

Media Inquires

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Travis County family wins restraining order, demands developer stop bulldozing historic Black-owned farmland

- The Alexander Farm was deeded to then-enslaved Daniel Alexander, a nationally recognized horse breeder and trainer, in 1847 by the namesakes of Travis County's McKinney Falls State Park
- The Alexanders' legal action asks for the Court to stop AMTEX Multi-Housing, LLC from trespassing upon, destroying, and razing parts of The Alexander Farm during the developers' building process
- The Alexander Farm has passed from generation to generation of Alexander descendants, is historically certified by the Texas Department of Agriculture, and is still an operating family farm managed by sixth-generation descendants of Daniel Alexander and his mother, Cenya

AUSTIN, Texas (January 12, 2023) – Descendants of one of Travis County's earliest Black "race-horse men" have been granted an emergency temporary restraining order (TRO) and injunction against a California-based developer in Travis County District Court. The TRO granted by the court stops AMTEX Multi-Housing, LLC, from razing and destroying portions of The Alexander Farm's private thruway that straddles the heart and length of the antebellum Black family farm and cemetery.

The Alexander Farm is historically notable as one of the few remaining Black-owned farms in the country, and even more significant because it has been owned and operated by the same family for 175 years and seven generations.

The farm was founded in 1847 by then-enslaved, nationally renowned horse breeder and trainer, Daniel Alexander. The McKinney family – namesake of a Travis County McKinney Falls State Park that was originally built as a Thoroughbred farm – made an economic arrangement with Daniel Alexander that included land in exchange for his horse training and breeding skills.

Speaking of the recent leveling of her family's property, Rosalind Alexander-Kasparik said, "What the developers did is just so utterly wrong and traumatic. They trespassed on our heirs' property, and razed the ancient thruway by which my family traversed our farm. This is the land that sustained my ancestors when they were enslaved. It sustained our family, their descendants, for generations since. The takers must be stopped, held accountable for their trespass against us, and prevented from inflicting further harm to our family land."

Alexander-Kasparik said the family's communications to AMTEX to cease and desist from bulldozing the Alexander property and informing them of the historical significance of The Alexander Farm were ignored. Therefore, availing themselves of the legal system was the Alexander family's only recourse.

Attorney Ashton G. Cumberbatch, Jr., special counsel with McGinnis Lochridge – Austin's oldest law firm – led the team representing the Alexander family in their petition for a restraining order.

“Litigation was not the first path of choice for the Alexander family,” said Cumberbatch. “But without open channels of communication, it became the only option to stop the offenses that were occurring on The Alexander Farm and to the Alexander legacy – both rich pieces of Texas’s heritage. This TRO is an important first step in preserving that heritage.”

Cumberbatch added: “And now that the litigation process has opened the communication between the parties, we’re hopeful this will result in a mutually satisfactory resolution.”

“We want to honor the heritage of the Alexanders, who were this farm’s smart and steadfast founders as they gave so much to the county and to Texas,” said Marcellus Alexander, Jr. “They also instilled in us a fighting spirit and an enviable work ethic, which we’ll use to protect their legacy for our next generation.”

The Texas Department of Agriculture has historically certified The Alexander Farm under its Family Land Heritage program, which recognizes farms in operation for 100 years or longer. Austin’s Carver Museum first recognized the Alexander family in 1977 as a founding Black Austin family in its ongoing permanent exhibit. Daniel Alexander’s seminal role as Thoroughbred and Quarter horse trainer of Sam Houston’s horse, Copper Bottom, in Galveston was also featured in *Black Cowboys: An American Story* at San Antonio’s Witte Museum. Alexander is nationally recognized in the Library of Congress’ *US History of Horse Racing*. A representation of Daniel Alexander holding the reins of America’s first great racehorse, Sir Archy (whose descendants include Secretariat), may be seen in the recently conserved 1823 Alvan Fisher painting of the two champions. The 200-year-old fine art painting is housed at the Texas State Archives in Austin.

“I want to help people understand that any portion of our land is not just dirt for developers to churn and bury,” says Alexander-Kasparik. “The land that they trespassed and bulldozed is part of the life’s work, hope and dreams of those Alexanders who came before us – of those without whom we would not be here. Of those we will never forget.”