

[Greg's lead in]

Intro to second Station ID break:

Greg (Track): Amber Tamm is a farmer and horticulturist based in New York City, and Chris Newman is a farmer and co-founder of Sylvanaqua Farms in Virginia. This is Climate One. Coming up, how approximately 11 million acres of land have been held by -- and taken from -- Black Americans.

Andrew Kahrl: This is almost a classic example of the forces that have been arrayed against African-Americans who have strived toward opportunity within our economy in America who then find themselves singled out for the type of racist abuse and discrimination.

Greg (Track): That's up next, when Climate One continues.

Music: out

STATION ID BREAK at (approximately 40')

Music Bed – 60 seconds

Outro from second Station ID break:

Greg (Track): This is Climate One. I'm Greg Dalton. June and Angela Provost are sugarcane farmers in Western Louisiana. Their story is emblematic of how systemic racism has prevented Blacks from accumulating land and wealth, a problem that is compounded by climate disruption. Freelance producer (TKTK) Julianna Bradley filed this report.

~~**Angie:** My name's Angela Provost and I'm here with my husband June. We are multigenerational farm owners. We have been on the initiative to work forward towards making people aware of the systemic racism that is very apparent within agriculture~~

~~**Angie and June are multigenerational sugarcane farmers in Western Louisiana.**~~

Julianna: The Provost farm was in the family for TKTK years. In 2015, they were forced off their land **WHEN SPECIFICALLY WHAT HAPPENED** of racist tactics and policies by the bank providing their crop loans and their local USDA office. **WHAT DID THEY DO? DID THEY SAY WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM IN THEIR OWN WORDS?** They watched as the same thing happened to other black farmers in the area all while white farmers thrived.

Angie: As black citizens, we are constantly bombarded with images of farming as being that of enslavement. If farming wasn't such an important industry for us, then your land wouldn't matter, your access to farm wouldn't matter and white supremacy would not be trying to take it away from you.

Farming to the Provosts is more than a livelihood, it's core to who they are. June has been farming his entire life.

June: Everything about farming I love. I always say when you plan something is almost like a symbol of hope, like you're planning something. sugar cane you're going to see in two weeks like is popping out of the ground. So you see, like hope there you see something that you work hard for in is coming out the ground and is going to be 12 to 15 feet in a year or so and is nothing better than seeing that happen.

The Provost story has been widely shared by the New York Times 1619 podcast. They were most recently featured in President-elect Joe Biden's victory video. June and Angie want to enlighten people about the insidious ways systemic racism and the history of enslavement drive American agricultural industry and policy.

June: And it's really important to share the story because, I mean, as black farmers, we're less than two percent of all farmers. I mean, if you go from 1920, there was almost a million black farms. Now today there's less than forty five thousand. And out of that, forty five thousand seventeen thousand are subject to foreclosure now. I mean, for for us is if this continue on the same path, another five, 10 years, there won't be any black farmers.

In the five years since losing their land, the Provosts have pursued legal measures against the bank and USDA office citing discriminatory practices. In the next chapter of the Provost's story they want to cultivate opportunities for learning for future generations of black farmers and dismantle and rebuild racist systems that impede black farmers.

June: I mean, representation matters. And if they can see somebody like me on a tractor and they might say, well, you know what, I want to be a farmer one day. So we and we need that. I mean, we need the younger generation to take over, you know, if their family farms now or if they just want to get involved from on their own. We need that down the road. We need that in the future. So, I mean, we're excited for what the future holds.

[Greg's lead out]

Greg (Track): That was freelance producer Julianna Bradley. Andrew Kahrl is professor of history and African-American studies at the University of Virginia, and author of *The Land Was Ours: How Black Beaches Became White Wealth in the Coastal South*. I asked him how representative the story of Jim Provost is in the context of what he studies.

Other Quotes:

Angie: [00:01:40] We have been on the initiative to work forward towards making people aware of the systemic racism that is very apparent within agriculture and how agriculture affects everything in our everyday lives. We are hopefully able to connect with people who possibly don't understand the guidelines, laws and rules that delegate the USDA and how that is relative to the Justice Department, the EPA, the Food and Drug Administration and all of those things that you may not be thinking about on a day to day, you know, mindset, but how all of those things relate to all of the key talking points that we go through in our lives. [60.5s]

