

## **The Battlelines are Drawn: Rightwing Neo-Secession or a Third Reconstruction**

June 1, 2015

*This essay was originally published on August 2, 2013 as a commentary on the fight for racial justice and against the far right in national and North Carolina politics. In 2015, Wade Rathke of Social Policy asked me to update it a bit and he published the new version in June of that year. The 2016 victory of Donald Trump has brought this struggle to a new level of urgency and danger.*

The heartless combination of the Supreme Court's gutting of the Voting Rights Act, the House Republicans flatly shunning the immigration bill and the series of police murders of unarmed Black men should be a wakeup call about the grave dangers posed by the far right. And it may give rise to a renewed motion among African Americans that could give much needed new impetus and political focus to the progressive movement.

The negative policies and missteps of the Obama administration are often the target of progressive fire, and rightly so. But these take place in the context of (and are sometimes caused by) an extremely perilous development in U.S. politics: an alliance of energized rightwing populists with the most reactionary sector of Big Business has captured the Republican Party with what even American Enterprise Institute conservative Norman Ornstein denounces as "the unabashed ambition to reverse decades of economic and social policy by any means necessary." (1)

The GOP is in all-out nullificationist mode, rejecting any federal laws with which they disagree. They are using their power in the judiciary and Congress to block passage or implementation of anything they find distasteful at the federal level. And under the radar the Republicans are rapidly implementing a far flung rightwing program in the 31 states where they control the governorship and the 28 where they lead both houses. They have embarked on an unprecedented overhaul of government that further deepens inequality and hurts all sectors of the poor and much of the working and middle classes, undermining the rights of all.

The main precedent in U.S. history for this kind of unbridled reactionary behavior was the states' rights, pro-slavery position of the white South leading up to the Civil War. In the 1960s, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called out the segregationists' attempts at "nullification" in his famous "I Have a Dream Speech," and the movement defeated them.

This time we are at a pivotal point in a 35-year long rightwing offensive, begun with the Reagan victory in 1980. As shown in the ultra-conservative playground that is the government of North Carolina, the new laws and structures of today's rightwing program are so extreme and in such stark contrast to the rest of the country that I believe both their strategy and their program should be called "Neo-Secession." The country is politically polarized to an extreme, to the point that it could be called a peaceful civil war.

This nullification and neo-secession must be met by a renewed motion for freedom and social justice. The great scholar-activist Manning Marable, the leader of the powerful fightback in North Carolina NAACP President Rev. William Barber II, MSNBC's Melissa Harris-Perry and others have called for a Third Reconstruction that builds on the post-Civil War first Reconstruction and the Civil Rights/Second Reconstruction. (2)

We are now at a pivotal point in this fight. The battlelines are drawn: Reactionary Nullification and Neo-Secession or Third Reconstruction?

Like the first secession, this second neo-secession is centered in the South even though it is a national movement with unusual strength in the upper Rocky Mountain and plains states, as well as rural areas throughout the country. (3) Similarly, racism, especially anti-Black racism, lies at its foundation even as the rightwing assaults all democratic, women's, immigrant and labor rights, social and environmental programs. On our side a renewed grassroots African American movement may be shaping up, and it is critical that all progressives contribute to the movement of the most progressive part of the U.S. population. The fight for the South is also growing in importance. Unfortunately, most Democrats, unions, progressives and social justice forces barely have the South on their radar and rarely invest in it. This must change, and change rapidly.

A shift in progressive priorities and intensification of on-the-ground organizing are crucial to defeating the right's neo-secessionist agenda as well as to forge a sufficiently powerful "Third Reconstructionist" political force to successfully pushback against the corporate leadership of the Democratic Party. We can righteously roast Obama all we want, but unless we can build a truly powerful force to his left that can simultaneously unite with moderates to break the political stranglehold of the far right, we will be spitting into the wind.

## **NEO-SECESSION AND THIRD RECONSTRUCTION**

Both the rightwing strategy of Nullification and Neo-Secession and the peoples fight for a Third Reconstruction are deeply rooted in U.S. history.

