




**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP ASSEMBLY
ST. HELENA ISLAND
MARCH 2026**



**GROWING FARMERS IS THE
KEY, FARMERS ARE THE
FABRIC, AND THAT'S JUST
THE WAY I LOOK AT IT,
IT'S LIKE A QUILT;
WE ARE JUST BUILDING
A QUILT OF FARMERS.
- CYNTHIA HAYES**

WELCOME LETTER

Welcome SAAFON farmers, friends, and guests,

In many of the stories we've heard over the years about Cynthia Hayes, one sentiment is repeated again and again: she called the farmers she worked with, the very people building SAAFON into a network: "my farmers". That simple phrase carried something powerful. It reflected her deep commitment, her fierce love, and her belief that we belonged to one another. A true organizer, Cynthia held hopes and dreams for individual farms, and also for the flourishing of entire communities. For her, belonging was not symbolic, it was action.

As we gather here at SAAFON's first in-person General Membership Assembly, bringing together the largest convening of farmers in our institution's history, we are living into that legacy. We have chosen to gather at The Penn Center, on the lands of mossy trees and sea breezes that Cynthia called home. This place carries its own legacy: a historic space of movement building, organizing, and restoration for those doing the work of justice and community care.

When we speak of kinship and crafting it within our network, we are talking about solidarity. This solidarity means we are willing and equipped to "Go Through Together." That when conditions require us to adapt and evolve, we do so as one body.

That our core, we remain committed to our own farms and land dreams, and to how our fellow farmers are experiencing the journey as well.

Kinship asks something of us. It asks that we see one another. That we check in. That we share knowledge and burdens. That we celebrate and strategize side by side. It reminds us that none of us stands alone in this work.

So as you settle into this gathering, take a moment. Look up at the trees. Feel the breeze. Look around at the faces in this space. Imagine Ma Cynthia smiling at the sight of us - together in purpose, together in struggle, together in joy. Celebrating 20 years in existence, in connectivity and in action!

May this time deepen our connections.
May it strengthen our resolve.
May it remind us that we are, and have always been, in this together.

In solidarity and kinship,

Whitney Jaye & Alsie Parks,
Co-Executive Directors and Institutional
Stewards of SAAFON



