



Who Owns America?-III

June 6-9, 2001

Memorial Union • University of Wisconsin–Madison

November 19, 2001

FINAL REPORT

Audience A total of 160 individuals from 32 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, South Africa, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe attended, including rural African Americans, Latino Americans, Native Americans and other indigenous people of North America struggling with land tenure and community security issues.

Also attending were representatives of non-government organizations, federal/tribal/state and local government organization representatives, private foundation representatives, and university faculty and students.

A special invitation was extended to Dr. G. P. Mayende, Director General of the South Africa Department of Land Affairs, who was visiting the Land Tenure Center at the time of the conference.

A final roster of participants was produced, including contact information for all but a few “walk-in” registrants.

Conference Goal Improve the quality of life in rural communities by reducing the rate of land loss among rural African Americans, Latino Americans, Native Americans and other indigenous people of North America and facilitate the processes of justice and equity in land recovery among these groups.

Scholarships A total of \$37,200 was awarded to 62 individuals in support of travel expenses and registration fee waivers. The maximum awarded to any one person was \$700.

Priority was given to individuals of minority status who were on the conference program and who represented community-based and/or non-government organization working in communities. All requests were honored, except for a few last-minute applications.

Land Tenure Center staff helped to arrange scholarship air itineraries through a local Madison travel agent. Airfares and lodging costs were direct-billed to LTC as a courtesy to scholarship recipients.

Budget \$50,750 Final Program Budget, including gifts and grants of \$39,800 from:

- Ford Foundation
- Otto Bremer Foundation
- Farm Foundation
- Fannie Mae Foundation
- UW-Extension Center for Community Economic Development
- Terra Institute Ltd.

Also: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Memorial Union, provided meeting space at no charge. Volunteers included UW students, staff and faculty.

**Objectives
and Progress**

◆ **Provide learning opportunities for interested individuals**

The 3 day conference has been held. There were 49-1/2 hours of learning opportunities provided, through **29 workshops** (1-1/2 hr. each = 43-1/2 hrs) and **4 plenary sessions** (each 1-1/2 hr. = 6 hrs). Participants commented favorably on learning opportunities:

- This was the most extraordinary exchange of ideas that I have ever experienced at a conference.
- [I appreciated] hearing people's individual stories, the great combination of activists and academic analysis.
- This was a life-changing experience!

◆ **Provide a forum to develop vital networks and form coalitions**

Conference workshops, breaks, luncheons and evening activities created an atmosphere where people could network. A printed roster of conference participants provided contact information for future communication. Participant comments included:

- I have already talked to people I've met at the conference and am working to coordinate a major event in our area relating to the land-to-trust issue.
- [I plan on] networking with others to draft legislation that would help remedy the fractionated heirship problem
- The conference made me more aware of what academic work is and isn't being tackled. I know better now where to direct my research—and I will stay in contact with those who are working on the allotment issue.

◆ **Focus attention on minority land and community security issues in North America.**

Plenary sessions and workshops focused entirely on minority land and community security issues in North America. Media press releases preceded the conference and UW Prof. Thomas Mitchell was invited to appear on a morning TV news spot to talk about the conference. An audio recording of Winona LaDuke's keynote address was broadcast on a local Madison radio station. A story was published in the "Indianapolis Star" after the conference. Participant comments provided additional insights:

- The most beneficial aspect of the conference . . . [was] realizing the generality of issues related to land loss across so many cultural groups in the US . . . understanding that other groups have similar issues.
- [I valued] seeing applied social research in action; researchers and activists were linked together around the issue of land tenure.

**Outreach
and
Follow-up**

- ◆ *The Conference Program and Book of Abstracts*, including summaries of each presentation prepared by the author, along with each presenter's contact information, was provided to each participant. A copy of the book was distributed to donors immediately after the conference. Additional copies are available upon request.
- ◆ *Web site posting.* *The Conference Program and Book of Abstracts* is posted on the Land Tenure Center's web site <http://www.wisc.edu/ltc>. The web site will be linked with the Farm Foundation's web page as required under the terms of the Foundation's grant. Others who wish to link with the web site should contact LTC for permission.
- ◆ *Empower land-focused non-government organizations* by providing an opportunity to tell their story and network with other groups. More than half the participants/presenters represented non-government organizations. Plenary sessions and workshops featured professionals and activists from the non-government Native American, Latino, and African American communities.
- ◆ *Invite local and regional media* to cover the conference. Press releases were distributed to local and regional TV, radio and newspaper outlets. Electronic notices for distribution were sent to planning committee members, UW campus listservs in related areas and the UW Department of Public Affairs.
- ◆ *Photograph and/or videotape conference presentations* to provide images for the web site and upon request to the press. We had anticipated that a volunteer professional photographer would document the conference, but he was unable to attend, thus we relied on nonprofessional volunteers. Plenary sessions were videotaped and audiotaped and transcripts of the plenaries are being posted on the LTC web site (<http://www.wisc.edu/ltc/>).
- ◆ *Review panel presentations and workshops* for possible presentation in any future regional and/or topical workshop sessions that might be developed by the Land Tenure Center. Manuscripts were solicited from presenters and 24 were reviewed for possible publication. Reviewers selected 10 papers with potential for publication in a special issue of a related journal. Three articles address natural resources and minority communities, three concern planning and minority communities, and four discuss historical aspects of minority land ownership. Journal editors and authors are being contacted about the prospects for publication. So far, one journal editor has responded positively.

**Additional
Outcomes**

- ◆ Susana Lastaria (LTC) and Betty Wells (Iowa State University), both university researchers, are preparing a proposal for a future workshop on Gender and Land, to continue the “Who Owns America?” tradition.
- ◆ Thomas Mitchell (LTC/UW Law School), Jerry Pennick (Federation of Southern Cooperatives) and Joe Brooks (PolicyLink) are exploring the possibility of a pilot project to link Black Farmers with Black migrants from the south to create an economic resource network. Joe referred to this concept in his plenary speech as the "Up South, Down South Project."
- ◆ Juliet King (First Nations) and Gene Summers are discussing the possibility of a one-day workshop on "Lessons from Pigford vs Glickman." It became clear at the conference that class action suits being developed by Native Americans, Latinos, women and elderly against USDA for discrimination in the administration of various farm programs would benefit from a focused review of Pigford vs Glickman. Such a workshop might be held in conjunction with the Indian Lands Working Group annual meeting in October, but there are no firm plans at the moment.
- ◆ Brenda Haskins (LTC) and Joe Childers (Kentuckians for the Commonwealth) are considering the possibility of drafting a model code for state legislatures to adopt which would address the fractionated heirship problem by allowing ownership in common to be changed to a more secure form of ownership.

**Contact
Information**

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