends and the friends already know you are
 6 in trouble and then they send their friends out to
 7 talk to you to see can they buy your farm.
 8 So all of these things should be looked at.
 9 And what we need, we need somebody on a local
 10 level who are there to represent us as minorities
 11 and see that the money is going to the people who
 12 need it. Because I think the money is being
 13 funneled down but it's going to millionaire
 14 farmers, people who are already millionaires.
 15 And gentlemen, I'm telling you, we're in
 16 trouble. I think it's something like, we've got
 17 about -- at one time in my neighborhood we had at
 18 least 200 farmers, real live farmers. And now I
 19 am the only certified farmer in that county. We
 20 have some farmers who are doing hog farming and
 21 cattle farming and things of that nature, but I am
 22 the only certified farmer in that county. And I'm
 23 saying to you today we need some type of
 24 assistance and we need some money. Thank you.
 25 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Davis. We

1 finally William did have to stop because of
 2 illness.
 3 But similar to the other gentleman who spoke,
 4 the county U.S.D.A. agencies would slander William
 5 by telling all new people working in this office
 6 that he was a troublemaker and don't go to his
 7 place. They wouldn't, you know, send anybody out
 8 to see about his needs. And I'm also standing in
 9 for Ray Charles Penn also. And I'm reading
 10 because I don't have this memorized.
 11 Migrating from -- this is from Ray Charles.
 12 Migrating from south central Georgia as a slave at
 13 the age of 10, witnessed the emancipation of his
 14 family which was left, what was left of it, as the
 15 owner fled as the Union soldiers rode through.
 16 This former slave came to Oklahoma to protect
 17 his sons from being hanged or torched, and settled
 18 south of Langston, Oklahoma in eastern Logan
 19 County. He prepared through farming, using
 20 techniques not practiced in Oklahoma at this time
 21 known as terracing. At the death, he left seven
 22 farms, one to each of his children. This former
 23 slave died at the known age of 103 years old, thus
 24 giving the great grandson the opportunity to know
 25 him.

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1 The legacy started by the former slave Alan
2 Park Senior is now being carried out by his great
3 grandson Ray Charles Penn who farms the only farm
4 left from the estate. The life on the family farm
5 is escaping and eroding the American dream in
6 rural America.

7 With the many programs created by Congress,
8 they have bypassed the minority family farm
9 through denial, discouragement and discrimination,
10 thus depriving me the means necessary to rural and
11 farm survival. Some of my contact (sic) with me,
12 the U.S.D.A. Farmers Home Administration resulted
13 in denial of farm operating and ownership plan
14 applied for 1980, denial of home improvement loan
15 and a grant for my 76-year-old mother in 1994 and
16 '95.

17 Control of the state. I contacted the state
18 department Farm Home Administration, Stillwater,
19 Oklahoma, in 1987. He only offered negative and
20 discouraging advice about getting started in
21 farming. The high costs -- he stated that one of
22 the reasons was the high cost of equipment and the
23 large amount of capital and the cuts by the
24 U.S.D.A. However, I continued to read and saw
25 pictures of young nonminorities starting farming

1 William Penn and Ray Penn. I'm understanding that
2 you spoke for yourself and those other two
3 individuals?

4 SPEAKER 29 - JOSEPHINE PENN: Yes.

5 MR. CLARK: Okay. Jerry Keener is the
6 next speaker. Is Jerry here? Jerry Keener? He
7 had to leave? Okay.

8 SPEAKER 32 - GLEN BROOKS: Good
9 afternoon. It's a privilege to be here. I'm
10 pretty sure I'm the only one of this kind that's
11 here because I work every day for the Department
12 of Transportation, and I'm the Chief of Civil
13 Rights for about 2600 employees for the last 24
14 years. I'm also a military officer in the
15 Oklahoma National Guard. If you see me tomorrow
16 in uniform, you're still seeing the same person of
17 27 years.

18 I say that to let you know I do know
19 something about Oklahoma. And the reason I'm here
20 today is because a good friend of mine told me as
21 a farmer that I needed to be here today. I get a
22 lot of your calls. That's why I'm here. I'm
23 civil rights for the Department of Transportation
24 which is your highway system. But I get in
25 contact with a lot of farmers, especially black

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1 careers.

2 Number four, participated in 1992 disaster
3 relief program administered by U.S.D.A. and ASCS
4 office and received a 1099 income tax reported,
5 and reported a statement for \$90. However, I
6 never received the check. When questioning the
7 ASCS office in Guthrie, Oklahoma, the only answer
8 I received was that the 1099 income reporting form
9 was a mistake.

