

MEET A FOOD PIONEER: FANNIE LOU HAMER

A revolutionary in many respects, Fannie Lou Hamer fought for justice nearly her entire life. From co-founding the Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party to rallying for black folks right to vote — she saw an injustice, and she fought back against it.

She was born in 1917 in Montgomery County, Mississippi, to a family of sharecroppers and joined them in picking cotton as young as the age of six. Though she was able to attend school long enough to learn how to read, she had to leave school at the age of 12 to work. In the summer of 1961, Fannie attended a Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and grew infuriated by the denial and suppression of black voters. This sparked what would be a lifelong journey in civil rights activism.

After years of fighting for justice within the political sector, Fannie Lou Hamer decided to refocus her strategy to creating opportunities for economic growth within the black community as a means to achieve greater racial equality. Most of this strategy was centered around farming and land access. For instance, she created the Freedom Farm Cooperative (FFC), which with the help of donors, was able to purchase over 640 acres of land for black farmers grow and sell food as a collective. FFC also launched a “Pig Bank” where black farmers could get free pigs to raise, breed, and slaughter for profit.

Though Fannie Lou Hamer passed in 1977, her legacy forever lives on. In Ruleville, Mississippi stands a statue memorializing Fannie’s tireless work in creating equitable opportunities for black folks in Mississippi and beyond.

WATCH: Below are a couple of opportunities to hear Fannie Lou Hamer speak. You may or may not be surprised that some of the injustices she spoke on and fought for then, we are still fighting against today.

- What similarities can you find between the topics in [this video](#), and issues people of color face today?
- [This](#) is how the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party began.

READ: There is an abundance of information about Fannie Lou Hamer available online, but check out [this article](#) from The Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee website. This was one of the organizations that Fannie partnered with in her work during the Civil Rights Movement, and gives a wonderful overview of her contributions.

