

1 The session will be taped, and the
2 transcript will be provided to the Secretary and to
3 the panel so that we can move forward and deal with
4 the issues that you raise today.

5 I have a list of people who have signed up
6 and I will take that in the best order that I can.
7 I will try to follow it as best I can. And I will
8 call your name and then I will call as well the
9 person who is to speak after you, so that that
10 person could be ready.

11 And I'd like to begin today with Bob
12 Miller. And Bob will be followed by George Hobbs.
13 So if you'd please be willing to go to the mike, I'd
14 like you to state your name and anything about you
15 you wish, an organization you may belong to or where
16 you are from.

17 So Bob Miller first.

18 (No response.)

19 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. George Hobbs? And
20 after George, Elmer White. Go ahead, George.

21 MR. HOBBS: Good evening, Mr. Secretary,
22 members of the panel. My name is George Hobbs and

1 I'm from Dinwiddie County, Virginia.

2 I'm here mostly speaking for the small
3 family farm. I live on a family farm now that's
4 been in our family for over a hundred years, through
5 my grandfather, my father and myself. I took it on
6 in 1971 when my father passed.

7 And through all those years, we growed
8 peanuts on that farm, up until last year when
9 Kenneth Upshaw, which was the county agent of
10 Dinwiddie, he take the quotas off. Then this past
11 year, taking the tobacco quota off.

12 Now, I never borrowed money or anything to
13 farm with, because it's a small farm and I farm on
14 my own. The few years before that, what he doing
15 taking the quotas off it, in 1992 I run into a
16 problem of selling my peanuts.

17 And I got -- this is into your office now
18 because I done wrote everywhere in 1990 -- I mean
19 1992 it was, trying to sell my peanuts. And I wrote
20 everywhere in '93 trying to get that problem solved
21 and never did get it solved.

22 So when I grows my peanuts the next year,

1 Kenneth Upshaw told me -- I told him I would sell
2 them on my own, instead of trying to sell them
3 through him, because my peanuts was stolen off me.
4 And all this is on record because I filed a
5 complaint. He come down and told me I couldn't sell
6 them on my own.

7 Then after I raised the peanuts, he said
8 then I couldn't sell them on my own, and I lose my
9 price support if I did. So he took the price
10 support away from me, then took the peanut quota
11 away. After he took that, he send me a bill then
12 for 4,000 and some dollars, fine for growing them.
13 And I got this, I got this on record now.

14 So after this now, when I got ready to
15 grow my tobacco, which was the next year after that,
16 he told me he wasn't going to give me a marketing
17 card to sell the tobacco with. So then tobacco,
18 peanuts sitting in the field.

19 I can't go through everything because it's
20 too long. So I just want to try to give you a basic
21 idea how all this come about. When he took the
22 tobacco quota off it and all the county agent said I

1 couldn't sell my peanuts, I sell to the market and a
2 binder was the one that stole my peanuts away from
3 me and give me bad peanuts and I couldn't sell
4 them. So I had to dump that crop in the field.

5 Then the next year, when he told me I
6 couldn't sell them, that's another crop sitting in
7 the field. Now the next year after that when I did
8 grow the peanuts and tobacco for to sell them, and
9 he said he wasn't going to give me a market card,
10 that's the three years in a row that that crop was
11 sitting in the field. And it's no way that a small
12 family farmer can survive behind that. There's no
13 way.

14 And I look at it this way here. I've been
15 keeping the farm now for about 20 some years, and
16 this is not just to keep me from farming. This
17 is -- at least there's a lot of racial unjust being
18 going on. This is more than racial unjust. This is
19 a racial conspiracy going on to strip the black
20 farmer of all his quotas.

21 (Applause.)

22 MR. HOBBS: After you take all his quotas

1 away from him, now you cannot farm no more now
2 because you ain't got no quotas. Now the next thing
3 you're going to do, you're going to take his land
4 then. And the minute his land is taken, he never
5 gets that back.

6 This has been happening to us down through
7 the years down there. And I done fight against it.
8 The year after I got all my quotas and stuff taken,
9 I wrote everywhere. I even made a trip up here
10 because -- you wasn't in office then. Mike Espy I
11 think was in office. I couldn't even see him. I
12 couldn't even see him.

13 Keep from taking a long lot of time, I'll
14 tell you what I like for you to do about this. Not
15 trying to tell you how to run your office, but the
16 only way this is going to be stopped is to have this
17 kind of stuff investigated. Not just writing down,
18 because they can lie with that. But they be
19 investigated, like I see all the panel up there
20 now.

21 You need one more up there with you, and
22 that's Ms. Janet Reno of the Justice Department for

1 to investigate these people. And then you can come
2 up and stop it.

3 Because I'm just going to give you a few
4 names here that I'd like for you to really look
5 into. And I started with Kenneth Upshaw, with the
6 Agriculture Department at Dinwiddie. He is from the
7 federal government.

8 The next one is the state, because I
9 always thought graders, they grade the peanuts with
10 the federal government. It's not the federal --
11 well, I won't say it's not the federal. It's the
12 state government. Okay.

13 Well, my time is up then I can't go no
14 further then. What I'll have to do is try to get it
15 in writing to you.

16 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Let me just ask you
17 if I might, who was it who did this with your
18 quotas, peanut and tobacco quotas?

19 MR. HOBBS: Kenneth Upshaw.

20 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: And he is the USDA --

21 MR. HOBBS: He's the USDA --

22 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: -- county agent?

1 MR. HOBBS: The county agent. And the way
2 he got it on the records, he went in there and
3 didn't save your quota, I mean didn't plant your
4 quotas. It was planted, but that's the scheme that
5 they used to take your quotas away from you.

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, George.

8 And again I'm really sorry that we're
9 trying to hold to five minutes, but if we don't try
10 real hard, an awful lot of people will go away this
11 afternoon without having a chance to speak.

12 Bob Miller, have you arrived?

13 (No response.)

14 MR. JOHNSON: Well, Elmer White first, and
15 then we'll take Bob if he's here.

16 MR. WHITE: Good afternoon, everybody.

17 I'm from Somerset County on the Eastern Shore.

18 I come from a family of 15, 11 boys and 4
19 girls. And we was raised up on a big farm. My
20 father didn't own it, he couldn't afford it. But
21 all 11 of us boys, all of us wanted to take up
22 farming.

1 And then I got married in '62, and my
2 wife, we had seven lovely children. The girls went
3 to college. I worked hard; my wife did, too.

4 I had two boys. They loved farming, they
5 did. They used to go with me, try to buy seed, gas,
6 try to get a piece of old equipment on time. And I
7 was having such a hard time, my boys decided not to
8 be farmers.

9 And then '74, my father passed. And we
10 was carrying him to the cemetery and I seen a farm,
11 had 23 acres on it. And that Monday morning I went
12 to the real estate and he carried me over. We
13 looked at this farm. And I tried getting finance.

14 And in '73 and '74, that was a good year
15 for farmers, and I was farming about 125 acres. And
16 I sold some soybeans that year, was \$9.50 and all my
17 corn got \$3.85. I didn't owe nobody and I had this
18 money.

19 I told my wife, I said we're going to buy
20 a place if I have a buy an acre in the woods, clear
21 it off, build a place to put my machines. And I
22 filled out application to farm credit.

1 I had so much money, you know, to put down
2 with it. They gave me a hem and haw for about two
3 months. I called the real estate man up, told him I
4 couldn't get nobody to finance the farm.

5 And so -- I bought the property from two
6 teachers. They lived in Silver Spring, Maryland.
7 So they called me one Friday night, ask me could I
8 meet them at this farm next Saturday morning, which
9 they didn't come early enough for me because I was
10 there by four o'clock that morning.

11 And I bought the place. It had a big
12 eight-room house on it, 23 acres of nice land. And
13 in '78, the electric system caught on fire and my
14 house burnt down.

15 Well, I told my wife, I sure wished I had
16 done it myself, I kept all my files in a drawer and
17 all you had to do was get this drawer and you have
18 my insurance policies and everything. And when I
19 get -- I had \$45,000 worth of insurance on this
20 house.

21 I got that, I paid my mortgage off. I
22 told my wife, I said, honey, this is the first thing

1 we've ever owned. I said reckon might be putting up
2 here for a while, because it's ours, we worked for
3 it.

4 And I bought a bungalow, it had five rooms
5 to it. And I moved it there and I built on to it.
6 And then that -- before I moved the house, they had
7 to set so long for the state to give me permission
8 to move it at nighttime.

9 I put in order for -- went to Farmers
10 Home, put in order for a chicken house. This was in
11 '79, a chicken house and a house. Which when they
12 did respond to me, they said a chicken house only.
13 I told my wife, I said, well, that's good.

14 And they was building the chicken house
15 and I was in my house, you know, doing some work,
16 doing bad weather stuff. So this lady from Farmers
17 Home, the name was Betty Hoffer, she was something
18 else.

19 And she come in the house, said, Elmer, we
20 was going to let you have money to build the house.
21 I said I don't need no damn house. You see this
22 good carpenter work I'm doing? That's what my

1 father used to call the work.

2 And she jumped down. I didn't have no
3 front step up there. She jumped off from that step
4 and I hadn't seen hide or hair of her for about
5 three years.

6 And I wanted to buy the land that would
7 join right up to me. They foreclosed on it. I
8 didn't want it but two months. They wanted \$45,000,
9 two months, because I had a son was getting a big
10 settlement from an accident he was in. And she
11 never -- every time I go to her, it was this, that
12 and the other. And so they foreclosed on it.

13 And I was 8,000 and some dollars ahead on
14 my Farmers Home payments. If they wasn't putting
15 somebody down low, that's pretty low as I think you
16 can get. But I did tell her, I get hurt, but I
17 don't give up.

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

20 Is Bob Miller here?

21 (No response.)

22 MR. JOHNSON: And the next speaker will be

1 John Myart.

2 MR. BOYD: John Boyd.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. I'm sorry, I've got a
4 John Myart and I've got a John Boyd.

5 We have Bob Miller up first. I'm sorry,
6 we've asked for Bob Miller first and then we'll
7 follow next.

8 MR. MILLER: Mr. Secretary and members of
9 the panel, thank you for having us here to discuss
10 some of the problems of minorities and in our case
11 Indian agriculture.

12 I'm Robert Miller, from the Creek Nation
13 of Oklahoma, and President of the Intertribal
14 Agriculture Council, and we represent about 65
15 tribes all over the United States and Alaska. We
16 were chartered in 1987 and from that time until now
17 we've been working on the things that affect Indian
18 agriculture across the nation.

19 We were able in 1987 to get a memorandum
20 of understanding signed between the Secretary of
21 Agriculture and the Secretary of Interior to
22 cooperate in trying to improve Indian Agriculture.

1 And we've been ten years now working in that
2 effort. And we've had -- we've certainly had some
3 help from the USDA people.

4 We of course get a little bit discouraged
5 because we get something on the burner and it gets
6 shifted off. So we're glad that we've got our
7 people in the White House, our man in the White
8 House, and we've got friends now in the USDA. We
9 certainly had problems under the last two
10 administrations, trying to get some of these things
11 implemented.

12 In 1990, for the first time in history, we
13 got some Indian language in the Farm Bill. And then
14 we passed the Farm Management Act in 1995 that
15 guaranteed Indian operators to have the same USDA
16 services of other farmers. So we're -- we're
17 looking to you, Mr. Secretary, and to this
18 administration, to help us get some of these things
19 on down the road.

20 Certainly there are many things that need
21 to be addressed. Credit is very critical. We still
22 don't have services in some areas, USDA services in

1 some areas. One of the things that is particularly
2 needed all over Indian country is access to credit.

3 Of course, we're different in that we
4 don't -- we can't pledge trust land to those loans.
5 So we're at a disadvantage there. Commercial credit
6 is almost nonexistent. So we certainly need some
7 direct lines of credit through the USDA.

8 We are willing and want to work with you
9 in any way we can. We certainly hope that you call
10 on us. We'll have some written testimony for you
11 and we'll try our very best to cooperate with you in
12 any way we can to help move this, our programs
13 forward.

14 Indian people for so long have been denied
15 the services of the USDA, cooperative extension and
16 so forth. We're very interested in cooperative
17 extension that was nonexistent to reservations, on
18 reservations for about 15, 20 years.

19 And we finally got Congress to appropriate
20 us some money. We get to keep -- we keep getting
21 cut back on that. We asked for 6.5 million, we got
22 one. And then we got clear up to 1.7, and then

1 we've been cut back every year on that.

2 So we lack very greatly in that area and
3 many of our youth are going without the opportunity
4 to belong to 4-H clubs and so forth because of
5 that. So we'll certainly be happy to work with you
6 in any way we can and we look forward to making some
7 great progress in the near future.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Bob.

11 Our next speaker is James Myart. James,
12 I'm sorry I got your name wrong. James chooses to
13 let John Boyd.

14 MR. BOYD: Thank you for having me. My
15 name is John Boyd, President of the National Black
16 Farmers Association.

17 I have words of wisdom, words of faith,
18 and I have words of the Department of Agriculture to
19 tell you today.

20 We have come here today to dramatize a
21 shameful condition. In a sense, we come to our
22 nation's capital today to cash a check.

1 When the architects of the Republic wrote
2 the magnificent words of the Constitution, the
3 Declaration of Independence, they were signing a
4 promissory note to which every American was to fall
5 heir. The note was a promise that all men, yes,
6 black men as well as white men, will be guaranteed
7 the right of life, liberty and pursuit of
8 happiness.

9 So, Mr. Secretary, we come here today to
10 cash a check that will give you -- that will give us
11 upon demand the riches of freedom and the security
12 of justice. But we're here on a day of concern. We
13 have yet to receive a settlement of numerous
14 complaints already at the Office of Civil Rights.

15 The time has come for action from USDA.
16 Yes, we have been receiving a lot of lip service.
17 I'm overwhelmed by the actions of the Department, by
18 keeping racist employees such as the Associate
19 General Counsel, Kent Cohen.

20 When I asked a question in a meeting, I
21 said why out of a hundred lawyers in the office of
22 General Counsel, Mr. Cohen, why are there not any

1 black lawyers? He indicated that we didn't need
2 any.

3 This is a type of racism in the Department
4 of Agriculture that should not be tolerated. This
5 type of individual should not be working on any
6 settlements on any black farmer's cases, that feels
7 this way towards black people. This is the problem
8 that we have today, people, and this is the problem
9 why your farm -- that your farm complaints have not
10 been settled.

11 Mr. Secretary, we need you to do something
12 on this. We need you to take a stand today and show
13 the farmers in good faith by getting rid of the
14 problem. You can clean up the Department of
15 Agriculture.

16 (Applause.)

17 MR. BOYD: I listened very closely to
18 President Bill Clinton's speech the other day. He
19 talked frequently about the race problem in this
20 country. This is a public invitation for the
21 President of the United States to address small
22 farmers regarding the race problem at the United

1 States Department of Agriculture.

2 Congresswoman Maxine Waters of the Black
3 Caucus addressed a letter on behalf of the National
4 Black Farmers Association, because the caucus is
5 concerned of the treatment that we're receiving
6 there. They're concerned of our future, they're
7 concerned in the fact that we're less than one
8 percent. She's concerned in the fact that 67
9 percent of that one percent is tied up with the
10 federal government, people that play a tremendous
11 role in our future today.

12 Mr. Secretary, I read the piece in The
13 Washington Post in which you talked about Dr. King
14 and his dream. I'm here to tell you -- to deliver a
15 message. It's a message of thousands of black
16 farmers across the country who have lost their farm
17 through ignorance or prejudice, discrimination and
18 racism, at the hands of the Department of
19 Agriculture.

20 Mr. Secretary, you also talked about the
21 stigma of the Last Plantation. And I would like to
22 return to the name that you like to call it. You

1 call it the People's Department.

2 Well, the farmers have a dream as well.
3 It's a dream that USDA will live out its true
4 meaning of its motto of the People's Department, not
5 just for white but for all people, to include all
6 people, to treat all people fairly.

7 We have a dream today also, Mr. Secretary,
8 that the racism, discrimination, unfair lending
9 practices, racial bias, racial disparities, and just
10 plain neglect, will all come to an end. And the
11 dream is not over yet, Mr. Secretary.

12 We also have a dream that today you take
13 that ink pen out your pocket and sign that
14 settlement check and to help all these black farmers
15 out. They have been suffering.

16 I'm going to ask the black farmers in here
17 today that have active complaints to stand up.
18 Y'all stand up, stand up.

