

Black Farmers' Perspectives on Social Equity within the United States Hemp Industry

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BLACK HEMP FARMERS' PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL EQUITY WITHIN THE  
UNITED STATES HEMP INDUSTRY

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### **Dedication**

This is dedicated to the small farm owners in America who work tirelessly with few resources to put food on the tables of Americans. This is also dedicated to the Black farmers and other groups of minority farmers, as they fight for equality and their piece of the American dream.

To my grandmother, the late Helena Graham Litmon: It has been 25 years since you left us, Nana, and we think about you each and every day. I remember you sitting down at the kitchen table and teaching me to read the Bible when I was a child. I hope that I have made you proud.

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To my niece, Tia Floyd: The last time I did this, you were still in elementary school, but now you are in college. Continue to do your best in all that you do and remember to keep your family close. You have great potential. Keep up the good work! You make us all proud.

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### **Abstract**

Despite hemp's recently acquired legal status, there have been numerous social equity concerns related to the implementation of hemp policies. Small farmers and farmers from underrepresented backgrounds have experienced difficulties in gaining access to the hemp industry, which has been projected to become a billion-dollar industry in the next decade. The objective of this study was to capture the perspectives of Black farmers on the barriers that exist within the hemp industry in the United States. Twenty current and former Black hemp farmers from Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and Missouri participated in semi-structured interviews, which produced the following emerging themes: a lack of education provided to Black hemp farmers; a lack of financial resources; and policy implementation irregularities. The process of Qualitative Content Analysis with Methodological Triangulation was utilized to correlate the emerging themes with the review of literature and archival statistical data from the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and scientific studies, to further substantiate the claims that inequities are prevalent within the hemp industry for Black farmers. Recommendations were made that addressed the concerns of study participants in the areas of education, financial resources, and policy implementation irregularities, which would improve social equity outcomes among small farmers and underrepresented farmers in the U.S. Hemp Industry.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Hemp advocacy and minority groups argue that several policy implementation issues exist surrounding the Industrial Hemp Industry, as well as a lack of social equity within the policy implementation process. Although the 2018 Farm Bill removed hemp from the list of Schedule I Controlled Substances, which enabled the federal legalization of the crop, these social equity and policy implementation issues persist (Smith, 2019). Despite hemp's legal status, some barriers have been created in the policy implementation process as it relates to who qualifies for a hemp license in the participating states, as the federal government has established the initial hemp regulations that govern each state's hemp program. One of the major restrictions that has created a participation barrier is the stipulation that an individual who has a felony drug conviction within ten years of the application process is not eligible to apply for a hemp license in any participating state (Smith, 2019; Adesso, Laser, & Mills, 2019). This policy has been contested by several minority groups as negatively affecting Black and Latino individuals due to a disproportionate arrest and conviction rate for marijuana compared to White marijuana users, despite marijuana usage being comparable across these racial/ethnic groups (Bender, 2016; Cipolla, 2019).

### **Statement of the Problem**

As previously stated, the problem is that a lack of social equity exists in the policy implementation process that governs the hemp industry in the United States (Blebea, 2022). These social equity issues exist at the federal and state levels which have created a

policy implementation dichotomy between federal and state departments of agriculture (Berry-James, et al., 2021; Blebea, 2022). Advocates for social equity believe that policy implementation should be uniform with more provisions made by federal and state departments of agriculture to be more inclusive in providing opportunities for increased participation among individuals from underrepresented demographic groups in the United States (Solomon, 2020; Frederickson, 1990).

### **Objective(s) of the Study**

The objectives of this study included the following:

1. To use social equity and policy implementation theories to explore a phenomenon within the U.S. Hemp Industry.
2. To explore the perspectives of Black hemp farmers to determine if a correlation exists between their ethnographic information, existing literature, as well as archival statistical data to achieve methodological triangulation within the study; and
3. To illuminate the findings of this study to facilitate improvements in social equity and changes in how public policy is implemented in the U.S. Hemp Industry.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research was significant as it investigated the phenomenon of a lack of participation among Black farmers in the hemp/legal cannabis industry due to social equity and policy implementation concerns. Black farmers were excluded from participating in the hemp/legal cannabis industry at the ground level, which is currently a

multi-billion-dollar industry in the United States. According to Dorbian (2021) of Forbes Magazine, the Industrial Hemp/CBD Industry is set to reach \$19.5 billion in the United States and as high as \$30 billion worldwide by 2025. Social equity and reforms in policy implementation are required to level the playing field as much of the industry starts with farming. Reiley (2021) of the Washington Post stated that of the 3.4 million farmers in the United States, only 45,000 (1.3%) are Black, which is a figure that has declined from more than one million farmers at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Simpson (2019) of the Pew Charitable Trust added that Black farmland accounted for merely 0.4% of total farmland in the United States, meanwhile, Black agricultural sales accounted for only 0.2% of all agricultural sales in the United States. These figures demonstrate the relevance of social equity concerns among Black farmers in the United States, which also permeates their participation in the American Legal Cannabis Industry. Federal laws that govern the industrial hemp industry create an intersection between social equity and policy implementation as both concepts must be addressed jointly. According to the 2018 U.S. Farm Bill, all hemp producer applicants must not have a state or Federal felony conviction related to a controlled substance in the ten years prior to submission of an application (Federalregister.gov, 2021). This is problematic in many ways as the American Criminal Justice System disproportionately punishes individuals of color more harshly than white individuals for similar offenses, particularly for minor drug offenses like simple possession (Swinburne & Hoke, 2019). According to FBI/Uniform Crime Data (2010-2018), 50.7% of white individuals twelve years of age and above have used marijuana at some point in their lives. By comparison, only 42.4% of Black individuals twelve years of age and above have used marijuana at some point in their lives. Despite

the small statistical difference in marijuana usage, the data on criminal convictions is far more telling. White individuals are convicted for marijuana related crimes at a rate of 1,513 per 100,000 compared to Black individuals who are convicted for marijuana related crimes at a rate of 5,128 per 100,000, which is 3.5 times the average of white individuals (FBI/Uniform Crime Data, 2010-2018). As Public Administration scholars and practitioners, these racial inequities, because of laws and public policies, should raise concerns as exclusion is perpetuated by Federal and state governments. As the United States becomes a more diverse nation, its laws and policies must reflect that diversity, particularly in government agencies.

### **Research Question(s)**

The research questions for this study included the following:

1. What social equity and policy implementation barriers do Black farmers encounter as they attempt to participate in the U.S. industrial hemp industry?
2. What steps can be taken by the federal and state governments to eliminate those barriers to increase participation among Black farmers?

These research questions were connected to the literature as they referenced the social equity and policy implementation concerns that Black hemp farmers encounter while attempting to participate in the U.S. industrial hemp industry. The research has indicated that a racial disparity exists in the number of White farmers and minority farmers, with data indicating that Black farmers comprised the lowest number of all farmers in the United States. This racial disparity has transcended itself to the U.S.

industrial hemp industry as federal law and state policies have created social inequity and policy implementation barriers that have excluded many Black farmers from their participation. The need for social equity and policy implementation normalization across racial and socioeconomic lines has become an immediate concern in the U.S. industrial hemp industry.

Although statistical data exists on various aspects of Black farmers' participation in the agriculture sector and the disproportionate sentencing of Black individuals for drug related offenses, there is a dearth of literature that correlates statistical data with ethnographic information from Black farmers on barriers in participation in the U.S. industrial hemp industry. Therefore, this study will contribute to closing the research gap in racial disparities in social equity and policy implementation, which will illuminate those disparities and encourage advocates to work with government agencies to create legislation and policies that promote equitable participation for all persons from underrepresented populations.

### **Conceptual Underpinning(s) of the Study**

#### ***Social Equity Theory***

As the conceptual underpinnings begin with Social Equity Theory, the definition must be established to promote an understanding of the theoretical framework. According to Frederickson (1990), social equity is a concept that promotes impartiality and fairness in providing opportunities for individuals to participate in various programs and activities. In Public Administration, Frederickson is credited with applying social equity

as the “third pillar” of Public Administration, in conjunction with efficiency, economy, and effectiveness (Frederickson, 1990; Dooley, 2019). Social equity theory was developed as Frederickson believed that economic and social circumstances were not considered by public administrators when providing services to the public (Frederickson, 2018; Berry-James, et al., 2020). As social equity is enacted, public administrators must provide services to the public regardless of race/ethnicity, age, religion, gender/sexual orientation, or disability (Lee, 2021). As a theoretical framework, social equity theory will be employed to explain the existing phenomenon that pertains to the barriers that Black hemp farmers encounter as they participate in the U.S. industrial hemp industry.

### ***Policy Implementation Theory***

Policy implementation explains the process of how an entity executes and enforces the framework that operates its organization (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975; Sabatier, 1986). According to Seraw and Lu (2020), theoretical approaches to policy implementation became segmented in the 1970s, which produced a dichotomy of top-down and bottom-up approaches. The top-down approach to policy implementation theory is characterized by the head of a policy initiative setting the tone for the organization and developing operational procedures, while providing guidance and directives to subordinates to conduct those directives (Seraw & Lu, 2020; O’Toole, 2017). The bottom-up approach to policy implementation theory is characterized by individuals at the service level developing and implementing policies to best serve the public, and then advising those at the top of the process on how to provide support to those directly providing services to the public (Seraw & Lu, 2020; Montjoy & O’Toole,

1979). Currently, federal and state governments use a top-down approach when developing and implementing hemp-related laws and policies. These policies are developed by elected officials and then trickle down to lower-level public administrators and public servants. Many of these initiatives are ineffective as they lack practical application and create barriers to participation. The bottom-up approach is more conducive to assisting achieving social equity goals in the development of hemp laws and policies as this approach promotes more participation from lower-level stakeholders, like hemp farmers and those who directly provide services (Clark, 2018). These individuals would drive policy and legislation to be more effective in leveling the playing field in the U.S. Hemp Industry, while providing a more robust framework to inform decisions by upper-level public administrators and elected officials.

### **Limitation(s) of the Study**

This study utilized the snowball sampling method due to the limited number of Black farmers in the United States (less than 1.5% of farmers), and even fewer hemp farmers. Due to the small population of Black hemp farmers in the United States, the study attempted to interview available Black hemp farmers in Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and Missouri, and then generalized results across the entire U.S. population of Black hemp farmers. This generalization may result in a limitation of the study, as hemp farmers from varying regions of the United States might face different challenges.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

The literature review provided an explanation of social equity and policy implementation theories in public administration, which served as the conceptual underpinnings of this study. By connecting these theories to both historical and contemporary concerns in the agricultural sector as it relates to Black farmers and the obstacles, this literature review has built a case for social equity and policy implementation concerns in the hemp arena, and how Black farmers must overcome those barriers to participate in the hemp industry in the United States of America.

The literature review used statistical data, as well as material from the U.S. Hemp Industry both domestically and outside the United States. This information, in conjunction with FBI crime data on marijuana use and convictions by race, was utilized to further explain the need for reforms in the areas of social equity and policy implementation to level the playing field in the U.S. Hemp Industry and provided more accessibility opportunities for people from historically underserved communities.

The literature review analyzed the business of legal cannabis, which includes the U.S. Hemp Industry, and discussed its differences from marijuana through the exploration of federal regulations, as well as assessed federal guidelines that negatively impact the participation of Black farmers and other historically disadvantaged farmers in the United States. According to Carliner, et al., (2017), hemp has been negatively stigmatized through its connection with marijuana through the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937, as well as the Controlled Substance Act of 1970. This review of literature reviewed the efforts by cannabis advocates, as well as state and federally elected officials to

reestablish the reputation of the hemp plant through bipartisan federal legislation in the form of Farm Bills in 2014 and 2018.

Finally, this literature review explored the current and projected revenues from the legal cannabis industry, both domestically and worldwide. These current and future revenue projections have provided a convincing case for federal legalization of all cannabis in the United States to attain a share of an untapped market and a permanent stream of revenue that could be used to fund various social programs and government projects.

### **Cannabis**

There is much contention surrounding the legalization of cannabis in the United States. Many believe that cannabis is harmful to individuals that use it and can lead to the decay of morality in society, as it is seen as a gateway drug; a drug that leads its users to dependency on more harmful, illicit, and mostly illegal drugs. Others believe that cannabis should be legalized federally as it is no more harmful than cigarettes and alcohol, which can have dangerous and long-lasting health effects on users (Malone & Gomez, 2018). Alcohol abuse can lead to a variety of issues, which culminates in alcohol poisoning and cirrhosis of the liver. Prolonged cigarette smoking has been proven to cause arteriosclerosis and lung cancer (Malone & Gomez, 2018). The reality is that there are several types of cannabis. Some strains of cannabis have psychoactive properties while others do not contain psychoactive properties. Many opponents of cannabis have an opinion of the plant, which is not totally based on accurate information. As a result of this lack of information, many politicians in both the U.S. House of Representatives and

Senate had created legislation to outlaw all forms of cannabis in the United States (Malone & Gomez, 2018). Through research studies, education, and appeals from lobbyists, federal legislation has slowly changed the perception of cannabis. Cannabis use is no longer taboo as hemp is legal through the 2018 Farm Bill. As medicinal and recreational marijuana have become legalized in states like Colorado, California, Oregon, and Washington, the push for the federal government to legalize marijuana has become more vocal and more profound (Mead, 2019).

Cannabis is comprised of two categories which include marijuana and hemp. Although both plants are considered cannabis plants, each of these plants is distinctly different in nature. There are three species of cannabis plants. These species include *Cannabis sativa*, *Cannabis indica*, and *Cannabis ruderalis* (Carliner, et al., 2017; Jeliaskov, et al., 2019). The first, *C. sativa*, is a tall, thin cannabis plant that is characterized by narrow leaves. The *C. sativa* plant has a lower level of THC and more elevated level of Cannabidiol (CBD). This plant is used for a variety of purposes such as food, recreation, religious ceremonies, medical use, industrial fiber, seed oil, and textiles. The *C. indica* plant is also cultivated for textiles and used for medicinal and recreational purposes (Jeliaskov, et al., 2019). It has elevated levels of THC and lower levels of CBD. The *C. indica* plant is shorter and bushier than the *C. sativa* plant and is characterized by a wider fan leaf. Finally, the *C. ruderalis* plant is a smaller plant that has elevated levels of CBD and reduced levels of THC. While most cannabis plants are sensitive to the number of hours exposed to daylight, this plant is an auto-flowering plant, which means that it is time sensitive and flowers after a set number of days (Carliner, et al., 2017;

Jeliazkov, et al., 2019). This is a positive aspect for plant breeders because they have a definite timetable as to when the plant will start and end its life cycle and produce flowers. As a result of this, many plant breeders will cross breed *C. indica* with *C. ruderalis* to produce a plant that has higher levels of THC and CBD, as well as a more predictable life cycle through the auto-flowering process (Corroon & Kight, 2018).

## **Marijuana**

Marijuana is a cannabis plant that contains elevated amounts of THC, which is the psychoactive cannabinoid that provides its users with a high feeling. Although marijuana is not federally legal in the United States, several states in the nation have legalized marijuana for both medical and recreational/retail purposes (Alharbi, 2020). Medical marijuana is provided to patients under the care of a physician. These patients receive a medical marijuana card and can purchase marijuana through a dispensary that accepts their marijuana card. Studies have indicated that medical marijuana that is sold in the United States has a THC level of at least 15% (Bender, 2016; Cash, et al., 2020). Medical marijuana is used to treat a variety of conditions such as cancer, Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy, glaucoma, immune system diseases (HIV/AIDS), Crohn's disease, and many others. Recreational or retail marijuana is sold in dispensaries without the requirement of a medical marijuana card from a physician (Cash, et al., 2020). Recreational or retail marijuana is on average more potent than medicinal marijuana as it contains more than 20% THC, which is more highly psychoactive than its medical marijuana counterpart (Cash, et al., 2020).

**Hemp**

Industrial hemp or hemp refers to another type of cannabis plant that is often confused with the more psychoactive cannabis plant called marijuana. This confusion has led to a negative opinion about the crop throughout the world for those who oppose marijuana legalization and usage. Unlike marijuana, industrial hemp has been legalized by the federal government in the United States through the 2018 Farm Bill (Coit, 2018). As a result of its newly acquired legal status and less taboo reputation, many states have opted to adopt a hemp program through their state departments of agriculture. For industrial hemp to maintain its distinction from marijuana, the THC level must remain at or below 0.3% per federal guidelines (Johnson, 2019). This means that hemp plants have elevated levels of CBD while maintaining lower levels of THC, which indicates that hemp plants have low to non-existent levels of the psychoactive cannabinoid that is found in marijuana (Johnson, 2014). If a farmer's industrial hemp crop tests above the legal federal limit of .03% plus the additional margin of error which is determined by the state's department of agriculture, then the crop must be destroyed (Cherney & Small, 2016). Industrial hemp is one of the fastest growing plants on Earth as it has a life cycle of between 90 and 120 days. In North America, industrial hemp is planted between the last week of March and the second week of June. The plants are harvested between the middle of September and the middle of November.

Cannabis plants have transitioned from a plant that grows in the wild to more of a horticulture plant. As a result, special attention is paid to growing methods and caring for cannabis plants. Cannabis plants are now grown both indoors and outdoors, with most

marijuana plants being grown indoors. This is done to protect plants from the elements associated with growing plants outdoors, as well as producing a plant through a more climate-controlled environment (Kaiser, Cassady, & Ernst, 2015). On the other hand, hemp is grown both indoors and outdoors, depending on the purpose of its cultivation. When growing cannabis in an outdoor environment, it is important to monitor the plants and guard against diseases and pests. Cannabis plants can be severely damaged by pests such as caterpillars, aphids, and corn earworms to name a few. These commonly observed pests can destroy the flowers and roots of the cannabis plant, which can cost farmers a substantial portion of their crops. Cannabis plants can contract several diseases such as bacteria, fungi, nematodes, and viruses (McPartland, Clarke, & Watson, 2000). One of the most common diseases in the southern United States is called Southern Blight (McPartland, Clarke, & Watson, 2000; Walker, 2018). This disease is caused by soil that develops a fungus due to warm moist humid weather. Once a plant develops Southern Blight, the best step to mitigate the disease is to remove all affected plants along with three inches of soil around the plant. The plants must be bagged and disposed of immediately to prevent the spread of the disease to other plants.

Farmers harvest industrial hemp in many ways for a variety of uses. Those farmers who cultivate hemp for textiles or industrial purposes will chop the hemp down at the base of the plant like one would harvest corn. The hemp is then dried and processed as hemp fibers or used for food or fuel. Those farmers who cultivate hemp for the hemp flower to make oil or to smoke will harvest their hemp in a similar fashion to tobacco farmers harvesting tobacco (Kaiser, Cassady, & Ernst, 2015). The hemp is cut at the base

and then hung in a barn or in a dry room with ventilation for a period of between seven to fourteen days. It is important to monitor the air flow in the room as the hemp plants can develop mold if the drying space is too humid. Some farmers will purchase dehumidifier machines to remove the moisture from the drying space to prevent the development of mold on their hemp plants. This step can be essential as some farmers will lose their hemp crop because of improper drying techniques. Other farmers will deliver their freshly cut hemp to a processing facility to have their hemp dried by a specialized drying machine. These machines can dry a farmer's hemp in a matter of hours rather than days. The machines have gauges to measure the hemp's moisture content which determines how long hemp should be dried by the machine. Once the hemp is properly dried, the hemp is stored in a bag and used for biomass to produce hemp oil or animal feed. Hemp is used in a multitude of ways. It is primarily utilized in the following capacities: paper; textiles; rope; fiber; clothing; paint; insulation; biodegradable plastics; biofuel; food; hempcrete; wellness products; pharmaceuticals; cosmetics; animal feed; as well as other uses (Small & Marcus, 2002; Coolong, 2020). Although there is a tremendous opportunity to expand the hemp industry, many hemp farmers remain cautious due to the instability of pricing in the hemp markets (Cui & Smith, 2020). A more stable hemp market will create adequate supply to match the growing demand.

### **Cannabidiol (CBD)**

Cannabidiol (CBD) is one of 113 known cannabinoids that is contained within the cannabis plant. CBD is widely used as an ingredient in wellness products such as salves, gummies, oil, and gel capsules. Another method of ingesting hemp is through smoking or

in vapor form (Pal & Lucia, 2019). CBD does not have the same psychoactive properties as THC, which has made it federally legal and more widely accepted in the United States (Hart, 2020). One popular pharmaceutical product that has been manufactured with CBD is Epidiolex. This FDA-approved drug is made with CBD to treat epilepsy. The mainstream use of CBD has been made possible through the federal legalization of hemp through the 2018 Farm Bill (Thornbury & Scott, 2020). The signing of this bill took hemp off the list of scheduled drugs and excluded it from the list of controlled substances. CBD has also been infused in food and beverages such as beer, soda, sports drinks, and other consumable products (Cerino, et al., 2020). CBD has also been removed from the banned substance list by the World Anti-Doping Agency due to its use as a wellness product that is non-psychoactive by Olympic Athletes. In the United States, some professional sports leagues, including the National Basketball Association (NBA) have also removed cannabis from their banned substance list.

### **History of Cannabis in the United States of America**

The earliest reported usage of cannabis on the North American continent was in the early 1600s as Louis Hebert, a French botanist, brought it across the Atlantic Ocean to present day Nova Scotia, Canada and planted a hemp crop. As Hebert's first hemp crop was successful, other farmers in his area began to follow in his footsteps and grew hemp as well. One year later, in 1607, English settlers brought hemp from England to Jamestown, Virginia, where it was cultivated to make textiles, ropes, and sails for their boats (Fike, 2016). Other historians have noted that hemp was already being grown in the

Americas by Native Americans who used it for clothing, paper, food for both humans and animals, and a variety of other purposes prior to the arrival of European settlers.

Hemp was used in the thirteen original U.S. colonies as paper, lantern fuel, rope, animal feed, textiles, and sails for boats by colonists who recognized the crop as a staple in their everyday lives. Beginning in the early 1700s, the government passed laws that required farmers in the thirteen original colonies to grow hemp for the public good. The Founding Fathers of the United States recognized the importance of hemp and used hemp paper to develop the original drafts of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. From the inception of American colonialism through the American Revolution and the industrial age, hemp cultivation flourished in the United States of America (Fike, 2016).

In 1916, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) conducted a study and published its findings that revealed the value of hemp as it produced four times more paper per acre than trees. This was possible because hemp grows and matures rapidly in comparison to trees as the life cycle of hemp is complete in a timeframe of 90 to 120 days (Fike, 2016). This makes it possible to have a few hemp crops per year depending on your location and many hemp crops by the time a tree grows to into maturity.

### **Cannabis Cultivation in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Beyond**

Cannabis cultivation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century continued to flourish as researchers and manufacturers continued to discover new uses for the plant. However, as the 1930s approached, the nation was introduced to new measures that were passed into law to curtail the sale and use of cannabis products in the United States. This legislation came

into existence through the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937, which placed a tax on all cannabis sales in the United States (Patton, 2020). Although this new legislation was enacted to curtail the sale and use of cannabis, researchers and manufacturers continued to utilize hemp in many ways that caught the attention of both advocates and opponents. In 1938, a year after the passage of the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937, *Popular Mechanics* published an article stating that hemp could be used more than 25,000 ways (Malone & Gomez, 2019). The findings of this article were groundbreaking as it cemented the importance of hemp cultivation. This article may have been instrumental to Henry Ford and the Ford Motor Company. In 1942, Henry Ford built a car from hemp fiber that was tested and proved to be more than ten times stronger than automobiles made from steel (Malone & Gomez, 2019).

On the heels of World War II, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed a campaign in 1942 called “Hemp for Victory.” This federal government initiative encouraged U.S. farmers to cultivate hemp to support the war effort. As a result of the “Hemp for Victory” campaign, there were more than 400,000 acres of industrial hemp that were grown during the war. This hemp was used to manufacture clothing, ropes, and other industrial products (King, 2018). At the end of World War II, farmers continued to grow hemp in the United States and utilized it as a crop to be manufactured for industrial purposes. This continued until 1957 when farmers in Wisconsin planted the last commercially cultivated hemp in the United States. After 1957, hemp experienced a decline and in 1970, President Richard M. Nixon signed the Controlled Substance Act into law, which classified all cannabis (both hemp and

marijuana) as illegal Schedule I drugs (Patton, 2020). Nearly three decades later in 1998, the United States began importing food grade hemp products (e.g., seeds and oil). This was significant as it paved the way for the re-emergence of hemp usage in the United States. Another significant development in the re-emergence of hemp products in the United States was in 2004 when a ruling in the Ninth Circuit Court case brought by the Hemp Industries Association (HIA) against the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) permanently allowed and protected the sale of hemp foods and cosmetics in the United States (Corroon & Kight, 2018).

### **Cannabis Legislation in the United States of America**

Cannabis legislation in the United States dates to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Once again, the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937 proved to be a monumental piece of legislation to regulate the use of all cannabis. Under this law, the possession and sale of cannabis was made illegal for recreational purposes. According to the law, only marijuana or hemp that was used for medicinal and industrial purposes was deemed to be legal by the federal government and taxed accordingly (Patton, 2020). The federal government faced opposition from the American Medical Association (AMA) that argued against the law as it legislated a tax on physicians that prescribed cannabis to patients' pharmaceutical sales of cannabis, as well as cultivators and manufacturers that grew and manufactured medical cannabis plants and other cannabis products (Patton, 2020). Despite the Marihuana Act of 1937, the USDA and the military strongly encouraged farmers in the U.S. to grow in excess of 400,000 acres of hemp to manufacture ropes, clothing, and other industrial products (King, 2018). As Congress passed the Marihuana

Act of 1937, many historians view this law as a knee jerk reaction to an increase in Americans smoking cannabis. Much of this reaction was fueled by racism and anti-Mexican immigrant sentiments as African Americans and Mexican immigrants were demonized as the embodiment of illicit behavior because of smoking cannabis (Solomon, 2020). A limited amount of credible research was done or cited by Congress prior to President Franklin D. Roosevelt signing the Marihuana Act of 1937 into law, but at the time, it was viewed as a positive step in the eradication of cannabis use in the United States.

The Boggs Act of 1951 was signed into law by President Harry S. Truman, which created mandatory sentencing guidelines for drug convictions (Patton, 2020). As a result of this law, an individual that was convicted of possession of marijuana was sentenced to between two and ten years in prison and fined up to \$20,000. The Narcotics Control Act of 1956 was signed into law by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. This law aimed to further the tenants of the Boggs Act of 1951. The Narcotics Control Act of 1956 posed stiffer penalties on narcotics traffickers and consequently included marijuana (Yu, et al., 2020). This law also made it possible for non-citizens of the United States to face deportation for marijuana possession, which was a measure that appeared to be fueled by anti-Mexican immigration sentiments.

The Controlled Substance Act of 1970 (CSA) was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Richard M. Nixon as it established the nation's comprehensive guidelines on manufacturing, importing, possession, usage, and distribution of illicit and addictive substances (Patton, 2020). Since the Controlled Substances Act was signed into

law, the federal government established five categories or schedules and drugs were placed under or removed from a schedule by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This law and the Psychotropic Substances Act of 1978 provided the U.S. government the authority to impact drug scheduling both domestically as well as internationally (Patton, 2020). As a result of the Controlled Substance Act of 1970 and the Psychotropic Substances Act of 1978, both marijuana and hemp, despite the latter's lack of psychoactive effects, were included in these laws and classified as Schedule I drugs by the U.S. Government (Patton, 2020). This placed marijuana and hemp in the same category as heroin and Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD).

The Hemp Industries Association (HIA) sued the DEA on two occasions over the legality of hemp derivatives. In the 2004 case, the HIA argued that the DEA unlawfully prohibited the legal trade of hemp derivatives that were exempted by Congress from the same laws that prohibited marijuana and synthetic THC. The 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals determined that derivatives of natural hemp plants should be excluded from DEA enforcement (Corroon & Kight, 2018). The second lawsuit came in 2018 as the HIA contended that the DEA ignored the previous 2004 ruling by the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals and targeted the sale and usage of CBD. The DEA contended that CBD, which is a cannabinoid that is contained within the cannabis plant, was outlawed by the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937 (Patton, 2020). The HIA believed that CBD was excluded by the Controlled Substance Act of 1970, therefore its sale and usage should be legal. As a result of this lawsuit, the DEA reviewed its stance and reversed its decision to target CBD

and other non-psychoactive cannabinoids that are contained within hemp plants (Corroon & Kight, 2018). This was considered a huge win for the Hemp Industries Association and the entire hemp industry.

Another turning point for the hemp industry happened in 2007 as two South Dakota farmers were granted the first commercial hemp licenses in the United States since hemp cultivation was outlawed in 1957. Less than ten years later, President Barack H. Obama signed the Agricultural Act of 2014 into law, which permitted colleges, universities, and other institutions of research to collaborate with states to cultivate hemp through research pilot programs (Mark, et al., 2020).

The Industrial Hemp Farming Act was introduced by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2014 but failed to produce enough votes in the House or Senate. This was the first time Congress attempted to fully legalize hemp in America since the Nixon Administration placed it on the list of controlled substances in 1970. A Colorado hemp farm was issued organic certification by the USDA in 2016 for hemp cultivation, which developed a specialty market for organically cultivated hemp. Despite multiple efforts to separate hemp from marijuana and fully legalize its cultivation in the United States, hemp was still seen as a taboo subject (Patton, 2020). Hemp remained a controlled substance in the United States until December 20, 2018, when the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 was shepherded through the Senate by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and signed into law by President Donald J. Trump (Coit, 2018). This latest installation of the Farm Bill made hemp legal at the federal level and removed hemp seeds, plants, and all additional hemp by-products from the list of Schedule I controlled

substances. This created a separation between hemp and marijuana that was created by the Nixon Administration and the Controlled Substance Act of 1970.

A second lawsuit was filed by the HIA in 2018 as the group argued that the DEA disregarded the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals previous ruling in 2004 and concentrated its efforts on the sale and use of Cannabidiol (CBD). The DEA believed that CBD, which is a cannabinoid that is a non-psychoactive compound found in the cannabis plant, was deemed illegal because of the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937 (Patton, 2020). The HIA contended that CBD was not included in Nixon's Controlled Substance Act of 1970. As a result, the DEA should not prohibit the use of CBD. Consequently, the DEA reversed its decision to ban CBD and other non-psychoactive compounds contained in the cannabis plant, which served as a monumental victory for the hemp industry.

### **The 2014 and 2018 Farm Bills**

The Agricultural Act of 2014 was signed into law by President Barack H. Obama on February 7, 2014. The 2014 Farm Bill was a significant piece of legislation for the hemp industry as Section 7606 provided a definition for industrial hemp as any viable or non-viable part of the *C. sativa* L plant with a delta-9 THC concentration of 0.3% or below of dry weight hemp (Fortenberry & Mick, 2014). The 2014 Farm Bill created an avenue for collaboration between state departments of agriculture, colleges, universities, and research institutions to develop pilot programs (Mark, et al., 2020). These pilot programs were designed to study the viability of hemp for cultivation by American

farmers and for commercial usage by American businesses (Sterns, 2019; Mark, et al., 2020).

To become a hemp grower, the grower must register with the state department of agriculture and in partnership with a research pilot program. In Tennessee, the hemp grower must apply for a license with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (Walker, 2018). The applicant must provide a plot of land, an aerial photograph, as well as latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates for the property. Applicants must also pay an application fee of \$250 for five acres or less and an additional fee for farmers with more than five acres. The 2014 Farm Bill permits farmers to purchase hemp seeds from foreign countries if the seeds produce hemp plants with a THC level of 0.3% or below, which is in accordance with federal and Tennessee state law. In Tennessee, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture oversees the seed procurement process, and a permit must be obtained to transport viable hemp (e.g., seeds, clones, living plants) to and from each location.

In the wake of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Congress tried to seize on its momentum and further the cause of total hemp legalization. To capitalize on the 2014 Farm Bill, the Industrial Hemp Act of 2015 was introduced the following year. This bill was proposed by the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 525) and the U.S. Senate (S. 134). Its goal was to remove industrial hemp as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substance Act of 1970 (Patton, 2020). The bill explained that hemp and marijuana are classified as *C. sativa* L, but it does not contain a level of delta-9 THC more than 0.3% like marijuana. Industrial hemp does not have psychoactive properties as it is used to

produce textiles, clothing, food, and other goods (Sterns, 2019). Although this bill received bipartisan support, the Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2015 was not signed into law.

The 2014 Farm Bill was largely successful as farmers had the benefit of cultivating hemp in the face of a decline in tobacco and production throughout the United States. The price of hemp was also attractive to farmers as hemp brought in a price that was several times more per pound than tobacco, corn, or soybeans. As farmers saw the benefits of hemp cultivation and production, so too did elected officials in both Democratic and Republican-led states. As a result of the increasing popularity of the hemp industry, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky, decided to sponsor a new bill to legalize industrial hemp to benefit his home state of Kentucky and the nation (Thornsbury & Scott, 2020). Once again, another hemp bill was introduced to the U.S. Senate. The Hemp Farming Act of 2018 received bipartisan support from Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, both Democrats from Oregon. The updated version of the hemp farming bill was introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives by Representative Jared Polis, a Democrat from Colorado, whose state, like Senators Wyden and Merkley, had already legalized marijuana sales. The goal of this bill was to remove industrial hemp from the Controlled Substances Act of 1970, as well as provide farmers with access to federal agriculture funding, legalize banking transactions, and provide crop insurance to hemp farmers (Thornsbury & Scott, 2020). The passage of this bill would legalize industrial hemp and recognize it as a mainstream crop that could be grown by anyone who met the criteria to obtain a license in their state.

The 2018 Farm Bill was signed into law by President Donald J. Trump on December 20, 2018, and took effect on January 1, 2019. This bill included all the provisions from the Hemp Farming Act of 2018, and it allowed hemp cultivation to expand beyond state sanctioned pilot programs that were permitted in the 2014 Farm Bill (Patton, 2020). The 2018 Farm Bill permitted the transfer of hemp and hemp derivatives across state lines, which proved to be a challenge that placed commercial hemp companies at odds with local and municipal law enforcement agencies in various states that continued the seizure of hemp and arrested commercial truck drivers for possession of marijuana, citing the Controlled Substance Act of 1970 (Patton, 2020). Although the 2018 Farm Bill expanded the hemp industry, there were several restrictions that remained in place. The legal limit of a hemp plant's THC content remained at 0.3% to maintain its designation as industrial hemp (Thornsbury, 2020). Any level of THC above the legal limit of 0.3% would be designated as non-compliant cannabis or marijuana. Each state, through collaboration between the governor, chief law enforcement official, and state department of agriculture, must develop a state plan to regulate hemp cultivation and production, which is then submitted to the Secretary of the USDA for approval (Thornsbury & Scott, 2020). The 2018 Farm Bill defined violations of federal hemp law, which included growing hemp without a hemp license and cultivating cannabis plants that contain THC levels above the legal limit of 0.3%. The law outlined punishments for violators, such as felonies for habitual violations, as well as a track toward reinstatement and compliance (Patton, 2020). Under the 2018 Farm Bill, hemp farmers qualify for crop insurance through the Federal Crop Insurance Act to mitigate crop loss. These measures in the 2018 Farm Bill have brought hemp farming into the mainstream and permits them

to enjoy the same benefits as farmers of any crop. As the 2018 Farm Bill enabled farmers to cultivate hemp with a license, the licensure qualifications were a topic of contention as some members of Congress argued that individuals with prior drug convictions should not be eligible to apply for a hemp license regardless of time served or how long ago, they were sentenced. Several Democratic Congressmen argued that such a statute would discriminate against African Americans and Latinos who are disproportionately convicted of low-level drug offenses (Bender, 2016). After careful consideration, a compromise was reached, and the time frame was limited to no convictions within ten years of the licensure application.

### **Social Equity and Policy Implementation Concerns within the Hemp Industry**

Although the 2018 Farm Bill permitted the full legalization of hemp at the federal level, disparities in social equity and hemp policy implementation have been observed at the state level. Alabama requires their hemp farmers to grow no less than 1,000 plants on no less than one acre for outdoor cultivation and at least five hundred plants inside an indoor facility of no less than 1,500 square feet in size (Alabama Department of Agriculture, 2023). The application fee for hemp cultivators in Alabama costs \$150, in addition to a \$1,000 participation fee (Alabama Department of Agriculture, 2023). These stipulations create obstacles for Black farmers who would participate in the hemp industry as buying a minimum of 1,000 plants and growing them on a minimum of one acre of land could prove costly. It also excludes Black farmers in urban areas like Birmingham or Montgomery who do not meet the minimum acreage requirement.

For individuals who apply for a Hemp Processing License in Georgia, the social equity concerns are more glaring. The state imposes a licensure fee of \$25,000 for hemp processors while Tennessee, a neighboring state, does not require a fee for a hemp processing license (Georgia Department of Agriculture, 2023; Tennessee Department of Agriculture, 2023). This produces more inequities within the hemp industry as states such as Alabama and Georgia create barriers that prohibit Black farmers and other small farmers from participating in the U.S. Hemp Industry.

### **Collaborative Solutions**

To ensure that social equity and policy implementation concerns are addressed, the federal government must utilize the rational model. According to Denhardt and Catlaw (2014), the rational model insists that an organization acknowledges that a problem exists and then analyzes that problem to develop viable alternatives to solve it while considering the possible consequences associated with that alternative. In this case, federal and state governments should collaborate with other public and nonprofit organizations to develop solutions that address the negative implementation of public policy that affects the hemp industry (Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012). The goal of any cross-sector policy collaboration should be to promote more inclusion rather than participation from a select group to achieve more social equity (Schmid & Almog-Bar, 2020; Cornforth, Hayes, & Vangen, 2015). In addition to these collaborative measures, the federal and state governments should exercise more transparency in developing policies. Public organizations must discontinue the practice of excluding practitioners from the decision-making process and embrace their input, as practitioners work at the

ground level and deliver services to consumers (Rosenbloom, 1983; DeHart-Davis, 2009).

In an effort to exercise transparency for the long-term growth of the hemp industry, Senator Jon Tester (D- Montana) has sponsored the Industrial Hemp Act of 2023, a bipartisan bill that would remove certain testing requirements and regulations from hemp used for fiber and other manufacturing purposes (Levenson, 2023). Senator Tester collaborated with several hemp organizations and advocacy groups to develop provisions in the bill that would ensure that the interests of multiple stakeholders have been represented. This bill is a step in the right direction to ensure that social equity and policy implementation reforms are met to expand access to the industry in its inception or valuable opportunities to engage Black and underserved farmers will be lost forever.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discussed the research methodology that was utilized to guide this study. As the research methodology was explored, it applied a content analysis design, data sourcing and collection methods, participants, research questions, pattern matching based on interview data, and dependability of analysis.

### **Research Design**

The research design for this study used descriptive statistics in a qualitative study, as the researcher utilized semi-structured interviews with Black hemp farmers to collect demographic information, as well as responses that were aligned with this study's research questions. The interviews were transcribed, and emerging themes were evaluated using the MAXQDA Qualitative Data Analysis Software, which examined relationships between Black hemp farmers' experiences and perceptions regarding barriers that exclude Black farmers from participating in the hemp industry. MAXQDA is a computer software that was developed in Germany in 1995 that specializes in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods data analysis. MAXQDA software is used to rapidly and accurately analyze collected interview data. The researcher uploaded text from interviews into the MAXQDA system, which analyzed the most commonly used themes and phrases from the full text interviews. Upon analysis of emerging themes, each was placed into three major categories that correlated with theoretical frameworks that were used to guide this study. These areas were a lack of education, a lack of financial

resources, and policy implementation irregularities. Each of these major themes produced several subthemes, which have been noted and discussed in the following chapter.

### **Qualitative Content Analysis**

Qualitative Content Analysis is a qualitative research method that can be used to analyze and categorize data from interviews into emerging themes through the process of pattern matching (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995; Grayson, Doerr, & Yu, 2020). Qualitative Content Analysis allows researchers to comprehend a social phenomenon that can be used to provide further insight into areas that quantitative research may not provide (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). For the purposes of this study, Qualitative Content Analysis was used as both a primary and a secondary method. As a primary method, Qualitative Content Analysis focused on existing statistical data from the USDA on Black farmers, and FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program data on marijuana usage and conviction rates based on race (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). As a secondary method, Qualitative Content Analysis focused on data collected from semi-structured interviews with participants that generated emerging themes (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

### **Research Questions**

1. What social equity and policy implementation barriers do Black farmers encounter as they attempt to participate in the American Industrial Hemp Industry?
2. What steps can be taken by the federal and state governments to eliminate those barriers to increase participation among Black farmers?

### **Data Sources and Collection Methods**

The researcher secured archival data in the form of FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program statistics on marijuana usage and marijuana/drug-related convictions from 2010-2018. The researcher utilized USDA statistics on the number of Black farmers in the United States, land ownership of Black farmers, as well as the percentage of agricultural sales for Black farmers in the United States. In addition to these data sources, the researcher also secured data from the 2021 and 2022 National Hemp Reports that were developed by the USDA. Although these hemp surveys only contained two years of data, they served as a barometer for the direction of the hemp industry, as they provided data from hemp producers that will inform future hemp policies and produce recommendations to foster the sustainability of the hemp industry. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with at least 20 participants and utilized questions that were created from research questions. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research technique that utilizes open-ended questions that are focused on a particular subject, which allows a respondent to answer a specific question, but provide additional information if necessary (n, et al., 2017). The participants in this study were selected using the snowball sampling method. According to Naderifar, Goli, & Ghaljaie (2017), the snowball sampling method is utilized when there is limited access to or a limited number of potential respondents in a population. Snowball sampling relies on participants providing the researcher with referrals to other participants within a population that fit the parameters set by the researcher (Naderifar, Goli, & Ghaljaie, 2017). The researcher accessed respondents through a connection with the National Women in Agriculture

Association (NWIAA), Tennessee Women in Agriculture Association (TN-WIAA), the U.S. Hemp Roundtable, and the Hemp Alliance of Tennessee (HAT). As participants were secured, they were consulted to recruit additional participants for this study. Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher received permission from Tennessee State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), as this entity provided oversight for the research process and set parameters to guide the researcher on human subjects' participation. All participants were required to complete and submit a consent form to the researcher. The consent form notified participants of their rights, explained how their information would be utilized, and provided assurances for privacy. At the conclusion of the study, the consent forms and the original interview recordings were submitted to the Dissertation Chair where they will be kept on file for a period of one calendar year. After this period, the documents and recordings will be destroyed. The participants were not offered compensation for their participation in this study.