10 Okay, these following are some areas of
11 questionable financing that came to my attention.
12 Farm Home Administration, Logan County, Guthrie,
13 Oklahoma, loans to a private and segregated golf
14 and country club in Guthrie, Oklahoma
15 approximately 1980 where the funds were dispatched
16 into the bank known as the First National Bank in
17 Guthrie, Oklahoma. Farmers Home Administration,
18 Logan County, Guthrie, subsidizing home mortgage to
19 a nonminority underprivileged individual Carl
20 Kinney whose occupation was an office manager for
21 the local grain and fertilizer company in Guthrie,
22 Oklahoma with income in excess of \$70,000 whose
23 mortgage was accommodated at \$90 a month.

24 Respectfully submitted, Ray Penn.

25 MR. CLARK: Thank you very much. We had

1 farmers. And I would like for you to really put
2 in your minutes today that we are losing black
3 farmers in Oklahoma.

4 I travel all 77 counties at least, at least
5 twice each year. And I can tell you right now the
6 black farmer is in trouble. But I have some
7 answers for you. Because I get a lot of calls and
8 I have to tell them, you know, "I'm the Highway
9 Department; you need to call the other agency."

10 But I would say to you today that you need to
11 do a few things. Some of them I do. I have
12 friends in Washington and I contact them. Phil
13 Givens has been to me. He will tell you that we
14 get the business done. But I would say to you
15 that we can do a better job, you can do a better
16 job. And I'm in government and I can tell you all
17 it takes is reaching out and going out to visit
18 these homes and also these farms.

19 Oklahoma, if you don't know, has five all
20 black towns. Around them are black farmers. I
21 found out today that a lot of them don't even get
22 the message -- don't even get the message that
23 really affects their farms. One is banking
24 institutions. We have a system that we have in
25 place where we make sure that we contact the

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1 banking institutions.
 2 And I'm going to tell you, put some money in
 3 some minority banks, black banks. You have one
 4 right here in Tulsa, American State Bank. If you
 5 don't know about it, put your money there. And
 6 I'm pretty sure Leroy Thomas is going to get the
 7 money out to some farmers. And for the Indian
 8 farmers, that's for you, too, and some small white
 9 farmers.
 10 The other thing I have for you is
 11 advertisement. You've got to go to some black
 12 churches; that's where we meet. Because they're
 13 farming all week, but if you go to church and put
 14 it in their bulletin, they get the message,
 15 believe me. We do it for highway construction;
 16 that's how we get our minority contractors. They
 17 work all during the week but, you know, they stop
 18 and take time to pray on Sundays. So do that,
 19 contact the churches. And if you don't know the
 20 churches in Oklahoma, in all 77 counties, call me,
 21 I've got them.
 22 Also we have a lot of problems with EPA with
 23 black farmers. It's killing them. It's running
 24 them away. They got the sale. That's not right.
 25 Do something for them.

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1 My last point is condemnation procedures. We
 2 do a lot of condemnation when we build a highway,
 3 but it's a process. You should make sure that
 4 these people in this room are afforded an
 5 opportunity at the right time to have a hearing.
 6 Don't put the hearing when they're out farming;
 7 that's not right. Do it when they can make it to
 8 the hearing at an appropriate time.
 9 So I stand here today to tell you that yes,
 10 we've got a serious problem in Oklahoma. And if
 11 you really want to do something for all farmers in
 12 Oklahoma in your administration, please go to the
 13 farm and let's keep the farm going in Oklahoma,
 14 especially for these minority farmers. Thank you,
 15 very much, for coming today.
 16 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Brooks. The
 17 next speaker is Rudell Lee. Mr. Lee? Not here?
 18 I had Lewis Bruner and Willy Wilson. Both those
 19 names have been marked off. Are they gone? They
 20 had to leave? Ronald Banks?
 21 SPEAKER 36 - RONALD BANKS: I was
 22 standing out in the hallway just a while ago and I
 23 was telling them I was having little problem when
 24 I was a minority. But I don't have -- really I
 25 kind of understand it when I go to the bank and I

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1 don't get any money and I will be the only one
 2 leaving without any because I'm black. So I
 3 realized then where the minority started.
 4 But, okay, I have another thing I would like
 5 for you all to help me on. There's a point that
 6 there's quite a few black farmers that scuffle for
 7 their land and stuff. In our time they would like
 8 to turn it over to their kids.
 9 At this point I own approximately 640 acres,
 10 and I owe FHA \$12,000 on it. Now, I've paid on it
 11 approximately 30 years. I'm not behind at the
 12 time. But to turn it over to my son is the
 13 problem. He don't have a job, and FHA don't think
 14 he can handle it. But I handled it for 30 years
 15 and he worked for me. And that shouldn't be a
 16 problem.
 17 I should have taught him enough in 30 years --
 18 he's not that old, he's 20 -- but I should have
 19 taught him enough in 20 years to know what he was
 20 doing. I don't have a job and if I can make it,
 21 he wasn't that dumb. At least he came to dinner.
 22 So I don't think he was that dumb.
 23 Another thing, you know, curiosity here,
 24 every durn thing that I've got done, I got it did
 25 through calling the state office. You all can

