

DES MOINES DEFENDER

Community Zine

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TO THE [BLACK] FARMERS OF THE UNITED STATES

BY ALICE MOORE DUNBAR-NELSON

God washes clean the souls and hearts of you,
His favored ones, whose backs bend o'er the
soil,

Which grudging gives to them requite for toil
In sober graces and in vision true.

God places in your hands the pow'r to do
A service sweet. Your gift supreme to foil
The bare-fanged wolves of hunger in the moil
Of Life's activities. Yet all too few

Your glorious band, clean sprung from Nature's
heart;

The hope of hungry thousands, in whose breast
Dwells fear that you should fail. God placed no
dart

Of war within your hands, but pow'r to start
Tears, praise, love, joy, enwoven in a crest
To crown you glorious, brave ones of the soil.

WHO WAS GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER?

BY MARLEE RUTLEDGE



One of the greatest minds in Black History was George Washington Carver. As one of the first African American folk heroes, George Carver was born a slave in Diamond Grove, Missouri on July 12th, 1861(?). According to an unconfirmed (yet plausible) story, George and his mother Mary were kidnapped by Slave Raiders shortly after his birth. While they could not find his mother, George was returned to his owners Moses and Susan Carver. Moses and Susan Carver reared him, and since Slaves were only given first names George adopted Carver as his own, and later added the Washington. Unable to go to the white school near Moses and Susan Carver, George moved in with a Black couple in 1877 in Neosho, Missouri so that he could attend the Black school and paid his room and board by doing housekeeping and laundry for the family, which is something that he would continue throughout his education. When colleges in Kansas denied him entry once they found out he was African American, Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa admitted him into their school of arts. Carver was encouraged by his art professor to attend Iowa State University for agricultural sciences. Attending Iowa State University was harder than attending Simpson

SCIENTIFIC WORK

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GRASS ROOTS TEACHER AND ORGANIZER

Before Carver arrived at Tuskegee, part of his mission was to help the poorest Black farmers and homemakers. This group of people mainly consisted of newly liberated people and their children. For the homemaker, Carver sought out the best food dehydration and preservation processes. He developed color washes from the clay soil to help families beautify their home.

George was also an amazing science communicator. He would translate his research and others into language for the layperson and created a readable bulletin that was distributed freely. Yearly farmer's conferences ran by Carver were held for Black farmers and interested Whites. During these two day conferences, he would spend his time spreading motivation and innovation to work for economic independence. He would take these farmers to tour Tuskegee and explain the experiments that were underway. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) would give him free seeds which he would then distribute to farmers. However, Carver knew that these people could also benefit from learning on their own land. In 1897 the Farmers Institute was organized monthly. Members gained specific information about what fertilizers to use, what crops to plant, and how to improve soil. By inventing a Jesup Wagon, Carver created a movable school so that the Farmers institute could perform demonstrations. The wagon carried supplies and opened up for displays, and in the first summer of operation it reached over 6,000 people. This farm extension work was limited by the lack of funds, but the program succeeded in helping farmers beautify their homes and improve their soil

Carver's movable school, conferences, and readable bulletins were important contributions to agricultural education, especially to newly liberated people. He could have lived his life continuing to make great strides in research, but he chose to apply his gifts towards the advancement of poor black farmers in the South.

CREATIVE WORK

Carver originally enrolled into Simpson College to pursue art, but did not believe that he could make a living as a Black artist. When his art professor learned of his skills with plants, She suggested that he enrolled into Iowa State University for agriculture. (Below is a GWC with a painting)



