



Community 
Strategies Group

 THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

**All Land Is
Not Creating Equal:
Unleashing
Family And
Community
Wealth Through
Landownership**

Virtual Event

**Wednesday,
November 18, 2020**

**1:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Eastern Time**



Objectives

What is heirs' property?

Learn about the role of land in wealth inequality, about heirs' property and fractionated land, and its impact on underserved vulnerable landowners throughout the country – especially women, indigenous people, Black Americans and the poor.

Building Understanding

Deepen participant understanding of heirs' property, and the equity issues of involuntary land loss through contested claims, unaffordable high transaction costs, forced sales to speculators, and outright fraud.

Families at the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation:

Explore how the Center's legal and forestry education and services have assisted landowners and families in

stabilizing ownership and building productive land for generational wealth.

Taking Action

Learn about new strategies and policies that are addressing heirs' property and about organizations and groups who are helping to build stronger rural regions and urban communities that are more inclusive and resilient.

Putting it Together:

Gain ideas for how to craft effective partnerships among private, government and philanthropic sectors by focusing on natural resources to build family and community wealth and ecological restoration in marginalized communities.

Event Description

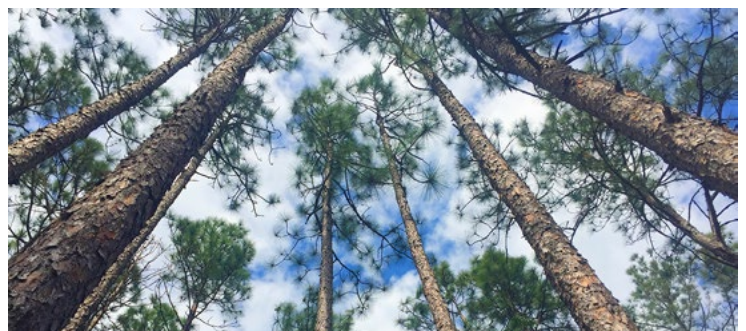
When it comes to the roots of wealth inequality in the United States, what is "the worst problem you never heard of?" For many, that answer is a confounding phenomenon called *heirs' property* or *fractionated land*.

Heirs' property is land that has been passed down through generations without a will – creating shared ownership among many descendants. Over time, unless title to the land is cleared and land rights secured, the opportunity for those owners to use their land for economic benefit is limited. As a result, underserved vulnerable landowners throughout the country – especially, women, indigenous people, Black Americans and the poor – have involuntarily lost their family property through contested claims, unaffordable high transaction costs, forced sales to speculators, and outright fraud. Black families alone, researchers estimate, have lost hundreds of billions of dollars in such land value over the last century. And the U.S. Department of Agriculture considers Heirs' Property the "leading cause of Black involuntary land loss."

Fifteen years ago, most considered this complex problem intractable. In contrast, the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation saw opportunity. The Center's process has since helped families clear more than 275 titles, and its partnerships have fostered a landowner movement that is unleashing cultural and natural

resources to build family and community wealth and ecological restoration in marginalized communities. Efforts alongside the Center – work in Native nations, among investors and researchers, and in state legislatures – are now likewise growing to secure family land ownership rights, stimulate economic growth and increase regional resilience.

In celebration of the Center's 15th anniversary – and the 35th anniversary of the Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group, which helped spark the Center's start-up – we invite you to learn about the role of land in wealth inequality, about heirs' property and fractionated land, and about strategies and policies that can address this issue to build rural regions and urban communities that are more inclusive and resilient. Join us for any or all these insightful-and-action-provoking sessions!





