

The Importance of the Fight for the South--and Why It Can and Must be Won

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This essay was written in March 2015 with the support of New Virginia Majority and New Florida Majority but not published until August 2017. The far rightwing's capture of the presidency in 2016 underscores this essay's main arguments about the importance of the fight for the South. Hard as that fight is and will be, downplaying the Southern struggle is a losing political strategy and forfeits the moral high ground on the biggest issues facing the country.

The importance of the fight for the South is a matter of considerable controversy. Whatever the rhetoric it's safe to say that most progressives outside of the South have put little time, energy or money into this struggle since the height of the southern Civil Rights movement. Many have outright given up on the South, considering it either a reactionary lost cause or simply unwinnable.

We beg to disagree, and in this essay will make the case that failure to the fight for the South downplays the centrality of the Black struggle in U.S. politics, strategically surrenders the upper hand to the far right and the Republican Party and cripples the fight against poverty. The South is a dynamically changing region and the fight for it is absolutely crucial to defeating the far right and winning a progressive future.

Specifically, as regards movement building, we argue:

(1) Defeating the right and building a strong progressive movement in this country needs the leadership, experience and energy of African Americans, a growing majority of whom who live in the South.

(2) Targeting the Southern racist rightwing in its own backyard, on issues of race, poverty, militarism, climate change and democracy, is a crucial part of a broad movement to defeat the right nationally in public opinion, on policy and in elections. To fail to do is a losing political strategy and forfeits the moral high ground on the biggest issues in the country. Organizing the South is also vital to building the progressive movement and an independent progressive wing inside and outside of the Democratic Party that is key to defeating the far right and corporate power. Defeating the far right and winning a jobs, peace, justice and sustainability agenda will be difficult if not impossible if the South is left to Republicans (or rightwing Democrats).

Electoral action to win political power in the South is a strategic, not an optional, component of any strategy to defeat the right. As regards to elections and political power, we argue:

(1) A critical mass of Southern states can and must be won if we are to block or defeat the right in presidential elections. Three of the five or so critical battleground states are in the South: Florida, Virginia and North Carolina. Southern blue and battleground states plus Washington D.C. hold 38 percent of the electoral votes needed to win.

(2) Winning an anti-rightwing congressional majority depends on winning in the South, as the South has a bigger congressional delegation than any other region and Southern congresspersons also hold key leadership posts within the Republican Party's congressional hierarchies.

(3) There are tremendous opportunities to build progressive political power and governance at the local level in the South as 105 counties have a Black majority. (Only one county outside of the South has a Black majority.)

All of these points will sharpen in the coming decades, as the South is projected to continue to experience greater population gains as compared to the rest of the country. That population gain is rooted in the ongoing transformation of the Southern economy which is driven by changes in the global economy. Well

aware of this, the far right has launched a withering campaign of voter suppression, racist gerrymandering and straight anti-democratic legislative maneuvers to combat it. The South is becoming ever more important economically and politically, not less.

While some might dismiss the South, focusing strategically on the Northeast and Pacific Coast as central to a progressive program and the Midwest as the main political battleground, the South's dynamic growth, historical legacy of Black struggle and powerful political weight make it a critical battlefield.

The nuance is that the South cannot be won as a bloc, but only state by state and county by county. In fact, winning the South in large part means understanding that it is not a monolithic entity and winning it piece by piece: i.e. politically deconstructing the South.

I. Background and Dynamics

What is the South?

Defining any region of the country is always a bit arbitrary, as regions are defined by history that is constantly changing and always involves complex intersections.

At first blush one might define the South as the former Confederacy. With the outbreak of the Civil War, a bloody line in the sand was drawn between the Confederacy and the Union. It is often forgotten that Texas and Florida were part of the original core of hard-line secession states along with South Carolina, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama. When Lincoln called for the armed recapture of Fort Sumter, Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina joined the Confederacy.

However, a number of slave states and territories did not join the Confederacy: Washington D.C., Delaware, Maryland, Missouri and Kentucky. West Virginia split from Virginia in opposition to secession.

A lot of water has passed under the bridge since the Civil War, and the South has been transformed in important ways. Gone are some of the most powerful hallmarks of the South, especially slavery, the plantation economy, sharecropping, whites-only voting and Jim Crow. All this makes defining the South even more difficult.

