

## **Heirs Property, Trusts & Legacy Workshop (December 12, 2025)**

The Heirs Property, Trusts & Legacy Workshop hosted by Fourtee Acres Resource Market (F.A.R.M.) was an electric, deeply resonant gathering that brought together landowners, farmers, advocates, and community members for a day rooted in truth, history, and hope.

Before the formal program began, Tyrone Williams of Fourtee Acres led the room in a moment of reflection and honor for his cousin, Chester Williams, a respected community leader and founder of A Better Chance a Better Community (ABC2). Chester's lifelong commitment to uplifting rural communities and advocating for opportunity set a meaningful tone for the day, grounding the conversation in legacy, service, and remembrance.

Mr. Williams then introduced Ebonie Alexander, Executive Director of the Black Family Land Trust (BFLT), whose presentation anchored the day. Ebonie delivered a powerful, accessible, and deeply informative session that traced the history of Black land loss in the United States, highlighted the disproportionate impact of heirs property on Black, rural, and low wealth families, and unpacked the legal and structural systems that continue to drive displacement.

Through clear explanations and a hands -on activity, participants were able to see how land is fractured over generations when deeds and wills remain unresolved. The exercise allowed participants to visually map how property splits among heirs, making tangible a concept that can otherwise feel abstract or overwhelming.

Ebonie emphasized that one of the greatest barriers families face is not just access to legal services, but accessing the language to help understand the terminology, paperwork, and processes required to protect land. She urged participants to confront this head on, offering a message that resonated deeply across the room:

“This Christmas, your family doesn’t need a new pair of boots, new gloves, or a new coat... they need you to have a will.”

In addition to introducing Black Family Land Trust, Ebonie highlighted several aligned organizations offering pathways for follow up support, including:

- Land Loss Prevention Project
- Sustainable Forestry & Land Retention Network
- American Farmland Trust

She also shared a short VICE-produced video on heirs property ("Losing Ground"), helping further explain the issue, and encouraged participants to learn more about the Uniform

Partition of Heirs Property Act (UPHPA) as well as ongoing efforts to strengthen and expand protections for heirs property owners in North Carolina.

After a shared lunch and networking time, participants gathered for a screening of the documentary *Family Tree*, which tells the story of families navigating heirs property, land stewardship, and generational responsibility. The film features F.A.R.M. board member and forest farm owner Nikki Jefferies, whose family's experience with sustainable forest management illustrates both the challenges and the possibilities of land retention. The film also centers the Williams family, showing how Tyrone and Edna Williams are actively training their sons to continue the legacy of their century old family farm.

The screening was followed by a dynamic Q&A panel featuring:

- Nikki Jefferies (landowner and *Family Tree* participant)
- Alton Perry (Sustainable Forestry & Land Retention Project / Roanoke Cooperative)
- Ebonie Alexander (Black Family Land Trust)
- Tyrone Williams (Fourtee Acres)

Panelists and audience members alike emphasized the importance of family alignment, education across generations, and using trusted organizations to navigate emotionally complex decisions. Throughout the discussion, Edna Williams' "4 Ts of Sustainability" emerged as a guiding framework: Time. Talks. Trust. Treasures. Take the time to have the talks that build trust and protect family treasures.

The day closed with a shared sense of gravity but also momentum. Attendees left with clearer understanding, tangible next steps, and connections to organizations working collaboratively to ensure that land remains a source of stability, wealth, and healing for future generations.

F.A.R.M. extends deep gratitude to all participants and partners, including Black Family Land Trust, the Roanoke Cooperative Sustainable Forestry & Land Retention Project, and sponsoring organizations USDA NRCS and Winston County Self Help Cooperative, whose support made this gathering possible."