SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

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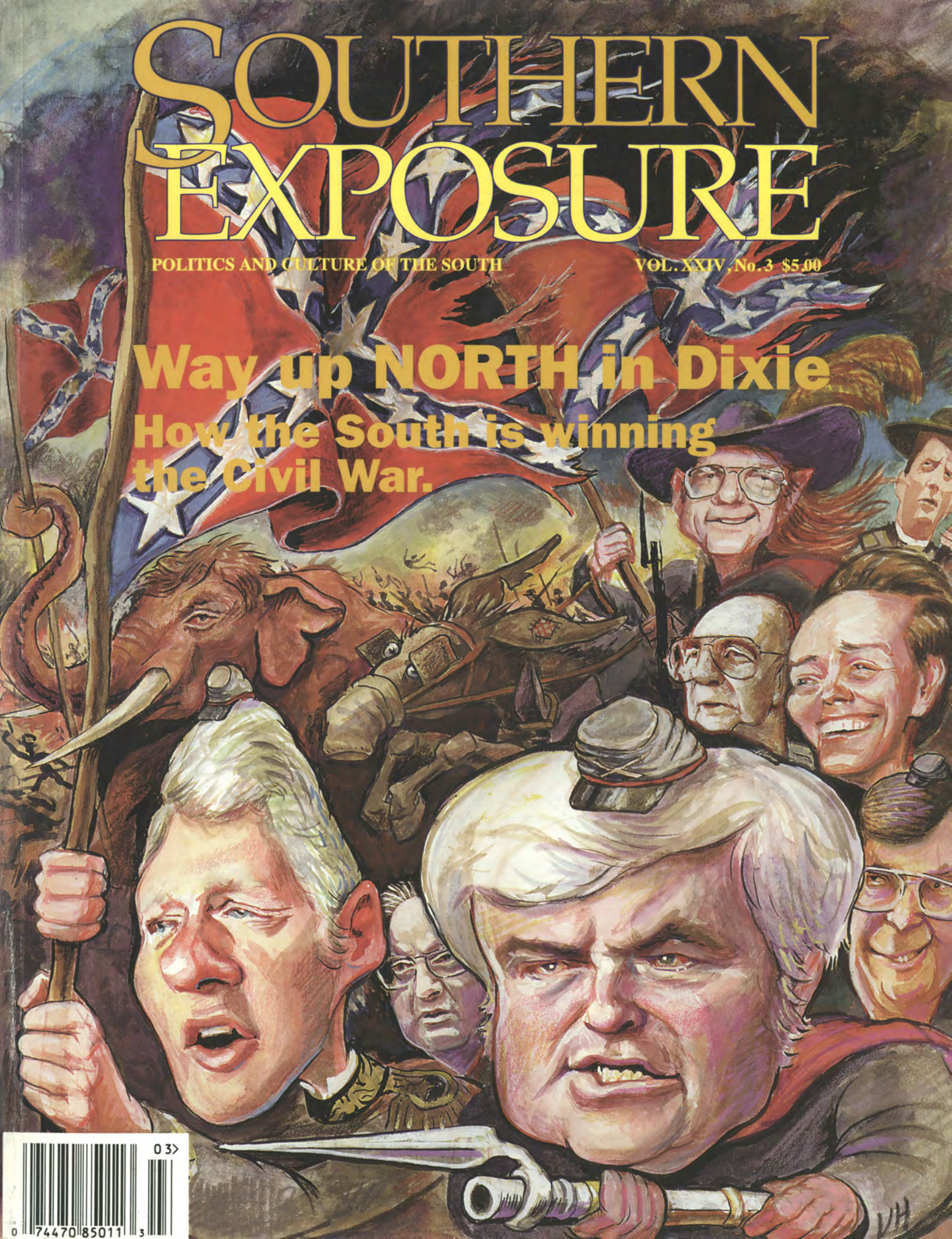

Way up NORTH in Dixie

How the South is winning the Civil War.

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Mel Watt of North Carolina (left) and Cynthia McKinney of Georgia (right) are among the U.S. congressional representatives whose districts are being redrawn after court challenges to majority black districts. The Campaign for a Color-Blind America is one of the groups dedicated to eradicating such districts. See Michael King's story on page 26.

Remember Hamlet

Five years have passed since the fire on September 2, 1991, at Imperial Food Products, a chicken processing plant in Hamlet, North Carolina. Twenty-five people died and 52 others were injured when an explosion rocked the plant, sending fireballs and black smoke through the factory where chicken nuggets were made for Wendy's and other fast food restaurants.

Locked fire doors and blocked exits trapped workers when natural gas ignited while repairs were being made to the fuel line, only several feet away from large vats of boiling oil. Plant owner Emmet Roe had ordered the doors locked because he was concerned about workers stealing chicken from the plant.

In 1996, North Carolina is being held up as a model throughout the country for the progressive legislative reforms enacted after the fire. But how have things really changed for working people in the state? The economy of the South is geared toward attracting new business and industry — apparently at the expense of worker safety and health. Only four years ago, Convention Bureau literature from Winston-Salem crowed, "Welcome to our town, where our non-union workforce provides trouble-free service."

Look for an article in the next issue of *Southern Exposure* for more on this topic. And in September, remember those who lost their lives. Take some time out to reflect on how the food you eat is made.

— *Betsy Barton*

Betsy Barton is assistant director of NCOSH, the North Carolina Occupational Safety and Health project.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE has been published since 1973 by the Institute for Southern Studies. With its combination of investigative reporting, historical perspective, oral histories, photography, and literature, the magazine has earned a national reputation. In the past five years, the magazine has received three Project Censored Awards, the Sidney Hillman Award for courageous reporting on racial injustice, two Alternative Press Awards for best regional publication, a National Magazine Award, and the John Hancock Insurance Company award for economic reporting.

THE INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN STUDIES is a nonprofit center working for progressive change in the region. Since its founding in 1970, the Institute has sponsored research, education, and organizing programs to (1) empower grassroots organizations and communities with strong local leadership and well-informed strategies, (2) provide the information, ideas, and historical understanding of Southern social struggles necessary for long-term fundamental change, and (3) nourish communication, cooperation, and understanding among diverse cultural groups.

THE INSTITUTE is supported by foundations and individual members. Annual membership is $24 and includes a full year of *Southern Exposure* (four issues), periodic action alerts, and discounts on Institute resources and publications. Address all membership correspondence to the Institute, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702. Call (919) 419-8311 or fax (919) 419-8315 for information or to place credit card orders (MasterCard or Visa).

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ART DIRECTOR
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CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Bob Hall, Mike Hudson
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CIRCULATION
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Caroline Brown, Gretchen Boger, Ann Duffy, Meridith Helton, Noha Ragab, Leslie Waugh

SPECIAL THANKS TO
Selwyn Carter, Anne Eckman, Jane Fish, Sally Gregory, Betty Meeler, Haila Rusch, Deb Sunick, David Terry, Michelle Ugochukwu, Brenda Wright

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From the Editor

Once upon a time, when Southern politicians talked states' rights, anti-big-government, and anti-tax, mainstream politicians dismissed them as reactionary extremists. Most citizens counted on the federal government to take care of social and environmental problems that many states — especially in the South — wouldn't face. In the cover section of this issue, associate editor Ron Nixon looks at how the agenda of the Old South has became mainstream — and then took over the federal government.

It's a fascinating exploration, but hard. One of our summer interns, Meridith Helton, from Chattanooga, Tennessee, writes about working with other students from all over the country as part of the AFL-CIO effort to bring workers and college students together to fight for workplace rights and social justice "... The 37 other Union Summer activists in my group ... came from 16 states mostly outside the South. Could I deal with their criticisms of my region? Though I might agree with their views, I retained a weird combination of pride and anger about the South."

She was reluctant to confront the problems at home. "It was easier to protest in the face of the New York Police Department in riot gear as they handcuffed eight students and smashed another's face in — as I did at a demonstration against New York City budget cuts — than it was to tell someone in my home community that he's racist, sexist, or homophobic. But no amount of growth in New York will do much good if I can't apply it at home," she writes in her account of her Union Summer experience.

"Though I might agree with their views, I retained a weird combination of pride and anger about the South."

She's right. It's the right and responsibility of those who live in this place to challenge the politics, economics, and social structures coming out of the South. And that's what we're doing in this issue.

It's a scary story. But sleep tight anyway, and don't forget to vote.

• • •

With this issue we say goodbye to the Institute's interim director, Tema Okun. A long-time supporter (she started volunteering at the Institute for Southern Studies more than 20 years ago) Tema took a break from the architecture program at North Carolina State University to help us re-assess our goals and strengthen our infrastructure. She has done a remarkable job, and we thank her. Tema will be staying on the board for some time to help us through the next transition.

We also welcome our new executive director, Pronita Gupta, who comes to us after a two-year stint as legislative director of the United States Student Association. Pronita has a master's degree in public policy and administration and extensive experience as a policy analyst and consultant on issues affecting young and low-income people. She serves on the board of the Young Women's Project, where she helped develop a mentorship program focused on leadership and skills development. She was co-president of the People of Color Alliance at Columbia and she served on the board of the Organization of Pan-Asian American Women. We're very excited to have her.

I'd also like to thank the summer interns, a remarkable group of women who have contributed their excellent judgment, dedication to social and economic justice, and creative energy to this issue and the planning for upcoming issues.

— Pat Arnow

Model Magazine

I met with Jeff Scott, a staff member of the Watauga County Land Trust based in Boone, North Carolina, last week in reference to the proposed Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation power line project in Creston. As you know, this proposed high-tension line is cutting through some of the most important wilderness areas of northwestern North Carolina (including my own land). A group of affected land owners are organizing in opposition to the project — and this was the topic of my meeting.

Jeff handed me a copy of a *Southern Exposure* piece from the Summer 1995 issue by Charlotte Pritt. Jeff went on to point out many similarities between the Ashe County power line problem and the West Virginia situation. The Watauga County Land Trust intends to model a great deal of the actions reported in your magazine as they take leadership in opposition to the Creston line. Jeff let me know that *Southern Exposure* was widely read by his peers and associates in Boone, and he believed your publication was one of the finest in the country.

You are doing important work — keep it up.

William B. Strom
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Charlotte Pritt is the West Virginia Democratic candidate for governor. — Ed.

No Pandering Here

I really appreciated "From Little Black Sambo to Son of White Man" (*SE* Spring 1996, "Falling Apart/Coming Together"), as I have been witness to some painful struggles with racism such as those described. You did a terrific job of reporting — describing what people went through without telling us what to think about it.

I also really like the personal essay by Stan Holt ("God Don't Make Mistakes"), which I will send to a graduate school friend. "I wondered when you were going to tell me" are exactly the words I once said to him, and he too was raised in a religious Southern home.

While I think a lot of mainstream media outlets are pandering to the right so much I can barely tolerate them, in *SE* I see one publication that has retained its integrity — the magazine makes an effort to tell the truth no matter the political climate. I trust what I read in *SE*. More specifically, I think the magazine is a very effective teaching tool. *SE* provides perspectives that can't be found in the mainstream media, which is more bound by what it thinks we want to hear than what we really should know.

Margaret Brown
Calhoun, Georgia

Raising Cain

Thanks to the Institute for Southern Studies for taking on corporate hog farming in North Carolina. *Southern Exposure's* 1992 "Hog Wild" story got the ball rolling, and others have joined in to raise awareness. Full accountability is still down the road a piece and each hurricane warning brings new worries, but we are making headway.

You are not the first conscientious Southerners to take up this difficult and smelly public issue. In 1761, George Washington was representing the Winchester area of the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia's House of Burgesses. Looking out for his local constituents, the 29-year-old legislator introduced a bill in Williamsburg "to preserve the water for the use of the inhabitants of the town of Winchester . . . by preventing hogs from running at large therein." If the future president was environmentally astute on this matter, he also showed a social consciousness. When illegal hogs were butchered, their meat, according to Washington's act, was to be given to the poor.

Wrap yourselves in the flag as if you were Olympic gold medalists and enjoy being square in the middle of the great and venerable American mainstream for a few minutes. Then get back to the task which you do so well: raising Cain in a sometimes corrupt and complacent culture.

Peter H. Wood
Durham, North Carolina

UPDATE

VICTORY for Kmart workers

OK, you can shop there again

Members of UNITE (Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees) working at the Kmart distribution center in Greensboro, North Carolina, recently ratified a new collective bargaining agreement that brings to an end a nearly three-year battle that created a new model of civil disobedience and union organizing. The Kmart employees' plight was featured in the Summer 1996 issue of *Southern Exposure* in Barry Yeoman's article, "No Ways Tired."

The contract, which went into effect July 28, features pay increases ranging from 22 percent to 52 percent over the next two years; a $2.50 increase in the top wage; two new paid holidays; increases in paid sick leave; non-discrimination language; and new job bidding, grievance procedure, and work standards language.

"This is an excellent new contract," said Bruce Raynor, UNITE executive vice president and Southern regional director. "It was a long, tough battle, but the Kmart workers, with the tremendous support from the Greensboro community, were able to force the company to agree to a contract that offers them the highest wage increases that any hardline distribution center has ever received."

From the State that Brought you JESSE HELMS...

Illustration courtesy of "On A Roll, Inc." They sell this fine Helms Happens Toilet Paper so you can express yourself politically from a different end entirely. For information call 704-358-3716.

"... The Wormy College Students, Too"

RALEIGH, N.C.—Don Follmer, former press secretary for state Republican House Speaker Harold Brubaker, lost his job this spring after he referred to a group of protesters as "niggers and wormy kids."

The protesters at the Legislative Building were housekeepers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, many of whom are black, and their student supporters. They opposed plans to privatize housekeeping services at the 16 UNC campuses across the state.

Barbara Prear, co-chair of the UNC Housekeepers Association, said Follmer's remark suggested that racist attitudes probably were common in the Capitol. "It surprised me we have elected officials with aides talking like that," Prear said. "That really got me."

Follmer said he made the remark during a conversation with AP reporter Dennis Patterson, with whom he often engaged in "anti-politically correct" banter. Patterson didn't report on the comment, but another reporter overheard the remark, and the story became front-page news. Two weeks later, Follmer lost his $54,000-a-year job.

Patterson, who said he often heard such remarks in the Capitol, was largely mum on the issue, but North Carolina AP bureau chief Ambrose B. Dudley said Patterson should have considered the press secretary's remark newsworthy and reported it. Dudley said he talked with Patterson and other AP reporters about appropriate behavior and language after the incident.

No stranger to the Capitol press corps, Follmer was spokesman under former Gov. Jim Martin for the state Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources. He was hired by Brubaker in December 1994. After the story of his remark made the news, Follmer said he encouraged Brubaker to let him go. "What he did was absolutely the proper course of action," the fired press secretary said.

Today he is somewhat contrite. "I have no history of bigotry or racism," he said. "Like 'kike' or 'spic,' I think [the word 'nigger'] should be eradicated from polite discourse. I know better. I used to get smacked as a kid if I said something like that."

So why did he say it on April 10?

"I was just blowing off steam and used an inappropriate comment in private," he said. As for the result: "Sometimes you fall on your sword. It gives you pause about telling the truth sometimes, although that's been my standard."

"Sometimes you fall on your sword. It gives you pause about telling the truth sometimes . . ."

Follmer said he didn't agree with one journalist's notion that his reputation had been ruined. "I left with my honor intact," he said. "I'm not a liar." He said he stood by his "record on race relations" and had received many calls and letters of support. These days, he said, he's "being a private citizen" and has no plans to return to politics.

While he admitted his comment was "inappropriate," Follmer also said, "Folks need to lighten up, or we'll be looking at an ever-widening gulf. I didn't commit a crime."

He said he stands by his apology to the housekeepers, which "goes for the wormy college students, too."

—Leslie Waugh

Basura Talking

SILER CITY, N.C. — It is illegal to have junk or debris — "*chatarra o basura*" — in your yard or to work on your car in the street or in the driveway of your home.

It is also illegal to use or sell drugs, which are expensive and dangerous.

A brochure conveyed these and other tips to the Hispanic residents of the mostly rural Chatham County town. Siler City's Hispanic Task Force, which had no Hispanic members, wrote the brochure for new residents who come primarily to work in poultry processing plants.

Local Hispanic leaders say the brochure makes insulting presumptions about Hispanics. The message was "very negative," said Israel Tapia, pastor of the Hispanic Loves Creek Baptist Church. "It is pretty much a series of don'ts: don't do this and don't do that," he said. "It is something that, by common sense, we can understand."

"What Siler City Expects From You" says it's illegal to for a husband to beat his wife or children or to raise goats or chickens within city limits. It urges newcomers to learn English to get a good job. The brochure exhorts residents not to make loud noise and not to use radios or TV after 10 p.m. (which is not the law at all but a translation error). Siler City is a tranquil town of 6,000, says the brochure, a town that likes order — but not crime or distractions.

The goal of the brochure, said task force chairman and town commissioner Robert Siler, was to educate newcomers about American culture. He protests charges of racism, saying the pamphlet was intended purely to help bridge cultural differences. "If I were to leave this country and go into another country with different laws, I would appreciate someone giving me such information," he said.

When the town provided Tapia and other ministers with the brochure to distribute, he put the material in the trash. He said other religious leaders did the same.

Although the brochure is being rewritten, the damage has been done. Tapia said the problem is more than just the translation. "The only changes will be grammar," he said. "The content will be the same."

—Gretchen Boger

Nonconformist Seminoles

NAPLES, Fla.—Traditional Seminoles are suing Collier County for the right to live according to their culture. County officials say it's time for the Seminoles, specifically the Billie family, to abandon the ways of their ancestors and join the 20th century. Officials claim that chickees, the traditional structures in which Seminoles live, don't meet current building codes.

Photo by Jason Fischer/News-Press

Benny Ingram Billie, 2, plays with corn that his grandmother, Martha, will grind so that it can be boiled and made into a beverage. The county wants the Billie family and others who maintain Seminole traditions to bring their homes — chickees — up to local building code standards.

"Our way of life is our religion," said Danny Billie, spokesman for the Traditional Independent Seminole Nation. "They're attacking the religion of our people because they are attacking our way of life. They are trying to take the last things that are a part of our lifestyle, the lifestyle we love."

Collier County officials say the village, located in an agricultural area and home to 40 family members from several generations, represents a health and safety risk. Officials say the traditional structures have already been modified to include electricity, plumbing, windows, and doors, all of which are regulated by county ordinances. The county can assess a $550 per day fine and force eviction for violations.

Elizabeth Bevington, with Holland & Knight law firm, questions the county's allegations. "It doesn't make sense," she said. "They say they are concerned about the safety of the Seminoles, but the Seminoles have lived safely and comfortably in chickees for hundreds of years."

The lawsuit contends that the civil and religious rights of the traditional Seminoles are being violated by the county's efforts to enforce building codes. Federal law requires that municipalities show a "compelling interest" before imposing ordinances that could infringe upon the rights of a group. The Billies believe the county's actions against them are the result of their opposition to landfills planned nearby.

No court date has been set to hear the lawsuit.

Although the local community has signed petitions in support of the Billie family, some opposing attitudes prevail. "They're renegades," said a woman who refused to sign the petition. "If they were traditional reservation Indians, I would be all for them."

That seems to be an attitude shared among members of the county commission. "The request seems to exempt a certain group of people based solely on race or ethnicity," Chairman Tom Norris said. "I can't choose to go out in the area and live in a chickee because of my race."

Ron Sachs, former communications director for Governor Lawton Chiles, believes the county will lose no matter what happens. "[If the county] wins the point, they will lose the issue," Sachs told the Fort Myers *News-Press*. "People don't want the government to interfere with or destroy the lifestyle of these simple people whose ways predate our own."

County officials claim the Seminoles gave up rights to self determination by choosing to live off reservation lands. "There are reservation lands set aside by the federal government where they can live any way they want," Commissioner Tim Constantine said.

But these traditional Seminoles rejected federal recognition and the corporate structure of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, created in 1957, and live in a traditional manner on lands throughout the southern tip of Florida. Traditional Seminoles maintain ties with the Seminole Tribe but receive no benefits.

"You cannot brush aside and do away with the first people of this continent," Billie warned the commission. "The principles of our nation are to maintain the traditions, the language, the culture of our people the best we can. We're saying we're not going to conform, because we have our own ways."

— Lois Tomas

Cold War Burns Up In South

PINE BLUFF, Ark. — If there is an emergency at the Pine Bluff Arsenal where the U.S. Army stores chemical weapons, nearby residents are supposed to seal their doors and windows with tape and remain indoors, said a local resident, Brainard Bivins. That measure saves the Army the trouble of evacuating the entire town in case of an accident, said Bivens, who belongs to the Chemical Weapons Working Group. CWWG is a coalition of organizations that works toward safe disposal of chemical weapons.

The "Shelter in Place" plan seems inadequate to residents who received the pamphlet describing the procedures. "How is an 80-year-old woman living alone going to tape up her windows?" said Suzanne Marshall, assistant professor of history at Jacksonville State University in Alabama. Marshall lives near another arsenal, the Anniston Army Depot. "How much tape are you supposed to have?" she asked.

Residents' worries have intensified because of plans by the Army to incinerate stockpiled chemical weapons. In the 1980s, to comply with newly signed international treaties, the Army decided burning would be the best method of destroying chemical weapons. They developed plans to build incinerators at stockpile sites, including Pine Bluff and Anniston.

Those two sites already release the most toxic material into the air of any of the 130 federal facilities in the nation, according to the Department of Defense

(DOD). Nearby residents fear that incineration would release even more.

The Army's arrangements to incinerate chemical weapons are racially and economically discriminatory, said Marshall. The population of Pine Bluff is 53 percent African American, and the poverty level is 28 percent. The situation is similar in Anniston, where African Americans comprise 44 percent of the population,

and 24 percent of the residents live below the poverty level.

Also, most of the people who selected the burning sites were affluent, white males, said Marshall. Residents of the sites were excluded from the decision-making process, she said.

Environmental injustice based on economic disparity was confirmed by *National Law Journal*. It studied environmental lawsuits in the United States over a seven-year period and found that stricter measures were taken against violators of environmental regulations in white neighborhoods than in minority communities. Poor neighborhoods became sites for waste dumping because of their lack of political leverage, the journal said.

But Marshall said it is hard to fight the burning of weapons because many military activities are classified, and it is hard to know what health risks residents may be facing from the fires. "It is the Army against you," she said.

Furthermore, fear of losing their jobs has led people to subdue their complaints. Marshall said that people who work at the Anniston Army Depot or who have relatives who work there are afraid to oppose the Army's procedures publicly.

In Arkansas, only recently did the state appoint a Citizen's Advisory Commission. It was the last state to form such a watchdog organization, said Bivens. The failure may have been due to a combination of apathy and general trust in the Army, he said.

There are other ways besides burning to get rid of chemical weapons. The army implemented non-incineration disposal in Maryland and Indiana. Also, the Senate passed an amendment in early July proposed by Senator Wendell Ford of Kentucky, appropriating $40 million for the Army to research alternative technologies. Yet, the two top DOD polluters in Pine Bluff and Anniston have not seriously investigated alternative technologies.

— Noha Ragab

Most Valuable Employee

PASADENA, Texas — When Ramon Tamez drove away from the 24-hour Stop N Go where he worked to make the business's bank deposit, he ran a stop sign and died in the ensuing car crash. Weeks later, his family received $10,000 from a life insurance policy that formed part of his employee benefits package.

But Tamez never knew about the extra $250,000 in life insurance taken out on him by Stop N Go's parent company, Houston-based National Convenience Stores (NCS). After Tamez's death, NCS collected $250,000, plus punitive damages and legal costs.

NCS now faces a potential class-action lawsuit from Tamez's widow and relatives of eight other Stop N Go employees killed at work. The suit demands that NCS' insurer, Lloyd's of London, pay all such policy benefits to the estates of the dead workers. Texas District Judge Scott Brister is considering whether the cases brought by the nine families qualify as a class-action suit.

NCS apparently bought the $250,000 policies on its 600 employees in place of conventional workers' compensation coverage. The firm developed this alternative method to protect itself from claims arising from worker deaths in a business whose hazards, including late-night armed robbery, are notorious. However, NCS' "insurable interest" in the lives of entry-level store clerks and low-paid clerk/managers is open to question, particularly in Texas, where the law traditionally has demanded a clear legal and personal interest in the survival of insured persons on the part of those who take out life insurance policies.

Texas businesses have been permitted to insure the lives of "key employees," such as executives whose replacement might be considered difficult. Houston plaintiffs' attorney Scott Clearman Clearman points out that NCS did not have any trouble replacing Stop N Go employees who died at work: "They could just get some guy off the street with a target on his back."

Because of the way Lloyd's policies were structured, NCS also had the potential to profit from on-the-job fatalities among its employees. Each time a Stop N Go worker was killed in a work-related activity, NCS collected insurance. If claims from the employee's death did not cost NCS the full amount, the company pocketed the difference. Clearman believes that NCS was not forced to pay the entire $250,000 it claims in at least three cases to date.

In 1995, NCS was acquired by Diamond Shamrock, which did not respond to repeated inquiries about the Stop N Go employee insurance cases.

— Mary O'Grady

Rest in Chaos

PARKERS FERRY, S.C. — "What do you care? They're not your people," a county commissioner told Lee Pye, a white resident of Charleston County who led a battle to save an old black cemetery from damage by a proposed dirt mine.

For 40 years, King Cemetery was hidden in a growth of chinaberry trees, flowers, and dense vegetation near Oak Hall Plantation in Charleston County. On private property, the cemetery was closed to visitors.

The county purchased land near the plantation in

1991 to use as a hazardous ash waste landfill. After roads were extensively damaged by Hurricane Hugo, commissioners said the county desperately needed dirt for roads. They decided to use the land as a dirt mine.

Pye, who had discovered the cemetery after buying Oak Hall in 1994, was concerned that the 20-acre mine would erode the soil and damage the graveyard's dense vegetation. She alerted area residents and family members of people buried in the cemetery.

James B. Green, a resident of the nearby Adams Run community, believes the graveyard was the final resting place of many slaves from the old plantations in the area. "It's not right to destroy a cemetery to be there for so many years," says Green. His grandfather, five uncles, and cousins are buried in King Cemetery.

The County Commission hired surveyors to determine the cemetery's boundaries, so the mine would not disturb the site. Though three gravestones and about a dozen depressions were the only visual markers, the surveyors found more than 170 graves. Many of the wisteria vines and snowball bushes flattened by surveyors' bulldozers had been the memorials for some graves. "I heard Mr. Green say there were graves under the very ground that we were standing on, that was being bulldozed," said Pye.

The $35,000 survey also showed that the property, known as the Shepperd Tract, was once an 18th century rice plantation. Peter Wood, professor of history at Duke University, says the area is the site of the Stono Slave Rebellion of 1739, which was "the largest slave rebellion in the colonial period." It is also the site of a Revolutionary War encampment.

Because of the results of the survey, Charleston County Administrator Ed Fava recommended abandoning plans for the dirt mine.

Though the cemetery is out of immediate danger, Pye says the battle is not over. The county still has the option to use the northern end of the Shepperd Tract as a landfill for ash from the county's incinerator in the Charleston Neck Area.

— Dana Clark Felty

Head Full of Trash

In the spirit of the impending election, can you name the Georgia politician who has, on different occasions, uttered both these statements regarding the House of Representatives: "The House is a corrupt institution," and "I'm a creature of the House"?

Answer: House Speaker Newt Gingrich (who's really from Pennsylvania).

This and 815 other Southern trivia questions and answers come from *Yellow Dogs, Hushpuppies and Bluetick Hounds: The Official* Encyclopedia of Southern Culture *Quiz Book*, published in April by the University of North Carolina Press and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi.

Lisa Howorth, a 10-year veteran of the Center, culled the questions and answers mainly from the 1656-page, eight-and-a-half pound *Encyclopedia*. The questions, offbeat and serious, cover a wide range of subjects, from religion and literature to business, art, sports, politics, and more. Howorth, who originally wanted to call the book *Head Full of Trash*, says not to take one's proficiency on the quiz too seriously. "Being Southern is a state of mind, not an IQ test." With that in mind:

1. What presidential candidate told Southern audiences, "Come January we are going to have a president in the White House who doesn't speak with an accent"?

2. What does the expression "brokedick" mean?

3. What best-selling novelist was struck and killed by a speeding taxicab as she crossed Peachtree Street in Atlanta?

4. Corvettes are made in only one place in the world. Where is it?

5. What does NASCAR stand for?

6. Over one-half of what hazardous waste is stored in the South?

7. What was the last Southern state to abolish chain gangs?

You'll have to look up "yellow-dog Democrat" for yourself.

(If you must look up the answers, see end of "Roundup" on p. 10)

— Leslie Waugh

Lisa Howorth, author of a Southern quiz book, enjoys a Vienna Sausage snack with her friends.

AFDC on the Block

Proposed changes in the nation's welfare system would likely hit hardest in the South, where several states already receive the lowest levels of assistance in the country.

Since 1970, the South has consistently had the lowest combined state AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) and Food Stamp benefits of any region, and the 11 states with the nation's lowest benefit levels are all in the South, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 1996 *KIDS COUNT Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being*.

But legislation replacing the 61-year-old AFDC program with federal block grants — annual lump-sum payments to each state — will further widen regional inequalities. "Block grants are extremely unfair to states with low-benefit payments like Alabama," says policy analyst Mary Weidler of Alabama Arise, a coalition of religious and community groups that advocates for low-income Alabamans.

Lump-sum block grants will eliminate entitlements which provide cash assistance for needy children. Under the current system, any family who meets federal guidelines can get AFDC assistance regardless of which state they live in or month of the year in which they apply, says Dan Gerlach of the North Carolina Tax and Budget Center. As the individual-

ized benefit system is replaced with block grants, says Gerlach, "no matter how needy a family is, if a state exceeds its budget before the year is up, there will be no available aid to new families."