Nullification was born in the nineteenth century as the slaveholders' legal theory that states have the right to ignore any federal legislation, judicial decision or executive order that they disagree with. In practice it meant court decisions like Dred Scott, congressional filibusters and reactionary legislation, and the consolidation of the slaveholders' power in the states. It was the prelude to Secession and Civil War.

Post-Civil War, the victorious Union alliance with Blacks in the South then decreed Reconstruction, the most democratic, progressive and racially just program in U.S. history up to that point.

By the 1880s, however, the Southern racists and their allies overthrew Reconstruction and set up another white supremacist regime characterized by legalized racial discrimination in all facets of life, the virtual reenslavement of Black labor and, crucially, a white monopoly on voting and political power. This regime even survived the New Deal and was not dismantled until the Civil Rights movement won passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965. This Second Reconstruction not only finally ended the white dictatorship in the South but also ignited the anti-Vietnam War, Chicano, Asian American, Native American, women's and gay rights movements. Together they gave rise to the War on Poverty and won unparalleled national rights and programs for workers, women, immigrants, the poor and others.

Today the rightwing is once again spewing out this racist legal theory of nullification and invoking a new civil war, hardly bloodless though not involving clashing armies, in an attempt to overthrow what is left of New Deal, Civil Rights and War on Poverty legislation: e.g. progressive taxation, voting rights, Social Security, Medicaid, environmental protection, abortion rights, jobs programs, fairness to immigrants, union rights, public education, etc. They aim to drastically reduce the parts of the government that actually serve regular folk, privatize most of what remains of government and otherwise completely reshape the entire governmental system to the benefit of the very affluent and the big corporations. They are putting it into practice at the federal, state and local levels.

Due to decades of control of the presidency, they occupy most of the federal judiciary where they are systematically stripping away progressive laws, regulations and rights—even public education, the historic bedrock of the middle class. They control Congress through political hardball,

gerrymandering and abuse of the rules. With control of two of the three branches of the federal government (not to speak of the military) and the malevolent abuse of the filibuster and mass refusal of executive political appointments, they are strangling the Obama presidency. (4)

Meanwhile the Republicans control 31 governorships, both houses of 28 state legislatures and numerous local jurisdictions in which they are moving to nullify federal legislation with which they disagree (e.g. the Affordable Care Act and gay marriage), qualitatively cutback on and privatize government and public education, drastically rollback the rights of people of color, women, workers, children and gays and eliminate progressive income taxes in favor of regressive sales taxes. Lara M. Brown recently reminded us in that “the vast majority of the laws under which each of us abides are state laws, not federal laws.”

The 2013 Supreme Court decision invalidating the most powerful parts of the Voting Rights Act has opened the floodgates to voter suppression laws that heretofore have been ruled unconstitutional. Although there are still numerous Black legislators, David Bostis and Thomas Edsall assess that Republican gerrymandering, voter suppression and Black legislators’ loss of clout and committee chairpersonships means that “At the state level, Black voters and elected officials have less influence now than at any time since the civil rights era.” (5)

Meanwhile the Great Recession has greatly increased already unacceptable levels of racial income and wealth inequality. Led by developers and corporations, affluent (and often “liberal” and “hipster”) whites are reoccupying the cities and reshaping them to their desires, displacing millions of Black poor. The flood of cases of police and vigilante murders over the past two years, most recently in Baltimore, have traumatically revealed, once again, the grave dangers to Blacks living amidst white racism.

Outright secession would be political suicide since the rightwing led states clearly lack the power to win a separate state. But if they have their way the difference between Blue and Red states will soon be so stark as to be the modern analogue to the free and slave states or the legally segregated versus non-legally segregated states of the past. This time the rightwing wants it both ways: to benefit from staying in the Union (and the great wealth of the Blue states) yet at the same time to re-create numerous states in their own ideological image. This is why I think it is historically justifiable and politically useful to brand today’s rightwingers as nullificationist and neo-secessionist.

Nullification is one of the principal tactics of the rightwing movement; neo-secession is its strategy and its program.