Today the U.S. Census defines the South as the eleven states of the former Confederacy plus the former border states of Delaware, Kentucky, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Washington D.C.

This essay will adopt that definition but excludes Delaware since it never had many slaves, never had a significant plantation economy, never seriously considered seceding, never formally adopted Jim Crow and never had a significant Black population. Since the U.S. census is the primary source of data there may be times when our data sets include Delaware.

Against Stereotyping: Variation and Transformation of the South

The South has always been extremely diverse internally, with areas dominated by plantations and slavery or sharecropping (often called the Tidewater, the low country, the Delta or Black Belt), areas dominated by white small farmers (often including small scale slavery and sharecropping, sometimes called the Piedmont) and areas dominated by very poor white folk (often called the mountains, or Appalachia). Belatedly a number of fairly large and medium size cities came into being, mostly in the Piedmont areas though including a few port cities. And in the last forty years different parts of the South, especially the emerging large cities and the Sun Belt, attract significant migration from outside the South, including immigrants.

Long term transformations of the South began slowly following the Civil War. Industrialization began to supplant the plantation turned sharecropper economy and a modern transportation infrastructure was built on rails. The so-called New South of industrial towns like Atlanta, Birmingham and Durham, mostly post-Civil War in origin and located outside the prime plantation areas, exploded into centers of steel, tobacco and textile manufacturing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Mechanization of agriculture displaced hundreds of thousands of sharecroppers and small farmers. The historic Black Migration to the North starting in 1915 was a response to the push-pull factors of displacement off the land, and the lure of jobs and relative freedom in the industrial economies outside of the South.

The explosive growth of the military industrial complex gave new energy to the Southern transformation in the mid and late 20th centuries. The South is home to approximately 41 percent of U.S. military installations and numerous military-related institutions which extended the already strong Southern militarist traditions.

In the old industrial heartland of America, the 1970s and 1980s marked the era of deindustrialization in which thousands of Northern factories were shuttered and fled off shore and to the non-unionized South. Tourism and a steady stream of retirees moving to better weather have contributed to rapid growth of Southern and Southwestern cities.

Cities such as Miami, Houston and Dallas-Ft. Worth, have been collectively dubbed the “Sun Belt.” Additionally, finance fled the expensive Northern cities and suddenly Charlotte, NC flourished as the second biggest financial center in the country, trailing only New York City.

In the 1950s, long before Silicon Valley, Durham, Chapel Hill and Raleigh, leveraged the University of North Carolina, Duke University and North Carolina State to create the high-tech Research Triangle Park, anchored by IBM. Since then the “New Economy,” “Information Revolution” or “Knowledge Economy” has filtered throughout the South with growing strength.

Each state is a different combination of these elements. The toxic mix of slavery, secession, sharecropping, white dictatorship and Jim Crow welded the South into the country’s most politically and economically identifiable region, but now the main trend is diversification. Despite these growing economic and social differences, the legacy of slavery, secession and Jim Crow—racism, conservative Christianity, anti-government sentiment and conservatism on all rights issues—continue to combine to create a rightwing white majority that reinforces Southern particularity, even as the economic and social basis for that uniqueness is undermined.

However, these various transformations have been extremely uneven. The South today is a study in economic and political contrasts. Overall, the region remains the poorest in the country with nine of the twelve poorest states. But Virginia and Maryland rank in the top five richest states in the country. The region has a growing majority of African Americans in the country, but Kentucky has but few while Blacks are about 35 percent of the population of Mississippi.

Today it might be helpful to view the South as consisting of three archetypal (and interpenetrating) political/economic/demographic subregions plus two unique states.

One subregion--consisting of Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and South Carolina--is marked by high percentages of Black people (approximately 25-35 percent) and relatively backward economies. This is what has historically been known as the Deep South, minus Georgia.

A second subregion, consisting of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia, is marked by significant Black populations (approximately 20-25 percent) but also by strong industry, finance, new economic development (high tech) and strong economic and demographic growth, including immigrants. Tennessee and Arkansas are split between their poor white Appalachian regions and their heavily Black areas on the Mississippi River, and seem to be moving in this direction, though with somewhat smaller Black populations (17% and 15%).