However, while AFDC guarantees that all eligible applicants receive aid, states have had the power to set the aid amount — and Southern states have set it especially low. Nationally, the 1994 median grant to a family of three amounted to a maximum of $366 per month — or 38 percent of the "poverty line," the minimum allowance set by the federal government for the living expenses for a family of three.

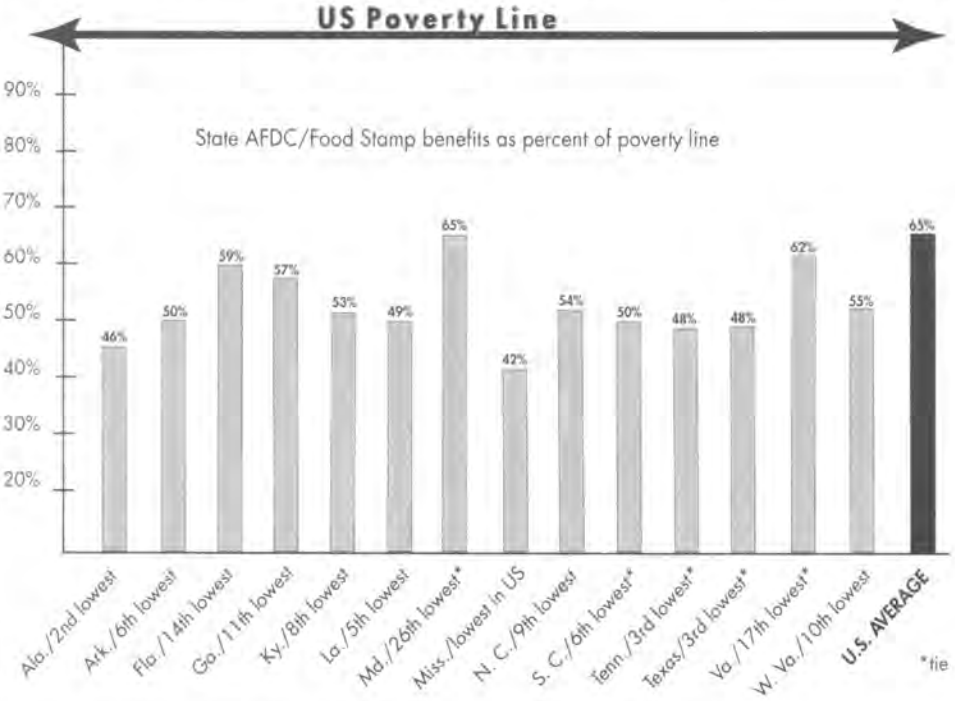
Southern states' maximum AFDC grants have been even lower, with a median amount of $240 per month, or 25 percent of the poverty line. Worst in the nation is Mississippi, where the maximum monthly grant for a family of three in 1994 was $120.

By setting such low AFDC levels, Southern states have also cheated their residents out of currently available federal matching money. AFDC is financed by a mix of federal and state funds, with the federal government paying an average of 55 percent. But poor states, such as Mississippi, have been entitled to more federal matching money. For each $1 that Mississippi pays out in AFDC benefits, the federal government pays $4, allowing the state to provide reasonable benefits at little cost to its own treasury. Yet, Mississippi, with benefits at one-third the national average, uses little of the federal government largess.

The South's block grants will be based on its historically low benefit levels, locking in some of the smallest welfare budgets in the nation. Kimble Forrister of Alabama Arise recently noted in *The Birmingham News*, "Under current proposals, Rhode Island gets $2,302 per poor child; Alabama gets only $347."

But the South will not have to contend with one problem that block grants are expected to bring. Many have worried that states will "race to the bottom" to ensure that people don't move to a state for its more generous welfare benefits. "I can't see people moving from one state to another in the South," comments Dave Rickard of the Arkansas Department of Human Services. "We are already at the bottom."

— Anne Eckman



Food Stamp benefits are set federally and are uniformly regulated throughout the states, but they have only partially offset the disparities between state AFDC benefit levels. For a one parent family of four, the poverty line in 1994 was $15,150. Benefits in every Southern state except Maryland fall below the national benefits average, which is 65% of the poverty line. [source: Annie E. Casey Foundation's 1996 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*]

Adoption African-American Style

SANFORD, N.C.— Della and Neal Burnell first saw their children on television. The five siblings appeared on "Wednesday's Child," a local show about children in foster care looking for permanent homes. The Burnells knew they had to do something to keep the children from being separated — so they decided to adopt all of them. The Burnell's story is only one of the success stories that Another Choice, a new African-American adoption agency in Sanford, North Carolina, has made possible.

Since its founding in January 1995, the agency has found homes for 60 children.

The need for Another Choice stems from North Carolina's fragmented social services system, which has not directed enough resources toward adoption, said Al Deitch of North Carolina's Youth Advocacy Program. Also, social services programs often don't have a good reputation in black communities. Black families may be hesitant to work with them to adopt children, Deitch said.

Toni Oliver, director of Roots, an Atlanta organization that also specializes in placing African-American children, said, "There's not much attention paid to children in foster care. Period. [It is] viewed as a burden on the public welfare."

The black community traditionally has taken care of its children informally, said Ruth Amerson, founder and program administrator of Another Choice. But what started to happen, she said, was that "the community just didn't realize how many were waiting [for families.]" Another Choice and Roots recruit families to adopt children and provide resources to facilitate the adoption.

"Many agencies have policies and practices that 'select out' black families. Families that do not meet income or education requirements are working folks that

are [most likely] to adopt the kids," Amerson said. Many agencies charge high placement fees that restrict many families from adopting, she said.

Roots also welcomes single parents, said Oliver, who has been involved with special needs adoption for more than 17 years. The agency works with single black males who have a hard time being taken seriously at other adoption agencies, she said. "[Roots] strives to eliminate the barriers to adoption rather than create them." Another Choice and Roots generally deal with children that have been waiting the longest to find permanent homes — children beyond five years of age and sibling groups, Amerson said.

While Another Choice specializes in placing African-American children with families of the same race, a new federal law called the Multiethnic Placement Act prohibits discrimination in placing children with adoptive parents of a different race.

With the onset of welfare reform, Amerson said she expects to see more children placed in foster care and more needing adoption. The adoption agencies have modest funding, however: Another Choice from the state, and Roots from the federal government.

— Caroline Brown

Olympic Sacrifice

ATLANTA, Ga. — This summer, people with disabilities in cities in the South and around the country experienced a lift bus shortage that left them waiting at the bus stop. That's because transit operators, at the behest of the federal government, yanked many of their newest buses off the street and sent them to Atlanta to provide shuttle service for people going to Olympic events.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that all new buses purchased by public transit operators must be equipped with lifts for people with mobility disabilities. It's been six years since the ADA was signed, so most cities have buses with lifts.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, 1,400 of the 1,600 buses that were deployed had lifts.

Among Southern cities that sent buses to the games were Miami, Orlando, Jacksonville, New Orleans, Dallas, Houston, and Birmingham. Officials in those cities were concerned that the bus shortage during the height of summer would cause headaches for all riders. "If we have a hot summer like last year, with all the breakdowns, we'll never keep up," says Ryan Larsen, transit service manager for Madison Metro in Madison, Wisconsin.

But the impact was especially hard on people who require lifts. All 36 buses that Madison sent to Atlanta had lifts, and accessible service was curtailed or eliminated on all but one line. Larsen says the only reason Metro made the Olympic sacrifice was because the federal government strongly suggested they do so.

"It's the Olympic spirit. It's not just Atlanta. It's America!" says Laura Gillig, spokeswoman for MARTA, Atlanta's transit autority.

— Mike Ervin

Stripping vs. Falls

FALL CREEK FALLS, Tn. — The site of the highest waterfall east of the Rockies could be polluted if a strip mine is allowed to operate nearby, charges Save Our Cumberland Mountains (SOCM), a volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation of social, environmental, and economic justice in Tennessee.

Skyline Coal, a subsidiary of the second largest mining company in the world, Cyprus Amax Minerals (CAM), has leased coal rights to strip mine outside Fall Creek Falls State Park, but still within its watershed area. Sulfuric acid will leak, charges SOCM, turning waterways rusty red and killing all aquatic life. Mining would place at risk several species of endangered fish and one of Tennessee's best trout streams.

SOCM, with its 2,000 east Tennessee members, filed a petition with the Federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM) last year to protect the watershed from strip mining. The petition prompted OSM to commission an environmental impact statement. Skyline submitted an intervening petition to OSM, stating that it could mine the coal reserves while protecting the water quality, said Willis Gainer, supervisor of the technical group of OSM.

Photo courtesy of Tennessee Tourist Development

Fall Creek Falls is the highest waterfall in the East.

OSM has already issued three permits to Skyline. The first two resulted in water quality problems, but revisions in its mining techniques in the advent of more advanced technology ensures that water quality will not be affected, said Gainer.

The battle evokes déjà vu: in 1977, SOCM stopped Skyline's parent company, CAM, from winning a federal permit to strip mine 10,000 acres of Cumberland mountain land that included most of the land within the Fall Creeks Falls State Park watershed. Now CAM has reappeared through its subsidiary and secured permits to mine small parcels of the original 10,000-acre tract. The company has already moved some of its strip mining to just outside the watershed.

The stakes are high for

both sides. If Skyline wins, SOCM says, then the viability of the petition process will come into question, as will the effectiveness of the Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative, an OSM project charged specifically with protecting Appalachian waterways.

If SOCM wins, Skyline has threatened to sue the federal government in a "takings" case — the taking of potential profit from 30,000 acres of property already leased to Skyline for mining. This could bankrupt the Office of Surface Mining.

But such threats are a routine part of the process, said Gainer. OSM has been sued in a takings case and has been subject to several threats. "It's hard to predict up front whether you're going to win or lose in a takings case," he said. Since there are no strict guidelines concerning takings cases, the federal courts make their decisions case by case, he said.

Jane Wholey, a spokeswoman for SOCM, said that the organization has an effective history. SOCM won key legislation that protected landowners from strip mining even if they didn't own mineral rights to their acreage and persuaded the state of Tennessee to institute a coal severance tax that brought in millions of dollars for local roads and schools. But, she said, she fears that the pricetag Skyline is placing on compensation for the mining rights may sway any well-intentioned regulator.

Gainer says that OSM will assess the economic impact of allowing or disallowing mining in making their decision in late spring 1997. There are alternative solutions, he said, such as allowing only underground mining instead of surface mining, or designating only a portion of the area for mining.

— Caroline Brown

Education Helps — Some

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Education may be the key to getting ahead in the South — unless you're black, female, or both.

A black woman with one to three years of college, working full-time, year-round, earns less than a white man who dropped out of high school, according to "The State of the South," a report released earlier this year by MDC, Inc., a Chapel Hill think tank.

Furthermore, women at every education level who work full-time, year-round earn less than men at comparable levels, and black men earn less than white men. According to 1994 figures, a white man with a college degree earns an average of $46,398 per year — $11,000 more than a black man, $15,000 more than a white woman, and $18,000 more than a black woman.

The "glass ceiling" that women and blacks are hitting indicates that education alone doesn't bridge gender and racial gaps, according to the report. Education is not yet an economic equalizer for several reasons, many of which spring from cultural barriers. Women are earning less because they work in female-dominated occupations, which pay less than mixed or male-dominated occupations, and many blacks and women have only recently gained greater access to better job and educational opportunities.

Even though race and gender still matter, education appears to matter more, says the report. "Undereducated white men nettled by declining or stagnating incomes blame affirmative action rather than their lack of education; undereducated blacks blame racism rather than lack of education and the surge in single-parent families," says the report. Over time, such tensions should be eased as more blacks and women attain higher levels of education, says the report.

In 1990, 70 percent of Southern adults had high school diplomas, but workers who had no education beyond high school had seen their earnings stagnate during the previous decade. Between 1979 and 1989, the average yearly income for working high school graduates went from $21,091 to $21,428 — only a 1.6 percent increase.

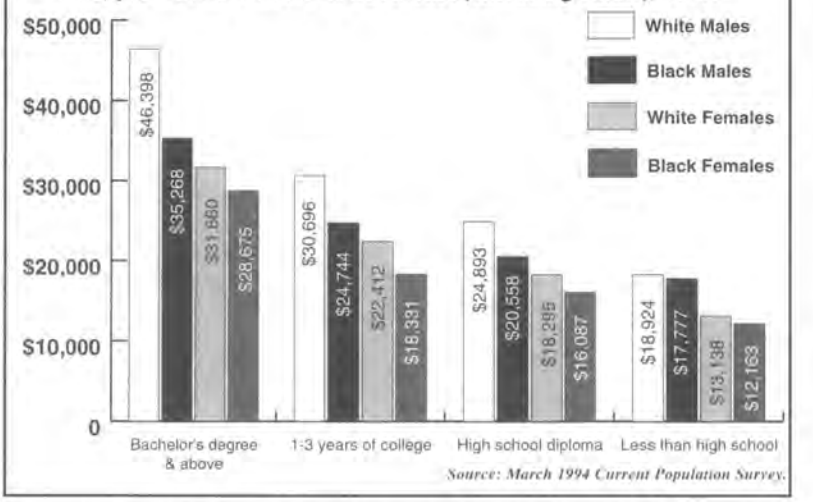
Traditionally lucrative Southern industries such as oil and gas extraction, coal mining, apparel and textiles, and tobacco products will see job losses during the next decade, but thousands of positions will be created in health, business, social, and educational services. As industries become more automated and technical, "skilled machine repairers and workers who can master the demands of computer-controlled machinery will be in demand, not miners and machine operators," the report says.

The report also found:

- Three out of 10 Southern families whose head of household doesn't have a high school diploma live in poverty; however, in most Southern states in 1990, more than half of poor families' heads of household worked during the previous year, and one in nine worked full-time, year-round.
- The South is home to 35 percent of the nation's total population and 42 percent of the Americans who live in poverty.
- Poverty exceeds the national rate in 11 Southern states. Louisiana ranks 50th, where one in four people live in poverty.

—Leslie Waugh

Average earnings by educational attainment, race, and gender for full-time, year-round workers in Southeast (excluding Texas), 1993.



Source: March 1994 Current Population Survey.

Answers to Southern quiz on p. 7:

(1) Jimmy Carter (2) Inadequate, sorry, broken-down, makeshift, not up to par. As in, "That is the most brokedick marching band I ever saw." Can also be a noun. (3) Margaret Mitchell (1900-49), author of *Gone With the Wind* (4) Bowling Green, Kentucky (5) National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing, Inc. (6) Low-level nuclear waste (7) Georgia, which abolished them in 1940. In 1995, Alabama reinstituted them for a short time.

A Better Swamp

FLORIDA — Since Majorie Douglas wrote *River of Grass* in the 1940s describing the majesty of the Everglades, the great swamp has been criss-crossed with levees, canals, and highways.

The channeled water that now streams onto the remaining marshland is being contaminated by phosphorous and other chemicals used on the sugarcane farms that dot the shores of Lake Okeechobee, poisoning fish and other wildlife.

This November, Florida voters will have the chance to decide for themselves just how much the sugar industry will have to pay to clean up the Everglades. Save Our Everglades has collected over 730,000 signatures to have a referendum placed on the ballot for a constitutional amendment, said Robin Rorapaugh, the campaign's director for Save Our Everglades.

Mary Barley, head of Save Our Everglades, said the amendment will create a penny-a-pound tax to "make the polluter pay to clean up his own pollution."

"The environmental extremists want to drive the sugar farmers off the Everglades," countered Judy Sanchez, director of communications for U.S. Sugar Corporation, "but they're not interested in getting rid of the cities, only small farming."

Cleanup is only part of the issue. Environmentalists would also pull the plug on government price supports that have been in place for more than 60 years. There is also a quota on imports to prevent a glut of foreign sugar in the U.S. market.

Barley says the price supports amount to corporate welfare. Industry giants U.S. Sugar and FloSun, for whom most small farmers grow, have lobbied Congress to continue the price supports.

"They came to Florida, destroyed our Everglades, and in the next 20 years they will get $4 billion," said Barley. "The subsidy has gotten so lucrative that other farming has gone by the way. They've all converted to sugar."

But it's the proposed extra penny-a-pound tax that has the industry worried. "The USDA says sugar farmers average a 7 percent per pound profit, so the tax would be more than they make," said Sanchez. She estimates that 40,000 jobs would be lost if the penny-a-pound tax is levied.

"There are 360,000 jobs at stake if they don't clean up the 'Glades," Barley countered. "Tourism, fishing, and many other jobs will be lost."

Whether or not the new tax is passed, help has been coming. In 1994, Florida passed the Everglades Forever Act, which requires cane farmers to meet rigorous water quality standards and pay more than $320 million to build artificial filter marshes on 40,000 acres of productive farmland. Either way, the Everglades will win in '96. And that's none to soon for the inhabitants of the river of grass.

— Nano Riley

TRACKING Segregation

"Most of the problems we face in the black community stem from tracking."

By Herb Frazier

Parents and community activists in two Southern communities profiled last year in *Southern Exposure* ("Wrong Side of the Track") have seen mixed results from their aggressive work to dismantle tracking in grade schools. Tracking — grouping students by academic ability — is prevalent in Southern states, where a disproportionate number of black children are grouped in less-challenging classes while mostly white students take advanced courses. The practice results in mostly segregated classes in supposedly integrated schools.

In Alabama, hopes ran high after a federal court ordered an end to tracking in 1993. But the new policy instituted by the state school board in April simply reinforces the old system, said Selma attorney Rose Sanders, founder and project coordinator of the Coalition of Alabamians Reforming Education.

The new high school mandates a dual curriculum — a regular track and an advanced track, she said. Students can choose which path to follow.

Sanders fears that many black families will take the regular track. "Most black people have accepted the inferior status of the masses of our black children, so it has become a self-fulfilling prophecy," she said. "The travesty is that this is being called educational reform when it is educational deform."

Sanders said that "most of the problems faced by the black community stem from tracking," a continuation of *Plessy v. Ferguson,* which legalized "separate but equal" public facilities, and a circumvention of *Brown v. Board of Education,* which outlawed that doctrine.

Seventh-grader Porter Johnson Jr. is now in honors classes.

Meanwhile, in Screven County, Georgia, the U.S. Department of Education has been investigating whether tracking created racially segregated classes in the district's three schools, where 55 percent of the students are black.

Activists are encouraged by the department's results. "Instead of having the [black] children isolated in the lower level, there is an effort being made by the school district to mainstream them into the school," said Karen Watson, coordinator of the Positive Action Committee in Sylvania, Georgia.

"It is more of the ideal setting we were striving for, and it adheres to the theory that children learn better when they are mixed," Watson said. She has visited several classes and has seen how teachers are learning to instruct students who learn on different levels. "It requires teachers to have greater skills, and it is proof to me that it can work."

Parents in other areas are waging their own battles against tracking. Few have been more vocal than Ruthenia Johnson. She challenged the Horry County, South Carolina, school district when it failed to put her son, Porter, in the honors program. Johnson said that at the end of his third grade year at Loris Elementary School, Porter was considered a prime candidate for honors classes. He was picked for a special Talented Identification Program sponsored by Duke University in the fourth grade, but he was not placed in his own school's honors program. "I thought it was very ironic," Johnson said. "If he is qualified for this program, and their criteria were the same as the honors program, he should be in the honors program."

Porter was in the sixth grade when he finally entered his school's honors program, said his mother. "I feel like I have had to fight tooth and nail to get him in there, even though he has made A's in all of his subjects."

While other parents in the district have been concerned about tracking, they have not been as organized, Johnson said. "I am the lone ranger here, but I say other parents need to become involved in the issue, too." SE

Herb Frazier is a reporter with The Post and Courier *in Charleston, S.C.*

After NAFTA

Photos by Sarah Anderson

As factories flee to Mexico, the trade agreement takes a heavy toll on the rural South.

Olivia Kearney, who worked for Black & Decker half her life, and 800 laid-off co-workers received a memory book at the plant's farewell banquet. It was dedicated to employees for "consistently making the Black & Decker Tarboro plant the #1 plant."

By Sarah Anderson and Karen Harris

Olivia Kearney worked at the Black & Decker plant in Tarboro, a small town in eastern North Carolina, from the day it opened in 1971 to the day it closed last December. She and 800 other employees were laid off when the power-tool maker decided to shift production to Mexico after passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, better known as NAFTA.

"It was sad, of course," recalls Kearney, who spent half of her 48 years working for Black & Decker. "But I'm just not good at sitting around."

Instead of feeling sorry for herself after the shutdown, Kearney contacted the U.S. Department of Labor and learned about job retraining and extended unemployment benefits available to workers laid off as a result of NAFTA. "I called up Washington myself, and it's a good thing I did," she says. Kearney and some co-workers organized a petition, and everyone at the Tarboro factory qualified for the federal retraining program. Kearney studied industrial maintenance and quickly landed a new job that pays as well as Black & Decker.

The story, it seems, has a happy ending. Black & Decker, by slashing labor costs, has better equipped itself to take on the challenges of a competitive global economy. Kearney, by taking advantage of federal job training, has repositioned herself more competitively in the global labor force. Even Tarboro, a community of 11,000, appears to be thriving. Well-preserved Victorian homes line the neatly groomed town common, and local merchants continue to sell their wares along the four-block stretch of Main Street as they have for half a century.

Yet beneath the quaint facade are signs of the deep scars left by the Black & Decker shutdown. Unemployment is up by a third. Tax revenues needed to pay for schools and social services are down. And a few storefronts along Main Street are boarded up, an ominous indication of things to come.

"Everyone understands this is a shared loss of the whole community," says Town Manager Joe Durham.

As NAFTA enters its fourth year, that loss is increasingly being shared throughout the U.S. economy. Layoffs related to the trade pact are accelerating throughout rural America, especially in the South. Rural workers comprise only 21 percent of the U.S. workforce, yet they have suffered 46 percent of NAFTA-related job losses. Of the rural layoffs, 42 percent occurred in the South.

Why has the rural South been so hard hit? What kind of toll are plant closings taking on rural communities? The answers lie beyond the bounds of Washington and Wall Street, in towns like

Tarboro. Like scientists charting the blast of an atomic bomb, economists tracing the impact of NAFTA must work from the epicenter of the explosion outward.

Ground zero

Olivia Kearney actually started working for Black & Decker before the company opened its factory in Tarboro. To lure the well-known power-tool maker to Edgecombe County, officials built a training center for the firm to use as a production site for six months while the new factory was under construction. When the plant finally opened, it became the largest employer in town.

Workers say the company led them to believe their jobs were secure. In 1991, Black & Decker initiated a high-tech training program boldly named "Tarboro 2000." Kearney signed up and spent seven months learning how to use robotics to produce electrical chargers for hand-held tools. "They made it seem like we were one big family," she recalls. "We just had to jump on the bandwagon, and we'd all ride into the next century together."

The ride proved shorter than Black & Decker had promised. While the company was promoting its plans for Tarboro, it was also lobbying heavily for NAFTA. Black & Decker promised it would not ship American jobs to Mexico if the trade agreement passed. A few weeks before Congress voted on the trade pact in 1993, company spokeswoman Barbara Lucas told a reporter, "We're not going to move jobs in or out of the U.S."

But that is exactly what Black & Decker did in Edgecombe County. The company insists it shipped jobs from its Tarboro factory to other towns in the United States. According to a report by the Department of Labor, however, the Tarboro 2000 program ended prematurely because Black & Decker shifted production to Mexico. The finding was supported by internal company memos obtained by workers and by reports from Tarboro employees who were sent to Mexicali, Mexico, to install equipment from the North Carolina plant.

The appeal of Mexico is clear. Hourly production wages at the Tarboro plant ranged from $8 to $16. By contrast, factory wages in Mexico average $1.37. In effect, NAFTA gave companies extra incentive for producing in Mexico by lowering investment and tariff barriers, thus making it more profitable to export goods to the U.S. market. In 1995 alone, American companies built 600 new factories in Mexico. Many other U.S. firms were hurt by increased imports from Mexico.

"We just had to jump on the bandwagon, and we'd all ride into the next century together."

The ride proved shorter than Black & Decker had promised.

Kearney and her former Black & Decker co-workers are among nearly 80,000 laid-off Americans who have qualified for NAFTA retraining benefits (only a small fraction of the total NAFTA job loss, since many workers do not know about the program or do not meet its narrow qualifications). About 15,000 of those workers — nearly a fifth of those receiving benefits — are from the rural South.

Why has the region been so hard hit? The answer lies in the same reasons why many companies moved south in the first place — to take advantage of cheaper land and labor than they could find in urban areas, and to evade unions concentrated in Northern cities. For runaway shops like Black & Decker, the move to Mexico was just another step in the pursuit of ever cheaper labor.

Asked if anyone had ever tried to organize a union at the Tarboro plant, Kearney and three of her co-workers burst out laughing. Whenever talk of organizing came up, they say, plant managers threatened, "If you want to make us close, organize a union."

Mary Brown, a 17-year veteran of Black & Decker, says the strategy of intimidation worked. "But the funny thing is that we might still have our jobs if we had unionized," she says. "Someone in management told us the company really wanted to close their Canadian plants, but the unions there have a contract that demands three years of severance. It was cheaper to lay us off because we only got a week for every year we worked."

Indeed, the Tarboro plant closing shows up as a big positive on the Black & Decker balance sheet. According to a company report, the shutdown helped reduce annual operating expenses by $60 million — in a year of record sales and profits.

"A part of themselves"

But creating a balance sheet that accounts for the true cost of NAFTA requires going beyond the bottom line of companies like Black & Decker. A full reckoning would start with the expense of unemployment insurance and retraining for laid-off workers. Over the long term, it would also include the costs of families forced to relocate to find work, and the drop in income levels for those unable to find jobs that pay as well as Black & Decker.

The Black & Decker closing was the largest of three major layoffs in Edgecombe County last year that drove the unemployment rate to 10.7 percent, almost double the national average. As in

many small towns, job opportunities in and around Tarboro are scarce. Studies show that rural residents have a harder time finding new jobs at comparable pay than their urban counterparts.

The Tarboro workforce at Black & Decker was three-quarters African American and two-thirds female. Both groups have been especially hard hit by NAFTA, primarily because they are employed in large numbers in the apparel and electronics industries, which have suffered the most NAFTA-related layoffs. In addition, a study by the Joint Center on Political and Economic Studies indicates that dislocated African Americans are more likely than whites to take substantial pay cuts in their new jobs. The gap between the races is particularly wide in rural areas, where the poverty rate among African Americans is 40 percent, almost three times that of rural whites and a third higher than the rate among urban African Americans.

Rural communities like Tarboro are often held together by support networks of extended families. But the Black & Decker layoff has strained this safety net by hitting entire families in one blow. Olivia Kearney, for example, has a son, two sisters-in-law, a niece, and a nephew who also worked for Black & Decker.

The plant closing also exacted a devastating psychological toll on workers. Average seniority at Black & Decker was 10 years. Fifty employees had worked at the factory for 25 years.

For older workers, the layoff "was almost like experiencing a death in the family," says Cyndi Phelps, a counselor with the local Employment Security Commission. "It was like losing a part of themselves."

Phelps urged workers to enroll in job training immediately so their unemployment benefits would last until they completed the program. But many of the workers were simply too traumatized to move on so quickly. Six months after the layoff, only 180 of the 800 Black & Decker workers had signed up for training. An even smaller number had found employment.

Many workers worry that they will be forced to leave the town in which they have spent their entire lives. Although Labor Secretary Robert Reich describes mobility as the key to success in today's economy, the pressure to relocate is devastating for many rural residents.

"Before I starve, I will move," says Mary Brown. "But until I get to that point, I'm not leaving. My roots are here. I just love old Tarboro."

Temps and mammograms

The ripple effect of the plant closing has extended outward from workers like Mary Brown to the rest of the community. The next to feel the effects were merchants and suppliers who did business with Black & Decker. Although Brown was the only person in her family employed directly by the company, her father runs a taxi and delivery service that depended on the company for at least 10 percent of its business. His is one of a large number of firms forced to scramble to make up for the Black & Decker closing.

One of the hardest hit was Megaforce, an employment agency that supplied Black & Decker with low-paid temporary workers. Helping Black & Decker develop a more "flexible" workforce of contract employees had been Megaforce's bread and butter for the past decade. Last year, the agency supplied Black & Decker with about 600 workers, many of whom had been "temps" with the company for as long as six years.

Another firm hurt by the plant closing was Service America, which ran the employee cafeteria at Black & Decker and catered special corporate events. All over town are banks, rug cleaners, a warehouse, mechanics, office supply stores,

Former Black & Decker workers Carolyn Keeter, Olivia Kearney, Shelia Andrews, and Mary Brown are among 80,000 laid-off Americans who have qualified for NAFTA retraining benefits. More than one-fifth of those receiving benefits are from the rural South.

and a host of other small businesses that relied on the tool maker for much of their income.

On Main Street, shopkeepers are tight-lipped about their potential losses. Jeanette Jones, who owns a TV and appliance store with her husband, admits that they "might have felt the pinch a bit," but hopes that there won't be any more negative publicity about the layoffs.

"We've had so much bad news that people are scared even if it's not their own plant," Jones says. "They're nervous about making purchases."

Community organizations that will lose donations from Black & Decker are too numerous to list. The company sponsored car races, softball and basketball teams, the March of Dimes, Special Olympics, and a Christmas drive for needy families. When Olivia Kearney's son was raising money for the high school band, Black & Decker bought $200 worth of oranges from him and gave them to the poor. Likewise, when the local volunteer group Women With a Vision needed door prizes, its members knew where to turn.

The local hospital is also suffering from the layoffs. Under the Black & Decker health plan, workers who got sick had to go to Heritage Hospital. Now, many are unable to afford health care. The company offered a Women's Wellness program that provided free Pap smears and mammograms. Without coverage, many women in Tarboro must forego such preventive care to meet basic family expenses.

