

# JRGP Symposium



The Southern University Law Center's Journal of Race, Gender & Poverty held its second annual symposium

By Nicholas Giles

On March 17, 2011, the Southern University Law Center's Journal of Race, Gender & Poverty held its second annual symposium, "We're Taking Your Property: Expropriation and Property Rights," on its campus in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The Journal's purpose of hosting an annual Symposium is to provoke critical discussions on subjects that remain extremely relevant to society, but fail to receive adequate coverage in mainstream law journals. The Journal achieved this purpose when they brought speakers from across the United States to contribute to diverse discussions on property rights and land loss by minority property owners. This year's symposium covered a wide-range of topics. Those topics included; environmental justice, expropriation, the Uniform

Partition of Heirs Property Act, and other significant issues related to property ownership and civil rights. With the economic recession, and the vast economic gap between minorities and the majority, panelist Savi Horne, the Executive Director of the Land Loss Prevention Project, noted, "this symposium came at a critical time and not a moment too soon."

The symposium began with discussions on expropriation. Opening panelists measured the impact of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Kelo vs. City of New London*, which granted the government the constitutional discretion to allow private companies to "take" property for economic development. Chancellor Emeritus John Costonis of the LSU Law Center and David A. Marcello, Director of the Louisiana Center for the Public Interest, detailed how this decision

affected the property rights of millions of African American residents in southern Louisiana who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Historian and University of Alabama Professor, David T. Beito, further noted how Kelo's expansion of the "takings clause" has negatively impacted Alabama residents as the state attempted to take the homes of impoverished minorities under the guise that the property was "blighted."

The second panel examined a common, but equally devastating way the government has taken the property of minority homeowners. Professor Thomas W. Mitchell and Professor Malcolm Meyer, Sr., agreed that two of the most critical means the state has stripped minority property owners of their land was by partitioning property through heirship laws. Professor Mitchell, who is also the Reporter of the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act for the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, compared the partitioning of property sales to a "private taking without just compensation." Tulane Law School Professor Malcolm Meyer, Sr., explained how complex heirship laws make it difficult for impoverished minorities to gain a good title on to their property.

Chris Brook, an attorney from the Southern Coalition of Social Justice in North Carolina, added an additional perspective to the symposium by speaking from an environmental justice perspective. He engaged the audience of law students and faculty as he lectured on how minority neighborhoods were targeted for unwanted land uses. These land uses include: toxic

dumping sites, chemical plants, and waste fields. Gary Bledsoe, the President of the Texas Chapter of the NAACP, had the audience at the edge of their seats as he related stories of expropriation abuse cases he litigated in Texas.

As the symposium headed to a close, Savi Horne gave an interesting, yet disturbing breakdown on the discriminatory loan practices that Black farmers experienced at the hands of the United States Department of Agriculture. Although her discussion was informative, it left the some of the audience feeling overwhelmed and hopeless. It was Frank Taylor, however, the President of the Self-Help Winston Cooperative, who closed the symposium in grandiose fashion by using his undeniable humor and wit. Mr. Taylor, while using catchphrases and stories of his love life, challenged the audience to take what they learned at the symposium beyond the realms of academia and put it into action! One of the most memorable lines of Mr. Taylor's closing was, "practice does not make perfect, but its gives you more than one choice." This was said to mean, "as one comes across various blocks in their mission to find solutions to the injustices of the world, one should not let their labor bend upon frustration but rather stay innovative and unappeased with minor measures of progress." It was this advice that summed up the audience's experience of the Southern University Law Center's Journal of Race, Gender and Poverty's second annual symposium, "We're Taking Your Property: Expropriation and Property Rights."

## The Society of St. Andrew gives WCSHC something to glean about

Winston County Self Help Cooperative is not just about helping members of the cooperative. They also have a strong desire to help others, especially those who are in need. Breaking the ice for more things to come, Larry Woodward, Mississippi Gleaning Coordinator for the Society of St. Andrew joined us for our forth business session of the year. Mr. Woodward introduced us to a Biblically based Ministry that was birthed from a conversation regarding food waste and the millions of people who are living at risk of hunger in America. There are more than 36 million Americans, including 12 million children who are at risk of going hungry in a country who is the richest in the world. Yet, in the United States of America, nearly 100 billion pounds of food is thrown away each year before it even gets to market.