**STAFF
+
BOARD**



Tammy Harris



Ashley Hunter



Whitney Jaye



Alisha Johnson Perry



Dr. Liz
Johnston-Dupre



Shelby Mandonado



Jason Lindsay



Alsie Parks



Zel Taylor



Kayla Harris



Dr. Cindy
Ayers Elliott



Yvette Browne



Jesse Buie

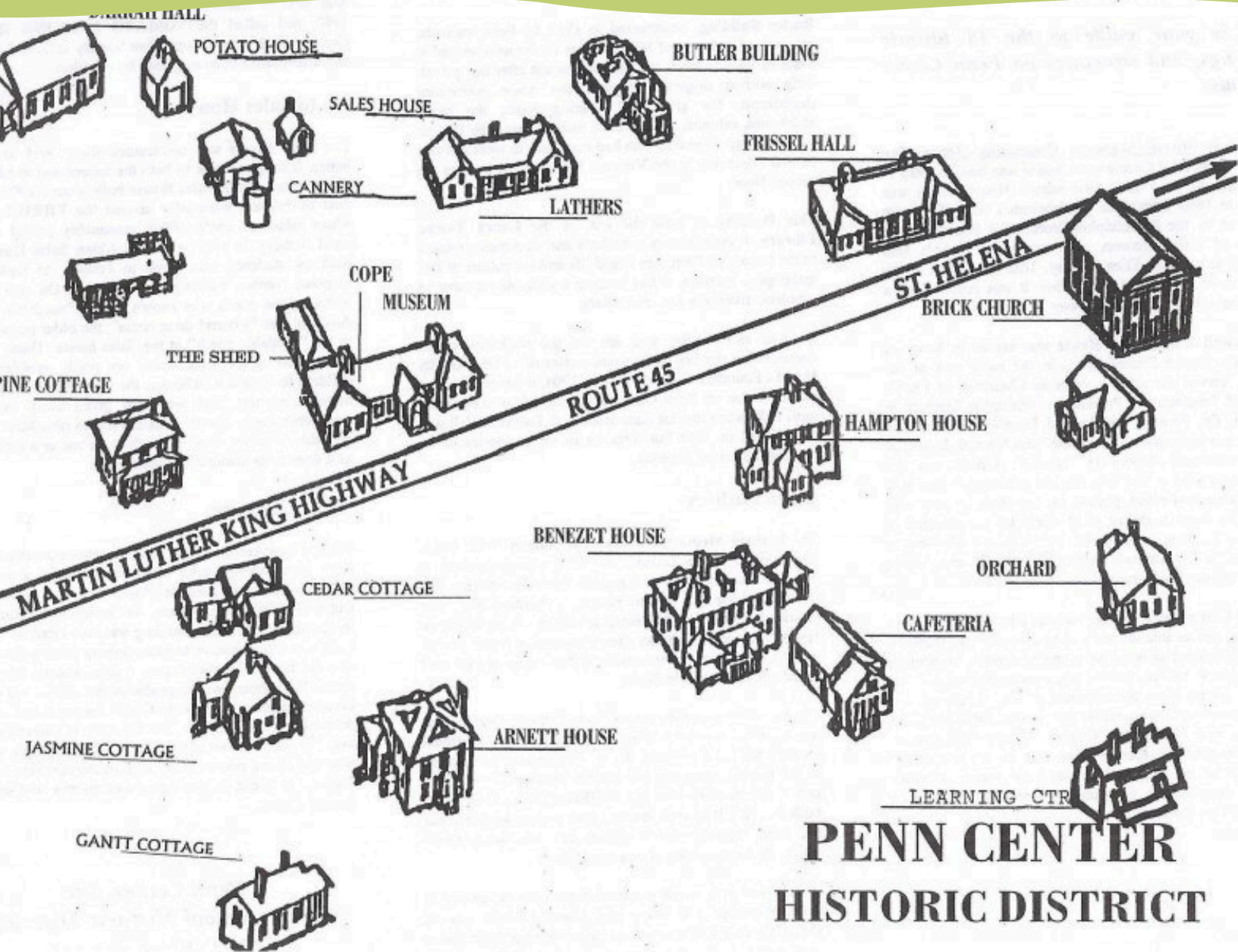


Sandra Simone



Blain Snipstal

CAMPUS MAP



MEETING / ACTIVITY SPACE
Frissel Hall

DINING
Cafeteria

SHUTTLE MEET UP
Outside Frissel Hall

CHILDREN'S HOUSE
Hampton Hall

SAAFON'S MEMBERSHIP ASSEMBLY

A Guide for Interactive Spaces

Throughout our time together, you'll find several spaces designed to support connection, care, creativity, and collective storytelling. These are open for you to visit at any point during the Assembly, we invite you to move through them as you feel called. Each of these stations and installations are located in the central areas of Frissell Community Hall (where registration is located).

Care Station

The Care Station serves as a soft landing place whenever you need a moment to pause, refuel, or regroup. Throughout the assembly, the Care Station will be stocked with:

- Tea, coffee, and light refreshments
- First aid supplies
- COVID and other wellness PPE
- A small loaner library of books and materials to browse during the Assembly (note: please keep in mind these books are to remain at the loaner library for folks to check out during the assembly - please do not take books back to your room or other areas of the assembly)

This is a space to pause, relax, hydrate, or simply take a quiet moment. We are happy to be able to offer teas from SAAFON farmer member Justevia!



SAAFON'S MEMBERSHIP ASSEMBLY

A Guide for Interactive Spaces

From Our Hands Table

The From our Hands Table serves as a space to honor the work of our hands and the lands we represent and steward, and the intention to share our place of being with others as we converge for the assembly experience.

We invite you to bring items from your farm, homestead, or land stewardship project. These items could include things you've grown, made, crafted, or produced. Some examples could be:

- Seeds
- Value-added products
- Art, crafts, or handmade goods
- Tools, books, or items you no longer need
- Natural items representative of your land or home

Everything on the table is available for swap and exchange. We invite folks to leave their items throughout the assembly experience, with folks having the opportunity to take something home following our celebratory dinner. Leave something that carries your story, and choose something that speaks to you to take with you. The From our Hands table is a celebration of our abundance and the many ways we create.



ASSEMBLY SCHEDULE

Thursday, March 5

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

HOTEL ARRIVALS. GAME NIGHT

Join us for a night of games and fellowship at Holiday Inn Hotel.

Friday, March 6

9:30 AM - 10:30AM

COLLECTIVE WELCOMING + GROUNDING

- Spiritual Grounding and Space Opening - Mama Dorothy Barker, Operation Spring Plant
- Welcome from SAAFON's Leadership - Mrs. Yvette Browne, SAAFON Board Chair
- Welcome from South Carolina – Daryl Orage, SC Black Farmer's Coalition
- Welcome from The Penn Center – Dr. Robert Adams, The Penn Center

10:15 AM - 11:00 AM

MYSTICA ROTATIONS: PENN CENTER HISTORY WALK

What is a mystica? We will engage in a shared ritual in support of connection, reflection, and grounding, a practice adapted from the global agroecology movement, particularly La Via Campesina.

