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# MINORiTYAgVOCATE™

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**MAY  
NEWSLETTER**

**VOL 1  
ISSUE 2**



# the MINORITYAgVOCATE™

## FREEDMEN HEIRS HIGHLIGHTS

# FREEDMEN —HEIRS— FOUNDATION

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

*The meaning behind Freedmen Heirs*

We are often asked the significance of the name Freedmen Heirs Foundation. Each word was carefully chosen to reflect the history and future of African Americans in agriculture. Steeped in

historical and cultural significance and standing upon pillars of resilience and courage, the name Freedmen Heirs Foundation is birthed out of the legacy of the “freed” men and women (Freedmen Bureau’s Act of 1865) that remained steadfast in the face of discrimination, racism, hardships, and unfulfilled promises. As heirs to the “freedmen”, our vision is to eliminate inequity in agriculture. Freedmen Heirs Foundation supports the development and advancement of the next generation of Black farmers, ranchers, and landowners. Our goal is to promote successful agricultural-based businesses and to increase market access and supply chain diversity. This is the foundation upon which Freedmen Heirs is built. We are Freedmen Heirs Foundation!

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hello Freedmen Friends,

I want to sincerely thank you for your overwhelming support of the inaugural release of The Minority AgVocate. It was such a joy to connect via social media, email, and by phone. I was enlightened by our conversations and the willingness to share your experiences with me.

As springtime brings optimism and excitement for us all, I want to invite you to think and reflect on how you can help make a difference in the lives of minority farmers and ranchers. Their early mornings, late nights, and hard work often go unnoticed. We all have the power to invoke change for the better, and I can guarantee from my own personal experiences that a life of service for the betterment of others is worth it. Your support of Freedmen Heirs Foundation is important. Each of you have a unique perspective and I'm eager to hear your thoughts.

In this month's issue, we highlight innovation in supplier diversity, inspiring agripreneurs, upcoming events, and funding opportunities.

Let's keep this momentum going!

*Seanicaa Edwards Herron*



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## SOCIAL MASS BALANCE™

Freedmen Heirs Foundation's

### Social Mass Balance™ Approach

*When Innovation, Equity, and Supplier Diversity Collide*

Historically, Black farmers haven't been a part of major food & agribusiness supply chains. Their absence is a missed opportunity for American agriculture. A vital, sustainable agricultural sector must tap into the knowledge, talents, and abilities of all types of producers. Attempts to increase opportunities for Black farmers have been haphazard and poorly resourced, exacerbating the struggles of the Black agriculture community at large. Increasingly, food and agribusiness companies are recognizing the opportunities to influence environmental and social imperatives through their supply chains. The benefits of an effective supplier diversity and inclusion strategy are multiple and include fostering resilience, creating a positive differentiator for consumer-facing brands, and building goodwill within the communities that the company operates in. It is also the right thing to do. However, a major barrier across the U.S. agri-food sector has been how to incorporate more black farmers effectively and equitably into their supply/processing chains.

Amidst a range of metrics that could be adopted to measure diversity, Freedmen Heirs Foundation proposes the very first program that utilizes the Mass Balance concept as a base framework to support Black farmers and increase the share of black grown agricultural inputs into agribusiness supply chains.

The Mass Balance concept has been utilized for decades across various industries that have complex supply/processing chains. Several agribusiness companies already employ the mass balance concept in the sourcing of inputs such as palm oil and cocoa, but none have employed this framework through the lens of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. A major advantage of the Social Mass Balance™ approach for agribusinesses is the ability to increase the share of agricultural inputs sourced by Black farmers into their respective supply chains without having to separately process volumes against other sourced products of the same quality. Our approach will assist in minimizing processing, production, and administrative costs while increasing economies of scale. As social mass balance makes it more equitable to source Black grown agricultural products, demand will increase, and more Black farmers will benefit from the social and economic advantages (including higher profit margins and long term contractual agreements). An important benefit of using the Freedmen Heirs Foundation's Social Mass Balance™ approach is the ability to grow and diversify current and future supply channels while building strong, sustainable, diverse partnerships.