19 These are the farmers' lives that we are
20 affecting here today, Mr. Secretary. I would like
21 to take specific notice to the young man at the end
22 here, Mr. Bowie. This gentleman traveled a long

1 ways to be here today.

2 And I also read in the article where there
3 were just pockets of discrimination. This does not
4 look like pockets of discrimination here today.
5 These are human beings.

6 We don't deserve to be treated this way.
7 We want to participate in the federal programs as
8 any other individual in this country wants to be
9 treated and participate in these federal programs.

10 We have farmers here today, these are
11 people with active complaints in the Office of Civil
12 Rights. How many of you here today received a
13 settlement from the federal government? Nobody.
14 Nobody.

15 We need some action, sir. We need you to
16 take a look at the hurt and pain in these people's
17 eyes today. We need the Civil Rights Action Team --
18 listen, gentlemen, take a look at these people.
19 These gentlemen here talking, take a look at these
20 people's faces. This is no time to be laughing.
21 Take a look at these people's faces, because you are
22 affecting their lives and you have the power to

1 change their futures.

2 Thank you for the opportunity to address
3 you. Thank you.

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, John.

6 James Myart, okay, and then Clinton
7 Howland will follow James.

8 MR. MYART: My name is James Myart. I'm
9 from San Antonio, Texas. However, for the last five
10 years, I've traveled to not less than 15 or 20
11 states, meeting with black farmers, Hispanic
12 farmers, white farmers, Hispanic farmers, and female
13 farmers.

14 I have over the last five years been
15 eating, drinking, sleeping, crying, nightmaring the
16 stories that are being echoed to all of you on the
17 task force for the last six weeks.

18 I'm proud to stand here as the General
19 Counsel to the National Black Farmers Association
20 because a young man named John Boyd decided that
21 enough was enough. And a newspaper writer from
22 Richmond, Virginia, Mary Beausoleil, decided that

1 the story he was telling was a story that needed to
2 be told, Mr. Secretary.

3 And the Richmond Times-Dispatch is here
4 today. I want Ms. Beausoleil to stand up, because
5 she has committed and her paper has committed to
6 rooting out, by telling the story of black farmers
7 from all over this country.

8 Ms. Beausoleil, would you please stand?
9 She's in the audience.

10 And with all due respect, Mr. Secretary,
11 all of you that are Deputy Secretaries, Under
12 Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Administrators,
13 Directors of all the various programs throughout the
14 Department of Agriculture, I just simply want to say
15 that I cannot as a lawyer and as a human being
16 continue to cry on a daily base. Because I do it.

17 Now, Mr. Secretary, you've had several
18 meetings here recently. You've met with a number of
19 people. It is my understanding that you have
20 passionately made your commitments in connection
21 with solving this problem. And because of that, I
22 personally and on behalf of my clients and on behalf

1 of the National Black Farmers Association want to
2 commend you.

3 (Applause.)

4 MR. MYART: It is our understanding that
5 you had no idea how bad this problem was and that
6 you have been working in Congress for years on
7 issues, that you've been working feverishly around
8 the clock, I'm told, now, in connection with this
9 issue. And you are to be applauded.

10 You have a golden opportunity, sir. You
11 have an opportunity to make history in this
12 country. Not only for Democrats, not only for black
13 farmers, but for Americans.

14 You see, this is not a black/white issue.
15 It's not. This is not a male/female issue. This is
16 an American issue in the breadbasket of this
17 country.

18 And the National Black Farmers Association
19 is going to present to you not later than next
20 Monday a comprehensive, well-thought-out proposal
21 entitled "National Reinvention of the Small Family
22 Farm."

1 They're not talking about black farmers,
2 they're not talking about Hispanic farmers. We're
3 talking about poor white farmers. We're talking
4 about all people from walks of life, Indians, native
5 Indians, who only want to cross that bridge that Mr.
6 Clinton and that you as his Secretary have espoused
7 nationally.

8 I went to the Arkansas Presidential Ball
9 and on the little thing it said "Crossing the Bridge
10 into the 21st Century," sir. Small farmers want to
11 cross that bridge with you. It's not a Republican
12 issue, it's not a Democrat issue. This is a human
13 issue. And all we want is your help.

14 (Applause.)

15 MR. MYART: Now, frankly, we're tired.
16 We're worn down, completely. I tried to call Mr.
17 Gilliman three years ago. He hung up in my face,
18 would not even speak with me.

19 I don't know if he's here today. Is he?
20 Is Mr. Gilliman here? Mr. Gilliman, the General
21 Counsel to the Department of Agriculture, hung up in
22 my face when I tried to talk about these problems.

1 He's a man just like I am. He's wealthy, I'm poor,
2 but he wouldn't talk to me.

3 I, with all due respect, sir, am going to
4 attempt to allow you to hear from five people who
5 happen to be my clients and the clients of my law
6 firm, to let you hear personally their stories of
7 five years of struggle with the lawyers at the
8 Department of Agriculture.

9 By the way, y'all have 109 lawyers in the
10 Department of Agriculture and it's my understanding
11 that not one of them is black. This is 1997.
12 That's wrong. Sends the wrong signal. You don't
13 have one civil rights lawyer in the Department of
14 Agriculture. That's wrong.

15 Now, as a lawyer, that's considered prima
16 facie evidence that's something's wrong. Where
17 there is smoke, there is fire. And not only that,
18 and I'm going to say it, you got career lawyers in
19 the Department of Agriculture, conservative
20 Republicans, that are attempting to do everything in
21 their power to strangle you and the civil rights
22 effort.

1 And I want to say that down in South Hill,
2 Virginia, where John Boyd is from, where Willie
3 Crute is from; down in Roscoe, Texas, where Robert
4 Williams is from; down in Colfax, Louisiana, where
5 Mr. Boyd is from; down in Monroe, Louisiana,
6 Georgia, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Arkansas, South
7 Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, it goes on, not
8 to mention the Native Americans in New Mexico,
9 Minnesota, Idaho, not to mention Hispanic farmers in
10 California, Texas, Arizona and New Mexico, we can't
11 compete with the white farmers who are driving
12 Lincoln Continentals, chauffeured, and flying their
13 private jets. And you know it's happening. I know
14 it's happening.

15 I want to introduce to you, sir, to your
16 Under Secretaries and to this task -- please, don't
17 put up that sign for me, thank you. I want to
18 introduce to you the officers of the National Black
19 Farmers Association.

20 You know, there are two types of people.
21 Those who look at signs and comply, and others who
22 look at signs and ask why. Please, do not do that

1 again.

2 I want you to meet the executive board of
3 the National Black Farmers Association. And by the
4 way, the national -- the board of the National Black
5 Farmers Association, led by John Boyd, is the
6 catalyst for the new civil rights movement in this
7 country into the 21st century.

8 And it's not going to come from the urban
9 areas. It's going to come from the breadbasket
10 areas and from the backs of these black men and
11 women and others who have struggled against all odds
12 to be successful as farmers.

13 The President, Mr. John Boyd, from South
14 Hill.

15 The Vice President, Mr. Robert -- I want
16 y'all to stand up so these people can see who you
17 are.

18 The Vice President, Mr. Robert Williams,
19 from Roscoe, Texas.

20 The Secretary, Mr. Walter Powell, from
21 Monroe, Louisiana.

22 The Treasurer, Mr. Lynwood -- Lynwood,

1 come down here. We don't want you in the back of
2 the bus. We want you up here where you should be.
3 Lynwood Brown is the treasurer.

4 And Welch Long, from Dewy Rose, Georgia,
5 is the Assistant Secretary/treasurer.

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. MYART: Now, interestingly enough,
8 each one of these people has a story to tell you.
9 And I'm going to ask that the stories begin with Mr.
10 Willie Crute, who also has a story to tell about
11 what has happened to him. And I would like for
12 these board members to stand behind him as he tells
13 his story.

14 Mr. Crute, could you take the microphone?

15 We'll be finished in just a minute. Those
16 of you that have signed up to speak, please believe
17 me, you're going to get to tell your stories, too,
18 okay. You really are.

19 So I'm not trying to trump you and I'm not
20 trying to take up all the time. But this is the
21 first time ever that you've had this opportunity,
22 and I'm sure the Secretary and all these very

1 important government employees will stay here to
2 midnight to hear you if they have to.

3 (Applause.)

4 MR. MYART: Mr. Crute.

5 MR. CRUTE: Yes, good afternoon. How are
6 you all?

7 My problem started in Mecklenburg County
8 back in 1992 when I entered the office of Jim Garnet
9 in Chase City, Virginia. I went and put a farm
10 program together with him for beef/poultry
11 operation. We sat down, see where the cash flow,
12 the program, cash flow on paper.

13 Everything was going well, as I thought.
14 And we went along with it. I thought everything was
15 going good.

16 But Mr. Garnet had a problem on time and
17 processing paperwork. He would keep losing
18 paperwork, would not process paperwork, and just
19 thought it was unimportant to what we were doing.
20 And it went on, it went on, and he would steadily
21 lose paperwork.

22 During this time, what we wanted to do, we

1 wanted to select roosters. Wanted to select a
2 rooster house. Could do it only adding 46 percent
3 more houses in that area. And which we're working
4 at this time.

5 So Mr. Garnet proceeded. He would not
6 process the application for the chicken house. He
7 did put me in business with the cattle, though, I
8 got my cattle and my equipment. But he just gave me
9 enough money to get out there to get hung, not
10 enough money to get back.

11 MR. MYART: Do you have an affirmative
12 finding?

13 MR. CRUTE: I have an affirmative finding
14 of discrimination with the Office of Civil Rights, I
15 do.

16 MR. MYART: Thank you, Mr. Crute.

17 The next person will be Mr. Water Powell.

18 MR. POWELL: Good afternoon. I'm Walter
19 Powell, from Monroe, Louisiana.

20 I have had several problems with FHA and
21 FSA, whichever way you want to say it, USDA
22 Department of Agriculture. We have people down in

1 Louisiana where they can feel that if they can get
2 you in a bind, they will.

3 And, Mr. Secretary, if I may, you say you
4 want to get rid of some of these problems that
5 you're having within the Department of Agriculture.
6 I can tell you right now the reason why you haven't
7 gotten rid of the problems altogether. Because it
8 has not cost the United States government one single
9 dime. And until it does, you and the rest, all of
10 you, will never do anything.

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. POWELL: But let it cost the
13 government, the government ever have to pay anything
14 out of their pocket for something that their
15 employees are doing, if they stand up behind the
16 employee, be responsible for the employee, then they
17 will get up and do something about it.

18 These people down in Louisiana, they'll
19 tell you quick, oh, it's nothing going to happen.
20 And it's nothing going to happen.

21 I been through a case where the gentleman
22 that caused me to be here today was slapped on the

1 wrist, moved to another office, came back to a local
2 office to where I'm living right now. He's head of
3 that office.

4 MR. MYART: And didn't he sue the
5 government and win?

6 MR. POWELL: Yeah, he sued the government
7 for reverse discrimination and won. I have a suit
8 pending now, which has been for the last five, six
9 years.

10 MR. MYART: Do you have an affirmative
11 finding?

12 MR. POWELL: I have an affirmative
13 finding.

14 MR. MYART: And your case is in court?

15 MR. POWELL: Yes, it is.

16 MR. MYART: And it's just sitting there?

17 MR. POWELL: It's just sitting there
18 collecting dust.

19 I want to ask you something. How do you
20 feel about people in general? I mean do we have a
21 place in life, do farmers have a place in life?
22 Farmers are the backbone of this country.

1 (Applause.)

2 MR. POWELL: There's nothing we can do
3 without the farmers. And black farmers have become
4 an endangered species. They should be at the top of
5 the list, since we are human, aren't we? We are
6 human. We should be at the top of this list of
7 things you're trying to save.

8 MR. MYART: Didn't you attend a meeting a
9 couple weeks ago with the Secretary?

10 MR. POWELL: Yes.

11 MR. MYART: What was your response to that
12 meeting?

13 MR. POWELL: My response to that meeting
14 was the Secretary to my sight looked as though he
15 was touched. But he was only touched through here.

16 Are you right-handed or left-handed?

17 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Both.

18 MR. POWELL: Good, that's even better.
19 Then some of that touchness from your warm heart
20 should have trickled on down the end of your
21 fingers, twist your head one side, and you sign
22 something to help these poor people that's here

1 today.

2 (Applause.)

3 MR. POWELL: It is good to have -- it is
4 good to have these people investigating different
5 places, because God knows it needs it. But that's
6 not helping us at all.

7 Because what you do -- what you're doing
8 is you're killing the people, you're killing all
9 these farmers. They're dying out from the farming
10 industry. Not dying in general, just dying away
11 from the farming industry.

12 Because I myself right now, as I speak to
13 you, have 250 acres of cotton in the field, right
14 now, simply because a gentleman that works for the
15 USDA caused me not to receive not one dime. And
16 he's doing right now everything he can do to keep me
17 from receiving a dime, simply because he don't like
18 the color of my skin.

19 I didn't make myself. God made me. And
20 if he wanted me to be white, I guess he'd have made
21 me that, too. But it wasn't my choice. That was
22 God's choice.

1 So what you need to do is -- I'm not
2 running your business because I can't, but I want to
3 make a suggestion as to what you should do.

4 Look at people as people. Put this out in
5 the field where your field workers can hear this.
6 Because you're a man and I'm a man. You put your
7 pants on one leg at a time just like I do. Look at
8 a man from being a man, not from the color of his
9 skin.

10 MR. MYART: Thank you. Mr. Long.

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. LONG: I want to thank you. This is
13 Walter Long from Dewy Rose, Georgia, the cradle for
14 tombstone building. And we do have two or three
15 farmers left.

16 I went to this county, which is Elk
17 County, bordering the Savannah River. In 1952 we
18 had 324 black farm family units in the county.
19 Today we have two. And one of those is buying his
20 farm back.

21 Now, I've been complaining since 1952,
22 because when I went to state meetings and national

1 meetings and whatnot, I always heard what service
2 the Farmers Home Administration had to provide for
3 local farmers. But when I got back home it was a
4 different story. They weren't talking about us.

5 And when you put in for the service, it
6 was always something wrong. Always something
7 wrong. Farm too large. And if you did, they did
8 receive it, it would take so long to get the money
9 the farmer was too late to plant.

10 In a survey that we had made, it took 128
11 days to process a loan for a black farmer. For a
12 white farmer, it took 73 days. 30 days different
13 and a farm loan processing can make the failure
14 between a success of a crop and a failure. In
15 anybody's book, you can't plant a crop 30 days
16 late.

17 So I'm asking you, and I said that before
18 and I said it before two or three other senators,
19 Senator Leahy and some more ten years ago, unless
20 we're going to provide some ways for this money to
21 be spent right, we don't need to send it, unless
22 you're going to carry it and get it spent right.

1 I've been complaining and we have complained and it
2 gets to Washington and it gets lost.

3 MR. MYART: Mr. Long, do you have an
4 affirmative finding?

5 MR. LONG: Yes, I have.

6 MR. MYART: Are you in court?

7 MR. LONG: They've been on national T.V.
8 with it three times.

9 MR. MYART: Has anything been done?

10 MR. LONG: Nothing.

11 MR. MYART: Is it in court?

12 MR. LONG: It's in court. Yes, it's in
13 court.

14 MR. MYART: Has your attorney informed you
15 that the Office of General Counsel at the Department
16 of Agriculture absolutely refuses to settle your
17 case because it's in court?

18 MR. LONG: That's right.

19 MR. MYART: Okay. Are you a graduate of
20 Tuskegee Institute, Mr. Long?

21 MR. LONG: Graduated.

22 MR. MYART: And what is your degree?

1 MR. LONG: U.S. degree in Agriculture, 30
2 hours, University of Georgia.

3 (Applause.)

4 MR. MYART: Mr. Long, would you tell the
5 Secretary why your wife is not here today?

6 MR. LONG: She suffered a stroke.

7 MR. MYART: She lose her eyesight?

8 MR. LONG: Lost her eyesight.

9 MR. MYART: What about you?

10 MR. LONG: Well, I've had three operations
11 on my right eye, two on my left eye, and I've got to
12 go back again next month.

13 MR. MYART: And what do your doctors say
14 over the last ten years about why your condition is
15 the way it is?

16 MR. LONG: Long periods of stress.

17 MR. MYART: Associated with what? The
18 Department of Agriculture?

19 MR. LONG: Well, I said that.

20 (Laughter.)

21 MR. MYART: Mr. Long, thank you very
22 much.

1 (Applause.)

2 MR. MYART: Now we want to hear, we want
3 to hear from a gentleman who took his life in his
4 hands by getting on an airplane yesterday morning at
5 six a.m. And I'm going to tell you a little story
6 about this.