Plenary Session link: <https://aspeninst.zoom.us/j/99592884047>

Timing	Plenary Session Segment	Descriptions
#1 1:00 PM EST	Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janet Topolsky, Executive Director, Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group • Jennie L. Stephens, CEO, Center for Heirs' Property Preservation • Melvin Oliver, President, Pitzer College 	Our Session Moderator, Melvin Oliver, will launch the discussion on how the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation (Center) has helped families clear more than 275 titles, and its partnerships have fostered a landowner movement that is unleashing cultural and natural resources to build family and community wealth and ecological restoration in marginalized communities.
#2 1:15 PM	William Mackey Shares His Story <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Mackey 	Watch as Center client William Mackey, who is legally blind, and his brother, Gerald, share their story on how the legal work of resolving heirs' property is key to stabilizing ownership and allowing them to claim all the tax exemptions and benefits for William's disability.
#3 1:20 PM	The Power, Problems, and Promise of Land Ownership History and Context of Heirs' Property <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lizzie Presser, Journalist, <i>ProPublica</i> • Faith Rivers James, J.D., Professor, The Citadel • Thomas Mitchell, Professor, Texas A & M Law School • Cassandra Johnson Gaither, Research Social Scientist and Project Leader, US Forest Service, Southern Research Station • Melvin Oliver, Facilitating 	<p><i>Part 1:</i> Learn the history and context of heirs' property and the current status of black land loss and home ownership.</p> <p><i>Part 2:</i> Understand the breadth of the heirs' property issue, the systematic obstacles and the scope of urban-rural, race, and regional circumstances</p>
#4 2:00 PM	Landowner Story of Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ronald Richards 	See how the Center is providing technical assistance to landowners through the eyes of Ronald Richards. Hear the story of how his family's land has been transformed into a productive and managed sustainable forest
#5 2:05 PM	15 Years at the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation: Vision and Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jennie L. Stephens • Janet Topolsky • Darrin Goss, Sr. President & CEO, Coastal Community Foundation • Melvin Oliver, Facilitating 	Hear about the origin, growth, and data-driven impact of the Center to racial justice, rural development, and conservation. Find out about the connection of the Center to Community Strategies Group (CSG) and the importance of doing rural economic development differently.





Plenary Session link: <https://aspeninst.zoom.us/j/99592884047>

#6
2:30 PM
5 minutes

Landowner Story of Impact

- Inez Miller

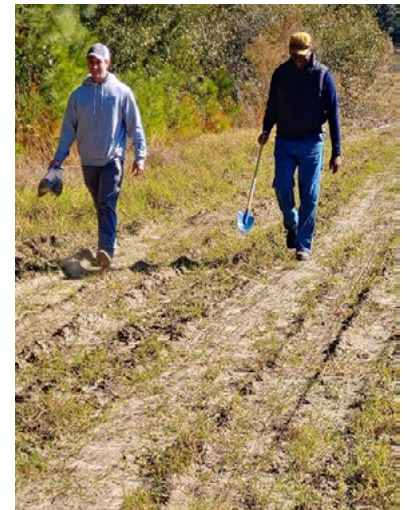
Experience Inez Miller's passion about the Center's Woodlands Community Advocate program. Learn how this grassroots landowner is preventing the sale of heirs' property at tax sales and rallying other family and community members to sustainably manage their forested land.

#7
2:35 PM
25 minutes

We're All in This Together: Partnering to Create Sustainable Wealth Creation

- Melvin Oliver, Facilitating
- Ann English, SC Natural Resources Conservation State Conservationist
- Kellie Terry, Senior Program Officer, Surdna Foundation
- Jim Porter, President, Business Development and Latin America, WestRock
- Kristopher Pickler, Board Member, Land Trust Alliance, In-House Attorney, Legal Real Estate Team at Lowe's Companies, Inc.

See how potential and existing partnerships among private, government and philanthropic sectors focus on natural resources to build family and community wealth and ecological restoration in marginalized communities.