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1 save us a lot of money; get rid of the county
 2 office. Them suckers ain't doing nothing. You go
 3 in there and you've got a program and you ask
 4 them, say, hey, what about this program that you
 5 have all got for this? What program are you
 6 talking about?
 7 You want to ask him, "Hey, when did you start
 8 working? It must have been about an hour ago."
 9 He doesn't know a damn what I do. You know, he
 10 really don't know. And it's like we're going to
 11 keep it a secret; we're going to hold the money.
 12 You know, down in Okfuskee County they have got
 13 this here Equal Opportunity Officer. I tried to
 14 find it. That sucker was sick or something,
 15 because he was one of the good old boys.
 16 You know, when I left out of the office, one
 17 of my white friends told me, hey that guy said you
 18 didn't need it, you know. I'm down here fighting
 19 for my -- I've got some cows on some CRP program
 20 and they wasn't even my cows but he said I knew
 21 about it and went on somewhere. This was the
 22 Equal Opportunity Office. So you know, they
 23 elected him and he's one of them that they pat on
 24 the back, hey, we're going to talk about this boy,
 25 just as soon as he goes, we'll handle that. He

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1 ain't worth nothing.

2 So that's one of the main problems that we're
3 having. And Mr. Beacham (phonetic), if he
4 remembers me, I was down there at the county
5 office trying to talk to my county officer and he
6 just kind of told me, yes, yes, yes, go play. And
7 I called Mr. Beacham and he went up there and he
8 talked to him and he set me up a program, that's
9 in Stillwater. I think his name was Mr. Beacham.
10 And we worked out a program. I'm back on board
11 again.

12 But they acted like I had -- I bought some
13 cows and they all died, they got caught in the
14 snowstorm coming up here, and half of them throwed
15 their calves and all this here. But anyway, when
16 I got behind, the county office didn't offer no
17 kind of help. I did -- I called Stillwater one
18 day because they wasn't giving me my check and
19 some guy up there told me, call Washington; they
20 will give it to you. I made a long distance call
21 to Washington.

22 I went down there and Jo -- I will even tell
23 you what her name was -- she was down there crying
24 when I got back, but she had my check ready. So
25 you can save a bunch of money; get rid of the

1 didn't know no better. He is sitting over there
2 thinking you can rent land for \$5 an acre, so when
3 you offered him \$21, he jumped on it. He didn't
4 know no better.

5 But you go down there to the ASC office and
6 there's an old boy down there and if he's white,
7 you say hey, man what's the going price for this
8 land? Oh, man, put it down for \$48. And that
9 black man farmer, what are you all talking about?
10 What are we getting money for? These guys are
11 really lost. You know, and they're talking about
12 getting to us. You have already got all the way
13 to us, that's stone rape.

14 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Banks. We've
15 gone through the list of folks that have signed up
16 to make presentations. We've still got about, my
17 watch says, about 20 minutes till five. I wanted
18 to wrap this up by five o'clock but we would offer
19 the opportunity here, if someone has got some
20 thoughts that did not sign up. Did not sign up.
21 Let's give them the chance first.

22 We would offer you the opportunity to walk up
23 there to the mike and make some comments. No
24 takers? One gentleman over here wanted to make a
25 few more comments.

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1 county office. I've got this guy over here, I
2 paid all my money, \$8,800 to Okmulgee. We moved
3 over to Okmulgee. I went over and told him, I
4 said, I want to plant some seed. Now, he ain't
5 had no hands on the rest of my money because I got
6 hurt on the job and paid up my FHA loan and I'm
7 lacking \$800 to plant some seed and he said he
8 didn't see where it would create a hardship. I
9 don't have a job. But it's no hardship not to
10 plant my crop. Well, she said it's time.

11 But all of us black farmers that are, you
12 know, hung out here trying to keep these farms, a
13 lot of them was passed down through our family and
14 it is time for you all to give us a hand to try to
15 transfer it. The black farmer is leaving, he's
16 gone. If you don't think he's gone, go where they
17 used to be and see how many of them are left. As
18 you can see, count the days. If you don't believe
19 I'm gone, count the days that I ain't been here.
20 Or count the days I've stayed.

21 I feel kind of like -- and the terriblest
22 thing that happened was on this CRP program, the
23 average black farmer came out with 25, \$19 and
24 everything, and the white farmer came out with
25 \$48. My dad went through that same durn junk. He

1 MR. FRANK JONES: I can't believe you
2 can't get this money down because they say it's up
3 there so why can't we get it? Now, Terry, I know
4 you and Charles stepped into a hornet's nest up
5 there. But, boy, if you're not tough enough, get
6 out of there or take you some nasty pills in the
7 morning or do something. You're going to have to
8 because it's serious. These people are telling
9 you something now, so do something.