Mystica Groups

- Group 1 – Red, Tammy
- Group 2 – Orange, Zel
- Group 3 – Yellow, Jason
- Group 4 – Green, Dr. Liz
- Group 5 – Blue, Ashley
- Group 6 – Purple, Alsie

11:14 AM - 12:45 PM

WORLD CAFE

A guided invitation for members to move around the room for introductions, values alignment, dialogue, and interaction.

2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

FARM TOUR

Our farm tour host and SAAFON legacy member, Sara Reynolds-Green of Marshview Community Organic Farm, will highlight the beauty and brilliance of Gullah Geechee land-based traditions.

ON-CAMPUS WEAVING WISDOMS SCREENING

Join us as we showcase the Weaving Wisdoms videos, and the farmers we featured, and hear more about the the work of SAAFON's production partners, Myriah Towner of Black Farmer Stories.

4:45 AM - 5:15 PM

CLOSING CIRCLE

We will close out the day's activities, integrate reflections on the day, and provide some general logistics for the remainder of the evening.

6:30 PM - 9:00 PM

BONFIRE + NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

We invite members for evening fellowship, continued dialogue and connection with a fireside chat, bonfire, and night at the Penn Center Museum.

Saturday, March 7

9:15 AM - 9:30 AM

**COLLECTIVE WELCOMING +
GROUNDING**

Bringing everyone into shared energy, and moving into the day's activities.

9:30 AM - 10:15 AM

**MYSTICA ROTATIONS: LEGACY
FARMER GALLERY WALK**

Mystica Groups

- Group 1 – Red, Tammy
- Group 2 – Orange, Zel
- Group 3 – Yellow, Jason
- Group 4 – Green, Dr. Liz
- Group 5 – Blue, Ashley
- Group 6 – Purple, Alsie

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM

MEMBERSHIP MEETING PT. I

SAAFON's first in-person membership meeting will serve as our annual touchpoint, with attention to the following topics:

- Uplifting and honoring the vision and legacy of SAAFON and our 20th Year Anniversary
- Providing and annual review of 2025, and forecasting 2026 activities and membership engagements
- Reciprocity Panel with Ben Burkett, State Coordinator for the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives & Rhondalyn Peairs, Grassroots Griot

12:30 PM - 1:45 PM

LUNCH

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

**MEMBERSHIP MEETING PT. II
AFFINITY GROUPS**

- Farmers will have the opportunity to gather in small groups based on various topics, farm models, and interests.

3:30 PM - 4:00 PM

CLOSING CIRCLE

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

**CELEBRATORY DINNER + AWARDS
CEREMONY**

A shared celebration – uplifting the recipient of the Dr. Owusu Bandele Award for Agricultural Excellence, a feast curated by chefs Matthew and Tia Raiford, and a musical show by The Mahoganeer Xperience.

Sunday, March 8

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

BREAKFAST AT PENN CENTER

10:30 AM - 11:00 AM

CLOSING CIRCLE

FARMER-TO-FARMER AFFINITY GROUPS

Based on farmer feedback in our survey ahead of the assembly, we are looking forward to some generative dialogue during our farmer-to-farmer affinity groups. These break-out groups are intended to offer direct connections with other farmers who have the same interests as you. Please feel free to browse the affinity group descriptions below to select the group that feels most aligned with your interests.

Affinity groups will meet up in Frissell Hall from 2:00-3:30 pm.

Business Development + Farm Finances

- Structuring farm businesses, recordkeeping, bookkeeping
- Accessing capital, grants/loans
- Marketing strategies, volunteer engagement, selling to institutions
- Health insurance, farm security, tax compliance

Value-Added Products + Processing

- Tinctures, salves, teas, extracts, oils, preserves, etc
- Canning + food preservation, educational workshops
- Cooking/taste demonstrations/workshops
- Product labeling, pricing, marketing

Herbalism + Medicinal Plants

- Herbs/native plants, tinctures, extracts, etc.
- Herbal cultivation, drying, processing, marketing
- Foraging, plant ID

Soil Health + Compost, Pest Management

- Soil health + management
- Fertilizers and amendments
- Compost – creating on-farm compost, utilizing
- No-till
- Natural pest control/IPM

Farmer Wellness + Community Care

- Mental health in farming
- Intergenerational wellness and education (elders + children)
- Healing from exploitation as land tenants/farm workers

Climate Resilience + Sustainability

- Adjustments for extreme weather, flood zones, climate change
- Disaster response + recovery
- Agrihood development, agritourism, land trusts
- Transitional farm operations

