

INITIATIVE on
LAND, HOUSING &
PROPERTY RIGHTS

BOSTON COLLEGE | **LAW**

Heirs' Property and the Racial Wealth Gap Conference

Over \$32 billion of heirs' property in the U.S. is at-risk. Learn about this driver of the racial wealth gap - and potential solutions.

Co-sponsor:

Institute for the Liberal Arts at Boston College

Date and Time

March 21, 2024, 1pm - March 22, 2024, 6:30 pm EDT

Guests may register for either or both dates

Location

300 Hammond Pond Pkwy
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

View on [Google Maps](#)

[Register to attend in person](#)

[Register to attend virtually](#)

Read the BC Law Magazine story of last year's [ILHPR Conference](#)

Agenda

Thursday, March 21

12:00 – 1:00 pm

Check-in

1:00 pm – 1:15 pm

Welcome

1:15 pm – 2:15 pm

Graduate Student Heirs' Property Research Panel

Confirmed panelists: Belay W. Alem, LL.B, B.A., LL.M, Ph.D. Candidate in Anthropology, the University of Florida; Uju Egiebor, Graduate Student (Ph.D.), Integrative Public Policy & Development, Tuskegee University; Jasmine Simington, NSF Graduate Research Fellow, Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellow, Department of Sociology & Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan. Moderator: Tes Myrie, MSc-PhD Student, Precision Forestry Lab & Remote Sensing, Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, University of Georgia.

2:15 pm - 2:30 pm

Break

2:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Roundtable: Media's Role in Uplifting Black Property and Heirs' Property Issues

Confirmed presenters: Lyle Kendrick, Producer at VICE News; Kim Duhon, featured in *Silver Dollar Road*; Professor Thomas W. Mitchell, Boston College Law School. Moderator: Associate Professor Angela Ards, English Department, and Director of Journalism Program, African and African Diaspora Studies, Boston College.

4:00 pm - 4:15 pm

Break

4:15 pm – 4:45 pm

Presentation by Dr. Dewayne Goldman, Senior Advisor for Racial Equity to the Secretary of Agriculture

5:00 pm - 6:15 pm

Dinner

6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Screening Gaining Ground: The Fight for Black Land

Please note that due to contractual obligations, we are not able to stream the documentary itself to our virtual audience; it will be shown only to in-person attendees.

8:00 pm – 8:30 pm

Gaining Ground Panel Discussion

Confirmed panelists: Tharlyn Fox, LEAP Manager, John Deere Company; Professor Thomas Mitchell, Boston College Law School, and film participant; Eternal Polk, Director; Moderator: John T. Cooper, Jr., Associate Professor of the Practice in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, Texas A&M University.

Agenda

Friday, March 22, 2024

8:00 am – 8:45 am

Check-in & breakfast

8:45 am – 9:00 am

Welcome

9:00 am – 10:00 am

Panel 1 - Quantifying Heirs' Property: Methodologies and Significance

Confirmed panelists: Maria Evans, Vice President for Sustainable Communities Partnerships, Fannie Mae; Natasha Moodie, Research Associate, Housing Assistance Council; Assistant Professor Ryan Thomson, Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, Auburn University; Kara Woods, Research Analyst, Socially Disadvantaged Ranchers and Farmers Policy Research Center, Alcorn State University. Moderator: Cassandra Johnson Gaither, Ph.D., Research Social Scientist, Southern Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

10:05 am – 11:05 am

Panel 2: The Racial Will-Making Gap and Efforts to Close It

Confirmed panelists: Professor Keeva Terry, Howard University School of Law; Gal Wettstein, Senior Research Economist, Center for Retirement Research, Boston College; Jesse Williams, Law Fellow, Environmental Law & Policy Clinic, Heirs' Property Project, Wake Forest University School of Law. Moderator: Terrence Franklin, Partner, Sacks, Glazier, Franklin & Lodise LLP.

11:15 am – 12:15 pm

Panel 3: The Role of Federal Institutions in Addressing Heirs' Property Matters

Confirmed panelists: Linda Cronin, Director of Outreach for Farm Loan Programs, Farm Service Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Cassandra Johnson Gaither, Ph.D., Research Social Scientist, USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station; Sarah Stein, J.D., M.A., Senior Research Adviser, Community & Economic Development, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. Moderator: Professor Robert Zabawa, Research Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Tuskegee University.

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm

Lunch with Keynote Speech and Fireside Chat

Keynote from Professor Thomas W. Mitchell, holder of the Robert S. Drinan S.J. Endowed Chair and Director of the Initiative on Land, Housing and Property Rights at Boston College Law School. Fireside chat with Dean Odette Lienau following the keynote address.

1:45 pm – 2:45 pm

Panel 4: Perspectives on Heirs' Property Matters from Lawyers in the Trenches

Confirmed panelists: Jacy Fisher, Attorney, Gregory Varner & Associates (AL); Brianna Bogan, Director of Legal Services, Center for Heirs' Property Preservation (SC); Andrea Barnes, Director of Heirs' Property, Mississippi Center for Justice (MS). Moderator: Mavis Gragg, CEO, HeirShares (NC) and Loeb Fellow, Harvard Graduate School of Design.

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Panel 5: Property Tax Foreclosures of Heirs' Property Homes

Confirmed panelists: Professor Heather Way, University of Texas School of Law; Andrea Bopp Stark, Senior Attorney, National Consumer Law Center; Kate Dugan, Staff Attorney, Community Legal Services of Philadelphia. Moderator: Odette Williamson, Senior Attorney, National Consumer Law Center.

4:15 pm – 5:15 pm

Panel 6: Heirs' Property/Tangled Title Issues in the Urban Context

Confirmed panelists: Octavia Howell, Manager, Philadelphia Research and Policy Initiative, The Pew Charitable Trusts; Kristopher Smith, Community Development Program Officer, Jacksonville LISC; Genevieve Hébert-Fajardo, Clinical Professor of Law, St. Mary's School of Law in San Antonio, TX; Scott Kohanowski, General Counsel, Center for NYC Neighborhoods; James Leonard, Attorney and Commissioner of Records, City of Philadelphia, PA. Moderator: Nefertitti Jackmon, Community Displacement Prevention Officer, City of Austin, TX.

