



GEORGIA HEIRS PROPERTY
LAW CENTER

May 15, 2019
Quarterly Update

Heirs property is the hidden story behind blight and generational poverty throughout Georgia. In 2017, USDA Forest Service and UGA Carl Vinson researchers identified probable heirs property in 10 non-metro Georgia counties with a total tax appraised value of over two billion dollars (\$2,148,951,361), equity that can't be used. If heirs property in 10 counties represents over \$2 billion in locked equity, the total tax appraised value of probable heirs property undermining Georgia's economy is over **\$34 billion**.

The Georgia Heirs Property Law Center, Inc. ("the Center") increases generational wealth, social justice, and community stability by securing and preserving property rights. Since 2015, the Center has provided legal representation and closed **259** matters. Today, the Center has **147 open** title clearing and estate planning matters involving properties in **43** counties with a total tax assessed value of **\$14.1 million**.

The Center's average client is **64 years old**, has an annual household income of **\$29,450**, and has **20.4 acres** of property with a tax assessed value of **\$86,754.66**.

Recent Client Stories:

Ms. Wilson* moved into the property where she currently lives 30 years ago to care for her elderly father. A few years later when Ms. Wilson's father passed away, she believed she was the sole-owner of the property since she was her father's sole heir. Ms. Wilson maintained the property and paid the property taxes, but when she recently tried to qualify for homestead exemption and obtain homeowner's insurance, she discovered that she had no ownership interest in the property since the legal title had passed down her stepmother's side. With the assistance of a pro bono volunteer attorney, the Center filed a Quiet Title action, asserting adverse possession. Not only was the Quiet Title successful, it also reunited family members to share stories about their deceased love ones. Ms. Wilson now has clear title to the property with a tax assessed value of \$322,000.00, and since she is in her 80s, has decided that the home is too much for her to maintain and plans to sell. The Center is working with Ms. Wilson to assure she works with a reputable relator to get the best price possible. The Center is also working on Ms. Wilson's estate plan so that she can take care of herself and pass wealth to the next generation.

Ms. Raines*, who is the guardian of her three grandchildren, one who has cancer, was living in a property originally owned by her deceased mother and deceased stepfather as tenants-in-common. When Ms. Raines's mother passed away in 2011, her stepfather and six children inherited. Subsequently Ms. Raines's stepfather passed away in 2016. With the Center's assistance, Ms. Raines was appointed as executor of both her mother and stepfather's estates, and was able to secure quit claim deeds from each of her siblings, which effectively cleared the title. Ms. Raines is now sole owner of the property, and as a result, has secure housing for herself and her three grandchildren.

*Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality.

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