10 Like this guy says, fire them. I would fire
11 them. I wouldn't fool with them five minutes. If
12 they didn't want to work, they didn't want to get
13 this information out, and like they said, get out
14 there one on one, see what's going on. If they
15 don't want to do it, get rid of them. Hell, I
16 used to fire them. I worked minorities, I've
17 worked -- I've been in administration in schools.
18 If they didn't work, get rid of them. But get
19 these people some help.

20 MR. CLARK: The last comments were from
21 Frank Jones; is that right, Mr. Jones? So for the
22 record here.

23 MR. PHIL GIVENS: Mr. Chairman, let me
24 say something. You know, I have a lot to say.
25 And what's really troubling me, we were in

1 Washington, D.C. Monday. The under secretary's
2 sitting right there. If I could ask you two
3 things to do today, these are the two things.

4 You've got Ron Clark and Terry Peach. You've
5 got all these black and minority farmers out
6 there. Why don't you come up with an advisory
7 board right now comprised of some of these black,
8 and native American farmers. And another thing,
9 nepotism, conflicts of interest, I'm tired of
10 U.S.D.A. hiding behind policy and procedure. When
11 the policy and procedure suits you all, it's fine,
12 but when we point out what the policy and
13 procedure is when it comes to nepotism.

14 And listen to this, to file a civil rights
15 complaint with U.S.D.A. means creating enemies
16 from here to Washington, D.C.; I know I've been
17 there 23 times. I would like U.S.D.A. to come up
18 with some type of policy and procedure that says
19 we will investigate the civil rights complaint in
20 a timely fashion and take care of it. In my case
21 filing 72 civil rights complaints, you all have
22 never done that.

23 We've got Terry, a county committee member
24 and a farm credit officer that's brother-in-laws
25 and that's all you've heard today about

1 I think U.S.D.A. ought to use all the persuasion,
2 all the funds that they can muster to bring 1890
3 colleges up to speed.

4 Now, I'm well aware of what's going on in the
5 past. But now, and I'm talking about -- I'm
6 talking about curriculum, I'm talking about
7 faculty, I'm talking about libraries, I'm talking
8 about all facilities, equipment, et cetera, et
9 cetera, where minority kids. You see, most of the
10 minority kids in this country still go to black
11 colleges, mostly Africa American. That is a fact.
12 And we need to see -- U.S.D.A. needs to see that
13 these requirements are brought up to speed so that
14 the students that graduate from these universities
15 can be expected to compete on an equal basis with
16 people who graduated in 1862.

17 Now, if you wonder what I'm talking about,
18 and some of you have been to some of the 1890
19 colleges, you look at the plant, you look at the
20 faculty, you look at the libraries, and the
21 facilities, et cetera, et cetera and you are aware
22 what I'm talking about. And that needs to be done
23 and it needs to be done quickly if we are going to
24 make agriculture an attractive vocation for
25 minority youth.

1 brother-in-laws. This is not a fictitious deal.
2 I've called you twice, at home, and Washington,
3 D.C. and Stillwater. The people in Washington,
4 D.C. won't even have nothing to do with it.

5 As much problems as we've had in Oklahoma
6 with racism in the county committee's office, you
7 ought to immediately make that board member
8 resign. The state office can do that. Or
9 transfer that local FSA officer; that's the
10 policy. And you won't do your job.

11 I've told your boss in Washington, D.C. you
12 were a good administrator, but you couldn't do
13 your damn job. You need to transfer that board
14 member or transfer the credit officer. I have a
15 problem with the county committee board members as
16 brother-in-laws processing a loan and determining
17 eligibility. Under secretary, Terry Peach will
18 tell you what I'm telling you is true and correct.
19 U.S.D.A. doesn't know how to act in good faith.

20 MR. ROMINGER: Thank you, Phil.

21 MR. SAM COMBS: Mr. Chairman, my time
22 ran out, and I would just like to make a couple
23 more points that I didn't have time to make.
24 Number one, I think this is very critical as it
25 relates to our college education for minorities.

1 And I reemphasize again that officials at the
2 top in the positions where you all sit need to
3 really monitor county offices because there's some
4 real atrocities going on out there in terms of
5 lacking information, absolute hiding of programs,
6 and not passing the information on in a timely
7 fashion, et cetera, et cetera. It's happening and
8 the people who are suffering are the minorities.

9 There is a good old boy network that's in
10 U.S.D.A. that needs to be gotten rid of. There's
11 no doubt about it, it's there in every agency, you
12 know, you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.