Next there are the overwhelmingly white and very poor states of Kentucky and West Virginia. Oklahoma is similar but is not part of Appalachia and is quickly changing. Black and Latino populations are growing and it has always had a large Native American population.

Florida and Texas have become unique states due to their strong roles in the international and national economies, their extreme internal diversity demographically and economically, and their large populations.

The similarities and differences across the region point to the strategic challenges and opportunities it poses to progressives both inside and outside the South.

Political Drivers, Political Trends

The destruction of the historic Southern plantation economy along with its white dictatorship and Jim Crow racism has, ironically, given rise to two contradictory political motions.

No longer a political or social outlier, corporate neo-liberals rather than plantation owners now dominate most of Southern politics. In fact, they have encouraged and taken advantage of the longstanding far rightwing Southern populist movement to drive a powerful nationwide rightward motion since 1980. That far right is now mounting a serious challenge to the rightwing capitalists for power in the Republican Party.

While the South has become the center of the racist, militarist right wing that threatens to dominate the country, this “nationalization,” together with the powerful African American presence in the region that has produced many of the glorious progressive traditions of the country, gives rise to openings for Democrats and progressives if they choose to seize the moment.

It is this high stake political polarization that, above all, makes the struggle for the South so crucial.

The main business wing of the Southern Republican coalition is not just corporate, but the extreme rightwing of corporate forces in the U.S.: big oil and energy, military, low end retail, big Pharma and Southern-based banks.

They are powerfully flanked by regional, state and local elites, usually more rooted in backward white Southern traditions, like real estate developers, big car dealers, low-wage construction, regional and local capitalists, conservative law firms, the criminal justice complex, white fundamentalist churches and small businesses—the state and local chambers of commerce and Christian coalitions.

These forces are joined to an often extreme rightwing populist/white supremacist base of affluent white suburban right wingers, tax revolters, gun enthusiasts and reactionary white workers and straight up white supremacists around an ideology of exclusionary blood and soil white nationalism, small government, and jingoistic military adventurism abroad.

In the face of this formidable Republican/rightwing coalition, more moderate and progressive forces are developing at different rates in different states. The Solid South is Solid no more and although the Republicans still win most Southern states, the Democratic presidential vote in the South has been rising over the past couple of decades.

The potential to defeat the Republicans in the South starts with the powerful African American community (and Latino community in Texas and elsewhere) and extends to the wider multiracial civil rights coalition of liberal churches, trial lawyers, progressive educators and students, unions and other liberal professionals.

It is being buttressed by new forces arising from the nationalization of the Southern economy and society, a process which includes urbanization, large scale national and international migration, the growth of the health industry, public education and government, tourism and retirement communities.

There are high political stakes underlying the South’s resistance to health care expansion, growth of government and public education, as workers in these sectors tend to be relatively liberal and unionized. There are important and growing immigrant rights, women’s and LGBTQ movements in the South.

Southern cities are growing rapidly in size and becoming bluer. As in the North, some older suburbs are becoming multi-cultural battlegrounds rather than exclusionary white enclaves that are economically and politically detached from the inner city. In fact, a number of suburban areas have reincorporated to the city in places like Jacksonville, FL (the largest city in the South) and Memphis. As demonstrated most vividly in the Moral Monday/Forward Together movement in North Carolina, African Americans continue to hold the potential to lead another major transformation, a Third Reconstruction.

Neither party seriously represents the economic interests of white small farmers or poor whites, a potentially volatile sector, especially as their economic positions inevitably become more unstable. Many tend to fall back on backwards racist and sexist traditions and/or in behind the rightwing corporate forces. However, they also have progressive traditions to build on, from the New Deal to worker and union militancy, to the Populist movement to civil rights.

Climate change is also a huge issue in the South, which is projected to suffer much greater economic and social harm than the more moderate weather regions of the country and which has a history of environmental irresponsibility.

Each state is different, but something like this process has already broken up the Solid South.

Washington, D.C. long ago became a majority African American city and a progressive Democratic bastion. Maryland became a battleground state in 1960 and has proceeded to become a solid Blue state. Formerly Florida voted like a classic Southern state since its founding. However, as its economy diversified and its population exploded it moved to the center and since 1992 has been a classic battleground state with the country's fourth highest electoral vote count. Virginia and North Carolina became battleground states in 2008.