The health of the town itself is also threatened. According to Town Manager Joe Durham, Tarboro will lose about $250,000 in annual property tax revenues as a result of the plant closing — 1.5 percent of what the town collects. Figuring in lost revenues from payroll taxes and sales receipts, plus increased expenses for various social services, one county commissioner predicted that the Black & Decker layoffs could drive up the local tax rate by as much as 12 percent in 1997.

"Before I starve, I will move. But until I get to that point, I'm not leaving."

Memory book

It is clearly impossible to measure all the costs associated with a layoff like the one that hit Tarboro. Yet even a cursory look at one town raises serious questions about whether NAFTA is living up to its promise to increase U.S. competitiveness. The key question, it would seem, is "competitive for whom?"

Last spring, IBP Corporation picked Tarboro as a competitive site for one of its hog slaughterhouses. Known for its high injury and illness rates and relatively low pay, the meat-packing giant tends to locate in economically depressed areas. Although the county eventually rejected the project because of the high cost of treating hog waste from the processing plant, a majority of commissioners were otherwise supportive of the bid, pointing out the desperate need for jobs and tax revenues.

Mary Brown, a 17-year Black & Decker employee, says a union might have saved her job, but "it was cheaper to lay us off because we only got a week [of severance] for every year we worked."

Tarboro leaders are realistic about an economy in which most new jobs are less than desirable. While few are as grueling as slaughterhouse work, most new jobs are part-time, temporary, or low-paying positions in the service sector. Thus, the pro-NAFTA promise that retraining will improve the lives of workers rings hollow. Even dislocated workers who do find satisfactory new employment are unlikely to come through the experience unscathed.

Six months after her last day on the job, Kearney's bedroom is still decorated with a half-dozen framed certificates of achievement from Black & Decker. Her son, Philuster Jr., laid off by Black & Decker after 11 years, remains unemployed and lives at home. Her husband, Philuster Sr., has worked nearly 30 years at a local textile plant, but Kearney knows that textile companies are leaving the United States in droves to take advantage of lower wages overseas.

On a night out at the Red Lobster in Rocky Mount, 30 miles from Tarboro, Kearney reminisces with former co-workers Mary Brown and Shelia Andrews about their combined 54 years at Black & Decker. Kearney, in a fuschia pantsuit and gold jewelry, and Brown and Andrews, also well-dressed with fresh manicures, hardly look the part of down-on-their-luck blue-collar workers. The women even manage to laugh about the day Black & Decker announced the layoff.

"They had security guards posted at all the entrances because they thought there was going to be a riot," says Kearney, her eyes twinkling with amusement. "Then this

SAVING Jobs *and* Towns

Although NAFTA has given companies wide latitude to abandon workers and communities, there are a variety of efforts underway that could protect towns like Tarboro from the whims of globetrotting corporations like Black & Decker.

1. Attach Strings to Tax Breaks. To entice Black & Decker to Tarboro, the county gave the company a brand-new training center — no strings attached. Since training, tax breaks, and other subsidies are an investment by taxpayers, some communities are beginning to demand something in return. Santa Clara County in California now has a law that requires firms applying for tax breaks to create jobs that pay at least $10 an hour, with benefits, and to keep those jobs in the county. If the company reneges, it must repay the full value of the tax subsidy.

2. Require Companies to Negotiate. In certain European countries, companies planning a plant closing must sit down with workers and government officials to explore ways to avoid the shutdown. Olivia Kearney, the laid-off Black & Decker employee, says many of her co-workers would have offered to take a pay cut or make other changes to keep their jobs. Even if the company had rejected their offers, Kearney says, the workers would have appreciated the opportunity to make their case.

3. Promote Community Ownership. The Black & Decker plant in Tarboro remains empty, a tremendous waste of a facility that cost $3 million when it was built in 1971. In some communities, workers, citizens groups, or local governments have bought plants and kept them operating. By preventing the ripple effects of a shutdown, communities can benefit even if a plant just breaks even. Local ownership also ensures a higher level of concern for community interests.

Some states allow local governments to use the power of "eminent domain" to take over plants about to be closed, as long as the seizure serves a public purpose and the owners receive "just compensation." Pressured by the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America , the city of New Bedford, Massachusetts, threatened to take over a plant owned by Gulf and Western. In response, the company agreed to sell the plant to another firm that kept the plant open for seven years.

4. Enforce Stronger Labor Rights. Unfortunately, no matter how hard communities work to retain jobs, corporations will continue to move overseas as long as a massive wage gap exists between the United States and underdeveloped countries. Mexican workers who try to organize and press for higher wages commonly face being fired and blacklisted.

To prevent such unfair labor practices and level the playing field between American and Mexican workers, labor unions and others demanded that NAFTA include provisions to punish violators with trade sanctions. But the labor agreement attached to NAFTA is weak, and the process for filing complaints is prohibitively bureaucratic. Only four were filed during NAFTA's first two years, and none has resulted in improvements for workers. However, citizens groups remain committed to fighting for stronger enforcement mechanisms to protect labor rights in future trade agreements.

Consumers play an important role in defending worker rights. Last fall, citizens held demonstrations outside Gap clothing stores to protest labor violations at plants run by company contractors in El Salvador and Honduras. In response, Gap agreed to allow independent monitoring of its overseas plants.

Local governments can also wield power over corporations. The most successful example is the sanctions movement against apartheid, which mobilized hundreds of municipalities to stop supporting firms that did business in South Africa. Governments could use the same approach to punish labor rights violators, halting investments and contracts with companies shipping jobs overseas.

— Sarah Anderson

man from corporate headquarters got up there. He was like a stranger in the night — we'd never seen him before."

"He had a bullet-proof vest on!" adds Brown. "I really think he did! They were just so sure it was going to be a mess."

Andrews nods. "The funny thing was that after the man read the piece of paper about the shutdown, everybody just went back to work. It was so quiet. I mean, I was thinking that somebody would have lost it, but they didn't."

When the women describe the company's lavish farewell banquet, however, their tone turns bitter. The company invited employees and their families, gave away prizes, and videotaped the event as a memento. Kearney and other workers received a memory book dedicated to employees for "consistently making the Black & Decker Tarboro plant the #1 plant."

"That's what they were really good at — making you believe it was a family-oriented company," Kearney says. "But I guess we know better now. You don't kick your family out into the street."

SE

Sarah Anderson is a fellow and Karen Harris is a research assistant at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. Anderson co-edited a 50-page report entitled NAFTA's First Two Years: The Myths and the Realities, *published by IPS in March.*

Up SOUTH

By Ron Nixon

In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson, a Texan, locked arms and sang "We Shall Overcome" with civil rights leaders after signing landmark civil rights legislation. For many, the image of a Southern legislator embracing the anthem of the civil rights movement signaled a new beginning for South and its once-hostile political climate.

The 1964 Civil Rights Act was the first of numerous bills to help blacks and other people of color. Now, more than 30 years later, Southern politicians who gained power in the 1994 GOP takeover of Congress have led the effort to put many of the gains of the civil rights movement in jeopardy. Attacks on affirmative action, welfare, and voting rights have intensified under the new Southern leadership in both the Republican and Democratic parties. Race-baiting political ads, reminiscent of the 1950s and '60s, scapegoating people of color now dominate the airwaves. The bold vision of a new South offered by Johnson's signing of the civil rights bill and subsequent political gains for blacks and poor people in the late 1960s and '70s now seems a distant memory, thanks in large part to the rightward shift of the GOP under the leadership of Southerners, including Newt Gingrich, Trent Lott, Tom DeLay, and others.

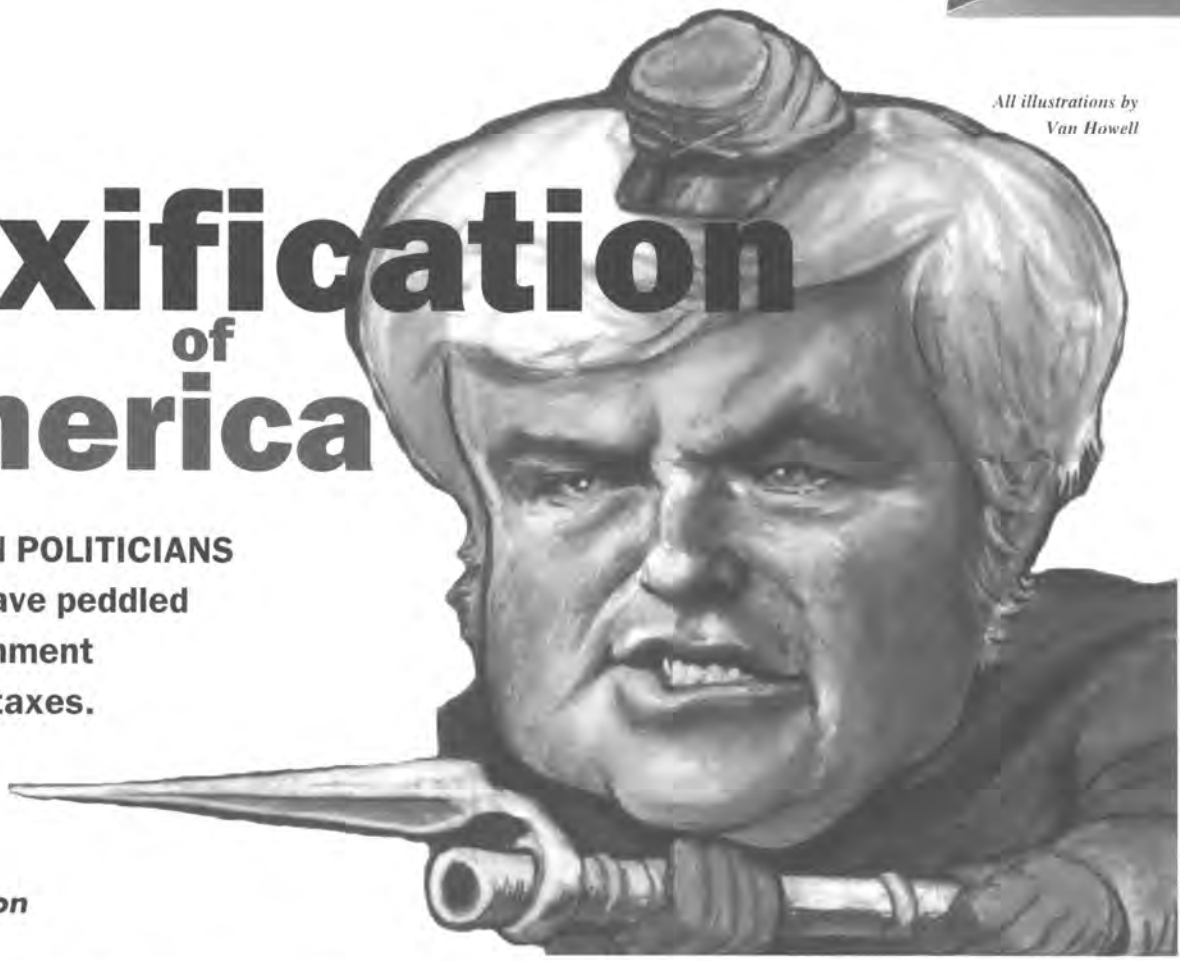
In this special cover section of *Southern Exposure*, we examine the current political landscape in the South and its impact on national politics. We report on the Southern takeover of the GOP and its impact on national policy since the Republican Party is now the majority party and in control of both houses of Congress. Michael King, an associate editor with the *Texas Observer*, examines the Campaign for a Color-Blind America, a Houston-based "civil rights" group dedicated to undoing the black congressional districts created four years ago. South Carolina native Hastings Wyman Jr., editor and publisher of the *Southern Political Report*, a Washington, D.C., newsletter, looks into the presidential and congressional races in the South. *Hispanic Magazine* associate editor Valerie Menard provides an overview of the impact of the Latino vote in Texas and Florida on the upcoming presidential election. She examines the political differences between the two Latino voting populations. Writer Raoul Dennis offers insight into the apathy and resistance to voting among those who would benefit from it most — young African Americans. Finally, *Southern Exposure* intern Meridith Helton gives a firsthand account of her experience as a Union Summer activist in Georgia with the AFL-CIO's campaign to bring students into the union movement.

We don't examine all aspects of the South's impact on national politics in this issue. For example, we didn't address the Southern impact on the Democratic Party beyond acknowledging President Clinton and Vice President Gore and Democratic National Committee Chairman Don Fowler. We didn't examine the Democratic Leadership Council, a creation of Southern Democrats to take the party rightward. Nor do we address the role and influence of the Southern-based Christian Coalition. We focused on the GOP because of its current status as majority party and because of the influence of the South through key leadership positions in the Republican Party. We hope that this issue serves as a primer on Southern politics. Long considered a backwater backdrop, the South has become the philosophical center of U.S. politics. As a result, the rest of the country is starting to look a lot like Dixie. SE

We hope that this issue serves as a primer on Southern politics.

"Everything beneath the Canadian border is down South."
— Malcolm X

The Dixification of America



All illustrations by Van Howell

SOUTHERN POLITICIANS gleefully have peddled less government and fewer taxes.

By Ron Nixon

What the South could never do on Civil War battlefields it has managed to do through the ballot box: take control of the country. The last two national elections have firmly established the South as the most powerful political region.

Bill Clinton of Arkansas and Al Gore of Tennessee are the first president and vice president team from beneath the Mason-Dixon line. When Bob Dole resigned as Senate majority leader to concentrate on his presidential campaign full time, Mississippian Trent Lott became the GOP leader in the Senate.

As Speaker of the House, Republican Newt Gingrich of Georgia is the most powerful congressman. Gingrich's lieutenants, Dick Armey, House Majority leader, the sultan of the flat tax long before former presidential candidate Steve Forbes, and Tom DeLay, House Majority Whip, who never met a regulation he liked, hail from Texas.

Key House committee and subcommittee chairmanships are in the hands of Southern Republicans. Bob Livingston of Louisiana chairs the powerful Appropriations Committee. Thomas J. Bliley of Virginia heads the Commerce Committee, which stopped congressional inquiries into tobacco companies as soon as he assumed the chairmanship. Bill Archer of Texas heads the Ways and Means committee. Larry Combest of Texas chairs the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

In the Senate, Republican Strom Thurmond, the senior senator from South Carolina and 1948 presidential candidate for the segregationist States' Rights Party, is chair of the Armed Services Committee. Fellow senior senator Republican Jesse Helms of North Carolina heads the Foreign Relations Committee.

As of 1994 Republicans hold 67 of the 125 congressional seats from the 11 states of the old Confederacy. It's the first GOP majority since post-Civil War Reconstruction. Of the 22 Southern Senate seats, only nine are held by Democrats.

The heads of both major political parties are Southerners, too: Haley Barbour of Mississippi heads the Republican National Committee (RNC) and Don Fowler of South Carolina chairs the Democratic National Committee (DNC). Add to that the Virginia-based Christian Coalition, which has virtually taken over the Republican party in several Southern states, including South Carolina and Virginia.

In addition to taking Congress, the GOP took legislative chambers in 1994 in the Tennessee Senate, South Carolina House, and North Carolina House. These were in states where Republicans have not controlled a chamber since Reconstruction.

"Might as well designate 'Dixie' as the official party anthem for next month's Republican National Convention," said *Miami Herald* columnist Fred Grimm in

July. "The peckerwoods have taken over the GOP and the party leadership."

How'd they do it?

The Southernization of American politics is due in large part to Newt Gingrich, the architect of the GOP's 1994 takeover of Congress.

Using GOPAC, a political action committee launched to help Republican campaigns across the country, Gingrich and his strategists latched on to the Southern strategy invented by Barry Goldwater, the conservative Arizona Republican who lost the presidential election in 1964 by a landslide to Lyndon Johnson. The strategy involved the Republican Party's abandonment of any semblance of support for civil rights and social programs to benefit the poor. White voters, especially in the South, were easily persuaded that support of civil rights and social issues important to blacks would only hurt the white population. Republican strategists were willing to alienate a receptive black population to gain a much larger white vote.

Republican Richard Nixon used the Southern strategy to good effect, winning the 1972 presidential election. Ronald Reagan and, to a lesser extent, George Bush continued using the successful strategy. Like their predecessors, these Republican candidates targeted white voters with racially charged language in campaign ads and attacked legislation to help the poor and minorities. Gingrich and GOPAC went further by teaching candidates how to run a winning campaign. This paid off with the GOP takeover of Congress in 1994.

If the GOP's Southern strategy is the mother of today's GOP, then the old-time Southern Democrat — the "Dixiecrat" that dominated Southern politics in the 1950s and '60s — is the father. Strom Thurmond started the steady stream of defections to the GOP when he left the Democratic party in 1964. The Republican party welcomed the old Dixiecrats with open arms.

The Southern Democrats and the Republicans suited each other perfectly. The old Dixiecrats brought their rhetoric of states' rights, less taxes, religious conservatism, dislike of federal intrusion, and opposition of aid to blacks and the poor. But there is one major difference, said Hastings Wyman Jr., editor and publisher of the newsletter *Southern Political Reporter* (and author of "The South Holds the Key" on page 23). "Where the old Dixiecrats were merely obstructionist, Southern leaders of the GOP are in the majority."

Don Fowler, chair of the Democratic National Committee, is from South Carolina.

Republicans and lawn fertilizer

This Republican majority has created a more conservative, rightward swing for the region and across the country, said *Miami Herald* columnist Fred Grimm.

According to FBI records, Trent Lott used his influence to get his mother a job with a contractor for NASA.

"Suddenly, there are members of the Republican party flying the Confederate flag. Suddenly, the GOP's big tent includes folks who want to give science the heave ho in favor of teaching creationism, and they're hanging out with slow-talking folks whose opposition to affirmative action and welfare seems just a trifle too gleeful. Suddenly they are anti-gay."

While much of this may be true, it oversimplifies the appeal of the GOP to Southern voters. Like the Dixiecrats, today's GOP does indeed appeal to those fire and brimstone conservatives who support flying the stars and bars and teaching religious doctrine in the classroom — Trent Lott was one of the last politicians to address the White Citizens Council, a white supremacist group known as "the educated Klan." And both he and Dick Armey have ties to Larry Pratt, whose resignation from Pat Buchanan's campaign for president last year made headlines after Pratt's ties to white supremacists became public.

But the GOP's appeal also extends to voters who would much rather burn a tax return than a cross.

Unlike the poor, blue-collar, fringe elements who joined the Ku Klux Klan and helped push former Alabama Governor George Wallace and other virulently racist Southern politicians to national prominence, the GOP owes much of its recent success to major demographic changes in the South. White-collar workers who have higher educational achievement than ever before live in the South, and a new suburban culture has transformed the region over the past 20 years.

Mississippian Trent Lott became the GOP leader in the Senate after Bob Dole's departure.

"As every political consultant knows, where the lawn fertilizer is heavy and the minivans are parked, the GOP will do well," wrote *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reporter Carrie Teegardin in 1994.

According to data from the Census Bureau:

- From 1970 to 1990, the proportion of Southerners with a high school education rose from 45 percent to 71 percent.
- The poverty rate rose nationally during this same period but declined in the South.
- Metropolitan populations in the South rose at twice the average rate for the nation.

"The more suburban, better educated, and more affluent South is a Republican South," said Charles S. Bullock II, a University of Georgia professor of political science, who has challenged black voting districts (see page 26). "These lifestyle changes, moving up the socio-economic strata, coincide with people who are suspicious of what the government may do to them and less interested in what the government may do for them," Bullock said.

Anti-tax and Uncle Sam

Southern Republicans may despise big government, but the South is actually more dependent on the federal government than any other region. As Vern Smith wrote in *Newsweek* in 1995, "Taking Washington's money is as Southern as cornbread and whiskey."

Taxes — The anti-tax Southerners actually do succeed in ducking high taxes — at least well-to-do Southerners succeed. According to the Tax Foundation, a business-supported research group in Washington, D.C., residents in the Northeast — not the South — pay the highest taxes. In 1995, residents of Connecticut and New York bore the highest tax burdens (this includes all taxes: federal, state, sales, income, and property). The average total tax per person in Connecticut was $12,584 and $11,373 in New York. No Southern state was among the top 10 tax-paying states. In fact, eight of the states with the lowest taxes were in the South. Maryland had the highest tax burden of the Southern states with an average per person tax debt of $9,200. It ranked 22nd in the nation.

The problem, according to the nonprofit Citizens for Tax Justice (CTJ), is that despite paying some of the lowest taxes in the nation, the South's tax burden is not distributed fairly. Tennessee, for instance, charges no state income tax, but does have a steep average 8.25 percent sales tax on goods, including food. Low-income people spend a high proportion of their income on food, which means they are paying a higher percentage of their income in taxes than more affluent people. According to CTJ, five of the 10 states that make the poor pay disproportionately high state and local taxes are in the South: Texas, Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana, and Florida.

Big Government — No issue appears to bother Southern voters more than their perception of federal government intrusion. But, in truth, no other region benefits from big government as much as the South does. According to the Census Bureau, 19 of the 37 counties that receive the greatest amount of federal expenditures are in the South. A January 16, 1995, article in *Newsweek* shows that there are an average of 12 military bases or installations per Southern state — 50 percent more than the average for states outside the region. According to *Newsweek*, Texas alone nets $4 billion per year in active duty and civilian military revenue.

Alabama provides a perfect example of how politicians play on the anti-big government themes while reaping benefits from the federal government. When Governor Fob James was elected in 1994, he vowed to fight federal intervention, even if it meant "sending back Uncle Sam's money." So far, that hasn't happened. A *Birmingham News* computer analysis of federal spending in Alabama shows that for every $1 the state sends to the federal government, it gets back just over $1.50. The federal government spends $21.2 billion in Alabama on contracts, grants, and social programs. In contrast, the state only pays out $13.9 billion in federal taxes. Every second, the federal government spends $673 in Alabama.

Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina heads the Foreign Relations Committee.

In Mississippi, anti-big government themes also play well. Last year, smaller government proponent Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi tried unsuccessfully to get NASA to steer a $1 billion project and hundreds of jobs from Utah to Mississippi. A confidential agency assessment found that the project would have cost taxpayers $850 million just for relocation. The project was killed. When reporters asked about the inconsistencies in trying to steer federal dollars to his home state while attacking big government, a spokesperson for the senator replied, "What do you want him to be, a purist?"

Being anti-big government has not

The GOP's appeal extends to voters who would much rather burn a tax return than a cross.

stopped Lott from trying to get the government he said he despises to help his family. According to FBI records, Lott used his influence to get his mother a job with security firm Hyde Security Service, Inc., (HSSI), a contractor for NASA. FBI records show that despite the fact that Iona Lott had no previous experience, she was hired by HSSI as a public relations director with an annual salary of more than $60,000. A letter dated April 4, 1990, from the Internal Revenue Service to the U.S. attorney in Jackson, Mississippi, said that Iona Lott's services to HSSI were "minimal and meaningless." According to FBI documents, HSSI also authorized the use of federal funds for the direct benefit of Lott's campaign activities. Records show that Lott used his influence to stop an investigation into the alleged improprieties.

States' Rights — The South's quarrel with big government historically has been about states' rights. According to the 10th Amendment, individual states have authority within their borders over anything not mentioned specifically in the Constitution. Like their antebellum predecessors who said that Washington couldn't abolish slavery, the Southern Democrats in the 1950s and '60s used the 10th Amendment to declare that the federal government had no business ordering integration of public facilities.

In 1956, South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond drafted the "Southern Manifesto," signed by 90 percent of Southern members of Congress, that called the U.S. Supreme Court decision ordering desegregation, *Brown v. Board of Education*, a substitution of "naked power for established law." After *Brown*, Mississippi adopted a "Resolution of Interposition," asserting the power of state government to block unilaterally any federal decision or law.

The rest of the country responded with shock and ridicule to such virulent manipulation of the Constitution to perpetuate segregation, but today, states' rights have made a comeback of sorts. During the South Carolina GOP presidential primaries, candidates, including moderates Lamar Alexander and Steve Forbes, along with Bob Dole, asserted the states' rights argument in defense of South Carolina's right to fly the Confederate flag. That argument sounded remarkably similar to the rhetoric of old-line segregationists. But states' rights arguments today go beyond the old race-based arguments of the 1950s and '60s, even though they're used to justify changes in welfare and kill affirmative action programs aimed at helping blacks and other people of color.

Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, 1948 presidential candidate from the segregationist States' Rights Party, is now chair of the Armed Services Committee.

"As every political consultant knows, where the lawn fertilizer is heavy and the minivans are parked, the GOP will do well."

Now the argument has to do with deregulation and is driven more by the corporate bottom line than resistance to equal opportunities for people of color. The recent struggle over regulating tobacco is a case in point. As Morton Mintz wrote in the May 1996 *Washington Monthly*, the tobacco industry, under the cover of states' rights, has tried to stall any federal regulation of its products in a number of Southern states. According to Mintz, at the 1995 Annual Conference of the National Foundation for Women Legislators, Inc., the Smokeless Tobacco Council, an industry trade group, sponsored a workshop called "FDA's Assault on the Constitution and Legislative Prerogative." The purpose of the workshop, according to the Smokeless Tobacco Council, was to alert the legislators of the FDA's proposal to regulate tobacco, "on the grounds that this is clearly a states' rights issue."

Like the tobacco companies, chemical, hazardous waste, and other industries have been quick to follow suit in the states' rights argument. "It's enough to make you think twice about the Republicans' devolution solution," Mintz wrote. This spirit of deregulation Mintz described does have voters worried, even in the South. The themes of anti-big government, fewer taxes, and states' rights may play well in the South and elsewhere, but when less government means cutting funding for Social Security, Medicare, or veterans benefits, or if it means deregulation of environmental, consumer, and other protections in the name of states' rights, it remains to be seen how Southern voters will react. Conservative voters may recognize that welfare recipients and people of color aren't the only ones who benefit from Washington, D.C.'s coffers.

Indeed, polls across the country now show that the Southern GOP-led takeover of national politics may have run its course. "There is also a perception that the 104th Congress did little," said David Bositis of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington, D.C. "I mean, for all the talk about the Contract with America, very little of it actually passed. What have they done except target programs for cuts that the majority of the American people want?" SE

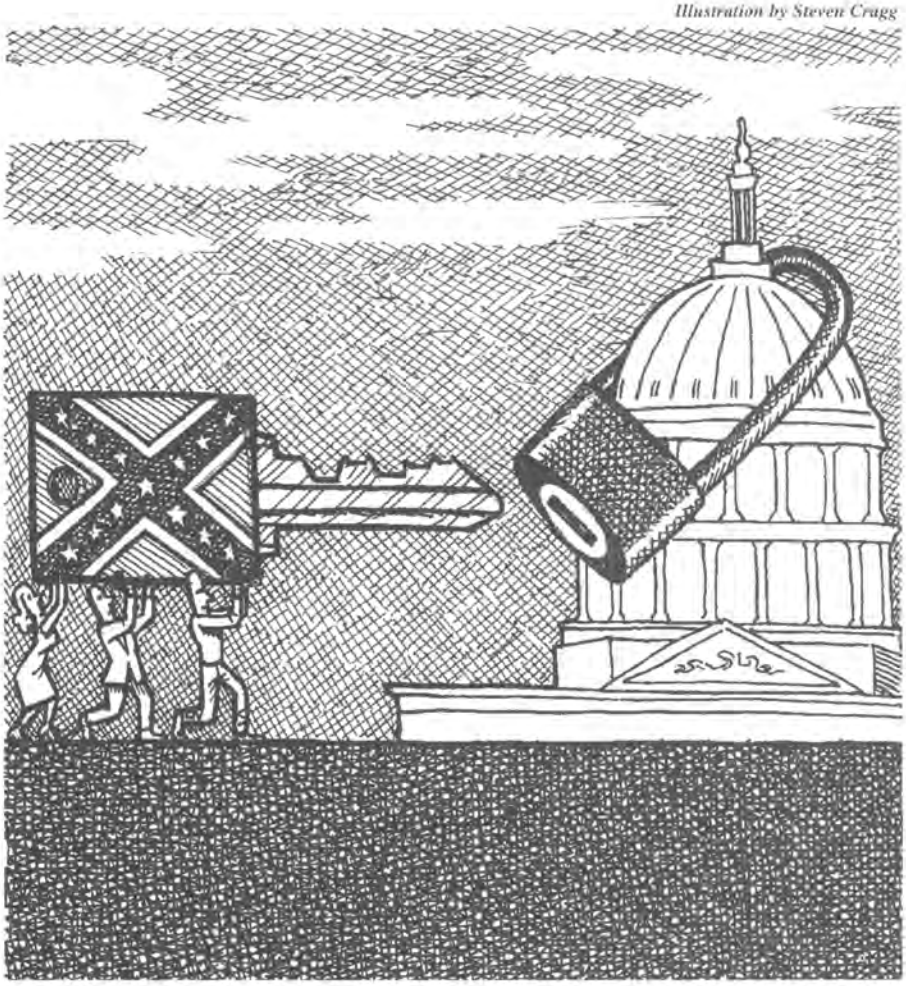
Leslie Waugh provided research assistance. Ron Nixon is associate editor of Southern Exposure *and director of the Investigative Action Fund of the Institute for Southern Studies.*

LOCK on the South

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, the South holds the key in the 1996 national elections.

By Hastings Wyman Jr.

Illustration by Steven Cragg



What's at Stake

THE AMERICAN SOUTH, which holds 155 of the nation's 538 electoral votes, is the nation's largest region and arguably its most politically powerful. President Bill Clinton won in 1992 in large part because he was able to divide the South, which had been a GOP stronghold in presidential elections. If Clinton splits the South again, he'll be re-elected. If Bob Dole takes the South solidly, as Ronald Reagan did in 1980, winning every Southern state but Georgia, and 1984 and as George Bush did in 1988, Republicans will retake the White House.

Another question is whether the Republicans' 1994 takeover of the U.S. House of Representatives was a one-shot deal or the beginning of a new era in American politics. To retake the House, Democrats need to gain at least 20 seats. Either party gains that many seats in about half the elections. This year, almost half the open seats, or seats with no incumbent candidate — 21 of 47 — are in the South. In addition, the South has at least 19 vulnerable incumbents in both parties.