The right reached both a new level of power and new level of extremism in reaction to the election of Barack Obama. Nearly two-thirds of the Republican primary electorate in 2012 voted for far right candidates and against the corporate rightist Romney. It is our fight to defeat them and bring forth a new, Third Reconstruction that will make further strides toward ending racism and bringing justice for all.

## **NOTHING COULD BE MORE NEO-SECESSIONIST: NORTH CAROLINA**

North Carolina is a true battleground state: Obama won the state in 2008 by one percent and lost it by two percent in 2012.

But through a combination of good luck and smart strategy, not to speak of state Democratic lethargy and division, Republican gerrymandering and the largesse of the rightwing retail mogul Art Pope, North Carolina has been the site of the Tea Party’s most dramatic political victories and its most draconian legislative and social agenda. Unlike other billionaire rightwingers, Pope is an active politician and organizer—he is a former legislator and served as Gov. McCrory’s first budget

director—and his foundation finances ninety percent of the income of the state's leading rightwing groups. (6)

In 2012, the Republicans won the governorship and a majority in both houses of the legislature for the first time since the first Reconstruction. In fact, they boast a supermajority in both houses. "Since then," says the NY Times, "the state government has become a demolition derby, tearing down years of progress in public education, tax policy, racial equality in the courtroom and access to the ballot."

In just its first two weeks the new legislature: (1) became the only state to nullify all federally mandated and funded extensions to unemployment, affecting 170,000 people. It also slashed the maximum unemployment benefit for new claims from \$522 to \$360 per week and the maximum length to 20 weeks. North Carolina has the fifth highest unemployment rate in the nation; (2) refused the federally funded Medicare benefit that would have provided health care to an additional 500,000 North Carolinians; (3) moved to enshrine existing anti-union, "right to work" laws in the state constitution; (4) passed voter ID laws, cutback early voting by half and eliminated same day registration; (5) legalized and subsidized fracking; (6) passed a bill to purge state commissions and Superior Court judges they don't like.

Reverend Doctor William Barber II, the North Carolina State President of the NAACP and the main leader of the growing fightback, gives further details about what he calls the "vicious war on the poor":

"Piling further indignities on the poor, they also want to require people applying for temporary assistance or benefits to submit to criminal background checks, and force applicants to a job training program for low-income workers to take a drug test, for which they have to pay. Now the legislature wants to increase and expand taxes on groceries, haircuts and prescription drugs. They're even taking aim at poor children with a bill to lower the income requirement for North Carolina's prekindergarten program, making it off limits to nearly 30,000 children who would have previously qualified." (7)

In addition, the legislature is moving to privatize Medicaid; slash public education funding to 2007 levels, end teacher tenure and place charter schools under separate governance; shut down most abortion clinics; and establish outlandish rules for ex-offenders to restore their voting rights.

This reactionary avalanche of neo-secession was met by a burgeoning fightback. The North Carolina NAACP (<http://www.naacpn.org/>) and the wide progressive coalition it has built called Historic Thousands on Jones Street (where the state capitol is located, <http://hkonj.com/>) is fighting for what Rev. Barber enunciates as a Third Reconstruction. In 2013 they launched "Moral Monday": every Monday a demonstration against the legislature was followed by civil disobedience in the state house. Almost 1,000 people were arrested, usually supported by thousands at the rallies. HKonJ and its member groups have flanked Moral Monday with a statewide and sectoral organizing campaign. (8) A major court victory was won when the courts upheld the movement's constitutional challenges to the arrests and charges were dropped. The movement reached a high point on Feb. 15, 2014 when tens of thousands marched on the capitol in the largest demonstration since the Civil Rights movement.

Despite this tremendous work, the Republicans passed their main legislative program and held their ground in the 2014 election, aided by the now gerrymandered districts. In a hard blow they also defeated Democrat Kay Hagen to win the U.S. Senate seat in the most expensive Senatorial contest in North Carolina history.