13 And I was in a county office; I'm a retired
14 U.S.D.A. employee myself. I was in a county
15 office in my home town. I won't embarrass
16 somebody by telling you which one. It wasn't the
17 one I worked for; I will say that. If it had
18 been, I would have been ashamed. I walked in
19 there and asked for some assistance and the young
20 lady they had working there, I guess she was the
21 secretary or something, well, she didn't know
22 anything, you know. And the office manager or
23 whatever they call him, was sitting in the back
24 there, you know.

25 And I must have been in there for 30 minutes

1 or so. And I knew all about the program and the
 2 young lady was trying to help me. It was no
 3 deference to her. She absolutely did not know.
 4 He never came out until he got ready to go. He
 5 picked up his briefcase and he walked as close to
 6 me as I am to this gentleman and he didn't even
 7 speak, you see.

8 Now, let's look at this scenario. Had I been
 9 a first time African American to have been in this
 10 particular office, what do you think I would have
 11 thought, you see. Now, believe me, that kind of
 12 stuff goes on in county offices. And it goes on
 13 on a daily basis.

14 And, you know, until -- I said this when I
 15 was working and I will say it again. Until the
 16 Department of Agriculture officials are willing to
 17 let some heads roll, it's going to take some of
 18 that before some folks get the message, and say to
 19 them in no uncertain terms that if you do these
 20 things, you will pay. Nothing else is going to
 21 change. I could go on and on. But I will stop
 22 right there.

23 MR. WILLARD EARL DAVIS: I am going to
 24 make this short because I know because we are
 25 about to close on time. But Mr. Joel Schmidt, is

1 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Davis. One
 2 more. I appreciate all the input.

3 FROM THE FLOOR: Mr. Chairman, I will
 4 take five minutes and I'm just glad that you are
 5 here. I represent Langston University. And I
 6 didn't want to say anything here but since many
 7 people are here, I would like to make this
 8 observation and declaration.

9 The U.S.D.A. has given Langston University
 10 the outreach training and technical assistance
 11 program and you have been only for sometime now.
 12 I can see that some of the landowners and tenants
 13 that you have worked with and many of them are in
 14 this hall. Some went through a lot of
 15 difficulties to get their monies and so on and so
 16 forth. But what I'm just trying to say is that if
 17 there's anybody who has been going through the
 18 1951-S, you know that, and things like that, we
 19 have a team that can help you out in packaging
 20 that process so that you can push it through the
 21 county office as soon as you can.

22 But most importantly, we are working in
 23 several counties in Oklahoma and we would like, as
 24 much as possible, to be involved in some of the
 25 activities that you are dealing with. And that's

1 he here or has he gone? Okay, now, he advised me
 2 that there are a number of minorities just got
 3 going. In other words, at this very moment
 4 they're in foreclosure and the thing that I would
 5 like for U.S.D.A. to do is to maybe get with him --
 6 I'm pretty sure he will get with you -- and try to
 7 get these loans, try to get a write down, in other
 8 words, forgive these people for some of this
 9 interest, at least the interest that they owe and
 10 maybe give them a start.

11 The one thing I would like to leave with you
 12 on your way back to Washington, D.C. or whatever,
 13 is that, you know, we don't really own land. It's
 14 not like owning a house or a car. Those things
 15 can be destroyed by ordinary means. But land is
 16 going to be here forever. We are just the
 17 caretaker of this property, property that our
 18 forefather's have owned and it has gone down from
 19 generation to generation. And we are about to
 20 lose that.

21 All I ask you to do is reconsider some of
 22 these foreclosures for minorities because all we
 23 ask to do is just be the caretaker. You can have
 24 it in about 50 years, but let us take care of it
 25 until then. Thank you, very much.

1 why we are being paid. The services are free.
 2 And we are just there to help you out.

3 MR. CLARK: Thank you. We had a hand
 4 right back here; this gentleman.

5 MR. CHARLES LONECHIEF: I want to thank
 6 you gentlemen, for sending correspondence to the
 7 tribe inviting us to be here. The Chairman of the
 8 tribe wasn't able to attend today but anyway, I
 9 came in his behalf. I live here in Tulsa and they
 10 called and asked if I would represent the tribe.
 11 I am a tribal councilman of the Pawnee tribe. And
 12 what I have to say has nothing to do with the
 13 feelings of the tribe, I'm sure, but what I
 14 observed over the years growing up, and what I've
 15 seen in government dealings and so on.

16 And what really bothers me is when I hear
 17 people, whether the black or Indian or Asian,
 18 whatever background or even, you know, Caucasian,
 19 they're really hurting in this country. And our
 20 politicians in their humanitarian efforts are
 21 willing to send millions of dollars over to AT or
 22 to Somalia or to Bosnia. Well, who is going to
 23 speak for the people here? That's what bothers
 24 me.