Innovative Systems + Niche Farming

- Hydroponics, aquaponics, other niche crops/markets (mushrooms, indigo, cut flowers, aquaculture, seeds/propagation materials, perennials, nursery starts, etc)

Livestock + Animal Husbandry

- Sheep, goats, cattle, poultry, etc
- Rotational grazing + pasture management
- Butchering + Processing

Educational Farm Offerings

- On and off-farm classes, demos, workshops, classes
- School partnerships, youth/workforce development
- Community engagement
- Business scalability + funding opportunities

Community Gardens, Collectives, Cooperatives + Collaboration

- Community garden management and accessibility
- Collective/Cooperative structures, marketing, tool/equipment/land sharing
- Mutual aid, farmer brigades, farmer-to-farmer skill-share
- Oral history and storytelling around afro/agroecological traditions

20 YEARS OF SAAFON: EARLY ORIGINS

Twenty years ago, SAAFON emerged through simple yet radical actions: the intention of reaching out, centering relationships, and honoring the land - all in service towards the greater viability of Southern Black farms. As we gather to celebrate 20 years of organizing, we honor the original spirit of SAAFON - its founders, legacy members, organizers, and countless others who have poured into SAAFON's growing ecosystem over the past two decades. Though SAAFON has continued to grow, change, and evolve, bearing witness to its early shaping and story can help guide us into the next decade of showing up in service to Black farmers in the Southeast. We were honored to have the opportunity to interview Sandra Simone (SAAFON legacy farmer and current board member) and Blain Snipstal (one of SAAFON's earliest organizers and current board member) to share with us some of their memories and experiences with SAAFON throughout the years - as well as their hopes and intentions for SAAFON in the future.

It is our intention to honor the organizing legacy of SAAFON's co-founders, Cynthia Hayes (affectionately/ respectfully referred to as "Ma Cynthia" by those who knew her) and Dr. Owusu Bandele (similarly referred to as Baba Owusu), and the lasting impacts of their vision on the southern Black Agrarian landscape.

Both Blain and Sandra imparted that in the earliest days, no one really "found" SAAFON - folks with a heart alignment were called toward SAAFON, often before they even realized it. Blain remembers driving through a farmer's market in Savannah as a college student and catching a glimpse of a banner with a name on it that he didn't yet recognize. It would be another few years before conversations with other organizers would lead him back to SAAFON and that first memory resurfaced. "I kept hearing about SAAFON," he says. "That's when I realized - oh, that's that banner I saw years ago."

For Sandra, that call came directly. "Most likely, Cynthia called me," she laughs. "That's just how it happened back then."



She remembers the first gathering in the summer of 2006, a small group in Ma Cynthia's home in a historic neighborhood of Savannah. Surrounded by moss-draped trees and the smell of something Ma Cynthia was cooking, Sandra reflects how she felt held by the experience curated by Ma Cynthia. "I felt isolated," she says. "And Cynthia brought us together."

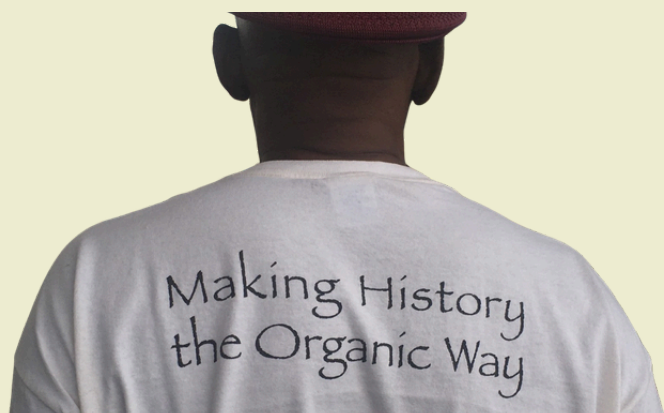
Many people speak of Ma Cynthia the same way: with warmth, with a deep sense of loss and nostalgia following her transition, and with the kind of reverence that comes from knowing someone who lived her purpose fully. Both Sandra and Blain emphasize through their descriptions that Ma Cynthia was many things, but ultimately share the remembering that she was protective, joyful, and like all of us, complex. Both share seeing her clear vision for Black farmers and a dedication to seeing it through. "She was in it, to win it, for the farmers," said Sandra.

