

the
MINORITYAgVOCCATE



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FREEDMEN HEIRS HIGHLIGHTS



WELCOME TO THE TEAM

Freedmen Heirs Foundation welcomes Dr. Jasmine Hendrix as Director of Programs. Jasmine attended Mississippi State University where she earned her B.S. in Chemical Engineering, M.S. and PH.D. in Food Science and Technology. She has prior experience in developing and implementing educational resources to specifically support minority farming and agribusiness in Mississippi (MS). Jasmine has a passion for agriculture-based outreach and community development, agribusiness diversification, and she is committed to helping minority farmers and community members reach their goals through building partnerships and establishing equitable programmatic practices. Welcome, Jasmine!

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the first issue of the Freedmen Heirs Foundation monthly newsletter: The Minority AgVocate. In The Minority AgVocate, we purpose to share Freedmen Heirs Foundation's program initiatives, updates and pertinent agricultural news with a minority-centered focus. We desire to utilize this newsletter as a platform to build community and foster connection. In this month's issue, we are showcasing Black-owned agricultural businesses and entrepreneurs who are effecting impactful change within the farming and agriculture community.

For the year of 2023, we are laser-focused on increased outreach and partnerships to ensure that our work is relevant and responsive to Black and minority farmers and ranchers. We will be communicating more about our mission and vision, program areas, partnerships and how each of you can engage with the organization on a deeper level in the months to come.

As Founder and Executive Director of Freedmen Heirs Foundation, I am fortunate to steward a mission that is dear to my heart, and to lead this organization into an exciting new phase of program growth and leadership. I appreciate your continued support of Freedmen Heirs Foundation and look forward to sharing this journey with you.

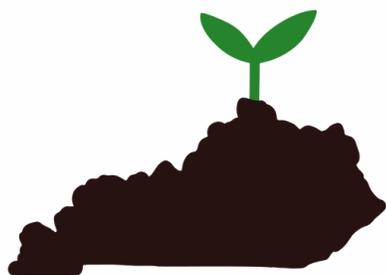
Warm Regards,

Seanicaa Edwards Herron



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AGRIPRENEUR FEATURE



BLACK SOIL KY
 OUR BETTER NATURE

Highlighting Ashley Smith of Black Soil Kentucky

Read more on her impact within the Black ag community and beyond

A native of Lexington, KY, Ashley C. Smith graduated from the University of Kentucky in 2008 with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. She is the co-founder and CEO of Black Soil: Our Better Nature, a statewide agritourism company with a mission of reconnecting Black Kentuckians to their legacy and heritage in agriculture. Smith has worked for brands such as KentuckyOne Health, Bluegrass Hospitality Group, Community Ventures, NetGain Technologies, Smiley Pete Publishing, The Lyric Theatre & Cultural Arts Center, and Fayette Alliance. Smith's other professional involvement, leadership, and accolades include: Ethical Redevelopment Salon member under the leadership of Theaster Gates, Secretary for Kentucky State University's Extension and Research Advisory Council, and 2016 Scholarship Chair for the Bluegrass Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

In addition, her leadership also includes serving on the Management Team for the Crave Food + Music Festival and Steering Committee member for the Kentucky Rural-Urban Exchange. Ashley has been doing fantastic things around Lexington, and she's also the proud mom of twins Caroline and Trevor, Jr. Under Ashley's



leadership, Black Soil KY has launched various initiatives to provide access to fresh, healthy foods in under-served neighborhoods. Additionally, the organization hosts workshops and educational events to promote sustainable farming practices and entrepreneurship among Black farmers.

For more information on Smith's foundation, Black Soil KY, visit www.blacksoilky.com.

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AGRIPRENEUR FEATURE



Helping minority-owned farms succeed

Read more on how Vince Peak connects farmers of color with invaluable resources

Share Farm is a free platform that exclusively helps minority farmers (People of Color, Women and Veterans) connect with pre-season procurement requests from large volume buyers.

It uses technology to predict how much food will be needed and pre-funded demand requests to assist farmers to sell their products in larger quantities by aggregating smaller farms together. This means that small farmers who previously may not have been able to sell to big buyers due to lack of volume, are now able to market (or sell) their products to larger companies or corporations.

Share Farm founder Vince Peak, a Black farmer and military veteran, has dedicated his life to serving his country and his community. He grew up with a deep value for healthier communities and sustainable resources in Spokane, WA where he developed a love and respect for the land and the people who work it. As a result of his educational and technical training, his military career, and his market selling ventures, Peak is determined to create an equitable and sustainable food system that offers resources for minority farmer success. As a Black farmer, Peak has faced many challenges

and obstacles, including discrimination and a lack of access to resources and support; however, he has never let these challenges stop him from pursuing his goals.

Instead, he has used his experiences to inspire him to effect change and to help other farmers like him succeed. He founded Share Farm with the goal of creating a platform that connects minority farmers and ranchers to institutional buyers, in order to bridge the gap and develop an egalitarian food system. His vision is to empower minority producers by giving them access to the resources, networks, and markets they need to succeed. As both a military veteran and a farmer, he embodies the values of service, dedication, and resilience. His leadership has been instrumental in building a platform that is transforming the food industry and creating opportunities for minority farmers and consumers alike.



For more information on Share Farm, visit www.sharefarm.com.

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AGRIPRENEUR FEATURE

Arkansas River Rice Mill: Black Agriculture History in the Making

Read more on owners of America's only Black-owned rice mill

Black agriculture history is taking place in the Southern region of our country as Arkansas River Rice Mill (ARRM), located in Pine Bluff, AR, is co-owned by agricultural leaders and pioneers PJ Haynie and Billy Bridgeforth. As the only Black-owned rice mill in the country, ARRM is a state-of-the-art rice mill offering premium rice products and by-products with flexible batch sizing, and various packaging solutions. ARRM is a SQF food-grade certified facility with capabilities to process organic rice along with Vegan, Kosher, and Halal certifications. Current rice varieties offered by ARRM are: enriched Long/Medium Grain White Rice, Long/Medium Brown Grain Rice, Brewers Rice, Second Heads, Rice Bran, and Rice Hulls. Co-owners Haynie and Bridgeforth exemplify their commitment to equity and social justice in U.S. agriculture and support of Black farmers through their associations with the National Black Growers Council, USDA Equity Commission Subcommittee, and various leadership positions across the agricultural sector.



Billy Bridgeforth is partner at Bridgeforth Farms, a fifth-generation farming operation in Tanner, AL. Bridgeforth Farms owns and operates more than 10,000 acres of row crops, spanning four counties in Northern



Alabama, and producing cotton, corn, soybeans, wheat, sorghum, and canola. Bridgeforth advocates for Black farming and promotes agriculture to the next generation, as he is a charter member of the National Black Growers Council and serves as Chairman Emeritus of the Board of Directors.

PJ Haynie is a fifth-generation row crop farmer with farming operations in Virginia and a satellite farming operation in Arkansas. Haynie owns and operates



Haynie Farms, LLC, a grain-farming business producing corn, wheat, soybeans and canola across four counties in the Northern Neck of Virginia. Haynie and his family also own and operate a transportation company specializing in food grade liquid bulk and dry bulk transportation, a timber harvesting company, as well as a landscaping and excavating company. Haynie currently serves as Board Chairman of the National Black Growers Council.

For more information, visit:

Arkansas River Rice	www.arkansasriverrice.com
Haynie Farms	www.hayniefarms.com
Bridgeforth Farms	www.bridgeforthfarms.com

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