7 Fifteen years ago, his white neighbor told
8 him, nigger, I'm going to own your land one of these
9 days. The Department of Agriculture discriminated
10 against him, foreclosed on his property, and sold it
11 to his white neighbor. And now the white neighbor
12 owns that nigger's land.

13 The problem is, is that 40 acres of that
14 land belonged to his homestead. And when it was
15 foreclosed upon, Mr. Dunn, and you know exactly
16 about this case, when it was foreclosed upon, the 40
17 acres became landlocked. The white farmer refused
18 for eight years to even allow this man an
19 opportunity to have access to his homestead.

20 MR. BOWIE: I'll agree --

21 MR. MYART: His father -- let me finish,
22 Mr. Bowie.

1 His wife cannot be here today because she
2 has suffered a major nervous breakdown and a stroke,
3 and she was a school teacher. Mr. Boyd himself has
4 suffered several strokes. Their doctors are saying
5 that it's because of the stress that they have had
6 to endure in dealing with the Department of
7 Agriculture since 1981.

8 He has an affirmative finding, Mr.
9 Secretary, and it's still in court. Your lawyers
10 refuse, even with an admission by the Department of
11 Agriculture, to even consider settling his case.

12 Mr. Bowie, would you please stand?

13 MR. BOWIE: I'll agree with what's been
14 just said, because I'm a witness. Also during that
15 time I was working 350 acres cotton and soybeans,
16 wheat. I do well with the cotton, but not the wheat
17 and soybeans.

18 MR. MYART: Mr. Bowie, can you look up?
19 Can you look up at the Secretary over here? Over
20 here, Mr. Bowie.

21 MR. BOWIE: And so I never put -- I never
22 could put it up for my cotton, because each time I

1 go to the ASC office or ask Ms. Garnet for chemicals
2 to spray, she never had any money for spraying.
3 Again still, others was going right ahead. And
4 during that time I had 350 acres of cotton land and
5 soybeans.

6 MR. MYART: Mr. Bowie, would you allow me
7 the liberty of telling the Secretary that in 1981
8 you took part of your crop proceeds from insurance
9 after disaster to pay his suppliers. For eight
10 years thereafter the county supervisor refused to
11 give him a loan because he did not give the proceeds
12 to the USDA. Instead, he paid his crop bills.

13 And for eight long years they called him a
14 crook and would not finance him. Look what it's
15 done to him. Look what it's done to his family. I
16 can't stand to hear him speak.

17 The man is dying and his last wish, Mr.
18 Glickman, his last wish is for you to please give
19 him his land back so that he can be buried on it.

20 Thank you, Mr. Bowie.

21 MR. BOWIE: You're welcome.

22 MR. MYART: Now we'll hear from Mr.

1 Lynwood Brown.

2 MR. BROWN: My name is Lynwood Brown. I'm
3 from Warfield, Virginia, the County of Brunswick.

4 I've been dealing with the USDA Farmers
5 Home Administration since 1980. In 1992, we had 66
6 black farmers in Brunswick County in our area. And
7 at that time was so much problem I went to the state
8 director, and at that time his name was Lloyd Jones,
9 to ask him to come out and to have an
10 investigation.

11 In December the 16th or the 19th, he came
12 out there, a thorough investigation. He talked to
13 USDA employees, he asked himself, Steve Walker, and
14 they found discrimination. They found that we had
15 been mistreated.

16 They found Mr. Feldman in his office
17 asleep. They asked the black farmers, did you see
18 him sleep? They say yes. They asked the USDA white
19 farmers, did they see him sleep? They said no, we
20 didn't see him sleep, but we see him doze every once
21 in a while. And they asked what was the
22 difference? They couldn't answer.

1 In 1990, I asked for farm loans and
2 services, from 1990 to 1995, I think, or '94.
3 Didn't get my response. And at that time they
4 offered me lease-back/buy-back. I got two farms
5 that is the lease-back/buy-back.

6 I received a letter from USDA stating
7 there will be no more lease-back/buy-back at the end
8 of this year, August the 16th, that my farm will be
9 taken. We'll have a hard time in Brunswick County.
10 We only have six active farmers left out of 66.

11 Mr. Secretary, I ask you to look into your
12 findings of discrimination in that county office.
13 They had found discrimination, they had found
14 wrongdoing. There's money been misappropriated,
15 misused.

16 And I asked what's going to be done about
17 it? Only thing they did see, that the county
18 supervisors just mismanaged government money. I
19 think it needs to be looked into.

20 And this is what can help us all, white
21 and black. If everybody pull their handkerchief, a
22 rag out their pocket, and clean up around themself,

1 we can settle this problem real easy, Mr.
2 Secretary.

3 MR. MYART: Thank you, Lynwood.

4 Now because time of is of the essence and
5 I know people are getting tired, I'd like Mr. Robert
6 Williams and his wife to stand up at the
7 microphone. And Mr. Williams, I want you to tell
8 your story.

9 This is the farmer from Roscoe, Texas, and
10 I want you to make it as quick as possible, because
11 the fact of the matter is, is they know your
12 problem. Your case has been presented to the
13 Secretary of Agriculture, not once, not twice, not
14 three times, four times. The Department of
15 Agriculture settled his case twice and reneged
16 twice. Mr. Williams.

17 MR. WILLIAMS: My name is Robert
18 Williams. And good evening, Mr. Secretary and
19 panel.

20 And believe it or not, on my way flying
21 from Austin, Texas, to get to Washington, D.C., I've
22 been here seems like ten times, but everything -- I

1 had some good things that I wanted to say to you and
2 to the staff, but believe it or not, I guess I just
3 run out of words.

4 But I will say this, it's a beautiful
5 thing to be in America today, and I thank God for
6 being here. And farming is a part of my life.

7 (Banner being displayed.)

8 MR. WILLIAMS: I kind of hate to look at
9 that cloth because the day, the morning that I
10 looked at that cloth --

11 MR. MYART: Tell them how -- tell them
12 where it came from, Mr. Williams.

13 MR. WILLIAMS: That was a lot of hurt.
14 That came from Roscoe, Texas. It was hung on my
15 gate. It was kind of a scary moment in my life, but
16 I dealt with it the best that I could. And when I
17 drove --

18 MR. MYART: Tell them what happened.

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. When I drove up that
20 there morning and I saw that sign, I couldn't
21 believe my eyes. Oh, yeah, I saw it on television,
22 but to see it in person and to see it like that, it

1 was a very fearsome thing because, you know, I
2 thought our country had come way beyond that.

3 MR. MYART: Mr. Williams, go ahead and
4 tell them what happened. How many times, how many
5 incidents you been involved in with this?

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Believe it or not, Mr.
7 Secretary, you know, this -- I usually hate to
8 discuss this, because this is a very touching
9 thing.

10 But anyhow, when I got out of my old truck
11 that morning and saw KKK, nigger go home, and walked
12 up to my gate and went to put the key in, it was
13 glue in my lock. That was kind of a scary moment in
14 my life, because it was two miles from my farm to
15 that road.

16 I walked back to the truck, got in the
17 truck, went to leave. But I got out, and I took a
18 pair of bolt cutters and cut the lock. And when I
19 cut the lock, something in my heart said don't go
20 down that lane.

21 But something else touched me and I'll
22 never forget it. I'm a firm believer in what the

1 Bible says. If I'm with you, who can be against
2 you?

3 And I put a .357 magnum and a .270 magnum
4 deer rifle in my hand and I went down that road, Mr.
5 Clinton. And I went down that road because I was
6 willing to die for that.

7 See, I didn't ask to get into it. They
8 come got me when I was hoeing cotton, said we got
9 your farm. We're going to put you -- we got you a
10 nice farm. They put me there.

11 MR. MYART: Who is "we" now?

12 MR. WILLIAMS: I'm speaking of the county
13 office in Nolan County. And I went and it was the
14 biggest moment in my life, probably the happiest
15 moment in my life for me.

16 My mama always told me, when I was a
17 little boy, said I always told her I was going to
18 own a farm. And when this was presented to me, you
19 know, it was a happy moment in my life.

20 But I didn't know -- you know, I asked --
21 my wife asked me, said if you really knew what was
22 mind it, would you have took it? Knowing me, I

1 said, yeah, I would, because it was a dream to me.

2 MR. MYART: What else happened, Mr.
3 Williams? We got to get going. What happened with
4 your dogs?

5 MR. WILLIAMS: The day I drove up there, I
6 had three old dogs. They were shot. And the bullet
7 shotgun -- 12-gauge shotgun shell was laying down
8 beside of them.

9 But you know, I got to cut this short,
10 because --

11 MR. MYART: What did Mr. Cummings, the
12 county supervisor, tell you about loaning you money,
13 Mr. Williams?

14 MR. WILLIAMS: I never forget a penny of
15 what he told me. I was asking for two truckloads of
16 dirt to put in my holes in my road.

17 He said if it costs you one penny, one
18 penny, I wouldn't let you have one penny to have
19 that road fixed, to get to my farm. And my reply
20 was to him, why? And he said I just wouldn't.

21 And I said, thank you, sir, but I say I
22 got one thing to tell you. One day, Mr. Cummings,

1 you will get to see that road be fixed. And he
2 looked at me and say I don't think so. And I walked
3 out his office.

4 MR. MYART: And what did he tell the white
5 farmers about your problems?

6 MR. WILLIAMS: I don't know, James. I'll
7 let my wife talk. This is very touching.

8 I'm not here to try to impress nobody.
9 But I say this much, this is a sad day to be in
10 America, to know that black people for something
11 that my ancestors went in 1800 and built this land,
12 we should have the right to be very recognized of
13 black farmers in this country.

14 MR. MYART: Did the government settle your
15 case on August 27th, 1993?

16 MR. WILLIAMS: Never, no.

17 MR. MYART: No, listen to me. Did the
18 government settle your case on August 27th, 1993, in
19 San Antonio, Texas?

20 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, they did.

21 MR. MYART: Who was there for the
22 government?

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Mr. Carlton Lewis.

2 MR. MYART: And who else from the
3 Secretary's office? Weren't there other people?

4 MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Myart --

5 MR. MYART: I'm going to finish this.

6 MR. JOHNSON: We have a whole group.

7 MR. MYART: That's right, but you're going
8 to hear it, because you never heard it before. So
9 please don't interrupt me.

10 (Applause.)

11 MR. MYART: Mr. Williams, did they settle
12 your case in San Antonio?

13 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, they did.

14 MR. MYART: And what happened four days
15 later? What happened the next day? What did Mr.
16 Lewis say to you?

17 MR. WILLIAMS: They --

18 MR. MYART: Help him out, Laverne. What
19 did he say?

20 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. Mr. Lewis had told
21 us that the government had did wrong and that we're
22 not going to discuss what hire or any of those

1 matters. We're just going to try to make a wrong
2 right. He said we want you guys to get out there,
3 farm, to do a good job, because we're going to make
4 you the model.

5 MR. MYART: Black farmer in this country?

6 MS. WILLIAMS: That's right.

7 MR. MYART: And what happened when he came
8 back to Washington?

9 MS. WILLIAMS: When he got back to
10 Washington, we found out through Mr. Myart that the
11 government said that he had no right to do that.

12 MR. MYART: And wasn't he on the phone,
13 wasn't he on the phone with Washington, every hour
14 on the hour, where we spent ten hours negotiating
15 that settlement?

16 MS. WILLIAMS: That's true.

17 MR. MYART: Mr. Dunn, please take note,
18 because you were the Administrator at the time.
19 Mrs. Longinoe, wherever you are, you know what you
20 did.

21 Did you settle it a second time?

22 MS. WILLIAMS: No.

1 MR. MYART: No, listen to my question.
2 Did the government settle your case a second time
3 here in Washington?

4 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes, they did.

5 MR. MYART: Through what, early neutral
6 evaluation and mediation?

7 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. There was a Mr. --

8 MR. MYART: Balm?

9 MS. WILLIAMS: -- Choosey.

10 MR. MYART: Choosey and Balm.

11 MS. WILLIAMS: Choosey and Balm.

12 MR. MYART: Did the government shake hands
13 with you on that day?

14 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

15 MR. MYART: And what did they say?

16 MS. WILLIAMS: Mr. Balm said on that day,
17 okay, he was a retired federal judge or lawyer, but
18 he said to us and he said to all the people that
19 were present at the meeting, y'all have put these
20 people through enough.

21 MR. MYART: What did your Congressman
22 Stenholm do?

1 MS. WILLIAMS: He said it's time for us to
2 go on and let these people go on with their lives.
3 He shook hands. The USDA had representatives there,
4 they shook hands with us --

5 MR. MYART: Do you remember that, Mr.
6 Dunn, Mr. Mike Dunn?

7 MS. WILLIAMS: -- in good faith. Then I
8 came back -- I went home. And then they called and
9 said that they reneged again. Two days later I had
10 a heart attack.

11 MR. MYART: And Mr. Gilliman went on a
12 hunting trip, didn't he --

13 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

14 MR. MYART: -- before he gave the
15 recommendation to Mr. Espy, did he not?

16 MS. WILLIAMS: That's correct.

17 MR. MYART: Okay. And it never got
18 signed, did it?

19 MS. WILLIAMS: That's correct.

20 MR. MYART: And Mr. Rominger refused to
21 sign it, didn't he?

22 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

1 MR. MYART: The assistant Secretary.

2 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

3 MR. MYART: And then what did Congressman
4 Stenholm tell the people at USDA?

5 MS. WILLIAMS: He said that if they
6 settled that case and they paid, if you pay those,
7 and I hate the word and I'll say the N word, if you
8 pay them that amount of money, those white boys back
9 there in my district are going to be upset with me.

10 MR. MYART: And did you get paid?

11 MS. WILLIAMS: No.

12 MR. MYART: And as a matter of fact wasn't
13 there a reinvestigation ordered by Mr. Glickman of
14 your case?

15 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes, it was.

16 MR. MYART: And it took six more months,
17 didn't it?

18 MS. WILLIAMS: And then the same people
19 that found discrimination --

20 MR. MYART: Found that it wasn't any
21 discrimination?

22 MS. WILLIAMS: Then they turned around and

1 they said there wasn't, very conveniently, any
2 discrimination.

3 MR. MYART: This is the United States of
4 America.

5 MS. WILLIAMS: James, I have to say
6 something. This is not about money. This did not
7 start off of, my husband and I, about money.

8 This started off, we went through all the
9 right channels. We went to our county supervisor,
10 we tried to work with him. We left there, we went
11 to the state. We worked with them.

12 And we had someone working with us at that
13 time which was Mr. Stenholm's aide, that said to us,
14 if I was in your shoes, I would carry this thing on,
15 because you have been discriminated against.

16 MR. MYART: And what did your Congressman
17 do?

18 MS. WILLIAMS: But I have to stop here.

19 MR. MYART: The Congressman turned around
20 and stabbed you in the back, didn't he? Didn't he?

21 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

22 MR. MYART: Okay. I want to ask one final

1 question. Mr. Williams, tell us about the locks on
2 your gates.

3 MR. WILLIAMS: Well, they had -- they had
4 super glue in them.

5 MR. MYART: And why do you think that
6 happened, over and over? Tell them. And your
7 daughter is going to give those locks to the
8 Secretary.

9 MR. WILLIAMS: They had super glue in them
10 because it was a message that they was telling me,
11 Mr. Glickman, that to get out. But I was determined
12 to stay.

13 And with the law to help, Mr. Glickman,
14 I'm still there, and I'm still going down that old
15 bumpy road. But I never gave up hope, because I
16 know it's a very important thing to keep hope
17 alive. That's the only way out of this.

18 But I not only here today speaking for
19 Robert Williams, I'm speaking for all black farmers,
20 for all black kids growing up in this new technology
21 environment, one day if they want to grow up to be a
22 farmer, and I think that is a very bright thing for

1 all black people. And things that I want to really
2 say, I guess they just -- I can't say them because I
3 feel a failure in my United States government. And
4 at this time I rest my case.

5 MR. MYART: Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. James, I have one
8 more thing to say to Mr. Secretary. And this is for
9 all the black farmers and this is coming from my
10 heart, the way I feel about the whole situation.

11 Texaco, and we all know about that, they
12 found discrimination within their organization. And
13 they got it resolved or they're working on it.
14 Stanley Morris, I believe, they found discrimination
15 within that organization, and they're getting it
16 resolved.

17 This is our government, this is the head
18 of our country. Now if those organizations can get
19 together and resolve the problems, our government --
20 this is the last stop for us. When we leave from
21 leer, we don't have anywhere else to go.