In the U.S. Senate, the GOP currently has a 53-47 majority. Democrats need six seats to gain control; Republicans need seven to give them the 60 seats needed to prevent Democratic filibusters. This year, about one-third of the Senate seats up for election are in Southern states, including four open seats. An unusually high number of them — nine — are competitive.

In the presidential, House, and Senate contests, the South holds the key.

Taken seriously

The catbird seat is not the South's traditional place in American politics. For most of the post-Civil War era, the Democratic monopoly below the Mason-Dixon Line kept either party from taking Southern voters seriously. It was the South's post-World War II boom in GOPism — for racial and economic reasons — that made the country pay more attention to the region.

Of more basic significance is that for roughly two centuries the Southern

states maintained a hostile stance toward the rest of the country, spending much of their political capital defending "peculiar institutions" — first slavery, then segregation. This adverse relationship to the rest of the nation isolated the region politically. Although Southerners wielded great power in Congress for more than a century after 1865, Southern candidates for president, such as Richard Russell of Georgia, never left the starting gate.

When institutional segregation collapsed in the South, followed by segregationist politics, Southern politicians could become national politicians. In 1976, Georgia's Jimmy Carter won the presidency, followed in 1992 by Arkansas' Clinton.

As a result of these changes, the modern South — black and white, Democratic and Republican — is a key battleground for both parties, and never more so than this November.

Looking presidential

In 1992, the double-Southern Clinton-Gore ticket won five Southern states (Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Tennessee) with a total of 47 electoral votes. Bush had to spend more time and money in the South, supposedly a GOP stronghold, just to win the states he did.

Clinton may be able to repeat his Southern strategy of dividing the GOP's Southern base this year. Despite his birthplace, in virtually every Gallup Poll conducted since he took office, Clinton has been weakest in the South. Nevertheless, this summer's polls found that Clinton's approval rating was well above Dole's in the South and higher than in any other region.

If the South remains competitive, as many pundits predict, Dole will have to spend much of his time and money in the South.

The House — vulnerable Democrats

In 1994, Newt Gingrich won the House speaker chair in part because of the GOP's 17-seat gain in the South. Indeed, for the first time since Reconstruction, the South's congressional delegation had a Republican majority, augmented by five party switches since the '94 election.

A Gallup Poll in mid-June showed that voters preferred Democrats to Republicans 50 percent to 43 percent, though voting doesn't reflect stated affiliation. The numbers were weaker in the South, but the Democrats still had a 49 percent to 45 percent edge over Republicans.

The GOP has an advantage, however, in that 17 of the 21 Southern House seats with no running incumbent are currently held by Democrats. At least 13 of these open seats could go Republican: one each in Mississippi, North Carolina, and Virginia, two each in Alabama, Arkansas, and Florida, and four in Texas. Retiring Democrats in Florida, Tennessee, and Texas are leaving safe Democratic seats.

Only four Republican congressmen in the South aren't running for re-election. Two are leaving safe GOP seats in Tennessee and Texas. Two others, however, are leaving excellent targets for Democratic takeovers — Jimmy Hayes (*Louisiana 7*) and Greg Laughlin (*Texas 14*), a party-switcher who was defeated in the Republican primary by renegade Ron Paul.

In addition to the open seats, there are 11 vulnerable Democratic incumbents in the South — one each in Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, two in Georgia, and three in Texas.

Sanford Bishop (*Georgia 2*), Cynthia McKinney (*Georgia 11*), and Cleo Fields (*Louisiana 4*) are African Americans in trouble because of recent court decisions overturning the redistricting that created districts with a majority of minority voters (so-called "majority-minority" districts). Similar litigation is creating problems for other black incumbents in Florida, North Carolina, and Texas.

Republican incumbents who could lose this year include Jay Dickey (*Arkansas 4*), Charlie Norwood (*Georgia 10*), Ed Whitfield (*Kentucky 1*), Ron Lewis (*Kentucky 2*), David Funderburk (*North Carolina 2*), Fred Heineman (*North Carolina 4*), Zach Wamp (*Tennessee 3*), and Steve Stockman (*Texas 9*).

The Senate — Republican Party Hearty

There are nine competitive U.S. Senate races in the South. The open seats:

- **Alabama.** Incumbent Howell Heflin (D) is retiring. The early favorite to replace Heflin is Attorney General Jeff Sessions (R), who is battling Democratic ex-state Senator Roger Bedford (D). Polls show a tilt to the GOP. *Leans Republican.*

- **Arkansas.** The Whitewater guilty verdict against former Governor Jim Guy Tucker (D) has thrown the U.S. Senate race to succeed David Pryor (D) into disarray. When Lieutenant Governor Mike Huckabee (R), the GOP's ex-Senate candidate, assumed the governorship, the GOP found a new nominee, U.S. Representative Tim Hutchinson. But Hutchinson didn't inherit the popularity of Huckabee, who had been leading in the polls by as much as 11 points. Democratic nominee Attorney General Winston Bryant (D) has the edge. *Leans Democratic.*

- **Georgia.** Sam Nunn (D) is retiring. Democratic Secretary of State Max Cleland, a disabled Vietnam veteran and President Carter's Veterans Affairs chief, is ahead in the polls. For the GOP, '94 gubernatorial nominee Guy Millner an abortion foe, beat out pro-choice Republican Johnny Isakson in the primary. *Leans Democratic.*

- **Louisiana.** Bennett Johnston (D) is retiring. The polls show the strongest candidates in the non-partisan primary are two moderate Democrats, '94 gubernatorial contender Mary Landrieu, followed by Attorney General Richard Ieyoub. Republican votes are split six ways, although some of the GOPers may back out. *Leans Democratic.*

In addition to these open seats, there are five Republican incumbents who are not as safe as they could be.

- **Kentucky.** U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell (R) is favored over ex-Lieutenant Governor Steve Beshear (D), but for an incumbent he has a lukewarm lead in the polls. McConnell has $2.8 million on hand and the cross-party backing of ex-Governor Wallace Wilkinson (D). Beshear has '95 winner Governor Paul Patton (D) and a revitalized Democratic party in his corner. *Leans Republican.*

- **North Carolina.** Every six years, the Democrats get all frothed up to beat right-wing Senator Jesse Helms (R) and they almost do it. This year, Harvey Gantt (D), who got 47 percent against Helms in '90, won a hard-fought primary to take on Helms again. It is likely to be another close race. Helms' campaign isn't as well-organized as it's been in the past, and the electorate is younger and more cosmopolitan. But recent history suggests another narrow victory for Senator No. *Leans Republican.*

- **South Carolina.** U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond (R) has only one problem: his age. He's 93, and most voters think he shouldn't run again. But since he is running, most Sandlappers say they'll vote for him. Thurmond's big advantage is seniority. He easily defeated his primary opponent, two-term state Representative Harold Worley (R). Thurmond's opponent is millionaire textiles heir Elliott Close (D), who defeated black photographer Cecil Williams. This could be a sleeper. *Leans Republican.*

- **Texas.** Phil Gramm (R) was weakened by his poor race for president, and his Democratic opponent, Hispanic teacher Victor Morales, is getting a lot of sympathetic press. Gramm should win handily, but he *might* not. *Likely Republican.*

- **Virginia.** Republican John Warner easily defeated his right-wing challenger, former Office of Management and Budget chief Jim Miller, whose backers were fire and brimstone conservatives out to punish Warner for opposing Oliver North in 1994. John Warner is favored in the November battle to defeat his wealthy namesake, Mark Warner (D), a former state Democratic party chairman. *Likely Republican.*

Dems with legs?

If the GOP trend of 1994 resurfaces this fall, the White House and both houses of Congress are likely to be in Republican hands for the first time since the early 1950s. This could usher in a new era in American politics in which government policy is determined by the right, not the left, for the first time since the 1920s.

If, however, the Democratic comeback that began in the '95 elections still has legs this November, Clinton will win a second term, the House may go back to the Democrats, as it was for 40 years, and the Senate probably will stay in Republican hands. Democrats, however, will be able to filibuster GOP bills. SE

Hastings Wyman Jr. has published Southern Political Report, *a biweekly newsletter covering the South and its politicians, since 1978.*

Races to get choked up about

Alabama — Polls give the edge to state Attorney General Jeff Sessions (R), who is running for U.S. Senate against former state Senator Roger Bedford (D). Sessions' office has been busy killing two birds with one stone, combining a probe into suspected illegal use of absentee ballots by blacks with investigations of the burnings of black churches. Sessions also has been trying to keep anti-gay legislation in his state alive despite a federal court ruling that struck down earlier provisions. The former Eagle Scout, who resigned his 12-year stint as U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Alabama when Bill Clinton was elected president, also wants to overhaul the federal court system and end welfare as we know it. As his campaign brochure says, "There must be time limits on receiving benefits and we must not reward people for laziness and having children outside marriage."

Georgia — Secretary of State Max Cleland (D) is favored to win a U.S. Senate seat. The first Vietnam veteran and the first disabled veteran to head the Department of Veterans' Affairs, he was appointed by President Carter in 1977. While in Vietnam as a captain in the U.S. Army, Cleland was seriously injured in a grenade explosion and received the Bronze Star and Silver Star. As a state senator in the early 1970s, he wrote the state law that made public facilities accessible to the elderly and handicapped.

West Virginia — Charlotte Pritt (D), the first woman on the state's ballot for governor, is seen as a populist. She worked as a consulting community organizer in the successful fight against plans by American Electric Power through its subsidiary, Appalachian Power Company, to install the nation's largest high-voltage power line through the southeastern part of the state. Her article on the fight appeared in *Southern Exposure*, Summer 1995. Pritt narrowly lost the 1992 race for governor after an eight-year career in the state legislature. Her opponent this time, former Governor Cecil Underwood (R), became the state's youngest governor when he was elected in 1956 at the age of 34. Now he's chairman of Morgantown Industrial/Research Park, Inc.

— Leslie Waugh

Bleached OUT

With the elimination of districts with a majority of black voters, Congress is likely to lose many of its representatives of color.

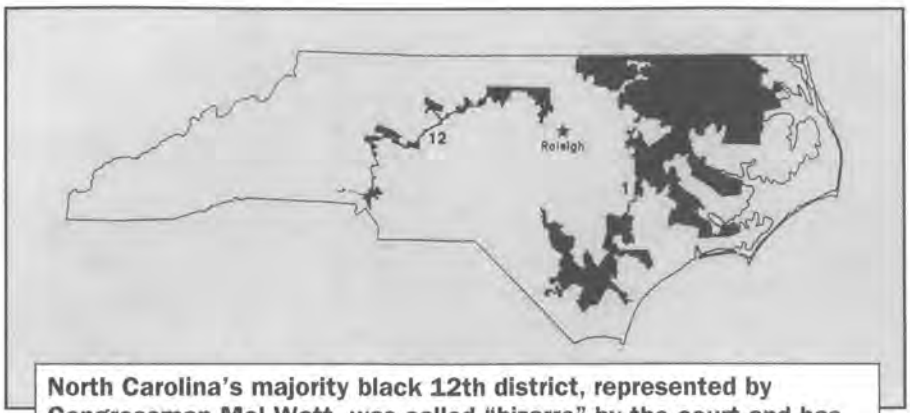
THE CAMPAIGN FOR A COLOR-BLIND AMERICA

doesn't want to see black congressional districts

By Michael King

THIS NOVEMBER, IF THE U.S. HOUSE OF Representatives becomes a whiter institution, some of the responsibility will belong to a small group of conservative political activists based in Houston. Since 1993, the Campaign for a Color-Blind America has been successfully challenging voting districts created to increase minority representation in Congress and state legislatures.

The Campaign was formed in the wake of *Shaw v. Reno*, the



North Carolina's majority black 12th district, represented by Congressman Mel Watt, was called "bizarre" by the court and has been ordered redrawn for the 1998 election.

1993 North Carolina case in which the U.S. Supreme Court rejected as "bizarre" the lines drawn for the majority black 12th district of Democratic Representative Melvin Watt. His district snakes from Charlotte to Durham, in some places only the width of Interstate 85.

To comply with an amendment to the Voting Rights Act, state legislatures created 10 new "majority-minority" congressional districts in the South — districts with a majority of minority voters — after the 1990 census. The number of African American congressional representatives jumped from five to 17 after the 1992 elections.

After the *Shaw v. Reno* ruling overturned North Carolina's 12th congressional district, several Houston-area Republicans filed similar lawsuits contesting Texas congressional districts. The federal court threw out three majority-minority districts in Texas, and the fledgling Campaign for a Color-Blind America had won its first major battle. On appeal of the case, *Vera v. Bush* , the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Texas lower court decision in *Vera v. Richards*.

This November in Louisiana, Georgia (which also had its districts overturned this year), and Texas, minority incumbents are fighting for their political lives in districts redrawn after similar lawsuits. North Carolina's 12th district will be redrawn for the 1998 election. Similar cases are pending in Virginia, New York, and other states.

Damned ironies

In Texas, Edward Blum, chairman of the Campaign for a Color-Blind America, is among the group of Republican plaintiffs who negotiated with the state for a new Texas congressional map. "But you'd think that I had dropped some kind of a biological weapon on the Texas delegation in D.C.," said Blum

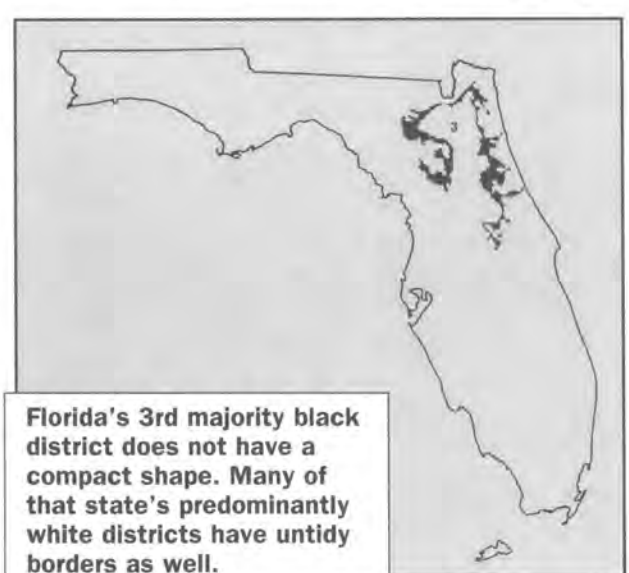
The Campaign, a legal defense and educational foundation, is dedicated to eliminating racial distinctions in American political life — whether those distinctions are used to empower or disempower particular groups of citizens, said Blum. He describes the Campaign as "a loose, *ad hoc* group of primarily legal scholars, social scientists, and people who've been active in the civil rights movement that communicate with one another about issues of racial gerrymandering."

Blum, who is white, said that contesting the consideration of race in drawing district lines carries on the tradition of the civil rights movement. "You cannot classify people by race and segregate people by race for something beneficial," he said. "You have defeated — this is my philosophy — you have defeated the entire depth of the civil rights movement."

Blum seems unfazed that representatives of that movement almost universally disagree with him. Houston attorney Charles Drayden, for example, who has fought Blum's organization in court on behalf of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, is skeptical of Blum's claim to a civil rights rationale for his attack on majority-minority districts. "I don't think Edward Blum is a person who's qualified to carry on that struggle," said Drayden. "He hasn't solicited the assistance or any of the ideas of any of the people who might have suffered from those kinds of distinctions in the past, but he has decided that he and his cohorts [in the Campaign] are the only ones who have any kind of ideas as to what is right when redressing racial distinctions in American politics. I think that is a very arrogant notion."

Blum's notions, arrogant or otherwise, are gaining credibility in one important place — U.S. courts have been increasingly sympathetic to arguments that considerations of race in redistricting are legally suspect, if not inherently unconstitutional.

In Texas, for example, the 1994 Campaign lawsuit charged that 24 Texas districts had been created through illegal racial gerrymandering. The three-judge panel of the U.S. District Court ruled in favor of Blum and his fellow plaintiffs, but only in reference to three majority-minority districts: Blum's own 18th district and two others, Houston's 29th and the Dallas-area 30th. The court ruled that the three districts "were scientifically designed to muster a minimum percentage of the favored minority or ethnic group;



Florida's 3rd majority black district does not have a compact shape. Many of that state's predominantly white districts have untidy borders as well.

minority numbers are virtually all that mattered in the shape of those districts. Those districts consequently bear the odious imprint of racial apartheid, and districts that intermesh with them are necessarily racially tainted."

In a 5 to 4 decision in June, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the district court decision, ordering the Texas districts to be redrawn because race had been the "predominant" factor in defining the district boundaries.

"Anyone who knows what apartheid is could never confuse racial redistricting with apartheid. To suggest that this is what racial redistricting is all about is dishonest."

For most minority advocates, the accusation of "racial apartheid" by the lower court judges (three Republican appointees) was particularly insulting. Laughlin McDonald, director of the Voting Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, told the *National Law Journal*, "Anyone who knows what apartheid is could never confuse racial redistricting with apartheid. To suggest that this is what racial redistricting is all about is dishonest."

But to Blum and his group, racial gerrymandering, however benignly intended, is a form of apartheid, and he reiterates his belief that "the use of race or ethnicity or religion in our public life is inherently immoral. That's the base that I was taught, and that's the base that I believe, and that's the base the NAACP used, leading up to *Brown v. Board of Education*. That the Constitution is color-blind is our dedicated belief."

Blum, who said his parents were active in the civil rights movement, is fond of citing the late Supreme Court justice and civil rights pioneer Thurgood Marshall in defense of his "color-blind" argument. But at Houston's Thurgood Marshall School of Law, there is considerable skepticism about Blum's claim to Marshall's civil rights mantle. Professor Carroll Robinson of the Houston Lawyer's Association, a group of African-American attorneys, finds Blum's claim to a civil rights heritage "damned ironic.

"It's ironic," said Robinson, "that majority white districts, congressional districts, all these years, have never been viewed as a violation of the Equal Protection Rights of African Americans, Hispanics, or Asians, and all of a sudden, the court and some minute group of whites, have suddenly found the need to say that the privilege they've enjoyed all these years is somehow being ripped from their clutches — simply because now we're being given the chance to elect representatives of our own choice."

Fine cuts

Blum said the seed for his organization came from his own failed 1992 congressional campaign against African-American incumbent Craig Washington. With little support from the Texas Republican party, which, Blum said, didn't want to

Civil Right Wing

Campaign for a Color-Blind America

THE BOARD

According to promotional literature for the Campaign for a Color-Blind America, the group is made up of "legal scholars, social scientists, and people who have been active in the civil rights movement." But the backgrounds and affiliations of the members show that none of the mostly white board of directors (Linda Chavez is the only non-white) has had any ties with traditional civil rights organizations that have advocated on behalf of blacks, Hispanics, and other minority groups.

Charles S. Bullock is a professor of political science at the University of Georgia in Athens, and head of the consulting firm, Electoral Demographics. Bullock has testified in a number of voting rights cases throughout the South. But Bullock's analysis on voting rights has been challenged by critics who have accused him of manipulating statistics and giving misleading testimony. The U.S. District Court in Raleigh, North Carolina, rejected his opinions in the 1984 case *Edmisten v. Gingles*, ruling that Bullock was not a credible witness because of his misuse of statistics. Three years later, a federal district court found his testimony "disingenuous" in *McNeil v. City of Springfield, Illinois*, in which black citizens claimed the city's election system denied them equal opportunity in political participation. According to the court's decision, Bullock's opinion on racially polarized voting appears in "no other writing in the social science literature . . . other than an article authored by himself." The decision also cited a *UCLA Law Review* report that found Bullock had given misleading testimony in another voting rights case. According to the report, expert witness Bullock "bamboozled" a federal court by using "misleading fancy statistics."

Linda Chavez heads the Center for Equal Opportunity in Washington, D.C., which, according to its promotional lit-

Photo by Anderson Wrangle

Edward Blum of Texas created the Campaign for a Color-Blind America to fight legislative districts created to have a majority of black voters. "The use of race or ethnicity or religion in our public life is inherently immoral," he said.

waste resources on a "black district" like the 18th, he spent $100,000 of his own money, and he and his wife ran a door-to-door campaign. Walking throughout the widely scattered district neighborhoods, he said, he discovered the "racial gerrymandering" that would inspire his personal crusade. Confusing district lines, he said, far too often cut through neighborhoods, along streets, or between tract homes and apartment houses — and, to Blum, the visible distinction was race. "The cuts were so fine," he said, "that they often split the streets down the middle."

Defenders of the district lines insist that apparent racial distinctions also often indicate traditional party preferences, which is considered a legitimate factor in drawing boundaries, but Blum remains unpersuaded. He said his run against Representative Washington was motivated by political idealism, and that Washington was so "universally disliked" that Blum found much support for his quixotic campaign.

"I spent a year of my life and $100,000 of my own money," said Blum, "knowing that if I had won that election, it would have been the show-stopper congressional election of the decade: 'White Jewish conservative defeats black liberal incumbent in wildly Democratic district.' You've got to have a big streak of idealism to do that."

Idealism was not quite enough. Washington defeated Blum handily, although Blum's 33 percent of the vote was a full 11 percent better than President George

erature, fights "racial preferences" and multicultural education. Chavez headed the U.S. Commission for Civil Rights under President Ronald Reagan. Chavez, of Mexican-American and Anglo parentage, has suggested "that Puerto Ricans are poor because they prefer not to marry and they like to be on welfare," said Janice Petrovich, director of ASPIRA, a national Puerto Rican organization.

Chavez is a former director of U.S. English, a group founded by John Tanton that lobbies for English as the official national language. Chavez left U.S. English after a memo Tanton wrote became public. She said his remarks were "repugnant" and "anti-Hispanic." Tanton received funding for his anti-immigration group, FAIR (Federation for American Immigration Reform), from the Pioneer Fund, which began in 1937, and advocated sending African Americans "back to Africa." The Pioneer Fund also supported Nazi eugenicists, who believed in manipulating genetics to control racial attributes.

Midge Decter, long-time conservative activist and formerly of the Institute on Religion and Public Life in New York City, was described in the *Washington Times* as the "godmother of neoconservatism." In a 1994 address before the Heritage Foundation, she told the audience that in the 1960s "there came along a company of radical blacks, community organizers, and politicians, who, in the name of justice, set about depriving their constituents of both the ambition and the courage necessary to achieving the lives that would have brought them into full partnership in American society." In the same speech, she chastised black leaders who, she said, believe that "blacks are oppressed; therefore, dish them out some bogus equality in the form of unearned perks and jobs . . ."

Robinson Everett is a law professor at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. A retired judge who served on the Military Court of Appeals, Everett filed the first federal challenge to "majority-minority" districts. Everett argued in *Shaw v. Reno* that the North Carolina's 12th district was created solely on the basis of race and violated the rights of white citizens. He filed the case on behalf of several white Democrats. According to Everett, the creation of districts based on race discourages racial coalitions.

Continues on next page

Bush garnered. In the 1994 congressional election, Washington lost to another African-American candidate, Houston city councilwoman Sheila Jackson Lee.

Blum said it was also his idealism, and that of six other Texas Republicans, that motivated his lawsuit against Texas districts following the 1993 Supreme Court decision rejecting North Carolina's majority-minority districts. Blum gathered potential plaintiffs for a Texas challenge and asked William Bradford Reynolds, formerly of the Reagan Justice Department, to take the case. Reynolds asked for a $200,000 retainer, "an enormous percentage of my net worth," said Blum, who makes his living selling municipal bonds. Blum decided to follow the "civil rights model" and recruited like-minded attorneys to work *pro bono*.

He asked the experts. Duke University law professor Robinson Everett had argued *Shaw v. Reno* before the U.S. Supreme Court. Louisiana attorney Paul Hurd had argued similar challenges in Louisiana and Florida. Blum recruited them and Houstonians Ted Hirtz, Doug Markham, and others. They volunteered most of their time and expenses in the expectation that should they win, their fees would be paid by the governmental defendants in each jurisdiction. That, said Blum, is what he meant when he told a reporter that the Campaign was willing to invest "a million to a million-and-a-half dollars" in any lawsuit in which it chose to take part. His comment was published widely.

"If I had won that election, it would have been the show-stopper Congressional election of the decade: 'White Jewish conservative defeats black liberal incumbent in wildly Democratic district.'"

Blum said the group's expenses thus far have largely been confined to smaller, short-term matters — costs directly out of pocket, such as document duplication or travel — and that he has generally paid them himself. "We have spent a little bit of money. It wouldn't buy you a new car," he said.

"The question came," Blum said, "how much did these lawsuits cost? OK — the lawsuits, every congressional redistricting lawsuit I know of argued through the Supreme Court — has cost the state well over a million dollars. Everybody reads this and thinks, 'Adolph Coors [of the Coors Beer family] and all the right-wing cranks have sent millions of dollars to defeat these districts.' That's not true; that's not at all the case. We have been able to raise $25 to $30,000. That's all public information: legal fees, travel expenses, some of these outstanding bills. All [the cases] have been argued *pro bono* and contingency." Contingency means that attorneys would collect fees from the states if they successfully argue their cases against redistricting. The fees can range from a half million to a million dollars, according to *New Journal and Guide* in Norfolk, Virginia.

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Abigail Thernstrom is with the Manhattan Institute, a conservative research institution in New York City. An adjunct professor at Boston University, Thernstrom took on fellow academic Lani Guinier after President Clinton nominated Guinier to head the Justice Department's Office of Civil Rights. In response to Guinier's exploration of possible new voting systems to ensure full participation for minority voters, Thernstrom asked, "Why aren't David Duke supporters a 'minority' group? Or vegetarians, or flat-Earth types, or Nazis? Why is race the characteristic that really counts?"

Clint Bolick, co-founder of the right-wing Institute for Justice and Guinier's chief opponent, first heard of the nominee when Thernstrom said, "Clint, you're going to love her." The two, along with other conservative activists, led an all-out media assault on Guinier, which ultimately led President Clinton to pull the nomination.

Thernstrom filed a brief in the Texas redistricting suit brought by the Campaign's chairman, Edward Blum, on behalf of the Institute for Justice.

Daniel Troy of New York City is an appellate lawyer with Washington, D.C., law firm Wiley, Rein, and Fielding. He was an attorney for plaintiffs in *Vera v. Bush*, the Texas redistricting suit, in the U.S. Supreme Court. He said Edward Blum, the Campaign's chairman, who brought the case after losing a 1992 congressional election, was "victimized" by a racially drawn district.

Troy said the Supreme Court's ruling in *Vera v. Bush* "vindicated Martin Luther King's vision of a color-blind society and rejects the notion that we are a country where political power should be allocated by race or ethnicity."

Troy was a clerk for defeated Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork, and he worked for the Justice Department's Office of Legal Defense under President Bush. He volunteered for the 1992 Bush-Quayle campaign and worked as special assistant in Rudolph Giuliani's Republican mayoral campaign in New York City.

Ronald Weber is a professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee and president of Campaign and Opinion Research Analysis, a consulting firm in Gonzalez, Louisiana. A self-described life-long Democrat, Weber was referred to by one voting rights lawyer as a "hired gun."

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The Separate Water Fountain Argument

Two lawyers debate redistricting.

Two law professors in Durham, North Carolina, argued against each other before the U.S. Supreme Court in the first case challenging the creation of congressional districts with a majority of minority voters. Though these men teach in the same town, they certainly do not have the same views.

Robinson Everett, a law professor at Duke University, figures prominently in the fight to eliminate black majority districts. He filed *Shaw v. Reno*, the first federal case to contest "majority-minority" districts. The court ruling outlawed the districts.

Minority districts represent nothing more than quotas, Everett said. The message these districts send in North Carolina is that the representatives from the two black majority districts will take care of black voters while the other 10 districts represent the interests of whites.

That message is "unhealthy." Black majority districts "only create ridiculous boundaries spread across different mediums," he said.

Eliminating these districts will not decrease the influence black voters have in Congress, said Everett. Alternatives to black majority districts will ensure that African Americans have equal representation. In districts with at least a 40 percent minority voting population, the best route to success would be for a black candidate to be nominated on the Democratic ticket, said Everett. The Democratic Party has often had successful alliances with African Americans, he said. When blacks run as Republicans, the best strategy for getting elected would be to persuade party leaders that the candidate's presence on the ticket will attract a different voting population, he said.

Photo by Chris Hildreth

Robinson Everett argued against the majority black district.

Julius Chambers, chancellor of North Carolina Central University in Durham and former head of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, argued in favor of the majority-minority districts in *Shaw v. Reno*. He said that eradicating these districts eliminated one of the few opportunities African Americans had to elect a candidate of their choice.

When told that Everett believed that equal representation can be facilitated without districts designed for minorities, Chambers disagreed. Believing that "race will not be a factor is misleading everyone," he said. Believing that a 40 percent black district will be able to elect a candidate is a far reach, he said. "We've had that [less than a majority], and it's not the result."

Photo courtesy of NCCU

Julius Chambers argued before the U.S. Supreme Court to save the majority black 12th district in North Carolina.

But Everett, who said he has always "tried to ensure equal opportunity in all areas," said that the black majority districts create a division reminiscent of two water fountains or two entrances — one labeled black and one labeled white. Majority-minority districts with 10 labeled white and two labeled black are the same. Everett reports no objection to majority black districts if they are drawn according to "traditional districting principles." But creating a district with the "predominantly racial motive to insure the election of a person of a particular race is unconstitutional," he said. The difference lies in the motive, according to Everett.

Chambers disagreed. Separate water fountains were a "clear delineation of where blacks would go, [and illustrated] the inferior status of blacks where the water fountains were not equal." He countered with a different example. The inequality is parallel to segregated schools, which resulted in an inferior education, he said. "All that is attempted [in black majority districts] is to ensure a fair opportunity to elect a representative of choice. It is clearly a misrepresentation to suggest [that black majority districts are] analogous to segregated water fountains."