Perhaps most importantly, Ma Cynthia was unwavering in her view for how farmer organizing should be held - with relationships at the center. Blain laughs at the memory of trying to find elder Black farmers through a Google search, "Black folks - especially elders - aren't on Google." Ma Cynthia's style of organizing was picking up the phone and reaching out directly, showing up to be with farmers on their own land, and opening her home to those same farmers. Blain remembers her constantly carrying around an older style



bar phone, a yellow flip notebook, and her pocketbook: "That was her gold - she knew relationships were like gold." Blain emphasized that her experiences having come through the Civil Rights era had imparted a particular protectiveness in her around her people and relationships: "She guarded her relationships dearly."

In those early days, Sandra shares that she felt inspired by the work of Ma Cynthia. With the visionary support of Owusu Bandele, SAAFON began hosting farmer gatherings to support Black farmers through the process of becoming organic certified. Blain emphasizes how the two saw their work with SAAFON as not only simply organizing farmers to become organic certified, but were "infusing the organization with their personality, perspective, and vision for Black people, and building a grassroots approach to relationship building and and being on the land with folks." He and Sandra both underline how radically different this was in practice and in feeling from other farmer-based organizations: "She was a hands-on kind of person," Sandra says. "She really cared about you as a person."



The early SAAFON network was small, consisting of maybe a dozen farmers all holding direct relationships with Ma Cynthia. Blain reflects on the scale of the Southeast, with those early legacy farmers spread from Louisiana to the Carolinas. The organization was almost “clandestine,” says Blain: no website, no email list, no sign ups - just a phone tree and trust.

However, the work was rich. Farmers traveled together for leadership development, started developing relationships in the Caribbean through trips to St. Croix, and connected with organizations across the country and beyond. Baba Owusu, gentle and brilliant, brought joy and jazz to every gathering. “He always made an opportunity for me to sing something,” Sandra remembers. “He was like our father figure.”

Although organic certification was the first shared project, it wasn’t just about paperwork - it was about reclaiming a lineage. “There’s a legacy of generational Black farming,” Blain says, “but a disruption happened following the Middle Passage, and even agriculture. SAAFON was confronting that disruption.”

Blain illustrates the bridge of children returning to family land their parents left, supported by the memory of how their parents and grandparents had held the land - a way of farming in resistance to the demands of industrial agriculture.

Blain reflects that both Ma Cynthia and Baba Owusu understood their work as not only supporting the real, immediate market advantages offered Black farmers by Organic Certification but also understood their work as “confronting the notion and image of the “downtrodden Black farmer.” The optic and the social narrative was backwards – part of the process of SAAFON was to present a disruption to that – not in the minds of white folks, but in Black folks’ minds,” particularly in a place like the Southeast, where agriculture was largely seen as a “male-dominated pursuit...where the notion was (and even still is) that organic production wasn’t possible in the south – too costly, labor-intensive, and high regulatory upkeep, with little representation.” Blain closes by sharing, “Her and SAAFON’s work at that time was cultural, but a cultural insurgency – a subtle but yet powerful and potent kind of way.”

The early gatherings were intimate and alive. Farmers spent time on the land together, cooked together, traveled together, learned together. They were full of energy and vision. “There was vibrancy,” Blain remembers. Even with the energy and vision, the work wasn’t without its challenges. Resources were scarce - SAAFON was a passion project and was self-funded by Ma Cynthia for the first decade. The broader landscape of agricultural philanthropy had hardly considered the Southeast as a viable region for investment - let alone an area of investment for sustainable agriculture. Sandra notes that finding reliable funding to support the enormous vision felt like “a never-ending challenge.” Blain similarly uplifts the lack of resources coupled with the increasing need for organizational stability as one of the biggest early challenges for SAAFON.



Even facing those challenges, there were critical moments of breakthrough and success: legacy farmer members continued to engage deeply with SAAFON, learnings and analysis from the global perspective began to impact SAAFON through Ma Cynthia and its early organizer's international travels, and an infusion of resources started to usher in a new era of SAAFON. All of these breakthroughs began to crystalize into the next iteration of SAAFON. Tragically, Ma Cynthia transitioned in 2016 just as these shifts began to take shape. Blain reflects that he had been speaking with her on the phone just two days before her transition, her having held her "long arc vision for the spiritual and cultural reconnection for Black farmers" to the very end.

In the rippling wake of her transition, the memories that arise most vividly for those who knew her and her early work with SAAFON are the real ones: cooking food, sharing watermelon juice. Spending afternoons relaxing on the porch, singing together. The sharpness and vibrancy of elder Black women, the protectiveness and feeling of being held by their sincerity and dedication.

As SAAFON enters its third decade, the message from our elders and legacy members is clear: "You gotta do the work." Not the romanticized version, but the real work - relationship work, land work, organizing work. Blain emphasizes that there is a real risk of entering the work of Black farmer organizing now and not realizing that the space created by our elders is new. Blain uplifts that as we enter increasingly uncertain times, being grounded, focused, and ultimately, organized, is what will hold us steady.