5:15 pm – 5:30 pm

Closing Remarks

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Reception

Panelist Bios



Belay Alem

is a Ph. D candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Florida.

Belay received LL. B in Law, BA in Management, and LL.M in Business and Corporate Law from Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia. He also served as a law lecturer and an executive director of administration affairs at the same university for about half a decade.

Belay's Ph.D. project delves into the intricate interplay of social and legal rules influencing the ownership, inheritance, and taxation of heirs' property collectively held by African American communities in Alachua County, Florida.

Since 2020, Belay has been doing intensive archival research and ethnographic fieldwork in Alachua County. He also conducted follow-up interviews in Washington DC, MD, VA, NC, SC, and GA States, with family members staying away from their properties in Florida. He employed a creative community-based participatory research method to engage community members in knowledge production. He also spearheaded a community-based public engagement project titled "Heirs' Property and Intergenerational Wealth: Initiating Public Discussions" through funding obtained from the UF Center for Humanities and Public Spheres.

Belay has also volunteered with Three Rivers Legal Service Inc. for over two years. He was the recipient of TRLS's Pro Bono Service Student Award 2023.

Belay served as a Community Development Intern with Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Jacksonville in the summer of 2023. Belay had the opportunity to do more research on heirs' property, the homestead exemption, delinquent real estate taxes, and the tax sale notification procedure. Belay will defend his dissertation in May 2024 and hopes to pursue similar research agendas in his career.



Obianuju S. Egiebor

Obianuju S. Egiebor is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in the Integrative Public Policy and Development Program at Tuskegee University. Uju's research

highlights the profound impact of Heirs Property in Alabama, shedding light on its differential effects within communities. She has presented her research before diverse professional organizations such as the Professional Agricultural Workers Conference and the Southern Rural Sociological Association; she has applied her knowledge through community workshops to address heirs property as part of the Alabama Heirs Property Alliance with Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities.

Hailing from Nigeria, Uju brings a global perspective to her work, holding a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Anthropology. With over 10 years of work experience spanning the public and private sectors internationally, her journey has been defined by roles in administration, rural development, and research, among others.

But Uju's impact transcends academia and professional spheres. As an entrepreneur, she is the proud owner of a flourishing local contemporary restaurant in Abuja, Nigeria. This entrepreneurial spirit mirrors her approach to addressing complex social issues with innovation and a deep-rooted commitment to community empowerment.

Upon completing her Ph.D. Uju is excited to bridge theory and practice, leveraging her academic expertise to spearhead projects that induce economic and social development, both locally and globally.

Uju's journey is one of relentless pursuit of knowledge, justice, and a future where opportunity knows no bounds. She eagerly anticipates the possibilities that lie ahead, driven by her unwavering commitment to effecting meaningful change.



Jasmine Simington

Jasmine Simington is a joint doctoral candidate in Sociology and Public Policy at The University of Michigan. Her dissertation is a mixed-method exploration of heirs' property ownership in Charleston, South Carolina. She has also written about attitudes towards reparations in Detroit and disaster recovery in Marion County, South Carolina.

Before graduate school, Jasmine worked in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute studying federally assisted housing policies, neighborhood quality, and residential mobility. There, she published policy briefs and reports on the Moving to Work

(MTW) demonstration, housing conditions in Tribal Areas, work requirements across housing authorities, and partnerships between housing authorities and school districts.

Public scholarship is an important part of Jasmine's work. She partnered with the Marion County Coordinating Council (Marion, South Carolina) to design a community asset map, conducted research for a virtual exhibit on housing inequality in Detroit funded by the Mellon Foundation, and helped construct an online map of complex disadvantage across the U.S. for a research project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Jasmine is a National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Fellow and Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellow. Recently, Jasmine received an Emerging Inequality Scholar Award from the Stone Center for Inequality Dynamics at the University of Michigan.



Tesfa "Tes" Myrie

Tesfa "Tes" Myrie is a MSc-PhD student at the Warnell School of Natural Resources at the University of Georgia. He is studying remote sensing and precision forestry. With proficiency in remote sensing and precision forestry, Tes intends to establish a quick protocol for land assessment and valuation that can assist in the prevention and clearing of clouded title and the subsequent heirs' property dilemma for low-wealth landowners. Tes holds a Master of Forestry from The Forest School at Yale University and a Master of Business Administration from the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. He has also conducted three years of doctoral research on the heirs' property

dilemma, land loss and land assessment and valuation through the Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation at the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences at Clemson University. Tes is trained by the USDA to provide assistance in financial literacy to landowners. He has a professional background in corporate law, corporate finance, and project management, and is intent on putting all his resources to use in the effort to reverse the heirs' property dilemma. Tes and his family have been directly affected by the heirs' property dilemma.



Lyle Kendrick

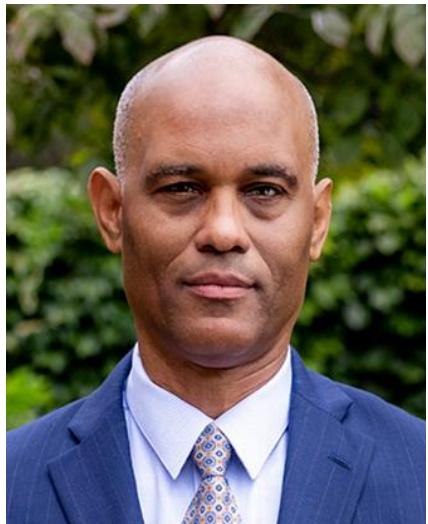
Lyle Kendrick is a producer and journalist for the longform documentary team at Vice News. During his decade-long run at Vice News, he's produced documentaries on topics ranging from U.S. politics to geoengineering to youth incarceration to the Southern

Baptist Convention. He produced a story for VICE's Showtime series about heirs' property in 2020 called "Losing Ground" which focused on a family that lost more than 400 acres in Louisiana. It was the recipient of a Peabody Award and a Salute to Excellence from the National Association of Black Journalists. His work has appeared on HBO, Showtime, Hulu, among other outlets.