25 You know, somewhere in some point in time, I

1 think that the Americans will pull together and
 2 start demanding or trying to get some avenue of
 3 getting the same type of appeal to the human
 4 conscience that we have people here in the country
 5 that are hurting. You know, you can go over in
 6 eastern Oklahoma or anyplace, as far as that goes,
 7 and still find people living in shacks. I mean,
 8 you can see daylight through the cracks in the
 9 walls of the house or maybe stars through the
 10 holes in the ceiling. And if money can be raised
 11 for emergencies like floods or disasters, why
 12 can't we save our people who are the grassroots
 13 people, the farmers that have fed the nation, you
 14 know, from the beginning? And that's the question
 15 that really rolls in my mind.

16 And you know, borrowing a phrase, I wish I
 17 could, you know, come up with some of these quotes
 18 that some of the famous people have come up with,
 19 but you know, you teach people to fish; if you
 20 hand them the fish, they will never learn. And I
 21 don't know, I would like to see not just with
 22 Indian tribes but with other minority groups that
 23 are wanting to learn, you know.

24 We send Peace Corps people overseas to teach
 25 those people how to raise crops and how to do

1 things out. But nobody in the state office told
 2 any of these minority farmers this.
 3 I knew and I've sat here through this whole
 4 meeting to see if that was even going to come out
 5 and it never did. And that bothers me. And when
 6 I testify in front of the Senate Select Committee,
 7 I'm going to bring that up and say that a state
 8 director with the NRC, FHA never told a black,
 9 Hispanic or Indian farmer about this moratorium on
 10 the AFSA problems. And it was never brought to
 11 this meeting till I brought it up. You remember
 12 that, Terry Peach, and Ron Clark.

13 MR. CLARK: We'll take one more, then
 14 we're going to wrap this up.

15 FROM THE FLOOR: Okay. I want to ask
 16 the -- what I was dealing with in asking you
 17 about; like, transfer forms. Just like -- I'm not
 18 actually tired of it, but I'm ready to give it up.
 19 And I would like to supervise and help my kid, you
 20 know, to get a start.

21 You know, it don't look like it would be a
 22 problem with it. After I paid on it -- actually
 23 I'm on the downhill payment. There looks like
 24 there ought to be some kind of way you could
 25 transfer this farm without any problem with just

1 things better. Why don't we have our inner Peace
 2 Corps to reach out to the different entities here
 3 in the United States?

4 Now, I thank you gentlemen. That's only food
 5 for thought that I threw out.

6 MR. PHIL GIVENS: Pearlie Reed, let me
 7 say this: Is there not a moratorium that the
 8 secretary has on minority foreclosures?

9 MR. ROMINGER: Yes, there is. The
 10 secretary --

11 MR. PHIL GIVENS: We're just now finding
 12 that out. I had to fly 2,000 miles Monday to find
 13 that out. Somebody should have put that in the
 14 paper that there's a moratorium on the minority
 15 farmers. You can explain that.

16 MR. ROMINGER: There's a moratorium on
 17 foreclosures on minority farmers until they can be
 18 investigated to see if there's been
 19 discrimination. That's in place, yes.

20 MR. PHIL GIVENS: Good. Terry, you
 21 should put that out. I mean, we didn't get a
 22 newsletter from you or Ron Clark or anybody in the
 23 state office telling minority farmers and this is
 24 just part of outreach. I'm not being smart, but
 25 all of us can't fly to Washington, D.C. to find

1 \$12,000 owed on it.

2 I don't see why you can't just say hey, I'm
 3 tired, you know, son, you can have it now. That's
 4 the way my grandpa -- he didn't give me a farm,
 5 but he gave me the chance to start farming and I
 6 could plant whatever I wanted to and do it when I
 7 was, like, 11, 12 years old. He was 60 something
 8 years old.

9 MR. PEARLIE REED: Can we meet with you
 10 right after the meeting? And I'm going to ask
 11 Randy Weber. Randy, would you raise your hand?
 12 He's the Associate Administrator of the Farm
 13 Services Agency in Washington, to if we can help
 14 you.

15 MR. CLARK: We have one more hand in the
 16 back.

17 MR. T.C. MONROE: Yes, I'm T.C. Monroe
 18 from southeast Oklahoma. I'm actually speaking on
 19 behalf of my wife, I guess. She -- there was an
 20 ad in the paper on this inventory property with
 21 FMHA. She put in an application for it. She was
 22 immediately turned down because she had too much
 23 experience or because of this, that and the other.
 24 After two or three appeals, she got qualified to
 25 buy it.

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1 Well, in the meantime, when they ran this ad,
2 they had the price of the property, the interest
3 rate, the number of years. Well, after a year and
4 a half of appeals where she got qualified for this
5 property, she got turned down, she got approved
6 for the loan after a year and a half so there was
7 no money. What happened to the money? If the
8 money was there when this property was advertised,
9 why shouldn't it have been there until the
10 property was sold?