### **Dependability of Analysis**

The analysis process that was utilized in this study was Qualitative Content Analysis. This process enabled the researcher to find patterns in data from semi-structured interviews that produced emerging themes, which were classified based on their connection with research questions that pertained to Social Equity Theory and Policy Implementation Theory. Emerging themes were also correlated with existing statistical data from the U.S. Government, and literature through Methodological Triangulation. According to Donkoh & Mensah (2023), this method allows the researcher to cross-check data from multiple sources to search for regular occurrences in the

research data. Methodological Triangulation involves the use of several data collection tools, such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, and documents (Thompson, 2023). This method was used to in this study to acquire an extensive understanding of the following concepts: emerging themes from semi-structured interviews with Black hemp farmers; analysis of social equity and policy implementation concerns related to federal and state hemp policies; as well as information contained in the review of literature.

### **Participants**

The population of participants consisted of Black hemp farmers in the states of Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and Missouri. This sample of participants consisted of those individuals that consented to be interviewed and responded to semi-structured questions. According to the USDA National Hemp Report (2023), only six percent of hemp farmers in the United States are Black. Wright (2023) listed the percentage of Black hemp farmers at seven percent. Due to the small number of Black hemp farmers in the nation, this study interviewed 20 participants from those previously mentioned states.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **Introduction**

This study utilized a Qualitative Content Analysis approach to collect, analyze, and evaluate data through the process of methodological triangulation. The data was collected by the researcher through a series of semi-structured interviews with 20 current and former Black hemp farmers from Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and Missouri to analyze their perspectives regarding social equity and policy implementation concerns within the hemp industry in the United States.

The interviews consisted of 10 demographic questions and seven semi-structured interview questions that were created in line with Social Equity Theory and Policy Implementation Theory to address possible concerns that Black hemp farmers may have in those areas as they relate to the U.S. hemp industry. This chapter evaluates methods that were utilized to collect data, review procedures for data analysis, and identify themes that emerged during the study. These emerging themes which appeared throughout this study were correlated with the literature review and existing data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the process of methodological triangulation.

### **Interview Results**

The interviews for this study took place between November 13, 2023, and February 2, 2024. The study was open to Black hemp farmers in Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and Missouri, as the population of Black hemp farmers was expected to

be concentrated primarily in the southeastern United States. According to Wright (2023), black hemp growers make up only seven percent of the total population of hemp growers in the United States. As a result, there were 20 participants in this study.

### ***Summary of Interview Participants with Emerging Themes***

#### ***Participant 16-01***

The interview with participant 16-01 took place on November 13, 2023.

Participant 16-01 is a full-time female hemp farmer from Tennessee. She is between the ages of 55 and 64. Her highest level of education attained is Junior College. She has been a hemp farmer since 2018. She has a history of farming in her family that goes back to her grandfather. The following themes emerged from this interview:

1. A stigma or negative perception of hemp as it is confused with marijuana.
2. There is a lack of access to capital or banking for hemp industry professionals due to the taboo nature of hemp business.
3. A need for better and more comprehensive regulations and laws to increase participation in the hemp industry.
4. A lack of access to land for Black farmers.

#### ***Participant 8-01***

The interview with participant 8-01 took place on November 28, 2023. Participant 8-01 is a Black male hemp farmer from the state of South Carolina. He is over the age of 65. He has a bachelor's degree. He is a full-time hemp farmer, as he grows hemp both outside during the outdoor growing season, as well as indoors via a greenhouse. He has a

family history of farming through both his maternal and paternal grandfathers in the states of Alabama and South Carolina. The following themes emerged from this interview:

1. A lack of opportunities as a result of inequitable policy implementation for federal and state legislation.
2. A lack of education for Black farmers and HBCUs.
3. A lack of access to banking and financial resources; and
4. A lack of equity in licensure allocations and fee assessment.

***Participant 4-02***

The interview with participant 4-02 took place on November 29, 2023. Participant 4-02 is a Black male part time hemp farmer from the state of Georgia. He is between the ages of 55 and 64. He has earned a master's degree. He has been involved in hemp farming for five years. He is a fourth-generation farmer in Georgia. His family has been farming in Georgia since 1869. The following themes have emerged from this interview with participant 4-02:

1. A lack of opportunities to secure financial resources (e.g., access to banking and USDA loans).
2. A lack of education provided by land grant universities (HBCUs).
3. Inequities in policies that adversely affect hemp farmers (particularly Black hemp farmers).
4. Inequities in licensure fees (e.g., \$25,000 annual processor licensure fee in Georgia, \$1,000,000 insurance bond).

5. Black farmers discouraged from participating (e.g., felony convictions, stigma of hemp vs. marijuana)

***Participant 4-01***

The interview with Participant 4-01 took place on November 30, 2023. This participant is a part time male hemp farmer from the state of Georgia that is over the age of 65. He possesses a law degree. He has been a hemp farmer for two years. He comes from a long line of farmers in his previous generations of his family. He was born in the northern part of the United States and relocated to Georgia to re-establish his family legacy in farming. The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participant 4-01:

1. Existing policy restrictions on processing hemp (licensure issues with pricing and eligibility).
2. Existing stigma surrounding marijuana vs. hemp.
3. Lack of availability of government insurance or protection for hemp farmers for non-compliant hemp crop with proof of following protocols.
4. Lack of policy distinction for hemp used for topical or wellness purposes vs. hemp used for industrial purposes.

***Participant 4-04***

The interview with Participant 4-04 took place on November 30, 2023. Participant 4-04 is a Black male part time hemp farmer from the state of Georgia. He is over the age of 65. He has earned a master's degree. He has a family history of farming that dates back

several generations. He has been involved in the hemp industry for the last four years.

The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participant 4-04:

1. A lack of available financing (e.g., banking, loans, and government grants).
2. A lack of government subsidies in comparison to other crops.

***Participant 4-05***

The interview with Participant 4-05 took place on December 4, 2023. Participant 4-05 is a full-time Black female hemp farmer from the state of Georgia. She is between the ages of 55 and 64. She has been farming hemp for the past three years. She holds a master's degree. Although she is a first-generation farmer, her husband is a seventh-generation farmer in the state of Georgia. The following themes emerged from this interview with Participant 4-05:

1. A lack of consistency and uniformity in policies between federal and state governments.
2. Exorbitant fees for licensing and fees (e.g., hemp grower, processor, and fees for testing potency).
3. Lack of comprehensive education provided to hemp growers.
4. Lack of available financial resources.
5. Lack of available policies to protect small farmers within the state from larger corporate farms from outside the state.

***Participant 16-02***

The interview with Participant 16-02 took place on December 4, 2023. Participant 16-02 is a part time Black female hemp farmer from Tennessee. She is between the ages of 55 and 64. She has a bachelor's degree. She has been farming hemp in Tennessee since

2017. She is the first person in her family to farm since the abolition of slavery in the United States in the early 1860's. The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participant 16-02:

1. Lack of timely assistance from government agencies.
2. Lack of education for existing farmers and potential hemp farmers.
3. Lack of available or allocated funding for Black hemp farmers.
4. Lack of comprehensive or inclusive policies in the hemp industry at the federal and state levels.
5. Lack of policies that differentiate hemp cultivation for flower vs. fiber.

***Participant 4-06***

The interview with Participant 4-06 took place on December 6, 2023. Participant 4-06 is a Black male hemp farmer from Georgia between the ages of 55 and 64. He is a retired Veteran of the United States Armed Forces. He holds a master's degree. He has been a hemp farmer for two years. His family has an extensive history in farming, as his farmland has been in his family since the 1830's. The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participant 4-06:

1. Lack of funding and access to the markets.
2. Lack of education from government and land grant institutions (HBCUs).
3. Expensive fees for licensure (e.g., processor license)
4. Lack of continuity in policies between federal and state agencies (e.g., USDA and state departments of agriculture).

***Participant 4-03***

The interview with Participant 4-03 took place on December 6, 2023. Participant 4-03 is a Black female part time hemp farmer in Georgia. She is between the ages of forty-five and fifty-four. She holds a master's degree in management. She has been farming hemp since 2019. She has an extensive family history of farming, as her family has been farming for five generations since the abolition of slavery in the early 1860's.

The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participant 4-03:

1. Difficulty in finding stable hemp genetics (e.g., issues with THC potency).
2. Inequities in fees (e.g., processing licensure and testing)
3. Lack of continuity in federal and state hemp regulations (e.g., regulations for processing hemp).
4. Lack of education offered to Black Hemp Farmers.

***Participants 8-02, 8-03, & 8-04***

The interview with Participants 8-02, 8-03, and 8-04 took place on December 20, 2023. Participant 8-02 is a full-time Black female hemp farmer from South Carolina. She is between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four. She holds a master's degree. She has been a hemp farmer for two years. She has a family history of farming, as her grandfather was a farmer in South Carolina. Participant 8-03 is a full time Black male hemp farmer from South Carolina. He is over the age of sixty-five. He holds a bachelor's degree. He has also been farming hemp for two years. He has a family history of farming, as his

father and grandfather were farmers. Participant 8-03 is a full-time Black female hemp farmer from South Carolina. She has some college in her educational background. She is between the ages of forty-five and fifty-four. She has been farming hemp for the past two years. She has a family history of farming, as her grandfather and other previous generations were farmers. The following themes emerged from this interview with Participants 8-02, 8-03, and 8-04:

1. Lack of comprehensive education from federal and state departments of agriculture and land grant institutions (HBCUs).
2. Lack of available funding opportunities.
3. Expensive fees for licensure, processing, and testing.
4. Lack of cohesive policies and implementation of existing policies and procedures (e.g., THC level and hemp rules).
5. Existing stigma of cannabis as illicit drug that prohibits increased success for hemp businesses.

***Participant 16-03***

The interview with Participant 16-03 took place on December 27, 2023.

Participant 16-03 is a as time female hemp farmer and processor in Tennessee. She is between the ages of 35 and 44 years old. She holds a master's degree. She does not have a known family history of farming, as she is a first-generation farmer.

The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participant 16-03:

1. Lack of available funding for hemp farmers.
2. Lack of available education from federal agencies.

3. Inconsistent policies on federal and state levels.
4. Stigma surrounding hemp vs. marijuana.

***Participants 24-01 & 24-02***

The interview with Participants 24-01 and 24-02 took place on December 28, 2023. Participant 24-01 is a female part time Black hemp farmer in Missouri. She is between the ages of 35 and 44. She has been in the hemp industry for the last four years. She has a Graduate Degree. She has a family history of farming that dates back generations. Participant 24-02 is a male part time Black hemp farmer from Missouri. He is between the ages of 35 and 44. He has been in the hemp industry for the last four years. He has some college, as well as a cannabis industry certification. Although he is a first-generation farmer, he believes that he has an ancestral connection to farming and agriculture. The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participants 24-01 and 24-02:

1. Lack of education for new farmers
2. Inconsistent hemp policies (e.g., transportation of products)
3. Stigma of hemp vs. marijuana
4. Need for improvements in supply chain management (e.g., seed to sale)

***Participant 16-04***

The interview with Participant 16-04 took place on December 29, 2023. Participant 16-04 is a Black male that was a part-time hemp farmer for a period of five years in Tennessee. He is between the ages of 55 and 64. He has a Master of Business

Administration (MBA) degree. He has a family history of farming that dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His family has farmed the same land since the abolition of slavery in the United States in the early 1860s. He works with a few organizations that collaborate with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on developing the farm bill. The following themes have emerged from the interview with Participant 16-04:

1. Stigma of marijuana vs. hemp (e.g., reluctance of Black farmers to participate, need for hemp education).
2. Inequity in policies and policy implementation (Federal and State Departments of Agriculture).
3. Lack of available financial resources (e.g., grants going to large institutions and farms and banking).
4. Lack of educational opportunities (e.g., the need for an incubator system to assist underrepresented farmers).

#### ***Participant 16-05***

The interview with Participant 16-05 took place on December 29, 2023. Participant 16-05 was a full-time Black hemp farmer and processor in Tennessee for five years. He is between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four. He has some college experience and possesses several cannabis industry certifications. He has a history of family farming, as both of his grandfathers were farmers. The following themes have emerged from the interview with Participant 16-05:

1. More consistent and practical policies and legislation (e.g., changes in THC limits).
2. Better access to financial resources and a lack of equity in allocation of those resources (e.g., grants and banking).
3. Lack of education for Black Farmers from HBCUs and USDA.
4. Stigma of hemp vs. marijuana.
5. Lack of available legal services for underrepresented farmers in the hemp industry.

### ***Participant 16-06***

The interview with Participant 16-06 took place on February 1, 2024. Participant 16-06 is a Black male that is a former hemp farmer in Tennessee. He was involved in the hemp industry for a period of three years prior to leaving hemp farming. He is between the ages of 25 and 34. He has a bachelor's degree and some Graduate School experience. He has a family history of farming that dates back several generations. The following themes have emerged from the interview with Participant 16-06:

1. Stigma of Marijuana vs. Hemp (e.g., interactions with law enforcement).
2. Lack of education (e.g., medicinal/wellness benefits of hemp).
3. Lack of available funding and resources (e.g., government grants and bank loans).
4. Lack of comprehensive policies (e.g., regulations on THC levels)

***Participants 16-07 & 16-08***

The interview with Participants 16-07 and 16-08 took place on February 2, 2024. Participant 16-07 is a Black female part time hemp farmer in Tennessee. She has been involved in the hemp industry for five years. She is over the age of 65. She has a bachelor's degree and two years of Law School. She has a family history of farming in Massachusetts and North Carolina that dates back to the mid-1800's during American slavery. Participant 16-08 is a Black male part time hemp farmer in Tennessee. He has been involved in the hemp industry for five years. He is over the age of 65. He has a bachelor's degree. He has a family history of farming that dates back to the 1800's during American slavery. He has been farming periodically since his childhood in the 1950's. The following themes have emerged from the interview with Participants 16-07 and 16-08:

1. Lack of available funding (e.g., start-up costs and grant funding from the state or USDA).
2. Stigma of Marijuana vs. Hemp (e.g., law enforcement agencies and banking issues).
3. Inconsistent policies (e.g., Delta-9 THC vs. Total THC).
4. Instability in hemp genetics due to changes in THC policies.

***Demographic Information***

During this study, each Black hemp farmer was asked a variety of demographic questions related to the following areas: state (location) of hemp farm; current hemp farming status; age; full or part-time status; level of education; family history in farming; and years in the hemp industry.

*States Represented, Gender, Number, Age, & Hemp Farmer Status***Table 1.**

State	Gender	Number	Age						Hemp Farmer Status	
			18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Part-time	Full-time
TN	Male	4	0	1	1	0	1	1	3	1
TN	Female	4	0	0	1	0	2	1	2	2
GA	Male	4	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	0
GA	Female	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1
SC	Male	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
SC	Female	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
MO	Male	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
MO	Female	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0

*Note.* Table 1 illustrates the number of male and female study participants represented by state. This study consisted of 20 Black hemp farmers from four states that are recognized for agriculture. Of the 20 Black hemp farmers, eleven identified themselves as male and nine identified themselves as female. Tennessee had the most participants with eight, which was evenly split with four males and four females. Georgia had the second highest level of participation with six Black hemp farmers, which was split with four males and two females. South Carolina had four participants in this study, which was evenly split between two males and two females. Missouri had the lowest number of participants in this study with two, which was also evenly split with one male and one female.

In this table, Black hemp farmers are broken down by age range. Tennessee did not have any Black hemp farmers between the ages of 18-24. Tennessee had one Black

male hemp farmer between the ages of 25-34 and two Black hemp farmers, one who identified himself as male and the other who identified herself as female, between the ages of 35-44. There were three Black hemp farmers from Tennessee that were between the ages of 55-64, of which two of them identified themselves as female and one of them identified himself as male. Tennessee had two participants that were 65 years of age or older. Of those participants, one of them identified himself as male and the other identified herself as female.

Georgia did not have any Black hemp farmers between the ages of 18-24, 25-34, or 35-44. There was only one Black hemp farmer, a female, who was between the ages of 45-54. Georgia had three participants that range between the ages of 55-64, of which two of them identified themselves as male and one of them identified as female. Georgia also had two participants that are 65 years of age or older. Both of those participants identified themselves as male.

South Carolina did not have any Black hemp farmers between the ages of 18-24, or 25-34. There was only one Black hemp farmer, a female, who was between the ages of 35-44, and one female participant that was between the ages of 45-54. South Carolina did not have any participants between the ages of 55-64, however the state did have two participants, both males, which were age 65 and above.

Missouri did not have any participants between the ages of 18-24, or 25-34. Both participants from Missouri, one who identified as male and the other who identified as female, were between the ages of 35-44. There were no participants from Missouri in the age ranges of 45-54, 55-64, or 65 and above.

The subject of age in farming in the United States has been widely publicized as the average age of a farmer in this country is 57.5 years (Halvorson, 2023). In this study, there were 12 out of 20 participants that were 55 years of age or older. Although the average age of a hemp producer in the United States is slightly younger at 49 years of age, the ages of hemp farmers in this study are consistent with the overall national average age of U.S. farmers across the board from all sectors of farming (USDA, 2022). According to Buys, Green, and Robertson (2023), one of the greatest obstacles for younger Americans to enter farming is start-up costs and land acquisition, if they are not born into a family that has farming infrastructure. Another deterrent for younger Americans is the instability of the agriculture market. These obstacles also deter younger Black Americans and other minority groups from entering farming. To combat these issues, the federal government should increase opportunities for younger people to enter farming while simultaneously offering additional support for the existing aging farming population (Buys, Green, & Robertson, 2023).

This table also demonstrates a breakdown of Hemp Farmers' Status. According to this table, Tennessee had five Black farmers that currently participate in hemp farming, while three Black hemp farmers no longer participate in hemp farming. The gender breakdown of those current participants were four females and one male, while three males no longer participate in hemp farming in Tennessee. There were three Black hemp farmers in Tennessee who engaged in hemp farming on a full-time basis, while five of them engaged in hemp farming part-time. Of those full-time Tennessee hemp farmers, two of them were females while only one identified as male. Tennessee had five part-time

Black hemp farmers that participated in this study. Of those part-time hemp farmers, four of them were males, while only one of those Black hemp farmers identified as female.

Georgia had six Black hemp farmers that participated in this study, of which five farmed hemp currently and on a part-time basis, while only participant farmed currently, but on a full-time basis. The gender breakdown for those participants from Georgia were four that identified as males and two participants that identified as females. Four of those part-time participants from Georgia identified themselves as males, while only one of the part-time Black hemp farmers from Georgia identified herself as female. The lone full-time Black hemp farmer from Georgia that participated in this study identified herself as female.

South Carolina had four Black hemp farmers that participated in this study, of which all farmed hemp currently in the state and on a full-time basis. Two of the Black hemp farmers from South Carolina identified themselves as male, while the other two identified themselves as female.

Missouri had two Black hemp farmers that participated in this study. Both Black hemp farmers were current farmers and cultivated hemp on a part-time basis. One Black hemp farmer identified himself as male, while the other identified herself as female.

*Years in Hemp, Family History of Farming***Table 2.**

State	Gender	Number	Years in Hemp			Family History of Farming	
			0-2	3-4	5+	Yes	No
TN	Male	4	0	1	3	4	0
TN	Female	4	0	0	4	3	1
GA	Male	4	2	1	1	4	0
GA	Female	2	0	2	0	1	1
SC	Male	2	1	0	1	2	0
SC	Female	2	2	0	0	2	0
MO	Male	1	0	1	0	0	1
MO	Female	1	0	1	0	1	0

*Note.* Table 2 illustrates the number of years that each participant has been involved in the hemp industry. Tennessee did not have any Black hemp farmers that had been involved in the hemp industry for 0-2 years. Tennessee had one Black hemp farmer, who identified himself as male, who has been involved in the hemp industry for 3-4 years. Tennessee had seven Black hemp farmers that had been involved in the hemp industry for five or more years. Of those participants from Tennessee that had been involved in the hemp industry for five years or more, four of them identified as male, while the remaining four participants identified themselves as female.

Georgia had two Black hemp farmers that had been involved in the hemp industry for 0-2 years. Of the two participants from Georgia that had been involved for 0-2 years,

both identified themselves as male. Georgia had three participants that had been involved in the hemp industry for 3-4 years. Of those three participants, two of them identified as female, while one of them identified himself as male. Georgia had only one participant, a Black male, who had been involved in the hemp industry for five years or more.

South Carolina had three Black hemp farmers that had been involved in the hemp industry for 0-2 years. Of the three participants from South Carolina that had been involved for 0-2 years, two of them identified themselves as female, while only one of them identified himself as male.

Although South Carolina did not have any participants that had been involved in the hemp industry for 3-4 years, the state did have one Black male hemp farmer that had been involved in the hemp industry for five years or more.

Missouri did not have any Black hemp farmers that had been involved in the hemp industry for 0-2 years, nor did Missouri have any Black hemp farmers that had been involved for five years or more. Missouri did have two participants who had been involved in the hemp industry for 3-4 years. Of those participants, one identified himself as male and the other identified herself as female.

This table also demonstrates the Family History of Farming. For this study, the family history of farming was broken down by the state. Tennessee had seven participants with a family history of farming and one participant with no known prior history of farming. Of those participants with a family history of farming, four of them identified as

male and three identified as female. The lone participant from Tennessee without a known family history of farming identified as female.

Georgia had five participants with a family history of farming and one participant with no known prior history of farming. Of those participants with a family history of farming, four of them identified as male and one of them identified herself as female. The only participant from Georgia with no known family history of farming identified as female.

All four participants from South Carolina had extensive family histories in agriculture, many of them dating back to the period of American slavery. Missouri had one participant, who identified as female, with a family history of farming, while the other participant from Missouri, who identified as male, had no known family history of farming.

*Highest Level of Education***Table 3.**

State	Gender	Number	Highest Level of Education				
			High School Diploma	Some College	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctorate or Professional Degree
TN	Male	4	0	1	2	1	0
TN	Female	4	0	1	2	1	0
GA	Male	4	0	0	0	3	1
GA	Female	2	0	0	0	2	0
SC	Male	2	0	0	2	0	0
SC	Female	2	0	1	0	1	0
MO	Male	1	0	1	0	0	0
MO	Female	1	0	0	0	1	0

*Note.* Table 3 illustrates participants' highest level of education completed. The levels of education are broken down into high school, some college, bachelor's degree, master's degree, and Doctorate or Professional Degree. Tennessee did not have any participants at the high school level. There were two participants, one who identified as male and the other as female, with some college experience. There were four participants with at least a bachelor's degree. Two of those participants identified as female and the other two participants identified themselves as male. There were two participants, one who identified as male and the other as female, who each had a master's degree. Tennessee did not have any participants with a Doctorate or Professional Degree.

Georgia did not have any participants at the high school, some college, or bachelor's degree levels. Georgia had five participants at the master's degree level and one participant with a Law Degree. Of those participants from Georgia with a master's

degree, three of them identified as male and the remaining two identified as female. The lone participant with a Doctorate or Professional Degree from Georgia identified himself as male.

South Carolina did not have any participants at the high school level. There was one participant, a female, who had some college experience. Two participants, one who identified as male and the other who identified as female, each had a bachelor's degree. One participant, who identified himself as male, had a master's degree. South Carolina did not have any participants with a Doctorate or Professional Degree.

Missouri did not have any participants at the high school level. There was one participant, a male, who had some college experience. There were no participants that had a bachelor's degree. The other participant, a female, had a master's degree. Missouri did not have any participants in this study with a Doctorate or Professional Degree.

### ***Emerging Themes***

This study was conducted utilizing the responses of 20 participants from Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and Missouri. Those semi-structured interviews with the 20 study participants produced the following emerging themes: Lack of Education; Policy Implementation Irregularities; and a Lack of Financial Resources.

Lack of education was the emerging theme that was mentioned most by study participants, as 18 out of 20 Black hemp farmers from the various states represented believed it to be a barrier to participation within the hemp industry. Lack of education

was broken down further into three areas of concern. These concerns were the lack of education offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, a stigma surrounding cannabis, as hemp and marijuana have been lumped together as illicit, which has caused a reluctance for black farmers to participate due to historical concerns, and a lack of acknowledgement of the wellness benefits that cannabinoids, particularly CBD, can provide for hemp users. An additional educational concern dealt with a lack of available legal representation for those who face legal jeopardy while growing or using hemp products.

Policy Implementation Irregularities was the emerging theme that was mentioned the second most by participants, as 17 out of 20 participants named it as a barrier that Black hemp farmers face in the hemp industry. This emerging theme was broken down further into additional concerns, as the change in the THC limit from Delta-9 THC to Total THC was mentioned as an impediment to participation, as well as regulations that govern who is eligible to participate (e.g., time limits for felony drug convictions). An additional policy concern that was mentioned primarily from those participants from Georgia was the state's regulations on processing hemp, as the state made it mandatory for hemp farmers to send their harvested hemp to a processor rather than permitting them to handle it themselves without a processor's license, which costs \$25,000 annually (Georgia Department of Agriculture, 2023).

Lack of financial resources was the third most popular emerging theme from this study, as 16 out of 20 of the study participants named it as a barrier to participation for Black farmers in the hemp industry. This emerging theme was broken down into a lack of

banking opportunities for those who participate in the hemp industry, fee inequities relating to licensure, start-up costs, and hemp compliance testing, and the lack of availability of government grants and other financial assistance, as it is believed that government financial assistance is provided to larger corporate farms instead of minority and small farms.

### **Discussion**

This study was guided by the following research questions, which were developed in line with the theoretical frameworks of Social Equity Theory and Policy Implementation Theory:

1. What social equity and policy implementation barriers do Black Farmers encounter as they attempt to participate in the American Industrial Hemp Industry?
2. What steps can be taken by the federal and state governments to eliminate those barriers to increase participation among Black Farmers?

This chapter explored the first research question through analysis of the emerging themes from the semi-structured interviews, in conjunction with literature on Social Equity and Policy Implementation Theories and hemp legislation, as well as data from the federal government. By utilizing the process of Methodological Triangulation, this procedure both confirmed and substantiated the argument that inequities exist for Black farmers in the hemp industry in the United States. The second research question evaluated recommendations for remedies to social equity and policy implementation concerns from Black hemp farmers, which will be addressed in the following chapter.

*Social Equity*

In the discipline of Public Administration, social equity is the notion that a sense of fairness, justice, and impartiality must be recognized and implemented within public spaces to provide the general public with opportunities to utilize public services (Frederickson, 1990; Berry-James, et al., 2021). Social equity will be explored to evaluate the emerging themes of lack of education and lack of financial resources.

Lack of education was the most popular emerging theme, as 18 out of 20 study participants mentioned it as a barrier to participation in the hemp industry for Black farmers. One of the key assertions was that few educational opportunities were offered to Black farmers through the USDA. According to its Press Release No. 0165.19, the USDA developed the Domestic Hemp Production Program, which established a set of new federal guidelines for hemp cultivation and production. This program was in response to the 2018 Farm Bill, which removed hemp from its Schedule I classification on the controlled substance list, and simultaneously legalized its cultivation across the United States. Although a special program was created in late October 2019, many hemp farmers had participated in hemp cultivation prior to the signing of the 2018 Farm Bill in December of 2018, as several states had previously adopted pilot programs that enabled farmers to cultivate hemp through research programs with state departments of agriculture and partnering universities. Black hemp farmers also maintained that the USDA did not employ its agency resources to provide them with outreach, but instead relied on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to provide Black farmers with educational opportunities and outreach. Black hemp farmers believed that some

HBCUs were initially reluctant to participate in hemp pilot programs as institutions did not want to grow hemp or provide education to black farmers due to the taboo reputation that cannabis has in the United States, as well as how it has been criminalized to disproportionately incarcerate black people and other individuals of color. According to Bender (2016), the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought about the weaponization of cannabis to perpetuate racial stereotypes against Blacks in the South and Mexicans in the Southwest, as both groups were stigmatized as violent criminals that committed murders and sexual assaults against white women. Therefore, lawmakers believed that prohibition of cannabis was in the best interest of the general public (Bender, 2016; Cipolla, 2019).

Cannabis has been used to racially profile and incarcerate Black Americans at a disproportionate rate in the United States for decades, which has further strained their relationship with Law Enforcement Agencies in America and led to a reluctance to participate in the hemp industry due to the stigma of hemp and its similarities to marijuana (Cipolla, 2019; Vitiello, 2019). According to statistical data from the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program (2019) that was reported between 2010 and 2018, 42% of Black Americans over the age of 12 used marijuana in their lifetimes in comparison to nearly 51% of White Americans. Despite similarities in marijuana usage, Black Americans were arrested and charged with marijuana crimes at more than 3.5 times the rate of their white counterparts (ACLU, 2020).

As this study has focused on the perceptions of Black hemp farmers in Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and Missouri, statistical data has substantiated a legitimate concern as it relates to reluctance to participate in the hemp industry due to law

enforcement concerns. Haines (2022) stated that Tennessee ranked second in the United States in 2021 with 13,900+ arrests for marijuana possession, with a rate of 199 arrests per 100,000 people. Georgia ranked fourth in the United States during that same time span with 9,800+ arrests, with 90 arrests per 100,000 people. Missouri ranked sixth in the nation in 2021 with 9,100+ arrests for marijuana possession, with 171 arrests per 100,000 people. South Carolina ranked eighth in the United States in 2021 with 8,900+ arrests, with 148 arrests per 100,000 people (Haines, 2022). Most of those arrests for marijuana possession disproportionately affect Black people and Hispanics, which is consistent with perceptions of Black hemp farmers (Haines, 2021; Swinburne & Hoke, 2019).

Lack of financial resources was the second most popular emerging theme with 17 out of 20 Black hemp farmers mentioned it as a barrier to participation in the hemp industry. Most participants cited a lack of banking opportunities, fee inequities, and a lack of available farms loans as crucial impediments to the hemp industry.

According to Cooley (2021), most banks do not accept money from cannabis businesses, as marijuana is still federally illegal. Although hemp was made federally legal through the 2018 Farm Bill, many banks still refuse to do business with hemp businesses, as the stigma between hemp and marijuana constrains financial institutions from participating in potentially illegal activities (Cooley, 2021; Thornbury & Scott, 2018). Safe Harbor Financial (2024) stated that more than 95 percent of banks in the United States still decline relationships with cannabis-related businesses, which includes federally legal hemp. Those financial institutions that decide to open bank accounts for hemp businesses charge between \$200 and \$300 per month in maintenance fees, which

can be financially unsettling for many small farms and those farms owned by individuals from underrepresented communities, which encourages them to eliminate the word hemp from the names of their businesses (Cooley, 2021).

Participants considered fee inequities to be an issue that prevented more Black farmers from cultivating hemp. Licensure fees vary between states, especially in those states that require a processing license. According to the Georgia Department of Agriculture (2023), applicants that apply for a hemp processing license must pay a \$25,000 annual fee. Participants have indicated that Georgia prohibits farmers from processing their own hemp without a processing license. Black hemp farmers have also revealed that Georgia only has one hemp processing facility in the state. Many of those farmers believe that a monopoly has been created due to expensive licensure fees and lack of processing options. Testing fees have proven costly for most small and minority hemp cultivators. In Tennessee, all testing must be carried out by the Hemp Administrative Testing and Screening (HATS), a private company that is contracted with the state, or the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. HATS charges \$450 for the first sample taken, \$225 for samples two through four, and \$125 per sample after the fourth sample, while the Tennessee Department of Agriculture charges a flat fee of \$150 per sample (Tennessee Department of Agriculture). If samples are over the limit of 0.3 percent Total THC, then federal law requires that non-compliant hemp be destroyed, which is carried out by each state's department of agriculture (Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Wright, 2023). If the samples are more than 1.0 percent Total THC, then law enforcement may be contacted to investigate the hemp farmer (Tennessee Department of

Agriculture, 2023). This reality further leads to reluctance on the part of Black farmers to participate in the hemp industry.

Lastly, as it relates to a lack of financial resources for Black hemp farmers, participants believed that a lack of available farm loans played a pivotal role as a barrier for entry for Black farmers in the hemp industry. Participants asserted that government funds and financial opportunities had been allocated to larger corporate farms, which limited the chances of smaller and minority owned farms from surviving and thriving in the industry. The USDA has notoriously discriminated against black farmers by excluding them from receiving loans from the federal government, which became the catalyst for black farmers losing their land in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as contributing to distrust and skepticism among black farmers as it pertains to the USDA (Successful Farming, 2023; Wright, 2022). According to John Deere (n.d.), Black farmers have lost \$326 Billion in land, as 90 percent of Black owned farmland was forfeited during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of heirs' property entanglements and the USDA's refusal to extend fair lending opportunities to Black farmers.

As previously stated in the literature review, Reiley (2021) indicated that around 50,000 farmers in the United States are Black, which accounts for around 1.5 percent of the total farmer population. Simpson (2019) affirmed the financial disparities that Black farmers face in the United States as Black owned farmland accounts for less than 0.5 percent of total farmland in America, while black agriculture sales contributed to 0.2 percent of all agricultural sales in the United States. In an attempt to remedy decades of racial discrimination, the USDA initiated a \$2.2 Billion program named the

Discrimination Financial Assistance Program, which was signed into law by President Joseph Robinette Biden, Jr., as part of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

### ***Policy Implementation***

According to Seraw and Lu (2020), policy implementation can be most popularly characterized by a top down or bottom-up approach. The top-down approach is led by administrators that develop policies and give directives to subordinates. The bottom-up approach allows subordinates to have a role in policy development, as these individuals work directly with those who require services and receive the greatest impact of those policies (Seraw & Lu, 2020; O'Toole, 2017).

The final emerging theme from this study was policy implementation irregularities. According to participants in this study, hemp-related policies have been largely created and implemented using a top-down approach, as little input from hemp growers has been considered. One of those policy irregularities has been the change from Delta-9 THC to Total THC. According to the 2018 Farm Bill, the Delta-9 THC limit could not exceed 0.3 percent. This stipulation did not consider that other THC cannabinoids existed and many in the hemp industry used this law to create products that utilized Delta-8 THC and THC-A, which was excluded from the original language of the farm bill. As a result, there has been a change from Delta-9 THC to Total THC, which has affected those plant breeders who have had to effectively alter the genetics of various hemp strains in a short period of time to comply with new regulations. Now, many states like Tennessee have decided to introduce legislation that enforces new rules for Delta-8 THC and THC-A, which will limit sales statewide (Friedman, 2024). According to

Friedman (2024), the change in legislation stemmed from a lawsuit from a business owner in Chattanooga, TN, who sued law enforcement for illegally seizing hemp products during a traffic stop and misclassifying those products as marijuana. Tennessee lawmakers attempted to ban smokable hemp products statewide in 2022, however that bill failed. Some hemp advocates suggested that \$180 million in annual revenue could have been an influencing factor in the bill's failure in the Tennessee legislature (Friedman, 2024). Additional issues that participants mentioned in reference to policy implementation irregularities were disproportionate felony drug arrests and convictions for Black people in America, which prohibits those individuals from applying for a hemp license for a period of 10 years, and hemp processing regulations, which were covered in previous sections.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

### **Introduction**

The road to social equity through the implementation of policy in the hemp industry has been challenging for small farmers and farmers from underrepresented demographic groups; particularly for Black farmers. In the previous chapter, the case was made that social equity issues exist for Black farmers through a Qualitative Content Analysis, as the process of Methodological Triangulation was used to correlate literature on social inequities with existing statistical data, as well as semi-structured interviews with 20 Black hemp farmers from four U.S. states, who were provided with an opportunity to tell their stories. Through these interviews, the researcher observed several emerging themes in the areas that were connected to the study's research questions and theoretical foundation. In connection with Social Equity Theory, the lack of education and the lack of banking opportunities were observed. Through the final emerging theme of policy implementation irregularities, a connection was established with Policy Implementation Theory.

### **Policy Implementation Recommendations**

To assess recommendations, the final research question was addressed, and responses were disseminated by participants in this study, as well as by the researcher, to provide a comprehensive perspective on the most beneficial pathway toward social equity for Black farmers through the implementation of hemp policy. The recommendations that were created from this study were produced from emerging themes that were produced

from semi-structured interviews with 20 participants from Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and Missouri, in conjunction with a review of literature related to theories surrounding social equity in the implementation of hemp policies, as well as social justice concerns related to a lack of opportunities in the hemp industry due to a history of systemic discrimination in the areas of access to education, financial opportunities, as well as the application of policies in all aspects of farming and agriculture. According to Petrescu (2019), White farmers received benefit from the Homestead Act of 1862, which provided adult citizens of the U.S. with 160 acres of frontier land west of the Mississippi for \$1.25 per acre, while Black farmers were largely ineligible to receive this benefit. Historic discrimination in policies like the Homestead Act has largely prohibited Black-owned farms from growing at the same rate as their White counterparts. In current times, Black farmers have also cited disproportionate growth in the market share of large farm corporations, which they believe have run them out of business. This claim was substantiated by the USDA in a 700-page report that investigated the claims of Black poultry farmers in Mississippi between 2010 and 2015, against Koch Foods, the fifth largest farm corporation in America (Arnsdorf, 2019). The goal of these recommendations is to focus attention on social equity concerns in the implementation of hemp policies, while creating a pathway toward more opportunities through an improved market share in the hemp industry for Black farmers.

The second research question that guided this study was as follows:

- What steps can be taken by the federal and state governments to eliminate those barriers to increase participation among Black farmers?

### *Lack of Education*

In line with Social Equity Theory, the lack of education was an emerging theme that was divided into three principal areas: lack of education offered by USDA and HBCUs; the stigma of marijuana and hemp which leads to reluctance to participate in the hemp industry of the part of Black farmers and entrepreneurs; and the lack of acknowledgement of hemp's wellness benefits.

### *Lack of Education offered by USDA and HBCUs*

To combat the lack of education offered by the USDA and HBCUs, the first recommendation is that HBCUs offer monthly workshops that are available to Black hemp farmers on hemp cultivation, as well as the differences between hemp flower and hemp fiber. These workshops would allow Black farmers to obtain necessary cultivation skills for hemp flower and hemp fiber, as well as provide them with networking opportunities with other attendees, and members of the hemp industry business community to strengthen commerce. This will also allow Black farmers to connect with other small farmers and farmers from underrepresented communities to create business opportunities, which would benefit the hemp industry in its entirety.

The next recommendation to combat the lack of education offered by the USDA and HBCUs is for the USDA to provide additional grant funding and resources to

HBCUs and non-profit organizations with a focus on agriculture to train Black farmers on all aspects of hemp, rather than certain aspects that fall in line with a particular research agenda. The USDA could accomplish this by providing funds specifically for hemp training in cultivation practices, in addition to resources that are spent on research. This measure would ensure an increase in participation among Black farmers, as well as other small farmers and farmers from underrepresented populations, which would increase education and opportunities for those individuals to enter and thrive within the hemp industry.

### *Stigma of Hemp vs. Marijuana*

To combat the stigma of hemp versus marijuana, federal and state governments must address the reluctance of Black farmers to participate in the hemp industry. The previous chapter addressed the inequities that dealt with felony drug arrests and convictions by comparing statistical data from the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program as it pertained to arrests and convictions of Black Americans being more than 3.5 times the rate of that of White Americans despite similar cannabis usage. This disproportionate rate of arrest has led to a distrust of law enforcement among Black Americans.

In show of good faith, the federal government should partner with universities to provide free training and professional development for law enforcement officers and agency administration on the differences between hemp vs. marijuana, and how their actions negatively affect those who partake in hemp, a federally legal product, versus marijuana, which is not yet federally legal. This training should occur on a year-round

basis and should be required once a year to attend. Additional training should be provided within that year if certain laws changed that would impact their response to hemp-related investigations.

The USDA should partner with state departments of agriculture, universities, and hemp advocacy groups to create public awareness through public service announcements that would inform the general public about hemp to destigmatize the plant.

### ***Lack of Acknowledgement of Wellness Benefits***

To provide opposition against the lack of acknowledgement of hemp's wellness benefits, the FDA must conduct and publish more scientific studies related to hemp regarding its wellness benefits and share the results of those studies with the American people. By conducting more scientific studies on the various cannabinoids that are found in hemp rather than focus specifically on THC, the scientific community can provide context relative to what each cannabinoid can do within the human body and how wellness benefits can be achieved.

To further this initiative, the USDA and FDA should partner with teaching hospitals to research the wellness benefits of hemp through clinical trials. This clinical research would be valuable as more information would be available on the effects of cannabinoids on the body, which might lead to a lowering in the rate of opioid addiction in America or dependency on other prescription drugs.

***Lack of Financial Resources***

The lack of financial resources was also an emerging theme from this study, which was in line with Social Equity Theory. This emerging theme encompassed the following areas: lack of banking opportunities; fee inequities for licensure, start-up funding, and testing; and exclusion of small and minority-owned farms in the allocation of government resources.

***Lack of Banking Opportunities***

One of the most commonly mentioned emerging themes from this study among Black hemp farmers was the lack of banking opportunities for hemp farmers. The previous chapter explained that banks have been leery of allowing hemp industry businesses to open accounts due to the relationship between hemp and marijuana. Of those banks that decide to work with hemp industry businesses, many of them charge monthly maintenance fees between \$200 to \$300.

To address this banking inequity, the federal government must step in to provide guidance and establish policies for banks to entice them to work with hemp business accounts, as hemp is a federally legal crop in the United States. The federal government must also prevent participating banks from charging excessive fees to maintain hemp business accounts.

***Fee Inequities in Licensure, Start-up Costs, and Testing***

Fee inequities are a concern for Black farmers as they attempt to participate in the hemp industry. The Review of Literature has explained how there is no uniform federal

standard for licensure fees or other fees within the hemp industry, as each state sets its own fee structure. As a result of state autonomy to impose fees, the state of Georgia has established a \$25,000 annual fee for a hemp processing license, which has led to only one hemp processing facility in the state. To mitigate this inequity in licensure fees, the federal government must provide guidance to states and set a cap on licensure fees that can be charged by a state for a hemp grower or processor license.

As seeds and seedlings can be relatively expensive, which impacts the amount of hemp that a farmer can grow, the federal government must collaborate with state departments of agriculture and universities to develop compliant genetics that are affordable for farmers to grow. This step will provide more of a streamlined chain of custody process where seeds and hemp clones would be purchased from an organization that is in compliance with federal and state law and lessen the possibility of crop destruction due to noncompliant levels of THC.