Kim Duhon

Kim Duhon is a proud mother of two adult children and five beautiful grandchildren, she is the widow of a United States Marine veteran who served our country for 25 years. She is happy to announce that she has recently returned back to college to receive her Bachelor's degree in Business and Human Resources. Kim is a descendent of the Heirs of Mitchell Reels of Silver Dollar Road.



Thomas W. Mitchell

Thomas W. Mitchell is a professor at Boston College Law School where he holds the Robert F. Drinan, S.J. Endowed Chair and founded and serves as the Director of the Initiative on Land, Housing & Property Rights. He is a national expert on property issues facing disadvantaged families and communities and has published leading scholarly works addressing these matters.

Professor Mitchell has engaged in extensive law reform and policy work, most prominently serving as the principal drafter of a uniform act (model state statute) named the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act (UPHPA), which is designed to substantially enhance the ability of disadvantaged families to

maintain ownership of their property and their property-related generational wealth. Twenty-one states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have enacted the UPHPA into law thus far, making it the most successful uniform real property act the Uniform Law Commission has promulgated in the past thirty years. Professor Mitchell also has helped develop other state and federal policy proposals designed to help disadvantaged farmers and property owners. In 2020, Professor Mitchell was named a recipient of the MacArthur

Fellowship in recognition of the substantial impact his overall professional work has had in assisting disadvantaged farmers and property owners. In 2021, he was awarded the Howard University Award for Distinguished Postgraduate Achievement. Professor Mitchell is a graduate of Amherst College, the Howard University School of Law, and the University of Wisconsin Law School where he received an LL.M. and served as a William H. Hastie Fellow. He is a member of a number of professional organizations, including the American College of Real Estate Lawyers.



Angela Ards

Angela Ards is an associate professor of English and African & African Diaspora Studies at Boston College, where she is the director of the Journalism Program. She teaches African American and contemporary American literature, with special interests in cultural studies, literary journalism, and narratives of place. She is the author of *Words of Witness: Black Women's Autobiography in the Post-Brown Era*, and her current book project uses oral histories to chronicle the lives of black Americans who bypassed the Great Migration to remain in the South. Her scholarship has been generously supported by fellowships from the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study and the Hutchins Center for African and

African American Research.

Angela began her journalism career as an editor and writer at *The Village Voice*, with subsequent tenures at *The Nation* and *Ms.* magazine. Her articles on African American life and culture have also appeared in publications such as *Essence*, *Time*, and the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine, as well as numerous books, including *Step into a World: The Global Anthology of the New Black Literature*, *That's the Joint: The Hip Hop Studies Reader*, and *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: Contemporary African American Women's Activism*. She is a frequent contributor to *Texas Monthly*.



Dr. Dewayne L. Goldmon

Dr. Dewayne L. Goldmon received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Arkansas and his Ph.D. from Iowa State University, all in agronomy. After four years as a field researcher with American Cyanamid (acquired by BASF), he joined Monsanto Company (acquired by Bayer Crop Sciences), working 25 years in the agricultural chemical and seed industry.

He held various positions in technology development, where he conducted research on all southern row crops and managed research and development trials in soybeans, rice, and cotton. Later in his career, he worked on Monsanto's government affairs team and in human resources, retiring as the Outreach Lead for Bayer Crop Sciences in 2019. In 2020, he served as the Executive Director of the National Black Growers Council, an organization that he was instrumental in creating and advised for over 10 years. Throughout his education and career, he has worked on diversity initiatives and maintained working relationships with several land-grant universities, non-profit entities, and community-based organizations.

Goldmon has served on numerous advisory boards, including the Dean's Executive Advisory Board at his alma mater, as well as on local and state boards for 4-H and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. He has also served on regional and national advisory boards for organizations such as MANRRS, the Policy Center for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers, the Southern Risk Management Education Center, and multiple terms on USDA's Advisory Committee for Minority Farmers and Ranchers. He also farms in southeast Arkansas where he produces corn, rice, and soybeans.

On March 1, 2021, he was announced as the inaugural Senior Advisor for Racial Justice and Equity at USDA where he serves as a key advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture. In this Presidential appointment, he provides counsel on a broad range of matters, as mandated by the Biden-Harris administration. He routinely liaises with relevant White House personnel on designing, planning, and executing key initiatives and priorities while also representing the Secretary and USDA on high level inter- and intra-agency working groups and public facing forums. He provides leadership on the implementation of congressional initiatives and on cross departmental racial equity work. Goldmon works closely with the Secretary and the department to address the cumulative impacts of prior discrimination, working with his colleagues to transform USDA into a racially equitable department.



Eternal Polk

Eternal Polk is a Midwest-raised, Brooklyn-cultured filmmaker who currently calls Charlotte home. As an award-winning director, Eternal has crafted content with purpose and intention. His work has appeared on various outlets including HBO, ESPN, BET/VH1/ MTV, FOX, NFL Network, TBS & HGTV. He makes his feature film debut with the documentary *Gaining Ground: The Fight For Black Land*.

His work has received numerous awards including The Webby Awards, Omma Awards, The Telly Awards, and Shorty Awards.



Tharlyn Fox

Tharlyn Fox, currently leading the Legislation, Education, Advocacy, Production Systems (LEAP) Coalition at Deere & Company in Moline, IL, is a dynamic force in driving change and equity for Black farmers. As the LEAP manager, she passionately advocates for racial equality and invests in initiatives aimed at advancing social and economic opportunities for Black Farmers.

Tharlyn's leadership and relentless advocacy sparked a pivotal partnership with Al Roker Entertainment, resulting in the creation of the groundbreaking documentary "Gaining Ground: The Fight for Black Land." This film collaboration sheds light on the challenges and triumphs of Black farmers, amplifying their voices on a national scale.

In her role, Tharlyn collaborates closely with esteemed organizations such as the National Black Growers Council and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund. Together, they work to dismantle barriers created by Heirs Property and provide crucial resources to enhance the lives and livelihoods of Black farmers across the country.