Angie:[00:02:42]We have gone through a share of tactics that are residual from days of enslavement and Jim Crow laws. Those things are still affecting us today and they have not been fully repaired. So we hope that by sharing our story, we can hopefully make a dent in that and hopefully inspire the next generation to further push progressive policies that are inclusive, that are caretakers and fellowships of this earth, and that we are able to create real instead of systemic oppression and systemic change and progression. [48.2s]

Angie: [00:04:17]And it's important to talk about why black farmers are such a necessity to the American population and to humanity, because what that means is that the sustainability of black farmers means an inclusive voice, and it also means caretaking, like I said earlier, in Fellowship of the Earth. So if you have people who are owning land, who are taking care of that land, most likely they will take care of their communities as well. So black farmers is a key to community development. It's a key to empowerment. I hate to use the word power because I want people to be empowered. [45.4s]

Angie: [00:06:42]I think I think a key point is that, first of all, as black citizens, we are constantly bombarded with images of farming as being that of enslavement. Right. So we're bombarded with images that actually don't coincide with the average farm market today. [19.6s]

[00:08:37]And I always tell folks like if if farming wasn't such an important industry for us, then your land wouldn't matter, your access to farm wouldn't matter and white supremacy would not be trying to take it away from you. [18.2s]

[00:09:16]And we hope that by bringing our story to light and hoping people understand our passion for why we're fighting for this resonates and that we make some real change. [9.9s]

June: [00:09:27]And and I always tell especially young kids that that message us and said, you know, I planted a seed and it is growing. And I always said, I can't see this enough how important farmers are, especially now like with covid, you see the shortages of food banks and all of these different things are happening. And we are always going to need farmers and always tell kids, [22.7s] [00:10:11]And it's and it's nothing better than instilling the soul in. And I always say people look at me crazy sometimes when I see it, you know, you smell the salt as you're tellin me, but you actually do. And this is nothing greater than in getting that feeling. [14.0s]

[00:11:23]So the Heritage Center comes from a vision that we've always had to sort of to to involve. [8.1s]

[00:11:34]Young folks into the idea of recognizing and honoring the legacy of black farmers, and in doing that, we can sort of switch that that mentality or that mindset of that we have to either move away from the farm or move away from the land. And it sort of gears our way back to it [24.5s]

[00:13:04]And right now you can see me, but I'm smiling so much because we get excited when we talk about this. I mean, we envision where we can have kids just come and learn how to plant seeds, learn how to grow and take that back to to their household and try to plant something there as well as well. [19.7s] [00:13:31]and just highlighting the accomplishments of black farmers that came before myself. I mean, I'm a fourth generation farmer, but just to highlight, like, certain things that they accomplish in not only in the sugar industry, but just and as well. I mean, there's just so much ideas and the passion I love to form farming is everything to me. But this is also very important to us because we we want to see this come to fruition and make this happen where we can, you know, do something really, really big for our community as well. [35.3s]

[00:15:45]tell her in our stories, just so many farmers and I mean so many people throughout the country. I mean, different countries have been reaching out to us. [6.4s]

[00:15:51]And just like, you know, we'll visit you for we want to visit your farm and for us to hear that, you know, it just it makes us just just want to keep fighting and keep pushing to make this a reality. [10.5s]

Angie: [00:16:03]It makes you realize the importance of our connection to the land and our connection to food and our connection to the environment. Right. So we're just super excited about what could come of this, the partnerships that could be built, because it's not about Junon myself. It's about a collective. So we just really look forward to what's coming for the Heritage Center and the farm. [26.2s]

[00:18:08]But to really get some real reparative change to to our communities and to create policies that are inclusive, that really honor the legacy of our ancestors and pave a way for the next generation and. We see a lot of corporate jargon using the word sustainability as if it's just a key talking point, but it's actually just a marketing gimmick, because to us, if you are not talking about the sustainability of black farmers. There is no, you know, ongoing or safekeeping of a process. There is no sustainability when you're not talking about us. [48.1s]

June: [00:24:19]And when you plant something, how the soil makes it grow. And and my dad always told us, you know, you take care of this, all the soil will take care of you. And it is true, is very true is it's nothing better than getting your hands dirty in just touching the soil and just, you know, and you just pick up a clump of soil and just say, you know, something is going to grow in this. And it's it is amazing. I mean, I'm a fourth generation farmer. I've been brought up, you know, since a little kid doing this. But I'm always amazed by it. I mean, still to this day, I mean, you know, I grew close to five thousand acres of sugarcane and I still would be amazed every day of what this SOL can do for you. So I would tell that young kid, yes, I mean, there are challenges, but just to be out there and soak in all of this up is well worth it. [51.6s]