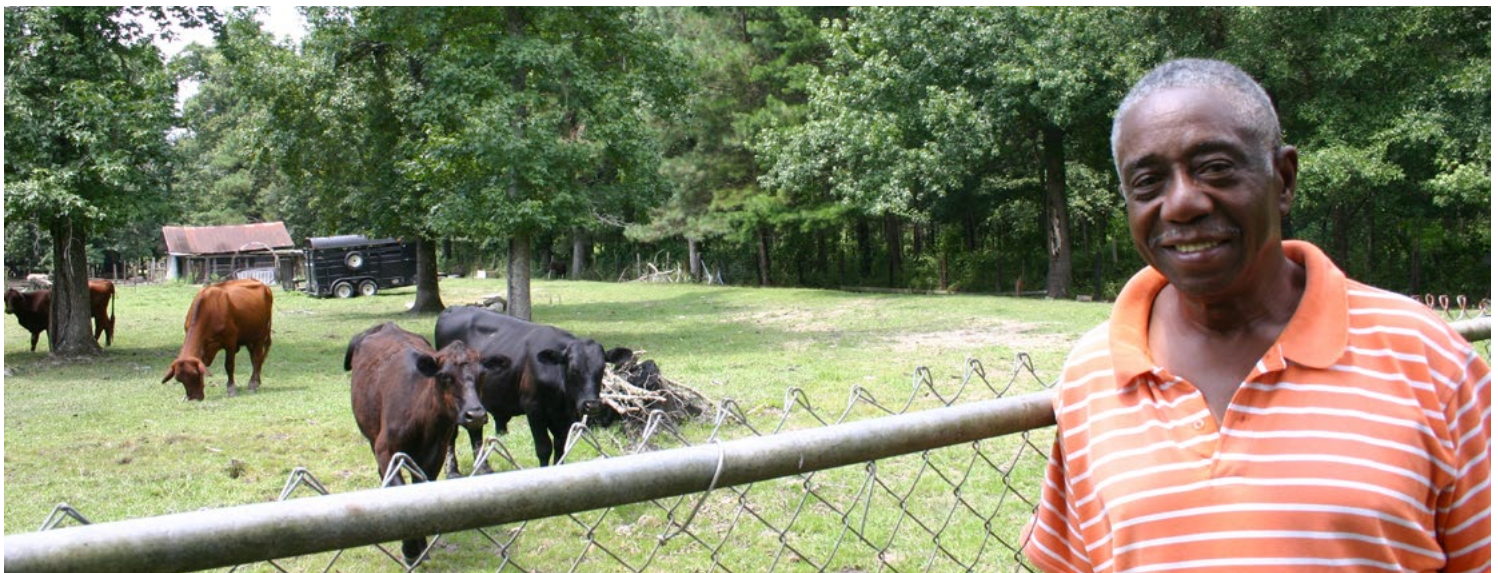
#8
3:00 PM
10 minutes

Closing Session

- Melvin Oliver, Facilitating
- Janet Topolsky
- Jennie L. Stephens
- Dan Porterfield, President and CEO Aspen Institute

Join in for summary comments, big-picture takeaways and practical solutions, as Janet, Jennie, Melvin and Aspen Institute president Dan Porterfield give thanks for a productive afternoon.

35-minute break before breakout sessions begin





Breakouts: Attendees can attend two different breakout sessions, one at 3:45 PM and one at 4:45 PM.