— Caroline Brown

Continues from page 30

The fees have benefited Campaign for a Color-Blind America board members, including Charles Bullock and Ronald Weber, who collect fees for serving as expert witnesses in redistricting cases. Both have set up consulting firms to provide experts for attorneys fighting redistricting. Another board member, Daniel Troy, has collected attorney's fees from the state of Texas for the *Vera v. Bush* case (see sidebar).

Nonpartisan

After the victory in *Vera v. Richards*, Blum began receiving nationwide inquiries and requests for help. The Campaign was incorporated as a nonprofit legal foundation and has provided networking for legal assistance and information to groups from New York to Hawaii. He and his wife, Lark Blum, run the organization out of their Houston home, primarily by recruiting lawyers and expert witnesses to share information and provide assistance to groups challenging voting districts.

Despite his own background in Republican party politics and the presence on the board of directors of Republican partisans Linda Chavez (see sidebar), director of the Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission in the Reagan administration, and Paul Weyrich of the right-wing Free Congress Foundation and National Empowerment Television, Blum said the Campaign is non-partisan. He said that the Campaign has upset Republican politicians as often as Democrats because Republicans under George Bush's presidency championed majority-minority districts. Both parties' attitudes on the issue are "cynical and disingenuous," said Blum.

Blum is not alone in his assessment. Some Republicans, especially in North Carolina and Georgia, have argued that while the 1994 redistricted elections resulted in doubling the number of minority representatives in Congress, they also helped Republican candidates win elections in neighboring "bleached-out" districts. Sociologist Chandler Davidson of Rice University said that some liberal Democrats have loudly criticized the redistricting for the same reason — that it results in the election of more minority members, but at the cost of leaving them politically isolated.

Davidson said that given recent history, returning to supposedly color-blind methods is unrealistic and mistaken. "There is a trade-off," Davidson said. "Given how difficult it is for blacks to win elections from majority white constituencies, you've got a choice between not drawing districts in which blacks can win anymore, and, on the other hand, increasing the numbers of Democrats in Congress, if only by a few seats. Admittedly, that's a difficult trade-off. Yet it's rather presumptuous, or rather flippant, for people to say, 'Well, it's obvious that we ought to have fewer blacks.'

"The most strident in criticizing these districts nowadays are white Democrats, liberals and moderates, who say either up front or between the lines, 'Look, whites can represent blacks at least as well as blacks can themselves and maybe better. And in any case it's going to increase the numbers of Democratic votes, and that's more important than having a black face in Congress.'"

North Carolina Democrat Melvin Watt, whose 12th district was ordered re-

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Weber has testified for plaintiffs challenging minority districts in Georgia, North Carolina, Louisiana, and the Florida case originally brought by Susan Lamb, a leader in the National Association for the Advancement of White People founded by David Duke. Weber opposes what he calls efforts to "segregate" and "stereotype" voters — to presume they will vote according to race. Minority districts "undermine the momentum to ignore race," he said. According to a deposition given by Weber in a Wisconsin redistricting case, his firm grossed $180,000 for his testimony in redistricting cases.

Weber testified in favor of the creation of the black majority third congressional district in Florida when it was first created in 1992, but in 1996 he testified against the district.

Paul Weyrich, who heads the Free Congress Foundation, is considered the father of the new right. With start-up funding from conservative Adolph Coors, Weyrich co-founded and became first president of the Heritage Foundation, a well-known conservative organization.

The Free Congress Foundation runs National Empowerment Television (NET), a conservative television network that reaches millions of viewers through satellite hook-up. A number of conservative programs and "exposés" are featured on NET, including a show hosted by a former aide to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. According to Catholics for a Free Choice, Weyrich hired convicted Nazi Collaborator Laszlo Pasztor to staff the Free Congress Foundation-based Coalition for America.

Weyrich coined the phrase "moral majority" and teamed with Jerry Falwell to create a politically conservative religious group of the same name that preceded the Christian Coalition, started by Pat Robertson. The Moral Majority folded in the early 1990s, but the creation of the group helped secure the Christian Right's takeover of the Republican party beginning in the early '80s.

Research by Meridith Helton, an intern with Southern Exposure.

U.S. Representative Mel Watt of North Carolina

"The truth of the matter is that the black community gets blamed for a lot of stuff that we don't have a damn thing to do with," said Representative Mel Watt.

drawn by the Supreme Court, emphatically rejects the argument that majority-minority districts isolate black voters and elect more Republicans. "It's an erroneous argument," said Watt, "In North Carolina, that [racial redistricting] should have created a substantial Republican shift in 1992. It didn't happen. We went from seven Democrats to eight in 1992."

When the dramatic Republican shift came, Watt said, it was in the 1994 election, and it occurred also in states not subject to racial redistricting. "In Washington state, there are no minority districts, and it had the most dramatic shift toward Republicans of any state in the union. The truth of the matter is that the black community gets blamed for a lot of stuff that we don't have a damn thing to do with."

Watt said that in any case, black voters are not necessarily better represented by white Democrats. "It's all based on the proposition that the minority community is better off in an 'influence' district than in selecting the representative of its choice," he said. "Look at some of the districts in the South, where historically there have been 30 percent to 40 percent minority districts, and the representatives have been some of the most aggressive in arguing against civil rights legislation — doing things that are directly contrary to the interests of the minority community. Mike Parker, who's from Mississippi, is one of the most conservative members of the Democratic Caucus. Between 36 percent and 40 percent of his district is black. Where in the hell is the influence?" (Parker switched to the Republican Party.)

Edward Blum, however, said that racial gerrymandering has aggravated racial polarization, and that if white representatives had more minority constituents, they would be more responsive to minority interests. He also said that his Campaign is not a threat to minorities. He pointed to his parents' involvement in the civil rights movement and his own background as a University of Texas student activist in the 1960s, where he co-chaired a student group that pressured the administration to increase minority enrollment. He said he became disillusioned with liberal solutions to American political and economic problems.

Back to '54

Blum, 44, looked back at his 20-year-old self, who fought for affirmative action, and said that while he now supports minority recruitment, he wouldn't "suspend the rules" to encourage greater enrollment of minority students. In a letter to the *Houston Chronicle*, Blum derided African-American State Senator Rodney Ellis, a successful Houston lawyer and investment counselor, for defending affirmative action. Blum wrote that Ellis' "privileged" daughter, Nicole, shouldn't expect special preference over poorer but "better qualified" white students.

Asked about Blum's version of affirmative action, Ellis was blunt. "I think his argument is ridiculous," he said.

Photo by Louis Dubose

State Senator Rodney Ellis of Texas

Blum is "either very naive or very insensitive. In either case, he's a very dangerous man, because in racial matters, he wants to take us back to 1954. Either he doesn't know American history, or he doesn't care," said Texas State Senator Rodney Ellis.

"He's either very naive or very insensitive. In either case, he's a very dangerous man, because in racial matters, he wants to take us back to 1954. Either he doesn't know American history, or he doesn't care."

Ellis said that a return to "color-blind" districting will result in an inevitable decrease in the number of minority representatives, although the effect might not be apparent immediately. "I've got a record and a war chest, so I could survive," said Ellis. "But a new black candidate, without an established reputation or funding, could not succeed."

Democratic Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson of Dallas echoed Ellis' comments. Her 30th district will also be redrawn as a result of Blum's lawsuit. "This [color-blind argument] is just a smokescreen," Johnson said. "This is a part of the racist reaction to overturn affirmative action in general. Minorities were never elected until we had minority districts."

Blum said the elections of minority politicians in white majority areas — notably Dallas Mayor Ron Kirk and a few others in local Texas elections — were evidence that "bloc voting" by race is no longer a crucial concern for redistricting.

But Chandler Davidson cites recent studies that indicate that a preponderance of evidence is on the other side. "The increase in the number of black legislators in 11 Southern states," said Davidson, "is due almost entirely to the fact that under pressure from the Justice Department, the state legislatures between the early 1970s and the late 1980s simply increased the number of majority black districts in those legislatures. And I just think that's very powerful evidence that people tend to overlook."

Heir-ogance?

Perhaps Blum's most controversial claim is his insistence that he and his Campaign are the true heirs of the civil rights movement, of the people who risked their lives and livelihoods to defend the rights of people of color to live free of racial segregation, to vote, and to take full part in public and political institutions. Blum passionately insisted that the historical civil rights groups like the NAACP and LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), which he calls "professional racial advocacy groups," have turned away from the vision of a color-blind America because it was just too difficult, while he and his group remain undaunted. "They have capitulated — I will not capitulate," he said. "That color-blind ideal is worth fighting my entire life for, and I'm not going to say, after seven years, or 10 years, or 20 years, 'Gee, it doesn't seem to be working right; therefore, let's come up with some new doctrine of civil rights.' I reject that outright."

"They love to quote King about people not being judged by the color of their skins but by the content of their character," said Representative John Lewis.

Asked why, despite these proclaimed convictions, virtually no civil rights activists support him and his Campaign, Blum pointed to U.S. Representative John Lewis of Georgia, recently profiled in *The New Republic*. Lewis, wrote reporter Sean Wilentz, "worries that black majority electoral districts will ensnare blacks in separate enclaves, the exact opposite of what the civil rights movement intended."

Lewis said Wilentz's characterization was inaccurate. He said that the Campaign's claim to a civil rights legacy is illegitimate. "I would like to see the day come when race would not be a factor," Lewis said, "but that day is not here yet. So you've got to have majority-minority districts." For Lewis, there is bitter irony in the claim of opponents to affirmative action that they are carrying on the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., even while they are attempting to undo the central legislative reforms brought about by the civil rights movement. "They love to [quote King] about people not being judged by the color of their skins but by the content of their character," said Lewis. "That is the ideal, but we're not there yet. We have not arrived at the ideal of an interracial democracy."

In the absence of that ideal, said Lewis, it is hypocritical to attempt to defeat the legal weapons designed to move toward equality. Lewis minced no words about the most recent court decisions. "The Supreme Court," he said, "is gutting the heart and soul of the Voting Rights Act."

Since the courts are no longer acting as "sympathetic referees" in the struggle for civil rights, the only effective response will be at the ballot box, Lewis said. "If the Voting Rights Act or the Civil Rights Act were before this Congress, they would not pass. If anything, this Congress would repeal them. We need to mobilize people to maximize the use of the vote, to get people elected who are going to be sympathetic to the Voting Rights Act, and an administration that will have an opportunity to change the court."

NAACP attorney Charles Drayden said that supporters of minority rights must look beyond the courtroom to fight their battles. "I'm not sure a legalistic strategy is the best thing. By removing those districts, you will also remove a whole group of ideas that will simply not show up on the floor of the House of Representatives or in the Senate," he said.

"A color-blind America will result in an America in which everyone sounds the same, and everyone will have to articulate the same points of view in order to get elected." said Drayden. "I have real concerns with whether the mission of the Campaign for a Color-Blind America is a noble one, or if it's really an attempt to make sure that certain ideas simply aren't expressed in the legislative arena." SE

Michael King is associate editor of The Texas Observer. *Research assistants were Katy Adams and Carol Stall. Funding and additional research were provided by the Investigative Action Fund of the Institute for Southern Studies, the publisher of* Southern Exposure.

Swinging the VOTE

LATINOS are changing politics in the South.

By Valerie Menard

Victor Morales (left), Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate, visits with State Representative Gerard Torres (D-Houston) at a meeting of Tejano Democrats in San Antonio this spring. The group pledged support for Morales.

IN RECENT YEARS, THE ONCE-Democratic state of Texas has been growing conservative — so much so that President Bill Clinton almost decided to cut it out of his 1996 campaign strategy, conceding the state already lost to Republican challenger Bob Dole. But that was before Victor Morales entered the scene.

Morales teaches government at Poteet High School in Mesquite, Texas, a small town outside Dallas. After the 1994 election, he became alarmed by growing anti-Latino rhetoric and the passage of California's Proposition 187, an initiative denying public services to illegal immigrants. When presidential hopeful Senator Phil Gramm (R-Texas) also spoke out against affirmative action, bilingual education, and Mexican immigrants, Morales decided he would challenge Gramm.

A political outsider, Morales received no support from the Democratic Party or most Latino elected officials. His campaign was considered almost comical. But Morales, whom Texas political analysts claimed owed his support to voter confusion between him and Texas Attorney General Dan Morales, offered more than just a familiar last name. For many Texas voters, his position as a Washington outsider was attractive. For Texas Latinos, his candidacy also offered a rare opportunity to gain new, high-level representation in Congress.

In a true grassroots campaign, Morales logged over 60,000 miles in his pickup. On March 12, 1996, he shocked the Texas political establishment by earning a runoff berth against Congressman John Bryant (D-Texas).

Said Morales, "Interviewing the analysts, over and over they'd say the same thing: 'Obviously it's the Dan Morales name recognition,' and I'd think, 'What about the sweat, what about my driving city after city, what about me hustling to get on the media in every town that there was — what about that?'"

Over and over they'd say the same thing: 'Obviously it's the Dan Morales name recognition,' and I'd think, 'What about the sweat, what about my driving city after city, what about me hustling to get on the media in every town that there was — what about that?'"

On April 9, 1996, after the runoff results revealed Morales the narrow victor, no one could blame confusion any

longer. Latino voters had provided the swing vote.

Post-election analysis showed that Bryant had carried more counties and more general regions of the state than Morales. But Morales won south and west Texas, areas with large Latino populations and high voter turnout in the primary. Morales had provided an incentive to go to the polls. In November his name will appear on the ballot just below the presidential nominees.

Andy Hernandez, Democratic National Committee Latino Voter Outreach director, has not ignored the Morales factor. "We hope to build off the Victor Morales campaign," says Hernandez. "Victor will definitely get Latinos to the polls. He offers a sharp contrast to Gramm. He can only help the president and hurt Gramm."

The Republican strategy in Texas is simply to hold the line. "I'll be happy if I can keep my base of 30 to 35 percent Latino support," says Frank Alvarez, director of Hispanic media outreach for the Texas Republican Party, which plans to host a Hispanic Republican Leadership Summit Conference in September. He's confident he can hold the line. Minimizing the show of support for Morales, Alvarez said the political newcomer poses no threat to Gramm and will only garner "the normal share of Hispanic votes."

Florida — casting Castro aside?

There will be no Victor Morales in Florida, but the incentive for Cuban American voters, who make up the largest Latino population in Florida, is American foreign policy in Cuba.

Cuban American voters have voted conservatively since the first mass immigration to the United States in 1959. The reason, said Peter E. Carr, a Cuban refugee and publisher of "The Cuban Index Genealogical Database," is the single focus on independence and democracy for Cuba. The Democratic Party is perceived as soft on Cuba, whereas the Republican Party has stood hard against any diplomatic relations with the government of Fidel Castro. While Latinos in Texas consistently support the Democratic Party, Latinos in Florida consistently support the Republican Party.

"Cuban Americans have a very long memory, and we still equate Democrats with communist sympathizing," Carr said. Newer citizens bring recent memories of Cuba that continue the pattern. "New immigrants may seem less vocal, but they have just emerged from an oppressive government, and for the first two to three years, will act as if they're still in Cuba. This is a similar pattern for all Cuban immigrants," he said. Second and third generation Cuban Americans also want to see Cuban liberation, if only to visit the country their elders remember.

Clinton moved in the wrong direction mid-term — as far as Cuban-Americans were concerned — when he began to consider easing sanctions against Cuba. In October 1995 he announced that he intended to modify the U.S. embargo on Cuba by relaxing curbs on travel and financial transactions with the island. For anti-Castro Cubans, who wish to travel freely only in a Cuba not led by Castro, maintaining a stranglehold is the key strategy for removing Cuba's leader.

"Cuban Americans have a very long memory, and we still equate Democrats with communist sympathizing."

Clinton also agreed to limit the number of Cuban refugees admitted each year to 20,000. The President refused entry to a mass of Cuban immigrants, forcing them and Haitian refugees to camp for over a year at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base. Considered political exiles, Cuban refugees had never been refused entrance to the United States. The President's action ended a 35-year policy toward Cuban refugees.

However, Clinton seemed to re-establish himself recently with Cuban American voters after taking a harsh stance against Cuba when two civilian planes were shot down by a Cuban MiG-29 fighter jet, killing four Cuban Americans. Operated by a Miami-based exile group, Brothers to the Rescue, the planes regularly flew reconnaissance to search for Cuban rafters. The incident elicited a sharp response from the President: he signed the Helms-Burton Act, which includes some of the toughest sanctions ever declared against Cuba and any person, business, or nation that does business with the country. Cuban-American perceptions of the Democratic party may be shifting.

"Of all the Democratic presidents, Clinton has been the hardest line against Castro, and that may help him do even better with Cuban voters than he did in 1992," said Carr.

Some Cuban American voters, satisfied that the president has taken a firm enough stance against Cuba, may not vote at all. Though Latino voting rates in Florida were high in the late '80s, levels dropped in the early '90s, a trend that may continue in 1996.

Meanwhile other Latino issues, such as immigration, English-only versus bilingual education, and affirmative action may bring Florida's other Latino voters — Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and Central and South Americans make up a combined 56 percent of Florida's Latino population — to the polls in new numbers. Republicans, Carr said, have been openly aggressive in their battles with Democrats on these issues. Many Latinos, including Cubans, have looked to Clinton and Democrats in Congress to save programs they support, such as bilingual education, and soften the blow on issues like immigration.

"We hope to see how these issues play out," said the Democrats' Hispanic Voter Outreach director Andy Hernandez. Like Carr, he believes that Republican stances against important Latino issues will bring a greater response from Puerto Rican and Mexican American voters in Florida and also will sway some Cubans towards the Democratic party.

Republicans believe they still hold the positions most important in attracting Cuban-American voters. According to Bob Sparks, director of communications with the Florida State Republican Party, the key is to maintain Cuban-American

Politics LATINO Style

Texas and Florida

LOOK AT LATINO VOTERS IN TEXAS AND FLORIDA, and you'll see a reverse image. While roughly 70 percent of Latino voters in Texas support the Democratic party and 30 percent favor the Republicans, Latinos in Florida favor the Republican party by 70 percent and the Democrats by 30 percent. In both states, the Latino vote could be critical.

Democratic Latinos in conservative Texas

Once known as a "yellow dog" state (suggesting Texans were such staunch Democrats they would vote for a yellow dog if it appeared on the Democratic slate), Texas has seen an overall conservative shift in recent years. The last Democratic presidential candidate to win Texas was Jimmy Carter in 1976. In 1994, Governor Ann Richards, who enjoyed enormous approval ratings, was defeated by Republican George Bush Jr.

Yet even while the state swings towards the right, Latino voters, 90 percent of whom are Mexican Americans, have remained loyal to the Democratic party. Although Richards lost to Bush in 1994, she received 76 percent of the Latino vote, according to an exit poll by the Southwest Voter Registration Institute. In 1992, Bill Clinton barely lost Texas to George Bush Sr., but he won 71 percent of the Latino vote in the state.

Republican Latinos in Florida

In Florida, a state he also last narrowly to Bush, Clinton received just 31 percent of the Latino vote — more than was expected. Though the Latino population in Florida is more mixed than in Texas, Cuban Americans, staunchly conservative voters, make up 43 percent. American foreign policy toward Cuba has traditionally kept Cuban American voters loyal to the Republican party.

Swinging Latino voters

In the past, common perception has depicted Latinos as a small minority with the power in some districts to provide the margin of victory or defeat but without much inclination to exercise their power. The popular misconception is that Latinos don't vote. But Latinos do vote, says Joseph Torres of *Hispanic Magazine* — if they're registered. Although 18.6 million Latinos are eligible to vote, only 5 million are registered. However, most of those registered voters — 82.5 percent — voted in 1992, according to post-election surveys by the United States Census Bureau.

In the presidential election, four of the key states needed for victory contain strong Latino populations. Among them are Texas and Florida (California and New York are the other two), with a total of 57 electoral votes, a sizable chunk of the 270 electoral votes needed to win. The projected population of voting-age Latinos in 1996, according to the Census Bureau, is 3.7 million in Texas and 1.4 million in Florida. In Texas, Latino voters will make up 27 percent of the vote in the 1996 election. Latinos who are eligible to vote in Florida will comprise 13 percent of the state's population by November. Only 43.6 percent of the 877,000 voting-age Latinos in Florida are registered. Latino voters are the clear majority in Dade County and make up a significant percentage in Orange and Broward counties. If Texas and Florida face close races, the Latino vote could decide the outcome.

— Valerie Menard

support for the party by implementing a broad-based conservative agenda, focusing on issues including cutting taxes.

Although Bob Dole has taken a hard line on immigration issues, Sparks takes a less staunch approach, acknowledging that in states like Florida and Texas, where the Latino population is large, elected officials must recognize the needs of their constituents. "Representatives Diaz-Balart (R-Florida) and Ross-Lehtinen (R-Florida) have not voted consistently with fellow Republicans on issues like immigration and official English, but we understand that. If they didn't vote in a way that respects their constituency, they wouldn't be doing their jobs," Sparks said.

Because of Latinos' consistent voting patterns, both parties plan to maintain their usual strategies for the two states: the Democrats hope to hold their 30 percent Latino vote in Florida, and the Republicans hope to hold their 30 percent in Texas. Nevertheless, the Democratic Party seems poised for gains this year. With Victor Morales on the ballot, Texas Latinos will probably go to the polls in greater numbers than they have in the past. But help for Democrats also may come in Florida. Cuban-American voters don't appear adamantly opposed to the President, and spurred by anti-Latino rhetoric in the Republican Congress, other Latino voters may turn out to vote in record numbers. SE

Valerie Menard is associate editor of *Hispanic Magazine* in Austin, Texas.

Young, Black, and Non-Voting

Photo by James Ferguson

Young African Americans, like these at the Million Man March, are persuading their contemporaries to register and to vote.

SOME GROUPS ARE dedicated to getting young African Americans to the polls.

By Raoul Dennis

Dennis Rogers, national director of Black Youth Vote, has never met Jolynn Brooks of Common Agenda. Nancy Ware's Reclaim Our Youth Project probably doesn't work with Rhamelle Green of the Zulu Nation in New York City. But it doesn't matter — they're all working together. They plan to get 1.2 million young African Americans to the polls this November — twice the number of those who voted in 1992.

The problem is that most of the people that Rogers and his colleagues are trying to attract are not interested in the political process — or in voting. Of four million eligible African Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 nationwide, only 638,000 showed up at the polls in 1992. That's lower than any other group in any age category. Only 14 percent of black men between 18 and 24 voted, and black women of the same age only did a little better at 19 percent. Older people can be counted on to vote — black women between the ages of 55 to 65 had a higher turnout, at 73 percent of their registered numbers. But the young stay away in droves, especially young blacks.

Although apathy plays a part, most voting rights activists and community leaders say the reasons for not voting go deeper. Young adults sense that the corruption and conservatism of government officials runs so deep that any hope for positive change is stifled. "Elections are bought and sold, candidates are manipulated, and young people can see that," says Jolynn Brooks, national director of Common Agenda Coalition, a Washington, D.C.-based federal budget analysis organization.

Many young people aren't aware of the power that lies within the political process, and they don't recognize the impact it has on their lives. "Most people see themselves as isolated from that picture, or any other big picture, for that matter," said Zulu Nation spokeswoman Rhamelle Green. "These days, people are too afraid to even talk to their neighbors. They would rather try to solve their problems on their own."

Nancy Ware, executive director of Citizenship Education Fund's Reclaim Our Youth Project in Washington, D.C., agrees with Green and looks beyond. "Too many young adults don't even know who their political representatives are," said Ware. "It's not just apathy, because there are so many who are eager to make their communities better. They just don't know the process or its value. When they do, they become charged and they act on it."

Some young African Americans around the South have gotten charged and are recruiting more voters around the region. Dennis Rogers of Black Youth Vote, a division of the National Coalition

Photo by Melanie Campbell Hill

Donna Frisbee, director of the Hip Hop Coalition of Rock the Vote, encourages young people to vote at a press conference in Washington, D.C.

of Black Voter Participation, registered 15,000 young adults at Atlanta's Freedomfest last spring. Formerly known as Freaknik, the annual spring break event is generally attended by thousands of black college students. Although in past years Atlanta residents have seen the student event as pandemonium, this year the National Coalition, the Freedomfest Committee, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and other youth and Southern groups worked together to present cultural and entertainment activities for vacationing students. And they challenged thousands of college students to become part of the political process.

The Black Student Leadership Network (BSLN) in Washington, D.C., has a plan to bring voter registration to campus computers: when students register for classes, they register to vote. "We want voting to be incorporated into the system," explains Darriel Hoy, BSLN Southern regional field director in Durham, North Carolina. "We have 11 HBCUs [historic black colleges and universities] and over 20,000 black students in North Carolina," said the 24-year-old Duke University graduate. "That's a potentially strong influence over our politics."

BSLN is also training student leaders at summer "Freedom Schools" around the country to get new registrants souped up about voting. "The whole idea is to get people to take the strategies back to school this fall," Hoy said. "It's so important to get young people thinking about the political process and how it affects them." Freedom Schools train more than 200 high school and college leaders in leadership and activism. "We are going to create a buzz on campuses," Hoy said. "We'll be on school PA systems, on bulletin boards at concerts and parties, on radio stations — we'll even develop student discounts to events if they can produce their voter registration cards at the door."

The National Coalition for Black Voter Participation, a 20-year-old organization with a membership of more than 70 groups, is trying to make the National Voter Registration Act a reality. Under the terms of the act, (also referred to as the "Motor Voter" bill) which President Clinton signed in 1993, people can register to vote when they apply for a driver's license . "Too many state legislatures are ignoring the principles of the act," said executive director James Ferguson. "We are in the process of looking at those states and developing litigation against them."

Ferguson and other members of the coalition see lost potential because of poor implementation of the act, which was supposed to go into effect this year. Just to show it means business, the coalition, working with its affiliated organizations, filed suit in July against Maryland Democratic Governor Parris Glendening for not complying with the Motor Voter bill. "We want to pressure these states into complying with the law," Ferguson said. "And with the support of our member organizations, we intend to win."

The Youth Task Force in Atlanta and 21st Century Leadership in Selma, Alabama, plan to run young people in future local and state elections as part of their Black Youth Agenda: Countdown 2000. The agenda was developed by more than 600 young people from across the nation who met in Selma last year to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act and the 1965 civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery. According to Angela Brown of the Youth Task Force, young people will be organizing to address problems affecting them. "The goal of running young people for office is not to win, but to be able to have a voice in the political process," said Brown.

Although these efforts are attracting young voters, those who are working to get out the vote agree that young people need to realize that they can make a difference on issues directly affecting them, including proposed cuts in student loans and other college financial aid and teen curfews. Until these potential voters understand the political process, their turnout at the polls will be low. "It's going to be a long, educational process," Ware said, "but I know we're up to it." SE

Raoul Dennis is a freelance writer in Washington, D.C.

Welcome to UNION Summer

By Meridith Helton

One of the 1,500 students who spent three weeks on labor organizing's front lines reports on the AFL-CIO's effort to bring workers and college students together to fight for workplace rights and social justice. The campaign was inspired by the 1964 Freedom Summer.

Photo by Katrina Hajagos

Left to right: Brandy Ross, Leon Coleman, and Larry Muhammad, Union Summer activists with the United Food and Commercial Workers and the Georgia State Employees Union, rally with union members and their families. They marched after a town hall meeting led by Rev. Joseph Lowry, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Linda Chavez-Thompson, Vice President of the AFL-CIO.

GROCERY STORES IN DEKALB County, Georgia, kicked us off the property for soliciting, though we "sold" only voter registration information. One person who took our union flyer asked if we were communists. Another accepted the flier graciously, then threw it in the trash.

Police in Eatonton, Georgia, accused two black Union Summer activists of having guns and frisked them. The officers looked at the activists' Chicago and New York driver's licenses with suspicion. The organizers were simply passing out union information to nursing home employees.

A veteran organizer and I gave union fliers to employees outside a paper bag company at 10:50 p.m. — just before the shift change. As cars pulled up to the plant's gate to drop off and pick up workers, five police cars pulled up. An officer looked at the two of us with our fliers and asked the security guard, *"This*

is the big crowd?" He asked us if the 30-some people entering and leaving the plant were with us. "No, they work here," we said.

We were watched by the management of the bag company at our Valdosta, Georgia, hotel. Our car was tailed by supervisors from another company. Employers at the targeted Georgia War Veterans Home in Milledgeville passed out papers rebutting our handouts, and nursing home workers in Valdosta found anti-union literature in their pay envelopes.

Welcome to Union Summer.

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While others crossed two time zones to fly into the Atlanta airport to participate in Union Summer, I spent an hour and a half driving down I-75 South from Chattanooga, Tennessee. Just a few years ago in high school I had come to Atlanta for concerts or movies that weren't mainstream enough to play in my hometown. I never saw the Atlanta where people could not afford to drive 117 miles for a show.

After I graduated I went to school in New York City where I learned about civil rights struggles of the past. I had grown up amidst the movement but largely ignorant of it. In my insular background, Atlanta had meant nothing more than good shopping. Now I wondered if I could put up a good fight.

Then I met the 37 other Union Summer activists in my group and had another concern. They came from 16 states mostly outside the South. Could I deal with their criticisms of my region? Though I might agree with their views, I retained a weird combination of pride and anger about the South. It's like relatives. I don't choose them. I don't always like them. But I love them. And I don't want to hear about their too-obvious flaws from anyone outside the family.

It was easier to protest in the face of the New York Police Department in riot gear. . . than it was to tell someone in my home community that he's racist, sexist, or homophobic.

Yet, it was hard to think about trying to change my own home. It was easier to protest in the face of the New York Police Department in riot gear as they handcuffed eight students and smashed another's face in — as I did at a demonstration against New York City budget cuts — than it was to tell someone in my home community that he's racist, sexist, or homophobic. But no amount of growth in New York will do much good if I can't apply it at home.

Out of the 15 Union Summer sites nationally, I participated in the South as a test. Could I act on beliefs that I hadn't had the nerve to assert here before?