**To learn more about Freedmen Heirs Foundation's Social Mass Balance™ Program, please contact us at [info@freedmenheirs.org](mailto:info@freedmenheirs.org).**

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## AGRIPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

### Building Better Communities, One Project At A Time

*How Dr. Timothy Bradford Jr. leads innovative services within agriculture*

Dr. Timothy Bradford Jr. (T.J.) is the Director of Agronomy for the regenerative farming company, Vayda; where he oversees all agronomic operations and is the chief architect of their regenerative cropping systems, including research and development. His primary goal at Vayda is to increase the number of regeneratively farmed acres in the world as quickly as possible. In this role, he implements guidelines on Vayda's Mississippi farm hub to recommend how to achieve and measure regenerative impact and integrate profitably into at-scale operations, while minimizing inputs to ensure a sustainable future. Prior to his role at Vayda, Dr. Bradford was the Director of Farm Transitions for Animal Outlook, where he worked to create blueprints and strategies for farmers who desired to exit the animal agribusiness sector and enter into a more environmentally friendly and sustainable plant-based alternative.

Dr. Bradford is a 5th generation farmer and the Founder/Owner and Senior Agronomist at Bradford Agricultural Consulting (BAC). In this role as Senior Agronomist, he is responsible for overseeing all commercial and residential construction of greenhouses and high tunnels, as well as providing comprehensive consulting services for specialty crop producers throughout the Southeastern United States. T.J. also consults on ways to conserve resources, increase profitability, and achieve sustainable production increases.

## Bradford Agricultural Consulting

Additionally, Dr. Bradford serves as collaborator on a number of USDA research projects and non-profit organizational boards that seek to pair precision agriculture technologies with perceptions of agricultural, climate friendly production of commodities. He also strives to



increase equity and representation of African-Americans in agricultural related leadership positions; as well as build health equity, and encourage positive emotional development within marginalized and socially disadvantaged communities.

A native of Jackson, MS, T.J. holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Agronomy and a Doctorate in Agricultural Sciences from Mississippi State University.

**For more information on Dr. Bradford's work, visit [www.bradfordagconsulting.com](http://www.bradfordagconsulting.com).**

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## AGRIPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

### Hunter Family Farm: Visualizing A New Narrative

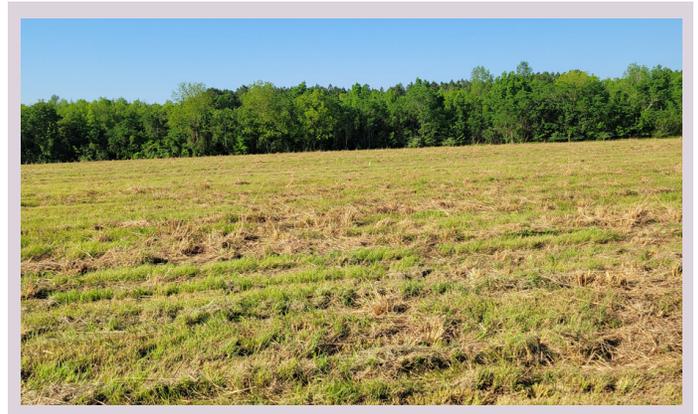
*Ms. Connie Baptiste's inspiring story of grit, persistence, and determination*

Ms. Connie Baptiste prides herself in being a southern girl from South GA, where farming and living off the land is her way of life. With family roots that run deep in farming, she was born in a share-cropper's cabin in which she has fond childhood memories of summers spent working the land with her father and grandfather. However, her family did not own the land and they had to leave their farming roots behind.

Ms. Connie followed her family's military legacy, which she proudly served 20 years in the United States Air Force. After retirement, Baptiste became a Chef and currently operates her catering service, Manna from Heaven, where she and her family serve many communities through their passion for food and culinary arts. Ms. Connie is now entering a new phase in life and has picked up the mantle to fulfill an unrecognized dream of becoming a farmer.

