

## **Black Land Loss: 1920 - 1997**

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### **ONLINE APPENDIX**

#### **Census of Agriculture (COA) Data Considerations**

Missing Values in the ICPSR Files - We relied on graduate research assistants to look up by hand any values that were missing from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) digital repository in the COA schedules available online through non-searchable PDFs or through physical copies of the COA schedules available in the university library (Haines, Fishback and Rhode 2018)..

How Ethnicity is Recorded in the COA - The acreage is recorded for “colored” farmers from 1920-1935, for “nonwhite” farmers from 1940-1964, and for farmers who are “Black and other races” from 1960-1997. In the early 20th century, “colored” or “nonwhite” farmers in the 17 states we examine are overwhelmingly Black farmers. In later years, the share of farmers included in the “nonwhite” and “Black and other races” categories who are not Black may have increased noticeably in some states, in particular in Oklahoma where the COA began to include much greater amounts of Native American land near the middle of the 20th century (United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 1840-2012). While we do not account for this changing composition of nonwhite acreage in this estimate, the effect is likely small, and we argue that it makes our estimate of lost Black farm acreage an underestimate, since in later years we are possibly inflating the actual acreage (and therefore deflating the loss of acreage).

Ownership Values in 1920 - The 1920 county-level COA only includes acreage for all operators and not owners. Using national COA data, we calculated that, on average, in 1920, fully owned Black acreage was about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the acreage operated by Black farmers, and partially owned Black acreage was about  $\frac{1}{15}$  of acreage operated by Black farmers. We use these proportions to scale the county-level Black operator acreage to create estimates for Black owned acreage in 1920.

1969 COA Undercounts - In 1969, the COA switched from in-person enumerators to mail-in questionnaires. This resulted in severe undercounts for that census (ELF 1980). Because of this, we exclude the 1969 COA acreage values from our analysis and smooth between the 1964 COA and 1974 COA acreage values.

Farmland vs. Other Rural Properties - Various studies of all owned farmland or all rural land show higher estimates of owned land than the COA (Du Bois 1904, Fisher 1978, Emergency Land Fund (ELF) 1980). These studies also tend to show a decline in Black-owned land over the 20th century. This is most clear in data on forestland from the Forest Service, which show 5.2 million acres of Black-owned forestland in 1978 down to 2.5 million in 2018 (Birch et. al. 1982, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2006-2018). However these surveys also tend to show much more Black-owned land than the COA. A study conducted by USDA (Lewis 1980) on landowners found Black people owned about 6 million acres in farms in 1978. The COA, meanwhile, showed about 2 million acres in the farms of Black full owners and 2 million in the farms of Black part owners (USDA 1840-2012). The discrepancy is likely due to undercounts in the COA (ELF 1980). The same land ownership survey also found another 4 million acres not in farms (Lewis 1980). A contemporaneous study noted that Black families were buying more non-farm, residential properties at the time than in the past (ELF 1980). This may explain the presence of significant non-farm acreage in these studies. There is also some ambiguity about the state of Black farmland ownership at the end of the century. The USDA conducted a 1988 study that found Black families owned 2 million farm acres (USDA 1990) while a similar 1999 study found almost 8 million acres (USDA 2001). The latter result seems hard to square with reports of persistent discrimination and land loss in the second half of the 20th century (Daniel 2013). More research is needed on these and other similar studies to better understand patterns of acquisition and loss of farm and non-farm properties by Black families in the latter part of the 20th century.

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