Together the outcome of the battleground elections in Florida, Virginia and North Carolina could determine the presidency. Georgia will likely be the next state to become purple. Together with Maryland and Washington D.C., these Southern states alone have 84 electoral votes, more than 31 percent of the 270 electoral votes needed to win the presidency.

The potential of Mississippi lies in the fact that African Americans constitute almost forty percent of the electorate. And down the road a bit is Texas, which could well be a national game changer given its huge size and large people of color vote.

II: Point by Point: Why the Battle for the South is Crucial and Can Be Won

1. The South is the most concentrated expression of both anti-racist and anti-poverty struggles.

The South is the historic home of the worst racism in the country. It is where the majority of African Americans reside and a destination for new migrants from around the country and the world. The South is also where poverty rates are the highest and income polarization is sharp.

A growing majority of African Americans live in the South where they have spearheaded the country's most powerful traditions of progressive struggle and culture, especially since the 1950s. The fight against racism cannot be won without defeating racism in the South.

The 2010 census indicated that 55 percent of Blacks lived in the South, 18 percent in the Midwest, 17 percent in the Northeast and 10 percent in the West.

Table 1 Black population by region 1990-2010

Region	1990	2000	2010
South	52.95%	53.62%	54.98%
Midwest	19.12%	18.78%	18.07%
Northwest	18.77%	18.00%	17.10%

West	9.46%	9.60%	9.84%
Total US Black population	29,896,060(12.02%)	36,419,434(12.94%)	42,020,743(13.61%)
Total US population	248,709,873	281,421,906	308,745,538

Although the Black population has increased in all U.S. regions since 1990, the South has had the most growth. Gentrification as well as economic restructuring are motors of this growth, as they are displacing numerous African Americans from Northern cities. In addition, for the first time, the 2010 census showed that many Black professionals are also returning to the South. The percentage of the Black population that lives in the South is growing.

Demographic changes are reshaping the historical racial binary across the South as Blacks return to the South and transnational migrants make their way to Texas, Georgia, Florida, Virginia and the Carolinas. Black return migration has increased the percentage of African Americans to 55 percent. Latinos started arriving in the late 1980s, and are expected to grow as a percentage of the population rising to above 30%, mostly concentrated in Texas which, of course, was formerly part of Mexico.

It is near impossible to think of strong national progressive politics, a strong movement or organizing effort, without the deep involvement and leadership of Black people.

Although fast being replaced by Latinos as the main source of low-wage labor in the rest of the country, Blacks are still central to the Southern labor force. This provides leverage and organizing opportunities and places Blacks at the crossroads of labor and anti-racist organizing.

Significant new Black-led grassroots organizing efforts are underway, most notably the Moral Monday/Forward Together movement in North Carolina and #BlackLivesMatter and other fights in the wake of the Trayvon Martin, etc. cases. The NAACP, which in some Southern states has more than 100 chapters, is a revitalizing force. African American churches in the South are still incredibly numerous and potentially powerful. These fights are once again demonstrating the ability of African Americans to drive the fight for a Third Reconstruction.

The deep involvement and leadership of Black people are indispensable to forming a strong progressive electoral bloc.

The Jesse Jackson candidacy electrified the electoral potential of Black people. And since 2000, African Americans have surged to the polls, constituting thirty percent of all new voters, voting for the Democrats (even before Obama) at an astonishing ninety percent rate, and surpassing whites in voter participation for the first time in history.

In fact, there has been steadily rising Black presidential election turnout since 1996: 53 percent in 1996, going up to 67 percent in 2012. Meanwhile the percentage of African Americans voting Democratic has skyrocketed to more than ninety percent.

Race is the pivot of politics: Democrats and progressives cannot win without massive support from people of color and Republicans cannot win without suppressing the people of color vote.

The South is the most polarized center of the fight between the rightwing cross-class white political forces and the multi-racial anti-racist forces.

The political crux of the matter is still that white voters in the South vote about 75 percent Republican compared to the national white vote of about 60 percent Republican. And Southern Republicans tend to be further to the right than in most other regions. Race and racism are at the heart of the struggle for the South. To sustain their momentum, the far right has implemented a powerful campaign against voting rights and for voter suppression, and racial gerrymandering that must be met by a powerful democratic, antiracist response.

