



Did You Know...



That Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Civil Rights Legacy has Roots in Agriculture?

As a teenage college student, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. left the South to spend his summer working on a tobacco farm near Simsbury, Connecticut. It was the first time he experienced life outside of the segregation and racial violence of the Jim Crow South. It was during this time that fellow Morehouse College students at the tobacco farm elected him their religious leader, and he decided to become a minister.

Years later, Dr. King campaigned across agricultural southern states to demand economic justice for the nation's poor, for the rights of Black farmers, and for the need to tackle poverty across racial divides. He called attention to inequities in land ownership and food access, issues which USDA continues to address today.

Dr. King was assassinated just before the Poor People's Campaign could take place, and his close friend Reverend Ralph Abernathy took charge of the movement. Fifty thousand people attended The Poor People's March on June 19, 1968. Abernathy visited the USDA to discuss the demands laid out by Dr. King and thousands of Black farmers who had been denied land, food and opportunity.

Today, we see Dr. King's legacy and the progress of the civil rights movement reflected in dedicated programs at USDA that continue to move the country towards the promise of equal rights and equal opportunity.