CENTER FOR Heirs' Property PRESERVATION

HEIRS' PROPERTY MATTERS

In Pursuit of Justice

[See page 4 for full story]

TEL: 843.745.7055 • FAX: 843.745.7054 • WWW.HEIRSPROPERTY.ORG

HEIRS' PROPERTY MATTERS

WHAT IS HEIRS' PROPERTY?

Most heirs' property in the Lowcountry is land that was either purchased by or deeded to African Americans after emancipation. Much of this land has been passed down through the generations without the benefit of a will so that the land is owned in common by all of the heirs — whether they live on the land; help pay the taxes, or have never set foot on the land.

This unstable form of ownership puts heirs' property at high risk for loss because any heir can sell his/her percentage of ownership to another who can force a sale of the entire property.

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A Note From Jennie

Fifteen years ago, a number of us in the philanthropic and social justice communities around Charleston decided we should no longer accept further loss of African American family land. Not only was land loss severing the connections of families to their land-based heritage and culture, it was draining away the economic potential of black communities, both rural and urban. We knew that the widespread condition of heirs' property was preventing productive use of land; resolving it was key to stabilizing ownership.

Many thought that the problem of land loss was so complex that it could not be "fixed." In contrast, our community saw an opportunity to create a solution——the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation. Consequently, there is now a landowner movement that has the power to unleash the cultural and natural resources of land in marginalized communities toward family wealth creation and to ecological restoration.

This happened all because of you; give yourselves a pat on the back for forward thinking!

Leadership Team

Jennie L. Stephens, *Chief Executive Officer*

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Brianna Bogan, *Staff Attorney*

David Bourgeois, *Forester*

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Feeling Relieved... Getting your Family Affairs in Order

By: Brianna Bogan,
Staff Attorney

In March of 2019, Denis Hudson, and his sister, Darlene Gaffney, came to the Center looking for help in dividing their family's property. After receiving the Center's free one-hour consultation with our staff attorney, Mr. Hudson understood that in order to subdivide the property among his family he must first clear the title of the property.

To successfully resolve heirs' property issues, the family must actively participate and come to an agreement as to the future use [or purpose] of the property. Because this can be an intimidating process, our legal team at the Center can provide a facilitation tool called a Family Presentation, tailored to the specific needs of each family.

In Mr. Hudson's case, the Center has worked diligently in assisting the family with clearing the title and ensuring that there is agreement among all the family members. While pursing various legal actions to clear the title, Mr. Hudson was inspired to complete his estate plan. By being proactive and establishing his estate plan, he has insured that future generations will not have to endure the same legal challenges to enjoy the full use of their family land.

"Thanks to the Center, it was such a relief to finally get our family affairs in order," said Mr. Hudson, after signing his estate planning documents. Taking the lead on clearing the title, Mr. Hudson has made estate planning a family affair! The Center has begun helping his extended family with their Wills and Estate Planning documents.

Do you have heirs' property in your family? Do you have a Will? Call the Center today and schedule an appointment with our Legal Department! Don't leave a legacy of complex legal affairs to your children.

Mr. Denis Hudson with Center Attorney Brianna Bogan on the family property in Dorchester County, after signing legal documents

The Center's 15th Anniversary!

In Persuit of Justice - Economic, Social, and Environmental

2002 The Ford Foundation funds the "Heirs' Property Preservation Project', managed by Jennie Stephens, at Coastal Community Foundation. Partners are – SC Bar Foundation and SC Legal Services.

2005 Center incorporates as non-profit organization with a budget of $150K and 2 paid staff. Serving 5 counties

2006 Full time Executive Director Jennie Stephens is hired. Add Georgetown County to service area and 1st heirs' property (HP) title is resolved

2012 Revised Mission; developed partnership to launch the 'Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention" (SFAALR) program. Center budget - $500K.

2013 Recipient of grant awarded for SFAALR. Client intakes doubled with 1 attorney. Hired Sustainable Forestry Director. More regional and national attention. 7 staff members.

2015 Jasper County receives legal services. Conducted HP and Forestry forums in AR, GA, MS and VA. Graduated first class of Woodland Community Advocates.

2016 Mapping Project reveals at least 108K acres of HP across Center's anticipated 15-county service area. 10 staff members.

2018 Resolved 202 titles since 2005, with a total tax assessed value of $12.2M. Service area expanded to 15 counties. 17 staff members

2019 1st satellite office opened in Orangeburg. Helping to build regional network with other Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention programs. Center budget $2M

2020 Now serving a total of 18 counties with 27 employees and celebrating our 15th Anniversary…with your generous support!

Reinventing the Center during COVID-19

This spring, as the COVID-19 pandemic threatened the ongoing work of the Center, Dr. Stephens immediately formed an internal task force charged with the mission of reinventing outreach efforts. The results were swift and impactful.

By early April the Center was hosting seminars by using *Facebook Live*. Shortly thereafter, switching the technical delivery platform over to *Zoom*. The very first Heirs' Property and Forestry Seminar offered on Zoom attracted more than one hundred registrants! The unexpected popularity forced the Center to upgrade its Zoom account to increase capacity before its first use!