Under current conditions, the testing regimen for hemp plants can be costly, as many farmers test their hemp crops on a weekly basis to ensure that hemp does not reach the Total THC limit of 0.3 percent. As a result of frequent compliance testing, some hemp farmers can spend thousands of dollars per season depending on how many varieties of hemp that need to be tested. This scenario has increased the probability of noncompliance and decreased the retention rate of small farmers and farmers from underrepresented populations, as the expense for testing and the threat of a noncompliant hemp crop is a distinct possibility. To alleviate the high testing costs, the federal government must work with state departments of agriculture and universities to lower the

cost of compliance testing by creating testing labs at universities. This necessary step would enable hemp farmers to transport their crops to a participating university in their area and have their hemp tested the same day or within a two-to-three-day window, which would eliminate the uncertainty of a hot crop for hemp farmers while saving them money.

### ***Government Resources Exclude Small Farms and Minority-owned Farms***

Study participants believed that government resources have been consistently allocated to larger corporate farms, which has disenfranchised small farms and minority-owned farms. To remedy this barrier to participation for those farmers, the federal government must provide more grants and financial assistance that goes directly to small farmers and farmers from underrepresented populations. This financial assistance would provide farmers with funding to purchase hemp seeds or clones, and cover the cost of compliance testing, which would encourage more participation among small farmers, Black farmers, and other farmers from underrepresented communities.

### ***Policy Implementation Irregularities***

Policy implementation irregularities was an emerging theme from this study that was developed from Policy Implementation Theory, as participants named this as a barrier to participation in the U.S. hemp industry for Black farmers. As an emerging theme, policy implementation irregularities were broken down into the following subcategories: changes in THC regulations; changes in who can participate in the hemp industry; and hemp processing regulations.

*Changes in THC Regulations*

The subject of changes in THC regulations was seen as a major hurdle for not only Black hemp farmers, but everyone in the hemp industry, from development of genetics to hemp cultivation to point sale. The change from Delta-9 THC to Total THC has presented a problem for geneticists, as the change has not provided sufficient time to develop compliant strains of hemp that meet federal and state standards for THC. Additional legislation at the state level has seen many states opting to change or eliminate THC-A, which was not included in the 2018 Farm Bill, and curtail the sale of hemp flower, as law enforcement cannot distinguish hemp from marijuana due to both being cannabis plants.

As both hemp and marijuana are indistinguishable by odor, the first recommendation would be to legalize marijuana or decriminalize small amounts of marijuana at the federal level, and then provide guidance at the state level. This step would eliminate felony drug convictions for cannabis, which disproportionately affect Black people and Hispanics in the United States. The Biden Administration has taken steps to expunge criminal records for possession of small amounts of marijuana at the federal level, but legislation would need to be passed through Congress to ensure that state level convictions could be challenged. If bipartisan legislation is not passed through Congress, then the federal government must provide law enforcement with adequate and up-to-date testing equipment to distinguish a legal hemp product from an illegal marijuana product. These testing kits, which have been used in Europe, would solve

much of the problem in mitigating the police from charging law abiding citizens with marijuana possession.

Another crucial step in addressing policy implementation irregularities within the U.S. Hemp Industry would be to raise the THC limit from 0.3 percent to 1.0 percent. According to Stuyt (2018), individuals who used cannabis in a United Kingdom medical study with a level of THC under 5.0 percent did not experience psychoactive effects. Based on this information, it would be conceivable to believe that raising the legal THC limit in hemp from 0.3 percent to at least 4.0 percent would not produce psychoactive effects in users. Therefore, it could be surmised that raising the legal THC limit from 0.3 percent to 1.0 percent would not harm hemp users and it would provide the hemp industry with stable genetics, which would promote industry growth and stability.

As the previous argument was raised in the area of a fee inequities relating to start-up costs, an additional solution to policy implementation irregularities as it pertains to changes in THC policy would be for the federal government to purchase all noncompliant THC-A hemp products from farmers, wholesalers, and retailers, and destroy those noncompliant products. This step would ensure that hemp industry farmers and merchants would not lose money due to changes in THC regulations. As an additional measure, the USDA, state departments of agriculture, and universities could collaborate further to develop federally compliant hemp genetics that could be sold to farmers at wholesale prices. This measure would also ensure that compliant genetics were in circulation, as farmers would be able to purchase their seeds and clones directly from the regulating body, which would also mitigate crop destruction.

*Changes in Regulations for Participation*

As discussed in the review of literature, the U.S. Hemp Industry is a billion-dollar industry. Therefore a 10-year ban on those individuals with drug convictions represents a barrier for many Black people and Hispanics, as these groups are disproportionately charged and convicted of felony drug convictions, particularly for marijuana possession. As a means of combatting this social inequity, the 10-year ban should be abolished for those individuals who have completed their sentence and are not on probation or parole. As hemp is a federally legal crop and individuals have paid their debts to society, then all restrictions should be lifted if those conditions are met prior to the 10-year waiting period.

An additional concern is that some individuals who possess a marijuana license in some states where marijuana has been legalized have been disqualified from simultaneously securing a hemp license in states where the federal government operates the state's hemp program. This policy implementation issue is the result of a vague interpretation of federal law that resulted from the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill. According to Brown and Fertig (2023), the inconsistency of federal and state policy implementation and the ambiguous nature of federal law has led to crippling effects within the U.S. Hemp Industry, as the prices for hemp flower and retail hemp products have tanked in recent years. In addition to a drop in hemp prices, farmers are leaving the industry and growing other crops in lieu of hemp. Over the last five years, starting in 2019, the number of acres of hemp planted in the United States has gone from 275,000 acres to less than 10 percent of that total in 2022, at slightly over 21,000 acres in 2022

(Brown & Fertig, 2023). This policy has not only created social inequity among Black hemp farmers, but it has also affected the entire industry in a negative way. A recommendation to alleviate this policy inconsistency is for the federal government to allow farmers to hold both hemp and marijuana licenses where marijuana is legal. This action would enable hemp farmers in states where marijuana is legal to take advantage of an additional stream of revenue, while providing states with a tax base for both hemp and marijuana sales.

### ***Processing Regulations***

As mentioned in the previous chapter, processing regulations affected participants in several states. Georgia has assessed a \$25,000 annual processing licensure fee, which has led to only one hemp processing facility in the state. Georgia State Law prohibits farmers from processing their own hemp. Once their hemp plants have been harvested, then it is mandatory for those plants to be sent to a hemp processor, which can be costly.

A recommendation would be for the federal government to establish regulations that allow farmers to process their own hemp without paying for a license, so long as products meet FDA standards when applicable. In addition to allowing farmers to process their own hemp, the federal government must set a cap on processing licensure fees, as well as growing licensure fees, to create social equity for small farmers and underrepresented farmers, as well as discourage monopolies by providing more choices for those farmers who need their hemp processed.

An additional recommendation would be for the federal government to partner with state departments of agriculture and universities to provide grants for universities to purchase processing equipment and offer farmers with a low-cost option for processing their harvested hemp.

### **How and Why Does this Dissertation Fit into Public Policy and Administration?**

As the researcher posed 10 open-ended semi-structured interview questions to 20 participants, there were several themes that emerged in the areas of lack of education, lack of financial resources, and policy implementation irregularities, which were consistent with Social Equity Theory and Policy Implementation Theory. As data was collected from the interview process, a connection was observed between responses to semi-structured interview questions and policies that govern the hemp industry. Many of these policies that were discussed were created and implemented with a top-down approach. According to Hill and Hupe (2022), a top-down approach is characterized by the heads of agencies setting rules and giving directives to other bureaucrats within the agency to carry out those policy initiatives. As this study analyzed each emerging theme, there were parallels that were drawn between them and various policy types: competitive regulatory policies; protective regulatory policies; and redistributive policies (Hill & Hupe, 2022).

A lack of education, which correlated with Social Equity Theory, represented both competitive regulatory and protective regulatory concerns. In the area of a lack of education offered by USDA and HBCUs and working to provide education to eliminate the stigma of hemp in relation to marijuana, these aligned with competitive regulatory

policies, as Black farmers relied heavily on both the USDA and HBCUs to provide them with information and guidance regarding the newly federally legal hemp industry. Due to this lack of guidance during the inception of the hemp industry, Black farmers argue that they were placed in a competitive disadvantage, as their White counterparts were encouraged to participate in the hemp industry and provided information. This lack of education and outreach that occurred early in the process has been mentioned as a contributing factor to the low number of Black hemp farmers in the United States. Although the number of Black hemp farmers is more than three times the percentage of all Black farmers in the United States, only six percent of hemp farmers are Black (USDA, 2023).

The recommendations for this issue aligned with the creation and implementation of redistributive policies that would provide funding opportunities for HBCUs and nonprofit agricultural organizations to provide additional education and training to Black farmers to combat the lack of early engagement. As it pertained to the lack of education regarding the wellness benefits of hemp, there was a connection with protective regulatory policy, as the FDA has not provided adequate guidance to address this topic, which has placed the CBD flower sector of the hemp industry in decline (Hill & Hupe, 2022; Jaeger, 2023). Despite policies regarding the lack of education have been categorized as top-down, the most beneficial solution for this issue would be to employ a mixed approach, which included aspects of both top-down and bottom-up approaches (Hill & Hupe, 2022). The top-down approach should be maintained in working with hemp policies related to wellness and health, as the protective nature of these regulations

must be maintained for the collective benefit of society (Hill & Hupe, 2022). A bottom-up approach should be implemented that involves bureaucrats and other stakeholders that are directly affected by these policies, as nonprofit organizations and HBCUs should be provided with federal funding to provide and direct outreach initiatives that reach the targeted population (Hill & Hupe, 2022).

A lack of financial resources, which also correlated with Social Equity Theory, represented both competitive regulatory and redistributive policy types (Hill & Hupe, 2022). As it pertained to a lack of banking opportunities, fee inequities in licensure, start-up costs, and testing, and government resources that exclude small and minority-owned farms, these issues created a barrier to entry for many Black farmers, while others who did enter the hemp industry had a much lower survival rate due to historical inequities. Although these issues concerning the lack of financial resources have been established as competitive regulatory policies, as they have affected all smaller farms, they have disproportionately affected Black farmers due to the low numbers in the industry. The policy implementation recommendations to correct these issues have fallen under redistributive policy, as the recommendations have indicated that federal and state governments should provide funding directly to farmers from underrepresented populations to mitigate the expensive testing costs, as well as to purchase seeds, clones, and other equipment (Hill & Hupe, 2022).

Competitive regulatory policy was observed as a remedy to improve the relationship between the banking industry and hemp farmers, as it was recommended that the federal government provide incentives for more banks to participate in lending

programs and maintain accounts for hemp farmers (Hill & Hupe, 2022). These objectives must be achieved through a top-down approach to policy implementation, as the federal government has the authority to enact these solutions (Hill & Hupe, 2022).

Policy implementation irregularities correlated directly with Policy Implementation Theory. Changes in THC regulations, changes in regulations for participants, and processing regulations, have fallen under competitive regulatory and protective regulatory policies (Hill & Hupe, 2022). According to Hill and Hupe (2022), the need for governance in the policy arena is essential as it provides a set of rules and guidelines for agents to follow in public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The manner in which policy implementation has been enacted regarding these particular areas of concern have been top-down, as they have been driven by lawmakers and agency heads with little regard for the functionality of these policies and how they affect other stakeholders throughout the process (Hill & Hupe, 2022).

As it related to changes in THC regulations, the initial purpose was to create a protective regulatory policy, as the maximum limit of 0.3 percent Delta-9 THC differentiates hemp from marijuana (Hill & Hupe, 2022). This policy was an example of Rule-Inception Red Tape, as the rule was problematic from its creation (Bozeman, 2000). The rule was not based on science, but rather was created based on a seemingly arbitrary Delta-9 THC limit of 0.3 percent, as scientific research has indicated that THC is not psychoactive at levels below five percent (Stuyt,2018). The recent change to this policy from Delta-9 THC to total THC without revisiting the 0.3 percent limit demonstrated an example of Rule-Evolved Red Tape, as the newly enacted policy was developed in

response to poorly designed existing policy and still failed to address the initial problems (Bozeman, 2000). As policy implementation recommendations were established to combat this issue, there must be a mixture of top-down and bottom-up policy implementation to solve the problem, which includes scientific data and consultation from bureaucrats, and additional stakeholders (Hill & Hupe, 2022).

Changes in regulations for participants are an example of both competitive and protective regulatory policies. The 2018 Farm Bill set the rules for participation, as felons convicted of drug-related offenses must wait 10 years from the date of conviction to be eligible to apply for a hemp license. As a protective regulatory policy, the rule was set in place to ensure that individuals with drug related felonies were not eligible to grow hemp due to the relationship between hemp and marijuana (Hill & Hupe, 2022). Despite the initial purpose of this policy, the consequences have led to a competitive regulatory policy issue, as individuals who have served their time were prevented from participating in a federally legal industry, as hemp was no longer considered a drug (Hill & Hupe, 2022). The recommendation was to allow those individuals who had served their time and were no longer on probation or parole to qualify for a hemp license irrespective of time between felony drug conviction and application date. This would allow these individuals to participate in the newly legalized hemp industry with the opportunity to earn revenue.

Processing regulations were established in many cases as a protective regulatory policy, as the FDA was in charge of regulating hemp that would be ingested or used for cosmetic purposes. This regulation should be handled as a mixed approach rather than

strictly top-down, as science should guide the process, however the FDA should consult stakeholders within the hemp industry to develop guidelines that benefit commerce, while safeguarding the health of consumers (Hill & Hupe, 2022). The recommendation to eliminate the \$25,000 processing licensure fee in Georgia and for the federal government to set a maximum limit on the amount that states can charge for hemp licenses of any kind is a competitive regulatory policy change that would enable farmers to process their own hemp while remaining in compliance with FDA guidelines.

Bozeman (2000) stated that cutting red tape is essential to improving policy implementation goals. As red tape is eliminated, policies must be evaluated to determine if the purpose is necessary and if changes should be made (Bozeman, 2000; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). Policymaking is a fluid process that must be revisited regularly to ensure that existing policies still function with their intended purposes in mind.

According to Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), failure to make critical changes in failing policies through consistent policy evaluation negatively effects the long-term success of those policies. Through further examination of policies and implementation recommendations, it has been concluded that a mixed approach of top-down and bottom-up policy implementation strategies will benefit the hemp industry most as it continues to evolve toward the future.

### **Why My Dissertation is Important to the Student of Hemp**

This study is important to the student of hemp as it illuminates contemporary policy issues that exist in the hemp industry in the United States. As the findings have corroborated much of the literature that has discussed social equity concerns in the hemp

policy implementation process, future students of hemp may gain a further understanding of how social equity reforms in hemp policy implementation would be beneficial to the success of the hemp industry. The findings of this study were produced by semi-structured interviews in the form of emerging themes. These themes were a lack of education, a lack of financial resources, and policy implementation irregularities.

A lack of education, which was connected with Social Equity Theory, was observed in three major areas based on respondents. These areas included a lack of education offered by the USDA and HBCUs, a stigma connecting hemp to marijuana, and a lack of acknowledgment of wellness benefits of hemp.

According to Helmer (2021), North Carolina A & T University, an HBCU in Greensboro, NC, developed a hemp pilot program in 2016, which was two years after the passage of the 2014 Farm Bill, which allowed hemp to be cultivated and studied in pilot programs by land grant colleges and universities. The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina A & T University also created a program to connect Black farmers with agencies and resources, as it has acknowledged that Black farmers have not been provided with information in most cases (Helmer, 2021). Although most Black farmers depend heavily on HBCUs to provide them with information, depending on HBCUs solely for that purpose is insufficient and not sustainable (Helmer, 2021).

The stigma of marijuana as it relates to hemp is one of the biggest deterrents that prevent Black farmers from participating in the hemp industry. According to Bender (2016), Black people in the United States are arrested and convicted of felony drug crimes involving cannabis at a rate 3.5 times more than White people despite similar

levels of use. If you look at a hemp plant and a medical marijuana plant, the plants are indistinguishable, therefore the general public still does not know the difference between marijuana and hemp, as they believe that hemp will get you high (Klein, 2022).

The lack of acknowledgment of hemp's wellness benefits was indicated as a concern by participants in this study, as its overall safety has been questioned. According to cbdMD (2023), several current studies have revealed that CBD is generally safe with mild side effects when added to an individual's daily wellness regimen. Despite these revelations, little has been done by the FDA to provide guidance on CBD, which has negatively impacted the hemp industry (Jaeger, 2023).

A lack of financial resources, which was also connected to Social Equity Theory, was reduced to three areas: a lack of banking opportunities; fee inequities for licensure, start-up costs, and compliance testing; and a lack of availability of government grants and other financial assistance.

A lack of banking opportunities has been observed by those in the hemp industry, as the connection between hemp and marijuana has been seen as risky. According to Cooley (2021), due to the 0.3 percent THC limit, which appears to be arbitrary according to science, banks are hesitant to work with hemp businesses as this limit has created a thin line between hemp and marijuana.

Fee inequities for licensure, expensive start-up costs, and compliance testing were mentioned by respondents as barriers to entry for those Black entrepreneurs who have interest in the hemp industry. According to the Georgia Department of Agriculture

(2023), the cost for an annual processing license is \$25,000. This excessive fee has posed a problem, as Georgia State Law prohibits hemp farmers from processing their own crops without a processing license. As a result, they must send their hemp to a processing facility. Black farmers have noted that start-up costs can be expensive for aspiring Black hemp farmers, as they lack the funding for infrastructure and other resources (Wright, 2023; Helmer, 2021). The price of hemp compliance testing can be costly for Black hemp farmers. According to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (2023), the price of hemp compliance testing is \$150 per sample, if tested by the department, or upward of \$450, if tested by a third-party company. Some participants tested their crops weekly not to exceed the 0.3 Total THC limit.

The lack of government grants and funding made directly available to Black hemp farmers to cultivate hemp was a concern for participants in this study, as many stated that government funding has gone toward research and has been granted to colleges and universities, as well as private companies and organizations rather than to farmers in the field. According to Hemp Industry Daily (2021), the USDA provided Oregon State University with a \$10 million grant to partner with eight institutions throughout the Pacific Northwest to research hemp and address the needs of Native Americans and other individuals from rural parts of California, Oregon, Washington, and Nevada. Central State University, an HBCU in Wilberforce, OH, received \$10 million to partner with five other colleges and universities to research hemp as a food source for farm-raised fish. Greenhouse Product News (2023) has revealed that Iconoclast Industries LLC received a \$15 million grant to partner with four colleges and universities, two state departments of

agriculture, and 14 companies and organizations, to research industrial hemp for fiber and grain.

Policy implementation irregularities were the last of the emerging themes for this study. This area was broken down into concerns with the 0.3 percent THC limit, the change from Delta-9 THC to Total THC. Eligibility for applicants with felony drug convictions and licensure fees were also listed as concerns; however, they were covered in previous sections.

According to Schiller (2019), the 0.3 percent THC limit is arbitrary and other nations around the world have lobbied the United States to raise the THC limit for American hemp products. Although the European Union has a tougher statute at 0.2 percent THC, Switzerland has a limit of one percent THC, while Thailand has a limit of three percent THC for all hemp products. Respondents have pointed to an additional concern as the regulations surrounding the 0.3 percent THC limit have changed from Delta-9 only to Total THC, which is an attempt to regulate THC-A and Delta-8 THC. As a means of combatting this new regulation, Marijuana Moment (2023) stated that a lawsuit has been filed in Virginia by two hemp companies and a private citizen, as they contend that Virginia's new hemp regulations create a financial hardship for hemp businesses and negatively impact interstate commerce.

The findings, which were based on responses from semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 participants, were consistent with literature in all areas of concern. Through a correlation of literature and emerging themes, this study further substantiated the connection between the respondents' concerns and current hemp legislation and

policy implementation concerns in the area of social equity. As legislation involving hemp is a fluid situation, it is anticipated that more changes will be made in the near future, which will create additional social equity concerns in hemp policy implementation.

### **Summary**

This chapter has reviewed recommendations for improvements in social inequities within the U.S. Hemp Industry based on the perceptions of Black hemp farmers who participated in this study. The recommendations in this chapter were based on the emerging themes from the previous chapter, which were extracted from semi-structured interviews with 20 Black hemp farmers from Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and Missouri. The emerging themes were a lack of education, a lack of financial resources, which stemmed from Social Equity Theory, and policy implementation irregularities, which was developed from Policy Implementation Theory. If these recommendations are adopted, in part or in their entirety, then monumental progress will be made toward leveling the playing field in the hemp industry and providing equal access to not only Black farmers, but small farmers, as well as farmers from other underrepresented populations.

### **The Future of Social Equity in Hemp Policy Implementation**

The future of hemp policy in the United States is uncertain. From the inception of the 2014 Farm Bill through the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill, there have been social equity challenges in the implementation of hemp policy due to a lack of comprehensive

legislation. Much of the decisions were left to the individual states and their departments of agriculture, which created initial barriers to entry. As hemp policy continues to evolve at a fluid pace, lawmakers must collaborate with bureaucrats, businesses, consumers, and advocacy groups to be certain that all sides of the policy issue have been addressed (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). These collaborative efforts will ensure that social equity concerns continue to remain at the forefront of future hemp policy decisions, which will contribute to the long-term success and growth of the hemp industry in the United States and beyond.

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**Appendix A**

**Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter**



To: Kori Floyd

Department: Public Administration

Re: Protocol #HS-2023-4947

Date: Monday, October 23, 2023

From: Monique McCallister, Ph.D., Institutional Review Board

The document listed below has been carefully reviewed and found to be compliant with OPRR document title 45, Code of Federal Regulations part 46, the protection of human subjects, as amended by Federal policy, effective August 19, 1991. This project is **approved** as it presents minimal to no research risks to human participants involved. Please make note, that any deviations in the administration of the protocol, accidental or otherwise should be reported to the IRB as soon as possible. The FWA for Tennessee State University is #FWA00007692, which is effective from July 15, 2016 to February 4, 2025.

**Black Hemp Farmers' Perspectives on Social Equity and Policy Implementation Concerns within the U.S. Hemp Industry (#HS-2023-4947)**

**Other Researchers: N/A**



This approval is valid for one year from the date indicated above. Continuation of research beyond that date requires re-approval by the Institutional Review Board.

Please contact me at 615-963-7619 or e-mail [irb@tnstate.edu](mailto:irb@tnstate.edu) for additional information.

Monique McCallister, Ph.D.  
[mmccalli@tnstat.edu](mailto:mmccalli@tnstat.edu)

**Appendix B**

**CITI Training Certificate**



Completion Date 02-Nov-2021  
Expiration Date 01-Nov-2024  
Record ID 45877158

This is to certify that:

**Kori Floyd**


Has completed the following CITI Program course:

**Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher**  
(Curriculum Group)  
**Social & Behavioral Research**  
(Course Learner Group)  
**1 - Basic Course**  
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**Tennessee State University**

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.



Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citi-program.org/verify/?w8r8149f5-5732-4b28-89fc-ab93d5344236-45877158](http://www.citi-program.org/verify/?w8r8149f5-5732-4b28-89fc-ab93d5344236-45877158)

**Appendix C**

**Instrument (Interview Questions)**

**Interview Questions**

*Demographic Questions*

1. Please state your age:

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

over the age of 65

2. What is your Gender?

Male

Female

Non-binary

Prefer not to say

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

3. Highest level of education attained:

Less than high school

High school diploma or equivalent

Some college, no degree

Associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Doctorate or professional degree

4. What your annual household income:

Less than \$25,000

\$25,000 - \$49,999

\$50,000 - \$74,999

\$75,000 - \$99,999

\$100,000 - \$149,999

\$150,000 and above

Prefer not to say

5. Are you currently a hemp farmer?

Yes

No

If not, then why did you stop?

6. Are you a full-time or part-time hemp farmer?

Full-time

Part-time

7. How many years have you been involved in hemp farming? \_\_\_\_\_

8. In which state or states do you engage predominantly in hemp farming?

9. Are you a first-generation farmer, or does your family have a history of farming?

First-generation farmer

Family has a history of farming

Both

***Semi-Structured Interview Questions***

10. Are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

Yes

No

If yes, please elaborate.

11. Have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

Yes

No

If, yes, please explain.

12. Why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry?

13. As a Black hemp farmer, have you, in your experience, come across any hurdles or barriers within the hemp industry? Please explain.

14. Have you experienced any difficulties in gaining access to resources, such as land, capital, or education, that you believe result from social justice imbalances within the hemp industry?

15. In your opinion, which specific policies or regulations within the United States hemp sector do you believe have the most impact on social justice issues? In your opinion.

16. What steps can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers in the hemp industry?

17. From your perspective, how have government policies or regulations affected your ability to succeed as a Black hemp farmer in the U.S.? Feel free to share specific policy areas that you believe have had a significant impact.

**Appendix D**

**Full Text Interviews**

**Interview with Participant 16-01**

The interview with participant 16-01 took place on November 13, 2023.

Participant 16-01 is a full-time female hemp farmer from Tennessee. She is between the ages of fifty-five and sixty-four. Her highest level of education attained is Junior College. She has been a hemp farmer since 2018. She has a history of farming in her family that goes back to her grandfather. The following themes emerged from this interview:

5. A stigma or negative perception of hemp as it is confused with marijuana.
6. There is a lack of access to capital or banking for hemp industry professionals due to the taboo nature of hemp business.
7. A need for better and more comprehensive regulations and laws to increase participation in the hemp industry
8. A lack of access to land for Black farmers

Interviewer: I am here with participant 16-01 for the hemp study. Participant, could you please state your name and information?

16-01: My name is (redacted) and I am the owner and operator of (redacted). Which, (redacted) is our legal name, but we're doing business as (redacted) and we're located in (redacted). We have been growing since 2018.

Interviewer: Ok. Fantastic! Alright. So, we'll go ahead and roll right into the study. Ok. So, question number one, and again, please feel free for some of these that if you do not feel comfortable answering, then you can just state that you have no response or that you would not like to answer the question.

16-01: Okay

Interviewer: Alright, so we will begin. Question number one, please state your age range.

The age ranges are 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and over 65.

16-01: 55-64.

Interviewer: Okay, next question. What is your gender?

16-01: Female

Interviewer: Number three. Highest level of education attained?

16-01: Junior college

Interviewer: Okay, and then the next one. What is your annual household income?

16-01: I prefer not to say because I don't want to talk about my income.

Interviewer: I completely understand. That is exactly why "prefer not to say" is one of the choices. Okay, so next question. Are you currently a hemp farmer?

16-01: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, wonderful! Number six. Are you a full time or part time hemp farmer?

16-01: Part time, but when we are growing, we are full time. We grow all year. We grow all year part time, but during the (outdoor hemp growing) season, we are full time.

Products and stuff, too.

Interviewers: Oh, okay. Phenomenal!

16-01: We've got a production side and a growing side.

Interviewer: That's good to know because you have quite a few people that grow on the growing side and manufacture their own products and produce things, too. That is wonderful! Question seven. How many years have you been involved in the industry?

16-01: We've been in the industry since 2018. That's when we first got our license. So, that's what? Five years? A little over five years?

Interviewer: Okay. In which state or states do you engage predominantly in hemp farming? And you've already stated Tennessee.

16-01: Yes sir. Tennessee.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

16-01: Yes. I'm on the leadership team for Farm Bureau and we do a lot with them. That's a farm insurance company. Basically, we do programs with the kids in April. We also host them to come out to our farm once a year and do a tour just to see what we're doing and what we're up to. And I also donate a lot to elderly people, you know, who can't afford the products. So, I donate products to them. So that's pretty much it, and we do other little side things too, you know. We just do a whole lot of things. Too numerous to mention. Let's put it that way.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Number ten. Are you a first-generation farmer? Or does your family have a history of farming?

16-01: Family history. My, it goes back to my great grandfather. Yeah. We've farmed land forever. My grandfather used to loan his land out and let other Black farmers get the opportunity to farm. But my dad, he grew a lot of corn and had cows and pigs.

Interviewer: Alright. Number eleven. Have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

16-01: The stigma is there. Nobody has bothered us because we are kind of off the beaten path. Nobody has bothered us as far as law enforcement, but it's just the stigma. If you're growing hemp, they think it's weed and it's just on and on. But yeah. We haven't per se been bothered by anybody from law enforcement. You know. Anybody that will come knocking on your door or anything like that because we follow the books (laughter).

Interviewer: Okay. So, my next follow-up question to that would be is there a concern that at some point that could be the case?

16-01: No. I don't think so.

Interviewer: Alright. Number twelve. Why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry?

16-01: Oh, I was sick. I got sick and somebody had shared it with me. And I was like on seventeen medications. Then I started taking it and it made me feel good. It kind of gave me, you know, the relaxation that I was looking for. I was just concerned that I didn't know what they were putting in it, so I decided to grow my own. Then, I bought (redacted) aboard because she was a graduate of (redacted), and I wanted, you know, the

expertise to help me push it forward. So, that's when she came aboard. And so, the rest is history. We're still doing it.

Interviewer: Okay. Wonderful. Number thirteen. As a Black hemp farmer, have you, in your experience, come across any hurdles or barriers within the hemp industry?

16-01: Yes. Number one, the stigma, and before we got organic certified, minority certified, woman certified, we couldn't get into any (inaudible). We couldn't move, make any movement. But, now we took that extra step to give us another layer to be able to, you know, walk in a store and present our products. Now, it's better. Before, we were just with everybody else. But when you do those extra steps, it makes you more attractive. And you know that now we're getting more hits than ever before.

Interviewer: Okay. Number fourteen. Have you experienced any difficulties in gaining access to resources such as land, capital, or education that you believe results from social justice imbalances within the hemp industry?

16-01: Yes. I've experienced issues back during Covid, especially. I couldn't get any help nowhere. Nobody was trying to help me. So, I started a plan, a plan for grants. I got a couple of bites on some of the grants, but I mean they were turning me down left and right because I'm hemp. The banking systems and all that, they just don't work with us. They're still not open to us. But I got a bank account that it's just to go in and I tried to make an application to buy a piece of land and they turned me down. I mean, I've got the funding to show. I mean, I've got the money coming in to show that I can take care of it. But they turned me down because they said they don't recognize that type of industry and they probably never will. That's what the bank told me.

Interviewer: Okay. So, number fifteen. In your opinion, which specific policies or regulations within the United States hemp sector do you believe have the most impact on social justice issues? So, in other words, we want to level the playing field within the hemp industry to where African American or Black farmers can participate within the industry. So, what policies or regulations do you believe are the ones that prohibit that from happening?

16-01: Well, let me just say this. Our political system, I don't even know where to start with it because I was a commissioner. And when I tell you, we need an overhaul. We need more African Americans in the political realm to help push bills and legislation through. Otherwise, when you leave it up to the ones that are there now, we are never going to get anywhere because we are in a red state, and they don't look at this. We're in the Bible Belt here. They don't look at, you know, the need and the medicine that is in the hemp to help us. But the legislation that's in now, I've got a friend that's up there now trying to push the marijuana through, but I talk to him periodically, but he says right now that hemp is as far as it's going to go on their books. They're working on marijuana. So, I think it's the biggest thing like maybe not like certain policies, but the lack of land that Black people own. There are a lot of Black people out there that don't really own a lot of land to farm on. So, I think that is probably one of the biggest issues there. Yeah, and back to the banks. The banks won't loan for hemp, you know. So yeah, that's a loaded question for me. But that, you know, that's my assessment of it. They're not paying any attention to him unless, you know, you get those lobbyists busy and start working on things to push it through. We're going to be right where we are. But I'm

grateful for Frederick Cawthon and the things that he's doing trying to bring attention and more awareness and he's sitting up there trying to talk to some of the legislators to try to get some of these things changed so it'll be better for us. But programs like this. You doing this research, this is phenomenal because it's going to help bring awareness and bring more insight to some of the issues in the legislation and, you know, banking systems and all the different other, you know, formalities that go along with it.

Interviewer: So, yes ma'am. I appreciate you saying that. I think that this is definitely an important industry and I think that equal access to the industry is why or the lack of equal access to the industry is why I wanted to do the study because I think that hemp is a commodity that should be available for everybody to grow.

16-01: Most definitely. Most definitely.

Interviewer: Okay. Number sixteen. What steps can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers in the hemp industry?

16-01: I think it is more opportunity because we are the ones that always end up with the bottom of the barrel. I think if you like doing more research programs and stuff like that, it'll open up more opportunities. But I think if we could give them availability to more, better banking systems. But I also like if you were to target more Black farmers and expand this program, it would give room for jobs to where those Black farmers could hire more associates. So, I think that just the program itself and build up more Black farmers and incorporating more Black farmers will help with that.

Interviewer: Excellent. Alright. And last one. From your perspective, we're almost done. From your perspective, how have government policies or regulations affected your ability

to succeed as a Black hemp farmer in the United States? Feel free to share a specific policy area that you believe has had a significant impact.

16-01: The biggest thing that I have is they need to fix the banking system because I was with one bank, and they just threw me out on my ear, you know, and then I got with another bank there. You know this because if you ain't got nowhere to take your money, then you're stuck and because when you do get a nice contract, nobody will recognize your money. So, that needs to be cleaned up. And I think if the legislators, you know, get to working with the banking systems, I think it'll open up more doors. I think more opportunities for us to purchase land at a reasonable rate and not try to give us, you know, triple interest rates. I think things like that will help, too. And I think if they just have an open mind and see hemp for what it is, a medicine. You know, I know people use it in different ways, but the biggest part of hemp to me is medicine. And I think if they look at that and, you know, and sit big pharma down because they are killing us, too. I think if they, you know, just kind of give hemp a little 1% of what big pharma is doing, I think we can reach high limits. That's my opinion. I think, in general, with hemp, there is a stigma attached to it in addition to the issues that Black people already have to face. And that I just think that combination in general can sometimes just not be a good thing.

Interviewer: Alright. We'll leave it there. Do you have anything further that you would like to add or any additional questions that you would like to ask me as it relates to what we're doing?

16-01: I know you have been great. You have been phenomenal. I mean, from day one, our conversation to now, everything's been what you said it would be, so thank you. I

really do like the fact that you guys are trying to push industrial hemp because it's way more eco-friendly and you can use it in the textile industry, like the presentation was saying, the care industry, like there's a lot of different things you can build from hemp. So, I think it's just a great opportunity to be able to be a part of this program.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and participation.

End of recording

### **Interview with Participant 8-01**

The interview with participant 8-01 took place on November 28, 2023. Participant 8-01 is a Black male hemp farmer from the state of South Carolina. He is over the age of sixty-five. He has a bachelor's degree. He is a full-time hemp farmer, as he grows hemp both outside during the outdoor growing season, as well as indoors via a greenhouse. He has a family history of farming through both his maternal and paternal grandfathers in the states of Alabama and South Carolina. The following themes emerged from this interview:

5. A lack of opportunities as a result of inequitable policy implementation for federal and state legislation.
6. A lack of education for Black farmers and HBCUs.
7. A lack of access to banking and financial resources; and
8. A lack of equity in licensure allocations and fee assessment.

Interviewer: I am here interviewing participant 8-01 for the hemp study at Tennessee State University.

8-01: How are you doing today?

Interviewer: Doing quite well. How are you, sir?

8-01: I'm doing just great, sir. Just great. Just great.

Interviewer: Fantastic! Okay. So, question number one. Could you please state your age range.

8-01: I am over 65.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. And you are a male?

8-01: Yes, sir.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Okay. What is your highest level of education?

8-01: College.

Interviewer: So, number four, what is your annual household income?

8-01: I prefer not to answer.

Interviewer: Okay. So, are you currently a hemp farmer?

8-01: Yes, I am.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you part time or full time?

8-01: We are kind of both. We have a license for year-round and we grow outside and because we have so many greenhouses. We have seventeen greenhouses. We also grow on the inside. So, we grow in and out.

Interviewer: Okay. That's impressive. It's a very impressive operation. So, how many years have you been involved in the hemp industry?

8-01: In hemp farming, the actual farming side? I've been involved on the farming side...actually getting the farm and the license for three years. But in hemp, I have been involved for seven years.

Interviewer: Okay. So, could you tell me a little bit more about your involvement outside of the cultivation part of it?

8-01: Outside of the cultivation part, we have agricultural farm called the (redacted) right here in (redacted). We were also involved with several institutions back in Georgia, but prior to us leaving there, (redacted), (redacted) and we have associations with other hemp organizations throughout the country are setting up our global network throughout New Mexico, Colorado, South Carolina, North Carolina. And we go as far up as Pennsylvania and Iowa. So, we began setting up a great network.

Interviewer: Oh, that's remarkable. Okay, which leads me to my next question. In which state or states do you engage predominantly in hemp farming?

8-01: South Carolina.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Question nine. Are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

8-01: We are part of the Beginning Farmers Program for South Carolina State University and we're under a program with them and a grant with them for beginning farmers in this location, beginning veterans, Black disadvantaged farmers here. So, we teach classes here on behalf of South Carolina State on our farm.

Interviewer: Okay. That's fantastic. Are you involved in any other community initiatives related to hemp farming in and of itself?

8-01: Other initiatives that I'm involved in? I'm involved with some of my other friends in the Atlanta Black Chamber. We usually do a seminar every year. We missed it this year where we go online and we do a zoom call and we open it to the public. So, I'm usually the moderator for that since I'm a native of Atlanta and a Black Chamber of Atlanta member. We missed it this year, but we're going to do it again next year.

Interviewer: Okay. So, next question. Are you a first-generation farmer or does your family have a history of farming?

8-01: My grandfather was from South Carolina, a place called Switzerland, South Carolina. He was a farmer. My other grandfather on my father's side was a farmer in a place called Short, Alabama. So as far as we know, we come from that DNA, but I'm the first one in my family to actually own a farm.

Interviewer: Okay. So, the next question. Have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

8-01: I haven't here in South Carolina. That was one of the reasons that I came to South Carolina.

Interviewer: But what were those irregularities?

8-01: I'm a native of Georgia and there were a lot of irregularities. I've actually started in 2017 with an organization in Georgia for hemp and part of my job was to go out. I went to the state capitol. I spoke to all of the representatives. I spoke to the senators when they were passing the Georgia hemp bill, trying to tell them how, you know, unfair those bills were for monetary reasons. They made the fees in the millions for beginning farmers, which is way too much, and the process that they were putting in place was not to help the small farmer or the African American farmer. Those processes were for big farmers who were coming in from out of state. That's what that was. That policy or that bill represented an issue to me and that's what we were trying to tell them.

Interviewer: Okay. And then, as a result of your advocacy, what was the outcome?

8-01: As a result of my advocacy during that time, I knew my advocacy was going to lead me to a place to actually get a hemp forum because I was trying to get one. I knew what the bill was, and I was trying to change it. But in my advocacy, I reached out to a lot of the senators, and I got recognized for the letters and for what we did. But I think we got too well recognized because we tried to buy a farm, several farms in the state of Georgia, during those times and both of those farms were bought from under us. We had the bid. We thought we were going to close, but both times someone came behind my

organization and paid cash for both of those farms. So, that's when we kind of knew that, you know, we made too many waves out there.

Interviewer: Okay. And then, so what happened after that?

8-01: After that we kind of left it alone and worked with the farm and kind of kept our organization, the hemp association, as low profile as possible and it ended up that the opportunity presented itself where we had to get some hemp plants for a project in Georgia, which led us to South Carolina and a great piece of property that we ended up getting. But it wasn't under the pretense of hemp. We just had to be regular folks trying to get a farm because, again, the financial institution or certain organizations didn't want to hear the word hemp and we had to just kind of leave it alone. But we're in South Carolina now after that rough road in Georgia.

Interviewer: Okay. So, that leads me to my next question. Why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry?

8-01: Back when I first got in the hemp industry in 2017-2018 and I did the research on it, I knew and I saw that the hemp industry was going to be a new emerging market that can help bring generational wealth to not only African Americans, but to everybody. But the opportunity was open again and, as I went along and found out about the industry, the opportunity was there, but it was only for a select few that were going to get into it. I wanted to create generational wealth for my kids and for my grandkids and hemp is the way to do it and was the way to do it prior to what went on in the market after that.

Interviewer: Absolutely. And so, can you describe what went on in the market?

8-01: What went on in the market was during the early part of the hemp industry in 2014, those times when it was first coming out, it was only allowed to be grown through a pilot program through HBCUs and land grant universities in some states. And the notion was that they were bringing on at least ten states every couple of years. And during that time in 2017, Georgia was actually supposed to be one of the next states that came on, but President Trump signed the hemp bill in 2018 and that allowed everybody to get a license everywhere. The American small farmer thought it was a great opportunity to get into the market. Like, even though some of the license fees were unfair, North Carolina had one flat fee. Other states went by how much acreage you're going to grow. Other states went by monetary, but it was an opportunity for us to get in there. So what I saw happen in the industry was when the industry opened up to everyone, a lot of the hedge fund guys with the big money, \$15-\$20 million, saw an opportunity to get into a new industry where it was wide open where they can come in and spend that money and grow as much as they could and sell as cheap as they could because they had the money. I've actually seen farms that had plants on it worth \$4.2 million. They just bought and spent \$4.2 million just in plants and where these African American farmers were spending their little \$2,000 to \$3,000 trying to get into it. These big organizations were making multiple operations and buying millions in plants. They were setting up the processing centers. So, it made it really hard for all of us. When they came in and they grew, they saturated the market. They just grew it and dumped it into the market. So, where a farmer could get \$800 to \$900 for a good product. I used to get calls because people knew I was out there for people who had millions of pounds of biomass who couldn't get rid of it because the price dump was so low. So, they'd end up with a lot of farmers, especially African

Americans, who couldn't move their product because they were promised so much for that product. That never happened because the hedge fund guys brought that in the market and it became the wild west show and everybody was just, if you were small, you were out.

Interviewer: Wow. So, as a result of that, how do you think that has affected the hemp industry? Not only as it relates to Black farmers, but the hemp industry in general. What sort of adjustments have been made within the industry to, I guess, steer away from that particular area?