22 And if you guys can't get together and all

1 these black guys, the young lady that's sitting
2 there, I'm proud to see you sitting there. I'm
3 proud to see those people at Texaco, all the blacks
4 there. See, that just happened the other day.
5 There has been a time that you wouldn't have been
6 sitting there. Texaco was not hiring any blacks,
7 okay.

8 These farmers have been around forever.
9 There's a lot of pain, there's a lot of hurt in this
10 one little room. It's time to do something.

11 MR. MYART: Thank you, Ms. Williams.

12 Mr. Boyd, do you want to have something to
13 say?

14 MR. JOHNSON: Let's try to wrap it up and
15 take a break here.

16 MR. MYART: I just say --

17 MR. JOHNSON: Hold on one second, James.
18 Mr. Secretary?

19 MR. BOYD: Please look at these farmers
20 and take to the heart of where we're coming from
21 today. You are the only people that has the power
22 to change for the future.

1 President Clinton talking about crossing
2 that bridge into the 21st century, we want to cross
3 it with you. We want to help you. We want to sit
4 down and talk to you and help you resolve all these
5 cases.

6 They don't have to be in Federal Court.
7 We don't have to keep coming before you, trying to
8 embarrass you. This is not what I want to do. We
9 want you to take to the heart where we're coming
10 from today and let's sit down and resolve these damn
11 issues. Give me a hand.

12 (Applause.)

13 MR. MYART: I'm going to conclude right
14 now. Then other people can talk.

15 Mr. Secretary, now, I've heard what you
16 have said, I really have. And Mr. Mendelson
17 believes in you. Both he and I are members of the
18 National Black and Jewish Dialogue. And all of us
19 have been through a lot of pain, a lot of pain,
20 blacks, other minorities and Jewish people alike.

21 And now you are in a position of power to
22 right those wrongs. And we are prevailing upon your

1 moral and spiritual commitment to God and to
2 humanity to do this.

3 Now, having said that, the National Black
4 Farmers Association gave you a list of eleven
5 demands which you have. I've sent Mr. Thomas
6 Monterey I know two of threes copies of it. I've
7 given it to Wardell Townsend, I've given it to
8 Dallas Smith, I've given it to just about everybody
9 you've got here.

10 We would like Mr. Pearlie Reed's task
11 force to adopt those eleven issues and make his
12 recommendations with regard to them, Mr. Secretary.
13 Will you agree with that?

14 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: I'll say something
15 once you're finished.

16 MR. MYART: Okay. But make a note so you
17 can come back, because you're a lawyer and you know
18 you got to make notes about what you're going to
19 commit to, okay.

20 (Laughter.)

21 MR. MYART: The second thing is --

22 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Some of us lawyers

1 can remember, we don't have to make any notes.

2 MR. MYART: Okay. Second thing is, is we
3 would like for you today to state today whether or
4 not you will allow the five members of the executive
5 board of the National Black Farmers Association to
6 sit as a group to help write the recommendations
7 that Mr. Pearlie Reed is to make to you on February
8 the 7th.

9 All we want to do is help, sir. We want
10 to join with our brothers and sisters on this
11 committee, as illustrious as they are, and sit down
12 with you and give them the reinvention of the small
13 family farm and help them make their
14 recommendations. We'd like for you to address that
15 when you make your address to me and the rest of
16 these people in a minute.

17 Thirdly, we would like for you to seek
18 from Mr. William Jefferson Clinton an opportunity
19 for you and he to make a national policy statement
20 within 30 days, with you standing by his side, at
21 the White House, in the Rose Garden.

22 (Laughter.)

1 MR. MYART: Making a statement about the
2 reinvention of the small family farm crossing over
3 the bridge with everybody else to the 21st century.
4 Now we'd like for you to make that commitment to
5 call the President after Mr. Reed has given and all
6 these people have given you the recommendations.
7 It's a win/win for everybody. Mr. Secretary, I'd
8 like for you to address that request.

9 Now, I think the President is willing to
10 meet with us now, and I think that you as a very
11 powerful, sensitive human being, can call up, maybe
12 not on the red phone but at least on one phone, and
13 say, Mr. President, I heard an emotional appeal
14 today, and, sir, can I come over and talk with you
15 about it? Because I realize you got to go through
16 the cabinet's office to do it, but it can be done.

17 Finally, I want to say that Ms. Janet
18 Potts, who's a Confidential Assistant to the
19 Secretary, made some very serious comments at a
20 meeting with Mr. John Boyd. She made a statement,
21 according to Mr. Boyd, and it's by affidavit, that
22 they had ten cubic feet of complaints gathering dust

1 that were as old as fifteen years at the Department
2 of Agriculture.

3 She made that statement. It's in Federal
4 Court. Mr. Boyd has signed an affidavit to that
5 effect. Now Ms. Potts responded in court as well
6 with her affidavit by saying, oh, oh, I didn't say
7 that, I didn't say that. Those were really employee
8 complaints.

9 Now, you know what the problem with that
10 is? That's the kind of question you know, that you
11 ask people, when did you stop beating your wife?
12 Because it's liability no matter which way you say.

13 And I want the employees, black, white,
14 brown, minority, white, at the Department of
15 Agriculture, to understand that today Mr. Boyd said
16 to me, Mr. Myart, I want you to tell Mr. Glickman
17 that the National Black Farmers Association is
18 joining with the employees of the United States
19 Department of Agriculture to show solidarity.

20 And I'm going to give to Mr. Lucas the
21 affidavits that contain the admissions that there
22 are hundreds, ten cubic feet, of employee complaints

1 that have not been dealt with by the Department of
2 Agriculture. And I will tell you, this is a legal
3 document, it's an admission by Janet Potts, the
4 person we believe, frankly, Mr. Secretary, who's
5 been standing in your way as it relates to all these
6 problems.

7 (Applause.)

8 MR. MYART: Now, we want -- now I'm not
9 going to make that demand. You have to deal with
10 that. You have the affidavits. If you want to keep
11 Ms. Potts, fine. We can't tell you to get rid of
12 her.

13 But she -- you know, I was in a public
14 official's office and I'm not going to tell you who
15 it was, but I saw a note on his desk, a little
16 yellow pad. And I've met with 45 of your officials
17 so you'll never figure out who it is. I saw the
18 name of Janet Potts scribbled on his pad, and right
19 next to it had a dash, meddling in the problem.

20 Now if you got black employees and white
21 employees who are willing to scribble as they're
22 talking to you on the phone that Janet Potts is

1 causing problems and meddling in on what's going on,
2 then, sir, I would suggest to you that where there's
3 smoke, there's fire. And you need to deal with
4 Janet Potts, because she's a problem.

5 MR. JOHNSON: James --

6 MR. MYART: Now I'd like for you -- she's
7 a big problem. Now I'd like for you to address the
8 four demands made by the National Black Farmers
9 Association.

10 And all of you employees, we want you to
11 know that all these black farmers and
12 Mexican-American farmers and female farmers, we feel
13 for you. Because we know that y'all have been
14 degraded, oppressed, suppressed, and told if you
15 open your mouth you'll lose your government
16 pension. Sir, that's not fair, that's not fair at
17 all.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Let's let the Secretary
19 respond for a few minutes. We'll then take a
20 ten-minute break. And then I'd like you all to know
21 that we will stay as long as it takes to hear
22 everybody on the schedule. And we'll get back to

1 the schedule right after the break.

2 So, Mr. Secretary.

3 (Applause.)

4 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Okay. Why don't --
5 if you don't mind, would you mind, so I can see you
6 when I talk to you down there?

7 (Laughter.)

8 MR. MYART: Yes, sir.

9 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Well, first of all,
10 this is one of the most unusual experiences I've
11 been through in my life, I would have to say, Mr.
12 Meyers.

13 (Applause.)

14 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: But let me just make
15 a couple quick points. And, frankly, our job here
16 is to listen and not respond. Because this group in
17 front of us, I have deputized Mr. Reed and others to
18 have great authority to try to make recommendations
19 which deal and correct with a lot of these
20 problems.

21 And I know that there have been people who
22 have been frustrated with the delays after they

1 first talk to me, but we determined that to have a
2 senior level group of people across mission areas
3 who would be tasked by listening and making an
4 objective review of all the problems, both those
5 that Mr. Boyd and others have made today and others
6 as well, so that I can come up with a comprehensive
7 solution, not just one piece of it.

8 I mean I do know that the heart of what
9 was talked about here was settling individual
10 claims, and that has to be a part of consideration.
11 But so must be other matters that are here as well.
12 So we chose to deal with this comprehensively, to
13 listen and come up with constructive ways to deal
14 with it. That's what we're doing today.

15 You know, the eleven, whether you call
16 them demands or other points of view, are part of
17 this record. And, Mr. Meyers, I don't want to get
18 in an argument with you. You had 35 minutes to
19 talk. Let me finish, and then we can talk
20 afterwards. Because I think that would be most
21 productive for both of us.

22 MR. MYART: Will you meet with the board

1 after this?

2 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Pardon?

3 MR. MYART: Will you meet with the board?

4 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Well, I have a
5 meeting right now with the rest of the people, but
6 you know, I'll be glad to talk with you for a few
7 minutes. Okay.

8 (Applause.)

9 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Let me just say a
10 couple things. The demands or concerns or requests,
11 or whatever we call them, will be considered by this
12 task force. There are hundreds and hundreds of
13 people who have experienced personal grief and
14 hardship and they have an opportunity to express
15 those demands.

16 Under the rules of the government of the
17 United States, federal employees are the ones who
18 work for this government and sit on this task
19 force. And that's what, you know, we are going to
20 do to try to deal with this situation.

21 So and the other thing is I want to assure
22 you that in terms of the President and other people

1 in the administration, they're well aware of this
2 problem. I've talked to the President myself about
3 this problem and the Vice President and others as
4 well.

5 So they want us to get to the bottom of it
6 and solve it, not only for those who have been
7 harmed but also to deal with opportunities so we can
8 resubmit that we can make Agriculture thriving for
9 all farmers in the future, white farmers, black
10 farmers, Hispanic farmers, Native American farmers,
11 women farmers and farmers of every color and stripe
12 in this country.

13 That's our goal. Because the person who
14 said the production of food and fiber is the heart
15 of America is correct. That's the strength that
16 this country is coming through.

17 Now, I don't think it's particularly good
18 to get into ad hominem, individual names attacking
19 people. Because my judgment is that you can win a
20 lot more with lemonade than you can with lemons.
21 And so, Mr. Myart, we're going to do our best to
22 solve this problem. That's why we're here.

1 MR. MYART: It's already tasting sweet,
2 Mr. Secretary.

3 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Okay. Thank you
4 all. Let's take our break right now.

5 (A recess was taken.)

6 MR. JOHNSON: As many of you know, we
7 scheduled this to be done around four. We obviously
8 are not going to be able to make that but we'll stay
9 as long as we can and hear as many as we can.

10 And those of you who are going to present,
11 we would really appreciate if you stay as close to
12 your five minutes or within it, if you can say it in
13 two, please do so. It's not that we don't want to
14 hear you, it's just we're going to do our best to
15 get as many people on this afternoon as possible.

16 The next person on my list is Clinton
17 Howland. Clinton, are you here somewhere? Okay.
18 And then the person after that, Sharon Harris.
19 Sharon, are you -- if you'll be ready after
20 Clinton. But go ahead, Clinton.

21 MR. HOWLAND: Mr. Glickman, staff, I'm
22 Clinton Howland of southern Prince George's County,

1 a tobacco farmer. I have a small farm down there.

2 Back in the early '80s, I had bad drugs
3 which destroyed most of my crop. Didn't save any
4 crops at all and fell behind in my payments.

5 Well, I went to FHA at the time to ask
6 what could be -- what could I do to try to catch up
7 some of these, what kind of agreement could be
8 worked out. Well, it wasn't much we could do,
9 because I was three years behind, going on four.

10 But anyway, not to take up much time, they
11 came to me later on -- they changed agents down
12 there. He came and he said, Clinton, I have a plan
13 I believe can help you and we can get out of this.
14 He said we can go into a lease-back/buy-back
15 program.

16 So I went into the lease-back/buy-back
17 program with him, conveyed over to the FHA and got
18 all of my deficits cleared away and whatnot,
19 reclaimed my equipment, made payments on it and
20 everything.

21 Back this year in April, I think it was, I
22 went down and met with the state agent to try to

1 start to buy the place back. When I walked in, he
2 said, Clinton, I'm glad you met me here today. He
3 said I have something that we have to talk over.

4 When I got in, he told me, he said we can
5 no longer help you. I said you can't any longer
6 help me? I said what's the cause? He said under
7 the new farm plan, you've been written out. He said
8 anyone that has had the deficits, I forget what you
9 call it, but anyway --

10 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: The debt write-down.

11 MR. HOWLAND: Right. He said we can no
12 longer help them. Well, I'm quite sure that the
13 gentleman over here that was talking about he had
14 two farms into lease-back/buy-back and would lose
15 them both, heard the same thing.

16 I had been asking when can we start the
17 buy back and the answers to me were we don't have
18 the funds yet. All along I've been told we could be
19 a credit sale. But when I got to the office, I was
20 told that they could no longer help me.

21 I had to go to an outside supplier in
22 order to get money if I wanted to purchase the place.

1 back, because there was nothing in the contract that
2 says that they had to make me a loan. There might
3 not have been nothing in there that said that they
4 had to make it, but they sure did promise me help
5 and promise me that I was eligible for a credit sale
6 when the funds came in. And I have that in
7 writing.

8 What I would like to know is how can you
9 have a contract expanding over five years for a
10 lease-back/buy-back that you have an option to buy
11 any time you get ready, and you go in and you've
12 been dropped like that?

13 It's kind of confusing to me because it
14 looked like to me for the people that's already
15 within the system or something like that, it should
16 have been a grandfather's clause or a limit time for
17 someone being into that program with that and they
18 should have had opportunities to exert the rights
19 that were given them when they received that
20 contract. And it's very confusing to me.

21 And, Mr. Secretary, I would appreciate
22 very much if you would look into this matter and

1 check, because it's something that I'm quite sure
2 I'm not the only farmer in this situation. In my
3 area, as far as I know, I'm the only one, but I just
4 heard one farmer from Virginia over there say he's
5 losing two farms from the same situation. And
6 that's my case that I had to state before you
7 today.

8 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: What I would suggest
9 is I would like, Grant, somebody from your office to
10 talk to him today, if possible, the Farm Service
11 Agency.

12 Let me just tell you, the '96 Farm Bill,
13 Congress changed the law. And they did something
14 that we opposed, which is, just putting it simply,
15 if you ever had any debt restructuring in the past
16 or write-downs, that you would no longer qualify for
17 a lot of loans from the Department. And that was in
18 the 1996 Farm Bill. And there were a lot of folks
19 that got caught up in that.

20 We think it was a very bad idea. In fact
21 we're going to recommend changes as part of our
22 budget message. But you may or may not be caught in

1 that situation.

2 What I would like you to do before you
3 leave is -- I don't know who at FSA he ought to talk
4 to, but before you leave today, we ought to have
5 somebody talk to you about your particular case.

6 MR. BUNTROCK: Someone here from Farm
7 Service Agency will talk to one of our area offices,
8 if you just leave your name.

9 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Let's have them talk,
10 I want them do it right afterwards so they don't
11 lose him.

12 MR. BUNTROCK: Is Carolyn here?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We'll talk to him.

14 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Okay. Would you do
15 that? See what we can do about it, if there is
16 anything. There may not be, because it may be the
17 law that has to be reamended, but we'll see.

18 MR. HOWLAND: All right. Thank you very
19 much for your time. Thank you for allowing me to
20 speak today.

21 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

1 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Clinton.

2 Sharon Harris, is Sharon here?

3 MS. HARRIS: I'm not a customer, I'm a
4 USDA employee. I'm Sharon Harris.

5 I think that my name being added to the
6 list was because of the thorough effort of the staff
7 to try to get some individuals that I hope to give
8 an opportunity to speak today. My name was kind of
9 thrown in there in their effort to make sure I got
10 -- that the people that had expressed an interest
11 in commenting today were able to.

12 So I am the Small Business Program
13 Director here and my effort is to ensure that there
14 is sufficient inclusion for minorities and women
15 among the small businesses.

16 And I'd like to now give it to some of the
17 small businesses that I know are present who'd like
18 to say something, if that's fine with the group for
19 just a few minutes. And they'll take my five
20 minutes. Ralph Moore.