Sandra hopes the next generation carries forward a spirit of unity, care, and youth involvement. Blain urges an "active remembering" - of the crises our elders survived, of the joy they cultivated, of the vision they held close to their hearts. And both share the hope that more folks get to meet Baba Owusu, whose presence still brings joy and grounding to the network.

As we enter SAAFON's 20th year, we recognize this as an important milestone among many, as a part of a long dialogue and lineage of Black agrarian organizing. SAAFON in its 20th year is more than just an organization - it is a living community in evolution, holding the next generation and ready to carry the work forward. SAAFON represents the hands and hearts of our elders, the relationships protected like gold, and the joy of a Black agrarian lifeway rooted to loving land.





SHUTTLE SCHEDULE

Shuttles are offered in support of carpooling to and from the airport, to and from hotels, and to and from the farm tour. Please let a SAAFON staff member know if you have additional travel needs outside of the regularly scheduled shuttles.

Shuttle service will be offered in the morning and in the evenings to support arrival to and departure from the Penn Center for our activities for the day, with no mid-day hotel shuttles. As such, please plan to bring everything you need with you for the day on the morning's shuttle to the Penn Center. Additionally, members should plan to depart directly from the Penn Center via airport shuttles on March 8th. As such, please plan to check out of the hotel and bring all of your belongings with you to the Penn Center for our closing activities ahead of departure on the morning of March 8th.

Thursday, March 5

4:30 PM SAVANNAH AIRPORT (SAV) → HOST HOTELS

7:30 PM Please note that the drive between Savannah and St. Helena is approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Friday, March 6

8:00 AM HOST HOTELS → PENN CENTER

8:45 AM

2:00 PM PENN CENTER → FARM TOURS

Groups will leave Penn Center to head to Marshview Community Organic Farm.

4:00 PM FARM TOURS → PENN CENTER

Groups will leave Marshview Community Organic Farm and head back to Penn Center.

7:00 PM PENN CENTER → HOST HOTELS

8:00 PM

9:00 PM

SHUTTLE SCHEDULE

Saturday, March 7

- 8:15 AM** **HOST HOTEL → PENN CENTER**
- 8:45 AM**
- 4:00 PM** **PENN CENTER → HOST HOTEL**
- 4:30 PM**
- 5:45 PM** **HOST HOTEL → PENN CENTER (EVENING)**
- 6:00 PM**
- 9:00 PM** **PENN CENTER → HOST HOTEL**
- 10:00 PM**

Sunday, March 8

- 8:00 AM** **HOST HOTEL → PENN CENTER**
- 8:30 AM**
- 11:15 AM** **PENN CENTER → SAVANNAH
AIRPORT (SAV)**

Please note that the drive between Savannah and St. Helena is approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.

HONORING LAND AND LEGACY

SAAFON is honored to support stewarding a network of farmers holding a vision for their land and legacy with a wisdom that reaches far beyond any single season. Our farms are living testaments to dedication, adaptability, and cultural memory. As we gather to celebrate 20 years of SAAFON, we are honored to have the opportunity to highlight a SAAFON legacy member farm local to St. Helena Island - Marshview Community Organic Farm.

You're invited to step into this farm ecosystem with openness — to listen, to witness the labor and love that sustains this operation, and to celebrate the vibrancy embodied by this farm's care and intention for their land and community.

FARM TOUR

Marshview Community Organic Farm carries its own lineage, its own practices of care, and its own vision for the future. However, these stories are not isolated; they are part of a larger tapestry of Black Agrarianism, woven through generations of creativity, collaboration, and joy. We invite you to be present with the richness of these traditions and the possibilities they continue to cultivate.

Marshview Community Organic Farm is a five-acre, certified organic farm on St. Helena Island, SC. Founded in 2004 as a youth-led beautification project, the farm now serves as a vibrant hub for education, sustainability, and cultural preservation. Rooted in Gullah Geechee traditions, the farm improves community health and well-being by cultivating the next generation of low country farmers and chefs through hands-on programs in organic farming cooking, and cultural production. Managed by students ages 8–18 alongside dedicated long-term staff, Marshview empowers youth with leadership,

stewardship, and vocational skills while honoring the island's rich heritage and fostering resilience for future generations.