The Moral Monday/Forward Together movement is regrouping. It has won a number of important preliminary legal victories, especially on voting rights but also on fracking and the defense of teacher

tenure. This February it again mobilized more than ten thousand into the streets. Small civil disobedience actions have been recommenced and regular protests resumed at the legislature. Rallies are again being organized across the state. The movement has increased its focus on fighting for proactive legislation such as raising the minimum wage and for extension of Medicaid.

The hope is that the movement will regain momentum this summer in a series of actions on voting rights. Moral Monday plans to mobilize around their legal action against the legislature's voter suppression bill during the hearing starting on July 13 in Winston-Salem. That will be followed by actions in support of their challenge to the Republican's racist redistricting before the North Carolina Supreme Court in August. Actions are also planned to expose and reverse Gov. McCrory's silent destruction of the motor voter act: voter registration is down 66 percent at motor vehicle and social service agencies.

## **FIGHTING NEO-SECESSION**

The neo-secessionist strategy poses a highly complex set of challenges, distinct from a straight up secession. The right must be defeated in public opinion, in the streets, in workplaces and at the polls. And it must be defeated in numerous discrete congressional and legislative districts, as well as county and city races, governorships, the Congress and the presidency. This will be protracted guerrilla political struggle. We must prepare ourselves to take advantage of big opportunities to mobilize the public and reshape public opinion when they are presented—the BlackLivesMatter motion is showing that kind of potential--but also drill down into the electoral fights district by district. Only a gigantic and determined coalition of everyone who opposes the right can do this, not just in presidential elections but all levels of government.

However, we also need a massive and well organized progressive force to the left of Obama and Clinton Democrats with a social justice left that can root this force among people of color, unions and other poor folk that can provide the backbone that the elite Democrats consistently show they lack. This is crucial not only to win all of these battles, but to make sure the rightwing program is eventually buried at every level and forever, and replaced by a Third Reconstruction.

There are tens of millions of progressives in the U.S. However, we have so far failed to gain enough unity to leverage our power. We are often strangers, or at best short term tactical allies, across lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, issue and sector, pursuing separate agendas. Way too many of us seem to put our energy and resources behind or passively vote for mainstream Democratic candidates who more often than not fail to deliver, while failing to build independent political power of our own. Others eschew electoral politics, persist in "pure" but futile or even counter-productive third party schemes or think we can find safety in the non-profit world. While far right candidates and voters dominated the last several Republican presidential primaries, we have yet to come near matching the massive multiracial coalition spearheaded by Rev. Jesse Jackson in the 1980s. Ironically, President Obama expertly identified and mobilized the progressive electoral coalition in 2008 and 2012, but progressives themselves have precious little power within it.

This is not an ideological projection but a historically based reality of today's politics. (9) Strikingly, African American voters are dynamically growing and the most progressive voting bloc in the country and the even faster-growing Latino and Asian American populations are increasingly moving in the same direction. In 2012 Black voter participation exceeded that of all other groups. And no other demographic group votes in such a unified liberal-progressive way.

However, progressives are not organizing these voters. In fact, it often appears that the leadership and often membership of social justice non-profits and progressive electoral and issue organizations, editorial boards and actions are more racially segregated than the Fortune 500. And numerous people of color community organizations are isolated from the voter upsurge. Now we are presented

with new opportunities arising out of the motion at the grassroots in response to the dramatic string of police murders in the last couple of years. To what degree will this motion be sustained and become organized? In what ways can it be linked to or impact electoral politics and in what ways can electoral work help build the movement?

People of color are the anchor of a larger motion that is now being called “the new majority” or the “rising American electorate” together with unmarried women, labor and youth. Increased inequality among seniors, married women and the middle class also provide important organizing and political opportunities. But progressives are often missing precisely the kind of voter organizing opportunities that the far right has built itself upon.