21 MR. MOORE: And I signed up about eleven
22 o'clock, so I should be pretty high on that list.

1 Again, my name's Ralph Moore. I'm
2 President of RGMA, consulting firm out of Chicago.
3 We've been in business 18 years.

4 Our specialty -- we're in the 8(a)
5 program. We have a variety of private corporations
6 as well as -- private clients as well as government
7 clients in the area of strategic planning, minority
8 business development, as well as information
9 systems.

10 And there's been -- and again this has
11 been a pretty profound morning so some of my
12 comments are no longer relevant. But I do want to
13 thank you for this opportunity. And we all know how
14 important USDA is. And one of the -- some of the
15 things that we heard about here have been very, very
16 important.

17 And I was here -- I came back today from
18 Chicago. I was here for the inauguration. I had my
19 ten-year-old daughter in my lap while we sat and
20 listened to the President.

21 It was very important for me to bring her
22 to hear the process. I wish I had her here today so

1 she could hear another part of the process, because
2 I think this is also very important. But the
3 President's comment on this land of new promise, I
4 think it's within that spirit of new promise that
5 that's why I'm here today.

6 And USDA, I did a little research, was
7 founded in 1862. In 1862, your mission and your
8 mission areas did not include me or people of
9 color. It included rural areas, included the farm,
10 but it did not include my people.

11 And I won't go through what we just went
12 through today, but certainly even in the last 10 to
13 15 years, the increase in utilization of minority
14 businesses has been again through the work of people
15 like Sharon Harris and some dedicated employees
16 where there's been a significant increase in the
17 number of minority professional firms that have
18 worked with USDA, mainly in Washington, D.C.

19 But the challenge becomes how do we get
20 USDA to integrate the utilization of minority
21 contractors throughout the mission of USDA, within
22 all of the seven mission areas, domestically and

1 internationally.

2 And I think the key here is and part of
3 what we heard today, USDA is 135 years old, we have
4 to change the culture. It's going to take more than
5 a couple sessions like this, more than a few 8(a)
6 contracts. You have to change your approach.

7 And, Mr. Secretary, you're going to have
8 to lead the charge. People are going to look to you
9 and see is this important or is it not important.

10 We've consulted with several fortune 100
11 companies. When the CEO stands up and says this is
12 important to me and those who don't do it like I
13 want it done, you will not be here next year this
14 time, it gets done.

15 And the reason can't be a set-aside or a
16 compliance reason. You cannot fulfill the mission
17 of USDA without having minority partnerships,
18 without having us at the table. Not just on Black
19 History Month, not just twice a year.

20 We have to be involved in every mission
21 area of the Agency as a matter of policy, because
22 your mission cannot be achieved unless we are at the

1 table. I'm talking about farmers, businesses,
2 researchers, the HBCUs, the bankers, employees.

3 We have to be at the table when the plans
4 are being made, not just after the plans are being
5 implemented. We have be throughout the whole fiber
6 of the Agency.

7 The other issue, and don't fall into the
8 mistake that SBA made by setting up a separate
9 area. That will find -- you'll probably get anemic
10 funding and even less senior staff support.

11 And I see I have one minute here. Let me
12 just make some quick recommendations. You need to
13 convene a Minority Partnership Action Team, that's
14 standing, not just once a year or not some special
15 project. And look at and develop a USDA minority
16 partnership strategy model that you can roll out
17 throughout the Agency.

18 And the first thing you must state is
19 what's the rationale for this. And it's not a
20 compliance rationale. It's so we can fulfill our
21 mission.

22 You must also identify who are the key

1 stakeholders. It goes beyond customers. It goes to
2 all of the field offices and the farmers
3 themselves. You must also create a resource tool
4 kit so your employees will be able to have a
5 three-ring notebook at their disposal and some
6 training on how to roll out this new strategy.

7 Again, you're trying to change the
8 culture. It's going to take more than a couple
9 sessions like this. You have to give them some
10 opportunity to do that.

11 And you also must demonstrate to the
12 country that USDA becomes a primary catalyst for
13 integrating high impact, innovative, minority
14 partnership strategies within rural economic
15 development. It's critical that we again bring
16 these people to the table in a strategy.

17 And you also must have a town meeting or
18 some kind of communique at the end of this process
19 to communicate the progress so there's an ongoing
20 success story.

21 And my final point, and I took my daughter
22 to the U.S. History Museum and they have a project

1 over there, From Fields to Factory, and she was very
2 surprised and also very proud to know that her
3 grandfather was a part of the farming community back
4 in the early 1900s.

5 And what greater place than USDA for
6 minority businesses and minority organizations to
7 come back and look for opportunity. That's
8 opportunity that the President spoke to.

9 USDA, we are natural partners with USDA in
10 the agricultural community. So this would be a
11 great place to set a model for the rest of
12 government on the importance of minority
13 partnerships as relates to fulfilling your mission,
14 more so than just complying with some civil rights
15 initiative.

16 Thank you very much.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Ralph.

18 The next speaker on my list is Lucy
19 Burch. Lucy, are you still here? And then after
20 Lucy, Winston Monk.

21 MS. BURCH: Good afternoon. My name is
22 Lucy Burch and I come from Washington County, New

1 York, where I'm a dairy farmer.

2 Ironically, I received this invitation to
3 come here and interact with a team as I was
4 compiling my letter to the Secretary of Agriculture
5 regarding discrimination against myself personally
6 and also against my family farm.

7 Our farm is at risk of going out of
8 business. This dilemma was created by a bank that
9 not only deceived us and frauded the U.S.
10 government, but was further perpetrated by agents of
11 the Farm Service Agency who did not do their job.

12 Instead of the spirit that a job well done
13 benefits all, our local office believes until
14 someone tells them to do something they will do
15 nothing. It has been said of our local FSA office
16 that the only consistency in this office is the
17 inconsistency with which they perform.

18 Here in Washington County, New York, we
19 farmers are poorly represented by those
20 administering farm loan programs through USDA. In
21 fact, our acting supervisor has been absent from his
22 job since June of 1996 and is still absent as we

1 speak. It probably doesn't matter whether this
2 person is on the job or not, because it was more
3 common for him to refuse an application or
4 discourage an applicant than to help.

5 In regards to our own situation, our state
6 office told us that in '92 we should have forced
7 this agent to take our application, which he refused
8 because it might reflect poorly on his handling of
9 the guaranteed loan. In '93, he refused an
10 application for emergency assistance, even though
11 the FCS had made a determination we were eligible.

12 In '94, he said we were not eligible for
13 disaster assistance because we were not delinquent.
14 In '95, our application for loan preservation or
15 restructuring was never acted on, period.

16 And when we finally traced it down in '96,
17 Syracuse said it arrived too late. It didn't. They
18 said it was incomplete. It wasn't. They said we
19 should have requested a meeting. We had a meeting.

20 And now in '97, the credit manager says
21 now that you have filed for reorganization, this
22 entire loan preservation process will be reopened to

1 you.

2 We were denied our right to appeal because
3 we were never given an answer in '95. How are we
4 supposed to be assured that the same thing that has
5 happened in '92, 3, 4 and 5 will not happen again in
6 '97? In case someone hasn't noticed, we are about
7 out of time.

8 I ask who is overseeing our needs?
9 Syracuse? Syracuse is a top-heavy office filled
10 with administrative personnel who do not have a clue
11 about what is going on in our local level.

12 If they generate a report that is
13 incorrect, they say this is only words. It did not
14 have anything do with the final decisions made
15 regarding your account. Rather than doing what it
16 takes to make it right.

17 Our state personnel write reports,
18 uninformed, erroneous, often frivolous narratives,
19 more concerned in 1996 whether in 1985 I was single,
20 separated or divorced, instead of this loan was
21 originally made to Lucy Burch, farm background,
22 graduated land grant university, member Alpha Beta

1 fraternity, and member of the Dean's Advisory Board
2 for the American College of Agriculture. I question
3 if other minorities are still pointed out in these
4 narratives to be John Doe, black, or Mary Roe,
5 Jewish.

6 I have always wanted to farm but I also
7 wanted to be successful as a farmer. I felt hard
8 work and communication with one's lender was
9 paramount to success.

10 I frequently presented updates about our
11 farm and sought to talk about the good and the bad
12 on our farm. I was trying to create a team for the
13 betterment of our operation. After a while, I was
14 told don't do this. No one else does.

15 I always presented numerous financial
16 documents, including our farm plan, but in '94 and
17 '95 I was labeled uncooperative for failure to
18 complete my farm plan when the local vacuum cleaner
19 salesman and another data compiler, who did not get
20 out of his real job until four p.m., would call
21 desiring to do a plan on his way home, at this hour
22 of the day when our farm with 300 cows, 200 heifers

1 and seven kids, even though the plan had already
2 been submitted.

3 Until we had to fight for our farm, we
4 were unaware of a narrative written in 1996 by the
5 credit manager. In this two-page document, there
6 were two correct sentences. It sounded more like we
7 lived on a 70-cow farm seven miles away and were
8 always unable to pay our bills. But remember, this
9 is only words. It has no effect on the final
10 determination regarding our operation.

11 The credit manager continued that she did
12 not know if the farm was abandoned, if we lived on
13 the farm, or what our occupation was. This
14 narrative was the basis of all informed decisions
15 regarding our operation in 1996.

16 Our local office has done nothing to keep
17 the farmers farming, nor to get the next generation
18 started. Our state office just checks that box that
19 inquires if everything that could have been done has
20 been done, without any knowledge if this is so.

21 Here in rural New York we are a minority.
22 We are discriminated against and our farms put at

1 risk not because of our inability to farm, but
2 because the agenda of the Farm Service Agency does
3 not include team work, motivation and
4 communication.

5 This is not to say that everyone that
6 works for USDA in Washington County does not do
7 their job. Our former FCS office, the office of
8 David Holt, worked very hard at informing and
9 serving the needs of their farmers, as does the
10 NRCS, who deals with the present and are innovative
11 with the future.

12 But these two agencies cannot keep the
13 farms operating when it is the actions and lack
14 thereof of their brother, the one who controls the
15 purse strings, for he will determine the destiny of
16 agriculture in Washington County, New York.

17 Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Lucy.

20 Winston Monk is next, followed by Ardell
21 Ruiz.

22 MR. MONK: Good afternoon, everyone. My

1 name is Winston Monk. I am from the Eastern Shore
2 of Maryland, a director of the Delmarva Contract
3 Poultry Growers Association.

4 I think most of you are aware of problems
5 we have in that industry, although no one has said
6 what they're going to do about it.

7 First thing I'd like do is thank the black
8 farmers of America for saying that enough is
9 enough. However, I don't -- I agree with whoever
10 said nothing will happen until somebody begins to
11 hurt in federal government.

12 A few months ago, I traveled to Sanford,
13 North Carolina, to a Listening Session, the Packers
14 and Stockyards Administration of USDA, with some 200
15 other poultry farmers.

16 After the head of that Department and
17 several of the other top people listened to all the
18 things that we had to say, we were told then that in
19 some of these instances there is nothing we can do;
20 in some of these instances there are things that we
21 can do that will take some time; but in some of the
22 instances there are some things we can do right now,

1 and we are going do them.

2 No one has heard from them since. And I
3 am not naive enough to believe that because Mr.
4 Glickman has this office now that he will be allowed
5 to do very much about the problems we have here.

6 Some people would say that I'm cynical. I
7 would say I've got hundreds of years of history on
8 my side. If anything substantial happens for black
9 farmers, it will be because we have found a way to
10 make it hurt. And I suggest that we begin to do
11 that rather than to continue to waste our time going
12 to Listening Sessions.

13 Right now, with all the problems that are
14 present in USDA, they're nothing compared to the
15 racism that exists in the industry that I'm in. As
16 a matter of fact, in four weeks I will be out of
17 business because of those racial problems.

18 But my first contact with Farmers Home
19 Administration, now Farm Services, was when I began
20 to apply for a loan for my farm. After traveling
21 about -- making an appointment, traveling about four
22 and a half hours, the head of that office in Snow

1 Hill, Maryland, just stood me up. Just stood me and
2 my wife up. They made no phone call to tell us he
3 wouldn't be there, nothing.

4 I was told that I needed to make another
5 appointment. Well, I -- I'm kind of a city boy
6 turned farmer, so that was unacceptable to me. I'm
7 probably not as patient as most people.

8 So they gave me a person they said was a
9 forms person. They did not tell me that he was
10 second in command in that office. After about five
11 minutes, he told me I didn't qualify.

12 He didn't know that I had been through a
13 mock process in another office and that I had done
14 my homework. So after snatching my papers from him
15 and going directly to Dover to talk to his boss, we
16 finally got things moving.

17 But I'm probably talking about many people
18 that never even get an opportunity to apply for
19 these loans because of racism. They're told before
20 they can even begin or are discouraged in some way
21 or told that they just don't qualify.

22 What they wanted for me to do, you see,

1 was get angry and cuss them out and go on back home
2 and be mad about it. But, no, I think what we have
3 to do is find ways to solve our own problems.

4 If anybody thinks the racism in this
5 country is going away, you ain't read no history,
6 man. It's not going to go away. It's not going to
7 happen.

8 And the next thing we need to begin to
9 talk about is something that I don't think anybody
10 wants to hear in the first place. You just pay us
11 for what's already happened here, and we'll get out
12 of your hair. We're talking about reparations, and
13 we'll get out of your hair. You won't have to worry
14 about these Listening Sessions.

15 Thank you.

16 (Applause.)

17 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Winston.

18 Ardell Ruiz, and then after Ardell we'll
19 have Gregory Smitman.

20 MR. RUIZ: Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary.
21 My name's Ardell Ruiz. I'm from -- I'm a Native
22 American. My affiliation is with the Gila River

1 Indian community in Maricopa, Arizona.

2 And today I'm glad that this is
3 happening. I know that there was a hearing in
4 Window Rock, Arizona, which I was not able to
5 attend. But this afternoon I want to share with you
6 just a few things that I think that needs to be
7 noted. And being the first American and being a
8 host to you all, I think we do need --

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. RUIZ: There is an effort in the last
11 few years to work our land, as it was designated by
12 the federal government through treaties, through
13 many different mechanisms, to work the land that we
14 have set aside for the Native Americans, land and
15 water and whatever there is and however long it
16 flows.

17 But in the last few years we've only begun
18 to recognize the assistance or even receive the
19 assistance from the United States Department of
20 Agriculture. For the longest time there was a real
21 confusion as to who was to oversee Native
22 Americans.

1 First it was the Bureau of Indian Affairs,
2 and then it was the Public Health Service, and then
3 the USDA. And yet USDA's been on reservations from,
4 I believe, from day one. But yet it's only been
5 very -- a small or limited interaction.

6 But only in the last few years we've begun
7 to see some assistance. And guess what happens.
8 The government cuts back, staff cuts back, the
9 programs are -- the subsidy programs has been cut
10 back.

11 I'm a small cotton farmer, and cotton
12 farming has not -- has seen its ups and downs from
13 one extreme to the other. We've had some good times
14 in a very short time and bad times in a long time,
15 in a long duration.

16 And I cannot understand, it seemed like at
17 the time when the Native Americans were beginning to
18 participate, everything's being pulled out from
19 under us. In certain instances, maybe because it's
20 political, the discrimination occurs in the politics
21 of it all, in the committees or in the way that the
22 staff presents its programs.

1 Maybe whoever has the bigger farm or the
2 bigger bucks gets the attention, and those that we
3 have not been fortunate to receive large profits
4 from our efforts have to wait in line.

5 And as Native Americans, we feel that the
6 attention that's been given to those that, only in
7 the western states, that have been affiliated with
8 land and water. Dams have been built, irrigation
9 projects have been built.

10 In Indian country, there are over 70
11 projects that were started, and not one has been
12 completed, the oldest one being in Parker, Arizona,
13 in 1856. Because it's one thing or another, or
14 priority, or there's only so much budget money, we
15 can't spread it so we piece it out. And when you do
16 it in that manner, nothing will ever get finished.
17 And now it's over a hundred years.

18 And I can only say is that most of the
19 United States is now being zoned for something, and
20 the green spot that you're going to find in the near
21 future is going to be on the Indian reservations.
22 Or otherwise go to Southeast Asia or some foreign

1 country.

2 And we need to look at the Indian country
3 as a place where we can protect agriculture as well
4 as the Native American lands and water.

5 Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Ardell.

8 Gregory Smitman. Gregory's come all the
9 way from Montana, out from the cold.

10 MR. SMITMAN: Yeah, I came from Montana.
11 I got on my Washington costume. Glad to see
12 everybody didn't have to do that. Wish I'd known
13 that. But I've got to wear it once a year anyway.