ON-CAMPUS SCREENING

Please join us for the screening of two pieces highlighting SAAFON's farmers – the Weaving Wisdoms video series by Black Farmer Stories, and archival interview footage featuring storytelling by SAAFON farmers and organizers in honor of the release of our Land Report, in 2022. Together, these two pieces help celebrate the rich tapestry of agrarian lifeways that are held within SAAFON – uplifting the critical importance of education, intergenerational knowledge sharing, and vibrancy of land-based spirituality that is held traditionally by Black farmers. Join us as we pause to reflect on these farmers and their stories, as well as an opportunity to hear from Black Farmer Stories producer Myriah Towner on the production of the Weaving Wisdoms video series.

BABA OWUSU BANDELE: A BOUNTIFUL LEGACY



Dr. Owusu Bandele is a scholar, farmer, and visionary educator whose life's work bridged the academy and the soil. A longtime professor at Southern University Agricultural Center, he has been deeply committed to advancing Black agrarian thought, food sovereignty, and cooperative economics as essential pillars of liberation.

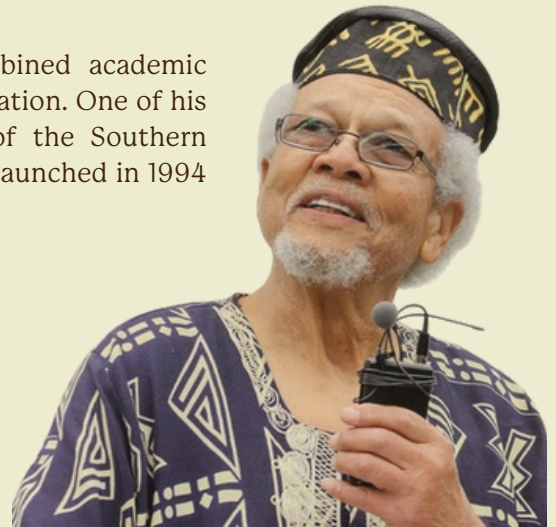
Grounded in both intellectual rigor and lived agricultural practice, Dr. Bandele understood farming not merely as production, but as cultural memory. His scholarship explores the historical and contemporary dimensions of Black land stewardship, tracing connections between African agrarian traditions, Southern Black farming communities, and global movements for self-determination. He began his career at the university in 1987 as an assistant professor in the College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences, eventually rising to associate and then full professor before becoming professor emeritus in 2009.

During his long tenure at Southern University, Dr. Bandele combined academic leadership with innovative student engagement and community education. One of his most enduring contributions was the creation and organization of the Southern University Black History Quiz Bowl, a signature educational event he launched in 1994 as part of the College's Black History programming.

Over the decades, the Quiz Bowl became a vibrant intellectual tradition on campus and in the Baton Rouge community, challenging students from Southern University and local schools to engage deeply with African and African American history, politics, culture, sports, and current events. Dr. Bandele expanded the program beyond collegiate competition to include middle and high school championships, and even Elementary School Quiz Bowls, where participants received books by or about people of African descent, an intentional effort to foster historical knowledge and pride from a young age.

In 1997, Dr. Bandele and his wife, Efuru created Food For Thought, a demonstration organic farm in Baton Rouge, to encourage other small scale farmers to explore organics as a way to sustain themselves. He also became the first certified organic farmer in the Louisiana, growing on four acres. As co-founder of SAAFON, Dr. Bandele helped build a regional and national platform supporting Black farmers transitioning to organic and sustainable practices. Through SAAFON, he advanced cooperative development, technical training, and land retention strategies while centering cultural reclamation and collective economic power.

Dr. Owusu Bandele's legacy lives in the fields he cultivated, the farmers he mentored, the scholarship he advanced, and the institutions he helped build. His work continues to shape conversations about Black land sovereignty, agrarian ethics, and the enduring relationship between freedom and the land.



**DR. OWUSU BANDELE,
SAAFON'S CO-FOUNDER**

DR. OWUSU BANDELE AWARD FOR AGRICULTURAL EXCELLENCE

SAAFON is grateful to have the opportunity to celebrate our 20th anniversary, and our co-founder Dr. Owusu Bandele through the first announcement of the Dr. Owusu Bandele Award of Agricultural Excellence. This award honors the vision of Dr. Bandele as a foundational Black agrarian thinker and leader. This award uplifts farmers who embody cultural stewardship, being in right relationship to the land, and the intergenerational imparting of agrarian knowledge. It is both a tribute to Baba Owusu's enduring legacy and a celebration of those carrying that legacy forward through their daily work, their teaching, and their commitment to Black land-based traditions.

This year, we are proud to recognize Loretta and Samuel Adderson of Adderson's Fresh Produce in Keysville, Georgia - third-generation farmers whose family has stewarded land and agricultural knowledge for generations. Their farm reflects decades of dedication to organic farming, soil health, community nourishment, and the preservation of Black agrarianism.