Of course, the battle for a Third Reconstruction takes place in a vastly different global and national context than Reconstruction I and II. In this era of imperial decline, social austerity and looming environmental catastrophe today’s radical reconstruction would encompass not only the fight for racial justice but also intersect with labor battles and anti-cutback efforts, fights for immigrant, women’s and LGBT rights, peace and climate justice in new ways. Getting there will be complex but the potential exists for a social change movement in the U.S. that is both broader and more radical on a host of issues than previous progressive upsurges.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUTH**

In this war for the heart and soul of the U.S., the battle for the South stands front and center. The South is the homeland of the most reactionary, most racist and most militarist forces in U.S. society. Yet it is also home to the majority of African Americans, the most progressive force in U.S. society. The right must be challenged on their home ground if they are to be defeated and southern Blacks are key to the formation of any national progressive bloc. It is the struggle against racism embedded in this unique polarization that gives the struggle for the South such urgency. Racism remains the cutting edge of the struggle for democracy, equality and justice in the U.S., and its most powerful advocates and opponents are both in the South.

The South is also the main center of poverty and militarism and a bastion of environmental destruction. The fight for peace and equality, therefore, also requires a fight for the South.

In fact, the South (remember that both Texas and Florida were part of the Confederacy) has more population, more Black people, more poverty, more military installations, more congressional seats and more Electoral votes than any other region of the country, and it is growing. Three of the precious few presidential battleground states are in the South: Florida, Virginia and North Carolina, soon to be joined by Georgia. 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. Winning purple states and congressional districts in the South is key to victory in presidential races and the fight for the Congress. And the 105 African American majority counties in the South provide great organizing and governance opportunities for progressives.

Although often written off by Northern liberals as redneck, ignorant Bible Belt country, the South has undergone and is undergoing socio-economic transformation and has become a heated center of struggle against the right.

Historically the defining features of the South were the plantation economy, the racially coerced labor that it was founded upon, legalized racial discrimination and segregation, and the white dictatorship that enabled and enforced all of this. However, although there are scattered remnants, these iconic features have been largely vanquished. Civil rights, worldwide capitalist competition, technology, migration and immigration, gentrification/white flight and exurbs are transforming the Southern landscape, at different rates and in different ways. (10) Indeed, Maryland and Virginia

now rank in the top ten in median household income while Southern states also occupy nine of the bottom twelve. Today even what's left of the Ku Klux Klan disavows racism.

These transformations have, ironically, given rise to two contradictory motions. The increasing political economic similarity of the South with other parts of the country has enabled its leaders to drive a nationwide rightward motion for the first time since the Civil War. Nationalization of the South economically has given rise to Southernization of large parts of the North politically.

The strongest part of the Southern Republican coalition is not just corporate, but the extreme rightwing of corporate forces in the U.S.: big oil and energy, the military industrial complex, low end retail like Walmart, big Pharma, Southern-based banks, fast food companies and the private prison industry. They are flanked by powerful state and local elites, usually more rooted in reactionary Southern traditions, like real estate developers, big car dealers, low-wage construction, regional and local capitalists, conservative law firms, the criminal justice complex, fundamentalist churches and small businesses—the state and local chambers of commerce and Christian coalitions.

These forces unify a base of affluent white suburban right wingers, tax revolvers, gun enthusiasts and reactionary white workers and poor and straight up white supremacists. The lingering poison is that Southern whites are far more conservative, Republican and prone to white political solidarity than elsewhere. Nationally, approximately 60 percent of whites vote Republican in presidential elections. But Southern whites do so at a 70 percent plus clip, rising to ninety percent in much of the Deep South in opposition to Obama.

## **NO MORE SOLID SOUTH**

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 extends to the wider multiracial civil rights coalition of liberal churches, trial lawyers, progressive educators and students, and unions. There is a far greater percentage of African American voters in the Southern states than elsewhere, topping at 35 percent in Mississippi. And like Blacks throughout the country, they consistently vote ninety percent Democratic. Black remigration to the South means that there is a higher percentage of African Americans in that region than in many decades. And Latino immigration is also on the rise and has become an especially important factor in Florida, Virginia and Georgia. 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.

People of color are 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 public education and government, tourism and retirement communities. Southern cities are growing rapidly in size, are generally blue and becoming bluer. As in the North, some older suburbs are becoming political battlegrounds although some remain exclusionary white enclaves.