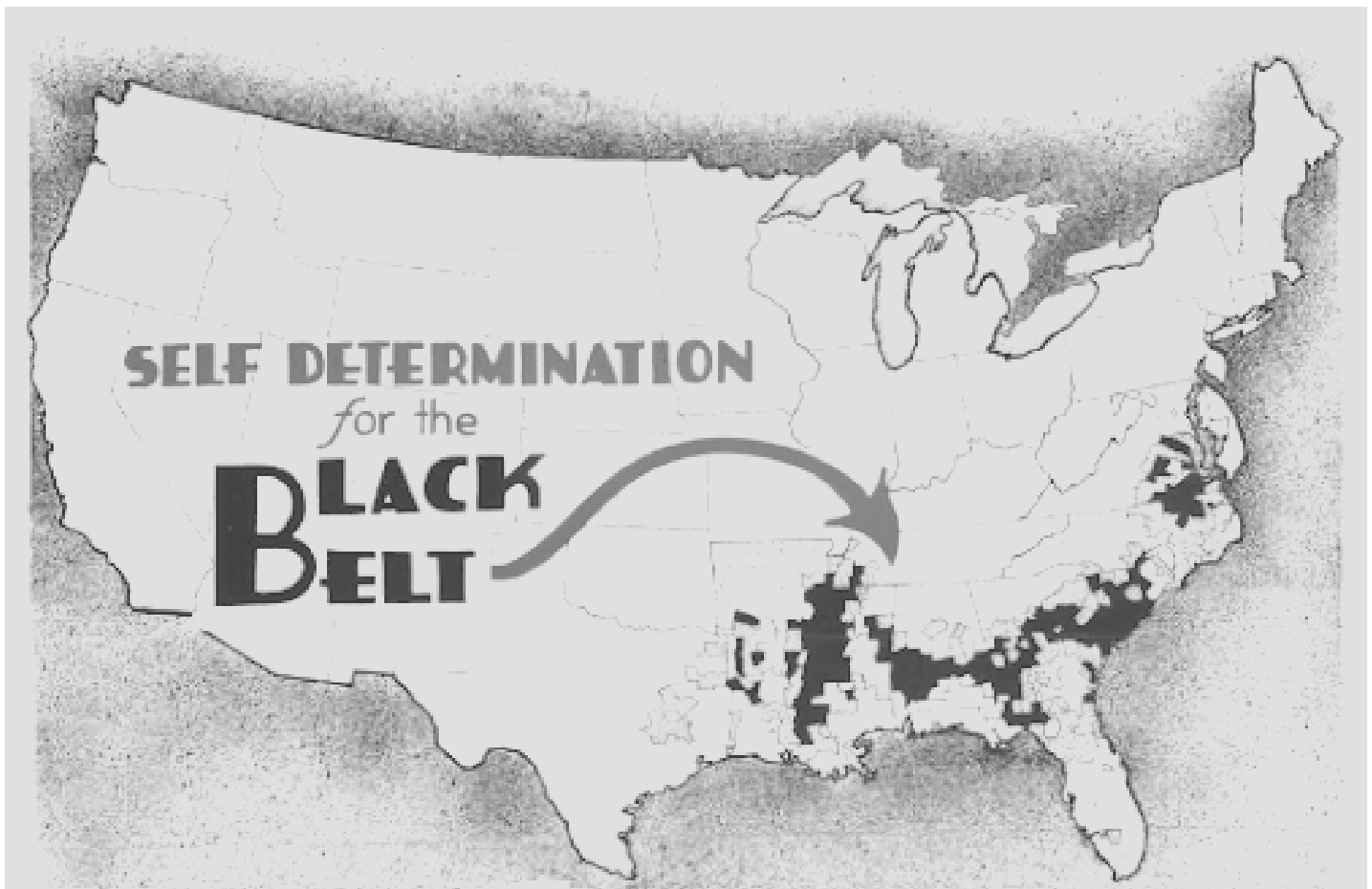


George Washington Carver's Products

Carver helped farmers by developing new uses for peanuts, sweet potatoes, and soybeans. It became economically viable to produce these crops because there were more uses for them, and in turn, greater demand. This helped the economy of the South evolve from a cotton monoculture.

Carver is best known for his work with peanuts. He developed over 300 uses for peanuts, including peanut butter, cheese, dyes, flour, inks, milk, and plastics. Carver also developed over a hundred new uses for sweet potatoes, including molasses, postage stamp glue, soap, rubber, and vinegar.

Adhesives	Face ointment	Mock veal cutlet	Rubber
Antiseptic soap	Face powder	Molasses	Rubbing oils
Axle grease	Flavoring paste	Molasses feed	Salad oil
Baby massage cream	Flour	Mucilage	Sandwich vinegar
Bisque powder	Fuel briquettes	Nitroglycerine	Shampoo
Bleach	Glue	Oleomargarine	Shaving cream
Butter from peanut milk	Glycerin	Paints	Shoe polish
Caramel salted peanuts	Goiter treatment	Pancake flour	Sizing for walls
Castoria substitute	Hand lotion	Paper	Soap
Cheese	Ink	Pavement	Soil conditioner
Cheese pimento	Insecticide	Peanut brittle	Stains
Chili sauce	Instant coffee	Peanut butter	Sugar
Chocolate coated peanuts	Insulating boards	Peanut candy bars	Sweeping compound
Chop suey sauce	Iron tonic	Peanut hay meal	Synthetic marble
Cleanser for hands	Laundry soap	Peanut koumiss beverage	Synthetic rubber
Cooking oil	Laxatives	Peanut meat loaf	Talcum powder
Cosmetics	Linoleum	Peanut oil	Tannic acid
Dyes	Mayonnaise	Peanut relish	Tofu sauce
Emulsion for bronchitis	Meal substitutes	Peanut wafers	Tutti frutti
Evaporated peanut beverage	Meat tenderizer	Plastics	Washing powder
Face bleach	Medicine	Pomade for scalp	Wood filler
Face cream	Metal polish	Pomade for skin	Wood stain
Face lotion	Mock chicken	Postage stamp glue	Worcestershire sauce



HISTORY OF BLACK BELT AGRICULTURE IN THE SOUTH

BY MARLEE RUTLEDGE

Two things allowed the Southern portion of the United States to become an agricultural super power (besides slave labor). The first was the climate. In the continental US, the southern portion has the longest and warmest growing season. Heavy rains, mild winters, and warm weather allowed for a longer growing season. The second is due to the geological formation of the United States. Particularly in Mississippi and Alabama the South was inundated with shallow seas during the late cretaceous period. When the Gulf of Mexico finally receded, it left a fertile, loamy, lime soil. These fertile soils in Mississippi and Alabama would bring in wealthy white settlers that would expel the indigenous people from these lands and build some of the most productive tobacco, cotton, and sugar plantations in the Confederacy.