8-01: One of the biggest things was that it scared everybody. There was a big scare because people were losing money left and right. There were people that were opening up and investing in hemp, hemp bonds, and hemp stock, and when this came along, it crashed not only the growers, but the people were losing money in their stocks. So, I think the federal regulations have had to step in. They kind of controlled it. We, as hemp growers back in those days, could grow it, but you couldn't get a bank account. So, what good did it do you to get a license and to grow this stuff? And you couldn't or the bank wouldn't give you any sort of loans or any sort of capital to do that because, at the time, we had a lack of education, not only from the commercial side, but from the institutional and the government side. A lot of governors didn't know what they were doing. A lot of states didn't know what they were doing. So, a lot of people didn't know what they were doing. Even on the boards that were signing the bills weren't aware. I asked some of them personally, did they know what hemp was? And they were like, well, we know it's a (inaudible). Do you know what to do and where it's going? So, I think the market

scared us out, which made a lot of the representatives, senators, congressmen, they had to educate themselves, which means we have to also educate the institutions. The institution has to now educate the communities because we have a bad perception about growing it, not only growing it, what it really is, even though there's so many implications out there of what this thing can actually do for not only the people, but our health as veterans. I take CBD oil. I use CBD products and trust me; it really helps me with some of my aches and pains that I have as a veteran.

Interviewer: Well, definitely, Sir. Thank you for your service and thank you for that information. That is very helpful. You talked about the banking industry and then you also talked about some issues dealing with that particular state of Georgia where there were some regulatory irregularities that made it difficult for Black hemp farmers. As a Black hemp farmer, have you experienced any other hurdles or barriers within the hemp industry outside of those two issues?

8-01: Outside of those two issues, I'm kind of in the state of South Carolina. There aren't a lot of issues here in South Carolina, you know, because the market is what it is. The big boys are who they are. You know you just kind of find your little way in there and find your way. My goal is to kind of change what we're doing in the market. You know, when the market got saturated, everybody took a market turn, at least I did. As we started looking, we looked at the fiber market because we know that was going to be the next market that was coming in. But there's still so many hurdles for African American farmers to get in the fiber market that, you know, we had gone out and found a decorticator. We went out and found the things that we needed two years ago. But yet

still, we couldn't get the institutions along with us educated, you know, grant institutions to come along with this because they wouldn't know what hemp really was at that time. They weren't really educated as to what hemp fiber was at that time. The only thing that people were talking about was CBD, were saying back then, let's make the switch because the CBD market is gone. The next market is fiber. And if you don't have it, you're going to have to collaborate. And that's how we're going to get into this fiber market and move forward. And that's what we're trying to teach and educate on our end here.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you've spoken, we've talked about some of the barriers, and you've spoken about education. As far as education is concerned, could you go into a little more detail as far as education or a lack of education is concerned as it relates to being a barrier for Black hemp farmers?

8-01: Sure, sure. The education back in the early part of 2018-2019, we actually did a presentation before the HBCUs, nineteen of them, in Washington, and we did a presentation talking about them and land grant universities. You guys already have a pilot program. You should have a pilot program for these kids. Other land grant universities are doing it. With HBCUs, I think there was a fear as to getting into the market and educating the educators. We were the last ones to be educated about hemp and what it was and the lack of getting funding for these HBCUs. So, we went on to try to educate the educators as to look, we can help. We know the people in this industry that can bring forward curriculums. We know people who can bring forward not only curriculum, but laboratories for these kids to train in. And so, the HBCUs had not learned what that was

themselves. They were kind of stuck in a lot of the stigma of hemp is marijuana and until they got out of that stigma, there was nothing that could be done. Their community was saying we don't want our kids to learn how to grow marijuana, which it was not marijuana, it was hemp. So, you had to fight the institution, the parents, and the community on what was already being done in other communities. There were institutions that had hemp programs in 2014, 2015, and 2016. There was little known about hemp, but they had them already because there was a pilot program. So, we try to educate our institutions and look, we're behind already. Our kids are behind already. Our farmers are behind already. If the institutions are not getting educated, how can you educate the farmer? That's what the fear of the Black farmer was. We have nobody to show us and guide us and if we have to go by guidance from other institutions. We don't know where we're going to get contracts and they didn't know what they were doing. So, the barrier for a lot of the Black people came in this industry was that we did not take the time to train our institutions and make our institutions go out and train the Black farmers, the community, and the kids. And that's a barrier that we still face to this day.

Interviewer: Oh wow. Okay. Wow. Alright. So, in your opinion, which specific policies or regulations within the U.S. Hemp Industry do you believe have the most impact on social justice issues in your opinion?

8-01: I believe the regulations that actually control the limiting of the number of processors can be done. I will also say processor funding. Funding is a huge thing that we're missing. I don't have a community where I can call my friends and say look, we all got \$15 million, let's put it together and let's do this. We rely on funding to get us started,

even myself. And if we can't get access to those funding opportunities then, whereas I see other institutions and other farms making millions of dollars and I've witnessed millions of dollars. I see black farms struggling. They can't get a crop out of the ground. So, until we change some of these institutions' funding laws, then nothing will change. We're not saying give us a handout. As we say, give us a hand up, help us where we need help. Don't give me a loan six months or a year later after my counterpart gets this loan or a year prior and he's a year ahead. He's into his next crop where I can barely get into my first crop. So, I think the funding is a big hurdle that we have to overcome in this industry, from Congress to a local community here in this. In this industry, we're going to survive. That's one of our biggest hurdles.

Interviewer: Okay. So, that leads me to my next question. What steps can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers in the hemp industry. And you mentioned funding, which is so very important. Can you think of any other steps that can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers?

8-01: I think the other part that they can improve for Black farmers is not only funding education, but a lot of the barriers that we face are within the USDA system. The USDA, you know, they have a lot of barriers. You have to go to rural development or certain people to get certain things done in this industry, as a farmer. And I'm a farmer and I know, and there are barriers in that industry that don't allow Black farmers access to the correct information. I'm not going to say information, but the correct information. And when we don't have the correct information, then we don't know. And we're also behind. So, we're going to have to tear down a lot of these USDA barriers. You know, we're

working on the funding part. We're working on the congressional part. But then we still have to work on that person who's actually in the middle. It takes a license to do everything. A lot of that is controlled by the USDA. So, I think once we break it down, a lot of those barriers there, then we can go further into the institution, into the hemp industry.

Interviewer: Okay. So, how should they go about making that change, in your opinion, as far as the USDA with the issue of licensing? How should that process be changed in your opinion or how should they go about doing it in your opinion?

8-01: I think that, to make the playing field equal, we know that African American farmers are only three or four percent of American farmers. So, we know that number is already low. So, if you're going to give out ten licenses or twenty licenses or you're going to give out funding for ten to twenty farms, some of those farms should get priority because, you know the numbers are already low. So, as certain states have learned, you know if you got ten licenses and you only give one to an African American farmer, two to an African American farmer, there are eight others. So, I think the playing field ought to be made fair. We should get a larger share of the new licenses to make the playing field equal. If we don't get the majority of the new licenses, then we're lost. If we can't get six out of ten licenses, we will never come up. We will never get into the game. If we can't, they can't figure out if I have \$100,000 and I have to give it out to my farmers. If I can't set aside \$60,000 for the African American farmers, then the \$40,000 that the other side gets it, it's already double already and we're actually behind just trying to get the minimum to get the maximum out of what we have been offered. Whereas the other side

is already getting a minimum and they're already doing the maximum because they get maximum participation in what they're doing. Max prices, max participation, and max first in the market. So, until they change that and the scale of how they're doing it, then we're not going to get there. I can't see us getting there with 100 licenses and they say okay, we're equal. Fifty-fifty, but you got fifty farmers with five acres a piece and then on the other side you've got fifty farmers with 5000 acres. What good are those fifty farmers with the fifty acres doing? You know you're not helping us. That's not making the playing field equal. They say they did fifty-fifty, but did they really do fifty-fifty? You know you made the playing field unequal for us until they really fudged those numbers, right? And I mean everybody coming in the room and fudging those numbers, right? We don't get ahead. And no matter what we do in this industry, and it's a wide-open industry, it's no reason for it not to be fair because no one has control of it. So, it's not like we're coming in and trying to take over. This is wide open. Everybody can do this. Everybody can do this together, make it equal for everybody and that's what we have to do and that's what I'm praying for that in my lifetime and my kids' lifetime, we see that it's an equal market that they can enjoy some of this generational wealth that this product is going to produce for the next 100 years. So, that's what I'm saying. Let's just make it equal, you know. Not equal just because you give out five licenses. How are those five licenses compared to the other five licenses, you know, so that's how we equal the playing field. So, you may need to give out ten licenses over here and three over there to make the acreage equal. You know until we get to the sum of those things, it's not going to be enough. So, that's what I would look at changing if I had my choice.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, this has been a wonderful interview, very eye opening. Very insightful. And I think that there will be some changes made in the near future that would benefit everybody across the board, not just the select few that have been able to get into the industry and thrive in the industry because they have more money than everybody else. So, thank you for everything that you do and everything that you have done. And yeah, it's been an incredible experience. So, at this time, I will stop the recording.

8-01: Okay. Thank you.

End of recording

### **Interview with Participant 4-02**

The interview with participant 4-02 took place on November 29, 2023. Participant 4-02 is a Black male part time hemp farmer from the state of Georgia. He is between the ages of fifty-five and sixty-four. He has earned a master's degree. He has been involved in hemp farming for five years. He is a fourth-generation farmer in Georgia. His family has been farming in Georgia since 1869. The following themes have emerged from this interview with participant 4-02:

6. A lack of opportunities to secure financial resources (e.g., access to banking and USDA loans).
7. A lack of education provided by land grant universities (HBCUs).
8. Inequities in policies that adversely affect hemp farmers (particularly Black hemp farmers).

9. Inequities in licensure fees (e.g., \$25,000 annual processor licensure fee in Georgia, \$1,000,000 insurance bond).
10. Black farmers discouraged from participating (e.g., felony convictions, stigma of hemp vs. marijuana)

Interviewer: I am here with participant 4-02 and we will begin the interview now.

Alright. Could you please state your age range?

4-02: 55-64 years old.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Thank you. Okay. And you are male.

4-02: Male. Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. And what is your highest level of education?

4-02: A master's degree

Interviewer: Okay. And what is your household income?

4-02: I prefer not to say.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you currently a hemp farmer?

4-02: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you full-time or part-time?

4-02: Part time.

Interviewer: Okay. How many years have you been involved in the hemp farming industry?

4-02: I'm going on the fifth year. I started the first year in Georgia when they made it legal for us to start planting. So, this is my fifth year.

Interviewer: Okay. In which state or states do you engage predominantly in hemp farming? And you've already mentioned Georgia.

4-02: Georgia, yeah. Georgia, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

4-02: Yes. I am part owner, one of the owners of (redacted) and we basically started a coalition of farmers where we are basically a group of farmers. We grow under the (redacted) brand to allow us to basically pool our resources together to be able to act as one unit.

Interviewer: Okay. How long have you been involved in that?

4-02: Since the inception of being able to grow hemp in 2019.

Interviewer: Okay, fantastic. Alright, sir. Are you a first-generation farmer or does your family have a history of farming?

4-02: I am a fourth-generation farmer. My family legacy started basically in 1869 right after slavery. My grandfather moved to a place in Cobb Town, Georgia and started farming in 1869. So, we've been farming since 1869 as independent farmers, I guess.

Interviewer: Okay. Wow. That's impressive. You have an impressive family legacy. Alright. Have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

4-02: I haven't personally had any legal obstacles from growing hemp. Personally, I have not, but some of my farmers that initially wanted to be involved in this industry of work. But me personally? No.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you at liberty to speak on any of those that you know of?

4-02: Well, I know basically some of them, you know, had some problems with the law and basically, due to that, couldn't participate. You couldn't have any type of felony. So, with that being on the record, even though it may not have been related to this industry, it still hindered them from basically entering into this industry.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. So why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry?

4-02: Well, two reasons. Being a fourth-generation farmer, myself, and wanting to be able to pass down the (redacted) farm legacy to the next generation. I knew that most of them would not be interested in growing cotton or peanuts because it takes a lot of land to do it. And so this was an opportunity where I felt that, you know, with a small amount of land that the next generation would be able to make a profit on such a small portion of land. So, my purpose was really passing something down to the next generation where, you know, if you're growing corn, you know you have to be doing 500 acres plus. But, based on the projection with hemp you can possibly grow, you know, one to five acres and still be able to make a decent profit for the farmer. And I figured that would give the next generation opportunity to continue farming. So, my purpose was getting in to be able to pass something down and to engage the youth in the next generation to continue to

farm. So, that was my main purpose for getting into farming to have a legacy to continue in some aspect of farming for the next generation.

Interviewer: Okay. That's outstanding. Alright. So, next question. As a Black hemp farmer, have you, in your experience, come across any hurdles or barriers within the hemp industry?

4-02: Well, I mean you know the same as any type of farming that most Black people engage in. Resources, you know, financial resources and being able to have the access to financial resources because hemp requires a lot of finances to enter into the business. You know whether it's finding land or whether it's buying seedlings or whatever, putting up greenhouses to be able to grow it. It's very demanding of your financial resources. And most of the time, because it's a new crop, most banks were not willing to take a chance on that. And so personally, you just have to finance it yourself. So, like any other crop, you know, a farmer can go into the FSA and say hey, I want to take a loan out, you know, to basically grow this crop and then I'll pay you back once I harvest. Because this is such a novelty crop, you couldn't get any type of financial assistance. So, you have to just finance this whole endeavor yourself, which can be very expensive, which can cost about \$10,000 an acre. And so, how many Black farmers have access to \$10,000 for just one acre? Most of us don't. So, that's the fear that we had is just getting access to capital to have this initial investment.

Interviewer: Okay. That actually led me into my next question. But outside of the issue of capital, are there any other difficulties? Have you experienced, as far as a lack of

education that's out there for the Black hemp farmer, anything else that may result in a social justice imbalance within the hemp industry?

4-02: Yeah, well, absolutely. You know, most of the time, you know if you grow cotton, peanuts, or whatever commodity you grow, there's always education that they have year-round to help those farmers be successful. And doing anything, you know, from growing to fertilizing to cultivating, and you know there are things that they have access to knowledge and resources. They can go and basically say, okay, how do I become better at this? What's the norm in order to grow this? And for the hemp plant it's just nothing. There's no type of education. There's a lack of funding from the land grant universities and minimum participation from them to assist you with the crop. I don't know. We did get some assistance from some of the land grant universities in Georgia, but very little because they were learning as we were learning, and we provided sometimes information for them that they didn't have knowledge of. So, it was just a lack of knowledge and resources that we can tap into to help us become better hemp farmers. So, absolutely it was a struggle, you know, because a lot of times when you call people we don't know. And so, you just have to really try it and you kind of feel as though you got there on your own experimenting and trying to get better.

Interviewer: Okay. And so, from that particular point of view where you say that you know you were out on your own experimenting, what are some lessons or takeaways that you've learned from that experience?

4-02: Well, I meant, you know, every aspect of growing a crop. The only thing that I had to rely on basically was that I'm a fourth-generation farmer. But, for those people who

didn't have the background of growing things, it would have been more challenging to them. And so basically what I, you know, what we had to do is basically build our own SOP from the beginning of you know of what type of fertilizer to use, whether to use clones or whether to use seeds. How do you maintain and take care of pest control because this crop is basically sensitive. You can't use any type of chemicals on it. So, therefore it's very labor intensive and how do you manage that? How do you control those pests, you know, going out to research and make sure you get organic pest control, and so that was a challenge trying to find something that was suitable that you can use on this product that wasn't going to compromise the end product. So, every aspect from drying it, you know it's difficult. From cutting it down to drying it to processing it, it is difficult work. It was, it was a challenging experience that we had to basically learn you know. As you know, it's one of those situations where you say you jump off the bridge and basically you grew wings on the way down, right?

Interviewer: Yes.

4-02: And that's similar to what we had to do. You know, we jumped off and said, okay, well, we go through it, we'll just learn. We're going to make a lot of mistakes, but we capture that information, that data, and then be able to pass it on to other farmers. So, they won't make the same mistake and we'll learn from it. So, we were really out there on our own in this whole endeavor when we started because there was no type of information that was given to us to provide help through this process.

Interviewer: Okay. So that leads me into another question. What steps can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers within the hemp industry?

4-02: I think the biggest thing is our land grant universities have to be engaged, you know, because we are involved in a commodity, and we couldn't rely on them for resources and knowledge. And so, the biggest thing is really engaging our land grant universities, providing them with the resources to be able to provide training and education for the farmers, and be able to assist them in that process because they have the knowledge in other areas of commodities. It's just a matter of adopting that and figuring out what works best by providing resources to our land grant university and also providing resources directly to, like organizations like ourselves, like (redacted). Because we've been growing for five years, we've been keeping records and data and so we can pass that information on to other farmers and say hey, this is what works for us and these are some of the solutions to some of the problems you're going to have when you grow this product, and this is how to overcome them. So, being able to have funding to help those organizations that could assist new and upcoming potential hemp farmers and that allows them to provide outreach.

Interviewer: Okay. And so, we have the education piece. From a policy aspect, do you see any ways where those policies can be improved in order to improve participation or increase participation among Black farmers?

4-02: Well, I know in Georgia, it's kind of a special situation. I can kind of only speak about Georgia. I know like for Georgia, you know, my goal when I got into this industry was to vertically integrate, you know, most of the commodities. Basically, you know that you have a small number of minority farmers. They put their blood, sweat, and tears into growing a product and basically, at that point, they turn it over to someone else, a

middleman, and they build all the generational wealth. And so, the idea is basically to vertically integrate, and in order to vertically integrate, you basically need to have the option where you can basically grow your product and be able to sell it directly to the consumer. So, that was the reason why I said hey, we can get in this early. We can build our own supply chain, our own vertical integration system where we can grow this product. We can process it ourselves and then we can package it and then distribute it directly to the consumer and we can keep all that money internal for ourselves. That was the goal of me getting in the new commodity because I figured that the supply chain hasn't been built, and so we can build our own from the ground up. So, I say all that to say in Georgia, they put in blocks to keep us from doing that because the license fee is \$25,000 a year to process it. I mean for me to have to pay \$25,000 a year just to be able to process it, it's crazy. No other commodity has that policy and so that limits us. So, with that policy that cuts out a lot of Black farmers, how many have the option to pay \$25,000 a year to process it? You know, it shouldn't cost that much to be able to process it. I should be able to do what I do with any other commodity. If I have cattle, then I can raise my cattle, and I can take the cattle to the slaughterhouse and get it slaughtered. I can do that. I just pay the fee, you know, and then I can sell it directly to the consumer if it's USDA Certified. So, I can sell it to the consumer with minimum cost. But for hemp, you know, in Georgia it's \$25,000 to have a processing license. And so that's a big hindrance that's not allowing us to basically vertically integrate. So, what we have to do is grow it and send it to a processing facility. They charge us whatever they want to charge us to process it and then we have to take that same product. Now we have to send it out to another state and let them make the end product, and then they have to ship it back to us

and then we're able to sell it. I mean, at all the cost that we have to acquire just to do that, it's limiting Black farmers from getting into this business. Why? Especially like here in Georgia, right? And so, another thing, in Georgia, we basically have to have testing, which I'm all for testing. We have to basically test to make sure we don't go over .3 total THC and I'm all for it. I think that's good. But, at the same time, we have to go back and get what we call a four-panel test where we have to basically show that it doesn't contain any metals, any pesticides, or any herbicides. I'm all for that, too. But my problem is that then, you know retail stores can buy stuff from China or out west without a COA, and they don't know what they're getting. So, when I go to a retail store and say, hey, I got some good quality product that's grown here in Georgia, and I say that it's going to cost you \$10 and they say well, I can get CBD for \$2.00 from a retail store, you know in most cases, they're going to take the \$2.00 product. So, that has really limited me from being able to see my product in Georgia. I'm happy to go through testing. I want to go through testing because most of the products that we grow, we basically also grow it for our families and friends, and they use the product. So, we believe in the healing portion of this product. We're into healing. We're not into getting high, but we want something, you know, and so I like the testing. I think it's great, but I just want everybody else to play by the same rules. If they're selling products in Georgia where you have to show a certified COA that says that, you know, it doesn't have any metals. It doesn't have any pesticides. It doesn't have any herbicides. And that you get a certified quality CBD product. And so, I just wish we can all compete on the same level. And so right now in Georgia, it's very hard because we have a hard time getting rid of our product because they can buy it a lot cheaper in Canada, in China, and out west. And so, as a policy, if we all had to compete

to say okay, if you're selling CBD in Georgia, this is the standard that you have to go by. And so those are some policies that can help us and those are some things that if they would reduce the processing license to, you know, something minimal, which I don't know, would make more sense. So, we can grow it, but we can't even process it without a processing license. I can't even touch my own hemp and process it. I can't even touch it and take control of it. I have to send it to another processing place out of state and they have to make the end product. And once I do that, I'm losing my standard because once it goes to another place, I don't know what type of quality that I'm getting back. I just have to take it that they have good quality control measures in place and they're not taking my good product and selling it and sending me something back that's not mine. That's the danger because that's not my product that I grew on my farm. I'm taking somebody else's word that it's my product. That could cause a problem if you have a certain standard. So, if they're giving you something back that's not actually your hemp, then that would definitely be an issue.

Interviewer: So, do you think that it creates some type of monopoly situation in your state where only certain people are able to get those processing permits to process all of that hemp from different farmers?

4-02: Oh, absolutely they did, you know. In my opinion, yes. They absolutely did because you know when you start saying \$25,000 for the license and then you talk about the facility, then you have to have \$1,000,000 worth of insurance. They knew that only certain types of people could do that, right? You know, for me, as the small average farmer, we couldn't do that. You know, we couldn't afford that type of upfront cost to do

all that. And so, they automatically eliminated us from that. So, yeah, absolutely. Policy was made to, you know, under the guise of trying to protect the industry. But yeah, it shouldn't have to be that high cost to eliminate other people to say they're protecting the industry.

Interviewer: Okay. And the final question. And that actually leads to the final question. What we've talked about, from your perspective, how have government policies or regulations affected your ability to succeed, as a Black hemp farmer, in the U.S.? And you've mentioned the situation with the processing where you have to send it out of state and so forth. Are there any others that you can think of that would prohibit or prevent you from doing all that you can do?

4-02: Well, I mean yeah. Because the idea of, you know, for small farmers to be able to build and capture all the revenue from this product is to be able to vertically integrate. And with this policy, they just make it very difficult for you to be able to take this product from your field and process it on your farm and sell it directly to the consumer. You have to have so many licenses. You have to be subject to so many types of inspections and so many different things. It's just difficult for small farmers to have those types of resources in place to be able to afford to do all the things you need to do to be able to vertically integrate this commodity. And so, it's just, basically I think a lot of people saw the potential in it in the beginning and they said Hey, well we want to monopolize this. We don't want everybody doing this and so they put barriers in place in order to eliminate a lot of us from engaging and participating in this industry. And so, it's, you know, it's very difficult to vertically integrate and that's what we really need to

do. You know, they wanted us to basically continue to just grow it and hand it to the middleman and let him make all the money, right? And so, they knew what they were doing, you know, and they did it under the guise of protecting the market. They put a lot of small farmers out of the business, and they left just a few growing so they can make all the money.

Interviewer: Well, that's definitely a very sobering reality of the industry. Well, that concludes our interview. Thank you very much for your time. And thank you for everything that you're doing for the hemp industry because we need people within the industry that are fighting the good fight in order to make things better for everybody else. So, I appreciate you for everything you're doing, Sir.

4-02: Okay. Thank you. I appreciate the time and opportunity to participate.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Thank you for your participation.

End of recording

### **Interview with Participant 4-01**

The interview with Participant 4-01 took place on November 30, 2023. This participant is a part time male hemp farmer from the state of Georgia that is over the age of sixty-five. He possesses a law degree. He has been a hemp farmer for two years. He comes from a long line of farmers in his previous generations of his family. He was born in the northern part of the United States and relocated to Georgia to re-establish his

family legacy in farming. The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participant 4-01:

1. Existing policy restrictions on processing hemp (licensure issues with pricing and eligibility).
2. Existing stigma surrounding marijuana vs. hemp.
3. Lack of availability of government insurance or protection for hemp farmers for non-compliant hemp crop with proof of following protocols.
4. Lack of policy distinction for hemp used for topical or wellness purposes vs. hemp used for industrial purposes.

Interviewer: Okay. I'm here with participant 4-01. How are you doing today, Sir?

4-01: I'm doing well.

Interviewer: Okay. Wonderful. Wonderful. Alright. We'll go ahead and go right into the questions. Alright. So, question number one. Could you please state your age range?

4-01: 65 plus.

Interviewer: Okay. And you're a male.

4-01: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. And what's your highest level of education?

4-01: I have a law degree.

Interviewer: Okay. Fantastic. What is your annual household income?

4-01: I'd rather not state my income.

Interviewer: Understandable. Alright. So, are you currently a hemp farmer?

4-01: I am.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you a full time or part time hemp farmer?

4-01: Part time, currently.

Interviewer: Okay. How many years have you been involved in hemp farming?

4-01: Two years.

Interviewer: Alright. And which state do you engage in your hemp farming?

4-01: Georgia.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

4-01: We are involved in some of the conservation efforts in the area and we also do some other work in the community. So, I guess the answer is yes.

Interviewer: You can elaborate on that if you don't mind.

4-01: Yes. We've actually been in contact with and done training for people in the area to better educate them on alternative energy resources. And also, we did a symposium on the importance of getting your land tested so that you'll know where you're moving into. We did a documentary, and we had some information about people who have moved into areas where they got really good prices on houses and then they found out that there was

a problem on the land. So, we are trying to teach people to do more things proactively to make sure and obviously, well, I won't say obviously, but often times that's in areas where people don't have the same income, education, or socioeconomic status. And so, we're trying to better educate them so that they will be able to do better to protect themselves against environmental concerns. So, we've been talking about environmental justice, which is, I guess, it's a subset of social justice as well.

Interviewer: Absolutely. Absolutely. Okay. So, are you a first-generation farmer or does your family have a history of farming?

4-01: Funny story. All of my family members were farmers in South Georgia. I was the first generation that was born up north and so we've had farmers that grew pine trees, cotton, tobacco, but this will be my first-time farming. My father was not a farmer, but previous to that, a long line of farmers.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. That's great. Have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in the hemp industry?

4-01: The biggest obstacle is the mandate regarding what is considered a finished product and whether or not you can sell it. The biggest challenge is that you have to go through a processor for your own hemp. For example, if I grew tomatoes, I could sell tomatoes to my neighbor next door. You know, I could can the tomatoes and I could sell them, too. You can't do that with hemp. So, you have to take it to a processor. And in the state of Georgia, a processing license was \$50,000 a year. Now, it's \$25,000 a year and you have to pay that fee whether or not you have anybody bringing hemp to you to be processed or

not. So, that's a huge hurdle for a lot of small farmers because when you take your hemp to the processor, they charge you anywhere from \$8 to \$15 a pound to process it. And yes, so that's a huge obstacle. And the thing is that there are people who know how to process hemp, but if they did it on their farm, then it would be illegal. And so, they would have all sorts of issues with the law if they did that, but they would be able to do it with the same sort of efficacy as, you know, some of the processors. So, in the state of Georgia right now, there's only one processor, only one in the whole state. There's only one in an area where there were seven. But because of the regulations and so forth, they have dwindled down. Most of last year there were two. Now, there's only one. And the problem with that is that we only grow organic hemp and use natural resources, using natural processes and, as a result of that, we cannot get our hemp processed on a machine that does not do organic, and if you do, you have to pay an upcharge. So, processing is the biggest hurdle, I think, for most hemp farmers in general. And like most things, whenever there's an economic hurdle to overcome, usually the most underserved population is the one who suffers the most.

Interviewer: Okay. That's a very eye opening and a very sobering revelation. So, that goes into the next question. Outside of what we've just mentioned with processing, have you experienced any other hurdles or barriers within the hemp industry?

4-01: Well, one of the biggest issues is that there is, I guess, a negative thought about hemp because of its outrageous cousin, marijuana. So, because of that it gets a lot of shade. But you know, at one time in the United States, every farmer was required to grow at least an acre of hemp. They had to. It was required and so now, I guess due to the rise

of the use of marijuana, the view of hemp has diminished. So, one of the issues that we have is you have to get your hemp tested. You have to get the product tested to make sure that you don't exceed a certain level. And what happens is that it's kind of costly to do that because in our first year, we grew four different strands and so we had to get tests for all four, and each time it's close to one hundred bucks for each one. And as you get closer to the time when you have to harvest it, you want to get tested more frequently, so that you don't exceed the rate. And in the state if you run hot, you have to destroy your whole crop. So, a farmer throws out everything that they've done, all their work, all the fertilizer, all the labor. Everything becomes a big zero! And I don't think, you know, like in some places, you know, if there's some sort of natural disaster, there's insurance that'll come in and cover it. But in the hemp industry, you just take the "L," okay. That can be very costly, extremely, so. We've had a number of minority farmers who have either combined to start growing on the same farm or they dropped out completely as a result of the regulations.

Interviewer: Wow! Okay. So, the next question, that's kind of a lead into that. So, have you experienced any difficulties in gaining access to resources such as land, capital, or education that you believe might be a result of a social equity imbalance within the hemp industry? I have not had any issues with that because we've got a great location. I should say the office that works with us is the Natural Resource Conservation Service. They are responsive in our area and reach out and that kind of thing. I think the biggest issue is people not knowing. I don't know how much that information is getting out to farmers about the technical assistance, as well as grants and other funding that is available, like

multiple millions, if not billions of dollars that the Biden-Harris Administration has released since they've been here. There's a lot of money and I'm sure they hear about it, but they don't know how to go about getting it, and sometimes that process of registering with grants.gov and getting the IUE, well I forgot what the acronym is, but you have to get a special number so you can do that. So, I think for some farmers, the task of getting in on the financing is a bigger hurdle. I guess there's counterbalance with them knowing about it because I've never talked to them. I've talked to some people who are farmers, but I asked them did they know about EQUIP and they said no. I don't know anything about it. I said, well, you know you need to look into that and see if there's something that you can do. And I just think information is the biggest hurdle and then once we get across that hurdle of knowing about it, then we can get to the next hurdle that I foresee, which will be actually applying for it, right?

Interviewer: Okay. So, that leads me to my next question. What steps can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers in the industry? So, again, that can come from a policy standpoint or a regulatory standpoint, as far as what you feel needs to be changed or altered in order to increase participation.

4-01: Well, I know that in order for you to actually receive any sort of funding, you have to get it. You have to get an FSA number. You have to get a farm number. And I think that if there was some sort of mechanism that would automatically register their land as a farm, that there would be information and people who would reach out to them. I know that's probably a resource issue in terms of being able to reach out to all the people. But it would greatly help if you had people who were first timers, who were just getting their

farm number where somebody reached out and said, hey, we're going to have these classes so that you can learn how to do grants. We're going to have classes on how to do composting. We're going to have classes on these so that they would be inundated with information about these classes and, at the same time, sort of connect them to their local county service and county extension office, so they can sort of be connected to them as well. Because there's a lot of information out there and I think a lot of times we don't necessarily access it because sometimes we don't know it's there and then sometimes, we don't know how to do it.

Interviewer: Okay. So, last question. From your perspective, personally, how have government policies and regulations affected your ability to operate as a Black hemp farmer?

4-01: Well, you know the ultimate thing is that you want to be able to control all levels. You want to be able to control everything from production to retailing the product. And right now, the biggest issue is that the government doesn't allow that to happen because of that whole issue of you having to go through a processor. And I know that may seem like a minor thing, but you know when you think about the sugar cane industry that was one of the things that they had to have. You had to take it to a processor in order to get that sort of stuff done. And if there's a lean year for the growers, then the processor doesn't make money. And so, either the next year they raise the prices, or they go out of business. And I think that's one of the concerns or one of the things that will happen in our industry if something is not addressed so that you can open it up more because I can go out and buy a processor for \$12,000. \$12,000, and I can go out and get a processor.

And the thing is that we have the industrial side of hemp as well as, I call it, the topical side. You know there are some people that call it medicinal, but on the topical side. But when you have the industrial side there, it's under the same sort of regulations as the topical side, which is not good. So, even if I'm growing this hemp, which our thought is that we want to grow hemp on the industrial side as well, so that we can use it for building materials for plastics, you know, to reduce the amount of plastic that goes into landfills. Also, hemp does help with soil remediation. It pulls toxins out of the soil. So, we want to take advantage of all the positive things that hemp does, but even for us to go and get a decorticator and process our own hemp, which would be a violation of the law in Georgia. So, that whole processing piece is a big hurdle for anybody entering the industry, especially here in Georgia. I don't know about other places, but in Georgia, that's the big hurdle. The hurdle is being able to control your own hemp vertically.

Interviewer: Okay. So, if you were a creator of policy, what change would you make or what couple of changes would you make in order to make that happen or to make it more, I guess, level across the board?

4-01: The biggest changes that I would make would be to create separate regulations for the hemp used for industrial purposes versus hemp that is going to be used for CBD oil and such. The other thing that I would do is that I would make it so that they would reclassify what is considered a processor. So, for example, if I am processing less than a ton of hemp a year, then I would not be considered a processor, so therefore I can process my own. But if you're a processor, and when you're doing more than a ton of hemp a year, then you have to pay this \$50,000 or \$25,000 or whatever and buy this \$1,000,000

worth of machinery and all that. But you have plenty of people who are in the community right now who can distill hemp and use it to make tinctures. They can make lotions. They can make soaps. They can do a number of these things in their homes, but it would be illegal if they did it. And again, the consumer's the one who winds up paying more anyway because now I've got to pay this. I've got to pay to grow the hemp. I've got to pay this processing fee and then I've got to pay for them to bottle it and package it and so forth and so on. And then, I pass this big debt to the consumer, which is going to limit the amount of hemp that's going to actually be out there and available for the public to use, right? So, it has a trickle-down effect.

Interviewer: Yes, as everything does.

4-01: Right. Right. So, my two big takeaways would be number one is change the idea of what a processor is considered to be, and I think the other thing that we need to do is, well, I should say three things. The other one is separate the industrial hemp protocols from the ones that you do for the CBD and also do something about the testing and the levels, because the farmer has to destroy his whole crop or find some way to subsidize it for their efforts for the year.

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah. That's fantastic. And that would come through the USDA in the form of some type of insurance, I would imagine.

4-01: Right. Right. Right. Because they have crop insurance now for people who have floods or natural disasters and that kind of thing. But I think that if you have someone who can show documentation that they've been testing this hemp like they're supposed

to, and because the thing is you can test it one week and it's .18 and the next week it's .35, you know, so you can be as diligent as you can be, unless you go out there and test it every day. And again, that's very costly and it usually takes a week to ten days to get the results back. So, while you're waiting on the results to come back, the levels are rising then, so...

Interviewer: Okay, well, wow! This has been a very eye opening, very thoughtful interview. And you have raised a lot of good points and hopefully the research will be able to make a difference in making some changes to the industry for that because that is a problem, and we want the industry to grow and thrive. So, alright, thank you very much. Now, I will stop the recording.

4-01: Alright.

End of recording.

#### **Interview with Participant 4-04**

The interview with Participant 4-04 took place on November 30, 2023. Participant 4-04 is a male part time hemp farmer from Georgia that is over the age of sixty-five. He holds a master's degree in theology. He has been a hemp farmer for the last four years. He has a family history of farming, as his grandfather purchased the land that he currently farms on more than seventy years ago. The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participant 4-04:

1. Lack of available financial assistance (banking, loans, grants)

2. Lack of government subsidies comparable to other crops

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. I'm here with participant 4-04. Alright. Okay. So, we'll roll right into these questions. Could you please state your age range?

4-04: Over the age of 65, Sir.

Interviewer: Okay, wonderful. And you are male.

4-04: I am.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your highest level of education?

4-04: A master's degree in theology

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Fantastic. And what is your annual household income?

4-04: I prefer not to talk about income.

Interviewer: Okay. No, not a problem at all. Alright. Are you currently a hemp farmer?

4-04: I am.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you a full time or part time hemp farmer?

4-04: We farm part time. We can only farm part time basically in Georgia because of the growing season and we don't have the resources to extend into inside farming.

Interviewer: Okay. How many years have you been involved in hemp farming?

4-04: We just completed our fourth year.

Interviewer: That's fantastic! Okay. And you said that you're involved in Georgia, correct?

4-04: Correct.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you involved in any community initiatives or community groups related to hemp farming or social equity?

4-04: No. We're independent.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you a first-generation farmer or do you have a family history of farming?

4-04: My father and my grandfather farmed. We've owned the same farm for as long as I've been alive, over seventy years, I guess.

Interviewer: Okay. That's wonderful! Yes. That's quite a family legacy. That's a beautiful thing. Okay. So, my next question is this. Have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

4-04: All the obstacles that we run into with the hemp industry is not being able to get financing to help us grow it. It's expensive to grow and there are no government loans. There are no government loans. Everything is basically dealing with finance.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry?

4-04: Well, my siblings and I decided to go into the industry because we weren't making any money. We were growing cotton and corn and we thought that hemp would be an industry that we could actually see a profit from. My father and my grandfather grew

cotton for, oh God, who knows how many years, and it seemed that we didn't break even and weren't able to pay the bills. So, he had to do the cattle business in order to subsidize the farming business so we could eat. So, just keeping the property for all of those years and paying the taxes, of course, as best we could, we've just been able to hold on and hope for a day when we could actually see something that we could do to maybe turn a profit. And we thought that the hemp industry would be the key to it.

Interviewer: Okay. So, as Black hemp farmers, in your experience, have you come across any hurdles or barriers within the hemp industry?

4-04: Well, the hurdles and the barriers. There are no resources for us. I don't know about the white farmers, but for the Black farmers, there are no resources. We can't get money to do anything in this industry and my family has come a long way. We have spent in excess of probably a quarter of a million to a half million dollars and just getting the industry up and going, getting out a little farm ready so that it grows hemp. And we haven't seen one penny back as it relates to trying to turn a profit. There's no such thing as profit so far and this year was a total loss, so....

Interviewer: Okay. So, my next question would be, we've talked about the difficulties in gaining resources such as capital for the industry and you have your own land, so you don't have to worry about that piece of it. But do you see any type of issue with education or a lack of education that is available for Black hemp farmers in the industry?

4-04: I don't think that there's a shortage of education and materials that are available. Those kinds of resources are now at your fingertips. We've learned how to grow the stuff

pretty easily and we've learned the different strengths. We've learned a lot about the industry over the four years that we've been in it and the education piece is now readily available, I think, and to us, the only thing that is not readily available is some money to make it happen.

Interviewer: Okay. So, in your opinion, which policies or regulations can you talk about? You know, we can delve into it more with what you've talked about in the way of finances and capital, but which policies within the hemp sector do you believe have the most impact on social justice issues in your opinion?

4-04: I don't know. I'm not really familiar with the government policies, but based on what the bankers are telling me, they have no regulations to loan money for hemp growers. So, that affects us in every way, socially, economically, the whole shooting match. So, that's where we are with that.

Interviewer: Okay. So, that leads me to the next question. What steps do you believe can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers in the hemp industry? So, getting into what we just spoke about with the capital and the finances, what are some things that can be done in order to improve that situation?

4-04: I think that they need to get some set asides. And in the farming business, with set asides, you pretty much have these guys that go out and plant corn and soybeans and all of this stuff, and each year there's a catastrophe that comes and destroys the whole thing. And then the government writes them a big fat check and they don't do anything other than go out and plow it over. So, that work is done when they planted, and they get paid

probably two to three times more than it's actually worth in the first place and they don't have to do a quarter of the work in the hemp industry. It's different. There are no set asides. There's no money for small Black farmers and it seems that it's always the same, regardless of what we do, we can't get ahead in any kind of way, even when it seems that we should. The playing field is uneven, and it seems that the big fish just eat the little fish and nobody's trying to do anything to help. But I think that governmental set asides are important. We can send money for bombs to two different countries to keep shooting. It seems to me that we ought to be able to grow some hemp in America as small farmers and turn a profit from it. That's my view of it.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Well, that concludes the interview. Thank you very much for your time this morning. And you've given some very insightful information that will be a great help to the study. So, thank you very much!

4-04: Yes, Sir. My pleasure, Sir.

End of recording.

#### **Interview with Participant 4-05**

The interview with Participant 4-05 took place on December 4, 2023. Participant 4-05 is a full time Black female hemp farmer from the state of Georgia. She is between the ages of fifty-five and sixty-four. She has been farming hemp for the past three years. She holds a master's degree. Although she is a first-generation farmer, her husband is a

seventh-generation farmer in the state of Georgia. The following themes emerged from this interview with Participant 4-05:

1. A lack of consistency and uniformity in policies between federal and state governments.
2. Exorbitant fees for licensing and fees (e.g., hemp grower, processor, and fees for testing potency).
3. Lack of comprehensive education provided to hemp growers.
4. Lack of available financial resources.
5. Lack of available policies to protect small farmers within the state from larger corporate farms from outside the state.

Interviewer: I am here with participant 4-05. Good afternoon. How are you?

4-05: Good. How are you?

Interviewer: I'm doing quite well. Thank you for coming. Alright. So, we'll roll right into the questions. Could you please state your age range?

4-05: 55-64

Interviewer: Okay. And you are a female.

4-05: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your highest level of education?

4-05: A master's degree.

Interviewer: Okay. And your household income?

4-05: I prefer not to disclose.

Interviewer: Okay. That's perfectly understandable. Alright. Are you currently a hemp farmer?

4-05: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you a full time or part time hemp farmer?

4-05: Full time.

Interviewer: Okay. That's wonderful. And how many years have you been involved in the hemp industry?

4-05: Three years.

Interviewer: Okay. And which state do you engage in hemp farming?

4-05: Georgia.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

4-05: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Could you please elaborate?

4-05: I have participated with the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus for Black farmers. So, I've attended a couple of those initiatives. We did a Black farmers tour earlier this year and continue to provide feedback to the legislators and representatives that participated in the black farm tour.

Interviewer: Okay. Fantastic. Are you a first-generation farmer or does your family have a history of farming?

4-05: Well, this is half and half. Our farm is family owned and operated, so the farm is on my husband's side of the family, and so he is a seventh-generation farmer.

Interviewer: Oh wow. Okay.

4-05: Yeah, but I'm definitely a first-generation farmer.

Interviewer: Okay. So, he kind of dragged you into it, huh? (laughter)

4-05: Yes. He definitely did. (laughter)

Interviewer: Okay, now. That's neat. Alright. So, tell me this. Have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

4-05: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Could you please elaborate?