11 I understand that they got rid of county
12 boards to some extent, which I think is a good
13 thing; the county board in those offices has too
14 much control. They're sitting there on equal
15 terms as you are, but yet they can control who
16 gets a loan and who don't. I think that puts the
17 individual to a disadvantage. That's all I have
18 to say. Thank you.

19 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Time for one
20 more. I see a hand back there.

21 FROM THE FLOOR: Again, I would like to
22 thank the panel and everybody. I hope when I go
23 back to Okmulgee office to put in for another
24 loan, it won't be thrown in the trash after this
25 meeting. This man filled it out -- his group and

1 more. Is there a possibility of getting a
2 minority outreach person down there to work with
3 the tribes?

4 MR. PEARLIE REED: The answer is yes,
5 and we will follow up with you.

6 MS. MARTHA LONG: I appreciate it.
7 Thank you.

8 MR. CLARK: Go right ahead, sir.

9 MR. O.C. SIMPSON: Thank you. I'm O.C.
10 Simpson, and I'm in charge of Research and
11 Corporate Extension Program at Langston
12 University. And I just want to say that we are
13 very sensitive about native Americans. However,
14 I'm not involved with the outreach program, but
15 just to show you our commitment to native
16 Americans in the Cherokee Nation area in
17 Tahlequah, we have an office there that's set up
18 purely to service primarily the Cherokee Nation
19 but that program is for youth.

20 But I offer this challenge today that if
21 someone that's in the Cherokee Nation area that
22 can locate for us a qualified person who is
23 willing to work in extension and work primarily
24 with the Cherokee and other tribes, then by
25 George, we'll employ them and locate them in our

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1 I know it was involved for you (sic). So
2 hopefully, after this meeting it will be better.
3 Thank you.

4 MR. CLARK: Thank you. That's what
5 we're all about. With that -- one more?

6 MS. MARTHA LONG: I noticed another
7 problem that we had is that native Americans have
8 no land grant college in Oklahoma. And you take
9 Langston University, for example, that has the
10 minority outreach program. Is that what we call
11 this, project outreach? There really is nothing
12 that concentrates on native Americans. And yet I
13 realize that you do them through the colleges, but
14 what do native Americans do? Because I know this
15 is sponsored through FSA and NRCS.

16 FROM THE FLOOR: Now, I'm native
17 American, and they gave me all kinds of help at
18 Langston.

19 MS. MARTHA LONG: Right. But I would
20 like to see more concentration, since we don't
21 have a land grant college in Oklahoma, if there's
22 a possibility of -- I know that they do help
23 native Americans. Well, they have been over to
24 the Sac and Fox. However, we don't have that
25 access, you might say, and I would like to see

1 office in Tahlequah. Thank you.

2 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Any other
3 comments?

4 MR. WILLIS ROBEDEAUX: Ronnie, one quick
5 comment. By the way, I'm Willis Robedeaux. I put
6 in for a loan at the Stillwater National Bank. I
7 got my feed and everything through the BIA, I got
8 it in my possession, I took it to Stillwater Bank.
9 And there's a deal that's supposed -- the banks
10 are supposed to work with you on a loan. And I
11 worked with this lady through the BIA. She got so
12 tired of working with them after two years, we
13 just gave it up.

14 So that's what we put up with, you know. The
15 program, it says that it's there and she was
16 willing to work with me, yet through the BIA and
17 everything, it was all turned down. She got tired
18 of messing with me. But I think somebody ought to
19 see somebody up there in Washington about the BIA,
20 too.

21 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Willis. With
22 that, let's wrap this up.

23 It's been a very informative session. And we
24 do appreciate your time and we do appreciate you
25 coming and being with us today and sharing your

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1 concerns. With that, I would like to turn it back
2 to Deputy Rominger to make some final comments.

3 MR. SAM COMBS: Could I ask some
4 questions before we dismiss? Are transcripts of
5 this meeting going to be available?

6 MR. CLARK: Yes.

7 MR. ROMINGER: I want to thank all of
8 you for coming here today. Secretary Glickman is
9 serious about resolving problems at U.S.D.A. with
10 our programs with how our customers are treated.
11 This action team that he has appointed has a big
12 job, as you can see. They are hearing a lot of
13 things from you and others around the country.

14
15 I want to thank the members of the action
16 team here who are spending a lot of time, and will
17 be for at least the next month, in listening to
18 your concerns and then coming up with some
19 recommendations to the secretary on how we can
20 improve the situation at U.S.D.A. both for you,
21 our customers and for the employees in U.S.D.A.

22 So again, thank you all for coming, thank you
23 for hosting us here today. And we're going to be
24 working on these issues. Thank you.