The Society of St. Andrew began its ministry in 1979 in a converted sheep shed for offices and a dream of a world without hunger. They strategically targeted two main points of food waste in this country, 1). Fields and archers where produce is missed by mechanical harvesting equipment, and 2). Produce is the wrong size or not pretty enough and is left behind by pickers. The crops usually wound up in land fields due to size and a few blemishes. To help counter act the waste, the Society of St. Andrew started a Gleaning Network. Gleaning is the traditional Biblical practice of gathering crops that would otherwise be left in the fields to rot or be plowed under after harvest. The Gleaning network coordinates volunteers, growers, and distribution agencies to salvage this food for the needy. Tens of thousands of volunteers from churches, synagogues, scout troops, senior citizen groups and other organizations participate each year in the gleaning activities. The Society of St. Andrew's Produce and Potato project has distributed well



The Society of St. Andrew, Continued on pg. 5

## WCSHC's 2011 Kick-off,

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the Louisville Coliseum for the co-op's 2011 kick-off meeting. "We are here on the last Thursday of 2010 to kick-off WCSHC's 2011 calendar of work with a bang according to co-op member Gloria Moore. The kick-off meeting presents an opportunity to broaden participation due to the holiday season. Our members and supporters are not working; therefore, we seize the moment to congregate and set sail into 2011 with fire in our belly".



## Farm transferred to 2nd Generation

By Andrew Williams  
WCSHC's Agribusiness Farm Management Specialist

Kimberly F. Cosby is a resident of Marion, Alabama which is located in Perry County of West Alabama. Ms. Cosby is an educator at Uniontown

Elementary School in Uniontown, Alabama. She graduated from Francis Marion High School and holds several advanced degrees. She decided early in her career that she would stay home and help her parents manage their family businesses. One of the businesses that her family owns is a small farm where cattle were produced in a cow-calf operation. When the

farm was transferred to Ms. Cosby, she contacted Andrew Williams of the Winston County Self Help Cooperative 2501 program for technical assistance. She indicated to Mr. Williams that she wanted to continue operating this farm, but wanted to convert it over to forestry production to include wildlife habitat management. At this point, Mr. Williams directed

her to visit the USDA/NRCS office for cost share assistance in the 2010 program year.

The USDA/NRCS office referred her to the Perry County Soil and Water Conservation District where she received cost share assistance under the Alabama Agricultural Conservation Development Cost-Share Program (AACDCP). Under this effort the following were

provided:

- A forestry Regeneration plan developed by the Alabama Forestry Commission
- Cost share assistance was approved by the Perry County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Andrew Williams provided

Farm transferred to 2nd, Continued on pg. 5

## WCSHC's Wellness Walking Program



Winston County Self Help Cooperative Walking in Wellness Program began 10:00 A.M. Saturday, February 5, 2011 at Ivy Park located in the heart of Louisville, MS. WCSHC Walking in Wellness is in conjunction with the Winston County Diabetes Coalition and working together to establish a healthier lifestyle for the community and its surrounding

areas. Marjorie Coburn, a Louisville native and Senior Citizen is WCSHC's Walking in Wellness Model who walks on average (5) miles a day. "Walking helps you! It helps your blood pressure, your heart rate, and diabetes, motivate yourself!" said Marjorie Coburn who will soon be 70 years old. Energy levels are increasing, stress levels decreasing and walkers

desire to walk for longer periods of time. Thanks Winston County Self Help Cooperative for making a phenomenal difference in the community and establishing a healthy habit of physical activity for all to embrace". Winton County Self Help Cooperative invites everyone to come out and begin Walking in Wellness 10:00 A.M. every Saturday at Ivy, Dean & Molly Estes Parks. For more information please contact WCSHC Walking in Wellness at 662-779-2400.

*"Walking helps you! It helps your blood pressure, your heart rate, and diabetes, motivate yourself!"*

**Marjorie Coburn  
WCSHC Walking in  
Wellness participant**

**WCSHC a family affair,**

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was already a small wagon road on the land, so the first project was to clear off a house seat and then the road in front of the house. The house was completed before the first child was born. Everything was accomplished by manual labor. There was never any doubt that farming would be a way of life for George and Montro Miller. It was something they both grew up doing and they both did it well.