With over 16 years of strategic experience in supply management, Tharlyn brings a wealth of expertise to her position. Her involvement in minority employee resource organizations, including serving as Chair of the Black Employee Resource Group and the National Black MBA Association, underscores her commitment to diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Tharlyn's academic background further enriches her professional profile, holding a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, a Master of Science in Computer Information Systems, and an MBA from the University of Detroit Mercy. Currently pursuing a doctorate in Leadership and Innovation, she remains dedicated to continuous learning and driving positive change and opportunities in her field.



Dr. John T Cooper

Dr. Cooper is a sixth-generation Texan from a family holding 120 acres of land originally purchased by his great-great-grandfather. He is also a professor of the practice in the College of Architecture, Department of Landscape and Urban Planning at Texas A&M University. His research, teaching and practice

focuses on the extent to which marginalized populations are accounted for in land use planning programs. In 2023, his Texas Target Communities (TxTC) Program was recognized by the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) for exemplary work in the field of community engagement, and in 2017 he received the Texas A&M Association of Former Students (AFS) Distinguished Achievement Award for Extension, Outreach, Continuing Education & Professional Development.

Dr. Cooper serves on the Advisory Board for the University of North Carolina Coastal Resilience Center and the National Academies (NASEM) Board on Gulf Education and Engagement (BGEE). He previously served as chair of the advisory council for the Center for Disaster Philanthropy and on the board of directors for the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities. Before returning to A&M he was a Program Director at MDC Inc. in Durham, NC, where he directed projects designed to equip leaders, institutions and communities across the Southern US with the tools and strategies necessary to advance equity and opportunity. Dr. Cooper earned a bachelor's degree in economics as well a master's in urban planning from Texas A&M before completing a PhD in City and Regional Planning at University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill (UNC).



Maria Evans

Maria Evans leads Fannie Mae's Community Impact team which delivers positive social and environmental outcomes for homeowners and renters, and the communities where they live. Ms. Evans is responsible for cultivating partnerships with organizations that engage historically underserved communities and advancing innovative projects with housing affordability, stability and equity at the center. She is also responsible for partnering with local leaders to support their long-term housing recovery plans

following natural disasters and supporting communities as they integrate climate resilient and adaptive practices. Additionally, Ms. Evans oversees the company's corporate citizenship efforts and is responsible for the enterprise strategy to engage Fannie Mae's 8,000 employees through volunteerism and employee giving programs, ensuring alignment with Fannie Mae's key business priorities.

**Natasha Moodie**

Research Associate
Housing Assistance Council

Natasha Moodie is a Research Associate at the Housing Assistance Council (HAC). She came to HAC as a graduate fellow in the Applied Community and Economic Development Fellowship at Illinois State University, where she completed her master's thesis on racial equity in the housing market.

Natasha received her undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan. Following her time in Ann Arbor, she developed a deep admiration for rural America during her Teach for America commitment and subsequent years living and working in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas. At HAC, Natasha's projects focus on racial equity, access to affordable housing, and community development in rural America.

**Dr. Ryan Thomson**

Ryan Thomson is an Assistant Professor of Rural Sociology in the College of Agriculture at Auburn University. Ryan works closely with the Gullah/Geechee Nation around heirs' property issues of involuntary land loss and cultural protection. Over the past two years, he has worked with the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) to train several hundred extension agents and community groups around heirs' property resolution and estate planning. Ryan can often be found traveling around Alabama with colleagues to speak strategies for addressing heirs' property at

local community forums. His 2023 study developed a detailed strategy for locating heirs' property and located roughly half a million parcels totaling 5.3 million acres of land in 11 southern states. He currently serves as Chair of the SERA 49 Heirs' Property Multistate Project and SRDC HP Research Committee. His research has received two national awards and has been published in *Social Science Quarterly*, *Rural Sociology*, and *Environmental Sociology*.



Dr. Kara A. Woods

Dr. Kara A. Woods is a native of Montgomery, AL, and an alum of the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Tuskegee University. She has held internships with two Congressional members and has served as the Deputy Director of the Get Out and Vote campaign in Macon County, AL. Her dissertation titled: "Trust God And Go To Work": The Relationship Between Heir Property, Social Institutions, And Civic Participation In Macon County, Alabama," concentrates on the social, economic, and political impact of heir property on the individual and community. In March 2021, Dr. Woods joined the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (SDFR) Policy Research Center (The Policy Center) as the Research

Analyst. In this role, Dr. Woods has a national focus and manages six research priorities to create equity for SDFRs by legislation. Her objective as a professional is to use her skills to foster community development, establish interpersonal relations, and advocate for social policy change. Additionally, Dr. Woods is the daughter of Darryl and Janet Woods, sister of Kayla Woods and wife of Stephen Russell.



Cassandra Johnson Gaither

Cassandra Johnson Gaither is a Research Social Scientist with the Southern Research Station, USDA Forest Service, in Athens, GA. Her research interests address human perceptions and interactions with nature and the environment. She has published research addressing social group visitation to wild land recreation areas, environmental justice as this relates to minority and lower wealth group access to outdoor recreation facilities. Her work currently focuses on the intersection of

property ownership and social vulnerability in the South and the implications of the same for national forest management.



Professor Keeva Terry

Professor Keeva Terry is a Professor of Law at Howard University School of Law. She teaches Wills, Trusts, and Estates, Federal Income Taxation, and Contracts. Professor Terry examines systemic disparities in wealth preservation and federal income taxation in her scholarship and service. She was instrumental in the passage of the Maryland Partition of Property Act, a modified version of the Uniform Partition of Heirs' Property Act. Professor Terry also advocated for a similar bill in the District of Columbia, the Partition of Real Property Act of 2022, which became effective February 23, 2023. Both laws help families preserve their wealth and legacies in the form of real property.