14 Mr. Secretary, Mr. Rominger, Mr. Johnson,
15 Pearlie, Mr. Reed, Mr. Buntrock, we've all worked
16 together over the last few years on Indian issues,
17 some of which Ardell talked about, some of which my
18 President, Mr. Miller, talked about. And I want to
19 tell you just a little bit about Indian country,
20 because I've got just a couple minutes.

21 We have about 54 million acres of land in
22 the United States. That makes us the largest land

1 owners in the United States outside of the federal
2 government.

3 We used to have 178 million acres after we
4 signed the treaties that said this is all we're
5 going to give up and get to keep the rest. So we
6 only lost 122 million or so in the last 90 years.
7 So that's probably not as bad as it is for some
8 folks.

9 We're losing land now and we're losing it
10 a different way. In 1987, I believe, GAO did a
11 report, said what's the biggest threat to Indian
12 lands? They said Farmers Home Administration is the
13 biggest threat to Indian ownership of Indian land.

14 (Applause.)

15 MR. SMITMAN: That's the GAO report. We
16 have to believe them. They're the United States
17 government.

18 Indians, first farmers, you know they do
19 that Thanksgiving thing where the Indians taught the
20 Pilgrims how to plant corn and how to put fish under
21 their corn plants, put the hills up, grow the beans
22 with the corn, all that stuff, nobody -- we don't

1 always get credit for that.

2 We don't always get credit for the fact
3 that 52 percent of the diet of the world originated
4 in North America with American Indians, cultivated
5 and produced well before Europeans ever found this
6 place. So we're agriculturalists.

7 We got 54 million acres, 48 million in
8 Indian use or in Indian farms. But you know, until
9 1979, we were excluded, specifically excluded from
10 service by USDA by your own written policies.

11 Wasn't until 1979 that policies in USDA
12 that existed since 1930 were reversed to allow USDA
13 to provide service to Indian people on Indian
14 lands. And even today, we're not getting it.

15 I know it used to be when you come here,
16 you see a big sign, says USDA partners. Well, Mr.
17 Secretary, we're not your partners, and we're not
18 partners with your partners.

19 I was in a rural development meeting last
20 week at home, and they brought out partners. And
21 the partners were RC and B's rural conservation, and
22 County Committees and state Department of Commerce.

1 You know, we don't participate with those
2 folks. Our reservation's been there before there
3 were states, before there were counties. And by
4 federal and state constitution, we're excluded from
5 participating from those folks. So when you build
6 your partnerships, you exclude us.

7 Reason that might be important in this
8 discussion and all the discussions you've heard,
9 which are just like being at home, you know, same
10 stories. Mr. Secretary, you can't do anything about
11 this because you don't have the power, because these
12 aren't your employees.

13 Where we have our trouble is at the county
14 office. The first guy you walk up to won't take the
15 application. You cannot apply. Indian person comes
16 in that office, they say we don't have money for
17 that program, go home. We're not going to make you
18 a loan, go home. We can't loan on trust land, go
19 home. They don't even get to apply.

20 And those people that don't work for you.
21 They work for the County Committee. County
22 Committee is elected from the same people that have

1 been taking Indian lands for the last century. It's
2 the County Committee in FSA.

3 In NRCS we call it conservation district.
4 It's the same damn County Committee, it's the same
5 folks. They're supporting themselves and taking
6 care of themselves. And extension is their advisory
7 committee.

8 Who are they? Who runs extension? You
9 don't run extension, Mr. Secretary. State land
10 grants run extension.

11 I think you've given my partner, Pearlie
12 Reed, an impossible task. I don't think he can come
13 up with a solution as long as your delivery system
14 is based on our very enemies in the countryside.
15 The very folks that have been taking away our land
16 for the last hundred years are the ones who are
17 administering your programs.

18 And you know what? If we're not in your
19 programs, we can't farm. The Farm Bill in 1985
20 started it. The Farm Bill in 1990 clinched it. If
21 you're a commodity farmer, you don't participate
22 with FSA, you can't compete in the marketplace and

1 you're out of business.

2 I'll give you one example. My time's up.
3 Fort Belknap Reservation, where I'm from, northern
4 Montana, 1985, we had 120,000 acres of grain lands.
5 On those grain lands, we had one non-Indian farmer.
6 He operated 3,300 acres. All of rest of it was used
7 by Indians.

8 1985, you passed the Farm Bill, said
9 you're going these things with FSA if you're going
10 to grow grain. You're going to participate, you're
11 going to get these conservation plans, you can't do
12 these different soil tests. This bill passed
13 Congress. So our Indian guys had to go in and apply
14 up to FSA, ASCS in those days, for these services.

15 Today, after the passage of that Farm Bill
16 and the requirement that we participate, 70,000 of
17 those 120,000 acres are used by non-Indians, leased
18 to non-Indians. Taken away from Indian ownership
19 and Indian lands by action of what we refer to as
20 USDA, Mr. Secretary, but in fact it's your County
21 Committees.

22 And until you do away with those County

1 Committees and make those local employees actual
2 federal employees that have to answer to what you
3 tell them do and the directives that are sent down,
4 we're not making any progress.

5 Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Gregory.

8 Is Kay Janis here? And then after Kay,
9 Ernest Blunt. Go ahead, Kay.

10 MS. JANIS: Okay. I have a document here
11 that a Farmers Home agent filed on my family in
12 1961. It took me 35 years to catch this agent and
13 these crooks, but I have them now.

14 Here is your document, your land option
15 that had been filed in the Horry County courthouse
16 without my parent's permission. If you'll get it,
17 please.

18 My family paid on this farm for seven
19 years. There has never been a late payment. There
20 wasn't a payment due.

21 This Farmers Home agent knew that there
22 was timber on this land and he decided he wanted it

1 for him and he took it for his own personal gain.
2 He has it today, but he took part of my inheritance
3 away from me, and my family and my brothers and
4 sisters.

5 I have done a full investigation on
6 Farmers Home and found out a lot of things. Mr.
7 Strom Thurmond's office swallowed \$30,000 from one
8 of my neighbors. He has no authority to do that by
9 USDA rules. A Farmers Home agent could only take
10 refreshments. I don't call taking land and timber
11 refreshments.

12 I've got a lot that I'd like to say, but I
13 know I don't have time today. Let me go through
14 some of my notes here.

15 I have investigated a lot of people that
16 has been done wrong in Horry County. There has been
17 money took by Farmers Home agents.

18 There's a letter wrote in Horry County, in
19 case some of them murder this man. This one man has
20 had his farm took. He worked with the United Farm
21 Association. Him and four other men tried to help
22 the farmers in Horry County. His house has been

1 burnt down. He's had to move to North Carolina to
2 live.

3 It's unreal what has happened in this
4 system. And it's been going on for 40 years. And
5 when is it going to end? When are y'all going to
6 wake up and see the light?

7 40 percent of the American people knows
8 there's something wrong with our government. When's
9 the other 60 percent going to realize what's going
10 on?

11 (Applause.)

12 MS. JANIS: There has been so much money
13 wrote off in Horry County and so much corruption,
14 and these agents has got rich.

15 I went to see the state prosecutor that
16 prosecuted two Farmers Home agents and convicted
17 them for taking land. One of them was in Sumter
18 County, South Carolina. I don't know where the
19 other one was at.

20 This is wrong. We are God's children.
21 Y'all cannot treat God's children like this. This
22 world's going to end if y'all don't do something.

1 Look at all the farmers and what we've lost.

2 Look what my family's lost. Farmers Home
3 put my family in a state of poverty. I grew up and
4 lived off homemade biscuits and homemade preserves
5 that my mama made for us to keep from us starving.
6 He took our farm, he took our land. He took
7 everything that meant anything to us.

8 There's forgery, there's fraud. This
9 paper right here that was filed in the clerk's
10 office in 1961, when I confronted our clerk of court
11 in Horry County about this document, she claimed no
12 knowledge of it. I came back two weeks later and I
13 says, ma'am, I think your handwriting's on this
14 document. She didn't work for three weeks.

15 The witness on this document was a Farmers
16 Home agent. Well, she was a clerk, excuse me. She
17 witnessed documents knowing that my parents didn't
18 sign this document.

19 He took this land and he kept it for his
20 self. He still has this land as of today.

21 We want our land back. It was rightfully
22 ours, it was my inheritance, and we're going to

1 fight until we have it back.

2 I would like for Mr. Dan Glickman to come
3 to Horry County and visit with the farmers there and
4 find out what's going on, what has went on. I have
5 did an investigation and asked for farmers to call
6 me. I've had phone calls and it is just too much to
7 tell in five minutes.

8 But y'all have got to do something. Y'all
9 have got to help these people. Y'all have got to
10 give back what y'all have took from the farmers.
11 The corruption has got to end. It's been going on
12 in this system for almost 40 years. And I want to
13 know what Farmers Home's going to do about it.

14 It looks like to me also that Farm Credit
15 Cooperative, all roads have led to their trail. It
16 seems like they're involved in this corruption. The
17 AFC office is involved in this corruption.

18 There's just too much went on, and only
19 thing I want to know is when it's going to stop and
20 if Mr. Dan Glickman will come to Horry County and
21 straighten this corruption out.

22 Thank y'all.

1 (Applause.)

2 MR. ROMINGER: Thank you.

3 Grant, we'd like to have someone from Farm
4 Service Agency follow up with this lady, please.

5 MR. BUNTROCK: We have our state directors
6 from each one of the states here today, so that we
7 have both the local state managers as well as the
8 Washington.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Ernest Blunt, and
10 after Ernest, Sam Donald.

11 MR. BLUNT: Secretary Glickman, senior
12 staff, the CRAT Action Team, I'd like to thank the
13 Secretary for listening to the sensitive issue that
14 has been going on for years.

15 You know, I was part of the National
16 Family Farm Coalition and we worked on minority
17 rights bill, minority land register. I wrote an
18 article about the loss of minority farmer, the black
19 farmer, in the nation. And it's really depressing.
20 It's an emotional issue, very emotional issue.

21 But what I would like to address today is
22 -- you know, I've got enough to write a book on,

1 but I'm going to have to try to address that this
2 evening.

3 But my most recent thing that has impacted
4 my county -- my name is Ernest Blunt and I'm from
5 Surry County, Virginia. And I would like to address
6 the most recent issue that has been brought about by
7 USDA and the adverse impact that it has on my county
8 which I live in, Surry County, Virginia. That's the
9 scheduled closing of the Farm Service Agency.

10 You know, the Agency is supposed to cover
11 all the programs for us. The agency, we have to
12 address for everything. It's mandatory that we go
13 there to take care of our business. I mean the farm
14 credit team is there, everybody's there. And now
15 we're going to close the office.

16 It's going to be moved to a location in
17 Smithfield, Virginia, about 60 miles from some of
18 our minority farmers. It's going in more of an
19 urban-type setting. I mean, you know, it's not in a
20 rural-type setting.

21 Smithfield, every time you turn around, is
22 going up in industry, motels, housing. It's

1 standard development. Farmers are steadily going
2 out of business and serious rules for the main
3 rule. And my position there is ask the Secretary
4 who will?

5 We've been working on this thing for now
6 last 18, 24 months. Our state FAC committee has
7 addressed it, asked you all to please keep our
8 office open. It came about as the reorganization of
9 USDA. You all are aware of it, and the downsizing.

10 Let me give you a little history about
11 Surry County. Surry County has the largest number
12 of black farmers in the state of Virginia. Surry
13 County has a large minority-owned base, land and
14 acreage, and has a minority committee chairperson.

15 We have been a role model over the years
16 for other localities throughout the state of
17 Virginia. We are represented on the committees by
18 minorities and we've tried to set the pace above
19 those who haven't wanted to follow along in the same
20 lines.

21 But you know, in doing this, in all this
22 representation -- and I must say we're represented

1 by the Honorable Bobby Scott who's also a minority,
2 a Congressman. And we wonder if all this minority
3 participation, all the discrimination going on, have
4 we been out on the closing because the fact that our
5 minority participation and our white counterparts
6 that have to suffer as well, from not traveling to
7 that direction.

8 We often ask that question. We hate to
9 ask it but we wonder if it's so. And I would ask
10 the Secretary and all those here that they would
11 look at Surry County, leave its Farm Service Agency
12 office open.

13 The Surry government has offered free
14 office space. I mean they're going out of the way
15 to build a, what, 6,200 square foot complex, you
16 know, and we offered free office space to keep our
17 office there.

18 We know what impact it's going to have on
19 our locality. We know the impact it's going to have
20 not only on the farmers but the small and minority
21 businesses, the socially disadvantaged people in our
22 county. And we've been trying and trying to ask you

1 to please hear our cry and answer our plea.

2 Thank you.

3 (Applause.)

4 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Ernest.

5 Sam Donald, and after Sam we'll have Bruce,
6 Taylor.

7 MR. DONALD: Mr. Secretary and other
8 distinguished platform individuals, ladies and
9 gentlemen, I am Sam Donald.

10 I am Regional Research Director for the
11 1890 land grant colleges and universities. I
12 represent the Association of Research Directors and
13 on behalf of the chair of that association, as well
14 as the chair of the Council of 1890 Presidents, we
15 are pleased to have the opportunity to participate
16 in this Listening Session.

17 Mr. Secretary, thank you for having this
18 Civil Rights Listening Session, as well as others
19 around the country. We in the 1890 land grant
20 community recognize that there are significant
21 challenges in this area and applaud your efforts and
22 those of others in the Department who seek to

1 develop positive action agenda to address these
2 challenges.

3 Further, I would encourage those in
4 leadership roles and positions as implementors of
5 the action agenda, to recognize the 1890 land grant
6 universities as national resources, available and
7 willing to assist the Department to find solutions
8 to these long-standing problems. This includes
9 assisting in the design and implementation of new
10 programs that may be necessary once the results from
11 the Listening Sessions are in and analyzed.

12 As for existing programs to provide
13 support and technical assistance for farmers and
14 many others in rural and urban areas in this
15 country, the Department's portfolio may be, as
16 economists would say, approaching or at diseconomies
17 of scale.

18 The portfolio includes commodity program,
19 conservation programs, food assistance programs,
20 disaster and emergency assistance programs, farm
21 purchasing and operating loan programs, grant
22 programs, and the list could go on and on. Since

1 the 1994 reorganization of the Department, I believe
2 there is one-stop shopping for customers, designed
3 to make it easier for them to gain access to and
4 assistance from the above mentioned programs.

5 Additionally, Mr. Secretary, the
6 reorganization was designed to maintain local farmer
7 and customer committees and boards to oversee
8 programs and to encourage diversity in local
9 committee and board operations. If the
10 reorganization in this regard is to accomplish what
11 was intended, then the problem may be merely one of
12 implementation, primarily at the local level.

13 Mr. Secretary, I know, as well as the 1890
14 land grant community, that your goal and desire is
15 to implement all programs in the Department's
16 portfolio in such a manner that no one may have his
17 or her civil rights violated. With this as a basis
18 of contention, on behalf of the 1890 land grant
19 community, I offer five recommendations.

20 First, all key USDA personnel from the
21 national to the local level should have diversity
22 and sensitivity training, receiving refresher

1 training when appropriate or necessary, relative to
2 working with people and providing services to
3 people. This is extremely important for personnel
4 in leadership roles and positions.

5 Second, facilitate and provide technical
6 assistance for diversity and sensitivity training
7 for all key personnel employed by land grant
8 colleges and universities, and other institutions in
9 the cooperative extension programs, the 2501
10 outreach and assistance for socially disadvantaged
11 farmers and ranchers program, and other pertinent
12 programs. We, too, must clean up our act if
13 violations of people's civil rights are to be
14 stopped.

15 Thirdly, ensure equal opportunity for
16 membership on USDA-established advisory committees
17 and boards at the level that represent racial and
18 ethnic makeup. I suggest that you follow the
19 process that was used in identifying and selecting
20 people, participants on the National Advisory Board
21 for the Research, Extension, Economics and Education
22 National Advisory Board. Slots were identified for

1 individual groups and only individuals from those
2 groups could be selected to serve on that board.

3 Fourth recommendation, establish minority
4 advisory committees and boards at appropriate levels
5 to provide advice and to assist in the design and,
6 if applicable, implementation of programs to help
7 minority recipients, utilizing the 1890 land grant
8 universities in this endeavor. The intent here is
9 to ensure the use of minority groups in
10 collaboration with others to solve the problem.

11 And finally, with funds from the Fund for
12 Rural America, support programs from the 1890 land
13 grant universities that would identify barriers to
14 family and community development, incentives for new
15 linkage and partnership, infrastructure needs,
16 business and job opportunities, development of human
17 capital leadership, use of natural resources,
18 community development, and new markets.