4-05: So, my background is in regulatory compliance. So, I'm familiar with compliance regulations, but what I think, there are a couple of issues. One issue is last year, we had to destroy our crop. When I say last year, it's 2022, because we just finished this growing season. So, in 2022 we had to destroy half of our crop and that was very frustrating because the state level people were telling us one thing and then they were checking with the federal regulations from the USDA, and they were giving them different guidelines. So, I thought when they said OKAY, you're non-compliant and you have to destroy, you know, the crop that has gone hot, that it was no longer in compliance. They told us that we could just turn it over. They sent us instructions on options on how we needed to get rid of it and we chose to turn it over to make mulch out of it, but what they didn't tell us initially was that they had to be present to do it because that was not what was in the instructions that the state was going by. But on the federal level, they said no, you have to have someone onsite from their office to watch. So, what we found is often times, which is very frustrating, is the state and federal regulations do not line up. So, as a farmer, we're trying to figure out who has the final word or which regulations we were supposed to go by at that point. We were able to resolve the issue because we have been working

with them. We were able to kind of pivot and, you know, we sent them a video showing that we did it. But just think if we would not have or did not have a good relationship with our state, you know people who knew and had been out there to do the testing. So, they kind of saw what was going on with the farm. But you know it was so close that it could have cost us. We could have been sanctioned. We could have lost our license all because they were not on the same page. Now. That's just one incident, but yes, that was a big one.

Interviewer: Oh, that is a huge one. Feel free to tell me another one if you'd like.

4-05: Well, the other thing that we often, you know, like you said, the regulatory issues we were talking about, which is the regulatory burden that they put on us. Well, there is every year when you have to renew your license. You have to go back again and get the fingerprints and all of that done, you know, and that is costly. So, to have to keep going with that is costly. So, this year Georgia legislators tried to enact it where we could do it every three to five years. It did not pass and that would have been wonderful. It's just to take the financial burden off of having to go through.....not only the financial burden, but the time of having to go back every year to get fingerprinted and go through all that background checking.

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah. That is huge. You're definitely right about that. So, next question, why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry?

4-05: So, there again, I was dragged into it (laughter). So, we had the opportunity because one of our relatives introduced us to the hemp industry. He was participating in the states of Virginia and Kentucky. He told us that hemp was coming to Georgia and that it would be a good opportunity. We had the land that was not being used, so why not? So, we

thought, well why not? We did our research and thought this would be good, not only for the land, but it would also bring in some revenue. But the other part, the more we learned about it, the benefits; the medicinal benefits that it could offer and with me having a medical background, I thought this would be very good. I could see where it would be beneficial to people. But then as we got into it, it also hit on a personal level. And so just for us, my husband and I, we started using it because we saw that it could benefit us. So, we started out as doing it for the purpose of using the land, bringing in revenue and bring in revenue, then it was using it for ourselves and sharing it with others. So, they too can, you know, receive the benefits from it.

Interviewer: Okay. That's phenomenal. That's really phenomenal. Alright. So, we've touched on the regulatory side of it, as far as obstacles as a Black hemp farmer. Have you, in your experience, come across any hurdles or barriers within the hemp industry?

4-05: Yeah. So, I think what it is, is with there not being a lot of Black farmers, so I guess we had the good fortune of, you know, being in Georgia. It's a small group of us. There are about seven farmers, and we formed a coalition that we participate in, but everyone doesn't have that. But what happened is our first year we grew was 2020. We purchased our clones from this company who's no longer in business and shortly after we purchased the clones, they went out of business. So, then we were left with no guidance. This was our first year and we didn't know anything about this. We didn't have a plan. So, now we have one. The original thing we thought after we got through growing was that we would return back to this company for processing and that didn't happen, but we were able to connect with the coalition and we were to process, basically under their agreement with

the processor. But the hurdle with Black farmers in Georgia is, especially I say that there is no available processing. The lack of processors is a problem. There is a lot lacking here. So, when you're trying to control your operation, and vertically integrate, you know, our whole process, the goal is to maintain quality. When you don't have resources to do it, it makes it very difficult. So, when you're looking for a processor, you have to find one because you can't process your own because in Georgia, it costs a lot of money to get a processor's license. It used to be \$50,000 the first year, but now it's \$25,000. So, now in the state of Georgia, there is only one processor, and that's in Southwest Georgia. We live in (redacted) Georgia, so that's a hurdle for us because we have to take it to the processor, which is about a four-hour drive from our farm. So, it's totally inconvenient, you know, by them having the processor license so high. As a result of that licensure fee, small farmers, even in a group like ours, would be very financially challenged in paying that \$25,000 fee. So, yeah, if they were willing to reduce the cost of the license, then maybe we would be able to go in together and, you know, pay for a license. But the way it is now, no, it's not something that can be done.

Interviewer: Okay. So that leads me to my next question, and it's kind of redundant, but it really fits into what you just talked about. Have you experienced any difficulties in gaining access to resources such as land, capital, or education in participating in hemp farming and in the hemp industry that you believe are a result of social justice imbalances within the hemp industry?

4-05: I think that the resources that we're looking for would be the education part and more on the marketing part. When I say education, you know, it was how do we take this product that we have and make it marketable, you know, put it in stores. The reason that I say it's a hurdle for social justice is because you have these big companies that have come to Georgia with resources and connections and we're not able to get into that arena as small farmers. So, you know that it is totally not a level playing field when you have people that can come in and, especially from states like Florida, and these are multi-million dollar companies and you're competing with the farmer who, you know, probably does good in the year to do \$30,000 worth of sales. So, it's not, you know, it's not a way to get into the market. So, if there was a way for them to, you know, to educate, and not so much even the capital, but to have a pipeline or connection maybe where if you're coming into the state of Georgia and you're going to be selling here, that you have to buy from a local farmer.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. So, that leads me to my next question, which sort of ties into what you were just alluding to. In your opinion, which specific policies or regulations within the U.S. Hemp Sector, do you believe have the most impact on social justice issues? And it can be the hemp sector, as far as the United States, and then it can also be specific to the state of Georgia.

4-05: Okay. You're right. Going back to what I said, if you look at other sectors and how they operate, if you're going to do business in that particular state, then you have to have a minority partner or partnership or know a supplier or something, in order to get, you know, the contractor and get the bid. So, that's something that I think the hemp industry lacks that would be very good for all farmers, not just Black farmers, but all farmers like

you said. That's equity for everyone, so when you are a large company and you're coming onto a state with local farmers there, there should be some type of requirement for participation with a supplier from that state. They should have to go to those local farmers first, and then once a quote is met, then they can go back to a different state or go back to the state that they're headquartered in. But as long as they are allowed to come into a state and bring their own products, then the smaller farmer is never going to be able to compete. It blocks us out.

Interviewer: Okay. And I tell you, this is a wonderful conversation that actually leads me to my next question. You touched on that participation aspect, so what other steps can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers in the hemp industry?

4-05: We have to see that there is an end result if we're going to grow. You have to, you know, as a farmer from what I'm learning. With anything in life, you kind of have to see an end result. So, if I start this, then what's going to be the end result? Because no one starts something without having an end game. Well, let me say that most people don't. You have to have an end result in mind. So, as a farmer, what would be my motivation to start and grow this product and invest time and money and effort if I don't see where I'm going to get paid, where I'm going to receive, you know, at least some financial reward for my hard work. So, you say why? Then you know what can be done to get more people interested. They have to see that there is an end game that's going to help them, what's going to help their farm, and help their family. So, yeah, you have to make sure that you're able to say this. If you do this, then this is what's going to happen and how it benefits you.

Interviewer: Okay. And so, from a policy standpoint, how do you believe that this can be facilitated?

4-05: Definitely, like I said, going back to install policies, and this comes from the legislators on down. Just saying that we're going to look out for our small farmers, our Black farmers that, you know, you have a seat at the table. That's what we're fighting for. You know, with everything that we have discussed, the most important thing is that we have a seat at the table, so that policies aren't made without talking to us. You have the big commercial farmers and then you have hemp. But how about the small farmers like us, like you know, three years in the game? We're new in the hemp farming world. But we still have a voice. We're still, you know, boots on the ground. So, to do that, you have to allow us to have a seat at the table.

Interviewer: Okay. And the last question, and it kind of feeds into what we were just talking about. From your perspective, how have government policies or regulations affected your ability to succeed as a Black hemp farmer in the U.S.?

4-05: The policies have not worked well for us and the hemp farmer because, like I said before, regulations and policies are not made for us and there is nothing in place for them to hear our voices. So, it's coming from a different perspective. It's coming from lobbyists, which are the large groups, but we don't have a lobbyist. We don't have a group, you know, so there's not a way for them to reach out and say come to the table because we want to hear what you have to say, not just during election time. Then, it's a struggle for us to try to not even compete, but for us just to carve out our own niche because you know, we can't compete with the big companies. So, in other words, not

having a seat at the table to initiate and review policies that affect us, what has had an effect on us as far as being able to succeed. Those policies are not made with us in mind. Those policies are not made with the small farmer in mind.

Interviewer: Okay. And we'll leave it right there. This has been a wonderful interview, very eye opening, very insightful, and you have presented a lot of wonderful information that I think will positively impact the hemp industry going forward, especially where Black farmers and small farmers of all ethnicities and races are concerned. So, thank you very much for your time.

4-05: You're welcome.

End of recording.

### **Interview with Participant 16-02**

The interview with Participant 16-02 took place on December 4, 2023. Participant 16-02 is a part time Black female hemp farmer from Tennessee. She is between the ages of fifty-five and sixty-four. She has a bachelor's degree. She has been farming hemp in Tennessee since 2017. She is the first person in her family to farm since the abolition of slavery in the United States in the early 1860's. The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participant 16-02:

6. Lack of timely assistance from government agencies.
7. Lack of education for existing farmers and potential hemp farmers.
8. Lack of available or allocated funding for Black hemp farmers.

9. Lack of comprehensive or inclusive policies in the hemp industry at the federal and state levels.
10. Lack of policies that differentiate hemp cultivation for flower vs. fiber.

Interviewer: I'm here with participant 16-02. How are you doing today?

16-02: I'm doing fantastic for a Monday (laughter).

Interviewer: Understandable. Alright. We're going to roll right into the questions. Okay.

So, question number one. Please state your age. What is your age range?

16-02: My age range is 55-64.

Interviewer: Alright. And your gender?

16-02: I'm female.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your highest level of education attained?

16-02: College.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your household income?

16-02: Oh, I prefer not to talk about my income.

Interviewer: That is completely understandable. Are you currently a hemp farmer?

16-02: Yes, but not this time of year. Normally, I would be growing hemp in the season of hemp.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you're part time.

16-02: Yes. That's right.

Interviewer: Okay. Wonderful. How many years have you been involved in growing hemp?

16-02: Oh, let's see. Since 2017. So, quite a few years now.

Interviewer: Okay. And which state do you farm in?

16-02: Tennessee

Interviewer: Okay. And are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity? So, any type of organizations that you are involved in or any type of things that do.

16-02: I would say that actively, no, but I do get asked to assist with grants at TSU when they have them, you know, to be part of a grant if they are trying to get on a grant or whatever. But no, not me personally.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you a first-generation farmer or does your family have a history of farming?

16-02: Family. The only history of farming that I found was on the, you know, the manifests in slavery times. I saw farmers on there. But as far as actively farming, I would say no. I'm the first person that has gone back to the land since the 1800s. Okay. Yes. I'm the first generation, I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's fantastic. Alright. So, have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

16-02: I have encountered no legal obstacles with hemp, but I have had obstacles just being a farmer in general. Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, can you speak on those issues that impact you as a farmer in general?

16-02: My primary focus is livestock, so I'm a poultry farmer and the hemp is on this behind me, you know, so I have had many issues with my Farm Service Agency. They have never walked this farm. I was told that I was ineligible for all of these programs, and I found out later that I was eligible. I have yet to get some of the basic equipment or things that come with being a farmer that is under the USDA. I am absolutely astounded at how dysfunctional it is, especially once I heard about the lawsuits that occurred prior to me being on the land. I thought that once I heard that they had been sued and they were trying to, you know, be more diligent, but they still have many issues at the office level, especially at the local office level.

Interviewer: Okay. So, why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry?

16-02: Well, for me, I didn't go into the hemp industry like most folks, who thought it was going to be this instant rich man or rich woman's kind of thing. And so they were into the CBD. I never wanted to do that. I was involved because I wanted to be with the fiber and the making of products that were going to be useful, either clothing, you know, for homeless people, or with shoes, or building materials. You know, I could always use

it to feed my flock if I needed to. So, I wasn't thinking about distilling and selling it as part of the segue to, you know, a regular marijuana kind of thing. I thought that we weren't ready, but eventually I said that they would probably get to that. We already have marijuana in some parts of this country. I wanted to grow hemp for more tangible reasons because I always think about homelessness and hunger and things like that. I thought like that wasn't they already were going to get eventually I said they'll probably get to that. So, you know how do we manage that? What can I do to manage that? So, that's what I was in it for.

Interviewer: Okay. And as a Black hemp farmer, have you, in your experience, come across any hurdles or barriers within the industry?

16-02: I feel like there's just barriers to being a Black farmer, whether you're hemp or not. I would say that, as a hemp person, it seems that there's just blocks overall when I'm in a room full of people that are farming hemp. It generally isn't always, you know, Black people within the hemp industry because a lot of people that went into the hemp farming transitioned from tobacco and, you know, it kind of went from that history because the majority of those were white farmers. I think the white farmers, as always, unfortunately, tend to be given much more room to do whatever it is they want to do, whether it be livestock, whether it be a crop, or whether it be whatever. I just feel like there's much more economics and push and resources.

Interviewer: Okay. That's a very important point, which actually is a segue to my next question. Have you experienced any difficulties in gaining access to resources such as

land, capital, or education that you believe results from a social equity imbalance within the hemp industry?

16-02: I feel like I already had this property, so maybe not from a land standpoint, but I feel like resources as far as finances, equipment, anything that has to do with you going through these programs, whether it be the NRCS or to me, all of those things they tell you are there for you, but you find out that it's not gonna be as easy as what they say. The USDA websites are horrendous. If you're not able to be a tech person or even get through that, I think it seems to me that you'd do better if you're with a cooperative, probably organizations, that have already fought the fight and you join them, right? I think, to me, that's probably for Black people for sure. I've been asked to be in cooperatives, and I see why this is historical for them where they have basically helped the farmers that have come before me. They already had been involved with the inequities and all of that. So, they realized they had to put together these cooperatives to get what they needed. I, on the other hand, came in green and naïve and just thought, never even thought that there'd be a problem and found that there was a problem and that problem had always existed. So, I would have to say in the beginning I was like, I don't need to join a cooperative. I can speak for myself very well, but I see the reason that they have cooperatives because they had to have the massive support systems, and you know, kind of coalesce themselves to get what they needed and still have trouble, even with that.

Interviewer: Okay. So, in other words, there is strength in numbers as far as making your voice heard collectively versus having your voice heard as an individual.

16-02: Yes. And I think also when you have historical experiences. I'm considered a new farmer, according to the USDA, right under ten years. And I believe that being new does make a difference because you don't really know all of what's going on unless you're networking with another farmer who historically knows what the system is, does or doesn't do. I'm not a generational farmer where you have legacies of people in our family that own land. Yes, I know quite a few. I hear that all the time. You know, their father was a farmer and they're living on family farmland or whatever. I didn't have any of those things to help me. Mine was all trial and error learning the hard way, but never thinking that I would have to have that connection. Why is it that there has to have been a farmer in my family? I mean, what difference does that make? But I believe it sort of makes a difference. I think it does because at least you would have the experience of what it is to understand what the biases are, right?

Interviewer: Okay. So, leading into those biases and from a policy standpoint, which specific policies or regulations within the U.S. hemp sector do you believe have the most impact on social equity issues, in your opinion, on a positive or negative standpoint? It can be positive or negative because the follow-up question would be what things do you believe could be done to change it or make it better?

16-02: I think that first of all, there's probably even today still some sort of misinformation about hemp. We know that it's a form of cannabis and we do have states that have medical marijuana and we've, you know, already crossed that bridge, and are fully vested in making money and the dispensaries and all of those things. So, I think that you know, but I still think there's a stigma with all of it for certain generations, certain

people, and whether you say it's hemp, whether I tell somebody it's hemp and I'm doing fiber, which obviously I'm not even trying to do CBD. So, it's still like oh! Then this pause comes in. So, I think that it seems to me that unfortunately, we haven't grown well enough to see the benefits of hemp and the benefits of hemp that were used historically for products as opposed to just the CBD side of it. So, education is probably key. I live in Tennessee. I don't want to say this about the South, but you know, we're just going to talk semantics, true truisms. The South is much more regulated down with the stigmas of things that they feel they're not as, maybe progressive, and they're thinking about what something could do, what could happen for it may still be considered to them a drug, even though it's taking over now. But you know, I still feel like there's that stigma that maybe causing policy not to move forward. You should be able to be progressive and still get things moved forward. But this area is not known for that in a general sense. So, I think that's policy. It's going to be tough. I don't know if Tennessee is ever going to, well, I won't say ever because it's, you know, it's just going to be consistently a fight.

Interviewer: Okay. So, we talked about what some of the issues are as far as with the state and really the federal aspect of it, too. So, the next question would be what are some steps that can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers in the hemp industry? And then also, from a policy standpoint, what are some of the policies that you believe need to be changed to facilitate that increase in participation?

16-02: Well, it seems again that we do better or it seems that we do better through a collective because of the history and them understanding what that means. You know, again, I don't have that history and I'm not a group person. When I fight, I fight the fight,

you know. I don't try to amass a bunch of people. I'm just going to fight you how I'm going to fight you, okay? But I can see that it's something that is probably still necessary in where you have the group participants. I would say we need to remove people. I've said this before, but there are people that need to be removed. They just need to lose their jobs. I mean, if we're going to do a policy, there needs to be an overall relook and revamp of what goes on at these government installations. And I don't really care about what ethnic group you come from. If you're not doing your job, you're not doing your job, and I think the whole setup of the system for farmers is riddled with issues and certainly hemp, okay? Because hemp still has that stigma on it. So, I would say that, policy wise, maybe we need to know there needs to be a revamp of their structure on hiring, firing, accountability of when they're working with farmers. And then we have the big thing that always comes into play, which is the farm bill that comes out every four years or whatever. And you know, I'm generally involved with a farm bill like, I'm in a group that they deal with for the farm bill, you know, prior to it coming out, you know, and legislation and all of that. And I just don't think a lot of us feel like we're going to get anywhere. So, there's a lack of participation regarding the Farm Bill. There's a sort of apathy. So, what's in the Farm Bill supposedly under this administration? There's more, you know, in the Farm Bill and agricultural advocacy under this administration, but of course there are people that would feel that there was advocacy under the last administration because of just the nature of farmers tending to be more conservative, you know. So, you know, I really don't have an answer except for that. I feel that we definitely are not. Agriculture in general is certainly not open. There's a whole lot that needs to be done and now we've swung the other way. I'm not against them, but I'm not

all for it. Urban agriculture, to me, is another trend because we trend a lot in this country. So, the policies are going to start going to the trend of urban agriculture, and that's fine. You know some people would say no matter what, whenever we're growing hemp, wherever we're growing hemp, it's okay. It's wonderful. But I still feel like what happened to the people that have been in the trenches, back in the field? And now you want to put all these monies in an urban agricultural place. And what happens to the people that have really stayed the course or tried their best to survive prior to urban agriculture trending? So, I guess I've said enough on what you're saying.

Interviewer: So, to be clear, what you're saying is that one thing that needs to be done, from a policy standpoint, is to provide equal access to financing and monies from the federal government that enable existing Black hemp farmers prior to the switch to the urban agriculture trend.....

16-02: Because we're doing the urban on all fronts, you know, that's the push. What happened to the people that are still out there on the traditional farm doing their thing? You know, they still need the support and the finances, and the policies should not just exclude them. We should not line item everything out and then change it to urban farming. That's what I'm saying.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Fantastic. And last question. From your perspective, how have government policies or regulations affected your ability as a Black hemp farmer in the United States?

16-02: You know, I don't know if I were going to say policy per se. I don't know if it's policy as much as I feel that there needs to be an overall relook or launch on existing

policies. If you're going to say that there's monies out there for a new farmer, an ethnic farmer, a woman farmer, a veteran, then is that happening? I would say no. It is happening maybe for the veterans because that's another place where, to me, that's where we're comfortable. So, we skipped over it. So, policy wise, you have this great thing called finances or monies or programs or whatever, but we pick and choose. I think where we're putting those monies and time and efforts and if we're going to continue to do that then we're not getting anywhere now. Me, personally, I'm still a push person and if I have to do the big bark, then I'll do the big bark, you know, but not everybody can do that, and nobody rolls like that. And so, you shouldn't have to. What I feel is you just shouldn't have to, you know. It should be understood. It's another thing too, policy wise. If we want to do something with policy, can we do something that makes the idea that you want to be a farmer and if you want to be a hemp farmer, you should be able to do that and know that you can make a living if you want. You should be able to make a living. If you have to still have another job, or your spouse has to be the carrier or your partner and you've got to have insurance and you've got whatever, and you literally cannot make a living as an agricultural operation, that's a problem because the support is not there on a federal level, state level, or whatever. That's the problem.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, with that, I want to thank you very much for your time. Your insight has been impeccable, and you have brought a lot of issues to the forefront of that. Hopefully, we will be addressed in the way of policy and social equity for everyone and then things will be made better for Black farmers, as well as Black hemp farmers, and

small farms as well. Because I think that small farms are getting the short end of the stick.

16-02: Absolutely. What I would say is what someone said to me some years ago when I said that I was a small farmer and he asked me how long you going to be a small farmer? And then I went, boom! Because literally you're supposed to graduate. If you're a small farm five years ago, then by year five or three or whatever, you should be kind of a medium farm because there's been some things happening where you're growing your operation. At that point you can maybe leave that full-time job and be down to maybe, you know, instead of forty hours a week, you can say hey, Mr. Employer, I can work twenty hours or thirty or whatever. Or you can do something else and it's paying some bills and then you know what you should do. Are you still a small farm after thirty years? That's where you shouldn't be a small farmer for thirty years because you should be able to grow in that industry that you've chosen and be able to employ more people and be, you know, that growth should be happening and I'm not sure it's happening for people of color. I think we are small, and we keep saying we're small and ten years from now, if you were to do this, you're going to, the people are probably going to say they are still a small farm. I'm a small farmer and after ten years, what? No. There's supposed to be growth, right? And equity in you becoming solvent, as a farmer. So, once he said that, it hit me that I was not thinking of it because I was just happy to be a farmer coming from an inner city and being my first, you know, on the land and I never thought that would happen. But then, you know, when I talk to you later, do you want to be considered a small farm? Are you successful then? Are you, no, are we? And so that's something we

need to address. There needs to be a graduation. Small, medium, you know, sort of medium, step, step, step, step, so that literally you can see that in your income. You can see it in your wealth for your family. You can see it in the community. You can, you can, you can. You are empowered by the fact that you are this agricultural operation, okay? And you end up leaving it, right? Or you end up having to make a decision to leave it, well, and that leads me to an important question and that question is going back to policies.

Interviewer: From the standpoint of policies, what are some things that the government can do to initiate policies to, so to speak, provide opportunities for small farms and for black-owned, minority owned farms, particularly hemp, to be able to graduate and to grow whereas there's been stagnation in the area of growth?

16-02: Well, I think then if we're going to say policy, then there needs to be somewhere where there's access to land, more land. You need to be able to have access to seeds and you know, what that means to have seeds, you need to have some educational programs that are geared toward, like you have for soybeans or whatever. You need to have some place where you can go and classes that teach you about the basics of it. You need to have mentoring so that you know that it's in some of these, maybe government agencies. You know, I don't know where they need to be able to facilitate these educational programs, so that you can, you know, I've gotten to this level so how do I grow this crop, as a farmer, because you know, if you don't have guidance, you literally end up floundering unless you are under some kind of university-based extension program. Even the extension, oh my goodness, they don't always do what they need to do. So, I would

say the policy is that they would have to say that hemp is an important product, commodity in this country, and that it's necessary for X, Y, Z. And when they do the commodities like they do other things, then to me, that would lend itself and trickle down to it being part of conversations. You know, how it feeds, you know. I don't know whatever it does, you know, but I do know that's not happening. So, if we're going to say that it's just not happening, we have to look at what we can do to fix it. But if we took it to that level, then maybe the farmers could grow it. They would feel like I'm a small farmer here, but then I went to here and I'm being mentored and my state is given a grant or whatever for me to do this and they don't, you know, and all that's constantly happening for them to expand their operation, I think. I just don't think that there is a whole lot for farmers to do that, certainly I don't think it exists for hemp. I think hemp has to be made important in policy. It's going to be bought up in policy what it can do, what benefits it has, and then if it's, you know, if it's brought to that, to the attention of, I don't know, lawmakers, I don't want to say lawmakers, but basically the community, then I think maybe we could get it on the books for the lawmakers. I don't know. It's hard. It's hard because America's kind of a twisted system when you're trying to get things done. But you certainly shouldn't be a small farmer for ten years in hemp or anything.

Interviewer: Okay. We'll leave it right there. Thank you very much for your insight and the information that you have provided.

16-02: Thank you.

End of recording.

### **Interview with Participant 4-06**

The interview with Participant 4-06 took place on December 6, 2023. Participant 4-06 is a Black male hemp farmer from Georgia between the ages of fifty-five and sixty-four. He is a retired Veteran of the United States Armed Forces. He holds a master's degree. He has been a hemp farmer for two years. His family has an extensive history in farming, as his farmland has been in his family since the 1830's. The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participant 4-06:

5. Lack of funding and access to the markets.
6. Lack of education from government and land grant institutions (HBCUs).
7. Expensive fees for licensure (e.g., processor license)
8. Lack of continuity in policies between federal and state agencies (e.g., USDA and state departments of agriculture).

Interviewer: I'm here with participant 4-06. How are you today, Sir?

4-06: I'm doing wonderful. How about yourself?

Interviewer: I'm doing quite well. Thank you for asking. Alright, we will go right into the questions. So, the first question, could you please state your age range?

4-06: 55-64.

Interviewer: Okay. Yes sir. Alright. And your gender?

4-06: Male.

Interviewer: Yes. Okay. What is your highest level of education?

4-06: Master's Degree.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. And what is your annual household income?

4-06: I prefer not to say.

Interviewer: Okay. That's quite understandable. Okay. Are you currently a hemp farmer?

4-06: Yes, I am.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you full-time or part-time?

4-06: Part time.

Interviewer: Okay. And how many years have you been involved in hemp farming?

4-06: Two.

Interviewer: Okay. Two years. Alright. And which state do you engage in hemp farming?

4-06: The State of Georgia.

Interviewer: Alright. Are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

4-06: No. Not at this time. We're not.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you a first-generation farmer or does your family have a history of farming?

4-06: I am a fourth-generation farmer.

Interviewer: Okay. Fourth generation. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

4-06: My great great granddad (redacted) acquired the farm back in the early 1800s. Our estimates were around the 1830s or so. Then my granddad farmed the property all of his life and then my dad did the same until around 1985, well in the early 1980s, when farming became no longer popular or profitable, especially for the smaller farm. This happened to the smaller farms and most of the black farms in our area, small family-owned farms, we couldn't compete. And about that time, my dad just kind of quit farming and then just maintained a group of cows and that sort of thing, and then he retired. And then, I did twenty-six years in the military. I retired too, and then I just kind of stepped back into it and just to do it and basically keep it going. That was my intent. And then the hemp thing came along, and it's specialized and it's an opportunity to make some capital to reinvest into the farm to bring it up to standard and maintain it like it should have been all these years, but we just didn't have the funding to do that.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, first of all, thank you for your service. And second of all, thank you for continuing your family's legacy of farming. The 1830s is a long time and so many Black farmers have lost their land over the years and it's really an honor and a privilege to be able to interview you and to talk about your family's legacy in farming.

So, thank you very much for that. So, the next question. Have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

4-06: In growing it? No. I mean there are some administrative things that can be done better to make the process a little easier; the process of obtaining a license and, other than that, that's about it, and then I think we're going to get into access to the markets after a while. But right now, that's in order to put a plant or seed in the ground and grow a plant. There are none that I have experienced. Maybe some of the other Black farmers have.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you went into a little bit of why you decided to participate in the hemp industry. Could you go a little bit deeper into that?

4-06: Yes. When I started, well when I went back to start reviving the farm, that's when I started hearing about hemp and that it was going to be legalized in the state. I saw it immediately as an opportunity. So, I did all the research and when the licensing opened up, I started applying for the license, which was very convoluted. I mean, the system that they're using in the state is just.....it's not very intuitive and so there are a lot of kickbacks. And so that was the only thing that I encountered or had a problem with. A lot of other farmers may have more problems, I'm not sure, but for me, farming just kind of comes naturally. I didn't have any real problems. It was a learning experience, a huge learning experience. I got a lot of lessons to learn and stuff that I can share, but that's kind of down the road. I'd like to try and plug into Black educational institutions, especially to research the agriculture part of it, which (redacted) is my alma mater. It is an 1895 land grant institution. It's an HBCU and the executive agent for hemp research in

the state of Georgia. But there are some issues that, you know, from the educational side of the house that are weighing in to try and provide some assistance.

Interviewer: Well, and we definitely want to touch on that aspect within the confines of the interview because I'm interested in hearing about that. As a Black hemp farmer, have you, in your experience, come across any hurdles or barriers within the hemp industry? And I know that question is somewhat redundant, but feel free to speak on anything you now as far as, even from the licensing standpoint, anything that you feel might be an issue, maybe not for yourself, but that could potentially present an issue for someone else that may not be as well versed in how to do things as you.

4-06: One of the issues is, I guess, market access. Is that something you want me to go into right now and then well, being able to grow?

Interviewer: Yes, please.

4-06: I personally have not experienced this, but these are some of the things that I've heard from some of the other Black farmers that are in the hemp business. The fees associated with getting a license. The inspection and oversight that's performed where they come out and do the testing. They take the samples to make sure you don't exceed the maximum allowed limit under the law and it's some pretty hefty fees. And while for me, I mean, I'm blessed. While it's not a big deal for me, I'm pretty sure there are some other farmers out there that, you know, really takes a lot of their pockets. It's a high cost for them, right?

Interviewer: Okay. Next question.

4-06: We're kind of focusing on growing, let me.... I think I can talk a little bit about processing and then access to the markets.

Interviewer: Yes. Absolutely. Just the whole gambit, the whole gambit of the hemp industry that may present a problem, and I'm sorry if I didn't make that clear in the beginning. Buy yeah, just the whole gambit, you know, as a hemp farmer, because not only from the cultivation side, but all sides of it that may present an issue.

4-06: And so, one of the things right off the bat is there's no assistance provided by the USDA to, you know, any loan or anything like that. They're very specific. When you request a loan, you kind of have to put all that information in there. It doesn't affect me because, you know, I haven't had to apply for a loan or anything, but that's one of the things I've heard from some of the fellow farmers and then the processing. Now I've heard, I don't know this for a fact, you know second and third information, that money was allocated, or money was given to certain people in the state to sort of set up these processing facilities. They, I don't know, I was just told that somebody got pretty close to three quarters of a million dollars to set up this processor in the state, and then now we have to come and take our product to have it processed and we're at their mercy in terms of the processing fees. There's a barrier to entry to, as far as building a processing facility, because that's something that we intend to do down the road. But the fee for that, the initial fee and then the annual fee, are pretty steep, which a lot of, I mean I can get by. It's doable for me, but a lot of the smaller farmers or Black farmers just, you know, it's a barrier to entry for them.

Interviewer: Yeah.

4-06: As far as marketing, I mean, I guess it's straight forward, like every other market. I mean, I know the competition is here, but as far as gaining access to the market, I don't have any barriers other than it's pretty expensive. It's what we intend to do, only to put our products online. At one point in time, the oil itself was very profitable. But what a lot of people started doing is they started buying, say \$10,000 in gallons of CBD concentrate and turning it into a \$50,000, \$60,000, or \$70,000 profit. So, at one point in time when the growers hit that brick wall because we were anticipating just making a sizable profit alone and growing, but that's no longer the case, and then the people that were buying the concentrate and having it processed were the ones who had already set up processing facilities and that sort of thing. I kind of get the feeling that we were just kind of, from my perspective, just kind of behind the power curve. It seems like, I don't know, seems like behind the scenes, a lot of people have been doing a lot of things for some reason, I mean, I didn't get the memos on those kinds of things. Maybe they existed, but it's like man, I'm behind the power curve.

Interviewer: Okay. So, that would be a lack of information disseminated. Okay. Alright. That actually leads into the next question about gaining access to resources, land, capital, and education. Now, you've spoken about the capital. Could you speak more to the education?

4-06: Educationally, yes. I have this thing about farmers and farming. I mean, it's hard to describe. It's just part of you, you know. It's something you enjoy doing. It's a lot of hard work and it's just not for everybody. So, growing was kind of natural for me. Now, I know a lot of farms are trying to revive their farms by growing hemp, but they're not

necessarily farmers, you know, and I'm not casting any disparity on them. They're trying to build some capital here and I don't blame them. I guess I'm trying to build some capital, too, but I enjoy doing this. It's kind of second nature for me. So, a lot of things, a lot of challenges like pesticides, pests, soil that the nematodes exist in the soil. They're basically soil based, pass all those kinds of things kind of came natural for me, but a bunch of others kind of struggle with that. So, I think there is a lot that can be done, maybe needs to be done on the research side of the house, so that information can be passed on to the Black farmers. I mean, that's the intent. That's what Fort Valley State does. I mean, they've been doing research for years since it was established, but the new hemp thing, you know, it's new to everybody. I mean, I learned a lot of stuff. I thought there were certain ways to grow, and I had to change my philosophy a little bit. I don't think all that information is out there generically speaking and what are the typical pests, and a lot of things that may not necessarily be second nature to a lot of people, but that's an area that's kind of where I'm trying to plug into to help down the road to disseminate that information because, I mean, that's why they were established as a land grant institution. It was something else that crossed my mind, but it slipped my mind there for a minute. So, yeah. That's the research part of that and then disseminating an example is which varieties grow better in certain regions of the state. That's just one example because if you don't know any better, you'll go out and you'll buy a specific strand of hemp and it may not be conducive to growing in that type of environment, soil type, rain, moisture, how much sunshine, etc.

Interviewer: Okay. So, the last two questions, I can actually roll it into one question, and we've already touched on it. So, what specific policies or regulations do you believe have the most impact on social equity and then how can those be changed to increase the participation among Black farmers?

4-06: I guess the first one is going to be money, funds, access to funds to actually do this. I grew, so far my first crop, second crop, too. Everything came out of my pocket, and everybody just can't do that. And if I didn't have that, I would be okay. Access to funds alone and change the policy. Right now, the USDA does not support hemp like they should. They need to change that practice and I think that would help everyone across the board. That's probably the biggest one.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Well, it's been a pleasure interviewing you today and thank you very much for everything that you're doing.

4-06: That's it (laughter)?

Interviewer: Yep. That's it (laughter). And once again, thank you for your service.

End of recording.

### **Interview with Participant 4-03**

The interview with Participant 4-03 took place on December 6, 2023. Participant 4-03 is a Black female part time hemp farmer in Georgia. She is between the ages of forty-five and fifty-four. She holds a master's degree in management. She has been farming hemp since 2019. She has an extensive family history of farming, as her family

has been farming for five generations since the abolition of slavery in the early 1860's.

The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participant 4-03:

1. Difficulty in finding stable hemp genetics (e.g., issues with THC potency).
2. Inequities in fees (e.g., processing licensure and testing)
3. Lack of continuity in federal and state hemp regulations (e.g., regulations for processing hemp).
4. Lack of education offered to Black Hemp Farmers.

Interviewer: Alright. I am here with participant 4-03. How are you doing today?

4-03: Oh, how are you? I'm doing quite well, thank you.

Interviewer: Good to see you here today. Alright. We'll roll right into the questions.

Question number one, could you please state your age range?

4-03: I'm not sure what the age ranges are, but I'm over 45.

Interviewer: Okay. So, 45-54. Okay. Alright. And your gender?

4-03: Female.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your highest level of education?

4-03: I have a master's degree in management.

Interviewer: Okay. Perfect. Thank you. Alright. And the next question. What is your household income?

4-03: I would prefer not to answer.

Interviewer: Okay. Understandable. Alright. So, next question. Are you currently a hemp farmer?

4-03: Yes, I am.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you full-time or part-time?

4-03: Part time.

Interviewer: Alright. How many years have you been involved in hemp farming?

4-03: Since 2019. So, four years.

Interviewer: Okay. Four years. In which state do you farm?

4-03: Georgia.

Interviewer: Okay. So, are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

4-03: Well, I am involved in an organization called (redacted). We are a group of hemp farmers that is trying to work with various legislation and the community, as far as with hemp, either education or legislation.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. That's fantastic. Alright. So, the next question, are you a first-generation farmer or do you have a family history of farming?

4-03: I am a fifth-generation farmer.

Interviewer: Okay. Wonderful. Could you tell me about that?

4-03: Yes. From the research that I've done and, as far as my family history, my great great grandfather was a farmer. Well, he was actually a sharecropper right after

slavery. And then one of his sons, my great great grandfather. I'm not sure of the number. Either way, in each generation, at least one or two of the siblings in that generation were farmers. And down the line, my grandfather farmed. My father is a farmer, and I'm currently farming, as well.

Interviewer: Okay. That's great. That's quite a lineage, quite a family legacy in farming. Alright. So, next question. Have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

4-03: The obstacles? I haven't personally had any as far as applying for my license to grow, but I'm not sure. I haven't had any difficulties as far as obtaining a license. There have been difficulties. I'm not sure if this would count as far as finding the correct plant or finding plant seeds that are in our area. Is that what you're talking about?

Interviewer: Yes. Please elaborate.

4-03: Also, as far as any difficulties in growing, well that definitely counts because in order to get your clones or your seeds they still have to fall within a certain legal or regulatory guideline. That, and I guess, maybe the price of testing. Those are pretty much the main issues that we've run into as far as, I guess, growing the crop for production and afterward. As far as processing being an issue here in Georgia, and also, I would say marketing, but I think that would be more on our end, as far as being able to get more information out or as far as our products out to the public.

Interviewer: Okay. So, next question. Why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry?

4-03: I decided first because I've heard a lot, as far as a lot of the medicinal properties and the qualities, as far as the good qualities. It also had qualities as being able to use it as fiber and you can basically use the entire plant, from food to building materials, even clothing. So, because the plant is so versatile, I wanted to have a part in working with it or growing it to start various different areas of the hemp industry. Like I said, as far as more products, more production, and processing. That processing issue would be an issue, as far as Georgia is concerned, because of the processing license, but I got in initially to work with the plant and to be able to grow it, as well as show people the different properties or the different uses of hemp.

Interviewer: Okay. So, that leads me to my next question, and it's kind of a spin-off of what you just talked about. So, as a Black hemp farmer, have you, in your experience, ever come across any hurdles or barriers within the hemp industry? One thing that you just mentioned was the license and the processing side of it. Do you want to go into more detail about that?

4-03: Yes. As far as the processing licensing, I believe this year it is at \$25,000 a year. Previously, it was, I believe, \$50,000 a year, but the cost per year is not really conducive to a lot of black farmers being able to actually process their hemp that they use or the hemp that they grow, and in doing that, we have to subcontract out processing. We have to pay extra for that. So, if we were able to process it ourselves possibly in smaller batches or even in larger batches, but the license itself is an issue because putting out \$25,000 a year on top of buying the equipment and a facility to do the processing, that's a

lot for individual farmers or even smaller black farmers to be able to come up with that kind of money or be able to actually do it.

Interviewer: Alright. So my question was, you had just touched on some of these issues dealing with the regulations, as far as your experience and as far as processing is concerned, in the way of barriers or hurdles within the hemp industry that black hemp farmers might face, would you care to elaborate on that?

4-03: Yes. As far as the processing is concerned, once the crop is complete or once the crop is harvested, it needs to be processed. If we haven't or if the farmer hasn't already sold the flower that they've grown, if it just sits in the barn, it's going to go to waste. So, it needs to be processed and in that processing portion of it, that's another license that has to be given to the farmer or whoever is processing in the State of Georgia, and that license cost is \$25,000, and that's per year. So, bringing up with that \$25,000 per year on top getting a facility to do the processing, that's a lot for smaller farmers, either as individuals or even as a group. And that's one of our main issues. What we would like to do is become vertically integrated from the seed to putting out the product, the end product on the shelf. And that is holding up that process, as far as being able to process our own materials.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you experienced any difficulties in gaining access to resources such as land, capital, financing, or education while you have been engaged in hemp farming that you believe might be a social inequity?

4-03: Well, one thing actually, now I believe this year is the first year that we're able to actually insure our crops through crop insurance. That was a barrier for a lot of people

who wanted to grow. They were skeptical in case it did not perform right or either the weather damaged it, as far as something that could...I'm trying to think of anything else. I can't think of anything else. I believe that was the main part.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Two more questions. In your opinion, what steps can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers in the hemp industry? And we're looking at it from, in your opinion, a policy issue that can be changed or altered in order to make their participation grow.

4-03: Okay. I would think, like I said, as far as the licensing cost, I know it needs to be tested, but if testing cost are too much, then that is an extra expense. As far as I believe here in Georgia, we only have labs and if we had better cost, I wouldn't say the pricing for testing would be an issue, but licensing and testing are some of the main issues that I have come across in the process. So, the other issue would be as far as when educating a lot of farmers. Some farmers are not getting the education they need to do well in this industry, and that needs to change.

Interviewer: Okay, and the last question. We just touched on that one. From your perspective, how have government policies or regulations affected your ability to succeed as a Black hemp farmer? And you just cited the policies that the state of Georgia has relating to the farmer not being able to process their own hemp without paying a \$25,000 fee. Do you care to elaborate on that particular point of the \$25,000 fee and how that can be changed in order to facilitate more results or better results?

4-03: Well, with a smaller fee more people will be able to come together or be able to actually set up a processing facility. Like I said, setting up a processing facility is very

expensive with some of the equipment that's needed, as well as employees that are needed. So, like I said, if that cost could come down, it would be a lot more feasible for people to be able to process or even if we're able to process it, I wouldn't say at home, but in a more cottage environment because I'm not sure if you're familiar with, like with cottage foods here in Georgia, there's a license where if you make cookies in your house so you can, you'll have a license, you can make cookies or baked goods and things like that. But we are here in Georgia. We would like to do something similar to that, like with making soaps or various things with the product, not just using tinctures or salves.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. This has been a very informative interview. You've given me a lot of good information, and so do you have anything else that you would like to add before we conclude?