Slavery had created a bigger population of African Americans that lived in the counties of the Black Prairie Belt than Whites. The Southern Black Belt doesn't just refer to an area of fertile land, but also the geopolitical region of enslaved peoples and black workers that lived in confederate states. After the civil war, this concentration of Black people would play a huge role in the Reconstruction Period. Booker T. Washington, a leading black intellectual, commented in 1901 that "So far as I can learn, the term was first used to designate a part of the country which was distinguished by the color of the soil. The part of the country possessing this thick, dark, and naturally rich soil was, of course, the part of the South where the slaves were most profitable, and consequently they were taken there in the largest numbers. Later, and especially since the war, the term seems to be used wholly in a political sense — that is, to designate the counties where the black people outnumber the white."

FARMING TIPS WITH PROFESSOR K!

First plan out what you'd like it to look like. This small bit of work upfront not only can save you a lot of heartaches, but can also be a lot of fun. Most stuff you can eat in the garden tends to LOVE sunlight, so look for a south facing area for your plants!

The right plants for the right place is important. Take a peek at the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map before selecting and purchasing seeds and plants. Here in the metro we are considered Zone 5, but it is Iowa so I tend to purchase my perennial seeds and plants based on Zone 4 to make sure they weather through the tough Iowa winters.

This may seem like a no-brainer, but grow what you eat. In most urban settings, there is no need to grow ten tomato plants unless you're growing them for other people to eat. If you're a novice to urban gardening, tomatoes, onions, peas, and carrots are exceedingly easy to grow.

We live in a city, and city soil is possibly going to have absorbed toxins that you definitely don't want transferred to your harvests. Getting your soil tested isn't as easy as it used to be in some ways. The great thing is that if you have the cash, you can get a test kit for around \$30. This includes: a comprehensive report that is in your hands in seven to ten days that highlight over a dozen plant available nutrient levels including pH, custom organic and synthetic product recommendations (based on your specific results), dedicated customer support, and in many cases, results can be sent directly to your smart device.

Many people in lieu of using existing soil, many gardeners use raised beds or opt for container gardens. Raised beds allow you to use quality bagged topsoil (or have it delivered), and allows you to add precious soil amendments like compost, bone meal, manure, peat moss, and ground limestone and have truly "perfect" soil for growing your edible plants. If you don't have a bunch of room, you can use containers. I prefer terracotta pots (because they "breathe" and leach water easily), but most things can be used for containers if they have enough volume, and they are able to have holes drilled into them for drainage. Without appropriate drainage, roots can rot and plants can get waterlogged. I've seen entire herb gardens grown from a series of two liter bottles tied together in a car tire that was cut in half.

Start small. The last thing you want is to have a garden that you can barely attend to. Soon, weeds can take over, you get discouraged, more weeds move in, and before you know it, your garden is pretty much shot. A garden should complement your life, not take it over.

Maximize soil moisture by mulching. You will water less, keep weeds from growing, and add precious plant material to your soil by mulching. You can use things like old hay, straw, leaves, grass clippings, or even shredded paper.

Last but not least, more hands make less work right? Get with your neighbors and perhaps you can make a plan together about what you're going to grow. If you can plan



on a nice harvest of tomatoes from your neighbor, you can make room to grow something else or more of one other thing like peppers. Gardening can build community, even if you're not all on the same plot of land. Remember folx, we're all in this together!

STATEMENT OF GRATITUDE

This farm is an uprising. It's proof of our desire to imagine ourselves fully detached from a system which feeds on us instead of simply feeding us.

BY MATÈ MUHAMMAD

This farm would not be possible without the never ending support for Black Liberation which has found a home in Des Moines for nearly a year now; from the community at large as well as from individuals.

I would like to take this space to express gratitude for Kennady Lily and MJ from Radiate Farms who's guidance on this project has been critical. I am grateful for Monika from Sweet Tooth Farms who gave us the land we are currently working on. I am grateful for Lashon Winfield, my homie and brother, for his unsung heroism in the form of labor, love and patience. And finally I am grateful for my fellow farmers, Naya, Celize, Marlee and Kerwin for being dreamers and trailblazers with us on this journey!!!

**DSM
BLM**
COLLECTIVE





MARLEE

“Farming has been the crux of self sufficiency for Black people in the United States since the beginning of slavery. Creating subsistence for ourselves is automatically fighting the powers that want to see us starve.”

MATÈ

“Black/urban farming means the beginning of land autonomy and sovereignty for oppressed people in America!”



KENNADY

“For me Black farming is a space for healing, growing, and self care. The plants are my teachers, my mirrors, and babies.”