Professor Terry contributed to the 2022 report, *Strengthening Probate Administration in the District of Columbia*. This report identifies a range of legislative, regulatory, policy, educational, pro bono, and practice changes that will aid citizens of the District of Columbia, especially those who navigate the probate administration process without legal counsel. She remains engaged in discussions regarding legislation to increase access to non-probate options that will reduce the racial wealth gap, including payable on death bank accounts, motor vehicle death beneficiary designations, and transfer on death Deeds. Professor Terry earned her A.B. degree from Harvard University, her M.B.A. degree from the University of Michigan Ross School of Business, and her J.D. degree from Columbia University School of Law. She previously worked as an associate at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom and as a tax consultant at Ernst & Young.



Gal Wettstein

Gal Wettstein is a senior research economist at the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College. He conducts research on labor market outcomes for older workers, health and longevity insurance markets and coverage, retirement decisions, and savings. He has authored studies on a wide array of topics in aging and presented to both academic and policy audiences, such as the American Economic Association, the National Tax Association, and the Office of Tax Analysis at the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Wettstein is a member of the National Academy of Social Insurance. Before joining the Center, he earned a doctorate in economics from Harvard University in the fields of health economics, labor economics, and public finance.



Jesse Williams

Jesse Williams is the Clinical Fellow at the Wake Forest University School of Law Environmental Law and Policy Clinic, where he co-directs the Heirs' Property Project with Professor Scott Schang. The Heirs' Property Project partners with front-line organizations in North Carolina to provide direct legal services to heirs' property owners, serve as a hub for research and interdisciplinary training on land rights, and train a new generation of heirs' property attorneys. Before joining Wake Forest, Jesse was a Skadden Fellow at Legal Aid of North

Carolina, where his work focused on heirs' property and related matters in rural eastern North Carolina. Before law school, Jesse spent two years advising NGOs and governments with the Boston Consulting Group. He left that position to co-found Scalawag, a nonprofit media outlet dedicated to truth-telling in and for the American South. He has written or edited for *Dissent*, *The Nation*, the *Law and Political Economy Blog*, and been quoted in various outlets about heirs' property issues. Jesse is a member of the North Carolina State Bar and a 2020 graduate of Yale Law School.



Terrence Franklin

Terrence "Terry" Franklin is a seasoned attorney with over three decades of experience handling trust and estates and probate litigation, disputes and appeals. His breadth of experience underscores the long-standing reputation of the firm he co-founded, Sacks, Glazier, Franklin & Lodise, LLP.

Terrence's Tedx Talk advances his mission to "[Bend the Arc of History Towards Justice](#)" by sharing the story of how his discovery of his family's freedom papers – the 1846 will that freed his ancestor Lucy and her family from slavery, helped him learn that we all have a role to play in shaping history.

Terrence's article "Black Deaths Should Matter, Too! Estate Planning as a Tool for Antiracists" published in the ACTEC Law Journal helped spark an initiative that led

to the establishment of the UCLA/Bet Tzedek “Graduate Fellowship for Equity in Trusts and Estates” for which he serves as an advisor, and the Los Angeles County/Bet Tzedek “Leaving a Legacy” program, both of which focus on bringing estate planning services to Black and other underserved communities in Los Angeles.

Active in the trusts and estates legal community, Terrence has served as a Regent, and as Chair of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusivity Committee of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel (ACTEC), where he is committed to increasing the membership and engagement of diverse lawyers.

Terrence is a graduate of Harvard Law School and obtained his Bachelor of Science from Northwestern University.



Linda Cronin

Linda Cronin has worked at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for over 30 years. As the Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Director for the Outreach Office, Linda is committed to enhancing access to FSA programs to farmers and ranchers through outreach, education and technical assistance. Prior to serving as Director of Outreach, Linda served as the Acting Director and then later the Deputy Director for the USDA Office of Tribal Relations in the Secretary’s office. She also served as the Director for the Program Operations and Appraisals Division for the Deputy Administrator of Farm Loan Programs in FSA. Linda also served as the leader of the Feds Feed Families campaign twice, which encourages employees from all federal departments and agencies to give in-kind contributions – food, services and time – to food banks and pantries.

She has committed her career to agriculture through experiences working in multiple states and in various capacities both in the outreach, administrative, farm program and farm loan areas.

Ms. Cronin has a degree in paralegal studies from Champlain College in Vermont and a master’s in public administration from American University in Washington, D.C. She lives with her family in Fredericksburg, Va., where she enjoys spending time with family, running, camping, backpacking and the outdoors.

Sarah Stein



Sarah Stein is a senior adviser on affordable housing and neighborhood stabilization on the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's community and economic development (CED) team. Prior to joining the Atlanta Fed, she was a practicing attorney representing seniors and low-income Atlantans on housing matters with the Atlanta Legal Aid Society. While there she also worked to develop educational and clinical programming to address long-term homeowner displacement and to help low-income families build generational wealth. She worked for many clients as they navigated heirs' property issues and has legal expertise in the areas of fair housing, residential real estate finance, property law, property tax, estate and probate matters, and affordable housing. In her present work at the Atlanta Fed, she engages with communities across the southeast with the goal of developing catalytic networks and partnerships and identifying priority research questions to assist individuals and communities as they build economic mobility and resilience. The Atlanta Fed's community and economic development team has included heirs' property in its scope of work since 2016.



Robert Zabawa

Robert Zabawa, PhD Anthropology, has worked at Tuskegee University for 39 years. His domestic research includes: small-scale and minority farming systems where he has been director of the Tuskegee 2501 program since 1994. Areas of concentration include land ownership, resource access (USDA Program and finance), resettlement communities, institutional inequities and policy as it pertains to the Black Belt South and the global South. Specific focus over his tenure at TU is heirs property and how it impacts both individual and family wealth and community development. His international research includes: agricultural development, production decision making, value chain analysis, and marketing strategies. He has worked in Belize, Senegal and Tanzania, and for over 20 years he has been on a team promoting the adoption of the orange sweetpotato in Ghana to address iron deficiency anemia and vitamin A deficiency. He is currently the Co-Director of the Integrative Public Policy and Development PhD Program.



Odette Lienau

Odette Lienau joined BC Law in January 2023 as the inaugural Marianne D. Short, Esq., Dean. Her scholarly interests center

around international economic law, debtor-creditor relations, and legal theory.