There are excellent opportunities to fight for progressive organization, political power and governance at the local levels in the South because there are 93 Black majority counties. And there are 51 Latino majority counties in Texas alone. The only Black majority county outside the South is St. Louis (which is

actually an independent city, not a county). Despite this ripe organizing opportunity there has not been a major attempt to organize in these areas since SNCC. La Raza Unida Party had a brief but quite successful strategy in the Mexican majority areas of South Texas in the 1970s.

2. The fight to combat poverty, improve the strength and quality of life of poor and working people, and their connection to the struggle against racism, is concentrated in the South.

Overall, the US is extremely polarized by income. Most of the Southern states suffer the double whammy of high inequality and low median income. The South is the poorest part of the country and has the highest poverty rates as well as sharp income polarization. Figures 1 and 2.

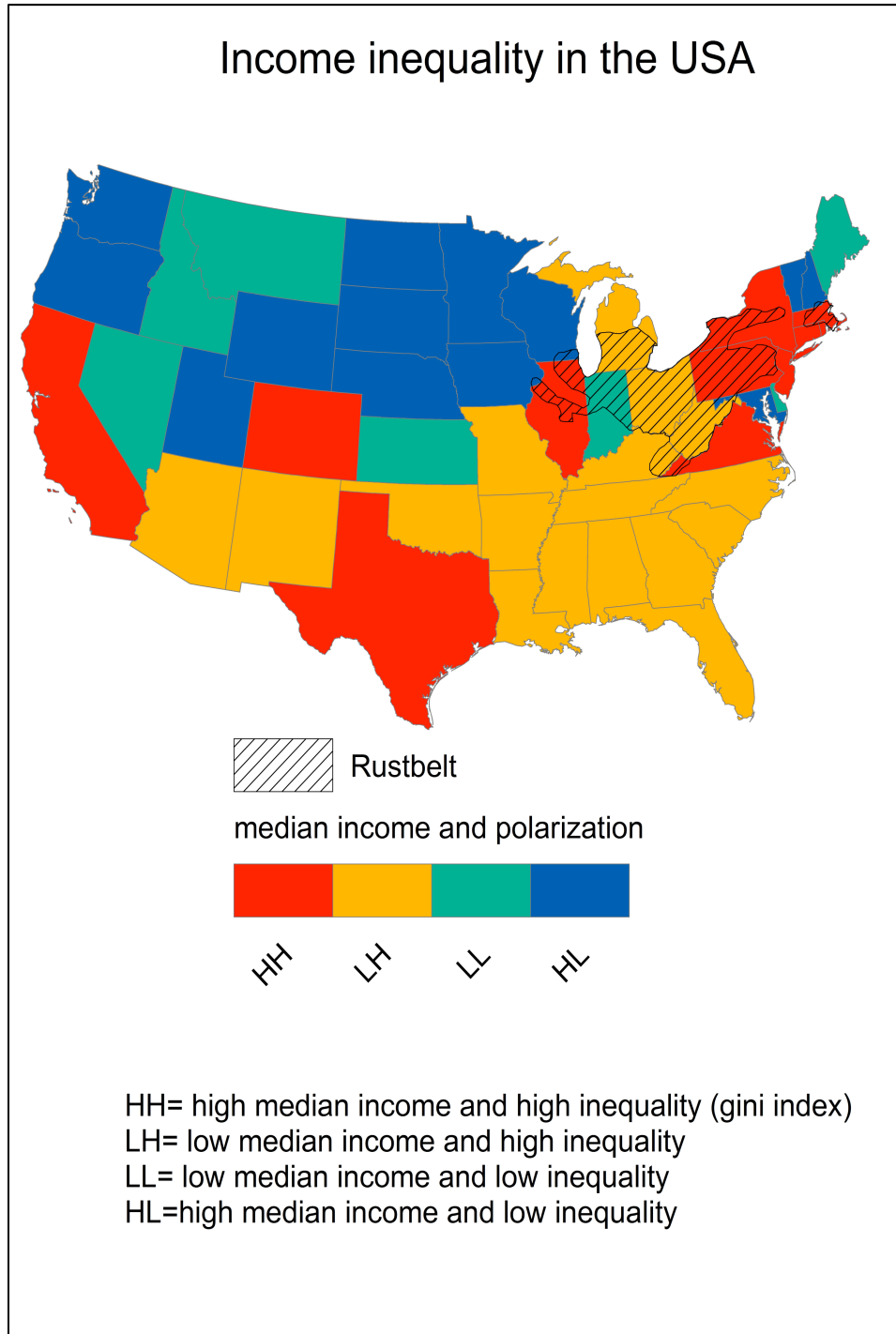


Figure 1 Median incomes and income polarization, 2013

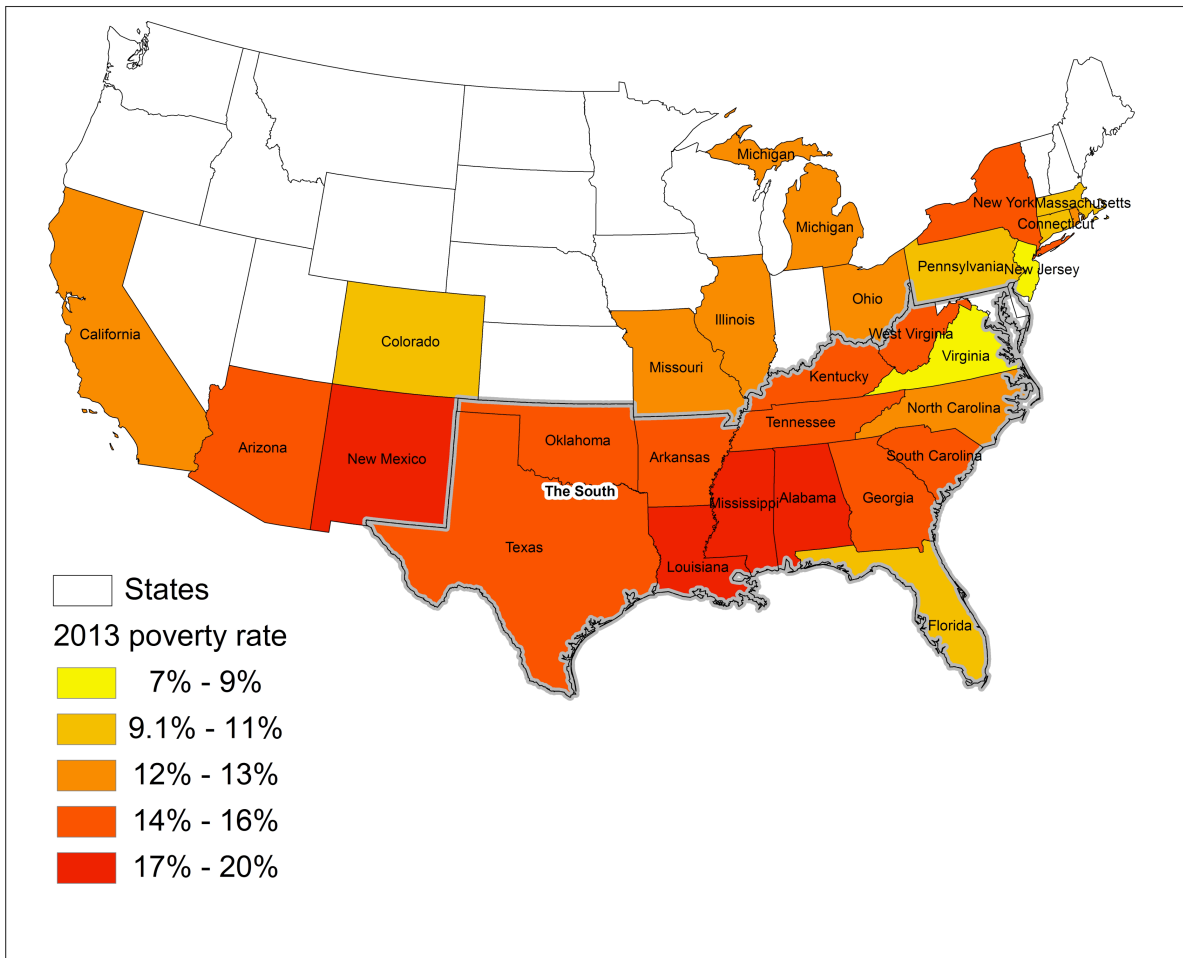


Figure 2 Poverty rates in states with above average income polarization 2013

Virginia and Maryland have relatively low poverty rates, and less income inequality than other Southern states attesting to their shifting politics at the state level as well as their relationship to the federal government and the new economy.