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 unusually liberal and unionized. There are important and growing women's and LGBTQ movements in the South. Neither

party seriously represents the economic interests of small farmers nor poor whites, a potentially volatile sector, especially as their economic positions inevitably become more unstable.

In fact, the South has been wrongly stereotyped as a Republican monolith since the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. Actually, it was not until 1994 that the Republicans won a majority of the Southern congresspersons. There are way more African American officeholders in the region than in any other part of the country. Democrats are generally stronger at the state and local levels than they are in presidential elections. New Deal and populist politics still exist among some working class whites and small farmers, and Latino and Asian immigration is growing.

The South is highly differentiated politically and economically, and the struggle for the South must be nuanced and taken on state by state.

Washington D.C. and Maryland long ago turned Blue, and Florida, Virginia and North Carolina are now true battleground states. President Obama won Florida both times, and Virginia and North Carolina once, losing very narrowly the other time. Together the outcome of the battleground elections in Florida, Virginia and North Carolina could determine the presidency. After North Carolina, Georgia was the most competitive state won by Romney and is most likely to be the next state to become purple. As earlier mentioned, the South also has the biggest Senate and congressional delegations and control numerous key committees. Without defeating many of these Southern congresspersons we cannot win control of the Congress.

Mississippi still has a way to go. But the potential, and importance, of Mississippi lies in the fact that it has the highest percentage of Blacks residents in the country and who represent 37 percent of the vote. The Republicans hold only a five-seat majority in the state's House. A proposed state constitutional amendment defining "personhood" as beginning at conception and prohibiting abortion "from the moment of fertilization" was defeated by 55 percent of voters in Nov. 2011. And the longtime Black and human rights activist Chokwe Lumumba was elected mayor of Jackson in 2012, the state's capital and largest city. (11) Chokwe unexpectedly passed in 2013, but his successful candidacy points to the vast potential of the 105 Black majority counties in the South. (There are none outside the South.)

Eventually, turning Texas into a battleground state is a key priority since, given its size and large Latino population, it could be a national game changer.

Progressive political forces and mass rumblings can be heard in every Southern state. While some of the other states, especially those that are nearly all white, are not favorable terrain, even there key struggles against racism, poverty, fracking, big oil etc. are crucial to the national fightback, just as they were during the Civil Rights movement. The South is where a broad coalition centered on African Americans must be unleashed and the rightwing routed in its own backyard.

The South is also the site of some of the most exciting social justice organizing in the country. (12) The defeat of the Personhood amendment and the election of Chokwe Lumumba as mayor of Jackson highlight the growing power of groups like Mississippi One Voice (<http://uniteonevoice.org/ovms/>), the Mississippi Black Leadership Summit (<http://uniteonevoice.org/2013-ms-black-leadership-summit/>) and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (<http://mxgm.org/chokwe-lumumbas-mayoral-victory-speech-tuesday-june-4-2013/>) in Mississippi.

Virginia New Majority has burst on the scene with the state's most dynamic political field operation and as a key organizing force in the Virginia legislature. It may be the first overtly social justice group to embark on an exciting new strategy of identifying, training and fielding progressive candidates in key areas of the state. <http://www.virginianewmajority.org/> Florida New Majority



(<http://www.flnewmajority.org/>) has built one of the largest social justice electoral formations in the country in that crucial battleground state.

## **FINAL REMARKS**

The 2016 election is already underway, and the Southern states of Florida, Virginia and North Carolina, along with Ohio, will likely be the key battleground states that determine the winner.

The stakes could hardly be higher and the race is a virtual toss-up. If a Republican is elected president, the Republicans may control every branch of the federal government as well as 31 governorships. Let the experience of North Carolina alert us to the danger: the “moderate” Republican former Mayor of Charlotte, a largely blue city, was elected governor, but the rabidly rightwing legislature passed the entire rightwing ALEC legislative program in a matter of two weeks. A Republican presidential victory in 2016 will likely follow the same playbook.

