

Black Land Loss, an epidemic which is causing African Americans to lose land at alarming rates. This problem has plagued Black Americans for over a century and a half.

We cannot allow an issue as pervasive and insidious as black land loss to go unaddressed. Black land loss is attributable to many reasons: lynchings, mob attacks, lack of legal wills, slick and untrustworthy lawyers, and unscrupulous real estate traders. Sometimes black land owners were attacked by whites who wanted to seize their property. During the Reconstruction period, black were ostracized, terrorized and dispossessed of the one thing they had managed to earn in that desperate time, their land.

By 1920, African Americans had amassed more land than they ever held since reconstruction, at least 15 million acres, according to statistics compiled by the U.S. Agricultural Census.

Black land ownership tapered off after World War I and plunged in the 1950's. Today, African-Americans own just 1.1 million acres of the more than 1 billion acres in productive land in the U.S. During the 20th Century Black Americans have lost their land holding at a rate two and a half (2½) times faster than whites. Blacks were forced out of the South and off their land by:

The discriminatory lending practices employed by banks and the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the need to seek better economic opportunities in the North; racial oppression; and violence perpetrated by white supremacists groups and other terrorist organizations. In effect, black landowners were put under so much pressure to give up their land, that they became refugees in their own country.

Families that pass down their land without wills or with vague wills are particularly vulnerable to losing their property through partitioning and other predatory legal practices. Historically blacks in the rural south seldom left wills. Experts say thousands of acres of black owned land that had been in African-American families for generations has been lost through these practices. In recent years separating African-Americans from their land has become big business. All to the detriment of African-American land owners.

Ownership of land has meant more than just a family homestead, land represented wealth to a black family, when these homesteads were taken from black families they lost their ability to pass on wealth. As WEB DuBois stated, "universal suffrage could not function without personal freedom, land and education."

By preventing blacks from preserving their land, whites were more able to perpetuate the vestiges of slavery. Taking land from African-Americans went a long way in eliminating their ability to prosper; participate in the political process; and to effectively pass on wealth to future generations.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the Associated Press for a series of articles it ran late last year entitled, "Torn from the Land," which documented in great detail how private and government entitles cheated many Black Americans out of their land or drove them from their land through intimidation, violence and murder.

The misappropriation of these lands, undertaken primarily in the South, began more than a hundred years ago and continued well into the 1960s.

The lands and properties that were taken from African Americans were generally small, such as a small home, a 40-acre farm or a modest business. But such losses were devastating to families and to a people struggling to overcome the legacy of slavery.

According to the U.S. Agricultural Census, in 1910 African Americans owned over 15 million acres of farmland, the greatest level of black landownership in our nation's history. However, as a result of the illegal land grabs and the discriminatory practices of the old Farmers Home Administration, black landownership today now stands at 1.1 million acres.

The wholesale theft of land from African Americans is the greatest unpunished crime in our nation's sordid history of race relations.

Landownership was the ladder to respectability and prosperity in the Old South—the primary means to building economic security and passing wealth on to the next generation. So when black families lost their land, they lost everything.

Typically, blacks were forced off their lands with phony charges of nonpayment of taxes or through claims of counter ownership by other private or government entities.

In other cases, African Americans were forced off their lands with threats of violence or the outright murder of black landowners.

In my home state of Missouri, hundreds of blacks fled the city of Springfield in 1906, after three men were lynched. The city, which at the time had a thriving African American population of at least 10 percent with many black doctors, lawyers and educators, is today only two percent black.

In another case, 129 blacks abandoned land in Pierce City, Missouri after armed bands of whites burned five black-owned homes and killed four African American men. Afterwards, whites bought up the previously black-owned land at bargain prices.

The great abolitionist Frederick Douglass foresaw this future tragedy for Black Americans when, on the 24th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, he said, "Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, anywhere any one class is made to feel that society is in an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob, and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe."

The Associated Press articles provide ample empirical evidence that Congress needs to conduct a study into these tragic events to determine whether reparations for past losses are in order.

Throughout our nation's history, there are many examples of our government taking steps to correct past wrongs committed against specific groups of Americans.

We have compensated Japanese Americans for the time they were interned in concentration camps during World War II, and we have compensated Native Americans for the loss of their lands to western expansion.

So now the time has come for us to examine the economic and physical losses suffered by African Americans under the old policies of Jim Crow. To do any less, would allow Justice to be denied.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 3252

Mr. HILLIARD. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that my name be removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 3252.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Alabama?

There was no objection.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today on account of aircraft mechanical trouble.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. GUTKNECHT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LANGEVIN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LYNCH, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STRICKLAND, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. GUTKNECHT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. GANSKE, for 5 minutes, February 10 and 11.

Mr. LOBIONDO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. NUSSLE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GUTKNECHT, for 5 minutes, today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 7 o'clock and 59 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, February 7, 2002, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

5364. A letter from the Chairman, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's report entitled, "Report on the Economic Impacts on Western Utilities and Ratepayers of Price Caps on Spot Market Sales"; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

5365. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 14-229, "Health Insurers and Credentialing Intermediaries Uniform Credentialing Form Act of 2002" received February 6, 2002, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

5366. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 14-236, "Closing of a Portion of South Avenue N.E., and Designation of Washington Place, N.E., S.O. 01-312, Act of