4-03: No, I believe that's all.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Thank you for your time.

4-03: Thank you.

End of recording.

### **Interview with Participants 8-02, 8-03, & 8-04**

The interview with Participants 8-02, 8-03, and 8-04 took place on December 20, 2023. Participant 8-02 is a full time Black female hemp farmer from South Carolina. She is between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four. She holds a master's degree. She has

been a hemp farmer for two years. She has a family history of farming, as her grandfather was a farmer in South Carolina. Participant 8-03 is a full time Black male hemp farmer from South Carolina. He is over the age of sixty-five. He holds a bachelor's degree. He has also been farming hemp for two years. He has a family history of farming, as his father and grandfather were farmers. Participant 8-04 is a full time Black female hemp farmer from South Carolina. She has some college in her educational background. She is between the ages of forty-five and fifty-four. She has been farming hemp for the past two years. She has a family history of farming, as her grandfather and other previous generations were farmers. The following themes emerged from this interview with Participants 8-02, 8-03, and 8-04:

6. Lack of comprehensive education from federal and state departments of agriculture and land grant institutions (HBCUs).
7. Lack of available funding opportunities.
8. Expensive fees for licensure, processing, and testing.
9. Lack of cohesive policies and implementation of existing policies and procedures (e.g., THC level and hemp rules).
10. Existing stigma of cannabis as illicit drug that prohibits increased success for hemp businesses.

Interviewer: Alright. I am here with participants 8-02, 8-03, and 8-04. How are you doing today?

8-02: We're doing great. Thank you.

Interviewer: Alright. We'll go ahead and roll right into the interview. So, could you please state your age ranges for me?

8-04: I'm 65 plus.

Interviewer: Okay.

8-03: I'm 45-54.

8-02: I'm 35-44.

Interviewer: Okay. Fantastic. And your gender?

8-03: Male.

8-02: Female.

8-04: Female.

Interviewer: Alright. What is your highest level of education?

8-02: Master's Degree.

8-03: Bachelor's Degree.

8-04: I have some college.

Interviewer: Okay. And your household income?

8-02: Rather not say.

Interviewer: Okay. That's totally understandable (laughter). Alright. So, are you currently a hemp farmer?

8-03: Well, yes.

8-02: Yes.

8-04: Yes.

Interviewer: Are you full time or part time hemp farmers?

8-03: Full time.

Interviewer: Okay. And how many years have you been hemp farming?

8-03: Two years.

Interviewer: Yes. And in which state?

8-03: South Carolina.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

8-02: No. Not at this time.

8-03: I've joined certain groups, but I am not active in those groups.

Interviewer: So, are you a first-generation farmer or does your family have a history of farming?

8-03: Okay. Now, we're talking about my grandfather. My grandfather was a farmer.

Interviewer: Okay. Explain a little bit about that. Tell me a little bit about your family's farming history.

8-03: Of course, they were in rural (redacted) County. I guess you would call it subsistence farming. This was up until the late 1940s. But nothing active after that. So, this would be my first opportunity to farm.

Interviewer: Okay. That's fantastic.

8-02: I'm sorry. Can you add the maternal side of farming experience?

Interviewer: Yes, we can. You absolutely can.

8-03: (Redacted), you want to talk a little bit about that?

8-04: Well, Mr. (Redacted) has the facts, but I'll try to talk about it. His wife's grandmother was a farmer from the late 1800s through the 1960s, probably in rural (Redacted) County of South Carolina. Okay. They had at least 200 acres. I don't know if they farmed at all at the same time, but they were on a farm of at least 200 acres.

Interviewer: That's fascinating. I've talked to a few people that have had quite a family legacy with farming that goes back into the 1800s. So, I always find generational agriculture to be quite fascinating from a legacy standpoint. Okay. So, moving into hemp. Have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

8-03: I have. Yes.

8-02: Okay. I did.

Interviewer: Okay. Please feel free to share anything.

8-03: Everything. Well, being new at it. I don't, you know. I didn't have anybody to guide me to show me where I needed to go or who I needed to see. All of that was through Google and online. I had an experience with a local FSA office where I thought I was doing the right thing, turning in the right applications, and I did not get a response. Maybe there was something else that I needed to do, but I never got a response back. I wondered if the state agriculture department had any resources that I could use. You know, none of that was on a blackboard somewhere where, you know, this is what you need to do next, and this is what you need to do after that and so forth and so on. So, I don't know if I missed any programs to help a new farmer. I don't know if they have any resources to help a new farmer other than, you know, going and opening up a Google Search for the local extension service or if there's some kind of local farmers group or state farmers group or something or somebody that could help me. So, I've had IT problems with both federal, state, and local government officials or resources where I just didn't know what to do or say or who to contact, and it's like pulling teeth. You know, you don't know the questions to ask, and then the questions that you do ask, you know, it's always well, we don't do that, or you have to go to somebody else to do that. They never tell you exactly what to do or where to go. I had that problem with the FSA. It seems like if they worked in that office, they would be able to tell me what I needed to know or who I needed to see or what I needed to do. So, I don't know if it was my inability to express what I wanted or their desire to keep everything top secret or something. That's what I felt like it was. Okay. That's about all I got.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you.

8-02: I think, as a family new to this business, like (redacted) said, we didn't know what questions to ask or who to even ask these questions that we did come up with and not that we expected, you know, a celebration and confetti walking through the FSA doors, you know, and I did visit that office with him. You would think that they would hear more on farmers being successful. You know it affects everyone in that county and in that area, etc. Sometimes, you know, having experiences we can't help because we're citizens of these United States to wonder if we're having these experiences because of how we look and who we are. Things like getting our water connected through the county. It was a trial, and it should not have been. And we wonder because, you know, we can see when someone visits our website. So, we walk into a building and people ask what we're doing, what our farm is, and then a moment later there's a ding on the website from the very city that we're standing in. More than likely, that person Googled us and their opinion of us may have changed. And the stigma that's attached to cannabis just having a conversation. Sometimes, it would shut doors or people would close their ears or turn their ears off just with the legality of things. They think that we're probably doing something illegal and can't be trusted. And does that affect the amount of help that we receive? I will say in South Carolina, we live in (redacted) County, even though the farm is in neighboring (redacted) County. We're seeing regulations by, I believe I want to say the District Attorney or Attorney General, trying to regulate CBD and hemp products. There have been raids. There have been regulations on what can be displayed when it comes to advertising products, just where we are able to operate and spread information to the community. It seems at times, you know, once they see the green leaf and then once they see the brown face, things have changed, and we have to work through discrimination.

Interviewer: Absolutely.

8-03: (Redacted), thank you for reminding me about getting permits from the county. It was arduous trying to figure out what I needed to do, you know, just to get the bare minimum of what I needed to do and the cost of getting permits. Like she said about the water situation, we actually needed a permit for a power pole. It was incredible what we had to do and pay to get the power to our field. So yeah, it was something else to work with the county on that.

8-02: And we've lived in South Carolina all of our lives, born, and raised here, all three of us. Even though my sister and I live (redacted) now. So, at the moment, you know, you have to ask yourself because of these experiences, you know, have we tripped and fallen into the good old boy system? Like it or not, are we dealing with the good old boy system? Is that the root of where these challenges come from? Because I can't imagine that any other farm would have these same issues with just getting power. You know, we did everything that we were supposed to do as they told us. And then even after that, we waited an extensive amount of time. And a farmer needs power. We need our well, you know, to be successful. And it was nothing to them. So, we had to question, you know, the racism that we encounter. We don't want it to be true, but it very much is true often.

Interviewer: Well, absolutely. Especially when there's a process to receiving services and you're not getting those services. But there are others that don't have to go through the hoops that you have to go through just to get services that should be provided by the county or the city or the state or whomever. That definitely represents an issue with the

implementation of policies and procedures. So, absolutely. Alright. So, my next question is why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry?

8-02: I guess I can best answer this question. My mother inherited land many years ago, and from this lot of about 11 acres or so, my parents, as I understand it, were paying the property taxes and you know, just doing enough to keep the land because it was important. Land is important to this family. Ownership is important and from that 200 or so acres that we discussed a few minutes ago, we have far less than that still within the family. Unfortunately, we've seen or heard the story of how Black families sell away land. Not that we don't see the value in it, but the money that it brings and the need that we have, you know, for the money. So, instead of selling and just getting by and maintaining and selling timber from the land to take care of the cost of ownership, we sat down as a family and discussed other financial investments that we could make. But in my career, I saw where CBD was making this reintroduction and how we should consider hemp farming. My dad, being the researcher that he is, was able to reinforce the idea and, as a family, we worked from there and we took the leap into the industry hoping that it would be everything that it has been so far.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. So, this question kind of goes into the previous question that we had already talked about, but you can feel free to add to it. As a Black hemp farmer, have you, in your experience, come across any hurdles or barriers within the hemp industry? And please explain those barriers.

8-03: I guess cost is one hurdle. First of all, the money to get a hemp license in South Carolina. I think the first year was \$1,000, maybe the second year was \$500, and then

there are, you know, processing costs too. We had to have our hemp processed to a point to make hemp oil or crude oil. Yeah, and that was expensive, too. Also, I had to use a consultant who guided us through the process. He was also a hemp farmer, and his cost was pretty high also. So, the main thing would be, I guess, the cost of the operation and labor costs, too. We used casual labor when we could for planting and harvesting. For security, we've purchased cameras and put up a fence surrounding our acreage. We had a robbery, I guess you could call it, when someone came on the property before our fence was completed and stole 25 plants; pulled them up by the roots or so we're assuming. The planting and harvesting and farming are the main costs, so the cost of operation would be the main thing. We had to rent vehicles to transport our raw hemp to the processor in upstate South Carolina. We had to pay for testing by the state twice. I think we had to pay for testing. That was a cost and I think I'll leave it at that. If I think of anything else, I'll let you know. (redacted) and (redacted), do you have anything else?

8-04: I do. I think that one of the biggest barriers in the hemp industry involves legislation, which directly influenced the communication or miscommunication. So, there are other companies involved in the hemp industry, especially on the retail product provision side. And with the lack of information, there's a cloud of secrecy that we can feel from the public consumer. So, it impacts our ability to expand our business. It impacts the knowledge of the community so that they can be engaged and involved and supportive of this, particularly Black-owned businesses. So, I think legislation is a huge barrier in the communication around the legislation. That's a huge barrier to the industry.

8-02: Okay. Yeah. I agree with both of them. They've said most of the costs and I keep coming back to legislation, especially locally because hemp is not, excuse me, because cannabis as a whole is not federally accepted and needed. We need it across the board to be okay everywhere. A state like South Carolina has the freedom to be very restrictive on who is growing it, who is selling it, and who is processing it is all a legislative thing. And it, most often, affects people of color and it has really hindered opinions to the places to the point where it affects where we're able to operate, even as a vendor at certain markets where we are accepted. So, yeah. We've gotten it all over the place.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. So, the next question. Have you experienced any difficulties in gaining access to resources such as land, capital, or education? You all mentioned the education piece. Please feel free to expound on that as well as land, capital, or any other issues that you believe have resulted from social equity imbalances within the hemp industry.

8-02: I believe early on one of the early battles was just with banking. At one time we had to code things in our point-of-sale processor to not include certain words like CVD or hemp because banking is still something that is being worked out beyond banking. Now, when it comes to even applying for grants, I think sometimes just seeing that we are hemp is a problem. I've even been with consultants and have been told to leave the word cannabis, hemp, or CBD out of things, which is extremely hard when describing what business, you are truly involved in. So, it limits who's going to accept, even consider offering you any kind of investment or financing or funding, and beyond that I can't think

of anything else off the top of my head. (Redacted), can you think of any other hurdles? I was automatically thinking about access to financial resources.

8-04: It seems like there is a limited amount of information on the types of grants or financial opportunities for this particular industry. I have not been able to compare it to any type of crop, agricultural crop, and those resources, but it seems that there's not too many opportunities to apply for funding or resources to get the business, you know, stable and up and running. Land is not an issue because, of course, that is our main resource. That's something that we have. But finding vendors that can support the types of things that we need, such as if we aren't able to plow, who are the local persons that can engage in that type of work for us or with us. Just having those types of lists or resources or directories would be helpful.

8-02: And I also remember when it comes to education like because of cannabis being scheduled a certain way, we are not allowed and not accepted in certain communities, properties, or campuses. It's something as simple as participating in a community fair. If it's on a certain property or school property, we more than likely won't be accepted there as a vendor. Seeing that leaf makes people nervous about the perception of being associated with schools or any kind of church organization, federal entity, things of that nature. So, where we're able to reach people sometimes is in the most public of places, in most neutral places. And we want to have conversations with our community, but you know where we can go is restricted most of the time because of how cannabis is scheduled and hemp just falls under it, you know, because of a refusal to reschedule or deschedule it altogether.

Interviewer: Okay. And so, from an educational standpoint, how do you feel that the education process could have been handled to give you a better opportunity to succeed within this industry or to eliminate some of the barriers? How could education have helped in that regard?

8-03: Okay. It just reminded me of our experience with South Carolina State University when we were told to contact someone and that person, you know, I don't know if we were able to contact them, but I think we had an experienced like we were speaking to somebody and they thought we had three or four heads popping up, like you know, like we were crazy or whatever. But yeah, we had an experience with them. It seemed like that could have been a lot less tasking for us to get information from them, for them to help us. I don't know what it was. I don't know if it was because we were a small farm or what, but you know, that's an HBCU and it seems like they would have had some kind of an outreach or a better way of educating us on what's the best things to do with this crop. Also, you know, there were things like best practices, and I mean I tried to find out where a course was that I could take for best practices about certification for organic farming.

8-03: And we also have a problem with transportation, you know. I think because I have a license from the state of South Carolina, I can haul stuff around, but I don't know if, you know, like if I had somebody working with me, could they take my product from the farm to my house or whatever? Would they get in trouble if they were stopped by the law? We just don't know these things. We are only guessing and hoping, but I guess my main thing was South Carolina State University not having much follow through on their helping Black farmers.

Interviewer: Well, that's a big deal because Black farmers look to the 1890 land grant HBCU institutions to provide them with some type of guidance and information and the rest of it. And so, with that guidance and information not being there, that does pose a problem. So, do you think that due to the lack of information that the HBCUs have provided, do you think that could be a deterrent for the low number of Black hemp farmers or Black farmers that have chosen to venture into the hemp industry? And if so, then why?

8-03: (Redacted), you were in contact with them, right?

8-04: I'm sorry, with the university? Yes. So, would you pose the question again?

Interviewer: Sure. So, basically the follow up to that would be, you mentioned that South Carolina State University is the land grant institution, the HBCU 1890 institution in South Carolina. And basically, they have not provided or made accessible information regarding the hemp industry for those Black farmers that look to them for guidance and things of that nature to provide information. So, do you think or how do you think that their lack of provision has affected Black farmers from venturing into the hemp industry?

8-04: I think because their program isn't diversified, meaning it's not differentiated to meet the needs of where the farmer is, and their program is suited for farmers who are just beginning and may not have done as much research as we have done. And so, it's a small tunnel that they want them to fit into in order for them to benefit from their resources. So, we were beyond some of the criteria, and we weren't interested in some of what they were offering. They were interested in crop yielding a certain outcome such as

being able to provide hemp plants, which were like the male version of the hemp plant. And we were not ready for that. So, because we weren't fitting some of the criteria, we didn't meet what they were looking for, and so I feel like they completely ignored us or did not respond to our request for help. So, that could be a barrier if they are not going to diversify their ability to engage with people who are in different places around how they want their hemp farm or their business to grow, and (redacted), please add to that.

8-02: I believe that because we are more than (redacted) miles away from Orangeburg or so where South Carolina State is, we didn't have the same attitude that I heard other farmers express about the extension program, the hemp program there at South Carolina State. I think a little bit of intimidation was a major factor learning that South Carolina State was going to have this hemp program because beyond that there was just Clemson at the time in upstate South Carolina. So, to come to the Orangeburg area, the current hemp farmers were nervous about how it would affect their operations as they should be. We know about cross pollination and other things like that, and then, you know, the university and HBCU is receiving money for a particular vision in a particular demographic, and we were seeking assistance as my (redacted) spoke, from those who are probably not in the business of that assistance at the time. And then having to rely on our own resources and reaching out to someone and entrust another farmer to help us with the operation became a challenge in itself. So yes, South Carolina State's program is wonderful to have, but as farmers, we are not quite sure how we feel about it yet. We haven't benefited. So, I'm sure we don't know how we feel about it yet.

Interviewer: So it seems to me that based on what you're saying, in a nutshell, South Carolina State was not of great help to any of the black hemp farmers or people that were interested in farming hemp that did not align with their research interests, and it appears to me that their research interest in hemp, and you mentioned the male plants, the research interest in hemp for South Carolina State University has to do more with fiber hemp as opposed to hemp for flower purposes.

8-02: I think our best summation was, yes, in alignment with what we were seeking assistance and some things to be defined. What we were always aware of is that they had the industrial hemp program, and the focus was fiber.

8-03: We were not aware of any additional programs for the new and beginning hemp farmer with the resources we were looking for. In comparison, I actually attended a course through Clemson University's New and Beginning Farmer program when I was not the only hemp farmer in that course over a 10-week period. So, I was more aware of a PWI's incubator than anything. Any resources that might have been available at SC State, do they exist? We don't know and we were very much aware of other programs. We even attended one about a hoop house or so, excuse me, a high tunnel. So yeah, there may have been more, but we would say that they failed to make that available to us if it did exist.

Interviewer: Okay. And last question, and it's a big question. What do you believe can be done, as far as from a policy standpoint or a procedural standpoint, that could facilitate more participation among Black hemp farmers within the industry?

8-02: I'll let you two go first (laughter). Some kind of mentorship, I guess, and I'll let (redacted) go ahead, proceed.

8-04: I'm going back to legislation. Legislative policy. The South Carolina State Legislature needs to establish some clear policy and guidelines on what is legal and what is illegal and make it publicly known. So, there needs to be legislation passed that supports cannabis, particularly CBD, that's under the point 0.3% THC range. There also should be policies and procedures that are established for mentorship and guidance and probably divided upon what type of crop you are engaging in as a farmer. So, there need to be specific policies around supporting new farmers.

8-02: Yes. I would agree with the support for the farmer, especially farmers of color. We often face many challenges that others may not ever encounter. A large part of our challenges with education deal with a lack of communication. We need to decriminalize cannabis as a whole. It would open the conversation that doctors and pharmacists are already having.

Interviewer: It would.

8-02: It would open doors to entrepreneurial spirit within the Black community to pursue other avenues beyond farming. I am constantly reminding others that you don't have to just farm, but you can store it. You can also transport it, test it, and you can sell it in a dispensary. The legislation is the largest part of that. Once we have those conversations and deschedule and decriminalize cannabis, as a whole, then it will open the door for the entire industry to people of color because we are a creative people, and we will find a

way to make it work for us to expound on this billion dollar industry. It's already proven to work. Of course, we're going to make it better.

Interviewer: Alright. And with that, I'll leave it right there. Thank you all very much for your participation and thank you for your insight and the valuable information that you have imparted for this interview. And I believe that it will hopefully facilitate change within the sphere of public policy so that the hemp industry can become more inclusive for those underrepresented individuals, which will grow the industry as a whole. So, thank you very much for that. And with that, I will stop.

8-02: Okay. Thank you so much for the opportunity.

End of recording.

### **Interview with Participant 16-03**

The interview with Participant 16-03 took place on December 27, 2023.

Participant 16-03 is a as time female hemp farmer and processor in Tennessee. She is between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four years old. She holds a master's degree. She does not have a known family history of farming, as she is a first-generation farmer. The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participant 16-03:

1. Lack of available funding for hemp farmers.
2. Lack of available education from federal agencies.
3. Inconsistent policies on federal and state levels.

## 4. Stigma surrounding hemp vs. marijuana

Interviewer: I am here with Participant 16-03. How are you doing this morning?

16-03: I'm doing well.

Interviewer: Okay, wonderful. Alright, we'll go ahead and roll right into the questions.

So, question number one, could you please state your age range for me?

16-03: 35-44

Interviewer: Alright, and your gender?

16-03: Female

Interviewer: Okay. And what is your highest level of education?

16-03: Master's Degree

Interviewer: Okay. And what is your household income?

16-03: I prefer not to say.

Interviewer: Okay. That's perfectly understandable. Are you currently a hemp farmer?

16-03: Yes, I am. I'm also a processor.

Interviewer: Oh, fantastic! We can talk a little bit about that as well. Are you a full time or part time hemp farmer?

16-03: I'm a full-time hemp farmer and processor.

Interviewer: How many years have you been involved in the hemp business?

16-03: Six years.

Interviewer: Okay. And which state or states do you engage predominantly in hemp farming?

16-03: Tennessee.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

16-03: Yes. I am a member of the Hemp Alliance of Tennessee. This organization provides hemp farmers with different educational opportunities for them to engage in the hemp industry. I also work with Ag Launch, and we put together a series to help farmers understand licensing and growing practices and how to actually market the business.

Interviewer: Okay. That's wonderful. Alright. So, are you a first-generation farmer or does your family have a history of farming?

16-03: I'm actually a first-generation farmer.

Interviewer: Okay, fantastic. And so why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry?

16-03: Because hemp was the closest thing to marijuana that Tennessee would allow us to grow.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

16-03: A lot.

Interviewer: Okay. Tell me about it.

16-03: So, when I first started, the biggest obstacle was getting people to understand what you did. So, they literally did not understand what hemp was, what I was doing, and the simple fact that I was a processor. So, I was one of the first licensed processors and then they did away with the processing license. So, when I first started, I started off as a processor and then the second year they went away from the processor's license. So, I had to move over to the farmer's license because, hey, no one grew the type of material that I needed to process because they didn't understand the supply chain. It was like I wanted to do a retail store, but it was like nobody wanted to give you a retail location, especially with you processing the material down. So, it was cool for a retail store, but to tell them I wanted to be inside with hemp, it just threw everybody off. It was like, so, what are you doing? And I was like, well, you got to break it down and it was just a lot of hoops and hurdles to explain to someone and allow, like get them to allow me to grow. So, I had to like, go to my mom, and say hey, I need to build a processing lab in our backyard because nobody would let me process the material, except for this one commercial kitchen. So, I found a commercial kitchen during Covid, who allowed us to process in the kitchen, then that way we were compliant because that was another thing. So, you didn't have to get a license to process, but you had to get a food manufacturer's license and you have to have, you know, your three sinks and this stuff. So, it was required of us to have something and then it's hard to get someone to access the kitchen. Like, no one has a full commercial kitchen just a bay, until we started finding people who let us process in there. And then when I actually did process in there, I processed it like twelve at night, so the smell of it wouldn't interfere with other people's production. So, I also liked that they did let me do it, but it had to be at night so nobody else would smell

the smell or like on a Sunday, Lord forgive me (laughter), but I processed on a Sunday, so that way it allowed us to be able to operate. It was good, like just learning all the nuances, but overall it was just really hard for someone, let me not say, but most of the time I felt like when people looked at me and I said that I wanted to grow hemp, they immediately assumed that I wanted to do something else and I was like, no, I literally grow hemp. It may look like weed, but it really is hemp. Like, it won't do anything to you, but I got to do it in my backyard, okay.

Interviewer: Okay. So have you encountered any, I guess, legal or regulatory obstacles dealing with the policy because that actually answered another question that I had following this one about several hurdles and things that you would have to cross as far as farming or being in the hemp industry. So, that was good. Have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles so far?

16-03: So, with me, I'm kind of like a dual person. So, I do marijuana and hemp. I do medical marijuana. What I've encountered is weird. The non acceptance of hemp in the medical cannabis industry a lot of times, like so a lot of times they frown upon hemp, even like the products and different things and regulations for me being able to grow my hemp in Tennessee and bringing it over here to process. So, the processing rule is very vague. It doesn't really protect you, though. What people don't understand is they will grow hemp, then the processor remediates the THC out of it, but as you process it down, it turns anyway to noncompliant hemp aka marijuana. So, I had to find a way to stay compliant. I got a medical cannabis license to cover the transformation of it. So, if I am processing hemp, it's always better to do it separately. So, like when I was going for

grants for the USDA, they didn't cover processing. They only covered growing. So, a lot of times the funding, unless it's statewide, 'cause I got state funding to build my processing lab, but federal funding does not cover the intermediate process of hemp because it turns into marijuana and then we turn it back to hemp.

Interviewer: Okay, no. That's good! And that's actually a good segue into my next question. Have you experienced any difficulties in gaining access to resources such as land, capital, or education that you believe results from a social equity imbalance within the hemp industry?

16-03: I am going to say more so with the more federalized sectors of agriculture because statewide, it has been very great. I have received a lot of funding, particularly for what I do. So, I will not discredit the statewide process in Tennessee, but as I went for more federalized larger grants, those big grants that you are really trying to go for to help propel your business, we were not allowed like they didn't cover it. So, that's how I know like, oh, they'll cover plants, but they won't cover processing, or this idea didn't fit into what they kind of saw for funding. So, a lot of times when we were going for those matching grants and those larger grants, it actually knocked us out because they were like we don't cover hemp at all. So, like the value-added grant, when I first, you know, I wrote this huge proposal to go and apply for the value-added grant that's \$250,000, but it's \$150,000 match, so guess what? That would have been phenomenal for me to be able to apply for that grant because I did value added anyway. Like anyway I did value added naturally, as the processor and the farmer. So, it would have been great to be able to capitalize off the funds because everything I do is self-funded because I wasn't able to for

the longest. I was not able to get any type of funding because of what I did. Like, it was hard to get a bank account. I was hard to rent somewhere. It is hard to grow if you don't have land. I'm going to say that I was lucky enough to know about the land bank. So, I literally, before the pandemic, I went down and in (redacted), they were giving a lot of land away. So, the one thing I did was learn through the new farmers academy. I had just finished the New Farmers Academy and (redacted) told me about different ways to access land. So, I was little more privy to understanding about the land before I started farming. I went to the New Farmers Academy. So, like I didn't just go like I went to school. I went to that whole nine-month program and really kind of honed in, but I did understand that it wasn't catered toward my crop. It was the information that I got, but because of what I particularly grew, I did not get anything. I just got to the FSA this year. So, it has been a long self-funded run of it. If you're going anywhere outside of your state that is familiar, like in (redacted). Luckily, this year they changed it to encompass indoor growing. But like when I came over here, they literally were like, oh, you're going to mix hemp and weed together and you're going to adulterate it. And I was like they are the same plant. I'm actually making it weaker by adding hemp to it. That doesn't make sense. So, it was a lot of, and when I say it was a lot of teaching and understanding and they were like well, hemp doesn't have THC in it, or it was just so much that they just didn't understand. And even when I went in, I just got the license to do hemp indoors. So, they just changed it last year to where you could grow indoors because in (redacted) you could not grow indoors. You had to grow outdoors and have at least 1,000 plants to get your license over here, and they did not allow commercial growing. It was strictly for research. So, like I'm over here and they were like how did you find out about (redacted)? And I

was like, well, because you won't let them do anything and they always come to (redacted) for me to process their materials and I was like because for the longest they had our processor listed, but it's just so many different rules to even where it's hard to be a hemp grower and farmer because universally just the USDA, the farm service agents, they really look at you like you're growing weed, and I'm like, but it's a real crop. You told us to grow this and then you penalize me for growing it. And it's like, and sometimes I don't necessarily think it's color as much as my age demographic. I'm just getting into farming and they're like, oh, so you're just going to grow hemp? And I'm like, well, now I've evolved to growing tomatoes and blueberries. And because I'm actually coming into farming and looking to learn how to grow cannabis, it really teaches you how to grow everything and you understand that it's actually a commodity for a reason. People buy this. So, it's like, I think, like sometimes it was what we chose to grow and just it attracted the younger generation. Because even when I go talk to my own Black farmers, they will look at me crazy because I want to grow hemp. They say oh, you just want to grow marijuana. But you told me that I couldn't. The government told me that I had every right just as much as you do to grow your tomatoes. I have the right to grow these. So, I think sometimes yes, it's a color barrier, but I really think it was the perceived concept of this particular plant that we grow in the things that come from it. So, that's why I just think it's that real, that younger generation.

Interviewer: That's actually very interesting. Could you tell me a little bit more about that, as far as your interaction with other Black farmers?

16-03: More traditional black farmers are hesitant to grow hemp due to the stigma or they, I'm going to say, I get that they want to grow it, but they don't have the concept of when somebody walked in and said hey, you could just throw this seed out there and it's a weed. They really thought like, oh, it's a weed. It's just gonna grow right then. Like, I would always go and talk to Black farmers. I would always have to point out that I, as a young farmer, I am coming to you, but what they never understood was everybody wouldn't get in this for the right reason, right? If you dug a little deeper, I tell everybody, it's very shady. Religious people, people with good hearts, this may not be for you. Because when people came in and now they're a little more weeded out than when they first came in. But it was just people who said, oh, I'm gonna get rich. We're trying to grow all of this. The government says we can and any type of money that I make, I'm going to take it, and I just saw a lot of people not researching, like not going beyond what somebody told them. Like me, I liked cannabis. So, I tell everybody I was like, I'm going to be a little more precise. Like, I know what's going to sell. I know how it needs to grow. I just looked a little more into that. I think as Black farmers, they were just like, oh, this is just like selling weed. We're gonna grow it and we're gonna ask for the best price because everybody is going to come and buy my crop because it's the greatest, because I'm a farmer. But you don't know how to grow it. It's not like, like again, it's not like growing a tomato. I had to go meet with a lot of farmers and Black farmers who thought they wanted to grow it. And they were very combative when I said Hey, this is not gonna be right. You're gonna lose money. And they were like, you don't know what you're talking about. And I'm like, I may not know your traditional farming, but I understand this plant, right? And you can put it here, but it goes with this particular soil. Like, I went

out and did a consultation with a Black farmer, beautiful acreage of land. I said, hey, where are you planting your seeds? He was like, I'm gonna plant it right here. So, I touch the soil, do a little soil test. I was like, hey, this is clay soil. It's not going to work. Like, I learned this from a farmer who farmed 100 years. Like, I was taught this in class. And he was like, you don't know what you're talking about. His crop died. I said that I don't know what I'm talking about, but when I'm going to talk to another farmer who entrusted me with his information, I'm just passing it on to you no matter what. I may not look like you, a traditional farmer. I'm not seventy-eight. I haven't farmed for 115 years. One man told me that he has farmed for 100 years. I was like, how are you not dead yet? You can't farm for 115 years because you're still alive talking to me (laughter). So, it was just like when you interact with Black farmers, it's like, hey, I know this and I don't want to take any information from someone else because if you are here to help me, then something is wrong. It just always felt like when I came in as a black person to another black person, it was always competitive, but I could literally send my white counterpart in there and they would be cool and they would get (inaudible) for tens of thousands of dollars and wonder why all their seeds were wrong. And wonder why they didn't understand that even if you buy feminized seeds that it's not going to stop you from having to go out there and pick out some male plants. It's things that I just thing that we, as Black entrepreneurs and Black farmers should focus on. If we plant it, it will come like I've heard from so many. I've heard so many Black farmers say, oh, I'm gonna grow it and they're gonna come and buy it all, but if you don't have anywhere to store it, then how are you gonna keep it? If they don't buy it immediately, then I would say hey, are you going to process this down to oil? And if I process it down to oil, instead of it lasting six months, you know, you've

got two years' worth of shelf life, right? They didn't think of, hey, what are we going to do with it? And they'll be like, no, I just want to buy it to make stuff and I'm like, but what if I don't buy it? What if me, as a processor, want to buy it for a dollar? You want me to buy it for \$20, right? It's not going to work, because it's not my job. Like I used to have to explain to them what processes I did was like it's literally my job to buy it at the cheapest price and process it down and make materials out of it. I was like, and I would tell everybody I was like, if you're going to grow, you most definitely need a solution on what you're going to do with it. And I just think that everybody hyped it. I mean, at the height of it, I would get calls from people with like, one million pounds of hemp. What? Okay, well that's one million pounds of hemp. They didn't tell you? You've got to get it processed and me, as the processor, I don't always have to pay for it. Guess what? You've got to send it to me, but I don't want it. I don't want all of it. I was like, I don't want it and then they would just kind of get offended and like I've grown for this long and I'm like, but I can't process it if it's got mold on it. The price is a dollar because I have to work forty times harder because you said that you grew twenty-five acres of hemp, and nobody walked down those aisles so now I have seeds and mold. So, I just think like that interaction on top of a lack of knowledge and on top of how hard our community stigmatized the plant, is what makes it hard. I think we were just in an uphill battle, like we were in a down battle anyway and the fact that it was only like, five of us, like five people. I never saw more than that. I mean, that's not many. Let's say that it wasn't many who actually got into the farming side of it because a, they couldn't really afford it either, right?

Interviewer: Well, let's talk about that, too, the cost.

16-03: Luckily, I had money saved up and I grew outside. So, I'll tell anybody, I took two factors out, electricity, because I'm not going to pay when I could grow it outside. I know a lot of people invested into growing on a large amount of acreage. That was another downside that I saw a lot of people do that. I really, I would tell them not to, but you know, nobody understands. And I was telling them because like, I was in California, and I always saw like you made \$1,000,000 out of a garage, like 1,500 square feet. In that 1,500 square feet, you only have between 100 to 200 plants, right, continuously, and that's what I used to tell them. I was like, you don't need to grow. You know how much an acre is? That's a lot. And then you're going several acres and that, like I said, it was in the height of it. It was just like you started to feel sorry for people because they put so much into it. And even the Black people who did put it in, I don't see a lot of them still around. Let me say that I know most Black people that were in it and I honestly and truly, I probably am the only person who still sees some type of monetary value in CBD hemp. Let's say that I know other people who are doing fiber and other things, or really being able to see money and capitalize and garnered a market share. There weren't many black companies that were able to do this. And like I said, lights are expensive. Soil is expensive. Irrigation, trellises, machines to process, machines to dry, it could run you starting off about fifty to sixty thousand dollars, for just a small setup, so you can greatly incur a cost. But I also think that a lot of times we were not given the information. We were just told that hey, you put \$20,000 in and then I'm gonna get you something, right?

Of course we looked like, oh, and then it was just like they never really delivered for all the promises, right?

Interviewer: Okay. So, we were talking about Black hemp farmers, and we were talking about, I guess, the lack of education.

16-03: And just the misconception of the business in and of itself, just the continuation that a lot of information that was put out there was not put out there for us. We were not the target audience.

Interviewer: I see.

16-03: I can understand that because I sat in rooms, and I've sat with people, and it was not for us to be involved. A lot of opportunities that I saw for larger sums of money were never given to us. Let's just say like, and a lot of times we didn't even know about grants that were available to us. So a lot of times, I would just look back to see if it was even something that we could do in the start to let them know of the astronomical cost. It's going to be a true uphill battle. A lot of times it had to be self-funded because literally back in 2019, nobody was giving you money, so you had to be self-funded. If you were not self-funded, you had to answer a lot of questions. So, that really pushed me to get my own land or go ask my parents. Because when you first filled out the license, if someone gave you permission to use their land, they had to sign it. So, like, that's kind of how old I am in the application process. Like, you literally had to get them to sign an affidavit saying, like, hey, I'm going to let you come on my land and do this. And I also give you the right to come on my property anytime you want to inspect it. That also throws people off. It's like, so the police are just going to come to my house and be able to come in at

any time? And I mean, I had to explain to my folks, yeah, we're literally signing our rights away, that they're going to do aerial views over our house. And you have to explain to a parent who is a drug rehab counselor. Let's also play the roles of what kind of jobs that Black families have. I'm a pastor. I'm a medical worker. I'm either a correction officer or a drug rehab counselor. And then you have waves of people saying this drug is now what's considered a drug is no longer a drug, it's an agricultural crop. I want you to wrap your head around it, but I'm going to tell you the flip side. And I tell everybody again, if you came in as a preacher, a religious person, a drug counselor, you had to learn how to sell hemp like weed. So, if you had never been involved in anything, at least see when somebody comes and says, oh, you still got to meet me in the back alley to get this and you're looking like, why? Because I really can't transport it to you. I can't sell it to you directly. But then they got it. You know where we could, but at first it was like a lot of oh, I'm going to tell you I'm coming. We're selling 150 pounds of hemp and I wire you the money and nobody ever shows up and I never get any product. A lot of people get burned like that, too. So, it was just like you had to learn who was really there and not a lot of us looked. A lot of people look like us and we can talk farm, but half of the time we can't talk business. So, now when I'm telling you I want to bring in one million pounds, what's the price? You don't know the price of that. You don't know the price to go buy one million pounds and know how you're going to get it tested. What grade is it? If we're coming in and we're buying these seeds, do we have to get it tested? Because we know we need these other ones tested. But the government has told us so, now we have to go through fifty channels because at first you had to order the seed, shift the seed into Tennessee Department of Agriculture, then Tennessee certified, then they

deal it to you. And I'm like, well, damn. Who wants to go through all of that? Nobody wants to go through twelve channels to get to one thing. So, I just think like sometime, it wasn't necessarily set up for us. What if you couldn't read? What if you're a Black farmer who couldn't read and didn't read. You've got to get certified seed or it's illegal. So, it was just a lot of things that I don't think were laid out for us in mind because it was like, I would see four or five hundred farmers, but they were like again, they wouldn't be black. I mean I love the (redacted), but we attracted a lot more white farmers than Black farmers, so I would say unanimously I only know five or six hemp farmers that are Black. Again, like I'm like, it's not even many aren't but I know a number of white hemp farmers who are successful, who actually make money and go into retail and are successful, and you see where they've gotten money from the FSA before anybody else could get money from the FSA. You didn't tell us. I mean I know a lot and I'll be sitting here like I wish you would have told me that at first. At one point, it could be pushed as a commodity crop. You didn't tell me because of how I presented. The FSA can deny you off of what you're presenting, but if I presented right, it's not like I can get funding because we never knew that. And this is now what I had to find out from a long trial that if you presented your hemp as a monetary crop, I'm going to sell it at the farmer's market. I need advertisement. Nobody told me that. But then you sit here like, oh, they give you \$100,000 for an advertisement grant. So, go out here and market because you're at the farmers market because I'm a farmer. It doesn't matter what my product key is. I'm a farmer. It's like they cut everything out and said, oh, you're a hemp farmer. No, no, no. I'm a farmer and they never told us, don't say you're a hemp farmer. You farm blueberries. You farm tomatoes. You farm something else besides this. But if you were

already a farmer and you were, you already knew that and that's how you got all your equipment and then you were able to not front the bill. I'm able to work. And also, you get operational loans and working capital. Agricultural crops don't have all these, but I never, you know, you never know those types of things. Even though you can go to all the classes in the world, even if your leader doesn't know, banks wouldn't deal with you. So, I just think like a lot of times it was put in a way that was available. But if you never knew it, how would I know that? Like I literally had to go to the FSA person and be like, I wouldn't know that. I wouldn't know to commoditize or value it at the rate. So, now when I went in, and she was like what's your collateral? My hemp, okay, but I didn't know that was collateral and I went to the FSA a million times. Nobody ever said the crop you're growing should not only make you money, like making you money, but also increase your farm's likelihood to succeed. They don't. I don't. I went to the FSA a million times. That's not what they present. Hey, do you have farming? What are you farming? Oh, hemp. I don't know what I can do with that. I never did. That's a different one. But they don't come in and tell you how to structure it in a way. Maybe hemp should have been a rotational crop. Things that I saw so many other people who didn't look like me already know. The first aquaponic hemp grow was a white farmer. It was fully granted by the state with \$200,000. That was the same grant I applied for. That's how I know. And I was like oh, but I didn't know to put in the back. I needed (inaudible). I didn't know that. I'm just asking for (inaudible). I think I got \$15,000. I got \$15,000, as a Black farmer growing hemp, while a white company got \$250,000 for the same concept. We're doing the exact same thing. You got \$250,000 and I got \$15,000. Let's just go ahead and throw that in there. I wrote you the same concept in the same state. I went to

the same entrance meeting as you did, but you get this much? I am literally growing and processing. We had the same concept down to the (inaudible) and I get \$15,000 and you get \$250,000. But I didn't even know, like didn't even know when I was applying for these grants how to write them. I didn't know you wrote stuff in and if you didn't have cash, you can go get a loan. Hence, the loan could be backed by the FSA. Nobody's in there and tells you that. They just tell you, hey, you know, if you're here in the class, well, this other person can write you a grant. But that's five more thousand dollars. That's more money that I don't have. But imagine, like I said, all the money that we could have gotten as Black farmers, that I really feel like a lot of times since you don't know, you don't know to go to these grant classes, and you have to have a (inaudible). You go to the pre-class that increases the likelihood of you getting selected. Don't know why I tell you that hemp farmer and another farmer, they're not going to sit there and tell you, and especially as a hemp farmer, they're going to look at you like, oh, you're not even qualified for it. So, you might even know this information, but I was here for many years. You're not even qualified. So, even if you know it, you can see it here, but I'm not even going to enter your submission because it's hemp, right? So, I just think it could be better. It's getting better, but I just don't think people wanted to wait to see this. Like, imagine being six years in and in six years you're finally going to get a loan for hemp. I've paid every bill, fronted every bill. It's in my name. I'm almost going to go semi bankrupt because you're trying to fund different things and grow and also fight for something you love because I'm like, well, this is a good commodity. People should be able to do it. You do have great laws in place and this could be a crop that you can make money off of it, but if you have all those obstacles, I know a lot of people who got out

just because they did not want to deal with the stuff you just have to deal with, right? So monetary wise, it could. It's getting better. At the beginning, it sucked in here. It's hitting the curve, and I don't think a lot of people are understanding. But since it was so hard in the beginning, I don't think I would even see the five that I saw getting in now. Because, I mean, like somebody said the other day, there's no money in hemp. There's money in whatever you want money to be in. But of course I would say that, too. If I were so disheartened at every turn, it just seems like it was not for us. I'm going to say that it just really, it never seemed like hemp, or any type of cannabis was going to happen. I'm on both sides. It never seems like anything is for us. I promise you it's how people would look at you. Now, it's getting better. But at first it was just like, oh my God, you just want to go sell weed. I literally got somebody who said, so you quit a corporate job just to go sell weed? I'm like, nah, I really quit to be a farmer because that's honestly what I'm doing. I was like, I'm producing something with my hands. I am providing a stress-free work environment for myself, but all you see is all I want to do is grow weed, so right.