Ms. Connie has set forth to rewrite her family's narrative and now has established Hunter Family Farm. Experiencing hurdles, stumbling blocks, and much disappointment through the journey, Ms. Connie endured and overcame a lonely and treacherous path to locate and purchase the exact land she desired to start her farming operation.

Now, Hunter Family Farm sits on 52 acres located in South Georgia.



The farm will house high tunnels for growing commercial produce, a production vineyard to produce grapes for wine producers, greenhouses outfitted to conduct cutting-edge agriculture-based research studies, and more.



Hunter Family Farm is also designed to be a working farm that invites students to gain hands-on farming experiences, provides non-farmers an opportunity to learn the importance of farming, and offers a memorial garden

and a community greenhouse to foster community engagement. Ms. Connie and her family take great pride in establishing their family farm as they humbly pursue their mission to be good stewards of the land. Baptiste's vision for Hunter Family Farm is to Grow, Teach, and Repeat. She believes that the cycle of growing and teaching is essential for developing the next generation of successful African American farmers.

**To learn more about The Hunter Family Farm, contact [connie.baptiste@mfhservices4u.com](mailto:connie.baptiste@mfhservices4u.com).**

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## AGRIPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

### An Influential Voice For The New Farming Generation

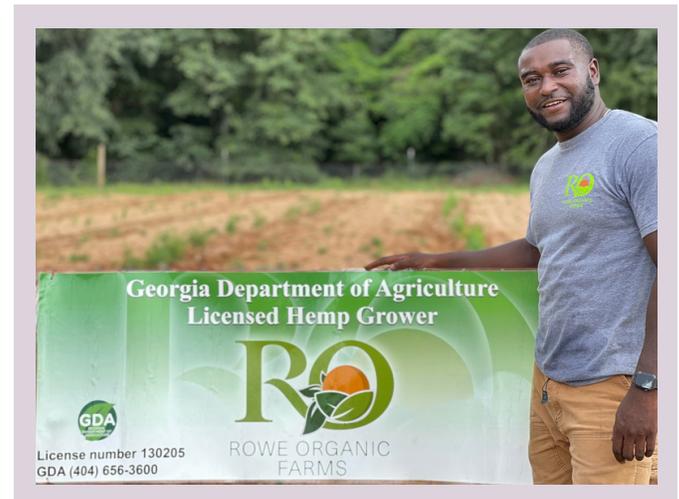
*How Sedrick Rowe Jr. is making a name for himself and young farmers alike*

Sedrick Kent Rowe Jr. is an organic farmer from Albany, GA where he currently grows hemp, sunflowers, and peanuts on 20 acres of land. Although agriculture has been a part of his life since a child, Rowe is today considered a first-generation farmer.

In 2015, Mr. Rowe graduated from Fort Valley State University on a fully-funded football scholarship and received his Bachelor's degree in Plant Science with a concentration in Horticulture. Upon graduating college, Rowe worked with the Southwest Georgia (SWG) Project, a nonprofit organization with a mission of educating, engaging, and empowering communities, led by civil rights activist Mrs. Shirley Sherrod. While employed at the SWGA Project for two years, Rowe also received his Master's degree in Public Health. His Master's thesis on organic peanuts was publicly recognized and published in the *Journal of Agriculture and Life Sciences*.



He was among one of three farmers to grow organic peanuts for market in 2019, and has since been influential in creating a niche market for fellow young farmers to survive, thrive, and



become successful in the agricultural industry. As Rowe was recognized as one of only three certified organic peanut farmers in Georgia, he was also the first organic hemp farmer licensed in South Georgia in the year of 2020. His innovative and sustainable approaches to farming have been widely acknowledged with features in *The New York Times*, *Wrangler*, *Georgia Farm Bureau's Farm Monitor*, *Atlanta Magazine*, and *Fruit Growers News: 40 Under 40 (Class of 2021)*.