To this union, 5 children were born, 3 boys and two girls. Unlike his parents, the first two out of the oven were boys. These boys were like the "two men crew" observing their father while he worked until they reached the age of 5. After that, they were allowed to do little things around the farm and then moved up to harder tasks. By the ages of 6 and 8, the two boys were regular crew members, participating in the planting, harvesting, plowing and anything else that took place on the farm. The family planted just about everything they ate and also raised pigs, chickens, mules, horses, and cattle. Their main crop was cotton. However, after the U.S. Government paid small farmers an insignificant sum of money to stop producing major crops, the local Cotton Gin closed down and the family lost a source of income. Times got hard for all the small farmers. But when Mr. George applied for the same grants and assistance his white friends told him they had received, he was met with disappointment and frustration each time he made the trip to the USDA and was told there was no money to be had. Yet and still his white counterparts continued to receive assistance with farm equipment and other needed resources.

Through the years, Mr. George was employed with Fair Company, a family owned grocery store, and Spartus, a manufacturer of clocks. Yes, he worked all day away from home and then came home to put in numerous hours of strenuous work on the farm. His children describe him as a man who never stopped working. One of his daughters gave him the nickname of "Work Head". If he didn't know it before, he will know it after reading this article. One reason Mr. George worked so hard in addition to his will to provide for his family is that he also had a strong desire for each one of his children to receive a college education. And they did (all five of them). Mr. George funded his children's college education by hauling logs on the back of his 1956 GMC pick-up truck that he claims "could out run a car". The same daughter that gave her father the nickname wanted nothing to do with going to college. So Mr. George took her out into the woods to cut logs and within 2 week's time she had a new attitude. Not only did she go to college, but she is a gifted educator of 30 years.

While Mr. George was working away from home during the day, Mrs. Montro ensured that all assigned chores were completed on the farm by the time he got home. She tells

the story of how she would operate one end of the cross cut saw and the two eldest boys would be on the other end, sometimes fighting and accusing the other of riding the saw. In spite of the bickering and arguing, the load of logs was always ready for their father to take to sale when he got home from work. Mrs. Montro was a woman of many duties. She was able to do what one would call "back breaking work" and still find the energy and time to can and put up the vegetables they grew and to care and nurture her family as well as the best of mothers.

At ages 84 and 76 respectfully, George and Montro Miller are still farming. Things have been quite different for them since Mr. George became a member of Winston County Self Help Cooperative around 1991. Because of WCSHC's affiliation with the International Heifer Program, Mr. George was one of the many members who received 5 bred heifers from the program. To help secure his pastures, he also received metal fence posts and barbed wire from WCSHC in addition to feeding troughs for his cattle. Government services that once denied Mr. George assistance have now extended those services to him due to their association with WCSHC. He was able to receive fencing material through the Equip program that is sponsored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service who also dug a pond on his land for watering his cattle. Mr. George's affiliation with WCSHC has afforded him the opportunity to receive grants from the Co-Op as well as a wealth of information that allows him not only to maintain, but also to enhance his farming strategies and techniques.

Mr. George's involvement in the WCSHC played a major roll in 2 of his sons' decisions to return to a life of farming in Winston County. The eldest, George A. made the move in 1996 after spending 10 years in Detroit and then a few of years in the Jackson area. While in Detroit, George A. (now, Elder George A. Miller) was never at peace because of his desire to return home to farming. Elder Miller became a member of WCSHC in 1998 and his wife Equilla joined the cooperative in 2006. The two of them met while attending college at the University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff. Elder Miller was on the Football team and after graduating became a free agent for the NFL for 1 year, then decided to get married. Although Equilla did not live on a farm, she grew up in Forest City, Arkansas where her family raised chickens and all of their food, including fruit trees and grape vines. So she is no stranger to their lifestyle today. Elder Miller says he never felt comfortable living in the city. Looking both ways when he walked out of his house in the city was a requirement for him. He says that being on a farm allows him to sleep better at night and affords him the opportunity to live off the land. It took him a while to move his family back to Winston County, but the day he received a call to pastor a church in Starkville put the wheels in motion.

He was grateful for the opportunity to move back to the area and to buy land in Winston

County. With both Elder Miller and Equilla being members of the Self Help Cooperative, they have received 10 bred heifers, chickens, donkeys, and other services such as free fencing, posts, seeds and 2 ponds have been dug on their farm. Their plans for the future include clearing off more land to be used for grazing, expanding their herd and purchasing more land for hay ground. Elder Miller plans to use farming to supplement his retirement in the near future.