Interviewer: Okay. And the last question. That was actually fantastic because it was very insightful and it really speaks to a lot of issues that black farmers have within the industry and then also a lot of barriers in dealing with the USDA to get funding and really information, which is key because if you don't have the information, then you're really at a disadvantage already. So, the last question, what steps can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers in the hemp industry?

16-03: Providing avenues to the market. Meaning you need to entice people to do more than just growing because a lot of times we have a lot of people have been jaded and a lot

of people are like, we might as well just go the medical cannabis market because a lot of people see it as just an entry. But I always want to encourage people that it's way more things to do with the plant. So, really driving to the new farmer or the new person who is coming into the hemp industry, that it's more, still so much innovation. That's why I was like, I want to get out, but I'm like, you may, you're just in an industry in its infancy, and you may miss, like that key point that's like boom! What if you found a new cannabinoid or something? I was like, it's still so new that you still have an opportunity to kind of jump in where it's needed. So, I always say, I think the biggest thing that we can focus on when we bring in more people of color, minorities, is really focusing in on the difference. Okay, yes, you can smoke it. Yes, it is a part of the cannabis family, but it's a protein. You can make more money off of eating it. You can eat it. There's a whole market for seeds. We have a lot of people who want to grow genetics, find the genetics that work in the South, find something that's still here and can be innovative. And we really have to bring that out because a lot of people focus on, hey, grow high CBD hemp or high THC, all of these. But guess what? You literally just did. I tell everybody if you break it down, every cannabinoid is worth money. The plant itself, don't worry about it, but if we dive into the cannabinoids and what you can do, I know people who still make \$10,000 or \$15,000 a kilo because all they're doing is sitting there separating out the cannabinoids and selling them. It's like 100 of them or more. I can sell the terpenes. I can sell the leaves for paper. Like I tell everybody, there are so many ways you can make money. Like I told my FSA agent, I said I sell my leaves for a dollar. She was like a dollar? I was like no, literally just a little fan leaf that doesn't have anything on it that we just dry. I sell it for a dollar. In a processing cycle, I get thousands. I said, guess what? Farmers literally

throw it away because they didn't see the value. I was like, but if you see value in everything, you can put the leaves on Etsy, just dry it out. You know how many craftspeople would like that. I didn't even know that. But I was like, I put the fan leaves out one day and the guy was like, I'll buy them from you. I was like, I just throw them away, and he was like, oh, for real? I started selling them by the pound. Come on! A lot of people think, oh, I'm just a novice. They just want to come in and grow a little flower. Sewers are going to sew that on something. Makers are going to be created. A lot of times we harp on growing this plant but grow it for ingredients. Later on in life, there are people who cook with it. Hemp seed is literally protein. You can take that out and it's now a plant based vegan option. Let's think of something new and I think like that could really entice Black farmers to come into it and not take on so much. We don't have hemp seeds. We have to import them from Canada. It would be great for me to be able to go and get fresh hemp milk from hemp seeds that actually grew in Tennessee, and you will never find it. I mean when nobody says I can present that to you and people are like nobody wants grain? I buy hemp seeds for \$12 a bag, and nobody wants grain? Nobody? The hemp seed aisle is always empty at Whole Foods and it's \$12 a bag, and you don't even get a pound. So, like I tell everybody, and I think it's just us opening our eyes to more of a creative innovation of this plant and not being so focused on smoking. You can do so much. You can get high anywhere. You can literally get high anywhere. If we take out the drug mentality, I feel like you're sometimes in drug wars and I'm like, now being in the cannabis industry, the real cannabis industry, I was like oh, I would love to go sell my plants at the farmer's market. That is really not what you want. I said I garner a higher price for my hemp products than I do for my cannabis products, and they can

literally be the same product though. No, seriously, I can sell pain cream in (redacted) to the medical dispensary for \$35. I can sell pain cream in Tennessee in the last six years for \$225 and I've never had to go down on my price, ever. Like I've never had a price adjustment since I wrote my prices on there and I tell everybody, and nobody questioned it. They have not because it works. They know that I'm the farmer. They know that I grow it. They know that I'm going to manufacture it and send it to them and to me, sometimes even building your community is a way to really be that herbalist that you want to be. So, like I said, innovation is going to be the biggest thing to get younger creatives to come into the market because we have washed them out with the oh, if you grow it, they'll come. We're going to have to entice them with something else, though. But I think it needs to be done.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, we'll leave it right there. Thank you very much for your time and thank you for everything that you're doing for the hemp industry and the cannabis industry. And thank you for the information that you have provided today.

16-03: Thank you so much.

End of recording.

### **Interview with Participants 24-01 & 24-02**

The interview with Participants 24-01 and 24-02 took place on December 28, 2023. Participant 24-01 is a female part time Black hemp farmer in Missouri. She is

between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four. She has been in the hemp industry for the last four years. She has a Graduate Degree. She has a family history of farming that dates back generations. Participant 24-02 is a male part time Black hemp farmer from Missouri. He is between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four. He has been in the hemp industry for the last four years. He has some college, as well as a cannabis industry certification. Although he is a first-generation farmer, he believes that he has an ancestral connection to farming and agriculture. The following themes have emerged from this interview with Participants 24-01 and 24-02:

1. Lack of education for new farmers.
2. Inconsistent hemp policies (e.g., transportation of products).
3. Stigma of hemp vs. marijuana.
4. Need for improvements in supply chain management (e.g., seed to sale)

Interviewer: I am here with Participants 24-01 and 24-02. How are you all doing today?

24-01: Great.

24-02: Well. Thank you.

Interviewer: Okay, fantastic. Alright. We'll roll right into the questions. Alright. So, question number one. Please state your age range.

24-01: I am thirty-five to forty-four.

24-02: Ok. Yeah. I'm also thirty-five to forty-four.

Interviewer: Okay. Fantastic. And what is your gender?

24-01: Female.

24-02: I am male.

Interviewer: Okay. Wonderful. And so, what is your highest level of education?

24-01: Graduate Degree.

24-02: Ok. I have some college. I also have a certification in Cannabis Science.

Interviewer: Okay, that's wonderful. Fantastic! And what is your annual household income?

24-01: \$110,000 plus.

24-02: I prefer not to say.

Interviewer: Okay. That's perfectly understandable. Alright. Are you currently a hemp farmer

24-01: Yes.

24-02: Yes.

Interviewer: Are you full time or part time?

24-01: Part-time.

24-02: Part-time.

Interviewer: Okay. Wonderful. And how many years have you been involved in hemp farming?

24-01: Well, four years.

24-02: Four years. But we took one year off, kind of. But we were doing educational seminars, and we were licensed during that time.

Interviewer: Okay.

24-01: Four years with the license.

Interviewer: Okay. Wonderful. And in which states do you engage in hemp farming?

24-01: I'm in the state of Missouri.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

24-01: No.

Interviewer: Okay. Would you care to elaborate?

24-01: Yeah. I think the associations that would be the first place to look when it comes to joining something are costly. And so, we have not gone into membership, although we participate in public meetings, social events, free webinars, things that they provide that maybe you don't get access to or don't need access to as a member. We also were part of a lot of just first-time initiatives because the industry is so new. So, these are things like groups of people getting on calls once a week, bringing information together for new workshops that are being launched and in those places, information is shared. But again, it's a one-time instant activity or just an ongoing conversation, but nothing structured, or I would say like with a big goal in mind.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Are you a first-generation farmer or does your family have a history of farming?

24-01: My family has a history of farming.

Interviewer: Okay. Would you care to share about that?

24-01: Yeah. So, I will say when I first started hemp farming that I didn't know that fact and becoming a hemp farmer, I have met a side of my family in (redacted) and they've been growing. They've been in the grape industry for many years and still own property and even have a side of the road "you pick" stand for their grapes.

Interviewer: Okay. And you?

24-02: Sure. For me, I would like to say in my life span, no. But I do feel like, you know, when I started this journey and I started to put my hand into the dirt, that I knew what I was doing and how to do it. And I just felt like it is in my genes. So, you know, even if my ancestors were farmers, I didn't know about it, which I'm sure at some point that someone was a farmer. Those genes became activated. So, you know, I mean, in my personal life, no, but in my past family life, you know, family tree, I believe so. Yes. I feel it in my body.

Interviewer: It's a spiritual connection to the land.

24-02: Right. I know what to do.

Interviewer: Okay. So, have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

24-02: Yes. In the shipping of our product across state lines, we essentially lost about eighty percent of our year one crop in the mailing system and we were counting on sending it to a place that would process that to support us in selling that product and we lost out on that in our first year.

Interviewer: Okay. Could you go into further detail about that scenario and what happened with that?

24-02: So, we were part of a co-op the first year and part of it was that, you know, give them materials to make products such as gummies and process it into edible products, oils, and tinctures. You know, it was a buying co-op. So, we bought into it and then we had to get the product to them, and the option was to drive it about six hours or mail it. And the decision was made to mail it and we put it in parcels, air locked it, and attached our documentation, COA's and our certificate of business and our licenses were in the box, and we sent the box package out and then we noticed the tracking number wasn't being picked up. So, that alerted us like within a twenty-four-hour situation. And we went back to the place that we mailed it from and then they said they made sure it got on the truck and from there when it got on the truck, you know just having issues of finding it after that. Then when we went to the company that was in charge of the parcel, they said it seemed to be apprehended and when they apprehended it, we went to the headquarters of the local Police Department that was dealing with the issue. And then they were like they had no record or recollection of that happening. And you know, and it's ongoing from there. They're like, we'll look for it, but we don't know who did it. We looked for the report, and honestly, in that moment, we pursued it for about a month. We kind of dropped it and let it go as a loss.

Interviewer: So, why do you think that happened? Do you think that perhaps somebody thought that it was something else other than hemp?

24-01: Yes.

24-02: Yes. I agree with that. I could definitely see that.

Interviewer: Okay. So, tell me why did you decided to participate in the hemp industry?

24-01: I'll start. Mine was I think two things were going on, a health issue and a mindset shift were happening at the same time. Historically, I was one of those people, you were categorized as a, like a misinformed citizen about the cannabis sativa plant, thinking that cannabis, the psychoactive part, was the only part of the plant. And that part was very negative and very detrimental to society in some ways. Like, you know, decreasing human potential essentially. And it was in my own health journey that I needed to manage pain for a diagnosis that I had. And I went into a doctor's office and smelled the smell of cannabis in that office. And that kind of like awakened me to plant medicine as a very real alternative to pharmaceuticals or any other methods that I had been pursuing up until that point. Unfortunately, that doctor and I never had the actual conversation about cannabis, as my diagnosis was in a pretty dire state and I needed to take other extreme measures to heal myself. But I did find a medical pathway into cannabis and had my first cannabis vape to heal my pain, which worked instantly and that had me kind of come to the conversation with my partner here outside or my partner here about what is the power of this plant. And it was in my own research and understanding new information for myself that this plant was a part of a larger plant family that had been around for decades and essentially globally was also being used in other ways that wasn't currently being used in the United States, and my desire to share this information, but also be affected by

it. One of the strains to heal my pain had me really consider getting into the industry in some way.

Interviewer: Okay.

24-02: And for me, I have roots from the Caribbean, you know, I was fortunate to grow up in the island of (redacted). And you know, so kind of, I don't want to say cannabis was a part of the culture, but it was something that people did to relax and chill out. It was more like a social thing. So, you know, I grew up in that factor of my awareness. Was it to be, you know, something to relax and calm you and enjoy the social people around you who socialize with it moving forward? You know, it's always been a part of my life a lot. We went to visit New Zealand and I noticed how beautiful New Zealand was and how very strict they were on the ecosystem. That's when I started to question myself about environmental things like, you know, how we're treating the Earth. And you know, so with that awareness of going on that trip, I started to research other things that could be replaced, and hemp came up, you know, and again being a connoisseur of cannabis sativa, not being educated enough to know that CBD take that back. Industrial hemp was something that was in existence that we were neglecting. Yeah. And I was looking up on the research and it was a replacement for plastic and it is amazing to lo and behold to find out that hemp could be a replacement for plastic.

24-01: True

24-02: Making polyps that the same time came up. I was watching the news and China had just stopped that week, it was reported on the news taking schedule one plastic, schedule one plastic, which meant they were like fifty to sixty percent of the consumer of

our waste through plastic. So, where is it all going to go? So, and that whole turn around, it all became like, wow, you know, these things are serious, you know, so again, with the love of the plan and our constant conversation, you know, always trying to elevate each other, it came up and right when it came up, (redacted) met up, she met someone who directed us toward the industry and, I guess everything aligned from there.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. That's wonderful. Alright. So next question. As a Black hemp farmer, have you, in your experience, come across any hurdles or barriers within the hemp industry and then please explain those.

24-01: Well, I would like to say no, I have not. No, personally, everything has been pretty smooth. Nobody has been in our way. Nobody came to raid us. So, you know, yeah, nothing. So, my answer is no.

24-02: Okay. Yeah, I would say the same, and I think for a couple of reasons. If I were to think about like why the answer is no for us.

24-01: And I would say that we chose to farm in a state that was very, I would say progressive on hemp regulations and policies. We are in a red state. And so, it is interesting for us to be in a state that has kind of a farmer's mentality as one of the (inaudible) of this plant, our state has, or we've already said we grow in Missouri. So, Missouri has a history of being a top producer of hemp. And so, the conversations that we're in seem to never have a closed door on them. People are very often open and interested in the pathways to enter the industry, to work within the industry to ensure that it remains wide open. And I don't know if there will be hurdles in the future because of now the legalization of cannabis. There seems to be some things on the rise that might be

threatening industrial hemp derived from CBD that I think the associations are looking ahead to because there haven't been any barriers as of yet and we want to keep it that way.

Interviewer: Absolutely, absolutely. And so, the next question would be, have you experienced any difficulties in gaining access to resources such as land, capital, or education that you believe come from a social equity imbalance within the hemp industry?

24-01: For me, I would say no, not as a result of the social equity imbalance. When I think of the imbalance, I think of what we don't know because we were beginning farmers. Not being farmers, not growing up on a family farm, you get into farming and agriculture and you make a lot of mistakes. And so, do I think that's a result of social equity? No. But do I think that there are things at the intersection of a new crop and a beginning farmer that are coming into play? Yes, absolutely. Those two things intersecting create challenges that I don't think we can avoid, but we wouldn't say that those challenges are a result of social equity. We're like we never would have known that or that's something you know any new farmer would have bumped against, but not because of who we are.

Interviewer: Okay. So, could you elaborate on some of those things that you feel based on your level as a novice farmer that could have been spelled out for you, but were not?

24-01: I have a few that could have been split up, but it's not. I'll start with, you know, the chain of farming. So, going to them like, from seed to sale, the process of farming. So, given that we are in an industry that is being reinvented and there is no structure

around it, we were very blind to well, what happens after we harvest the plant and who has open doors. Where's the market for this if you were deciding to farm it? And I think there's a lot of onus or pressure or expectation on the farmer to not only grow it, cultivate it, process it, but then to educate the people who need to be your buyers. And that's a burden. That's a burden to have to try to explain that your product is not the psychoactive one. It's not this other one. It's this other one that is, you know, known globally and has a wider reach. We currently do not farm industrial hemp. We've just been farming for CBD for that reason. I think it's because we expect to have to explain what industrial hemp can be used for and the value of it. And so, you know, to be the people that have to educate and sell, I do think that is an extra burden.

Interviewer: Okay.

24-02: I want to say whatever she said. I have nothing more to say, I think.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright, and the last question. Okay. What steps, in your opinion, can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers within the hemp industry?

24-01: Yeah. So, I have a very different view on this. I really believe that the reason why there aren't many Black farmers in this industry is a direct result of the lack of Black farmers in agriculture, and that the direct result of that missing piece is one of conversation of reparations in the United States. And it is surprising to me to meet Black people, African American people in the United States that have land and don't know how to use it; don't know what to do with that land. They don't know that there is a whole industry of farming. There's this whole new hemp industry, and we're not making the connections of well, what would you do if reparations were here right now? I think we've

not been in the right conversation, as African American people, when it comes to expecting land and what to do with land and how to get into a new industry like this. And so, it's very easy for us to teach the distinctions of hemp and cannabis, but you know what steps can be taken to bring more farmers into the industry. It's like conversations about this is what's possible. Once you realize that land is yours and you can do with it what you want because it's your land. That is a very new conversation for Black people, and we're examples of trying to create projects that we believe deserve reparations. And (redacted), our brand for us is an example of, okay, if you have land, here's what you could do with it. Here's a whole new industry called hemp. And so that's going to be part of the barrier, I think, for Black people is really forgetting that we deserve this and that this is ours for the taking.

Interviewer: Alright.

24-02: Obviously, I have lots in mind. She spoke about seed to sale. So, one of the barriers I do believe in and one of the valuable lessons I learned is you can't sell something unless you have somebody to sell it to. So, it's not really seed to sale. It's like you have somebody to distribute to and they're producing for that person. Luckily for us and our structure, no matter what we grow, we grow something, and if we are creating products for (redacted), so it's like we are growing our own artisan CBD and using it for the products that we are making. So, at the end of the day, you know we can fill that gap of distribution with our products. But I think for a lot of people is having that who if I were to grow. Who am I selling it to? So, I'm basically talking about maybe a platform for networking, a platform for a marketplace where you have different levels, you know,

Black people who sell seeds, Black people who sell farming equipment, black people who, you know what I mean? So, all the way down to Black businesses that need these products, you know what I mean? That's a platform for Black people and maybe to share. And I understand that will come with time, you know, when more people participate. But yeah, that is what I have to say on that part, but yeah.

Interviewer: Alright. We'll leave it right there. Thank you both so much for your time and you have given a lot of insight as to how a difference can be made and some different things that can be done to improve the industry as a whole. So, for that, I really appreciate you.

24-02: Thank you.

24-01: Thank you for having us.

End of recording.

### **Interview with Participant 16-04**

The interview with Participant 16-04 took place on December 29, 2023.

Participant 16-04 is a Black male that was a part time hemp farmer for a period of five years in Tennessee. He is between the ages of fifty-five and sixty-four. He has a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree. He has a family history of farming that dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His family has farmed the same land since the abolition of slavery in the United States in the early 1860s. He works with a few organizations that

collaborate with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on developing the farm bill. The following themes have emerged from the interview with Participant 16-04:

1. Stigma of marijuana vs. hemp (e.g., reluctance of Black farmers to participate, need for hemp education).
2. Inequity in policies and policy implementation (Federal and State Departments of Agriculture).
3. Lack of available financial resources (e.g., grants going to large institutions and farms and banking).
4. Lack of educational opportunities (e.g., the need for an incubator system to assist underrepresented farmers).

Interviewer: I am here with Participant 16-04. How are you doing today, Sir?

16-04: I am doing well.

Interviewer: Okay, that's great! Could you please state your age range?

16-04: I am 55-64.

Interviewer: Okay. And what is your gender?

16-04: Male.

Interviewer: Okay. And what is your highest level of education?

16-04: MBA Master's level.

Interviewer: Okay. And what is your household annual income?

16-04: I prefer not to disclose.

Interviewer: Okay. That's quite understandable. Alright. Are you currently a hemp farmer?

16-04: Not currently.

Interviewer: Okay. So, why did you stop?

16-04: 2019 and 2020 was the last grow year that we did, but the market started to crash in 2019, and at that time we had ramped up to ninety acres by 2020. We still wanted to get in and grow. We did twenty acres in 2020 and with just where the markets were going, it was oversupplied. I liken it to the build it and they will come strategy is what I felt the industry was in, i.e., farmers that did jump on board, but there wasn't a market to support the supply that was brought into the market across the states.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. And when you farmed, were you full-time or part-time?

16-04: Full time.

Interviewer: Okay. And how many years have you been involved in the hemp industry?

16-04: Since 2016. I've been playing an active role in the hemp industry. It was 2018 when I started on the farm side.

Interviewer: Okay. And in which state did you engage in hemp farming?

16-04: Tennessee.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

16-04: Yes. Here in the state of Tennessee, it's a part of the group that collaborated to submit for the USDA Climate Smart Commodities grant, which that was working in conjunction with Tennessee State University and then nationally. I sit on a board for the advocacy group that works with Congress on the USDA Farm Bill, and in that role, I am the chair of the Minority Empowerment Committee.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. That's wonderful.

16-04: Locally and nationally, I am active in supporting underserved communities.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you a first-generation farmer or does your family have a history of farming?

16-04: My family history of farming goes back to slavery. The land that we own was given to us by the slave master, and it's been farmed ever since now. So yeah, it's about four or five generations, and I have to go back to my great, great, great grandmother or grandfather. Yeah, which not to get into detail, but the great, great, great, grandfather on that side was a slave master.

Interviewer: Oh wow, okay.

16-04: And so, yeah, when that farm got split up out to slavery, heir land went, you know, the land got split between those kids. Some went to the white side. Some went to the black side.

Interviewer: Wow.

16-04: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, wow. That's interesting. Alright. So, have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

16-04: I would say there's definitely hurdles in the process of growing just with the fact you're having to submit to the DEA, even though we're saying this is a legal crop, and even with the submission and now we don't, you know, switch from Tennessee Department of Agriculture and that resides under the USDA. It's cumbersome to go through this process. I was growing corn, wheat, soybeans, none of this, these hurdles would be in place.

Interviewer: Okay, alright. So, why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry? So, of all of the crops, why hemp?

16-04: That's actually a personal story there in that in 2012, my mom was diagnosed with dementia, and that's after over seven plus years of being misdiagnosed by multiple doctors. So, by the time in 2012 when my mom is being diagnosed, my family had a jaundice eye looking at the medical industry with just how mom's treatment had been and then where her life, lack of quality of life was by the time that they finally said, oh, we figured it out. Now it's dementia. And so really, what was the catalyst to start looking at hemp was September 2013. Doctor Sanjay Gupta did that first week, one episode a year and a month later after her diagnosis. And that's when, you know, I'm sitting there watching the show and said Charlotte (inaudible) issue was brain related. My mom's

issue was brain related. Could there be a correlation there? And that started research and then by 2016 joined the local association in the state of Tennessee. And that you know everything else, the dominoes started to fall. Then by 2018, I'm out on the farm learning the process.

Interviewer: Okay. So, have you ever experienced any difficulties in gaining resources, access to resources such as land, capital, or education that you believe is a result of social equity imbalance within the industry?

16-04: And you know that's been an evolving and moving situation there like, you know, because back in the 2016-time frame extension, agents didn't really even understand this plan. You know, if we look historically with any plant, your strongest people, knowledgeable people generally are the extension agents who are able to educate the farmers, right? And so, predominantly in this industry and that is kind of shifting as Ag agencies are getting more up to speed, but back when we're starting this, it was farmers who had the most insight and typically those farmers were non-minority farmers who had capital to take the risk and had connections and the ability to go to the West Coast or pull in West Coast resources. Whereas if you're a minority farmer, you're bootstrapping it, you know that then that's getting into undercapitalized, right? So, it's always typically harder for undercapitalized communities regardless of what color you are or being able to get into a brand-new industry where it's all about relationships and money to make things happen, right?

Interviewer: Okay. So, as a Black hemp farmer, have you personally experienced or come across any hurdles or barriers within the industry? I would say being able to, you know, a

couple call outs I'll make there one funding and then the other one I would call out in addition to funding is if you're not having using your own land and needing, you know, and wanting to leverage of pulling other land using your own land and needing, you know, and wanting the leverage of pulling other land around you, renting, you know, land, leasing land. It's a stigma, you know, one of the biggest hurdles is the stigma on the plant that you're having to get the person whose land or resources you're using to sign off on that in order to submit for your licenses and their hindrance to do that because they're concerned the feds getting ready to come in and do something to them. So, I would say early on that was the biggest piece of it and in addition to just financial backing because you're having to pay upfront for whether you're using seedlings, clones, etc., and the input costs are more expensive than your normalized commodities, right? Yeah. And we're talking cents versus dollars when we're talking about input costs, right?

Interviewer: I mean, right, the entry costs are definitely a little bit more on the front end than some of the other commodities that are being farmed.

16-04: Yeah. I mean, if you compare costs of corn inputs versus hemp it's night and day, alright?

Interviewer: So, in your opinion, what specific policies or regulations within the hemp industry do you believe have the most impact on social equity issues?

16-04: Number one would be the felon ban, where we're restricting people from participating in a legal market because of their past, having to wait that ten years before you can operate. That's like putting a handicap on Black people. Let's just be honest

about that. That is literally saying we're getting ready to start a market and if you meet this criteria, you have to wait ten years before you can get in the game, okay? That's a handicap, right? I mean to me, that's the very biggest one that just touches my (inaudible). It's like earmarking minorities primarily, right? Yeah. I mean, well, I won't even say, right? That's just my perspective, but I think the data will validate that.

Interviewer: Indeed. Can you think of any other policies or regulation pieces that you believe have an impact on social equity?

16-04: The banking aspects of the national and regional banks. It's because there is an (inaudible) banking regulation, and most banks look at this as marijuana. Even when you got all the information, licensing, and everything, there's still questioning if this is marijuana, and I would even say even in my role as an officer of a 501c3 trade association, working with a bank that's headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee, that's a National Bank. We get audited and go through scrutiny every year where the regulators at the bank are wanting to close our account, and the only reason that this account doesn't get closed is we have a good relationship in place with the local people here where we live and opened that account. And they know who we are, and they lobby for us on our behalf. They are our advocates. And they go behind the scenes making phone calls to say do not shut down this account. But from corporate down, it's always every year we go through this where they're wanting to shut that account down.

Interviewer: Wow. That is unbelievable. It is unbelievable, but it's not.

16-04: It is unbelievable, but it's reality. I'll say it that way, right? Yeah, so banking, you know, if I step back up, what's the list? You've got the felon ban, then you've got the restrictions on banking or the fact that we don't have the Banking Act passed Congress several times, but for some reason it gets held up in the Senate. That would hopefully give banks more comfort, making banks more comfortable with allowing the money to flow for hemp, you know? And then one of the other challenges is novice laymen outside industries out the gate, legislators, regulators, they do not distinguish between marijuana and hemp. To them, it's the same thing and you're having to convince them it is not marijuana, right? And then if you are a minority coming in with that story, it's even a harder challenge to convince them that you're not that, like literally. So, it's the stigma that is attached to marijuana that has spilled over into the hemp industry.

Interviewer: Yes.

16-04: And then being a black person or any minority walking in, they already looking at you typically as okay, now I know this person is hustling or they upped is no good or whatever, you know, I mean, yeah, like because where did the history come from? The history comes from demonizing the plant and minorities, Black and brown people to the plant, Reefer Madness. I mean we go back to that like literally.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, how do you feel that that has impacted people of color, Black people, brown people? How do you feel that that has impacted their ability to participate within the industry itself?

16-04: I'm glad you went there because, to me, in my mind, as it's flowing through this interview that is the perfect segue because it's a double-edged sword, right? There are champions like me who are willing to take on the risk, go through and jump the hurdles to participate in this industry, and if you probably look across the industry, we're probably very close to what you see is Blacks participating in farming in general. What? We're only one percent now? We're probably in that same percentage, one to two percent of the entire hemp marketplace. And so, what then that does to people who are not participating in it? It makes them not want to deal with all of the hurdles or the issues because it's not a market that is welcoming, you know, the lanes have not been set up to incentivize Black people to get into the industry.

Interviewer: So, that leads into a segue to my follow-up question. What steps can be taken to improve participation among Black farmers in the hemp industry? And also, with those steps we're also looking for some policy things that can be done to make those improvements, as well. So, in your perspective, what steps can be taken to improve black participation?

16-04: You know, it's going back to the list, but now I'll add some to the list. One, you know, going back to that felon ban and removing that, getting banking in place and, you know, some of what I'm going to say, oh, actually the last two, plus it hurts blacks more, but it's not a clear line in the sand because the minority class or people in this country, white people, they benefit from this too, you know, like smaller impact, but they need to be able to bank, too. That is, it's not like Black people are the only ones that are having banking issues. You know, it just typically will hurt us more because we don't have, you

know, we're typically not the ones who can call and have a buddy who can get us off into the bank. We're just shut down, you know, we're, you know, we knock on doors, can't get in where they got connections and can talk to the right person who says, yeah, you knocked on five doors. I can get you in over here, call my buddy, Bob. He'll take care of it. We typically don't have those relationships, right? And so, it's the felon ban. It's the banking, but then, and this touches what the USDA has been dealing with for decades, is the fact that we need support whether it's in grants or loans, and I'll go back to the history of the USDA. They hadn't really played fair with Black farmers when it comes to loans, right? But we need structure in place that would incentivize because this, you know, at the end of the day, what we're talking about is rural development, right, which is economic development, and so when it comes to being able to have access to capital is another key piece that levels the playing field, right? So, any grant that the USDA has because, even if we look at that Climate Smart Commodities grant, it was structured that, if you are an HBCU, we're incentivizing to give money to HBCUs, and I'm making an assumption here, but I mean you can assume that we're saying, oh, we'll make available money to HBCUs and then that should touch black farmers, but there is nothing that they've done thus far that has a direct impact, and I'm saying we need funding put in place that is direct to black farms.

Interviewer: So, what you're saying is basically, in a nutshell, the USDA is providing money or opportunities for HBCUs and then, in return, the HBCUs are expected to reach Black farmers, when the reality is that this may or may not happen.

16-04: Correct.

Interviewer: Okay. And so, what do you think can be done to facilitate that so that more Black farmers can be reached?

16-04: Literally, man, and I kind of said it before, I restated to be clear, for grants put in place that are earmarked for black people and, in addition to grants, we need to see how to say this, in addition to having grants out there, what would be beneficial is where the USDA would support programs that shepherd black farmers through the process, right, you know, I mean, let me break it down like this. If I am a white farmer or even if I'm a minority, people just happen to have the right relationships in place, and I'm going to keep it as politically correct as possible but try to be as transparent as possible. If I was in the house and I had white people in my corner, my road is going to be a little bit easier because they are going to take care of me. I'm one of the chosen few, right? But if I'm out in the field, I don't have the support in place and I'm individually out here trying to figure it out, and so it would be really great if the USDA would create a center of excellence that would be an incubator for all minority groups, disenfranchised groups. I'm not just keeping this black at this point because I want to expand this beyond (inaudible) just because, to me, it's about lifting all boats up because then we have a stronger overall economy where all boats rise, right? And so if they put in an incubator, I'm calling the Center of Excellence Incubation, and I think those terms mean something to people already they can understand the frameworks behind that where then you can have individuals who don't have the resources, the knowledge that (inaudible), they can then be shepherded in and set up for success. It's how we set farmers up for success and not do this whole everyone is just you're out there in the race and it's up to you to be

successful and pull your bootstraps up by your own self. That's why we need to get up out of that. It's about community.

Interviewer: So, a lack of relationship should not be a deterrent for success among all participants or an impediment?

16-04: It should not be an impediment, you know, we can create, I'll say, incubators and again where people can come into the fold, and even when you can create environments like that, not only are you bringing in financial backing, you're bringing in subject matter experts, but then by me being a part of it, I'm going to say the word club knowledge is transferred, shared. We all learned; you going, me and you, a part of this, you know, some things. You're going to see some things that I didn't see, but by us being connected and then they can say, well, there's associations out there that's paid. That's pay to play, right? That's pay to play. If you don't have the money and the resources or if I can't afford to go to the expos, we get out in Denver and every place else that's pay to play is what that is, right?

Interviewer: That's right.

16-04: So yeah, how do we break down that barrier? And it's literally the government doing what government is supposed to do, supporting their people, right? Hopefully that answered that question.

Interviewer: No, it did. It was a great answer. It provided great insight as to some things that can be changed or altered to make the industry, not only more accessible to black farmers, but accessible to everyone who is disenfranchised within the industry that wants

to participate in the industry, but either cannot participate in the industry based on a felony conviction of a sort or that may be prohibited from entry into the industry based on some other factors that may deal with financial or policy issues and so forth.

16-04: So, no. There was a variance cycle and then it's, you know, I'll add to that. It's you don't know what you don't know, right?

Interviewer: Right.

16-04: And that idea of an incubator center that is funded and center of excellence and let's then, you know, to even help the government on this. Well, we can't just put money out there. We'll know the institutions that you know, and trust already exists. We have just here in my state, the collaboration that's already been put together. The USDA knows the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. The USDA knows the University of Tennessee Ag Extension. The USDA knows Tennessee State University. Just with those four institutions that I just named, they have a footprint that covers the entire state of Tennessee with facilities that cover the entire state of Tennessee that, with adequate funding, this could easily be turned on, and these are reputable institutions, validated, audited, that are already getting money, and I'm just saying, how do we use the money now, right? And the idea of an incubation model, we do it in business all the time. Tennessee State University has an incubation center, UT, all these schools, but we only focus on this on business and building startup businesses. We need to use that same mindset, that same process for farming. This country always says two things; farming is our backbone in our military. Those are two things politicians always use, but they're the

least that really gets the funding, accommodations, and served. They're the least served. They're the most serving, but they're the least served, right?

Interviewer: Alright. We'll leave it right there. Thank you very much.

16-04: Tearing up in here, bro, like that.

Interviewer: No, no, no. This has been wonderful. Thank you very much for your insight. You have provided a unique perspective, and an important one, because you've brought up some issues that definitely need to be addressed. And again, as you stated, not only for Black farmers individually, but as a whole, for all underserved farmers who want to get into the industry, and not only the hemp industry itself, but farming and agriculture as a whole. And there are some things that can and should be done by those entities that have the power to do so. And hopefully with this study, hopefully this will be one piece that will move in that direction to be able to make that happen.

16-04: And one last statement. It's not a question of the money, you know, because the government has proven that the money, trillions of dollars, went into that infrastructure package to build out America, so I know the money is there. All I'm saying is direct major investment, even when we say that billions of dollars that were put forward for Climate Smart Commodities, if you look at the list that is out there publicly available and go through it and see how many minorities out and it would be a speculation, but I guarantee if somebody took the time to scrutinize those numbers, ninety percent of that money went to non-minority people.

Interviewer: Yes.

16-04: And demographically, ninety percent of this country is not white people.

Interviewer: That's right. That is correct.

16-04: But if you look at the breakdown of the money flow, it's disproportionately going to white people, right?

Interviewer: But I think you said something earlier that is true in this respect, too.

16-04: I think that with the Climate Smart Commodities grant, I think that the federal government provided money to larger institutions in the, I don't want to say, the hope, but in the thought process that it would trickle down.

Interviewer: Okay, and everything you're saying hope and then trickle down, it's not reality, you know.

16-04: Yeah. I'm the cat or the dog that's sitting up underneath the daggum table that's full of food and I'm down here hoping that some crumbs will trickle down or roll off that table is the visual that I have anytime I hear anybody talk about trickle down, going back like the Reagan trickle-down economics.

Interviewer: Yeah.

16-04: We go get some money to some rich people and they'll be benevolent and let some of that money fall off the table, right? When we are a capitalist society that's built on greed, how in the heck does that triangulate? How does that correlate? Look, this is what this is. This is literally what I'm asking. Not me asking, but this is what they're projecting, that's being asked that we trust people who want to have five, six, seven

homes, the ability to take all of these vacations, that somehow the benevolence in their heart is going to say, you know, instead of us spending five million dollars, you know, we could put ten percent to twenty percent of this (inaudible). That's not reality. Yeah, no, we need money directed strictly cutting out the middleman. I use the pathway, the platform of saying incubators as an example. There are other type programs that have been set up that have shepherded entrepreneurs and businesses and I'm just saying do that in an Agribusiness perspective, starting foundationally at the farm because we have farming. It maintains the sovereign power of every nation. If you don't have farming, you're powerless as a nation, and then it's getting everybody on board, and when I say everybody, it doesn't matter what color. We need all of our farmers to be successful, and if we got one side of that equation that is falling off, it's affecting our ability as a whole, the collective, right?

Interviewer: That is true because the nation depends on farmers and farming, agriculture and it's almost an all-hands-on deck scenario because you need everybody to participate in the process in order for the goal to be accomplished.

16-04: And then I would even add the close out just from my end is the why starting with the plant, you know, industries, business, government powers. Europe has already mandated carbon neutral by 2030. Corporations in the United States, (inaudible), they're looking at how to take care of their environment, have governance around that social equity. All of these industries for Wall Street have already shifted and are focused on this, right? And this plant that we're talking about, hemp, sequesters carbon and remediates soil, Chernobyl. The Russians are using this to clean up their radiation spill

over in the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl. It's a proven plant. We do need more research. To me, this is the one plant that I say we can get it right on, and when I say get it right, you know, as a child, I can remember when winter wheat was introduced into the state of Tennessee, and I remember when soybeans was introduced into the state of Tennessee and all of these commodities they said was going to be the one that was going to save farmers. But this is across the board. We know the numbers showed that you have a good year in farming, then you have a year that wipes you out and you go on getting the loans. This is the one plant that gives us the opportunity to get this right. Well, we take care of the farmers and it's not just talking about taking care of farmers. No, the collective percentage of Black farmers has gone down from post slavery, going up through where we're down under one percent now that needs to be reversed. And it's not just, oh we need to have more Black people at the table. No, this is why we need to, as a country, put more emphasis on farming and collectively everyone wins when we do that because it's not just, you know, you say Black people are down to less than one percent. You got to also look at the left side of that coin, too. White people are walking away from farming, too. We're being pushed out in percentages more and quicker, but the whole system is failing, so we need to rebuild agriculture in this country. The emphasis, the focus on agriculture and all I'm saying is when we're doing that, let's even that playing field, making sure that resources are going to lift both muscles. Our PWI, what they call them, primary white institutions, and we need to lift up our brown and black as well. It's good for America. I will endorse that message like you'll approve that message.

Interviewer: Politician?

16-04: I don't know.

Interviewer: You may have a run for Congress in you somewhere.

16-04: Hey, I'm out here fighting on the outside right now, but you know, you never know. I have never turned down what the future holds, man, because I got the passion for sure.

Interviewer: Alright, well, we will leave it right there.

16-04: Thank you, Sir.

End of recording.

### **Interview with Participant 16-05**

The interview with Participant 16-05 took place on December 29, 2023. Participant 16-05 was a full-time Black hemp farmer and processor in Tennessee for five years. He is between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four. He has some college experience and possesses several cannabis industry certifications. He has a history of family farming, as both of his grandfathers were farmers. The following themes have emerged from the interview with Participant 16-05:

1. More consistent and practical policies and legislation (e.g., changes in THC limits).

2. Better access to financial resources and a lack of equity in allocation of those resources (e.g., grants and banking).
3. Lack of education for Black Farmers from HBCUs and USDA.
4. Stigma of hemp vs. marijuana.
5. Lack of available legal services for underrepresented farmers in the hemp industry.

Interviewer: I am here with Participant 16-05. How are you doing today, Sir?

16-05: I'm well. And you?

Interviewer: I'm doing quite well. Thank you for asking. Alright. We will roll right into the interview. Okay. So, could you please state your age range for me?

16-05: 35-44.

Interviewer: Okay. And what is your gender?

16-05: Male.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your highest level of education?

16-05: Some college and a couple of professional certificates.

Interviewer: Okay. Fantastic. Okay. What is your annual household income?

16-05: I prefer not to say.

Interviewer: Alright. That's perfectly understandable. Are you currently a hemp farmer?

16-05: No.

Interviewer: Okay. So, why did you stop?

16-05: It's a twofold answer. CBD, as a crop, lost its value in 2020. If you're farming anything less than, I'd say, five to ten acres, there's really no value in it unless you have a processing lab and a full output. And in second to that, they may outlaw growing THC-A flower in Tennessee, which is the biggest part of the market right now. But, since they outlawed that, then there's not a lot of room for growers outside of the small batch niche market. Now, there is room for growers if you're willing to bend and break the law, but I'm personally not right with that.

Interviewer: Okay. So, when you did farm, were you a full time or part time hemp farmer?

16-05: I was a full-time farmer, and I ran a lab on top of it.

Interviewer: How many years were you involved in the hemp industry?

16-05: On the agricultural side from 2015 until 2020. So, for about five years.

Interviewer: Okay. And in which state did you engage predominantly in your hemp farming?

16-05: Tennessee.

Interviewer: Alright. Are you or were you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

16-05: So, I've been a board member of both the Hemp Alliance of Tennessee. I was a member of the Tennessee Tree Association and a member of the Tennessee Growers Coalition.

Interviewer: Okay.

16-05: I'm no longer a member of any of those.

Interviewer: And why did you discontinue your membership, if you don't mind me asking?

16-05: No, not a problem at all. I actually had some health issues arise at the beginning of this year that took me out of it, you know, the side projects like that.

Interviewer: Sure. Okay. So, are you a first-generation farmer or does your family have a history of farming?

16-05: I'm not a first-generation farmer. My grandfather had a small farm in (redacted), Tennessee. On my other side of the family, my other grandfather did some farming. He was a Mason and did some farming on the side.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Very interesting. Have you encountered or when you were involved in the hemp industry, had you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

16-05: You know, outside of them really pushing the total THC ban here, not really. We are in Tennessee, and speaking for this state alone, it actually had been very, for lack of a better word, a liberal set of laws regulating us up until the end of 2021. So, I'd never actually run into any problems until this year when they passed the new regulations that taxed hemp. Something they did was to stop issuing manufacturing licenses for people that made hemp products.

Interviewer: Why?

16-05: They did. Why did they do it? I don't know, but they did that. And how that affected me was in 2022, I sold my business, (redacted), to a local entrepreneur who owns a series of dispensaries, if you will, and during that time, while I was working for him, I had actually let my manufacturing license for my facility lapse. He and I, we couldn't see eye to eye on business practices, so I separated from him, and when I came back to my facility, my license had lapsed. And then I immediately went to go get another one, and they're like, oh, well, we have a moratorium on issuing new licenses. So, yeah, and you know, not that I'm special or anything, but the truth and the fact of the matter is that I was the first person in Tennessee to actually get a manufacturing license, completely lined up with the regulations of the FDA, as far as food manufacturing goes and with the regulations of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, as far as food manufacturing goes. Now, of course that doesn't affect the way they enforce the laws, but it was definitely a big shock to my system to get caught up in that and they're not going to start reissuing licenses again until July 2024. So, it's that definitely. But luckily, I have another facility that I'm partnering in and I'm able to use that for the time being.