Rowe continues to directly impact the young farming community, as he recently established the South GA chapter of the National Young Farmers Coalition. Aside from the Young Farmers Coalition, he is also a member of USDA's Black Farmers' Network, Georgia Organic Peanut Association, and Georgia Organics.

**For updates on Rowe Organic Farms, follow them on social media at [@roweorganic](https://www.instagram.com/roweorganic).**

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### NBGC'S 2023 MODEL FARM SERIES

**Next Farm Tour Date:** May 19th  
**Hosted By:** Darden Bridgeforth & Sons  
 Tanner, AL

For more information, visit  
<https://www.nationalblackgrowerscouncil.com>

## 2023 NBGC Model Farm Series



Date	Location	Host	Focus Group
May 19, 2023	Tanner, AL	Darden Bridgeforth & Sons	Crop protection in variety trials on Cotton, Corn & Soybeans
June 2, 2023	Byromville, GA	Jibb's Vineyard	Variety trials for Cotton, Corn & Wheat Harvest
July 20, 2023	Altheimer, AR	Thomas Farms Corporation	Specialty crops & Crop protection
July 20, 2023	Altheimer, AR	Haynie Farms	Rice, Corn, Soybean production, crop protection & irrigation practices
July 21, 2023	Bastrop, LA	J & A Farm Partnership LLP	Corn & Soybean production
August 11, 2023	Sledge, MS	CMB Farms LLC	Rice and Soybean production & irrigation practices
September 8, 2023	Rowesville, S.C.	Mahogany Farms LLC	Corn, Cotton, Soybean production & conservation practices

For more information go to:

<https://nationalblackgrowerscouncil.com/> or call (202) 641-4197

Annual Meeting December 2023 – Information coming soon



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **BLACK CONSERVATION WEEK**

For more information, contact the 40 Acre Conservation League.

[www.40acreleague.org](http://www.40acreleague.org)

**40 ACRE Conservation League**

# BLACK CONSERVATION WEEK

MONDAY, MAY 8 – SATURDAY, MAY 13

**SAVE THE DATE**

*Theme*  
**Welcome Back To the Land...**

Celebrating Black Conservation Week & the movement to bring us closer to nature through Access, Activism, Ownership, & Stewardship...

**Kickoff Reception:**  
**MONDAY, MAY 8 | 5:15 PM – 7:00 PM**  
 Capitol Park, East Lawn  
 WE'RE HOSTING A PARTY **WITH A PURPOSE**

**Black Conservation Week is brought to you by:**

**HONORARY HOST COMMITTEE**  
 ASSEMBLYMEMBER MIKE GIPSON | ASSEMBLYMEMBER CHRIS HOLDEN | ASSEMBLYMEMBER REGINALD JONES-SAWYER  
 ASSEMBLYMEMBER TINA MCKINNOR | ASSEMBLYMEMBER BLANCA PACHECO  
 ASSEMBLYMEMBER CARLOS VILLAPUDUA | ASSEMBLYMEMBER LORI WILSON

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### OTA'S ORGANIC WEEK

For more information and to register for the event, visit <https://livecon.swoogo.com/Organicweek23>.

**MAY 9 - MAY 11, 2023**

**#OrganicWeekDC**

**THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS**



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This work is supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, OREI project # 2021-51300-34891.



The Organic Trade Association's

Featuring The Organic Center's



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FARMER RESOURCES

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## FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### Application Deadline: July 25th, 2023

USDA is making \$45 million available to community-based and nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education and tribal entities that help underserved and veteran farmers and ranchers own and operate successful farms through the 2501 grant program. Based in local communities and rural areas, 2501 Program partners increase equitable participation in USDA's programs and services.

For more information on how to apply, visit <https://www.usda.gov/partnerships/underserved-veteran-farmers-ranchers-foresters>

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CONTACT US

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If you would like to be featured in an issue of The  
Minority AgVocate, please complete this form

**OR**

send us an email at [info@freedmenheirs.org](mailto:info@freedmenheirs.org).

We would love to connect with you!

VISIT US ONLINE AT:

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[@freedmenheirsfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/freedmenheirsfoundation)



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