Photo by Katrina Hajagos

After an "America Needs a Raise" town hall meeting, Union Summer activists joined union members and concerned citizens on a march to the Capitol steps in Atlanta. Chanting "the people united will never be defeated," protesters carried "Cynthia McKinney For Congress" signs to support the beleaguered representative. Speakers criticized Governor "Zig Zag" Zell Miller's plans to privatize state hospitals.

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Most of the members of my group were, like me, 22-year-old college students; half were black, and most came from the East, though three were from Portland, Oregon. There was Amity Hough, who went to school in Michigan and volunteered at the Olympics after her Union Summer stint. Sattara Lenz was a student organizer from Brooklyn College I had first seen at a rally in Chinatown last spring. Wes Stitt from Annapolis, Maryland, was a member of his college's Juggling Socialists Club. Matt D'Amico studied the philosophy of "aesthetic realism" at Baruch College in Manhattan, and Bachir Dussek was a poet and informed conspiracy theorist from the Bronx. Will Kopp, a North Carolinian who went to Brooklyn College, and I went to the same summer camp. Hope Neighbor from Portland joined the Peace Corps and was headed to Cameroon. Andy Lee Davis formed a labor caucus in the Arkansas Young Democrats and taught us the hog call. Patrice Nelson from Chicago planned to teach English over-

seas in the fall, and Maria Amado studied the working conditions on banana plantations at her home in Panama.

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As students well used to paper cuts, we were prepared for the job of leafletting. We handed out fliers for a town hall meeting about the need for higher wages. We gave out union information and authorization cards that would allow the union to represent the worker. We distributed Georgia primary election notices and signs: "Privatize — and we will organize."

We gave out our paper, cards, and posters as people came off the graveyard shift, when they went on at 3:00 and 11:00 pm, and when the 9-to-5 crowd headed for the subway. We stuck our literature in screen doors of homes and under the windshields of cars. We passed, posted, and waved our signs at Macon, Savannah, and Atlanta rallies, at Dekalb County churches on Sunday, and in front of Walmarts, Kmarts, and Krogers on Saturdays.

As we pushed for better working conditions for factory and hospital workers during our three weeks as organizers, we asked each other, "What about our long hours?" We joked about worker's comp for the paper cuts.

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We arrived June 9, exactly one month before Georgia's primary elections. For us this meant loading 18 to 20 deep in a 16-passenger van to "walk the walk" with "Get out the Vote" fliers.

Since the Georgia 11th congressional district, dominated by African-American voters from west Atlanta to Savannah, had been struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court (along with districts in North Carolina and Texas), we were encouraging voting in an historic election. We met United States Representative Cynthia McKinney (D), who won her seat four years ago in the 65 percent black 11th District but ran this summer in the 35 percent black 4th District that encompasses one and a quarter counties in metro Atlanta. The 30 percent didn't move — the district lines did. She did win the primary, and now she faces a stiff challenge in November.

It remained to be seen whether a white majority would elect a black woman, McKinney said. Her re-election would be an important reassertion of the voice of working people, women, and people of color in spite of the Supreme Court ruling, she said.

On weekends we generally leafletted in Atlanta and then took to rural Georgia. Nineteen of us worked with the United Food and Commercial Union (UFCW) Local 1996 and the other 18 with the Georgia State Employees Union (GSEU).

My work with the UFCW over the three-week internship consisted mainly of leafletting as we started new campaigns at poultry plants in Gainesville, Georgia, and nursing homes in Albany and Union Point, Georgia, among others. Despite employer intimidation, a majority of workers took information, took more for their coworkers, and asked, "What took y'all so long?" One man saw the word "union" and not 10 feet from the plant's gate completed the response card with his name and address. He checked "yes" to the question, "Would you like to be on the organizing committee?" That same day, our leafletting flurry outside a bag manufacturer in Valdosta got the attention of workers at a concrete company down the street who came over for information.

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Despite positive reactions, it was disappointing to catch the organizing campaign at such an early stage. Our counterparts with the Georgia State Employees Union embarked on work that seemed more urgent. To save money, the state of Georgia contracted a private firm

Photo by Katrina Hajagos

Union Summer activists Bill Winder, Hope Neighbor, John Hall, Heather Schoenfield, Patricia Neighbor, and Carol Roth listen to speeches at a Macon, Georgia, rally. Along with union members, they showed solidarity with striking *Detroit News* workers by marching on the *Macon Telegraph*. Both papers are owned by Knight-Ridder.

to run the War Veterans Home, a division of Central State Hospital, one of the largest employers in the town of Milledgeville. The company, Privatrend, agreed to retain only 30 percent of the workforce. They said they would consider hiring back the other 70 percent of the workers on a part-time basis with a minimum $9,000 cut in pay.

On July 1, just one day after we were to complete our Union Summer session, state jobs would fall into private hands. The union wanted to sign a majority of workers before Privatrend took over so that those losing their lucrative state jobs would have leverage with the private company. In the second week of June, the Union Summer activists started the legwork with all that was available to them — a five-year-old list of employees' names and addresses. They divided up the list and took to the back roads, often receiving sketchy directions —"turn yonder and go up a ways." They urged workers to sign a petition for union representation and to get involved in organizing themselves.

One Union Summer group of three or four with GSEU reported that they were pursued by ABC News crews. They arrived at homes to find workers out on their front porches, but after five minutes of camera set-up just to film the activists' trip to the front door, not surprisingly, no one appeared to be home.

By June 27, after talking to workers at home and outside of work and organizing demonstrations and fish fries, the participants had helped to sign up 80 percent of the War Veterans Home employees. With a letter in hand demanding union recognition, the 18 Union Summer activists accompanied Georgia State Employees Union organizers and members to the offices of Privatrend, the soon-to-be managers of the state's War Veterans Home.

One of the Union Summer participants, Carol Roth, said that employers' anti-union actions discussed in our training sessions became real to her when Privatrend personnel pushed away letter bearer Tyrone Freeman. Privatrend staff warned each other not to touch the letter.

The new managers called security on the GSEU group. Terrica Redfield, who went home after Union Summer ready to organize poultry workers in her hometown of McComb, Mississippi, said that "security couldn't do anything, because we weren't doing anything" save handing over a letter.

A majority of workers took information, took more for their co-workers, and asked, "What took y'all so long?"

Though new to Georgia, another Union Summer participant, E'an Todd, felt like the jobs lost at the Veteran Home were just the start and that, in fact, all 10,000 at the Central State Hospital were at stake. He believed that the union campaign was "key to how things are going to go in [the state's] politics." After the three weeks of Union Summer had passed, E'an took to sleeping at the GSEU office to see the struggle through, though a job awaited him at home in Portland.

Carol Roth, Al Loise, and Beth MacBlane were prepared to return to Atlanta from their homes in Virginia and New York to continue helping with the GSEU campaign. Another two Union Summer participants postponed return trips home to Florida and stayed in Atlanta to see the outcome of the union's appeal to the National Labor Relations Board. Several others from Arkansas to Queens stayed on with the textile workers' union UNITE! They started undercover research at targeted companies where they will work for slightly above minimum wage while organizing their co-workers for higher pay.

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Other Union Summer activists I talked to showed equal investment in their work. Amanda Johnson, a fiction writer, said that she started on the United Steel Workers of America's corporate campaign against Bridgestone/Firestone in Nashville, Tennessee, saying, "I'm not going to be an organizer." She went on to organize a prayer breakfast with Nashville clergy with only two weeks to get out invitations and make calls. She pinned down a caterer the day before the event. She hoped to enlist the religious community to present the names of 500 locked out employees at the Bridgestone/Firestone corporate headquarters during a massive demonstration in July.

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In Georgia's first Union Summer wave, we started with 37 people and ended with 34. Nationally, there were 1,500 Union Summer participants and more than 3,000 applicants. At some points it was a "logistical nightmare," according to Andy Levin, the program's director. Despite this, he told me mid-summer that it was "going great, and the only question now is how to keep Union Summer people involved." If our group in Atlanta or activists in Nashville are any example, that's one problem he doesn't have to worry about. SE

Photo by Katrina Hajagos

Meridith Helton had just one free day in her three week Union Summer stint. She spent it on Georgia's coast.

After Union Summer, Meridith Helton, a senior at Sarah Lawrence College, spent the remainder of her summer as an intern at the Institute for Southern Studies and Southern Exposure.

The Brass Balls of Handsome Bailey

By Junebug Jabbo Jones

Illustration by Patricia Ford

The redistricting blues bring out a visit from the congressman.

There are some things in life that just have to be done. The Irish have to kiss the Blarney Stone, Muslims have to make it to Mecca, salmon have to swim back to where they were born to hatch a brood before they die . . . and Handsome Bailey has to lie.

Me, I believe I'd die if I couldn't get back to the place in south Mississippi where I was born every three or four years. I have to go to the old home place, stir up some mustard greens with some collards, a few turnip tops, wild dandelions and poke salad mixed in. Cook 'em down with lots of garlic and onions, some okra and a few pods of pepper and serve them with pan-fried corn meal spoon bread . . . for that I'd walk into the White House and slap Bill Clinton.

The last time I made it back to Mustard Mecca I was about to sit down to my first plate of greens and here come a chauffeur-driven Cadillac car long enough to put a pool in. Out comes His Honor, Congressman Handsome Bailey. With his high-priced patent leather shoes, he slipped in a fresh cow pie. He came toward the back door calling, "Junebug! Hey Junebug! Where you at, man?" trying to clean his foot as he walked.

I put aside my greens, knowing he'd track mess all over our house without a second thought. I popped the screen door and stood so he couldn't get to the steps.

"Hey, Brother Junebug, I'm so glad you're back in town, man. I've got the redistricting blues. We need to relight the flames of struggle. They're trying to rip us off again, Brother."

"That ain't news to me, Handsome, and it oughtn't be news to you, considering how you voted on health care, welfare, education, affirmative action, and everything else that you or some friends of yours didn't see a way to make money on."

"I didn't make the rules, Junebug. I'm just trying to keep us in the game. You know I've always been down with the struggle. I really need you to hook me up with that Brother from the VEP, Brown."

I wouldn't even help Handsome clean his stinky shoe. I don't know what made him think I'd support his politics. Handsome always has had brass balls, I thought. He was born like that. B.B. King tagged Handsome in lines from his song, "Nobody loves me but my Mama / and she could be lying, too."

Handsome is a strange name, but it's particularly strange for him. His ears stick out at different angles, like a first-grader was trying to make a head out of clay and didn't know where the ears were meant to go. But despite his appearance, Handsome's very popular with a certain type of woman and has yet to lose an election.

Handsome was a child of wishes. His Mama, Ms. Mildred, wished the boy didn't look like he'd been beat about the head with an ugly stick. Still, she acted like the sun rose and set on her Handsome. Bought him everything he wanted. His closet was bigger than most people's houses. The daddy wished he could be certain that the child wasn't his. "It don't look like nothing that so much as passed through my family!"

His daddy, Mr. "One Stop" Bailey, had a store at the Mars Hill Crossroads. They called it Bailey's Hill Top — One Stop Service Station & Gro. We called it One Stop cause if you stopped one time you wouldn't stop no more. One Stop went for bad among black folk but was known to be more than a little skittish among white people.

Handsome is a strange name, but it's particularly strange for him. His ears stick out at different angles, like a first-grader was trying to make a head out of clay and didn't know where the ears were meant to go.

What got me so upset with Handsome happened when I came out of the service in '56. I'd joined the Voter Education Project to organize "citizenship education" classes to teach people to pass the "literacy test." It was hard enough to get people to the point where they could read and interpret the state constitution, but when One Stop Bailey started the rumor that I'd got "shell-shocked" in Korea, people wouldn't even come out to New Mt. Zion Church in the evenings to take the classes for fear I might get out of control, like Mr. Pud Johnson still did from time to time.

One Stop told everyone that he had seen plenty of cases of shell-shocked people during World War II and that I was worse than Pud had been when he first came back. I went out to the store one day to see why he was bad mouthing me. When I got there, he was sitting on the counter holding court like a judge. Most everyone there owed One Stop money, so they had to be careful.

"Why else would Junebug be running around the county trying to stir stuff up just when we got things moving on a smooth track? Ain't been no bad trouble here since Col. Whitten's cousin killed Miss Parker's son (so they say) for trying to organize voter registration."

"They got Frozine Johnson's boy for the same thing last year," said Jake Tucker.

"That boy died on the way to the hospital in Jackson," One Stop said.

Mr. Joe Whittie, more independent than the other men there, said, "He didn't need no trip to the hospital when they arrested him. Willie Gladstone told me that he had to wire that boy's jaw to his cheekbone to keep his mouth shut for the funeral."

"That would've been the only way to shut that nigger's mouth anyway. He wasn't scared of nothing," Willie Montgomery chipped in.

"All the more reason Junebug should not be tempting and teasing these crazy

crackers about voting. I tell you, he's shell-shocked and crazy as a rabid dog and twice as dangerous."

"That's the biggest lie I ever heard!" One Stop jumped like I had shot at him. "Mr. Bailey, you should be ashamed of yourself! You claiming to be a race man, too."

"It's a difference between a race man and a fool, Junebug. I been here a long time and intend to be here a good while longer."

"If you scared of the white folk, just say so, but we've had as much as we're going to take. You even got your 15-year-old son going all over the county lying on me. Is somebody paying you to keep us from voting? If it wasn't for a pity I'd take you out and whip your butt myself."

"See! What'd I tell y'all? He's just like Pud Johnson!"

"You ought to stand strong for the progress of the race. You got your own business, and I sure don't see no white folk in here spending their money to make you rich. And they sure as hell ain't paying you rent for them little shack houses you got all around the county."

"People need what I got to offer, Junebug. And they don't need you. You so crazy, you don't see the gun that's pointed at your head, boy. You can go anywhere, do anything you want, but we got to live 'mongst these crazy crackers. Why don't you go on about your business and leave well enough alone?"

It took some years before I found out why One Stop acted like he did. One Stop was up to his eyeballs in debt. He had money to handle — he didn't have money to keep. What he did get, Ms. Mildred spent as quick as she could get her hands on it.

He did his banking at Col. T.L. Whitten's bank up in McComb. Like most of the other property owners around there, white as well as black, One Stop couldn't go outside to relieve himself without Whitten's say so. The colonel told One Stop, "I don't see where niggers need no vote." That was all One Stop needed to know that I had to go.

With One Stop and Handsome working one side of the street and Whitten working the other, I didn't stand the chance of a snowball in hell. Feeling like a prophet in his homeland, I went somewhere else to work.

But Whitten, One Stop, and the others like them had misread the flow of history. They couldn't keep us from winning our right to vote. But when it got so it was safe for black folk to run for office, we let our guard down. Handsome Bailey was the first one to jump to the front of the line to run for office. He claimed he had been a leader in the struggle for our rights. And that was the least of the lies he told. He won a seat in the State Legislature and stood there for three terms before they elected him to Congress. I couldn't say that *all* politicians lie as much as Handsome does, but he does seem right at home in that business.

The Voter Education Project is gone now. Toward the end, a friend of mine, Ed Brown, was running it. Ed had called on Handsome to help with some fundraising for VEP. Handsome told him, "What do I need to get more people on the rolls for? The ones who are already registered are the ones that voted me."

"You burning the bridge that brought you over," Ed had told him.

But Whitten, One Stop, and the others like them had misread the flow of history. They couldn't keep us from winning our right to vote.

"... so that's why I need you to contact your buddy, what's his name ...?" Handsome finally stopped talking.

I wanted to insult the man, hurt him. I told him that the cow dung he was standing in smelled better than he did, but nothing I said moved him. Finally, I said to myself, some things just have to be done. I grabbed Handsome by the scruff of the neck and the seat of his pants and tossed him back in his Cadillac car and told the driver, "You better get him out of here before he really gets hurt."

I went on back in the kitchen, but it was the next day before I could enjoy my greens like I wanted to.

Time went by. One Stop died from a stroke while ringing up a sale in his store. Too cheap to buy a grave, Handsome buried One Stop beside the gas pump, closed the store, and put Ms. Mildred in a rest home. Col. Whitten's over 100 now. He wound up with the first statewide bank in Mississippi. Here lately I heard he financed Handsome in a string of convenience stores called Handsome's Pantry — One Stop Stores. Meanwhile, the average black person is worse off than we were in '56, but it won't be long before that berry's ready for the plucking. SE

The stories of Junebug Jabbo Jones are brought to Southern Exposure *via his good friend, New Orleans storyteller John O'Neal.*

MAPPING APPALACHIA

An east Tennessean in Boston reflects on the contours of his world.

By Douglas Reichert Powell

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Picture me composing this essay.

I am sitting at a desk, facing a computer screen, wearing a flannel shirt and a baseball cap. Behind me, a window frames a slice of the Boston skyline, the Prudential and John Hancock towers dominating the landscape. On the wall above me a series of maps is folded, thumb-tacked, and taped together to become one map of part of east Tennessee, including the Johnson City, Jonesborough, Unicoi, Erwin, Elizabethton, and Iron Mountain Gap quadrangles mapped by the U.S. Geographical Survey.

What's wrong with this picture?

You might say I shouldn't have my cap on indoors. Or you might say it's odd to be writing about Appalachia in central Boston. That second remark is more to the point here. It raises the question of where Appalachia is, exactly. Clearly, it's not out among the tall buildings, but how do we know that? How do we know what Appalachia is *not*? And even if we recognize the landscape as Not Appalachia, we still have to answer the question, where is Appalachia? Is it on the map? Is it in me?

For most of the people I know around Boston, the answer would be that Appalachia is in me. For most of them, I am their only experience of Appalachia, so I represent an entire region — people, practices, landscape, and all. Appalachia is in me in the same sense that Israel as a nation includes the Diaspora. And when people remark on my Southern-ness, I often correct them: "Appalachian, actually." I invariably add that I'm from east Tennessee.

The place from which I emerged is with me still. Origins play a major part in my sense of self; the past shapes my definition of the present. Appalachia moves with me among the tall buildings and has a foothold in an overpriced apartment a few blocks from Fenway Park — an apartment that costs more than the entire house and 40 acres where I lived before moving here from a small black dot in the upper-righthand corner of the Erwin quadrangle in east Tennessee.

However, I'm not willing to commit to the concept of Appalachia as some kind of metaphysical quality. My affiliation with Appalachia has more to do with a conscious, willful set of actions — not to mention an element of artifice — especially in this setting where "Appalachian-ness" is a foreign, almost exotic trait. Appalachia is something I can *do*, like wear a ball cap or say "fixin' to" and it's acts I'm conscious of performing. In fact, last Halloween all I did was put on something I might have worn on any given day on that 40-acre farm: camouflage pants, a flannel shirt, and a cap with a chain saw logo. I billed this as my native dress. This is a performance model of Appalachia.

Or you might say that I'm not in Appalachia at all. Appalachia is a place, a geographical reality on the map. Sure, Appalachia is in me, but I'm not in Appalachia. This geographical model postulates a very different model of cultural identity, tying the region exclusively to the land. It suggests that it's futile to ruminate over what, exactly, region is. A region is a place, and a place is a body of land. Either you are in it, or you're not.

I have a bias toward the performance model because I'm not "in" Appalachia, and I'd like to preserve something of that identity for all kinds of reasons, not all of which are clear even to myself. Still, when pushed to the logical extreme, both models have problems that point toward a larger underlying difficulty in trying to create any closed cultural model.

You can't get there from here

The performance model, that Appalachia is something you do, is illustrated by Stephen Greenblatt in his introduction to *Marvelous Possessions*. On his first night in Bali in 1986, Greenblatt saw a light in the communal pavilion, which was where his anthropological reading had taught him the Balinese gathered in the evening:

"I drew near and discovered that the light came from a television set that the villagers, squatting or sitting cross-legged, were intent on watching. Conquering my disappointment, I accepted the gestured invitation to climb onto the platform and see the show: on the com-

Both photos courtesy of Douglas Reichert Powell

When east Tennessean Douglas Reichert Powell looks out his window, he sees Boston.

When Douglas Reichert Powell visits his home in east Tennessee, he sees waterfalls.

munal VCR, they were watching a tape of an elaborate temple ceremony."

This scenario — highly reminiscent of the popular stereotype of the hillbilly shack with the satellite dish out back — illustrates a problem with the idea of culture as a stable and inherited set of beliefs and practices. One feels that the Balinese should be watching the ceremony in person and that the VCR and television pollute "real" Balinese culture. This view places inordinate emphasis on preserving "authentic" ways, suggesting that inherited practices should occur only along sanctioned and existing lines.

Greenblatt writes: "I think it is important to resist what we may call an *a priori* ideological determinism, that is, [the view] that particular modes of representation are inherently and necessarily bound to a given culture or class or belief system." Greenblatt casts his discussion in terms of ideology. An approach to Appalachian culture that defines the region as a set of practices or designates a particular practice as the exclusive domain of a people is highly questionable. Such a methodology can be easily co-opted into the service of racist or otherwise discriminatory politics. Moreover, even done with the best of intentions, the argument about authenticity is fraught with dangers. If decisions are to be made as to what is authentic and what is not, who is entitled to make such decisions?

Greenblatt based his expectations of Balinese culture in part on academic writing. At first, he felt that it was the culture, not the studies, that needed correcting when his experience ran up against his expectations. This disjuncture limits the possibility for expansion, assimilation, and transformation of a culture even as the viewer attempts (or pretends) to protect, privilege, or honor the culture. The defense of "authentic" cultural practices includes a potential paternalism that denies the constant dynamics of transformation, instead nostalgically valuing "old ways."

Every generation mourns the recent demise of the pastoral ideal and the disappearance of the older, simpler ways.

Museums physically manifest this approach to culture. The museum is the grammar of the metalanguage of colonialism. In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* Benedict Anderson discusses the ways in which colonialists in southeast Asia systematically "reconstructed" ancient cultural sites — Angkor Wat in Kampuchea, Borobudur in Indonesia — draining them of their cultural value. It's not difficult to see these same processes at work in the Great Smoky Mountains, giving us, for example, the meticulously authentic but now almost empty — save for tourists — Cades Cove.

In Appalachia, Anderson's archeology assumes the form of the living history museum, which is a subclass of the theme park. Colonial archeologists subverted Native Americans' connections to their heritage by subjecting it to scientific scrutiny and then reconstructing it in ways that placed it irretrievably distant in history. So, too, heritage parks and preservation efforts sever contemporary Appalachia from its past.

Historic theme parks sunder us from an organic harmony, and they reconstruct history in strangely alienating terms. This lost order survives only in the form of commodities, in marketable

Photo by Pat Arnow

Singer Dolly Parton has recreated her childhood home at Dollywood, a theme park near her birthplace in Sevier County, Tennessee, adjacent to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

wares that have replaced the complex dynamic of lived experience. Anderson calls this "logoization," the conversion of culture into uncomplicated emblems: unpeopled postcards of Angkor Wat that allege to be the experience of Kampuchea. Similarly, in *The Culture of Nature,* Alexander Wilson catalogues the "hillbilly gewgaws" in Gatlinburg, Tennessee: "carved wood figurines, plastic flowers, Dolly Parton T-shirts, whiskey-still charm bracelets, Christian inspirational plaques, and fake folk medicines." The character of any logo, writes Anderson, is distinguished by "its emptiness, contextlessness, visual memorableness, and infinite reproducibility."

Mapped by TVA

When one nails down exactly what artifacts are at the heart of a culture, one is ready for the trip from Cades Cove to Dollywood. Ultimately these sanctuaries of "authenticity" are of the same genus if not the same species as industrial parks, shopping centers, and suburbs.

The emphasis that theme parks place on the geographical aspect of a culture points to the problem with the common-sense approach of defining a region as land with physical boundaries. It may seem simpler to say that culture is tied to a place, but the implications of this geographical model fragment fairly quickly, just as happened with the model of defining culture in terms of practices.

The museum is the grammar of the metalanguage of colonialism.

In his *Death and Dying in Central Appalachia: Changing Attitudes and Practices,* James Crissman suggests the fluctuating nature of a geographical conception of Appalachia. But it's surprising that Crissman then comfortably and fairly arbitrarily defines Central Appalachia as "the Appalachian sections of Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Kentucky (including the northeastern and southeastern part extending into the foothills), and the entire state of West Virginia." Granted, Crissman's aim is to document funerary practices, not define the region. Still, the way he draws the map is another example of a deterministic approach to culture.

As Benedict Anderson observes, if the museum objectifies cultural practice, the map objectifies the space a culture occupies. A Tennessee-shaped magnet from any of the many Dollywood gift shops illustrates how easily the state's outline lends itself to logoization. The carto-

graphic definition of region is like the colonialist museum, not by distancing but by denying the past. Maps exist in an eternal present. Even when the traveler's experience of the landscape is at odds with the depiction, maps contain within themselves an argument for their own completeness and accuracy.

Indeed, geography and cartography historically reflect political positions, all the while denying the alliance through scientific or legalistic rhetoric. To use a map is to acquiesce to its authority, as if maps were transparent windows, authorless anomalies in the textual universe. Yet behind this illusion lies immense authorial power: the power to write the very face of the earth.

The maps on my wall show the many layers of authorship these artifacts involve. These wonderfully detailed maps have been of great use to me not only as an outdoorsman on my native ground but also as an evocation, far from home, of the places I love to spend my time: Laurel Falls, Red Fork Falls, Big Rock, Zep Spot. Above all, however, these are government maps, and they are almost eerie in their detached, omnipotent gaze that converts the very contours of the land into data.

These government maps, are almost eerie in their detached, omnipotent gaze that converts the contours of the land into data.

The way a map "looks" at the land necessarily depopulates it. In their pretense to timelessness, maps are methodologically incapable of accounting for the movements, activities, and lived experiences of real people. All that remains are opaque representations of cultures, black dots that stand in for complicated lives.

In this context, "U.S. Geological Survey" written on the map has an unsettling and regimented ring to it. What's more, as the fine print notes, these particular quadrangles were "Mapped by the Tennessee Valley Authority." It is oddly appropriate that the government agency that arguably has had the greatest role in rewriting not only the contours of the culture but the shape of the landscape itself is the agency that has the authorial and authoritative task of describing the land.

The ways in which the TVA has gone about representing its "beneficiaries" bear closer scrutiny. The methods suggest that the operations of government on the American interior are potentially as insidious as the colonial conquests of cultures outside our national borders. This can be seen in the series of photographs commissioned by the agency of homesteads on reservation sites, seemingly designed to show their squalor (a potent version of "authenticity"), or in pro-government propaganda such as former TVA official Arthur Morgan's book *The Making of the TVA*, which includes some of these very photographs.

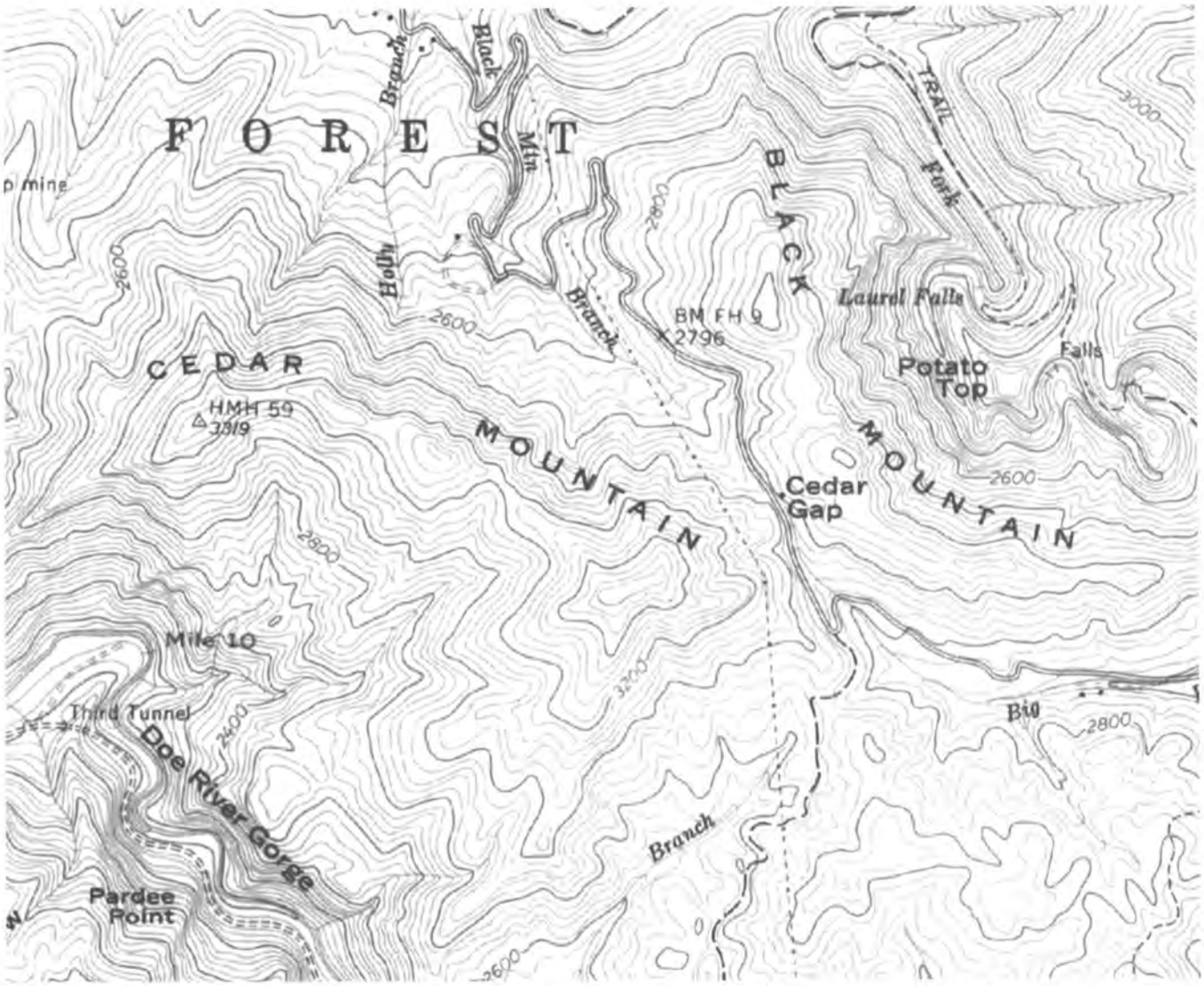
My maps, though, seem to resonate most deeply with a distant, depersonalized view of Appalachia, a view TVA uses to harness the region's resources into a modern power grid. In her poem "The Map," Elizabeth Bishop writes that "mapped waters are more quiet than the land is." Her remark captures the irony of those cool, uniformly blue expanses on, say, the Boone Dam or Watauga Dam quadrangles. Beneath those waters dammed by the TVA are homesteads and graveyards and trails and valleys and hills that the map will not admit as a past or present reality.