Interviewer: Okay. So, in July of 2024, are you going to reapply for the licensure at this point?

16-05: Yes. I've got a new brand that I've created in the past six to seven months. So, we will be applying for that in July. But we're just really kind of holding out to see what they do, as far as regulation goes. My mind is set on more co-packing and away from creating

my own stuff if it goes sideways, but I guess we'll just see in time, but I plan on getting a new license, yes.

Interviewer: Okay, great. So, that actually answered my next question. So, I'll go on to the next question. Have you experienced any difficulties in gaining access to resources such as land, capital, or education that you believe is a result of a social equity imbalance within the hemp industry?

16-05: Absolutely. I mean I think, you know, I think we can all take a deep breath and understand that, you know, this is America, and nepotism and favoritism is just the name of the game, and that doesn't matter if it's farming, selling used cars, it doesn't matter what it is and, you know, we can call it this or that. But the fact is that I was the person to apply for the TAEP grant for the Department of Agriculture. I sent my application all the way through, was successfully approved, and then when I was supposed to actually have the discussion about when I would receive some funds, I got the call that says, oh, we haven't, never mind. We haven't approved TAEP for cannabis or hemp yet. Okay. No big deal. And the conversation ended with next year, it'll be approved, and you'll be at the top of the list. Next year comes around, I put my application in, and I didn't hear a word back, and then once I found out who the grant money went to, I was a tad bit outraged because the grant money actually went to some of the wealthiest participants in the industry. Now, were they all a certain race? Were they all a certain gender? Were they all a certain age group? Yes. Am I a part of any of these? No. Is that the direct cause of it? I'm not here to say yes, but at a certain point when you zoom out far enough, it sure starts to look a certain way. And now my business (redacted), I ran from 2018 until 2022 when

I sold it. We did about \$1.2 million in total revenue in that time, slowly increasing year over year from \$5,000 to \$500,000, and at no point was I able to access loans, grants, or anything of that nature. I do my taxes. I keep clean books. I pay myself at the time, maybe \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year, you know, as it got a little later, maybe a little bit more, but there was no (inaudible). I mean, my personal credit was just fine, but I still couldn't access any level of financing from my bank. I mean, at one point, I think I had \$200,000 in my bank and my bank was just like, nope, we're not dealing with you, and that was Regions Bank, and at first, I believed it was because it was hemp, but late I came to find out that one of my, you know, one of the people in the industry that I knew had been using Regions as well, and they had actually been able to secure financing just on a personal guarantee. So, you know, there again, it was definitely a hurdle and I just kind of looked at it as like, alright, well, this is just an opportunity to prove that you don't need the bank to be successful and, you know, that's what I did, right?

Interviewer: Okay. So, the follow-up to that question, in your opinion, which specific policies or regulations within the hemp sector do you believe have the most impact on social equity issues?

16-05: You know, I mean, coming from my point of view, I am (inaudible). I was, at the time of the inception of the hemp industry in the United States of America, you know, thanks to the 2014 Farm Act, I was able to grow hemp. I was a felon at the time for cannabis, and it took a long road for me to get my situation back together in a way that I was able to, you know, get my license, you know, get everything expunged and everything. And that's not a cheap process. So, you know, if you look at the, you know,

the demographic of the average person trying to get into the hemp industry versus the demographic of the average person with a felony and how that might mess you up. But outside of that, I don't feel like there's a lot of limiting factors in the actual regulations. I don't feel like most people are regulated out unless you have a little bit of a checkered past, like myself, but I feel like it's pretty wide open for just about anyone to take a shot out. Now, whether or not you can find the rooms to get in and get involved in the conversations that you need to go and learn and all that stuff, it can be a bit intimidating, you know, but that's not really from a regulatory point of view.

Interviewer: Okay. So, speaking to having a felony for cannabis and trying to navigate that process of becoming eligible to participate within the hemp industry, I guess that leads me into my next question also. What steps can be taken to improve participation among black hemp farmers in the hemp industry, such as people that are in your situation that may have a felony, but they still want to participate within the industry that is a fully legal industry with a crop that is a fully legal crop based on the 2018 Farm Bill?

16-05: You know, when I got into it in 2014-2015, I could name the other Black participants that I knew of on two hands. Luckily for us and for the future and for other people, younger people that want to get involved and, for people who didn't get involved earlier, there is more representation, so there are more people you can talk to and there isn't as much of a glass ceiling kind of feel in the environment, therefore, I'd say the first three to four years it felt very, you know, maybe for lack of a better word, not segregated, but just closed off, closed off completely. And I think the biggest thing is, you know, you look at someone like a Frederick. I met Frederick in 2018, and he was just a guy sitting in

the crowd. Now, he is the head of the largest hemp association trade group in the state and interacts all over the country with other hemp associations and trade groups. So, it's really, you know, there is a certain level of personal responsibility that I think people have to take about putting themselves in those rooms. You know, you have to put yourself in the room and that's with anything, but the resources have grown for people, you know, for the minority people trying to get involved in it. And that's, you know, that's all on individual people, but yeah, seeing those resources grow over the years and seeing guys like Fred and Chris and Danny and Stu and all these people, not only survive in the industry, but thrive and become, you know, beacons in their areas. It's definitely uplifting. And I think everybody who wants to be a part of it should look at that.

Interviewer: Okay. So, tell me this, from a policy perspective or from a policy standpoint, what are some areas in which policy can be changed or altered in order to facilitate more participation in your opinion?

16-05: Yeah, you know, I think, I mean obviously, I think changing these laws is going to be your biggest step in inviting more growers back to the table, which in turn is going to help create that environment where, you know, so like I said, we're with someone like Frederick where even those monthly meetings, so I'm not going to say deregulate, but loosening up this regulation so that we can get back to the agricultural side of this business. Part of the reason there's not a big draw for people anymore is there's no agricultural side anymore. So, there's no meetings and there's no groups where, you know, at one point we were getting two, three, four hundred people in a room over at TSU in the Ag building, and so without that with strict regulations and the way we have

it, we don't have the need for the community to meet up to talk shop and that cuts off people from being able to access the industry because most of the guys I know in the industry, they're busy. They don't have time to do pop ins and pop ups and have people come by. So, the TNHIA was the place for us to become, you know, build camaraderie, but also share information, share knowledge, and share how to do things, so you know lighten up on some of the regulations so farmers can do what farmers do is step one. And then from there, we've had a growth obviously over the past four years, especially we've had a growth in social equity in general.

Interviewer: Okay.

16-05: So, I think once we get back to the point where farmers can do what farmers do with this plant, then the access will be wide open because, you know, back in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, it was a very, very limited crowd. It was a very, pretty much a certain type, maybe one percent turnout for minorities, but it was everybody else in the other demographic for the most part. So, we get it back open and now that TSU has a grant for hemp research, like fully underway what you guys have over there, it's going to help just in general. But there again, like I say, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, universities weren't really embracing it. They weren't really pushing it outward to their students. Somewhere like TSU was not pushing it outward toward their students and the farmers that use them as a resource. So, it definitely cut off some of that potential growth for Black farmers. I think personally, because maybe there was an, oh well, we don't want to get these people jammed up or we don't know how this is going to go. Whatever the reasoning was, the

lack of participation, I don't think would be reflected if we got back to that level of, you know, activity.

Interviewer: Okay. And so, if you were in charge of changing or altering the policy, how would you go about doing that or what would you do in order to facilitate that change in policy?

16-05: I would start, like I say, start at the top. I would say, okay, farmers can grow up to one percent Delta-9 THC. Then they should limit the amount of total THC that a farmer can grow and keep it to a reasonable hemp level. We don't need to, you know, we don't need to. A lot of people are masquerading marijuana nowadays as hemp and I'm like a huge cannabis user. I have been for twenty years, but this policy of allowing this to slip through the back door. I don't think it's helping build the industry, so I would end that. I would end the THC-A flower thing. That way we're not burning crops. Then I would start looking at the grant programs really hard and make them more direct and useful because the grants I've seen given out from the Department of Agriculture for hemp programs. I've been in cannabis for a decade. I've seen a ton of waste, but the waste that I saw with that grant money was embarrassing, and I think that, you know, grants like that shouldn't be offered to people with millions of dollars' worth of investors. They should be offered to, you know, social equity programs. They should be offered to small family legacy farmers. They should be offered to people like that that are trying to get involved and, you know, create agricultural products for their community, for their area, not for people who are trying to start national businesses. So, limiting the way grants are dispersed, increasing the amount of Delta-9 THC a farmer can grow, and decreasing the

amount of THC-A that a farmer can grow. I think these are just some of the base staples of creating a better, a more equitable farming program for everyone.

Interviewer: Alright. We'll leave it right there. Thank you very much for this. You've provided a lot of insight on how changes can be made to facilitate change and equity within the industry itself. So, the information has been very useful, very helpful, and I thank you for your time.

16-05: Yeah, and I mean and the one thing just to say, it's like I feel like we should be able to, we should find a way, and this is anecdotal in a way, to provide legal services because one thing I didn't have when I sold (redacted) to the guy that owns (redacted), I didn't have legal representation that truly had my best interest in mind. I went into it blind, thinking that I was going to get a good deal, and you know, that everything was being above board and honest, but what I didn't realize, have you ever heard of a get? You know, where everyone is in on it except....

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

16-05: You know like, yeah, everyone was in on it except for me when I went in that room to sign a contract. Everybody else was in on the play except for me. So, creating some base level of legal representation for people trying to get into the industry that maybe can't afford \$1,000. A lawyer just to sign a contract, you know, most can't afford to pay, you know, somebody like \$1,500 to review a piece of paper. Yeah. I feel like that's something that should definitely be looked into and potentially offered as the industry expands because I've been in the cannabis industry from Portland, Oregon to

Portland, Maine, and I've seen it all. I've had great equity deals. I've lost a ton of money in deals. I've made a ton of money in deals. People have caused higher prices so many times so many times and it has caused a great deal of stress and I've lost a lot of money and I'm actually in a lawsuit currently where I'm pro se against the (inaudible), but no legal representation wanted to represent me, like when I went to approach all the attorneys for representation on this, they said that they had a conflict of interest. I don't know anything cannabis, but you pay me ten grand, six months from now, I'll know enough and then we'll go in soon. So, creating some sort of resource for people to have to, at least just be able to ping off of, I think, it would be a huge step. And give people the security and comfort they need to actually make that time, life, and financial investment.

Interviewer: Alright. Thank you very much for that. And that is actually a perspective that I had not thought of. And so, when I make the recommendations for this study, I'll definitely use that because the legal side of it is definitely an issue and, not only from the regulatory side of it, but also making sure that people (inaudible). And that they're not disenfranchised or take for a ride on their reliance on people to have their best interests from a legal standpoint. So, thank you very much for that.

16-05: Alright. It's something. It's a serious issue. I appreciate you, though.

Interviewer: No, I appreciate you for speaking today. And again, you know these perspectives are necessary because that's a way to grow the industry, not only for black hemp farmers, but really for everybody because you don't want anybody to be disenfranchised, you know, you want everything to be above board and you want

everybody to be able to have equal access because it's only going to grow the industry as a whole.

16-05: So, that's exactly right. I mean, I'm in a lawsuit for half a million dollars right now, and I don't wish it on anyone, you know, so I get it, but just let me know if there's anything else. Yeah. I appreciate you.

Interviewer: No, I appreciate you.

End of recording.

### **Interview with Participant 16-06**

The interview with Participant 16-06 took place on February 1, 2024. Participant 16-06 is a Black male that is a former hemp farmer in Tennessee. He was involved in the hemp industry for a period of three years prior to leaving hemp farming. He is between the ages of 25 and 34. He has a bachelor's degree and some Graduate School experience. He has a family history of farming that dates back several generations. The following themes have emerged from the interview with Participant 16-06:

1. Stigma of Marijuana vs. Hemp (e.g., interactions with law enforcement).
2. Lack of education (e.g., medicinal/wellness benefits of hemp).
3. Lack of available funding and resources (e.g., government grants and bank loans).
4. Lack of comprehensive policies (e.g., regulations on THC levels)

Interviewer: I'm here with Participant 16-06. How are you doing today, sir?

16-06: I'm doing well. Thank you for asking.

Interviewer: Great. Alright, we'll roll right into the interview. So, question number one.

Could you please state your age range?

16-06: That would be 25 to 34.

Interviewer: Okay, wonderful. And your gender is male?

16-06: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your highest level of education?

16-06: Some Graduate School

Interviewer: Okay, and what is your annual household income?

16-06: I prefer not to say (laughter).

Interviewer: (laughter) Okay. That's totally understandable. Are you currently a hemp farmer?

16-06: Currently, no.

Interviewer: Okay. So why did you stop?

16-06: It wasn't lucrative enough to sustain and scale.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you want to go into specifics about that?

16-06: Well, I believe there isn't enough marketing for the healing purposes health. It's more so industrial. So only industries are looking at it. That's the cash crop right now versus the community itself.

Interviewer: Okay. So, when you did farming, were you a full time or part time hemp farmer?

16-06: I did it full time for a year and once a season in 2018.

Interviewer: Okay, and how many years were you involved in hemp farming?

16-06: Altogether, four years.

Interviewer: Okay, and in which state did you farm?

16-06: Tennessee.

Interviewer: Alright. And were you involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

16-06: Yes, that would be the Hemp Association and the TSU Pilot Program.

Interviewer: Okay. And so, are you are first generation farmer or does your family have a history of farming?

16-06: My family does have a history in farming, but it's been separated a few generations. My great uncles did so about three generations removed. My great grandfather farmed, too.

Interviewer: Okay, fantastic. And have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp when you were a hemp farmer?

16-06: Well, ultimately the whole concept of discrimination with Black Americans, it does deny it. Exclude the Agriculture Department and unfortunately a lot of black farmers haven't been able to sustain themselves in any business that has to do with

agricultural, industrial, corporate, or any major scale is just because Black Americans haven't been active in participating in the private sector of the economy in general and it stems into help and everything else in agriculture as well. So, it's as whole total equity shift that kind of trickles down to this department. It isn't really one thing. It's not a one-time discrimination with this department or for agriculture. It's hard to explain.

Interviewer: No, take your time, take your time.

16-06: But I think that just like all other departments where there's been inequities, you know, agriculture isn't excluded from that. So, I think it's just been hard for Black businesspeople in general to scale up and in hemp farming especially, because there's also a criminalization factor to it. Historically, Black people have been stereotyped for marijuana usage and dealing, and it automatically puts a bad stigma on them. It puts a misguided image in the minds of law enforcement because when they see a farmer, the ideal hemp farmer doesn't look like a Black person to them. So, when they do come across one, they don't necessarily put forth their best foot or best behavior. Their general assumptions usually ride out the rest of the process, and that's what tends to stop the success of Black farmers. Okay, so that was a long answer. I'm sorry.

Interviewer: No, that was great. It was actually very eye opening and very helpful. So, the next question, why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry?

16-06: Well, because I see the healing properties of it for medical conditions for many reasons, animal feeds and fabrics. There are so many things that can be done with hemp if we take the time to facilitate the research of it and continue to innovate because we're kind of stymied by the criminalization of its sister, marijuana. There is almost like a hold

up in knowledge and information and yeah, a lot of people who are suffering from illnesses they can't afford to wait, you know, they need working health and they're trying all the over-the-counter pharmaceuticals and things aren't working for them, so they would look at all the alternatives and holistic plants and healing is becoming a bigger industry. I think it's because of that.

Interviewer: Okay. So, have you experienced any difficulties in gaining access to resources such as land, capital, or education that you believe is a result of a social equity imbalance within the industry?

16-06: We have force, but just like, you know, many other cases of racism and all other government departments, it's very hard to prove. You know, you're going to say, well we didn't give it to you for this reason or we didn't give it to you for that reason, but you look at others, other farmers in the industry who are not, who don't look like you, they have similar reasons as to why they do get it. But I have those same reasons or the reasons why I don't. So, it's very tricky. I think it's just; you know, they choose their friends. They choose people who are already working with them. So, there is a human bias that's there anyway, but I also believe that the whole stereotype of Black people selling dope and selling drugs illicitly that kind of taints the image of the Black entrepreneur who is a farmer that's harming this. So, they don't look at you, even with your credentials, clean driving record, clean criminal record, I don't think I was allotted. I wasn't given the best position. I'm not sure, you know, it's just I wasn't selected to get the first loan or to get the first opportunity, you know, I heard about it, you know, through the grapevine, but I was never just the first to be informed. I have to go find the

information. You know, you have to know somebody to know somebody in this industry right now.

Interviewer: Okay, so next question. In your opinion, what specific policies or regulations within the hemp industry do you believe have the most impact on social equity?

16-06: Well, the 0.3 standard requirement for THC, that is one policy that doesn't help because in marijuana, they're basically the same plant, but they're trying to differentiate them for governmental and law purposes, and it doesn't make any sense at all. That's why the industry is kind of at a standstill. A lot of people want to do it, but they don't see the benefit of doing it. You're just spinning your wheels really. The personal benefits of it are great, but you know in order to get it out to the market it has to be tested in major facilities. It needs to be tested for mass consumption and it's hard to do that when it's still a federal issue. So that policy, as well as the THC standard policy, because it automatically converts anything that is higher than 0.3 percent THC limit to be hot or criminal, and at that point we know it's the same point, you know, and it's just a very tricky dynamic they have going on with that. And so how a lot of law enforcement don't know that either and they don't have proper instruments to test it at traffic stops, and you know, it's a whole system they have to assess. Go ahead.

Interviewer: No, what I was going to say is how do you think those things affect Black farmers who were in the industry?

16-06: It doesn't help because it just makes, you know, anything that's more limited and more restrictive. It's just limiting. I'll say that. It's just limiting. Okay. Because you already have this, the stereotypes and the way that law enforcement is moving, and then

you don't have the backing that a lot of businesses would just to sponsor you for it, because you don't have the, what's the word, (inaudible). Like for example, a lot of white farmers they've been in it for generations, and they've been showing it for generations. It's clear, it's proven in tax documents, but when you first start farming, I think in any race, but particularly with Black people because the employee is already that whole injustice everywhere notion. So, it is what can help, what can be done to help Black farmers get out of that. They need a special allotment. Yeah, Black farmers need special allotment. So, it could be called reparations. It could be called reformative justice. It could be called corrective. Just something to reinstate the enfranchisement of the Black farmer because Black farmers aren't truly enfranchised. We were stretching pennies, you know, we're doing everything we can to just stay afloat, and I'm not. I can't speak for all other farmers, but just to be black and a citizen that's an entrepreneur is already difficult and then doing that with hemp, with something that's taboo and it used to be illegal. It just makes it that much harder. You battle in stereotypes and you battle with business at the same time.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you mentioned that. What other steps, in your opinion, do you believe can be taken to improve participation among Black hemp farmers besides what you just mentioned?

16-06: The standards of what's acceptable to have and what's not. For example, if I'm riding around, if I'm riding with let's say a pound of hemp and I'm transporting it to a store for distribution as a farmer, and my buddy over here, my white buddy, is also a hemp farmer. He's carrying his pound in his truck and now he just got pulled over. He

shows his hemp license and he's let go with no, you know, no real kickback. But it's me. I'm, you know, thirty minutes or an hour trying to investigate and make sure I'm legit. They have to make sure that my license is a scam. It's just extra protocol to go through that. It's unnecessary. So, I just hate to make the policy just say stop being racist, but it's just we see it like okay, there's not enough Black farmers. Why aren't there enough? Because they don't see the benefit in it or why they don't see the benefit in doing it because they're seeing that they have farmers that are out here are barely making it and then the black hemp farmers they're just trying to survive, so they don't know what no other black people are seeing the benefit in joining the industry because they don't see it as being lucrative. So, a new way to send us all incentives would be grants, grant money for research funding, and Governor Bill Lee needs to raise the limit for THC, because when he raises that limit, it'll make all access to the research event, like we'll be able to research all the types of strands for different purposes. And I think that'll be better and more innovative and we'll be able to increase medicine. We'll be able to increase construction materials, clothing, it'll help the entire economy, its industry. But we're being held back because of these restrictions that they have set in place. So, we need to drop the restrictions so full research can be done, but they're still trying to pursue it as a criminal thing and that's forever going to be its downfall.

Interviewer: Okay. So, my next follow up question to that would be what responsibility do you believe that the federal government has in facilitating that process?

16-06: Outreach. Outreach enough. They'll send one representative to show their face at a school such as TSU and we never saw them again for the rest of the semester. Like I'm

not sure what's going on at the federal level, but there just needs to be more care for the states. There needs to be more care for the state, especially the agricultural states because we're the backbone of the whole nation, right? So, Tennessee is one of those agricultural states. We have to make sure they send more outreach and make sure the community is being heard. I felt like a lot of times they go through the motions just to say they did something and then it's not a lot of real care there. So, you know, Americans have to care more about other Americans. That would be the best way I can put it without being nasty. But yeah, we have to care more about each other, and we have to love our lives because, see, being healthy is like the number one thing for me. That's why I became a farmer. I stopped having trust in our current food systems, and I took my health into my own hands and started growing my own food. So, I eat mostly whole foods now and I can't see myself going back, you know, is another thing that I've noticed has a whole lot of influence because of its health purposes. And there's a lot of older middle-aged women and men that need hemp products for different reasons, like in their eyes, their heads, headaches, they have headaches. They have skin conditions. They need hair oils that don't have synthetic products in them. So, let's still get the job that's for hemp because it comes in handy in a lot of different ways. We just don't have the access to it to do all the research we should and end the funding. It seems like there's never enough funding for the most important things that we need. And health and medicine, which is majorly important, so I just think there needs to be more attention paid to it in general.

Interviewer: Okay. Well with that, we'll leave it right there. Thank you very much for your participation and your willingness to tell the truth as you see it, and I believe that it will be very helpful for the study and down the road for the hemp industry.

16-06: Well, thank you, Dr. Floyd. I'm glad that I could have my voice heard.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

End of Recording

### **Participants 16-07 & 16-08**

The interview with Participants 16-07 and 16-08 took place on February 2, 2024. Participant 16-07 is a Black female part time hemp farmer in Tennessee. She has been involved in the hemp industry for five years. She is over the age of 65. She has a bachelor's degree and two years of Law School. She has a family history of farming in Massachusetts and North Carolina that dates back to the mid-1800's during American slavery. Participant 16-08 is a Black male part time hemp farmer in Tennessee. He has been involved in the hemp industry for five years. He is over the age of 65. He has a bachelor's degree. He has a family history of farming that dates back to the 1800's during American slavery. He has been farming periodically since his childhood in the 1950's.

The following themes have emerged from the interview with Participants 16-07 and 16-08:

1. Lack of available funding (e.g., start-up costs and grant funding from the state or USDA).
2. Stigma of Marijuana vs. Hemp (e.g., law enforcement agencies and banking issues).
3. Inconsistent policies (e.g., Delta-9 THC vs. Total THC).
4. Instability in hemp genetics due to changes in THC policies.

Interviewer: I'm here with Participants 16-07 and 16-08. How are you both doing today?

16-07: I'm doing fine today. Thank you for asking me.

16-08: I'm doing fine, as well. Thank you.

Interviewer: Wonderful. Let's roll right into the interview now. First question, could you please state your age range for me?

16-07: I am over the age of 65.

16-08: I am over the age of 65, as well.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. And what is your gender?

16-07: I am female.

16-08: I am male.

Interviewer: Alright. What is your highest level of education?

16-07: I have two years of law school, but I did not finish.

16-08: I have a bachelor's degree.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your annual household income?

16-08: We prefer not to say.

Interviewer: Okay. I totally understand. Are you both currently hemp farmers?

16-07: Yes. We both farm hemp. We have been hemp farmers since 2019.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you have farmed for five seasons?

16-08: Yes. That is correct.

Interviewer: Alright. Which state do you farm hemp in?

16-07: Tennessee.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you been involved in any community initiatives related to hemp farming or social equity?

16-07: Yes. We have been members of the hemp association in Tennessee. We used to have our meetings at TSU. Those were the early days when we were doing research and trying to decide whether or not we were going to get involved.

Interviewer: Alright. So, are you both first generation farmers or does your family have a history of farming?

16-08: Well, my family has a history of farming. My aunts and uncles used to have farms. When I was a child back in the 1950s, I used to go to my grandmother's farm, and she used to teach me how to grow crops. I guess that's why I enjoy growing things now.

16-07: My family has a history of farming that dates back to slavery in North Carolina and then my great uncle had a farm when I was growing up in Massachusetts that we

used to go to when we wanted to leave the city. He grew vegetables and had chickens. He used to always bring fresh chicken eggs from his farm into the city for the family on Sundays.

Interviewer: Okay. That's great. So, have you encountered any legal or regulatory obstacles in growing hemp?

16-07: Not really. Tennessee has been really good about providing us with information and keeping us up to date with any changes. The Tennessee Department of Agriculture sends emails that we read and if we have any questions, then we give them a call. The one thing that I would say is the change in the THC limit from the Delta-9 to Total THC has been an issue because we have to be more aware of where we buy our clones and which clones will grow on our property the best. Other than that, I can't think of anything else.

16-08: Other than the THC issue, I can't think of anything right off hand. We get emails and we respond to the emails and ask questions. We have inspectors come out and we talk to them. They give us information to help us, so I can't think of anything.

Interviewer: Okay. So next question, why did you decide to participate in the hemp industry?

16-08: Well, it was something that my son wanted to do. He did the research and asked if this was something that we would be interested in doing. After talking it over, as a family, we all decided that it would be something that we could do together.

16-07: Well, I had cancer twice and my husband had cancer one time, as well. My son was worried about us and wanted to find something that would help us with our health issues. We all did research as a family, and we found out that farmers were growing hemp in Tennessee and that it had some wellness benefits that might help us, so that's how we got into growing hemp. It was a way to help ourselves deal with our health issues, and then we could also help other people, too.

Interviewer: That's a great story. So, have you experienced any difficulties in gaining access to resources such as land, capital, or education that you believe is a result of a social equity issue within the hemp industry?

16-08: Well, the land was the easiest part because we already had land that we weren't using. We always wanted to grow something. I guess hemp gave us an excuse to use our land.

16-07: I think our biggest issue was that the government did not provide any start-up money for this. We were beginning farmers, and we really didn't know where to start. My son worked a lot of hours, and he saved up a lot of his money to get us started. We sat down, as a family, and pitched in money to cover the costs of getting started. We did a lot of research and figured out a few things that we would need to at least get started and keep the plants alive.

Interviewer: Okay. That's interesting. So, next question. In your opinion, what specific policies or regulations within the hemp industry do you believe have the most impact on social equity?

16-07: I would have to say the THC limit for one and the lack of banking opportunities, as well. The government should settle on a realistic THC limit and then allow the genetics to become more stabilized because too many changes too soon will affect everybody across the board and it will be tough to grow a crop that is in compliance. The other issue is with the banks. We found a bank that would work with us, but that was after doing research and searching for nearly a month. There is a stigma that exists with hemp because people connect it to marijuana. Both of them are cannabis plants. One is legal and one is not. Most banks don't seem to care. They treat it all the same.

16-08: I would say the same thing. The stigma of growing hemp is something that must be addressed. We have heard stories of how some hemp farmers in this state have had run ins with law enforcement and their kids have been taken away from them for growing hemp. I believe that if it is legal to grow hemp, then it should be treated that way.

Interviewer: Okay. That's pretty insightful. What steps, in your opinion, do you believe can be taken to improve participation among Black hemp farmers?

16-08: I believe that one thing that can be done is to educate Black farmers to help deal with the stereotypes of hemp related to marijuana. Most Black folks that I know don't want to mess with hemp because they either think it's weed or they don't want the unnecessary confrontations with law enforcement and everything that comes along with that.

16-07: I agree with everything that he said here, and I will take it a step further. I believe that the government needs to do more to get information out there to recruit more Black farmers in general. Agriculture is so important to this country and the world because

everybody has to eat. With that being said, I think that if more Black farmers had more education about hemp and its benefits, then it might be something that would interest them in growing.

Interviewer: Okay, so how can the government help facilitate that process?

16-08: I think the government should provide the education through the colleges and universities. Black farmers have a relationship with HBCUs. I think if Black farmers can get the information and the training from HBCUs, then I believe that you will see an increase in the number of Black hemp farmers. The federal government can make that happen by providing more money specifically for education and getting started.

16-07: I think what he said is important, but I also believe that the federal government should provide more money that goes directly into the hands of the farmers. This could help with start up costs and testing. If Black farmers, or any small farmer that might not have a lot of money could get help with seeds or clones, and then testing fees, then that would go a long way to increasing the numbers.

Interviewer: Okay. I will leave it right there. Thank you so much for your time this afternoon.

16-07: Thank you for interviewing us.

16-08: No, thank you for your time.

End of recording.

**Appendix E**

**Curriculum Vitae**

**CURRICULUM VITAE****KORI T. FLOYD, Ed.D.****13914 OLD HICKORY BLVD.****CANE RIDGE, TENNESSEE 37013****korifloyd@yahoo.com****(615) 755-5764****CREDENTIALS**

<b>Highly Qualified in State of Tennessee</b>	<b>2009</b>
(Spanish Pre-K-12)	
<b>ILL-B Licensure: (442) Beginning Administrator PreK-12</b>	<b>2017</b>
<b>Professional Teaching Licensure: (409) PreK-12 Spanish</b>	<b>2017</b>

**EXPERIENCE**

<b>Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools</b>	<b>2014-2021</b>
Spanish Teacher/Interpreter	
Assisted with assessment protocols and teacher compliance	
<b>Curriculum Consultant</b>	<b>2020-2023</b>

**Responsibilities**

Collaborate intensively with Fisk University Department of Education Chair on Curriculum to design and implement the curriculum.

Provide leadership and training workshops for the professional development of teachers demanded by innovative programs and program materials.

**National Women in Agriculture Association (NWIAA) 2019-pres.**

Tennessee Co-Chair (Middle Tennessee), Outreach Coordinator

**Responsibilities**

Consult with offices of Congressional Members on the U.S. House of Representatives Agriculture Committee to solicit charter sponsorship through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and coordinated with the Director of NWIAA to develop projects.

Effectively developing content and conducting training workshops/seminars involving hemp research and strategic products, goals, and objectives for novice hemp farmers.

**Floyd Family Farm, LLC 2018-pres.**

Founding Member

**Responsibilities**

Collaborate with Business Manager and Farm Manager on crop decisions, planting schedules, and develop relationships with other farms.

- Partner with Agriculture organizations to provide hemp education seminars for novice and aspiring hemp farmers.
- Coordinate orders for supplies and materials used for hemp production and evaluate which hemp strains will grow best in the climate of Middle Tennessee to maximize growth potential while remaining below the Total THC Limit of 0.3%.
- Completely submit paperwork to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and Secretary of State for business licensure.

**Dissertation Consultant 2015-2019****Responsibilities**

Assist students in formulating studies

Assist with assessment requirements and school compliance

Assist in review of Qualitative/Quantitative Data

Assist in formulating recommendations for future study

**Tennessee State University, Nashville, Tennessee**

**2012-13**

**Position(s)**

Guest Lecturer (Educational Administration and Supervision)

**Responsibilities**

Taught classes in the Educational Administration and Supervision program when needed

**American Baptist College, Nashville, Tenn.**

**2010-11**

**Position(s)**

Adjunct Professor

Administrative Intern

Special Assistant to the Vice President of Academic Affairs

**Responsibilities**

Taught courses in Spanish/Latin Culture and Public Health

Created/Implemented college's Developmental Studies Program

Served as college's Developmental Studies Resource Coordinator

Evaluated/Revised student handbook

Evaluated/Revised college catalog

Prepared handbook and catalog for U.S. Dept. of Education Audit

Served on student recruitment and retention committee

Created college's admissions letter

Created recruitment letter for prospective students

Created letter for persons who recommended applicants

Created template for student transcripts

Updated/revised college's grading scale, entry level assessments and compliance

**Nashville Global Academy, Whites Creek, Tenn.****2008-10****Position(s)**

ELL Coordinator

Spanish Teacher

Spanish Interpreter/Title I Consultant

**Responsibilities**

Taught Spanish to children (ages 4-9) at an urban charter school in Nashville, TN

Conducted workshops for Spanish-speaking parents

Attended IEP meetings

Created and presided over the school climate survey

Translated/Interpreted for Spanish-speaking parents, teachers, and school administrators

Created and presided over the ELL program, orientation, and facility compliance

Provided additional enrichment for ELL students in English, Mathematics, and Science

*Prepared ELL students for the TCAP achievement tests and assessment protocols*

Conducted weekly observations, students, teacher interaction and school compliance

Consultant for school professional developments and continuing education

Evaluated ELL progress and reported to Principal/Assistant Principal

**Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools****2008-09****Position(s)**

Spanish Teacher (Grades 9-12)

Spanish Interpreter/Title I ESL Instructional Coach

**Responsibilities**

Taught Spanish I, II, and III

Conducted meetings with Spanish-speaking parents

Attended IEP meetings for ESL students receiving Special Education services

Translated/Interpreted for teachers and school administrators

Provided additional enrichment for ESL students in English, Science, and Mathematics  
 Evaluated student progress, assessment protocols and reported to school administrators

**Middle Tennessee State University**

**2004-07**

**Position(s)**

Spanish Graduate Instructor (Fall 2006)

Graduate Teaching Assistant for Department of Foreign Languages

University Tutor

**Responsibilities**

Taught Spanish 1010

Assisted full-time professors

Tutored students in Spanish

Compliance involving facilities and curriculum

**EDUCATION**

**Tennessee State University: College of Public Service**

**2020-pres.**

Ph.D. Program (Public Policy and Administration)

**Iowa State University: College of Agriculture and Life Sciences**

**2020**

Degree: M.S. (Agricultural Education)

**Bethel University (McKenzie, TN)**

**2016-17**

Instructional Leadership Licensure Program (K-12)

**Tennessee State University: College of Education**

**2011**

Degree: Ed.D. (Administration and Supervision)

**Middle Tennessee State University: Dept. of Foreign Languages** 2007

Degree: M.A.T. (Spanish)

**Jackson State University: Department of Mass Communication** 2003

Degree: B.S. Mass Communications (Broadcast Journalism)

**Jackson State University: Dept. of English and Modern Foreign Lang.** 2003

Degree: B.A. (Spanish)

**John C. Calhoun Community College** 2001

Degree: A.S. (General Education)

**John C. Calhoun Community College** 2001

Degree: A.A. (English)

### **Publication(s)**

Floyd, K. (2020). *The Intersection of Agricultural Education and Teaching Foreign Languages in American Elementary Schools*. Creative Component. Iowa State University

Floyd, K.T. (2011). *The Impact of Second Language Acquisition and Student Achievement from Teachers' Perspectives*. Dissertation. Tennessee State University, 158 pages.

### **Presentation(s)**

September 6, 2019: National Women in Agriculture Association National Conference- Tennessee State University- Nashville, Tennessee. Presentation on Hemp Cultivation for Novice Hemp Farmers.

July 16, 2012: Tulsa Public Schools- Tulsa, Oklahoma. Presentation of Findings on a study conducted on behalf of the district regarding Language Immersion Education.

**Committee(s)**

March 25-28, 2024: Served as a Committee Member for the International Conference on Business Models in Agriculture- Kigali, Rwanda

March 23, 2017: Served as the Content Area Specialist for a Dissertation at Carson-Newman University on the Dissertation entitled “Teacher Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) in an Urban School District” by Dr. Nikki Giovanni Hughes.

**Appendix F**  
**Letters**

**INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT: Black Hemp Farmers' Perspectives on Social Equity and Policy Implementation Concerns within the U.S. Hemp Industry**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Tennessee State University College of Public Service/Department of Public Administration supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You retain the right to refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you consent to participate in this study, you may withdraw from this study at any time without consequence. If you choose to withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this department, your school/program, or professor/instructor.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of the study is to understand, from the perspectives of Black Farmers, how the U.S. Hemp Industry can create barriers to participation for them in the areas of cultivation and manufacturing hemp products and how those barriers can be mitigated through more social equity opportunities within the implementation of hemp policy. Your participation in this study is voluntary and not required for any portion of a course grade or program completion.

**PROCEDURES**

You will be asked to give an interview and answer questions related to your experiences and perceptions about the hemp industry. Total time for participation will be between thirty and forty-five minutes.

**RISKS**

There are no anticipated risks in completing this interview, as your identity will be concealed, and any personal identifiable information will be redacted.

**BENEFITS & COMPENSATION**

There are no individual benefits for participants. There is not financial compensation, but consenting participants will be provided a copy of the study's findings.

**PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance. In order to ensure that each participant's identity remain confidential, the participant will be given a number and all identifiable information (i.e., name, specific location) will be redacted from the study.

**REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT**

You are not required to sign this Consent form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to participate in any programs or events at Tennessee State University or any services you are receiving.

**CANCELLING THIS CONSENT**

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, any collected data will be destroyed and not used. You are welcome to withdraw any data which has been collected about yourself, as long as that data is identifiable. You may contact the researcher at korifloyd@yahoo.com for further questions or to cancel your consent.

**CONSENT:** Completing the consent form is required to further participate in the study.

-----  
By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and a currently/formerly licensed hemp farmer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Participant's Name                      Date                      Participant's Signature                      Date

Email: \_\_\_\_\_



U.S. Hemp  
Roundtable

info@hempsupporter.com | Washington D.C. | @hemproundtable    

October 13, 2023

Dr. Monique McCallister  
Institutional Review Board  
Tennessee State University  
3500 John A. Merritt Boulevard  
Nashville, TN 37209

Dr. McCallister and Committee Members:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the U.S. Hemp Roundtable ("USHR"), the nation's leading hemp business advocacy organization, to acknowledge our assistance in Kori Floyd's study, "Black Hemp Farmers' Perspectives on Social Equity and Policy Implementation Concerns within the U.S. Hemp Industry."

The USHR will be happy to help Dr. Floyd secure participants for this study and provide support in any way we can, as this research is also very valuable to our organization.

If you have any questions, please contact Katelyn Wiard at [kwiard@fbtlaw.com](mailto:kwiard@fbtlaw.com).

Sincerely,

Jonathan Miller  
General Counsel  
US Hemp Roundtable



U.S. Hemp  
Roundtable

Paid for by U.S. Hemp Roundtable, Inc., an independent, nonprofit organization exempt from federal taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code. Learn more at [www.hempsupporter.com](http://www.hempsupporter.com)



Frederick Cawthon  
President of the Board  
Hemp Alliance of Tennessee  
Nashville, TN

October 10, 2023

Institutional Review Board  
Tennessee State University  
3500 John A Merritt Blvd  
Nashville, TN 37209

Dear IRB Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well. As the President of the Board of the Hemp Alliance of Tennessee (HAT), I am writing this letter on behalf of my organization, HAT, to acknowledge the organization's assistance in Kori Floyd's study, "Black Hemp Farmers' Perspectives on Social Equity and Policy Implementation Concerns within the U.S. Hemp Industry." My organization will help Dr. Floyd secure participants for this study, as the research is valuable to our organization, as well. We believe that this research holds enormous potential for the advancement of hemp agriculture with underserved producers and we are excited to support the effort. If you have any questions, please contact Frederick Cawthon at (615) 484-8436 or [president@yourhat.org](mailto:president@yourhat.org).

Our organization's mission aligns closely with the goals of this study. HAT is dedicated to promoting the growth and application of hemp as an agricultural crop, fostering industrial applications, and developing market opportunities for hemp.

Sincerely,

*Frederick W. Cawthon*

Frederick Cawthon  
President  
Hemp Alliance of Tennessee



"Think. Work. Serve."

College of Agriculture  
Department of Agricultural Sciences  
204A Farrell-Westbrook Building,  
3500 John A. Merritt Boulevard  
Nashville, TN 37209  
Office: (615) 963-5830; Fax: (615) 963-1496

October 18, 2023  
Institutional Review Board  
The Tennessee State University  
3500 Jon A. Merritt Blvd  
Nashville, TN 37209

Dear IRB Committee,

Dear IRB Committee:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Industrial Hemp Research Program, in the Department of Agricultural Sciences, Tennessee State University. I would like to confirm my Program's commitment to assist Dr. Kori Floyd's study entitled "Black Hemp Farmers' Perspectives on Social Equity and Policy Implementation Concerns within the U.S. Hemp Industry." The hemp industry in general and the Industrial Hemp Research Program at TSU is evolving as we address and overcome the many challenges faced by this relatively new crop and we welcome the opportunity provided by Dr. Floyd's study in understanding grower's rich perspectives on the industry. We believe that this research holds great potential for the advancement of industrial hemp agriculture with historically underserved producers and we are excited to support the effort. For these reasons, my Program is glad for any opportunity to help Dr. Floyd secure participants for this study, as this research is extremely valuable to our work as well. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 615-963-5830 (office), 307-703-0167 (cell) or [eomondi@tnstate.edu](mailto:eomondi@tnstate.edu).

Sincerely,

*Emmanuel Omondi* 10/18/2023

Dr. Emmanuel Chiwo Omondi, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Agronomy and Industrial Hemp Extension Specialist,  
Department of Agricultural Sciences  
Tel: (615) 963-5830; Cell: (307) 703-0167  
Email: [eomondi@tnstate.edu](mailto:eomondi@tnstate.edu)



October 10, 2023

Dear IRB Committee:

I am writing this letter on behalf of my organization, The National Women in Agriculture Association, to acknowledge the organization's assistance in Kori Floyd's study, "Black Hemp Farmers' Perspectives on Social Equity and Policy Implementation Concerns within the U.S. Hemp Industry." My organization will help Dr. Floyd secure participants for this study, as the research is valuable to our organization, as well. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tammy Gray-Steele  
Executive Director

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Oklahoma City, OK 73111

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**Dr. Vivian Williams, Chairwoman**

865-455-2851

[twiaa@chapter@gmail.com](mailto:twiaa@chapter@gmail.com)

October 10, 2023

Dear IRB Committee:

I am writing this letter on behalf of my organization, the Tennessee Women in Agriculture, to acknowledge the organization's assistance in Kori Floyd's study, "Black Hemp Farmers' Perspectives on Social Equity and Policy Implementation Concerns within the U.S. Hemp Industry." My organization will help Dr. Floyd secure participants for this study, as the research is also valuable to our organization. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vivian Williams  
Chairwoman

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