Dean Lienau's book, *Rethinking Sovereign Debt: Politics, Reputation, and Legitimacy in Modern Finance*, won an American Society of International Law Book Award. Her research has appeared in many distinguished publications, including the *Harvard International Law Journal*, the *Yale Journal of International Law*, and *Oxford University Press*. She has served as a consultant and expert for UNCTAD, the IMF, and the World Bank, and is a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Dean Lienau practiced in Shearman & Sterling's Financial Restructuring & Insolvency group in New York City before joining academia. She was previously an Associate Dean and Professor at Cornell Law School, and has taught at Harvard and Yale Law Schools. She received her A.B. from Harvard College, J.D. from NYU School of Law, and Ph.D. in political science from Harvard University, where her dissertation received the university's Charles Sumner Prize.



Jacy Fisher

Jacy Fisher is a senior associate attorney at Greg Varner & Associates, where her passion for justice shines through her tireless advocacy for heirs' property owners faced with involuntary land loss. While the firm's offices are in central and east Alabama, Jacy zealously represents clients in courtrooms all across the state. She has extensive experience with UPHPA litigation & most notably took an 18-year-old, non-UPHPA partition action to the Alabama Supreme Court, where she miraculously secured a favorable settlement for her client.

Jacy also serves as a JAG officer in the Air National Guard, balancing her commitment to both civilian & military service.

Her practice primarily focuses on heirs' property, real estate litigation, estate planning, & probate. She has presented numerous CLE courses related to this work, including: "Litigation Strategies for Lawyers in the Trenches," "Clarifying, Consolidating, & Clearing Title," "Where to Start: From Consults to Title Opinions," and "The Overview, Prevention, & Resolution of Heirs' Property."

Jacy's dedication extends beyond the courtroom, as she actively contributes to various organizations & initiatives in her field. Each year, she serves on the Expert Panel for the Federation of Southern Cooperative's Heirs' Property Bootcamp & regularly participates in the SRDC & SDFR Policy Center's Train-the-Trainer workshops, educating university extension professionals on "Understanding Heirs' Property at the Community Level."

Furthermore, Jacy serves on the Advisory Council for the Southern Risk Management Education Center, as the consulting attorney for the Alabama Heirs' Property Alliance, and is actively engaged in the Heirs' Property Practitioner Network.



Brianna Bogan

Brianna Bogan is a native of Stone Mountain, Georgia. She earned her bachelor's degree in English with an interdisciplinary certificate in Disability Studies from The University of Georgia in 2014 and her Juris Doctorate from Charleston School of Law in 2017.

Brianna, a member of the South Carolina Bar and the Charleston County Bar Association, was admitted to practice law in 2018.

Brianna joined the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation (CHPP) as a staff attorney in May 2019. CHPP's direct impact on the community and involvement in heirs' property legislation reform attracted her to the organization. In November 2021, Brianna accepted the position of Director of Legal Services managing CHPP's Charleston, Orangeburg, and Florence offices. She is excited about CHPP's expansion to open a Columbia office in the next few months.

Brianna often reflects on this quote by Jim Rohn, "All good men and women must take responsibility to create legacies that will take the next generation to a level we could only imagine."



Andrea' Barnes, Esquire

Andrea' Barnes is a native of Madison, Mississippi. She earned a Bachelor of Arts from Tougaloo College, a Master of Business Administration from Jackson State University, and a Juris Doctorate from Thurgood Marshall School of Law. Andrea' is licensed to practice law in Mississippi. Andrea' is the Director of the Heirs' Property Campaign for the Mississippi Center for Justice, a non-profit public interest law firm. The Heirs' Property Campaign provides legal assistance and community education to

families around the state to preserve ownership of their land and maintain their legacy.

Prior to joining the Center, Andrea' practiced family law, estate and probate administration, and personal injury litigation. Andrea's background also includes working as a law clerk with the Circuit Court of Hinds County, Mississippi, a prosecutor with the Hinds County Attorney's Office, and as the Public Records Officer and Staff Attorney with the Mississippi Department of Corrections. Andrea' has also served as an adjunct professor at Tougaloo College, educating aspiring lawyers about litigation and trial practice. Previously, she served on the Board of Directors for the Spencer Perkins Center for Reconciliation and Community Development. Andrea' is a member of many professional organizations and associations, including the Mississippi Bar, Magnolia Bar, Metro Black Women Lawyers Association and others. She has received numerous accolades and recognition by the profession and community. As an entrepreneur, business woman, and attorney by trade, Andrea' is truly a servant leader whose life reflects her commitment to her faith, integrity, and justice.



Mavis Gragg

Mavis is a self described "death and dirt" attorney and conservation professional empowering families to use real estate as a source for intergenerational resiliency and wealth. She is currently a Loeb Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. During this fellowship, Mavis has sought to raise visibility of numerous ways in which heirs' property is important to affordable housing, urban planning, climate resiliency, and markets, while also deepening her knowledge in the related fields. Mavis also is the co-founder and CEO of

HeirShares, which is building groundbreaking technology to facilitate affordable solutions for family real estate ownership. HeirShares recently launched DeathandDirt.com, the premier heirs' property learning platform rich with content in multimedia format and accessible to 8th grade reading level. Soon, HeirShares will begin testing their flagship software, the HeirShares Tree Builder, which is designed to aid attorneys in performing legal analysis of ownership changes in heirs' property and in calculating complex ownership shares. Previously, Mavis led the eight state Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Program as Director and chaired the boards of the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority and the Triangle Land Conservancy land trust. An art enthusiast, Mavis is the co-founder of Pop Box Gallery, a zero-commission art gallery in her home base, Durham, NC. She also serves on the Nasher Friends' Board and the North Carolina Museum of Art Foundation Board.



Heather K. Way

Heather K. Way is a clinical professor at The University of Texas School of Law where she directs the Housing Policy Clinic. A national expert in housing and community development law, Professor Way has more than 25 years of experience in the heirs' property field, working as a lawyer, scholar, and policy reformer.