In 2012, the South had a non-metro poverty rate of 22.1 percent—nearly 7 percentage points higher than in the region’s metro areas, a greater difference than in any other region. The difference in poverty rates in the South is particularly important for the overall non-metro poverty rate because an estimated 43.1 percent of the nation’s non-metro population lived in this region in 2012. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being/geography-of-poverty.aspx>

Southern poverty is a result of the region’s history of racially-coerced plantation labor and racial suppression which has stunted its economic development and produced the most reactionary labor laws in the country. Despite these laws, labor organizing is growing in certain parts of the South, and struggles to raise the minimum wage have great potential. Between the years 2011 and 2012, union membership increased the most in California (up 110,000 union members), Texas (up 65,000), and Louisiana (up 30,000). Unions still have an important role to play in the South.

In addition, climate change poses a clear and present threat to the economic and social development of the South, not to speak of increasing environmental disasters.

3. The South is the key center of the far right and the Republican Party; neither can be defeated without battling for the South.

The South is the stronghold and most dynamic center of the far right and the Republican Party. Neither can be defeated without winning key Southern states such as Florida, Virginia, North Carolina and, soon, Georgia.

The South currently has 192 electoral votes; it takes only 270 to win. The battleground states of Florida, North Carolina and Virginia, with 57 votes, already often hold the balance of power in presidential elections. Georgia, with an additional 16 electoral votes, is likely to become a battleground state before long, possibly followed by Mississippi. Texas, due to its size and large percentage of Latino and Black voters, could be a national game changer in a decade or so.

At the state level, Republican control of Southern states has had increasingly drastic results as the Tea Party has gained strength. Today Republicans control all but Virginia and Maryland. In North Carolina, long under Democratic control of the state government, the Republicans took power in 2010, consolidated it in 2012, quickly implemented the entire ALEC agenda of nullifying the Affordable Care Act, voter suppression, drastic cuts and privatization of schools, tax reform for the wealthy, closing abortion clinics, undercutting and privatizing Medicaid, legalized and subsidized fracking, slashed unemployment benefits and gerrymandering. Throughout the South the far right has launched systematic attacks on voting rights, passed starkly racist voter suppression legislation and undermined the democratic workings of the government through systematic legislative and executive rule breaking. Taking on and defeating the right at the state level, with a focus on the purple states, is crucial to defending democracy and the people's quality of life.

4. The South possesses the largest congressional delegation of any region and the most electoral votes, and both are projected to grow at a faster rate than other regions.

Consequently winning at least some states in the South is not only the key to the presidency but also to control of Congress and of its key committees. Currently there are 110 Republican congresspersons from the South, more than half of the 218 needed to control the House, and 49 Democrats. There are 23 Republican senators, almost half the number needed to control the Senate, and seven Democrats. All Southern states today have Republican governors and statehouses controlled by the GOP.

5. The South is the biggest center of military industrial complex and therefore central to the fight for peace and against militarism.

The South is home to approximately 41 percent of U.S. military installations. Six of the top ten states receiving Department of Defense funds are Southern states, including VA, TX, MD, FL, GA and AL. The Washington Metro area accounted for approximately 11 percent of federal Department of Defense expenditures in 2005. Virginia ranks second among states in military procurement, behind California. (Table 4, Appendix) according to the National Priorities Project.

6. The South has more population than any other region and is growing more rapidly than other region. Therefore, it will become even more powerful in national politics and more people will be under the control of Southern state and local governments. By 2040, it is estimated that 39 percent of Americans will live in the South and the majority will live in the Sunbelt regions of California, the Southwest, and the South.

This means that this region will wield even more power at the federal level, both the presidency and Congress.

It is increasingly difficult for progressives to argue that we represent a large, let alone majority, constituency unless we have a base in the South. Any progressive program and movement must exhibit an understanding of the past, present and future of the South. We cannot allow the rightwing at the state and local levels to continue to rule over such a large portion of folk, especially when so many are Black and/or poor.