Like the eldest son, the second eldest had plans to never return home after graduating from college. They both thought they had had enough farming for a lifetime as boys growing up on the farm. After college at Jackson State, Alonzo remained in the Jackson area for several years, and then moved to Bolton, MS. In 2001 he moved to Grand Prairie, Texas where he met his wife, Peggy. Like his dad and mother, they also met at church. Alonzo, his brother, and dad spoke often on the phone, mostly about farming and the benefits of being members of the Winston County Self Help Cooperative. When Alonzo saw his dad and brother receive heifers from WCSHC, he remembered the cost involved in buying cattle that he purchased with his dad and brother years back. He figured that if a program existed that would do this for its members; he wanted to be a part of it. Alonzo made trips back and forth to Louisville to help his dad put up fencing and to do other things on the farm. On one of the trips Peggy made with him, she saw him on a tractor for the first time. That was probably the first time she had seen anyone close up on a tractor except on TV. With farming in his blood and his heart, it wasn't long before Alonzo decided to move back home and try farming on his own. One of the main reasons was that he wanted to grow his own food and raise cattle. After serious discussions with his wife, she was able to see the possibilities in farming.

Alonzo explains that the older he got, the more he realized the value of what he had learned as a child. He saw his parents be almost self sufficient and work together with others to make sure everyone was OK. He says that owning land gives you the freedom to be a Producer and not just a Consumer. The first time he spoke with Frank Taylor, President of WCSHC, he realized that Frank was trying to bring back something that he himself was passionate about. For Alonzo and Peggy Miller, the WCSHC has given them a "jump start." "It has actually put us ahead in the game of farming", they both agree. Being from the city, Peggy is accustomed to having things almost instantly. Life being on a fast pace, it doesn't seem as though it takes a long time for something to materialize (in the city). She too realizes that the advantages and opportunities available through the Self Help Cooperative have allowed them to see results much sooner than if they had been on their own. Only being on their farm for two years, they are off to a great start thanks to WCSHC. They already have 12 heads of cattle and 3 more bred heifers on the way. They have chickens and donkeys. The Cooperative have

also provided fruit trees, vegetables to plant, workshops and valuable information that helps them to move forward with their goals. Their membership has brought them face to face with numerous organizations, programs, and individuals such as Cattlemen's Assn., USDA, NRCS, MS Forestry Commission, MSU Extension Service, Farm Service Agency, Grazing Land Specialist, and many more. Through these agencies they have received help with purchasing barb wire and fence posts for fencing, soil testing, lime and fertilizer. Representatives from the NRCS have made visits to the farm just to provide advice on how to set things up and help you plan your next step.

Peggy is especially grateful for the canning workshops that allow her to process and preserve the food that is grown on the farm. She likes the fact that she can now have fresh produce whether it's in or out of season, year round. Living on a farm is presenting her with new challenges every day. Things like making jellies and preserves are tasks she never thought of herself doing before. Growing her own vegetables has challenged her to look for new recipes and ways to prepare them. Field trips taken with the Cooperative provide her the opportunity to see things up close that she has never seen before. Knowledge obtained from workshops, seminars, and field trips make it possible for her to be a contributing partner with Alonzo instead of being totally in the dark about everything. She even gets her hands dirty from time to time helping Alonzo with the fencing, and building things such as the chicken house and dog pen.

What lies ahead for Alonzo and Peggy? Future plans include getting ponds cleared out and repaired, wiring in another 52 acres of land and putting up some cross fencing. Also on the list are plans to clear off some timber to create another 20 acres of grazing land. Purchasing hay processing equipment is another priority as well as constructing barns, store houses for feed and hay, and holding ramps for cattle. Alonzo says that the Winston County Self Help Cooperative program brings about the same concept that his ancestors had. He is surprised that more people are not participating in the program. With the economy the way it is, this program creates opportunities that can help you take care of your family and also educate your children by introducing them to the field of Agriculture which may inspire them to become Producers.

Mr. George never expected his 2 eldest sons to return to a life of farming in Winston County, but he is certainly glad they did. As he gets older, he considers it a blessing to have them around to help. However, from time to time he has to show them that he can still carry his own weight. Five members and 1 associate member from the same family are reaping the benefits offered by a great program. Obviously, the Millers have made Winston County Self Help Cooperative a "Family Affair." Hopefully their story will inspire others to do the same.

## Saving Rural America and Youth Conference 2011 Photo Gallery (Continued)