It is absolutely crucial that the Republicans be prevented from seizing the presidency but also key for progressives to find ways to support the Democratic candidate (most likely Hillary Clinton) against the Republicans but that also push him or her to more progressive positions and, most importantly, enable us to build the unity and strength of progressive forces going forward. (13) The entry of Bernie Sanders into the race should help this process.

The BlackLivesMatter movement is already a force in U.S. politics. If it continues to gain momentum it could literally reshape the election. However, a polarization around racism does not automatically benefit progressives in the short run, as we could be out organized by the racists. It is therefore crucial that we put this fight front and center both in the long and short run. This cannot be done without the critical involvement of the majority of African Americans who live and struggle in the harsher political conditions of the South.

The emergence of a renewed mass African American-led grassroots motion would be a major step for the progressive movement as a whole as we take on the task of fighting to defeat neo-secession and forge a Third Reconstruction for peace, jobs, equality and justice.

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## **FOOTNOTES**

(1) Even the Brookings Institute centrist Thomas Mann and the American Enterprise Institute conservative Norman Ornstein are alarmed by what they call the Republican’s “new nullification” strategy. They have devoted an entire book to this subject: “It’s Even Worse than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism,” (2012).

(2) Manning Marable, “The Third Reconstruction: Black Nationalism and Race in a Revolutionary America,” Social Text, Autumn 1981. Reverend William Barber II: <http://www.storyofamerica.org/reconstruction3>. Melissa Harris-Perry: <http://newsbusters.org/blogs/nathan-roush/2013/07/08/msnbc-harris-perry-claims-we-are-third-reconstruction-after-voting-rig>.

(3) Bruce Bartlett does a great job of tracing the origins of today’s struggles to slavery days: <http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/Columns/2012/05/04/Americas-Return-to-Political-Polarization.aspx#page1>

(4) In order to promote political stability, the framers of the U.S. Constitution created a unique fragmentation of the government into three branches (plus the Federal Reserve the military) and a distinctively powerful division of power between the federal, state, county and city jurisdictions. Combined with the decision to disperse and stagger elections, this system makes the governmental system of the U.S. uniquely stable. But, in an unintended consequence that Mann and Ornstein detail, it also makes it vulnerable to sabotage and nullification by a powerful political force like today's Republican Party which rejects the culture of compromise that is absolutely crucial to make our uniquely divided national governmental system work.

(5) Bostis is quoted in Thomas Edsall, "The Decline of Black Power in the South," <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/07/10/the-decline-of-black-power-in-the-south/?emc=eta1>

(6) Much more on Pope at: <http://www.southernstudies.org/person/art-pope>

(7) <http://www.cnn.com/2013/05/29/opinion/barber-north-carolina-protest>

(8) A big question is how this increased street motion can not only be greatly increased but also translated into the electoral power necessary to strip away the Republican supermajorities and governorship in that state.

(9) For elaboration see Bob Wing, "Notes Toward a Social Justice Electoral Strategy," <https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/notes-toward-a-social-justice-electoral-strategy-by-bob-wing/> and "Can We Defeat the Racist Southern Strategy in 2012?" <http://www.organizingupgrade.com/index.php/modules-menu/community-organizing/item/728-can-we-defeat-the-racist-southern-strategy-in-2012>

(10) Bob Moser, the executive editor of American Prospect magazine, advances an interesting and optimistic analysis of the political potential of the South in his 2008 book, "Blue Dixie" and in a recent special feature of American Prospect magazine entitled "The End of the Solid South" (<http://prospect.org/article/end-solid-south>).

(11) Bob Wing, "From Mississippi Goddam to Jackson Hell Yes': Chokwe Lumumba is the New Mayor of Jackson": <http://www.southernstudies.org/2013/06/voices-from-mississippi-goddam-to-jackson-hell-yes.html>

(12) There are many more important groups but the following are the social justice organizations with major civic engagement operations I am currently most knowledgeable about. Each of the groups I highlight is grounded in racial justice, new majority and/or rising American electoral politics and strategies.

(13) See "The Importance of the Fight for the South—And How It Can and Must Be Won" in this volume.