Identity crisis

Ultimately, maps and heritage museums work in roughly the same way. In their quest to contain culture in an artificial, finite zone, they make it available for unethical uses: stereotyping, exploitation, commodification. But like any culture, Appalachian culture is infinitely more complex than any model could possibly take into account. It is with some pride that I look at the county-by-county map in the front cover of Paul Salstrom's *Appalachia's Path to Dependency* to discover that, as a native of Washington County, Tennessee, I am from "Older Appalachia." Is this the solution to my identity crisis? But what would Salstrom think if he knew that there, in the heart of Older Appalachia, I grew up in a notably un-rustic neighborhood of university professors known informally as Scholar Holler? Or that my experience of Appalachia centers on a medium-sized city, that the only times I've been around looms or churns or bull-tongue plows were in heritage museums and the households of collectors? Is my experience of the region I claim as my birthplace rendered inauthentic by my place within the culture?

Here at last the performance and geographic models of culture lock in conflict. It's not me or my culture that's gone wrong, been conquered, disappeared — it's that all the available models of the culture I grew up in are too static to take into account the changes wrought in Appalachia over the years. What's more, there never has been a time of Edenic exemption from the processes of cultural change and evolution in Appalachia or in any region, no moment of cultural purity. As the British scholar Raymond Williams notes in *The Country and the City*, every generation mourns the recent demise of the pastoral ideal and the disappearance of the older, simpler ways.

Indeed, warning bells of potential manipulation and intellectual peril should sound whenever representations of a culture seem to validate in absolute terms the clear outlines of its existence. To the extent that the academic field of Appalachian studies attempts to intervene on behalf of Appalachian culture, whatever it may be, and to benefit the lives of these people, whoever and wherever they are, the map and the heritage museum and the paradigms they represent are a Scylla and Charybdis. To be a vital space for public discussion, Appalachian studies must, I believe, avoid a narrow conception of its objects or locations of study. Instead, it might open lines of dialogue with other cultures and other criticisms. For all that is wonderfully unique about the region, much can be shared with the



One of the detailed contour maps of east Tennessee created by the Tennessee Valley Authority shows the Elizabethton Quandrangle of the U.S. Geographical Survey.

experiences of other cultures — Indonesia and Cambodia, for example. Much can be gained from alliances with other socially and politically conscious areas of cultural studies.

Beneath those waters dammed by the TVA are homesteads and graveyards and trails and valleys and hills that the map will not admit as a past or present reality.

It might seem ironic that despite all these misgivings about attempting to contain culture, nonetheless I use the word "culture" throughout this essay. There is a regional culture, and we are in it now, and I am in it in the picture of myself that opens this essay. The regional culture, the Appalachia that I espouse, is historic but dynamic throughout its history, open to incursions and excursions, living in the present but cognizant of potential futures and the range of versions of the past.

Culture is the result, not the source of, our discussions and experiences of region, and our memories and articulations of those memories, and our plans and concerns about what is to come. Culture is inheritance, but it is also frays in patterns of inheritance, the intrusion of the new and the systematic distortion of the old. To be Appalachian is to participate, whether on location or from afar, in the acts, words, deeds, and landscapes of our ongoing debate over who are the "Appalachians." The region exists, securely, as long as the debate goes on. SE

Douglas Reichert Powell is a doctoral student in English at Northeastern University. He also attended Washington and Lee University (BA, 1990) and East Tennessee State University (MA, 1992) and is associate editor of the anthology, Appalachia Inside Out *(University of Tennessee Press, 1995).*

The Rock Garden

By Nicola Mason

My grandmother kills her dogs when she tires of them. She won't give them away, not even when the vet has found homes. She tells him: "I give my dogs ice water and ice cream in the summertime. I feed them from my plate — pork roast and gravy, cornbread, and butter beans from the garden. They're used to the best. Nobody will give them as much." Then she has the vet put them to sleep. Colored Penny died this way, a hunting dog too shy to kill anything herself. And Charlie, whom I called Snake because of the evil look in his varicolored eyes — one blue and one brown. When I visited he'd stalk me, then nip at my calves till I bled. There were more dogs. Leila, my father's mother, talks of Tuff Enuff, Tiger, and Brandy — but I never met them. They died before I came to the state where my parents were raised. Before I truly knew my family's families.

I was born in Florida, after my parents fled their small, poor Louisiana towns. They met at the college nearest their homes, my father the first in his family to attend, my mother preceded by her elder sister and followed by her younger. Mother was a senior when my father was a freshman, he having done a stint in the Navy to earn money for school. My father told me the story of their first date a dozen times when I was a child, amending or embellishing as I grew, teaching me what school did not: that history changes with time.

He told me when he arrived on campus some of his fraternity brothers spoke of Ruthie Cook, the "fast" girl who had made the rounds among his new friends. Later, when he was introduced to my mother in the student union, he recognized her name. He asked her out. Come Saturday he rumbled up to her parents' small house in his sleek black Impala. I imagine my mother's flush as she spied through the curtains. She was the quiet, bespectacled sister; the one who, nose deep in a book, never heard the call to meals. Her dates were few and with boys who misknotted their ties, knocked heirlooms off the mantel, spoke haltingly of rainfall, soybeans, their various ailments, and family curses.

You would imagine these boys would suit my shy, serious-minded mother, but what no one knew was how as a teen she would creep from the room where her sisters lay sleeping and pore over scandalous novels like *Forever Amber* and *Peyton Place*, how in church she would leaf through the Song of Solomon, lingering on phrases like "You have ravished my heart," "My beloved is like a young stag," "Your lips drip as the honeycomb." How she would steal away to the corner store and buy not a cherry limeade but a dime cobalt bottle of Evening in Paris, slipping the scent behind her knees and on the webs of skin between her fingers before school. Or how she memorized the words to "dirty" songs like "Little Pretty One" and "Annie Had a Baby," humming them softly, daringly, at dinner.

What my mother knows as my father strides up the driveway is that he is worldly; he has flown around the globe on the Navy's planes. She's heard that he's a drinker, a party boy, that he has a tattoo of a little red devil on his bicep. This information, his slick ducktail, and his "shaggy-dog" shoes tell her that he is dangerous, and one ankle wobbles as she hurries to answer his knock.

The way he tells it, my father knew within five minutes that my mother was the "wrong" Ruthie Cook: they would marry in eight short months. Though he didn't know it yet, my father was tiring of the party life. Often he thought of his advanced age (twenty-five) and his poor grades, and a different kind of restlessness sneaked over him. Soon he would quit the fraternity, make weekly visits to the library where my mother worked, and have her recommend books, which he pretended to read. He would take her to the movies and trail tiny kisses from her fingertips to her shoulder. He would implore her to write his papers, grovel flamboyantly, pretend she had slain him until she agreed. He would sweep her off her sensible feet.

But now they are on their first date, talking stiltedly in the

Impala, and they have no place to go. My father intended to find a secluded place to park and let my mother take it from there, but that plan has dissolved under her bright, breathless quizzing ("Do you like to twist?" "This car goes pretty fast, huh?" "Have you ever read *Ben Hur*?"). It is dead winter, which, in Louisiana, doesn't mean much, but this winter has been unusual — bitter cold, interminably gray, and there has been a rare and fearsome snowstorm the night before my parents' date. Driving along the poorly shoveled streets, snow heaped on either side, another idea comes to my father. He suggests they cruise the overpass.

This is not quite as sorry an effort at entertainment as it sounds. The new interstate is a source of excitement in a town with no drive-in, no skating rink, where splitting a malt at the Dairy Dreem is romantic and a trip to Woolworth's is to die for. The interstate is the world come knocking. It is big town. It is glitz. My mother straightens. "They finished?" she asks. "Just today," my father says. "So I hear."

Watching through her eyes as I pull up to the trailer, I see that the wrong grandchild has returned to her: the sad clown.

In fact, the overpass wasn't yet complete — but you'd never know it to look at it. In his telling, my father always pauses here, making me squirm. I itch to take over, tell it for him, add my own details. For I am there, in the seat between them, seeing the clear sieve of sky through the windshield. You would never know, looking at that soft, somnolent dusk, of the previous day's blast. You'd never imagine that it had forged a brittle bridge of ice over the gap in the road.

My mother is laughing at my father's jokes as he drives. The heater has made the car cozy, and she adjusts her cat's-eye glasses, the better to see his perfectly pomaded hair, his crisp checkered shirt, his rolled jeans exposing just the right length of white sock. So charmed is she that she forgets to look up as they climb the ramp, accelerate, and cut a path into air. She is fixed on his shoes as they fall.

It is fully dark when they crawl from the wreckage. The overpass was in fact nearly complete, and they've missed the water by a hair. My mother shoves blood and bangs from her eyes as they stagger up the riverbank and weave their way to the nearest porchlight. This is the early '60s: a time when people open their doors to strangers, when ambulances come quickly — and soon my parents are at the hospital, stitched up and swabbed clean and given shots to sleep. Today, a tiny ridge of flesh cleaves my mother's right eyebrow, the vestige of her injuries.

"From then on it was all over," my father tells me. "I'd scarred up your mother so no one else would take her."

I have looped away from my grandmother, but now I return. And I do return to her every other month, making the drive from Baton Rouge to her trailer at the lake. Five hours. A long trip, even risky on the narrow, rutted roads jostling with cane hailers, cotton trucks, pickups that burn oil at forty. I return guessing, as I drive, what will have changed. Sometimes she'll have new spectacles, sometimes new plants. Once a gleaming pine rocker and a mobile — balsa owls circling placidly at the ceiling. Another visit and the coffee table has been set with her ceramic birds — cardinals, jays, owls, all spaced around a low, wide-lipped bowl. "You see," she says, splaying her hands at the arrangement. "They come to drink." Sometimes the change is a dog.

Each visit is strange, full of subtle pressures and hints, food I'm forced to eat much of, *Star Search*, Christian platitudes, and a dozen small services I'm slated to perform. Sometimes I'll put up a shower curtain, repot a plant, help pack a box of persimmons from her tree to send my father. But mostly I order items from catalogs — a coal scuttle to hold her magazines, new placemats for fall, a deluxe salad shooter — adding tax and shipping, writing out her check. I make calls to 800 numbers, discovering why the things she ordered without me haven't come. I scan video catalogs and make recommendations. This was harder in the beginning, when I tried to improve her ("This one is dark, yet uplifting. Are you familiar with *film noir*?"). Now I know to choose films with small children, dogs or horses (no cats), musical numbers, or men hunting or fishing. We will watch these without comment after *Star Search* — she rocking calmly, me sobbing helplessly over Old Yeller's death. Then we are ready for bed. She turns to me: "Want some Advil? Want some Tylenol? Want some Bayer? Want some Excedrin?" After I pop aspirin to please her, we retire. But tonight there is another change. As I head to the spacious side room with the double bed, her sewing machine, and quilting frame, she stops me: "I've put you in the other one." She indicates the closet stuffed with a single bed, the guest room guests never sleep in, the crypt she has claimed every other time I've come. As I crawl onto the narrow mattress, I am suddenly unsure. Does this mean that now, at last, she sees me as family? That there's no need to put on the dog? Or am I again unspecial, unworthy of the best her trailer has to offer? My sleep is troubled, and I wake often to the slow, regular sawing of her snores: I have remembered what is always at the back of my mind when I come — that my grandmother has never loved me.

My mother told me more about my grandmother when I was a teen. She said when my sister was born, Leila came to visit and held Amanda and fed Amanda and rocked Amanda. And when I was born Leila came to visit and held Amanda and fed Amanda and rocked Amanda. Memories from early visits to

my grandmother's house in town came back to me — Leila and Amanda disappearing for hours at a time, returning with bags full of face creams and scented shell-soaps, perfumes and mud masks and those glowing lustrous bath beads. I remember wandering into my sister's room back at our own house and discovering in her suitcase an owl necklace with glittering emerald eyes, a charm bracelet with little dogs dangling from the chain, a huge *faux*-amethyst ring that opened like the ones on TV that held poison, only this gem concealed a tiny watch.

During one visit to my grandmother's they came back from a secret shopping trip with a greasepaint kit, and my sister decided we would be clowns. Leila wielded the paintbrush, and Amanda became a grinning, cherry-cheeked jester. I was given a frowny face, and teardrops fell from my triangular eyes. That afternoon I ran away in the grocery store parking lot, hid between cars, sprinted from row to row while my parents and grandmother circled in the Chevy, calling for me.

After such tantrums my father consoled me in careful ways. "Your grandmother is an odd woman," he would say. "She has her own way of showing you her love."

Now my mother asks, "Why do you go see her? She's never cared about you." Her question triggers an image of Leila's old house, the house of my childhood — an inconspicuous brick single story. But in my mind it exudes mystery and glamour. Perhaps it was simply the alien spaces to explore, strange objects to ogle, but as a girl I was devoted to its every detail. In the carport the Cokes were kept in a fridge that Leila opened with a tiny silver key. The frosty bottles fit coldly in our hands like statuettes. Against the wall leaned a dolly over which my sister and I fought bitterly. Usually, because she was older and bigger, she got to play the Sears serviceman, and calling "Hey, delivery! Clear the way! Coming through!" she pushed the dolly up and down the driveway as I, the major appliance, perched stiffly on its jutting metal foot.

In my grandmother's kitchen a nut dispenser with a little drawer parceled out exotics like cashews, pistachios, and filberts. Caches of mints and candied almonds were secreted throughout the house, mounded temptingly in a porcelain teacup, a little dish into which a hand-painted doe dipped her head. But the piece I returned to was my grandmother's oil lamp. Gaudy and gold, the size of a stovepipe hat, it perched atop her taboret. This miniature Greek temple was lit by four small bulbs, artfully concealed. Venus posed coyly within its network of tiny wires, down which slipped hundreds of illuminated droplets of mineral oil: the goddess caught in a cloudburst, her tunic clinging to her curves. I thought it beautiful. Wondrous. Of course I wasn't to touch it; not because it was expensive — the truth — but because, Leila told me, I would urinate unceasingly if I got so much as a drop of oil on my hand. Terrified, I hovered before the lamp each vacation, drawn to its ornateness, its threat. And once, just once, I extended a pinkie into that classical rainstorm, my breathing shallow, my muscles clenched. I waited, a tiny dome of oil trembling on my fingertip, for my punishment. There was nothing, of course, but still I never dared it again. More than to touch it, I wanted to keep the lamp special, dangerous. I wanted to believe my grandmother's lie.

So when my mother asks, "Why do you go to see her?" I think of how Leila always says she loves me before I hang up the phone, before I drive away at visit's end. I think about the lamp, and I wonder that each time I make that five-hour trip with shreds of cane and cotton flying off the trucks ahead I am extending a finger to test the truth of my grandmother's words. I wonder, too, if I want to know it. Or whether I return, month after month, because I want to believe the powerful lie of her love.

In the spartan guest-room bed, listening to the sound of her sleep, I try to guess my grandmother's thoughts. I imagine her watching as I pull up to the gate and guide my car down the winding drive. The sourdough bread she baked is cooling. Potpourri is simmering on the stove and the bedsheets are fresh and tucked tightly under the mattress. Now she is ready for my arrival. Now she can rest. Yet watching through her eyes as I pull up to the trailer, I feel the imperfection of the moment. I see that the wrong grandchild has returned to her: the sad clown.

I was twenty-four when I learned that my grandfather had killed himself. He died when I was two, and I accepted his loss unquestioningly through my youth, like that of my baby teeth, or my playmates across the street who moved away. I never knew him. He was mentioned rarely, and then with a forced brightness I mistook for cheer.

But at twenty-four, on my parents' boat during a school vacation, I asked, "Dad, what did Juban die of?" My father stares into the water. My mother, behind him, is warning me with her hands. Finally, my father speaks. "He died of a hard time."

Juban was a carpenter. At twenty he wed his young love — a farmgirl of sixteen — and built a house for her in the town of Minden. He worked hard at construction and gave her first a boy child, then the finer things: a two-carat diamond ring, a mahogany bedroom set, a fancy oil lamp with Venus posing in a summer storm.

My father had married and moved away by the time the arthritis set in. Soon Juban couldn't make a fist, and Leila had to wedge forks between his fingers so he could feed himself. She took a job — her first — in the bakery at the Piggly Wiggly while Juban stayed home, eating Bufferin, running scalding water over his hands, trying again to curl his thumb around his hammer.

One morning Leila's phone rings at work: "Better come quick," a man says, and the line goes dead. She calls home: no answer. The voice on the phone was her husband's.

The mystery to me now is not my grandfather's suicide. He was a good man, a hard worker, shamed beyond bearing by his uselessness, by his failure to provide, by his hands' unthinkable betrayal. But the abyss stretching between my life and my grandmother's begins the morning she arrives home from work, having left a tray of unfilled eclairs on the counter. I wonder, as she steps from her car, if she replays her small cruelties in her head, resentment manifest in her staring too pointedly at his fingers, in giving him her shoulder in their bed. For there were certain expectations, I am sure. A horsehair settee, a Hummel or two, a second set of china whose pattern faded in her mind as Juban groaned more often in his sleep. I wonder because I still remember sprinting through that A&P parking lot, my greasepaint tears coming to life on my face. When I tired, at last, and let the car catch me, I faced my Leila tremblingly in the backseat. She cuffed me, as though in play, on the shoulder, but her eyes were aglint with her anger. "You dumb bunny, "she said.

The place was peopled with dwarves, knee-high ceramic characters who rolled on their backs or held their bellies in glee, who read upon a mushroom or bent to inspect a ladybug.

Small cruelties, yes. But all of this — every unloving word or glance, every preferential act, every gift presented my sister on the sly — all this falls away when I turn to that unimaginable morning. I can't begin to enter the mind of the woman who sheds her past life like a skin as she walks toward the rock garden behind her house. By now the neighbors are gathered, having heard the shot. A dark space yawns open in the yard. In it lies the next moment of my grandmother's life, the next day, the next year. All the years unformed, unconceived of in her head. I see her standing in the rock garden — the one, I know now, she and Juban spent weekends creating from the stones he unearthed at the construction sites. Great chunks of granite they heaved up onto his truck. I remember it rife with cacti, mother-in-law's tongue, bromeliads growing gorgeously from cracks in the rocks. The place was peopled with dwarves, knee-high ceramic characters who rolled on their backs or held their bellies in glee, who read upon a mushroom or bent to inspect a ladybug. This is the enchanted garden of my childhood. A very different place from the one my grandmother enters in my third year of life, confronting the hole of her future. She leans against a dwarf that hides its eyes, and it dawns on her that Juban chose the spot with care; she'll merely have to spray off the stones with the hose. She puts her hands to her mouth and tastes icing.

Now Leila lives in a rattletrap trailer surrounded by sturdy, useful objects, not the delicate ornaments, the graceful, spindly-legged furniture of her previous home. These treasures are in my father's basement now — in keeping, I was told in a sibling spat when I was ten, for my sister. Leila told her so.

This mattered to me then: the beautiful things, my sister's triumph. But in college I began to see more clearly, as my sister did when it became clear that she was the only one receiving monthly care packages: boxes brimming with bars of Camay, tubes of Crest, Secret stick deodorants (including one partially used by my grandmother before being tucked in the packing). Carefully my sister would count out equal portions and send me "my half." Soon, though, I began to scorn her gifts, and when Amanda insisted on sending them, I passed out soap and toothpaste to the girls on my hall — a Robin Hood of good hygiene, enemy of tooth decay.

I was six and banished to my room, awaiting my father's evening arrival; he was to deal me my punishment. I had taken off my clothes for the neighborhood boys. Twice. And I had twice been found out. The first time I was talked to; now I would be whipped. It was the worst spanking I would ever receive, and as evening approached I began to suspect this. Smaller infractions were met on the spot by my mother with a willow switch — I picked my own from the tree in the yard. But my father was the wielder of a leather belt that he cracked as he came down the hall, the man I waited for in my room, growing wild with the thought of oncoming pain as the hours inched by.

His van drew up to the house at sunset, and I watched from my window as he trudged up the walk. There was muttering from below — my mother sealing my fate. And footfalls — passing my door heavily, leading into the big bedroom down the hall. The next sound I heard was a crack, leather on leather, and in my head the brown loop of my father's lash doubled in size. He entered the room quietly, still in his suit, the belt draped loosely against his slacks. I was not fooled for a moment by his calm, kindly tone as he spoke of trust, some promise I'd made, how I'd brought more pain to him than he can possibly cause me. I was near blind with terror by the end of his speech. I knew from disobedience past that pleading wouldn't work, but there had to be a way I could stop the proceeding.

I dropped my pants, laid myself stiffly across his legs, and as he raised his arm, it came to me.

"Dad?" I queried, my voice high and desperate.

"Yes, Nicola." The arm lowered. He paused, perhaps to hear my apology, to hear me issue another promise, this time one I really *really* meant.

"If my nose starts to bleed, will you stop?"

Another pause. This was something he hadn't anticipated, and I felt a pinprick of hope. "Nicola, your nose is not going to bleed," he assured me.

"Oh," I said.

He raised the belt once more.

"Dad?"

Now he was exasperated. "Yes, Nicola."

"But if it does, will you stop?" It was a last-ditch effort, and this time I got the response I wanted.

"All right, Nicola," he growled, primed now for my punishment. "If your nose starts to bleed, I'll stop."

When he raised the belt again, the beating commenced. Though I smarted for days afterward, at the time I hardly felt it. I had balled my hands into fists and begun to pound myself in the face.

The point of the anecdote is merely a certain early perverseness, which extends, in my muddy thinking, to my dealings with my grandmother even now. In college I took my revenge by doling out freely the soap she meant for my sister — slipping bars like boxed chocolates up against dorm-room doors, leaving a fragrant, skin-softening offertory in each of the communal shower stalls. Now I grow trickier yet: I return to her, grow devoted and ever more familiar with her past and person. I return to take her plants out of the greenhouse in the spring, to do her Christmas shopping in the fall. I return to observe the small changes in and about the trailer: a water cooler installed next to the stove, above the sink a clock fashioned from a rolling pin, and two new dogs, Yorkies, who lunge at my face when I sit and fight me in the morning for my jeans.

I return to prove I'm unlike her — kinder, more generous. I return to show her she was wrong about me all along. But whatever the reason for my making another, and yet another trip up that narrow, rutted highway, it's clear to me that my life became entangled with hers from the first realization that I had somehow missed her love. I once asked my father, after a newly embellished retelling of my parents' first date, if he would have seen my mother again had they not crashed. His answer was a flat *no*. But in the course of that short fall to the riverbank, his future and my mother's were changed. And I see that my grandmother changed mine all those years ago with that slender grease paint brush — that in denying me affection, she drew me closer than her love ever could. And sometimes what comes to mind as I look about the trailer are the things that haven't changed. The walls display a dozen pictures of my sister. A blond, dimpled child grinning under a huge, floppy hat. A leggy teen with bad glasses posed gawkily before a waterfall. The graduate, one hand on her mortarboard as she hoists a bottle of champagne to her lips. And the bride, eyes dark and depthless as she gazes, not at the camera, but at a rose she lifts to her cheek. There are no pictures of me. And I wonder as we talk of family and Leila sighs and says once again of my sister, "she is just something special," if in returning to her month after month, year after year, I am simply compounding my grandmother's early hurt. Suddenly, I am reminded of that long-ago evening I spent across my father's knees, and I hear again his belt whistling through the air between blows. I received a double punishment that night — one delivered by my father and one I administered myself. He was right: my nose never bled.

Leila married again some ten years after Juban's death. She met her new husband, Vernon, in church. He courted her by inviting her along on fishing trips, teaching her to play Solitaire, letting her iron his shirts. Now, sitting over our steaming coffee, she tells me, "I knew it was a mistake the minute I said, 'I do.'" They are mortal enemies, she and Vernon. But he has an Army pension, and she cleans the trailer and tends the garden, so they stay together in separate rooms, not speaking.

Most visits she won't let me eat with him. "Let's wait," she says, "till that old goat goes to bed." She heats a can of Beanie Weenies in the microwave, peels a slice of Sunbeam from the loaf for him to sop up the oily orange sauce, and cuts a raw green onion. All this she drops on a dirty paper plate — the one he ate from the day before and the day before that. This is Leila's revenge for his complaint of her wastefulness: she is ever throwing "perfectly good" things away. After he has finished his meal and shambled back to his room, Leila wipes his warped orange plate with a paper towel and stores it under the sink. "Sometimes," she says, "I could just maul his head." I choke on my soda, and she interprets this as a rebuke. "I ask the Lord to forgive me when I say things like that," she says. "And I think he does."

Then she pulls our feast from the oven: eye of round, black-eyed peas, cole slaw, corn salad, and her made-from-scratch cornbread. Tomorrow, if she feels God is watching, she will give Vernon our leftovers. If God sleeps, they'll be fed to the dogs.

Vernon will read his Bible while I'm there, hunch over it all afternoon in his chair at the edge of the carport, smoking his pipe. Sometimes he'll shoot a squirrel out of the pear tree, or knock the fruit from the bowed branches to prevent them from breaking. Before the stroke, he'd have three scotch-and-waters before noon. Before the stroke, he'd be fishing. Now he's afraid to go out on the water alone.

Leila wouldn't let me visit after it happened. "It's too bad here," was all she'd say. Later, after his recovery, she told me how bad. Out of his head, he wouldn't sit still, and she followed him around the trailer, plucking plates and lamps from his hands before he would hurl them at the walls. I mention this month, which is sunken and flappy, like a punctured tire. "He kept throwing his durn dentures away," she says. "I dug them out of the trash a hundred times. Then I got tired and let them stay there. He's trying to get the Army to pay for new teeth."

As she speaks she fishes twelve white raisins from a jar full of gin and lines them up like a corps of cadets on the napkin before her. Then she eats them one by one. These are her miracle cure. Last year she couldn't walk twenty yards, couldn't quilt or lift a frying pan above her waist. She had physical therapy twice a week and cortisone shots in her joints, to no avail. Then a friend from church revealed the secret of the raisins — twelve

each morning, only the white kind, only gin — and now she moves easily, stooping to hide the jar behind the washer so Vernon won't drink the juice. "He found it once," Leila tells me, "and left the raisins high and dry. I didn't have to look to know it. He was nasty as a crow all day." I leave this last remark a mystery, for Vernon is sweet to me in his way, presenting me with gifts each visit: a rusty bottle opener for my keychain, the Old Salt's Book of Poetry (from which he recites a few bouncing couplets), a saltine-sized New Testament passed out in his Sunday school, a jug of antifreeze. I ask Leila whether his children ever visit. She flicks out her tongue and withdraws it, snake-quick. "They won't mess with that old fool," she says.

"Why not?" I ask.

She looks at me piercingly. "Well, he's had nine wives."

I choke, I cough, I wheeze to cover the incredulous laugh that has caught in my throat. "That can't possibly be true!" I exclaim at last.

"Well, you know he was in the Army," she says in a tone that means this explains everything. Then she backtracks, worried perhaps that she has gone too far. "Now don't tell anybody what I said," she warns me, "because I am ashamed of that."

This is how I know she has lied. But by now it doesn't matter: I am delighted, completely taken with her. Her guile has its benefits, and my constant surprise is one of these. Her deception is a flute song, and I am charmed. I will return and return again, if only to discover how she will change her story. Next time he could be a quintuplet, a Nazi war prisoner, a royalty dethroned. I want to be witness to all this incarnations. And to hers.

Her deception is a flute song, and I am charmed. I will return and return again, if only to discover how she will change her story.

Leila's father was the son of an Irish immigrant. He was fire-haired, small-boned, and feisty. He could tear you apart with his tongue. My father grins when he speaks of his Grandpa Selden: "He was the cock of the walk, lord and king, and he'd as soon spit as look at you."

Once, when my father was on leave from the Navy, Leila drove him to her parents' for Sunday supper. The whole family was gathered, as was the custom on Sundays — twenty-odd farm people milling around the yard along with sun-dark kids wearing blunt, sewing-scissor haircuts. Presiding over all was Selden, strutting from group to group, half the size of his sons but with twice their stature, back-slapping or rocking on his heels or raising a finger as though to test the air — all the while holding forth in his high, tinny voice.

When he reached my father he grew silent, eyeing him from loafers to crewcut, a twist of his lips signaling distaste. His gaze had fixed on my father's chin. Grown lazy on his leave, my father hadn't shaved. Selden puffed up like a blowfish, his temples pulsing, his shoulders growing sharp as he filled his chest with air. "See you've got some baby hair," he said, calmly fingering his own day's growth.

My father, full of brash, military confidence, accepted the challenge. "It'll take your skin off," he said.

In a trice the two faced off, digging their heels into the ground and shaking the kinks out of their arms. There was an instant of dead staring. Then they lunged, locking arms, and slapped their cheeks together and began to scrub furiously — chin against chin. The family looked on as the seconds drew out, the one sound the sandpaper rasp of whiskers at war. At last Selden flung himself from my father's grasp, his jaw the color of flame. "That's no beard, that's barbed wire!" he pronounced, stalking off to cool his face in a rainbarrel. My father grins madly when he recounts his triumph. He calls this the happiest day of his life.