7. The South is not only rapidly changing economically, racially and demographically, it is changing in ways that represent the future of the country, not the past. The South is gaining in importance not only politically, but also economically. Its people and politics are becoming more diverse.

III. Main State Electoral Battlefronts

Washington, D.C. became the only non-state to have electoral votes in 1961. However, it is limited to a number equal to the smallest state, which of course is three. Since 1961 the residents have been overwhelmingly Black and Democratic. Obama beat Romney by 13 to 1.

Maryland, with ten electoral votes, is already deep blue. Since 1960, Maryland has voted Republican only in the landslide wins of Richard Nixon in 1972, Ronald Reagan in 1984 and George H. W. Bush in 1988. In 2012, Barack Obama crushed Mitt Romney here (62% to 36%).

Florida has more electoral votes, 29, than any other battleground state and the fourth highest electoral vote in the country. The Democrats have won every presidential election in Florida since 1996 except for 2004, but have never polled more than 51 percent of the vote. Florida has increased from a population of 6,789,443 (3.34% of the total US population) to 18,801,310 (6.09%) since 1970. Florida is a true purple state.

Virginia, with 13 electoral votes, just recently became a battleground state. It was reliably red since 1952 with the exception of the LBJ landslide in 1964. In 2004 Bush won the state by seven points. But in 2008 Obama won by eight. In 2012 Obama again won, but by only four points. The small but growing Latino vote was key to Obama's victories. Virginia is one of the handful of true purple states, and is growing rapidly.

North Carolina has 15 electoral votes and is now the 9th largest state in the country. It voted reliably red from 1952 through the 2004 election; Bush won by 8 points in that latter year. Obama broke the red streak by one point in 2008, but then Romney won by two in 2012. North Carolina is another true purple state, and one whose population is rising fast. At present the Moral Monday/Forward Together movement is probably the largest Black-led progressive movement in the country, and probably one of the strongest state level progressive movements in general.

Georgia is the 8th largest state in the Union and has 16 electoral votes. It is still a reliably red state, but the Republican margins have been shrinking rapidly. W won by 12 and 17 points but in the last two presidentials the Republicans prevailed by only 7 and 5. With a large Latino immigration, Georgia is projected to become a majority people of color state in the 2030s, and with hard work can be turned into a battleground state much sooner.

These Southern states plus Washington D.C. with 84 electoral votes, account for more than 31 percent of the 270 electoral votes needed to win the presidency.

Mississippi's economy and population are quite stagnant and in 2012 dropped an electoral vote and is now down to six. It is a reliably red state, but Republican margins have recently fallen from the 20-point range to the 12-point range. Mississippi has the largest percentage Black vote, about 37 percent. The NAACP and its allies are a dynamic force in the state. The potential of Mississippi was demonstrated in 2012 when a wide coalition unexpectedly defeated the reactionary Personhood state amendment. That amendment would have considered conception as equivalent to achieving personhood.

Texas is the second most populous state in the country and has 38 electoral votes. The state did not turn red until 1980 but has been deep red ever since. W carried the state by more than twenty points each time, but the Republican margin narrowed to 12 in 2008 and 16 in 2012. In the 2010 census non-Hispanic whites accounted for only 45.3 percent of the population and Latinos 37.6 percent. The racial picture is confounded because more than ten percent identified themselves as "some other race." Blacks constituted 3.8 percent and 2.7 percent as two or more races. Whites are definitely less than 50%.

There are raised hopes that Texas might before long become a battleground state, largely due to its racial/ethnic makeup. But Mexicans in Texas are notably more conservative than in other states. By the voting numbers there is a way to go, but over time Texas could be a national game changer.

Final Thoughts

The focus of this paper has been to argue for the strategic national importance of the battle for the South. In making this argument we have indicated some important points about strategy, i.e. how to win the battle for the South. However, a developed strategy will require a far deeper dive than what we have attempted here.

The particularity of the subregions that we indicated would have to be explored in detail, as well as an examination of how different strategies connected to each subregion have fared. State by state analyses and strategies are a crucial necessity. This fight will be long and hard, but it is absolutely necessary if we are to defeat the far right and make any real progress in the fight for racial justice, democracy, peace and economic equality.

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