Even a global pandemic cannot stop the critical mission of the Center. Although our office may be closed to the general public, our work moves forward. While protecting the health and safety of both clients and employees are paramount - through virtual outreach, working remotely, practicing social distancing and the use of face masks, we are still able to resolve heirs' property issues and provide technical assistance in the field.

Above: Center Forester David Bourgeois takes the photo of landowners Yvonne Knight-Carter [right] and her sister Eleanor Cooper Brown. David was providing technical assistance and help during a recent logging operation.

Left: Prominent Hilton Head Island landowner Thomas Barnwell [right] is shown explaining 'Tabby' construction to the Center's new forester, Kenneth Dunn

Commitment To Justice Award Reception

On Thursday, August 20, 2020, the Center will host the rescheduled "Commitment to Justice" Award Reception honoring Christine Osburn Jackson. This will be a virtual event and will begin at 6:30 PM.

Christine Osburn Jackson was born in Marion, Alabama. She moved to Charleston in 1963 as a home economist for Clemson University Extension Service. She followed her husband, the late Rev. E. L. Jackson, who moved here after losing his job as a football coach for simply participating in a civil rights march. The fight for equality and justice was a part of the couple's D.N.A., it is a family trait. Ms. Jackson is first cousin to Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Ms. Jackson led the Greater Charleston YWCA, formerly the Coming Street YWCA, for 37 years. When she became Executive Director in 1966, the organization was a segregated institution. Under her leadership the YWCA withstood vestiges of racial segregation to emerge as the local community's premier organization inspiring generations of young women to become strong leaders and advocates for opportunity.

Please join us to honor Christine Osburn Jackson and support the Center! For information about this virtual event please contact Brett Wadford, Director of Development at [843] 745-7055/bwadford@hiersporperty.org.

5th Annual

Center for Heirs' Property Preservation

Rural & Limited Resource Landowner Symposium

August 28th - 29th, 2020

The 5th Annual South Carolina Rural and Limited Resources Landowner Symposium will take place on August 28th and 29th. Good forestland management builds generational wealth! Education, technical assistance and access to available programs and resources are the keys to success. Here's your opportunity as a landowner to connect with the experts. This year it will be a virtual conference and the registration fee is only $20.00 per person! Help support the Center while taking advantage of this incredible learning opportunity! Register now! https://whova.com/portal/registration/lando1_202008/

Diversity in Forestry

Dana Bloome's passion for the outdoors began as a young child residing in the small town of North, South Carolina. Her neighborhood and backyard served as places for adventure. She often spent time on her father's logging job during the summer, where she would play and gain experiences that would later lead her to a career in forestry and logging.

Dana also had a love for literature which was flourished as she received her undergraduate degree from Claflin University as an English Major and member of the well-respected Alice Carson Tisdale Honors College. Following graduation, she was accepted to the highly esteemed University of Georgia's Warnell School for Forestry and Natural Resources as a graduate student. There, she was able to feed her passion with the necessary knowledge and techniques to become a good forester.

Dana has worked as a forester across the southeast, with some of the largest forestry companies. She was also employed as a skidder operator on her father's logging job.

"Mud, streams, dust, and trees...that is all that I can remember from my summer days as a child on my dad's logging job," shared Dana. "The days were never too long and the sun was never too hot because I was in my favorite place, the forest. I belonged and I still do despite the comments made to me by those who felt that I do not look like a forester."

Dana Bloome

Dana now lives in Sumter, S.C. with her family and is the owner of a private forest consulting business, Family Tree Forestry, LLC. Her company's mission aligns perfectly with that of the Center and she has already started working with our own forestry team. She has also found a way to put her English Degree to good work too! She is the author of a series of children's books about Larry the Logger. These books not only highlight diversity in forestry, but also demonstrate the positive aspects and importance of forestry management.

"I wrote this book for those who share the same passion for the outdoors as I do; for those who can step into a forest and feel at home," she said. "They are also welcome despite the color of their skin, gender and lifestyle choices. I love fingernail polish, especially pink, but I can also beat through a bed of briars and wade through the deepest swamp without fear or hesitation. I wrote this book to celebrate loggers because they are our true heroes in this industry."

Dana told us her dad has never complained about mill quotas, weather, and equipment issues and is a true Champion. And by the way, her business still contracts with her father who owns D & L Logging. His name is Larry.

CENTER FOR HEIRS' PROPERTY PRESERVATION
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Welcome!

New Employees : Cheryl Reid, *Chief Financial Officer*; Esther K. Adams, *Manager of Strategic Initiatives*; Kenneth Dunn, *Forester*; Antonia Francis, *Staff Attorney*; Jordan Lewis, *Outreach Liaison, Pee Dee Region,* and Demetra Stevenson, *Outreach Liaison*

Cheryl Reid

Esther K. Adams

Kenneth Dunn

Antonia Francis

Jordan Lewis

Demetra Stevenson