19 Let me close by quoting from a famous
20 writer, the author of The Greatest Salesman in the
21 World, who states, I was not delivered into this
22 world in defeat, nor does failure cross in my

1 veins. I am not a sheep waiting to be prodded by my
2 shepherd. I am a lion, and I refuse to talk, to
3 walk, to sleep with the sheep.

4 I will hear not those who weep and
5 complain, for their disease is contagious. Let them
6 join the sheep. The slaughterhouse of failure is
7 not my destiny. I will persist until I succeed.

8 I say to you, farmers, ranchers,
9 housewives, to all of us, we must be persistent.
10 May God provide us the strength and determination to
11 persist until we succeed.

12 Thank you.

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Sam.

15 Bruce Taylor is next, followed by Lynwood
16 Brown. Bruce.

17 MR. TAYLOR: Ladies and gentlemen, I came
18 here as a representative of Cherokee Nation of
19 Oklahoma. I have a number of remarks to make
20 specifically to the Secretary and I would like to
21 pass until his return, if that's possible.

22 MR. JOHNSON: We'll do that.

1 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you.

2 MR. JOHNSON: He should be back in just a
3 couple minutes. But we'll continue, if you will.

4 Ralph Paige -- or Lynwood Brown. Lynwood,
5 are you here?

6 (No response.)

7 MR. JOHNSON: Ralph Paige?

8 MR. PAIGE: Thank you very much for the
9 opportunity to address this group. I'll try to keep
10 it to five minutes.

11 First of all, I represent the Federation
12 of Southern Cooperatives. I'm the executive
13 director. I represent African-American farmers
14 throughout the southeast.

15 We are advocates, a resource organization
16 that works in poor communities across the south,
17 organizing farmers, putting them into cooperatives,
18 self-help marketing, cooperative development,
19 training. We have an institute in the black belt of
20 Alabama, one of the poorest counties, 1,365 acres of
21 land where we provide training, technical
22 assistance, and we also operate the enterprise

1 community.

2 With that, I would like to say thanks to
3 the committee, commend the Secretary for doing
4 this. This is the first time we've ever had a
5 Listening Session of this kind.

6 We have struggled with this problem of
7 discrimination since 1920 or longer. It has been a
8 persisting problem that has adversely affected the
9 African-American community more than that of any
10 other race.

11 You know, we noted all minority farmers,
12 Native Americans, Hispanics suffer, but we all
13 suffer. We're three and a half times more likely to
14 lose our farm or our land than white farmers.

15 With that, I would submit to you, back in
16 1920 over a million black farmers were engaged in
17 agriculture in the south, owned and operated over 15
18 million acres of land. However, many of these were
19 sharecroppers. We have lost that land.

20 By 1960, there were only 100 black farmers
21 operating, owning 6 million acres of land. And in
22 1992, the latest census that we have our hands on,

1 only 18,000 black farmers owning less than 2.3
2 million acres of land.

3 Now, that's terrible for a community. It
4 has been said that a landless people is a hopeless
5 people. We don't -- we don't pay taxes. What
6 happened to the million people? Moved into inner
7 cities.

8 This is causing much of the hoopla about
9 welfare and this kind of thing. If we had the right
10 to stay on our land and be productive citizens and
11 it had not been taken from us, we'd not have some of
12 these problems.

13 Now there's only 187 farmers that's under
14 the age, black farmers, of 37 years old in this
15 country. That in itself is something we must not
16 have and we cannot long afford.

17 We've heard all these problems today. I
18 concur with them. We need do something about them.
19 We do not need a quick fix.

20 We have been in this problem through -- I
21 know I've been in here through four presidents,
22 Bush, Reagan, Ford, Carter. The problem's the

1 same. We've complained.

2 We need a fix that will go forward through
3 the next four presidents or longer. We should never
4 have to come back to a hearing like this. This is a
5 step in the right direction. We're not dissidents.

6 To go on to show you, African Americans
7 are losing 1,000 acres of land a day. At a
8 conservative value, \$750 per acre, we are losing
9 annually \$300 million in irreplaceable equity
10 resources annually. I mean we can't have that.
11 We're losing and nobody really cares or knows.

12 In 1982, the Civil Rights Commission
13 issued a report that states unless government
14 policies of neglect and discrimination change, there
15 may be no black farmers by the year 2000.

16 Yet 1990, a report of the U.S. House of
17 Representatives Committee on Government confirms
18 these conditions have not changed in 1990. And it
19 concludes that Farmers Home and the U.S. Department
20 of Agriculture may be the catalyst of this declining
21 land and farmers. We must do something about that.

22 I'm going to try to just hit the high

1 spots. I will submit this.

2 Things that we should do about it. We
3 need to look very strongly at FSA committees. The
4 federation is concerned of the proposed dismantling
5 of Farm Service Agency. The past reorganization
6 efforts have already reduced services and curtailed
7 access to black farmers. You've heard that in
8 speakers before me.

9 Our members depend on FSA as their lender
10 of last resort. We cannot go to banks, don't let
11 anybody fool you. We need Farmers Home as an
12 intact, as a lender of last resort, because banks
13 don't loan to black folk. And you can bet that.

14 (Applause.)

15 MR. PAIGE: I have not yet sent a black
16 farmer, neither me or my staff, to where we can get
17 that. Even a guaranteed loan, ain't no such thing.
18 We need direct loans. We need FSA to stay intact.

19 And I repeat that, because if we don't
20 have participation in this agriculture system, which
21 is the greatest one in this country, we might as
22 well trade places with what we -- with Russia.

1 The federation feels that FSC systems,
2 County Committee systems, need improving. Family
3 farmers need to participate. It's corrupt. You've
4 heard that. I can say it over and over again.

5 It does not work. But dismantling it is
6 not the answer. We need to fix it in a way that if
7 there's voting, if it means going out, designating,
8 but we need voting members where we can have
9 something to say. This is a powerful committee.

10 And I know you've heard that in Georgia,
11 you've heard it in South Carolina, North Carolina,
12 you've heard it in Tennessee. But it is the truth.
13 That needs to be fixed.

14 It doesn't need to be destroyed. Because
15 if we don't participate in agriculture, we are one
16 step toward where Russia's coming out of. We need
17 participation, participatory-type agriculture, where
18 citizens can participate and make decisions.

19 It worked for the white folk. It can work
20 for everybody. So let's do it. Okay.

21 We just came out of a Farm Bill that does
22 not work. The farm credit system, the farm credit

1 provisions in there, is worse than a bank. If a
2 farmer's foreclosed, they can't ever go back and get
3 credit. We need to fix that.

4 Mr. Secretary, you spoke of that earlier.
5 We need to revisit that and you need to be dedicated
6 to revisiting the credit provisions in the act. The
7 19 farm -- the transitional payments, those are for
8 white folk and large farmers. Black farmers don't
9 get the complete message. It needs to be fixed.

10 Okay, going on. You know, this -- we need
11 to have an outreach program, you know, that we had
12 -- 1990, we worked with about 180 groups in the
13 coalition movement to get provisions, including
14 1890s community-based organization, Native American,
15 and we got the provisions for the minority provision
16 in the Farm Bill. That needs to be fully
17 implemented.

18 And I understand in a press conference
19 some funding was put there. You'll be commended.
20 This is the first time 4 million, 4.5 million has
21 been put in there. You'll be -- this group, you are
22 to be commended for that. But we need to go

1 further.

2 FSA, NRCS, forestry, crop insurance, each
3 mission area should have and must have an outreach
4 program where we can reach the farmers. This is
5 especially true when you're cutting back services,
6 when you're threatening to close the FSA offices.
7 We need that.

8 Marketing services, surely we're doing
9 some things. NAFTA does not speak to black
10 farmers. We need to ensure that we have programs
11 where we can participate in it.

12 It's not enough to just clean the books
13 off and we need that more than anything, all the
14 complaints that our friends have talked about
15 today. But when we get them off, we don't need to
16 get back in a rut. So we must set up a long-term
17 system that will keep us from ever, ever going back
18 and losing another acre of black-owned land or any
19 other minority-owned land.

20 The register for minority farmers, we
21 fought for that and it didn't get there. We need a
22 register for minority farmers. We need to know when

1 another minority farmer, another brother in
2 California stump his toe, we can fill feel it in
3 South Carolina. We need to know if he owns that
4 land.

5 This is the kind of thing we need. And a
6 register will let us know who owns the land, will
7 let us take the outreach service so we can go to
8 that farmer and offer the assistance there.

9 We don't have anything to hide, y'all.
10 Y'all know every piece of land we got. You can look
11 at it from up top, it's nothing to hide. Don't be
12 afraid of that. We need a register, where we can
13 know what we're doing and we can know what our
14 brothers and sisters, be it Native American Indians,
15 poor white farmers, whatever, have, where we can
16 save that particular land.

17 So our rights complaints, and you heard
18 that over and over again, it must be -- those
19 complaints must be solved. And we know that they're
20 there. They've been there since the turn of the
21 century.

22 And finally, we want to restore the

1 complete 15 million acres of minority farmland that
2 we have lost by the very nature of so-called
3 discriminatory acts at USDA, banks, and I'm not
4 letting anybody off the hook, corporate
5 agriculture. All of them are in the same mode of
6 operation, the same MO. That's to put the black
7 folk and poor folk and minorities out of business.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Ralph.

11 Bruce Taylor, do you want to take another
12 run at yours? And after Bruce we'll have Dave
13 Harris.

14 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much. Thank
15 you for allowing me to pass until the Secretary was
16 here.

17 Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Bruce
18 Taylor. I represent the Cherokee Nation of
19 Oklahoma. Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma operates
20 Cherokee Nation Industries, of which I'm the
21 chairman of the board.

22 Cherokee Nation Industries is an 8(a)

1 minority contractor. Currently the USDA does not
2 have any, or at least very few, 8(a) minority
3 contracts with Indian tribes, and that's why I'm
4 here today.

5 Mr. Secretary, I'm going to take less than
6 five minutes. I've got a short memo that if you
7 will sign it, it will solve my problem. It will let
8 me get out of here, it will let you get home early.

9 (Laughter.)

10 MR. TAYLOR: First let me say, though,
11 that as I said I want to focus on a solution. In
12 order to develop our reservation economies and
13 address the high unemployment rates of our
14 reservation, many tribes like my tribe, the Cherokee
15 Nation, have established tribally-owned 8(a)
16 businesses. An increasing number of tribes are
17 putting their business enterprises under the 8(a)
18 program to take advantage of federal procurement to
19 our reservation.

20 Congress has chosen to give tribally-owned
21 8(a) businesses special rights under the 8(a)
22 program. For example, while an ordinary 8(a)

1 company can only receive a sole source contract of
2 \$3 million, a tribally-owned 8(a) firm may receive a
3 sole source contract for any amount with no upper
4 limit.

5 Let me say that again. A tribally-owned
6 8(a) company with receive a sole source contract of
7 any amount with no upper limit. That's very
8 important. Federal Agencies have an opportunity to
9 simplify the procurement process and at the same
10 time obtain quality products and service and help to
11 build our reservation economies.

12 I'm pleased to report that the USDA Office
13 of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization,
14 under the competent leadership of Sharon Harris and
15 in concert with your Native American desk, Mary
16 McNeil, and many other officials at the various
17 divisions within the Department, have reached out to
18 the tribal 8(a) firms and have begun an initiative
19 that we hope will become a model for every other
20 federal Agency.

21 Specifically, the 8(a) -- the USDA federal
22 office is planning a conference this spring to bring

1 together the tribally-owned 8(a) businesses with the
2 procuring offices in different Agencies at USDA. At
3 this conference the tribes will ask -- will get to
4 explain their unique legal status and how that
5 unique status can provide mutually beneficial
6 opportunities for firms and the United States
7 government.

8 The firms will also at an Indian Business
9 Fair be allowed, as a part of that conference, be
10 allowed to display their capabilities to Department
11 officials.

12 What makes this even more exciting is
13 that, in preparation for this conference, the SDBU
14 office has put together several small group meetings
15 to bring together tribal 8(a) firms and Agency
16 procurement officials as pilots for the larger
17 conference. These initial meetings have been
18 extremely productive and positive.

19 As a result, we believe that there will be
20 a blossoming of business relationships between the
21 tribal firms and the Department. So while in some
22 areas the Department needs to catch up with the rest

1 of the government, here through these unique
2 relationships that you're developing with the Indian
3 community, you are leading the rest of the
4 government Agencies.

5 And I would like to complement your
6 Department for this initiative and ask that you, Mr.
7 Secretary, to please endorse this effort through a
8 written communication to your Department officials.
9 And if your schedule permits we would like you to be
10 the key note speaker at the conference. Are you
11 willing to do that?

12 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: When is this
13 conference?

14 MR. TAYLOR: I'm not sure it's been
15 scheduled, but that's -- but if possible --

16 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Absolutely.

17 (Laughter.)

18 MR. TAYLOR: And in that vein, I would
19 also like to have you sign a very short memorandum
20 to your staff that simply says, and I wrote this out
21 a few minutes ago, to the Cherokee Nation and the
22 tribes and all tribes in the Alaska Native

1 Corporation in the SBA 8(a) program, I agree to
2 support the Department of Agriculture's 8(a) Tribal
3 Contracting Initiative being launched by your Small
4 Business Director, Sharon Harris.

5 Are you willing to sign that today?

6 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Well, let me take a
7 look at it. You know, again, this is a Listening
8 Session, but certainly endorse what you've just
9 said.

10 MR. TAYLOR: You will endorse it? He has
11 endorsed it.

12 (Laughter.)

13 MR. TAYLOR: Don't nod your head like this
14 to say yes, I endorse it.

15 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Do you know Mr.
16 Myart? You and he could be in the same law firm.

17 (Laughter.)

18 MR. TAYLOR: Well, if it's all right with
19 you, Mr. Secretary, I'll pass this along. I would
20 appreciate your reviewing it and supporting our
21 program.

22 Thank you very much.

1 (Applause.)

2 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Bruce.

3 His time ran out before the Secretary said
4 yes, right? Well, we'll work on it.

5 All right. David Harris, and after David,
6 Shelley Davis.

7 MR. HARRIS: Mr. Secretary, members of the
8 Action Team, good afternoon. One of the nice things
9 about speaking the latter part of the day, is that
10 most of the people have made most of the points for
11 you.

12 The Land Loss Prevention Project is a 14,
13 actually a 15-year-old nonprofit law firm that has
14 provided free legal assistance to farmers facing
15 foreclosure or otherwise the last of their land. We
16 focus our work in North Carolina but we provide
17 training, technical assistance to farmers and
18 lawyers throughout the entire country.

19 Half our clients are people of color. And
20 most of those persons have been victims of
21 discrimination by one Agency or another of the
22 United States Department of Agriculture.

1 I hold up to you a report. Actually it's
2 hearing proceedings and a report. It looks small,
3 but actually the print is extremely small and you
4 need a magnifying glass to read.

5 These are from the proceedings during the
6 1990 hearing of a subcommittee of the House
7 Government Operations Committee. This report found,
8 and I'm paraphrasing but I'm not very far off, that
9 the Farmers Home Administration had been a catalyst,
10 and the word catalyst was used, in the decline in
11 the number of minority farmers throughout this
12 country.

13 This report is one of dozens of reports
14 that have been written over the years, Mr.
15 Secretary, documenting unequal treatment with
16 respect to various services provided by the
17 Department of Agriculture to people of color,
18 farmers who are people of color, and also women
19 farmers. There's also been documentation --

20 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: What year was that
21 report?

22 MR. HARRIS: 1990. The hearing was July

1 of 1990 and the report was issued November 20th,
2 1990.

3 Might add, too, I have a written statement
4 for today and I'll be submitting some supplemental
5 documents as well. And the citation to this is in
6 there, and if you like I can get the information
7 immediately to your legal assistant.

8 I make that point, Mr. Secretary, because
9 it's important to note two things. You've had,
10 what, twelve Listening Sessions throughout the
11 country, about twelve? And during those sessions
12 you've heard from some very unhappy people, some
13 very angry people.

14 It's important to note that those people
15 you've heard from represent a fraction, a small
16 fraction of a number of very unhappy folks who are
17 out there, because their tax dollars have not been
18 used in a way to provide the services that they need
19 to be effective, competitive farmers in this
20 nation.

21 It is also important to note that, given
22 the number of reports and the number of documents

1 that have been filed by my office, Federation of
2 Southern Cooperatives, the Rural Coalition, the
3 Farmers Rural Action Group, and many, many other
4 organizations and attorneys over the past decades,
5 given those documents -- when you put them all
6 together it will take up this whole building.