Breakout Session Title and Description	Presenters
<p>3:45 pm and 4:45 pm Legal and Policy Approaches to Resolving Heirs' Property Description: The impact of direct legal services on resolving heirs' property. Learn how the Uniform Partition Act, state policy focus, and national legislative possibilities may affect working families trying to resolve heirs' property and fractionalized land issues. Legal & Policy Link: https://aspeninst.zoom.us/j/95220786914</p>	<p>Alan McGregor, Facilitator, Consultant to Social Justice Philanthropy Josh Walden, Chief Operating Officer & Lawyer, Center for Heirs' Property Preservation Thomas Mitchell, Professor, Texas A & M Law School</p>
<p>3:45 pm and 4:45 pm The Opportunity for the Conservation Sector: Engaging People of Color and Their Land Description: Black-owned family land presents an opportunity in the preservation of conservation areas and habitats. Emerging landowner networks and support organizations help build inclusive and equity-focused conservation initiatives. Conservation Sector Link: https://aspeninst.zoom.us/j/98151615599</p>	<p>Melanie Allen, Facilitator, Co-Director, Hive Fund for Climate and Gender Justice Ebonie Alexander, Executive Director, Black Family Land Trust and SFLR Network Co-Chair Tom Martin, President & CEO, American Forest Foundation Dale Threatt-Taylor, Executive Director, The Nature Conservancy, SC Chapter</p>
<p>3:45 pm and 4:45 pm Building a Movement of Landowner Advocates Description: Find out how this power of landowner organizing can be a grassroots effort to enact legislation and unleash the cultural and natural resources of lands in marginalized communities, creating intergenerational family wealth and ecological restoration. Landowner Advocates Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86557268637?pwd=YmgzdElOa2dmcDAzaGFuNTdmNSt1dz09</p>	<p>Faith Rivers James, J.D., Facilitator, Professor, The Citadel Karama Neal, PhD, President, Southern Bancorp Community Partners & Founder, Heirs of Arkansas Bernie Mazyck, President & CEO, SCACED, Center Board Member, SC Landowner, Woodlands Community Advocate</p>
<p>3:45 pm and 4:45 pm Heirs' Property Across Race and Place Description: Learn the breadth and depth of the problem of Heirs' Property, and see how it impacts wealth creation opportunities in urban, Appalachian and Native American communities. Heirs' Property Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81906706553?pwd=eHFrOEtWN01pdnk2ckZqQnpCzNuZz09</p>	<p>Cassandra Johnson Gaither, Facilitator/Speaker, Research Social Scientist and Project Leader, US Forest Service, Southern Research Station Octavia Howell, Associate Manager, The Pew Charitable Trusts Betsey Taylor, Executive Director, Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Network Toni Stanger-McLaughlin, Regional Director, Federal Liaison, Native American Agriculture Fund</p>
<p>3:45 pm and 4:45 pm Forestry and Wealth Creation in the American Black Belt Description: The Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Program (SFLR) has been a shining example of the success of private and public partnerships. See how the SFLR program is assisting landowners in restoring the ecological health and productivity of family forests and has been a catalytic strategy for wealth creation. Forestry & Wealth Creation Link: https://aspeninst.zoom.us/j/95057456998?pwd=MGc1eHJxYXZaamE0Sjc0elQrTIZEQT09</p>	<p>Mavis Gragg, Facilitator/Speaker, Director of SFLR Program, American Forest Foundation Alton Perry, Director, Roanoke Electric Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention, SFLR Network Co-Chair John Littles, Executive Director, McIntosh S.E.E.D. Henry English, PhD, Head of the Small Farm Program, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff</p>



Special Event link: <https://aspeninst.zoom.us/j/97291101627>

SPECIAL EVENT

Presenters

6:00 PM

Special Event: America's Forests with Chuck Leavell

Description: Experience the life-changing stories of three landowners aided by the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation and their success found in the Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Program in this episode of *America's Forests with Chuck Leavell*. You'll see the hard work and determination of these landowners as told by Chuck Leavell, a family forester and keyboardist for the Rolling Stones! Following this video, you will have the opportunity to ask questions and hear behind the scenes stories from Chuck, and others featured in the program.

Janet Topolsky, Facilitator, Executive Director, Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group
Chuck Leavell, Tree farm conservationist, Musician, Host: American Forests with Chuck Leavell
Jennie L. Stephens, CEO, Center for Heirs' Property Preservation
Yvonne Knight-Carter, SC Landowner, Center Board Chair & Center Woodland Community Advocate



Chuck Leavell working with the next generation of foresters on how to plant seedlings



Chuck Leavell with landowner Mary Hill



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For more information and to support the Center's work, visit:

www.heirsproperty.org



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For More Information, visit:
www.aspeninst.org