Beyond their own production, the Addersons have become pillars of community education and mentorship. They have created hands-on training opportunities for new and aspiring growers, especially young people, helping them build skills, confidence, and a connection to the land. Loretta and Samuel have been widely recognized for their leadership and dedication to supporting the next generation of farmers and land stewards.

The Addersons exemplify the spirit of the Baba Owusu Award of Agricultural Excellence: farmers who grow to the highest standard, root their work in history, cultivate with intention, and work to ensure that the next generation inherits the knowledge, confidence, and sense of belonging to the culture of Black Agrarianism. Their legacy is living, growing, and deeply felt, and we are honored to celebrate them at this year's General Membership Assembly.



SAM AND LORETTA ADDERSON





SAYN 2025

Making History
the Organic Way

ROBERT J. SMITH II
FOOD
POWER
POLITICS
THE FOOD STORY OF
CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

WATERMELON
CONGREGENCE
2025

Dear Farmers
Thank You
For the
Watermelons
JALDA

YOUTH JAMISON

MISS JALDA
BORN TO FIGHT
FORCED TO WIN

DISCOUNTS AND MESSAGES FROM OUR PARTNERS



Georgia Organics

Georgia Organics has partnered with SAAFON for several years to expand farmers' access to resources.

By investing in farmers to support the health of our communities and the land through hands-on technical assistance, financial resources, and farmer-centered education, Georgia Organics hopes to support growers in adopting and scaling organic conservation practices, strengthening their businesses, and building lasting connections with trusted experts and peers.

If you're a SAAFON member, you can automatically become a Georgia Organics member. We look forward to deepening our partnership with SAAFON to broaden services for farmers like you every day. We are here to support you.



Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives

The Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MAC), is a state association of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, has a long history of providing outreach and technical assistance to limited-resource farm families in Mississippi since 1972. Its mission is to serve farmers, their families, and communities by increasing livelihood security and quality of life.

We were built out of the Civil Rights Movement, MAC provides technical assistance and advocates for cooperative development, sustainable production, marketing, and food security.

Message to SAAFON

SAAFON is a light that shines bright in any space where WE have come together. We are continuing in this fight cooperatively conquering barriers that have been designed to dismantle farming holistically, culture keeping and the faith! MAC supports and loves you!!!

DISCOUNTS AND MESSAGES FROM OUR PARTNERS



Appalachian Grower's Seed Collective: SAAFON10 (10% off)

Appalachian Seed Growers Collective is a collective of farmers and seed stewards dedicated to strengthening Southern seed sovereignty by growing, sharing, and selling locally adapted seeds.

Our annual seed sale is live through the end of March – learn more about us and our work, and check out our seeds for sale. Use the code SAAFON10 for 10% off at check out (valid through the end of the year).



Virgin Islands Good Food

Virgin Islands Good Food Coalition works to build a just, equitable, and sustainable food system in the U.S. Virgin Islands by advancing land access, climate justice, food sovereignty, and regenerative agricultural practices. We center farmers, fishers, and community voices while strengthening markets, policy, and narrative power across the region.

Message for SAAFON

SAAFON represents what regional solidarity looks like in practice. In a world where small island and Southern farming communities are too often isolated, SAAFON continues to weave us together across borders, languages, and landscapes. Your leadership affirms that we are stronger when we organize collectively, share knowledge openly, and move in alignment with the wisdom of our land and our people. VI Good Food Coalition is honored to be part of this network of practitioners, organizers, and culture bearers who are not only feeding communities but reshaping systems. We celebrate SAAFON's commitment to farmer leadership, policy advocacy, and cooperative economics. May this Assembly deepen relationships, sharpen strategy, and continue to root our shared future in dignity, sovereignty, and collective care.

MESSAGES FROM OUR PARTNERS



Black Dirt Farm Collective

BDFC emerged 13 years ago as a collective organized around Black agrarian cultural and political trainings and mutual aid/support. We linked with SAAFON in 2017, and have held onto the plow together ever since. Indeed, we hold the same seed together - the love for land & nature; the dignity and beauty of black agrarian life; and the promise and project of building a future full of productive black farms, vibrant cultural lives and joy.



Earth-Bound Building

12 years ago EBB was created to build infrastructure for small farmers and to create productive opportunities for black folks to gain hands-on trade-based skills. Every time SAAFON calls on us to show up, our only response is where and when! From goat shelters, to hurricane relief, to incubating strategic ideas - EBB is proud to part of the SAAFON support ecosystem. We are like soil - we can go from mud to dirt but will always remain together.

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SAAFON

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