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Black Farming and the Great Land Robbery

The organization that presented and held the panel, sought to help black farmers in the south as well as Brazil keep or purchase farmland. Vann Newark II, the presenter, was very intertwined in black farming, telling us about his family's farming history. He was a journalist for the Atlantic who was glad that he can finally turn to the family folklore of black land disposition. His article to illustrate this follows the Scott family in Mississippi and their struggle owning that land. Many people were stuck in this form of life. Ed Scott became an early landowner after slavery and passed it down to his family who then expanded it. By the end of WWII, they owned 1,000 acres and eventually ended up owning 17,000 acres. They were wary of farm aid and things such as welfare because they distrusted the government and felt they would use programs like this against them. The family got to a point where they needed federal assistance but were denied due to discrimination. To start anew, they opened a catfish processing plant, however had to shut down due to debt. Eventually, the Family was able to win a dispute case and received \$6 million in compensation from the government for discrimination. Many other black farm families were in a similar situation; however, many were not compensated for what happened to them. He terms this time period the great land robbery. During this time Black people amassed a large amount of land. More than often having to employ the black tax and the lack of federal help led to their downfall. During the civil rights era, the culture as a whole enjoyed victory however, black farmers lost the majority of their land during this period. This

created the counter movement that created poverty from the theft and denial of land to black folks. For example, black people had to move to cities where there was not a lot of wealth and investment. He emphasized that this is a key source leading to the black struggle. TAA Reps claim that “They were investing in food” concerning overpopulation and such. But their true motives are obvious. Gentrification after the Great Recession by TAA in DC show another more apparent example of what they are doing. This problem is not only in the US but in Brazil where other people of the black diaspora live. The question of why this is coming up now, of all times came up. He answered saying the fact is they have done a critical evaluation along with discovery and lots of new data sources. It Started with arguments of reparations and moving backwards. He incorporated the fact that all black roots lead to the south. To reverse this trend, they are trying to get more black people to invest into farming. Not necessarily directly, but by investing between a few people and hiring a land manager.

I see this as very important from an investment standpoint and being able to incur generational wealth for black family's overtime. As we've seen throughout history, when black people are doing well a lot of whites don't really like that, so they find a way to stop it or directly target blacks. This is similar to today with gentrification, which is happening right next door and, in my neighborhood, back home. On the farming side of black history, I was never really taught that we became very successful in it at one point. I was always taught after slavery many became sharecroppers and often encored debt. Along with the fact you don't really see images of black farmers, you often think or see white. So, I was very intrigued by it and am glad to have been educated on the subject and hope to spread this knowledge to others.