7 Given those documents, it is important
8 that this committee, this Action Team, come up with
9 recommendations that are, this time, serious,
10 comprehensive, and attacks the problem in a way that
11 addresses the problem in 50 years.

12 I see I have about 45 seconds left. I
13 will address one of those. You have an Office of
14 Supervised Enforcement, and I'm very much aware of
15 the problem related to its making findings with
16 respect to discrimination, and the Department turn
17 around and saying but we can't do anything.

18 I filed a memo with the Office of General
19 Counsel in late '93 related to this. And the
20 Attorney General filed an opinion in early '94
21 stating but, oh, you can't do anything.

22 So one recommendation I would emphasize

1 today in addition to the others that you've heard
2 today is that the Office of Civil Rights Enforcement
3 must be given the authority to enter effective
4 remedies to people who have been victims of
5 discrimination. Also, it must be elevated from the
6 level that it is to a higher level within your
7 office, so that it would have more authority, more
8 status, more power to take steps necessary.

9 Also the regulations, the
10 antidiscrimination regulations within the Code of
11 Federal Regulations, are a disaster. They need to
12 be rewritten.

13 One final point and I will shut up. And I
14 might add --

15 SECRETARY GLICKMAN: Regulations in what
16 area did you say were disaster?

17 MR. MYART: All the antidiscrimination
18 regulations, throughout Title VII, the Code of
19 Federal Regulations. They're a disaster. They need
20 to be updated at a minimum, and they are not
21 comprehensive.

22 One more point. Many banks have adopted

1 the idea of testers, sending people into local
2 offices to determine if the discrimination is
3 happening. I would suggest that you consider this,
4 sending testers, maybe working with the
5 community-based organizations to send testers to
6 some of these offices.

7 And, Mr. Secretary, if you find that
8 people in local offices are committing
9 discriminatory acts or practices, they need to be
10 fired.

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Bruce.

13 Shelley Davis, followed by Lorrette
14 Picciano. Shelley.

15 MS. DAVIS: Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary,
16 Mr. Rominger, and distinguished panelists. My name
17 is Shelley Davis. I'm the Co-director of the Farm
18 Workers Justice Fund. We provide advocacy and legal
19 assistance to migrant and seasonal farm workers
20 around the country.

21 2.5 million men, women and children
22 harvest the fruits and vegetables that help make our

1 country healthy. Despite their vital role in the
2 agricultural economy, the USDA has not viewed them
3 as one of its customers. And it is for that reason
4 that I'm here today to seek a change.

5 Farm workers are primarily people of
6 color. 70 percent or more are Hispanic. Others are
7 African American, Asian, and Native American.
8 They're largely poor, earning an average of \$6,500 a
9 year, so that even when both parents work they can't
10 keep a family of four above the poverty line.

11 Most of them are foreign-born and speak
12 little English, but they are legal permanent
13 residents and citizens in the vast majority. Yet
14 they are politically powerless.

15 This Department has systematically aligned
16 itself with the interests of those who own large
17 agribusiness enterprises, to the great detriment of
18 farm workers. Let me give you a few examples.

19 First, in the area of pesticides, tens of
20 thousands of farm workers are poisoned with
21 pesticides every year. Pesticide poisoning can
22 cause anything from the flu and rashes and eye

1 irritation to kidney damage, neurological problems,
2 birth defects, cancer and death.

3 The EPA, over a ten-year period, developed
4 worker protection standards just to provide some
5 minimal safety training and basic worker safety
6 practices with regard to pesticides. After hundreds
7 of comments by all the groups that are affected, it
8 went to the USDA as part of the statutory
9 consultative process. USDA opposed every single one
10 of those provisions.

11 Let me just give you one example. One of
12 the basic requirements was training, because unless
13 workers know the hazards they face they really can't
14 protect themselves. Under OSHA standards, all other
15 workers in other industries who are exposed to toxic
16 chemicals must be trained before they are exposed to
17 the chemical.

18 EPA proposed a standard which would give
19 agribusiness 60 days before they had to provide the
20 worker training, 60-day grace period. USDA opposed
21 even that modest provision, saying it was too costly
22 and burdensome.

1 That kind of attitude reflects a total
2 disregard for the safety of the workers. Let me
3 give you a second example also in the pesticide
4 area.

5 Under the 1990 Farm Bill, Congress
6 entrusted USDA with the responsibility of issuing
7 regulations to require users of restricted-use
8 pesticides, which are the most highly toxic
9 chemicals, to keep records of what they apply and
10 provide that information to medical providers in
11 case of emergency. Took four and a half years for
12 USDA to issue those regulations. But it still
13 hasn't implemented them.

14 As recently as two months ago, I was at a
15 meeting of the EPA Food Quality Protection Act
16 Advisory Committee, where USDA officials flatly said
17 that they are not looking at these records. And in
18 fact they said not one single user of restricted-use
19 pesticides has ever been fined in the seven years of
20 this program.

21 This is very basic, vital information. At
22 a time where we're trying to move towards a

1 reduction in use and safer products, accurate
2 information is critical and USDA has simply dropped
3 the ball.

4 Third example, currently before the Office
5 of Management and Budget are proposed regulations by
6 Department of Labor to define who is the employer
7 for purposes of the minimum wage requirement and the
8 basic work protections of the Migrant and Seasonal
9 Agricultural Worker Protection Act. This is
10 important when large enterprises use crew leaders to
11 provide the workers.

12 These regulations merely interpret
13 existing law. USDA has systematically opposed the
14 Department of Labor's regulations and it instead
15 advocated basically a wish list of large
16 agribusiness about what they would like to have the
17 law say.

18 That kind of attitude will deprive tens of
19 thousands of farm workers of the basic protections
20 of the minimum wage and the most basic labor
21 protections they need.

22 USDA has never provided farm workers a

1 voice, and so we have a single recommendation. What
2 we ask is that USDA create an Office of Farm Worker
3 Affairs, which would reach out to farm workers and
4 their organizations.

5 (Applause.)

6 MS. DAVIS: It would provide an
7 opportunity for farm workers to have their concerns
8 heard within the Department so that it could
9 influence the Department's policies and it's advice
10 to other federal Agencies.

11 I just have to say one final word. And
12 that is that there is currently a Coordinator of
13 Labor Affairs. And that individual has
14 systematically over the years never once taken a pro
15 farm worker position on any question.

16 This is simply inadequate. We have to be
17 heard and the time is now.

18 Thank you very much.

19 (Applause.)

20 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Shelley.

21 Lorrette? And Dr. Susan Tomkins after
22 Lorrette.

1 MS. PICCIANO: I am Lorrette Picciano of
2 the Rural Coalition. And I speak today on behalf of
3 our chairperson, Carlos Fuentes, who also leads a
4 farm worker organization in El Paso, Texas, and our
5 more than 90 community-based members who live in the
6 poorest communities in this nation.

7 Mr. Secretary, the question before us
8 today is have minority farmers and other
9 constituents of this Department suffered an adverse
10 impact or disparate treatment based on the manner in
11 which resources are allocated and services delivered
12 by the Department? If so, what response is
13 necessary and sufficient?

14 We suggest that they have suffered major
15 impacts and there is much that can be done that has
16 not been done. We do know that even if all of the
17 current complaints are resolved, the system exists
18 such that more will be generated.

19 The many years of experience of our member
20 groups show that violations of civil and human
21 rights by the Department are serious, blatant,
22 routine, systematic and widespread practices which

1 continue today.

2 The cumulated losses include the almost
3 total eviction of the African-American community
4 from the land which sent their children to college,
5 built the black middle class and the leaders of the
6 civil rights movement. It caused the collapse of
7 agriculture as an economic foundation for minority
8 and Indian communities, and set in place a system of
9 involuntary servitude that not only precludes the
10 largest work force in agriculture, the 4.5 million
11 farm workers with their varying accounts, from ever
12 participating in the system was producers, and also
13 without the tools to change the conditions that
14 cause them to have an average life span of 48 years,
15 an average income rate far below the poverty line,
16 and face indignities every day to their humanity.

17 We have a body of civil rights and other
18 applicable laws pertinent to the investigation, and
19 the Department must be measured by those. As my
20 colleague mentioned, we will send federal
21 investigators when Texaco violates these
22 principles. We are a government that will

1 investigate church burnings, but not the practice of
2 its own employees.

3 We've heard over and over that the
4 minority farms are failing at substantially higher
5 rates because the farmers are smaller in size and
6 their operators are less skilled and educated. We
7 remind you, as my colleague Greg Smitman told us,
8 that it was the Indian farmers who were the first
9 researchers and developers of plant varieties.

10 It was the African people who were brought
11 to this continent were brought here not because they
12 were less capable, but precisely because they knew
13 agriculture. Without their labor and their
14 knowledge, the agriculture system and trade which
15 built this nation and the foundation of its economy
16 would not have been possible.

17 And without the farm workers today, the
18 fresh food that fills our table would not be
19 possible. Harvesting sugar cane or raisins or
20 filling ten-gallon buckets of chilli, ten-gallon
21 buckets of chilli in an hour in 104 degree heat,
22 requires great skills.

1 These are expert producers who have a deep
2 connection to the land and desire to work it. They
3 faced a drought of justice, a flood of iniquity and
4 an erosion of decency.

5 If it's truly your intent to resolve and
6 reverse the wrongs and provide the services, your
7 direct leadership and a new team of leaders and a
8 new system of civil rights principles, guidelines
9 and goals and monitoring are necessary. So is a
10 widely expanded approach and proactive approach to
11 outreach, and a creation of new programs and
12 resources needed to replant minority people and
13 their communities on the land and restore
14 agriculture.

15 A first step is acknowledging the problems
16 which do exist. With regard to the County Committee
17 system of 8,300 members on County Committees in the
18 nation, 20 are African American, 33 are Native
19 American, and 55 are Latino.

20 Our member groups worked on a project with
21 Farm Services Agency to try and increase minority
22 participation this past fall. But we continually.

1 have to try and work with the committees and use our
2 credibility to convince them that this will be a
3 worthwhile process. You've given D.J. Miller &
4 Associates two years to help complete the
5 investigation needed for a GAO report.

6 Most minority farmers we find were
7 completely unaware of the full power that the
8 committees had and the range of responsibilities
9 mandated to them. There's no guidelines on how
10 these committees should work.

11 And as our colleagues have also indicated,
12 people are routinely told when they go and ask for
13 an application, the applications are not yet
14 available. When they come back three weeks later,
15 they're told the resources are already committed.
16 We would suggest that insider trading laws may be
17 applicable in this situation.

18 We also think if elections are conducted,
19 they should reflect the spirit of the Voting Rights
20 Act. If any county in the United States reported
21 that they had disqualified 25 percent of the
22 ballots, there would be an investigation. We're

1 finding those as regular, routine practices in the
2 counties where we worked all over the south and the
3 west.

4 Mr. Secretary, you noted you'd like all
5 USDA clients to be treated like members of your
6 family. The constant denial of most basic
7 information affects this dignity.

8 Nor, Mr. Secretary, would we want our
9 mothers or children to be consigned to laboring in
10 the fields full of pesticides and hazards without
11 water or sanitary facilities. The Department has
12 not yet devised a way to communicate directly with
13 this work force.

14 How would you respond to the entreaty we
15 received this past June from two workers if they
16 were members of your family? These are two farm
17 workers in El Paso.

18 We are writing to ask for your help. We
19 were working in the fields and the owner did not
20 have bottled water for us as part of the law. So we
21 had to drink from the ditch. We know this water has
22 many pesticides. There was nothing else. We drank

1 it. The next day we were sick. Because we missed a
2 day of work, we were fired.

3 Attention to these matters related to farm
4 workers is essential and we in community-based
5 organizations who represent these groups have
6 offered to work as your partners to do outreach to
7 the Department, to make sure that a system is set in
8 place such that these abuses do not occur again.

9 We'll submit the rest of our comments in
10 written testimony.

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Lorrette.

13 Dr. Susan Tomkins, are you here?

14 (No response.)

15 MR. JOHNSON: If not, Shirley Sherrod.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She had to leave
17 for a flight.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Okay.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I can give five
20 minutes more.

21 MR. JOHNSON: There are a lot of people
22 here who need five minutes.

1 Katherine Ozer? Then after Katherine,
2 Larry Mitchell.

3 MS. OZER: I'm Katherine Ozer. I'm
4 Director of the National Family Farm Coalition. And
5 as David Harris mentioned, a lot of issues have
6 already been raised and brought up.

7 And I agree with that and feel that I
8 wanted to be here representing the Family Farm
9 Coalition, of which there are 37 family farming
10 rural advocacy organizations around the country who
11 appreciate the effort right now of listening to
12 various concerns of holding the regional hearings.

13 But really feel very, very strongly that
14 this is an opportunity to respond, to take some
15 swift action, to put in place some changes in
16 programs so that we don't have a situation where a
17 few years from now there's a reiteration of many of
18 the same concerns that many of us have been working
19 on and recognize.

20 David Harris had that testimony from that
21 1990 hearing which we all worked very hard to raise
22 some of those issues publicly. There were some

1 lawsuits, there was a massive FOIA request that was
2 fulfilled that helped set the stage for some other
3 litigation.

4 But even prior to that, in '87, as part of
5 the Agricultural Credit Act, there was finally some
6 legislation that would help target some of the
7 direct farm ownership loans, target some of the land
8 and inventory to help not only deal with the
9 problems that existed, but to help create some newer
10 opportunities for either new minority farmers,
11 farmers that wanted to go into farming, or sons and
12 daughters who wanted to stay in farming.

13 And so many of us have worked on these
14 issues for what is now a decade, which is somewhat
15 hard to believe. But I think what's most critical
16 right now is what is taken from these Listening
17 Sessions, what actual practices have been happening
18 gets converted into policy and then really gets
19 implemented in a way that makes a difference and
20 helps restore some of both the sense that the
21 Department of Agriculture can respond directly to
22 concerns of all customers, whether African American,

1 minority, white, smaller farmers and people who are
2 struggling very, very hard to stay on their farms
3 and to stay in their rural communities.

4 Just very briefly, there's one issue that
5 we've raised before that is very important to all
6 farmers we feel, and that's the integrity of the
7 National Appeals Division. We feel that that's an
8 area where there are problems and people have felt
9 that there's been adverse decisions.

10 It's a way to get some independent look at
11 the problem, resolve issues earlier on, to minimize
12 some of the future conflicts. And right now there's
13 very serious problems with that whole review
14 process, with how the Appeals Division is operating
15 for all farmers who are dealing with different
16 levels of problems.

17 And that's something that we raised last
18 month. We think it's still an issue that needs to
19 be responded to. Because every day that goes by,
20 the integrity of the process and the ability of
21 hearing officers to feel that their decisions are
22 being -- are being respected both by the farmer and

1 by the Department, is very, very critical.

2 Lorrette mentioned the whole issue with
3 County Committees. There's a lot of local
4 decision-making and how that translates all the way
5 up through the process. We feel very strongly that
6 the entire implementation of the Farm Bill -- old
7 regulations that have been sitting in the process
8 need to get finalized and the implementation for
9 those need to be felt at the farmer level and at the
10 office level so that there is in fact the best
11 possible implementation of different programs.

12 I think that we join with many of the
13 other people who have spoken today to work hard to
14 make sure that there are changes. If some of those
15 changes mean a new reorganization that looks at how
16 credit issues are delivered, both at the loan
17 servicing level and at the access to credit level,
18 that needs to be really examined.

19 And whether that means looking at FSA's
20 delivery mode or at RUCD or the overall Department,
21 that we stand ready to help be part of the solution
22 so that in fact there are some very positive changes

1 and people don't look back at these grueling two
2 weeks of traveling and making comments and being a
3 part of the process as just another time to talk,
4 but in fact a time for some action.

5 So we look forward to working with you on
6 that. Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Katherine.

9 Larry Mitchell, and following Larry will
10 be Donna Carol.

11 MR. MITCHELL: Thank you. On behalf of
12 family farmers, ranchers and rural Americans who are
13 the National Farmers Union, it's my honor this
14 afternoon to be before this distinguished panel.

15 We commend you, Secretary Glickman, for
16 your leadership and initiative in moving to address
17 the problems we face here by minorities and socially
18 disadvantaged farmers. Representing some 300,000
19 agriculture families, Farmers Union is very
20 concerned when anyone's civil rights is threatened.

21 There may be those that would wonder why
22 Farmers Union would be here today to discuss this.