Her recent writings include an article on heirs' access to federal disaster programs, a primer for philanthropic funders on heirs' property issues, and an article on legal barriers heirs face accessing property tax relief programs. She is also the author of *Real Property for the Real World*, a book of hands-on case studies for law students that includes an introduction to heirs' property issues.

As a policy innovator, Professor Way's work has contributed to numerous high-impact legal reforms at the state and local levels, including, most recently, a Texas law to broaden heirs' homeowners' access to property tax relief programs. Professor Way is currently leading several research initiatives to deepen our understanding of heirs' property in urban areas and how heirs' property fuels housing instability. From 2021-2023, she served as the ABA RPTE Section Advisor for the Uniform Law Commission's project to draft a uniform law governing tenancy in common ownership.

After receiving her law degree from The University of Texas School of Law, Professor Way clerked for the Honorable William Wayne Justice in the Eastern District of Texas. She began her legal career as a Skadden Fellow representing low-income tenants and community groups in Austin.



Andrea Bopp Stark

Andrea Bopp Stark is a senior attorney at the National Consumer Law Center in Boston focusing on writing and teaching about fair debt collection practices and mortgage servicing issues. She is currently working on the intersection of heirs' property and property tax foreclosures and helps

state advocates develop legislation to protect homeowners and their hard-earned equity. Andrea is a contributing author to NCLC's *Fair Debt Collection*, *Home Foreclosures*, and *Mortgage Servicing and Loan Modifications* legal manuals. Andrea is also the curriculum coordinator for all of the NCLC conferences and training. Previously, Andrea was a partner at Molleur Law Office in Biddeford, Maine and engaged in bankruptcy and consumer litigation, and worked as a litigation attorney for Northeast Legal Aid in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Andrea obtained her JD and Masters of Social Work from Boston College.



Kate Dugan

Kate Dugan (she/her) is a Staff Attorney in the Homeownership and Consumer Rights Unit at Community Legal Services, where her work includes individual representation and systemic advocacy on behalf of low-income homeowners facing property tax and mortgage foreclosure, those with tangled titles, as well as victims of deed fraud and predatory homebuying.

Ms. Dugan previously worked for the Court of Common Pleas in Philadelphia as the administrator for Philadelphia's nationally renowned Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program. For her

work in the Diversion Program, Ms. Dugan received the Philadelphia Mortgage Foreclosure Steering Committee's Extraordinary Service Award. In 2017, she assisted in the creation of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas' Property Tax Rule Returnable Program in response to a dramatic increase in property tax foreclosures in the Philadelphia. Ms. Dugan sat as the Master for that program from 2017 through 2018.

Before joining Community Legal Services, Ms. Dugan was a staff attorney in the Homeownership Rights Unit at SeniorLAW Center, where she assisted low-income seniors with a variety of homeownership-related issues.

Ms. Dugan received her undergraduate degree from Brandeis University and her law degree from Temple University Beasley School of Law.



Odette Williamson

Odette Williamson is a Senior Attorney at the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) where she promotes sustainable homeownership among low-income people,

including efforts to prevent foreclosures, curb predatory mortgage lending, and preserve the income and assets of consumers of color. Ms. Williamson directs NCLC's Racial Justice and Equal Opportunity Project and oversees NCLC's Elder Rights Initiative. She provides training and support to hundreds of consumer lawyers, legal services attorneys, and lay advocates each year. Ms. Williamson provides testimony and comments to legislative and administrative agencies on matters affecting low-income and elderly consumers, and consumers of color. She testified before the Senate Special Committee on Aging in a hearing entitled "Frauds, Scams and COVID-19: How Con Artists Have Targeted Older Americans During the Pandemic." Ms. Williamson writes extensively for NCLC's legal practice publications for consumer lawyers. She is the co-author of the National Consumer Law Center's *Mortgage Servicing and Loan Modifications* and *Home Foreclosures* manuals.



Octavia Howell

Octavia Howell helps manage Pew's Philadelphia research and policy initiative. She leads the initiative's housing research portfolio, which explores how poverty and local economic trends affect the availability, affordability, and quality of housing in the city. Her research on cost burden, tangled titles, home purchasing trends, and rental code enforcement highlight the myriad ways that residents face challenges when seeking to secure and maintain safe and affordable places to live.

Prior to her time at Pew, Howell worked for the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, where she focused on geospatial analysis, community engagement, and housing. She is a native of Philadelphia.

An HBCU alumna, Howell holds a bachelor's degree in family and consumer sciences from Oakwood University and a master's in urban and regional planning from Alabama A&M University.



Kristopher Smith

Kristopher is a Community Development Officer at LISC Jacksonville where he co-directs LISC's Family Wealth Creation Initiative and Creative Placekeeping efforts to advance economic growth in urban

core neighborhoods. He has over 25 years of experience in philanthropy, public sector and community development. Kristopher designed and launched the heirs' property program in Jacksonville/Duval County in 2021.



Genevieve Hébert-Fajardo

Genevieve Fajardo is a Clinical Professor of Law at St. Mary's University School of Law in San Antonio, Texas. She teaches the Real Estate Clinic and Deposition Skills, and co-directs the Institute on World Legal Problems in Innsbruck, Austria.

The Real Estate Clinic is a transactional practice focused on preserving homeownership. Student attorneys draft real estate documents, negotiate heirship disputes and plan estates, enabling low-income homeowners to remove clouds on title, access repair assistance programs, and protect property wealth for future generations. Prior to the Real Estate Clinic, Prof. Fajardo directed a litigation clinic focused on deceptive housing

practices in marginalized communities, especially evictions, home sales, and mortgages in South Texas.

Professor Fajardo is a frequent speaker on consumer protection topics around the country. She uses her academic work to advocate for legislative reform on issues important to low-income Texans, including contract for deed reform and landlord-tenant issues. Her clinic cases have been covered nationally in the *New York Times*, and locally in the *San Antonio Express-News*, and her academic work has been published in the *Georgetown Journal of Poverty Law and Policy*. She is the co-author of a treatise on Texas consumer law and practice.

Professor Fajardo graduated from Columbia Law School and the University of Texas at Austin.



