



National Black Growers Council Response to Racism and Rallies

The National Black Growers Council (NBGC) is deeply concerned with the recent events that have swept the country. The tragic and senseless murder of George Floyd, at the hands of Minneapolis policemen, has highlighted a racial chasm in the U.S. Unfortunately, we have ample evidence that this was not an isolated event and the rallies occurring across the country echo these facts. As Black farmers, we have dealt with racial inequality and injustice for generations, often times feeling ostracized when confronted with its occurrence. The fact that we comprise less than 1% of the 2% of Americans that are actively engaged in agriculture adds to this isolation.

We must acknowledge that racism is an unpleasant reality and an extremely sensitive, and often uncomfortable, topic to discuss. But in this situation, we are on the front lines and need to lead an effort to develop solutions to these systemic problems. Our regular members are multigenerational Black farmers who have dealt with this situation for far too long. This racism caused the precipitous decline in the number of Black farmers from 1910 to today. Racist policies and procedures were further fueled by the unfair treatment of Black farmers by USDA, and others, from the 1930's onward. Decades later, class action settlements dealt with some of the discrimination, but did little to address the cumulative effect of being historically denied. As Black farmers, we find ourselves in an ongoing struggle with inferior infrastructures and being undercapitalized in a very capital-intensive profession. So, what do we do? Our regular members must focus on our mission: **to improve the efficiency, productivity, and sustainability of Black, row-crop farmers.** We must find ways to deal with the economic knee that has been suffocating the necks of black farmers for generations. While continuing to work hard, we must work smart and be aggressive adopters of technology and programs that will help us be more efficient. We have to share relevant information so that we can all learn from each other's successes and mistakes. We have implemented programs, e.g. NBGC's Model Farm field days, to facilitate this process, and must find ways to continue their growth, even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, our regular members cannot do this alone. We must partner with our sustaining members to help us craft and deliver solutions. We have to engage in uncomfortable discussions with our supporters to help them better understand our plight. We need your support in advocating for the fair and equitable treatment of our growers. We need to be included in opportunities to evaluate existing products and help with the development of new ones. We desire to be critical customers of your sales and technical development personnel. One of our

goals is to project the correct image of today's Black farmer. Although we have suffered discrimination, we are not bitter. We welcome the opportunity to engage with you in sessions that help you understand our rich history and our pride in feeding, clothing, and fueling a growing world population.

In addition to our regular and sustaining members, we have added a new class of membership: **supporting members**. This category is reserved for individuals who support our mission, but are not farmers or corporate sponsors. We have identified several advocates who partner with us to help us fulfill our agenda, including USDA personnel, community leaders, authors, landowners, and others who share our vision of creating an agricultural system where all farmers can concentrate on being the best producer they can be, regardless of color. We rely on you to help us amplify our message and expand our sphere of influence.

Our hearts and prayers go out to the families of Mr. George Floyd, Ms. Breonna Taylor, Mr. Ahmaud Arbery, and too many others who have suffered from racist attacks. No one should have to endure such inhumane treatment and we want to do our part to work towards collective healing. Needless to say, we have lots of work to do!