In the evenings Leila and I tour the yard. It is cool then, and ducks have come up from the water to beg for the corn that rains from our pockets. Bald cypresses spear into the sky, made gauzy by mantillas of Spanish moss, and dense islets of water hyacinths pool at their feet as though a cloak had slipped from their shoulders. Hummingbirds brush by our shoulders. There are dozens of them, and a score of ruby feeders sway in the trees. In midsummer Leila will fill them every day, and as I draw close to the pepper tree, the soft, electric sound of their wings will come to my ear. The sun lowers over the lake. Leila clutches my arm as we walk so as not to stumble in the lessening light, and I am suddenly aware of her stiff walk, her dimming eyes, and my taut shoulder under the mottled crab of her hand. And I know that this too is part of it — the reason I return. That in some sense a contest is being waged, one whose stakes are the past. It is one I must feel I am winning, or I would not keep coming back. But it is not triumph I feel as we wander past the rock garden, transported stone by stone from the house in town years ago. It's a certain expectancy that holds me here now. And I think again of the lesson in my parents' first date: history changes with time. I think of my grandmother's dogs. I believe she truly loved them. And here lies possibility: if she can end a love, it follows that she can begin one. The expectancy that someday I will roll down that drive and the change that I see will be me. SE

Nicola Mason is assistant editor of The Southern Review *and has fiction forthcoming in* New Virginia Review.

Teenagers in Atlanta speak for themselves on their own television program.

A Show of One's Own

Illustration by Jennifer Miller

By Paula M. Welch

LaShannon White has a simple theory on why teenagers get into trouble. She says it's because adults don't listen, and teens don't get to voice their opinions.

This theory inspired her to create "It's Me," a half-hour teen-oriented TV talk show broadcast every other Saturday afternoon on Media One Cable 12 in Atlanta. Cable 12 is a public access station that allows citizens to create their own public affairs programs. Television was a natural medium for the project because it's the chief source of information for most people, she said.

White developed the idea for a show for and by young people after trying to work on another show. "I gave it all I had in me and was pushed aside. I was looked at as a young person who didn't know what she was doing," she said. She recognized a typical attitude. "Young people are always told what to do," said White. "I remember as a young person, no one ever asked what I thought about anything. I had an opinion, and no one wanted to hear it."

On "It's Me," the participants, including the guest speakers, are all young. In the year and half since the show began, it has become a platform for young people to express their opinions and ideas and talk about what's important to them. The young viewers see someone like themselves on the show rather than an adult who might talk down to them, said White's partner and co-producer, Rah Raheem Eligha Muhammid. "Nothing against Ricki Lake and nothing against Tempest, but they don't begin to touch the surface," said Muhammid.

As producers White, 25, and Muhammid, 29, said they're careful about how much they control the show. "We can relate to [the teens] because we grew up in the hip-hop era, but we want to be a mediator," said Muhammid. The show "is a forum for them to come together and come up with solutions."

The mentoring role seems to work. "I'm in this universe for young people," White said. "I get down on their level, and we talk about different things. Kids are in my office all the time."

"[Teens] talk to me and respect me because I respect them," said Muhammid.

Young people probably gravitate to the producers because these young adults can relate to many problems teens face. White's mother was a single parent who wasn't always able to give her the attention she wanted. "My mother struggled to raise me. I would play sick to get attention from her," she said. She thinks this was one reason she started hanging out with the wrong crowd and got into trouble as a teenager. She even wound up on juvenile probation.

With support from her godparents and mentors at a local organization, White was able to turn her life around. She now sees herself as a mentor to younger people. "Our elders should be more like advisors than dictators," she said. "I want to give [teens] what somebody gave me — and that is, a chance."

Not like Oprah

To appear on "It's Me," applicants fill out a questionnaire, write a short autobiography, and explain why they want to be involved and how they can contribute. This, said White, helps her see how they're thinking and what they can do.

Young people are involved in the production from start to finish, including selection of the show's topic. At Sunday planning meetings, which often evolve into group counseling sessions, said White, the group looks at "what's hot" in the mainstream press and how the issues affect young people. After choosing a topic, the teens do the research and find appropriate guests. They produce and write segments for the program and even operate the cameras.

Although the show is often taped in the studio, White said the producers like to shoot on location. One show was taped in a park, and the group had a picnic. In addition to serious discussions, the show often features live music.

Guests and participants talk about issues in an open, "roundtable" format that allows for free discussion, White said, "not like on 'Oprah.'" In the opening segment, the guest speaker and the dozen or so teens who regularly appear on the show discuss positive aspects of the issue at hand and possible solutions to problems. In the second segment, the guests, usually specialists in some aspect of the issue, expand on their experiences. The last segment is a question-and-answer session.

A recent show focused on gangs. Community leaders working to end gang violence appeared on the show and talked about gang life and the often violent consequences of being involved. The show ended up focusing on how young people can lead more positive lives by finding alternatives to gangs. Such a format helps young viewers understand that, "It's not where you came from, but what you're doing now" that counts, said White.

The emphasis on helping teens find their own positive alternatives to their problems is what drives "It's Me." "We're not always able to solve the problems, but we do talk about alternatives," said White. And the producers can help. "If there is a communication breakdown with youth and parents, we can put them in touch with an agency that can help them."

Troublemakers or class clowns

The teens on "It's Me" come from the Atlanta area and are mostly from low-income families, said White. The producers especially encourage participation from teens who are labeled troublemakers or class clowns or are victims of abuse. Many of these adolescents are told that they aren't doing anything with their lives and will never amount to anything, White said. She thinks they just need to be heard and understood.

White noticed a remarkable change in one young boy as a result of his involvement with the show. Delante, 13, lives in an Atlanta housing project. He was one of White's students at the New Horizons Development Center where she teaches. She said that she had promised to be in his life always. She lost contact with him, however, when he was suspended from school. When she and Muhammid found him at his home, they encouraged him to join the show.

White described Delante as an intelligent child but not a vocal one. Through his involvement with "It's Me," he learned to voice the opinions that had been there all along, said White, and he cultivated greater self-esteem. White and Muhammid said Delante "changed his life and way of thinking." He returned to school, and his grades improved in a few weeks.

In addition to giving teenagers a forum for discussing issues and gaining self-esteem, "It's Me" also introduces the participants to the world of broadcasting and opens possible career avenues. Participants have gone on to explore videography, acting, and musical careers. Kawanna Eddins has worked on the show for two years, and has become a communications major at Morris Brown College in Atlanta. "It's Me" has "helped me to focus," she said. White also has a degree in communications from Morris Brown.

Although the show airs only in Atlanta, White said she hopes it will be syndicated nationally and abroad. Her production company, Sister Friend Productions, also handles advertising and promotions and provides counseling and speaking classes. White and Muhammid spend much of their personal time and money to produce the show, and equipment is limited, they said. As the show evolves, they are seeking additional funding.

While the producers of "It's Me" take pride in providing a forum for young people to address troubles in their lives, they said teens should take it upon themselves to strive to be their personal best. "They have to begin to believe in themselves, and there has to be someone who would make an impact [on their lives]," said White. "I have to make an impact, or I've failed." SE

Paula M. Welch is the Southern Regional Press Officer of the environmental organization Greenpeace. She is based in Atlanta.

TOOLBOX

One or more channels on every local cable system is reserved for non-commercial use by individuals and nonprofit groups. Any individual can take advantage of the opportunity to produce a cable access program. All of these channels, along with production equipment and training, are available at low cost or for free.

Most local cable access stations provide training for individuals interested in producing a television program, but different stations have different requirements. Call your local access station for more information.

"It's Me" Teen Talk Show
1444 Lucile Ave
Atlanta, Georgia 30310

For listings in your area:

Community Media Resource Directory 1994: A Comprehensive Guide to Community Media Centers in the United States
A publication of the Alliance for Community Media.
666 11th Street NW, Suite 806
Washington, DC 20001-4113
202-393-2650 (phone)
202-393-2653 (fax)
E-mail: AllianceCM@aol.com

$40 for members of The Alliance for Community Media

$60 for non-members

Asylum

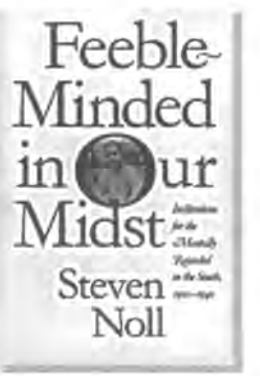
Reluctance to spend money on social programs in the South goes way back.

MOONLIGHT, MAGNOLIAS, AND MADNESS: Insanity in South Carolina from the Colonial Period to the Progressive Era.

By Peter McCandless
University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
$19.95 paper.

FEEBLE-MINDED IN OUR MIDST: Institutions for the Mentally Retarded in the South, 1900-1940.

By Steven Noll
University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
$16.95 paper.



By Sandra Barney

From Southern food and music through race relations and labor conditions to politics, writers continue to find significant differences between the South and other sections of the United States. Two recently published books from the University of North Carolina Press convincingly argue that not only has there been a unique Southern perspective in medical practices, but that there also are historically rooted Southern attitudes and practices in the mental health field. Taken together, *Moonlight, Magnolias, and Madness* and *Feeble-Minded in Our Midst* describe nearly 200 years of struggle to relieve and manage the conditions of mentally impaired residents of the South.

A professor of history at the College of Charleston, McCandless chronicles the efforts to provide for the mentally deranged in South Carolina from its days as an English colony through the 19th century. As he eloquently and carefully demonstrates, the insane — a term defined broadly to include anyone unable to fulfill his or her social responsibilities due to mental breakdown or disassociation — have always created challenges for their families and communities.

From the beginning, South Carolina's government was reluctant to provide direct assistance to demented citizens; rather, the responsibility traditionally was borne by local governments. By the early 19th century, however, reformers, following the lead of Northern physicians such as Benjamin Rush, sought to shift the burden of providing aid from the home and local community to the state. Unable to freely pursue humane therapies aimed at curing the insane, asylum physicians were forced to rely on harsh restraints and powerful sedatives to control patients. These circumstances turned the institution into a custodial facility and propagated an image of brutality and violence for the asylum.

The extent of the reformers' influence was demonstrated in 1828 when the South Carolina Lunatic Asylum opened to both paying patients and paupers. However, South Carolinians quickly discovered that a public institution to care for the insane did not guarantee resolution to social problems associated with mental illness. And medical practitioners, striving to apply modern ideals of psychiatric care, clashed with politicians unwilling to spend money and with reformers, patients, and hospital staff who advanced their own competing interests.

While McCandless studies the fate of those labeled mentally deranged, Steven Noll chronicles the experiences of Southern states attempting to respond to the needs of people deemed mentally deficient. By the end of the 19th century, though there were residences for the insane throughout the South, few Southern states had established homes for those who are today labeled mentally retarded. Noll describes the movement to build such facilities and the evolution of those institutions across the South in the early 20th century.

At the heart of the campaign to construct facilities for the feeble-minded was concern about danger from the mentally incompetent. Many reformers also believed that the severely mentally infirmed had to be protected from the dangers of a rapidly urbanizing and industrializing society. More conservative advocates of institutionalization insisted that caring for the feeble-minded in private homes in local communities imposed economic and social burdens that held the South back in its drive to compete for lucrative industrial projects. Comparing the mentally incompetent to the boll weevil, political elites labeled the retarded as deviant and burdensome and joined reformers in promoting the construction of institutions to remove them from broader society.

To guide their efforts, Southern mental health activists looked to the North for direction. By the early 20th century, phy-

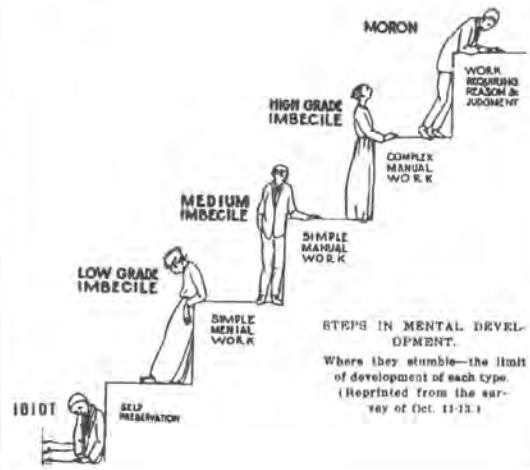
sicians and social scientists began to classify the mentally handicapped according to their intellectual and social abilities. These standards, which formed the basis of the contemporary system of classification, identified the profoundly retarded as exceptionally vulnerable members of society, but suggested that the more highly functioning were potential dangers to the general population. Reliance upon Northern experience stands as a critical element of Noll's story. Just as South Carolina physicians and asylum promoters had gone to Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland in the 1820s to seek guidance in the construction and management of their new asylum, so, too, in the 1900s did Southern proponents of mental health reform recognize the advances of Northern activists in this field and look to them for a model. But Northern models did not fit easily in the South.

In the opinions of both McCandless and Noll, racism stood as a major impediment to implementation of therapies. While few African Americans were allowed to seek care in the South Carolina Lunatic Asylum in the 19th century, blacks were never extended the same treatments that were provided white inmates, nor did they receive adequate provisions, clothing, or shelter.

Opportunities for African Americans seeking psychiatric care improved briefly during the Reconstruction era, when South Carolina's asylum was forced to open its doors to African Americans. McCandless shows, however, that blacks continued to suffer mistreatment and were frequently denied basic food and shelter. They never received the same level of medical or psychiatric care as white inmates.

In his discussion of the feeble-minded, Noll, too, finds that Southern reformers failed to adequately serve blacks. Overlooking the social and environmental reasons for the low scores African Americans earned on newly implemented intelligence tests, Southern reformers fell back on the argument that heredity determined intelligence. By asserting that African Americans were by nature mentally inferior, white reformers could justify excluding them from services for the mentally handicapped. Some Southern states constructed separate facilities for African Americans, but during the Great Depression services for blacks were curtailed or eliminated.

The categories of feeble-mindedness as shown in a 1915 report on "mental defectives" presented to the Virginia legislature. (from *Feeble-Minded in our Midst*)



Northern mental health reform was incompatible with Southern experience for other reasons, too. Local Southern governments did not adequately support state institutions for the mentally impaired. McCandless points out that South Carolina, which enjoyed relative economic security in the early 19th century, still hesitated to raise taxes to pay for the care of the insane. Until 1871, many county courts chose to board deranged paupers or to send them to the county poorhouse rather than to provide the relatively expensive care at the state lunatic asylum. As long as county governments paid for the care of the mentally impaired, lawmakers often made decisions based on economic circumstances alone.

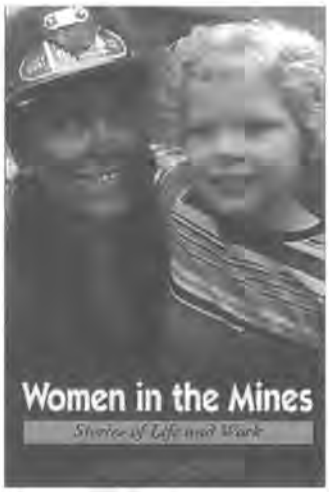
By the early 20th century, the impoverishment of local governments forced state governments across the South to accept responsibility for caring for mentally impaired citizens. Despite racism and the region's poverty, Southern governments and institutional agents planned innovative therapies gaining legitimacy in the North. But devastating poverty suffered by the region after the Civil War discouraged legislatures from authorizing adequate appropriations for mental health facilities.

Increasing industrialization in the South also impacted the mentally deranged and incompetent. Advocates of institutionalization for the insane and feeble-minded struggled to reconcile traditional rural life with the rise of urbanization and industrialization in the South of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Families that had previously possessed economic and social networks enabling them to care for their dependent members found themselves unable to do so when they moved into textile villages or new urban centers. Many Southerners, unable to enter the industrial mainstream, were labeled insane or incompetent. Reformers sought therapies that would enable patients to adapt to the quickly changing social and economic order.

Financial constraints compounded the problem. As in earlier centuries, advocates of innovative mental health care fought for adequate funding for their institutions and therapeutic practices. Southern state legislatures, now enmeshed in investments for industrial modernization, authorized only minimal funding, and chose to develop economic capital at the expense of human capital.

McCandless and Noll together deliver important new information about the experiences of some of the South's most vulnerable citizens. Their research is thorough, their arguments clear and compelling, and their writing thoughtful and engaging. These books remind us that the South's incompatibility with the rest of the nation has had extensive consequences for many of the region's residents.

Sandra Barney teaches at Lock Haven University. Her book on women and health care in Appalachia is forthcoming from University of North Carolina Press.



Women in the Mines: Stories of Life and Work.

By Marat Moore.
Twayne Publishers, 1996. $32.95. hardback.

Even though the first woman miner wasn't "officially" hired in the United States until 1973, women had worked underground — literally and symbolically — for decades as undocumented laborers. "Women have always, in a sense, labored underground, beneath the surface of the world of men, providing fuel for the continuance of life," writes Marat Moore, a former miner in West Virginia. In this compelling collection of oral histories spanning eight decades, two dozen women from Arizona to Pennsylvania share their experiences as coal miners.

On the heels of the civil rights and women's movements, affirmative action mandates opened lucrative mining jobs to women in the early 1970s — but the mandates didn't shield the women from discrimination, harassment, and isolation as they entered a historically male-dominated arena. Women miners became activists in the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and fought against cultural and social taboos for increased health and safety regulations and benefits for all mine workers.

The women's stories are complemented by a historical introduction, appendices, and photographs. An award-winning writer and former editor of the *United Mine Workers Journal*, Moore recently won a landmark sex discrimination case against UMWA.

— Leslie Waugh

One Blood: The Death and Resurrection of Charles R. Drew

By Spencie Love.
University of North Carolina Press, 1996. $29.95 paper.

Many scholars know the story of Charles Drew, an African-American scientist who pioneered the use of blood plasma and bled to death in 1950 because he was denied a transfusion at a segregated North Carolina hospital.

The story is not true.

White surgeons at the segregated Alamance General Hospital tried hard to save Drew, but his injuries defied treatment. The legend that Drew died at the hands of white supremacists began almost immediately, however, as Spencie Love explains in *One Blood*. Half a century later, the story continues to resonate. Yet in *One Blood*, Love does far more than debunk the myth of Drew's death: she skillfully dissects the layers of this legend to reveal the larger body of truth that gave it life. In language that is unswervingly clear, engaging, and frequently eloquent, *One Blood* tells a story, plain and profound, that will fascinate readers interested in African-American history, the South, folklore, and oral history.

The extraordinary life of Charles Drew goes far toward explaining the enduring myth of his death. Born among the black elite in Washington, D.C., Drew showed immense athletic and scholarly promise at Paul Laurence Dunbar High School. At Amherst College, Drew excelled at football and track and later became athletic director at Morgan, an all-black college in Baltimore. After attending McGill Medical School in Montreal, he taught medicine at Howard University from 1935 to 1938. At Columbia University in 1940, Drew became the first African American to receive a doctorate of science in medicine.

Drew's dissertation on banked blood helped him to set up the American Red Cross' first blood bank in 1941, which became the model for blood collection programs during World War II. The wartime controversy surrounding the Red Cross' decision to segregate plasma by race underlined the irony of Drew's role in blood-banking research. It also first vaulted Drew into the realm of historical mythology, as he became for black Americans the lone pioneer of plasma, even though he was actually one among many scientists who advanced the technology.

In 1950, trying to drive all night across the Jim Crow South — hotel accommodations for black citizens were few — Drew fell asleep at the wheel and died in an accident. Given his status and the role that segregation played in his life and death, it is not surprising that African Americans easily believed that the plasma pioneer had bled to death along the knife edge of the color line.

Though *One Blood* establishes that many of the legends surrounding Drew's life and death are not true, this fine book reveals grim and compelling truths about the racial realities of American history. Most importantly, Love demonstrates that folklore holds insights that often illuminate but also dwarf the facts of history. Love builds on a body of scholarship that explores the larger role of stories in sustaining cultures, especially in Southern and African-American cultures. Black Americans have used stories, Love explains, not only to preserve their history and beliefs but also to instruct the young in the ways of the world and to ensure their survival.

One Blood has limits, particularly in its scope. Some readers may admire it for its discipline, while others may find the work too narrow. The brief sections on racial politics during World War II overlook the degree to which the war years launched the civil rights movement; hence, the book tends to neglect the black activism in which Drew's life and death were imbedded.

But the impressive vistas that Love opens with her absorbing stories swallow any shortcomings. Extremely thorough without being ponderous, *One Blood* stands as a model for those who seek to use human stories to reveal historical truths.

— Tim Tyson

Will the real West Virginian please stand up?

Mountaineer Circles

Video/Discussion Program
John Nakashima, Jennifer Nelson, Billy Joe Peyton — Writers/ Content Advisors
West Virginia Northern Public Broadcasting (WNPB)

"To many people living outside its borders, West Virginia is perceived as being a strange land inhabited by peculiar people. American popular culture does not put a high priority on characteristics that are alive and well here." So says Billy Joe Peyton, Mountaineer Circles advisor and sixth generation West Virginian. Conceived as the video equivalent of a book discussion group, Mountaineer Circles provide a forum where West Virginians can meet to watch videos and talk about West Virginia — its people, identity, and culture.

Three documentary programs are in the video kit, which includes a complete guide to organizing a Circle and establishing ground rules for viewing and discussion. Musicians, writers, poets, sociologists, activisits, and others interviewed for the videos cover a wide range of topics in the three programs "Mountaineer," "Farmer," and "Gilligan's Appalachia." They raise issues from hillbilly stereotypes and Appalachian icons in popular culture to family farming, economics, and the state's relationship to the rest of the nation. Some sample questions: How is the experience of being a West Virginian unique? Are there parts of West Virginia you avoid because of the people that live there? What threatens the West Virginian way of life?

More than just social gatherings, the Circles and the videos are tools for raising awareness about West Virginia's history and its potential for future development. The producers think these organized discussions can help focus the long-term agenda of the state and its people. "Small groups of West Virginians can make a difference in our state," says WNPB producer John Nakashima, a self-described "West Virginian by choice." The Circles also encourage participants to confront the state's problems while celebrating its beauty and traditions. Says Nakashima, "There are no easy answers, but understanding, tolerance, and planning couldn't hurt."

For information on organizing or joining a Circle, call 800-227-9672 or 304-293-6511.

— Leslie Waugh

Home Schooling

Some parents in the South don't worry about the quality of public schools.

By Mary Lee Kerr

From the Civil War to battles against desegregation, the South has held to a fierce independence regarding government institutions. The growing movement to take students out of schools and imprint them with family values and learning priorities attracts both the left and the right side of the pedagogical spectrum.

"We wanted to teach our children moral values along with everything else," says Susan Van Dyke of North Carolinians for Home Education in Raleigh. "We wanted a Christian influence and more control over our family life," she says. Religion is an important reason many Southern parents home school their children. Polls show that the majority of families who home school come from fundamentalist or evangelical religious backgrounds. Even the names of the state associations for home schoolers show a religious purpose. Among them are the Christian Home Education Fellowship of Alabama, Arkansas Christian Home Education Association, and Christian Home Educators Fellowship in Louisiana.

"More people probably do it for religious reasons; they want their children to be just like them," says Lucinda Flodin, a Tennessee mother who was not welcome in a local home schooling group because she didn't share the members' religious views. "We believe in religious freedom and want our kids to know a diverse group of people, so we formed our own group."

Flodin and 25 other families meet to do geography projects, international feasts, sports, and more. She says she tailors material to fit her two teenaged sons' individual learning styles and to make sure the boys learn about issues of race and class. "We teach them that as white males they are privileged," she says.

HOME SCHOOLING LAWS IN THE SOUTH

State	Have home school laws or regulations	Require parents to have high school diploma or GED, or other qualifications	Require standardized testing or evaluations of students
Alabama			
Arkansas	✓		✓
Florida	✓		✓
Georgia	✓	✓	✓
Kentucky			
Louisiana	✓		✓
Mississippi	✓		
N. Carolina	✓	✓	✓
S. Carolina	✓	✓	✓
Tennessee	✓	✓	✓
Texas			
Virginia	✓		✓
W. Virginia	✓	✓ (parents must stay 4 years ahead of student)	✓

Source: Christopher J. Klicka, Home Schooling in the United States: A Legal Analysis, *Home School Legal Defense Fund Association, 1994.*

With about a million home schoolers spread across the country, home schooling is by no means just a Southern trend, but home educators like Van Dyke and Flodin are growing in numbers across the South. Texas ranks highest in the nation among home schooling states — over 90,000 or 11.3 percent home-educated students live in the Lone Star state. Florida and Georgia also rank among the top ten, with 4.4 and 4.3 percent of all home schoolers, respectively.

In all 50 states home schooling is legal, but there's much debate over the costs and benefits. Critics say home-schooled children aren't socialized well enough, their parents aren't adequately trained, and some children end up being ignored or abused. Child welfare advocates in Louisiana found that some children were left unattended by adults in home schooling situations or exposed to cult-like situations.

Proponents say those are rare and extreme cases, however. "Home schoolers go out of their way to provide their children with social experiences," says Christena Hansen, spokeswoman for the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) in Virginia. "They also avoid drugs and violence in the schools, get one-on-one attention, and don't waste time — they do very well on standardized tests."

These positives are pushing home schooling up 15-25 percent per year, according to the HSLDA. Through its persistent support for home schoolers facing legal battles, the HSLDA has helped relax home school laws. In Tennessee, where Flodin lives, the group helped ease rules so that a college degree is no longer necessary for parents to qualify to teach home schooling; a high school diploma will do. While most states require standardized testing or evaluations of home school students, several, including Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Texas do not, according to the HSLDA.

A lot of the success of home schooling depends on the parents. Flodin says she learns as much as her sons from the home school experience. "It's worth the time and energy," she says. "They help keep our minds alive; we try to see the educational value in everything we do." SE

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A special issue of **SOUTHERN EXPOSURE**

"SHUT UP & SHUT DOWN"

• • • December 1996 • • •

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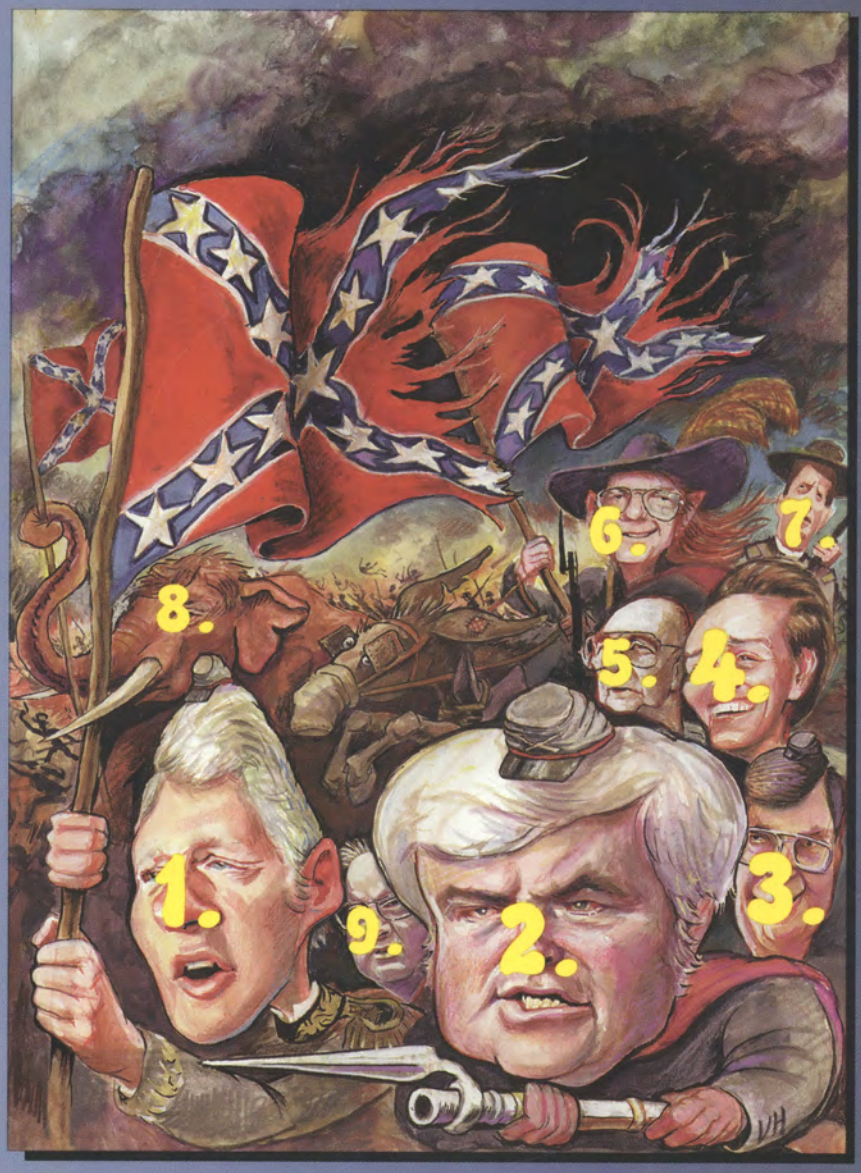
Who are they?



1. **Bill Clinton**
   Hope, Arkansas
   President (Dem.)

2. **Newt Gingrich**
   Marietta, Georgia
   (born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania)
   Speaker of the House (Rep.)

3. **Trent Lott**
   Pascagoula, Mississippi
   Senate Majority Leader (Rep.)

4. **Ralph Reed**
   Portsmouth, Virginia
   The Christian Coalition

5. **Strom Thurmond**
   Edgefield, South Carolina
   Senator, South Carolina (Rep.)

6. **Donald Fowler**
   Spartanburg, South Carolina
   National Chairman
   Democratic National
   Committee

7. **Al Gore**
   Carthage, Tennessee
   Vice President (Dem.)

8. **Haley Barbour**
   Yazoo City, Mississippi
   Chair, Republican National
   Committee

9. **Jesse Helms**
   Monroe, North Carolina
   Senator, North Carolina (Rep.)

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