K. Scott Kohanowski

K. Scott Kohanowski General Counsel at the Center for NYC Neighborhoods, previously directed the Homeowner Stability and LGBT Advocacy Projects at the New York City Bar Justice Center. In that role, Scott has trained attorneys, supervised cases placed with pro

bono and staff attorneys, provided direct legal representation to distressed homeowners, and engaged in law reform to preserve housing and communities. His areas of expertise include foreclosure defense, heirs property and community stabilization, and deed theft and scam prevention and litigation with an acute focus on racial equity and social justice across all communities. He is a 1996 graduate of the University of Minnesota with a B.A. in Portuguese and Spanish, summa cum laude, and a 2001 graduate of NYU School of Law. Scott worked at Morrison and Foerster LLP in real estate finance prior to transitioning to the public interest realm. Scott serves on the New York City Bar Association's Mortgage Foreclosure Task Force and Condo/Coop Committee, the New York Attorney General's Deed Theft Task Force and the New York City Non-Profit Legal Services Foreclosure Prevention Task, and formerly served on the City Bar's Housing and Urban Development and LGBT Rights Committees. He splits his time between a cabin in the woods in the Catskills and the urban forest of downtown Brooklyn.



James P. Leonard, Esquire

Jim Leonard is a lifelong resident of Philadelphia, who has spent most of his career in public service on behalf of the City of Philadelphia.

He has served as the Commissioner of the City of Philadelphia Department of Records since 2016. As Commissioner, Jim 1) serves as the Recorder of Deeds for Philadelphia, 2) manages the City's records management program for all departments, 3) administers the Department's public access to records program, including the City's historical archives, and 4) oversees the City's printing and binding center and official City photographer.

Prior to being appointed Commissioner of Records, Jim practiced law in Pennsylvania for approximately 17 years, with a focus on real estate transactional law, mostly at the City of Philadelphia Law Department.



Nefertitti Jackmon

Nefertitti Jackmon is a Cultural Strategist serving as Austin's first Community Displacement Prevention Officer. Jackmon leads the Housing Department's Displacement Prevention Office where she is instrumental in developing and leading programming

and outreach, including the \$300 million anti-displacement investments for Project Connect, described as a “comprehensive transit system expansion that will help transform Austin into one of the most sustainable, inclusive and innovative regions in the country.”

In this role, Jackmon, worked with community members, consultants, and City staff to co-create an Equity Tool to inform investment priorities for anti-displacement funds related to Project Connect. This tool will be instrumental in guiding the use of anti-displacement funding to benefit people most at risk of displacement from high-capacity transit investments.

Jackmon collaborated with department leadership, partners, and her team to successfully program and deploy over \$100 million in tenant stabilization services due to COVID-19, including RENT, the City’s response to provide emergency rental assistance to households in need. She’s responsible for creating investments, planning processes, programs and policies that help stabilize households and expand economic opportunities.

In January 2022 she was listed as one of Texas’ Top 100 Influential leaders impacting the Texas economy in Austin Business Journal. Her passion and work to support households in need comes from her more than 25 years of service in the nonprofit sector. Her desire is to see economic mobility opportunities as a foundation to address displacement pressures.

The Economic Architecture Project

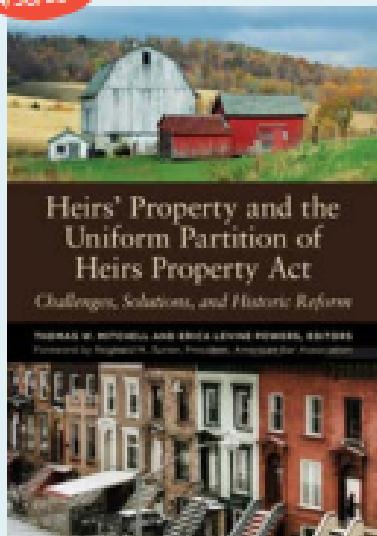
The Initiative on Land, Housing & Property Rights and Economic Architecture are beginning to develop an innovative project to foster structural approaches to heirs’ property and its impact on individuals, families, and communities. If you are focused on heirs’ property, interested in learning more or connecting with others, [please join us](#).

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Heirs' Property and the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act:

Challenges, Solutions, and Historic Reform

Thomas W. Mitchell and Erica Levine Powers, Editors

"To realize more of the promise of the Civil Rights Movement, massive racial and ethnic wealth gaps must be narrowed. Deeply problematic, unstable, and widespread heirs' property ownership has plagued Black and Brown communities for decades. This book should be the go-to book for those interested in helping disadvantaged heirs' property owners significantly increase their ability to maintain and further build upon the wealth, culture, and history associated with their property as well as for those committed to helping make our property system less racialized and more just."

—Derrick Johnson, President and CEO, NAACP

"This treatise on heirs' property is groundbreaking. This is the most significant analysis of how African Americans lost property and thereby lost one of the key pillars for generational wealth in America. I recommend this text to lawyers, pastors, activists, real estate agents, and civil rights organizations. It is a text that provides a framework for presenting a case for reparations."

—Rev. Dr. James C. Wilson, Esq., Senior Advisor, Rainbow PUSH; National Executive Director, PUSH Excel; and Pastor, Maple Park United Methodist Church

"This book concisely describes the social injustice background of forced heirs' property sales and the remedial Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act, and thoroughly sets out remedies, replete with examples and models. It should be on the bookshelf of every real estate and property law professor and every common ownerships and trust lawyer."

—David Callies, FAICP, Kudo Chair in Law, emeritus, the University of Hawaii and Past Chair, ABA Section of State and Local Government Law

This book provides a comprehensive, yet easily understandable overview of a widespread and problematic form of property ownership in the United States known as heirs' property, a form of property ownership that typically arises due to a lack of estate planning. There has been growing awareness about various heirs' property problems, including massive, decades-long, involuntary loss of land and homes, property loss that has disproportionately (though not exclusively) impacted Black and Brown families. This book should increase that awareness among lawyers, the general public, and policymakers. Just as importantly, the book offers many practical solutions for those seeking to address a variety of heirs' property problems.

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