25 (Whereupon, the proceeding was concluded.)

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1 CERTIFICATE

2

3 STATE OF OKLAHOMA)

4 COUNTY OF TULSA) ss.

5

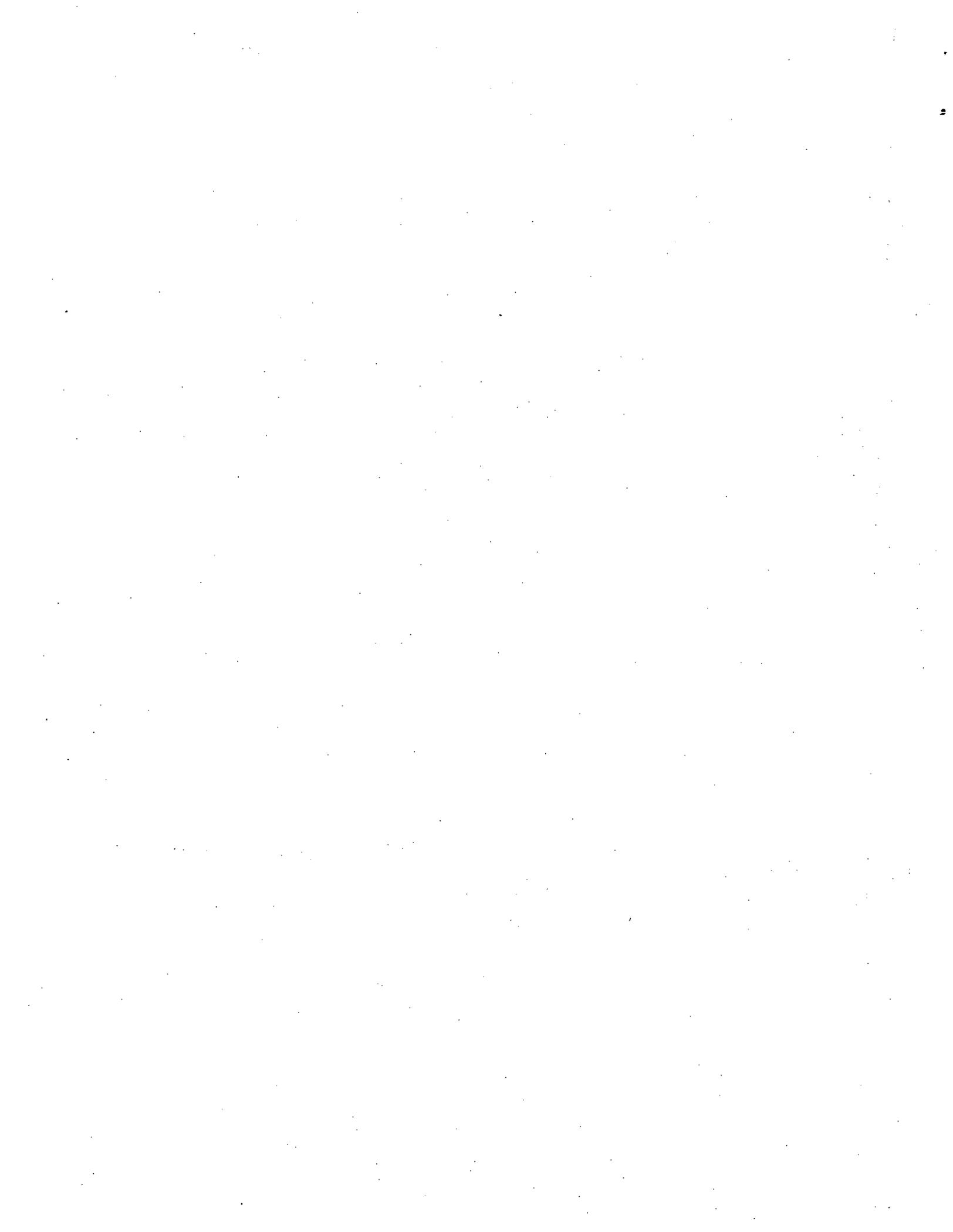
6 I, Linda Fisher, a Certified Shorthand Reporter
7 and Notary Public in and for the State of Oklahoma, do
8 hereby certify that on the 10th day of January, 1997,
9 at the Sheraton Hotel, 10918 East 41st Street, Tulsa,
10 Oklahoma, the within and foregoing proceeding was
11 reduced to writing by me in stenograph, and thereafter
12 transcribed by me and is fully and accurately set forth
13 in the preceding 106 pages.

14 I do further certify that I am not related to
15 nor attorney for any of the said parties, nor otherwise
16 interested in the event of said action.

17 WITNESS my hand and official stamp this 15th
18 day of January, 1997.

19

20 _____
Linda Fisher, CSR-RPR



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