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## The Intersection of Socioeconomic Segregation, the Black Voter, and Redistricting within Tallahassee, Florida

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**The Intersection of Socioeconomic Segregation, the Black Voter, and  
Redistricting within Tallahassee, Florida**

**Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
of Bard College**

**by  
Tsion Kiros**

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## Abstract

This thesis explores answering the question of why Tallahassee is considered one of the most economically/racially segregated cities within America. This thesis also wants to create the argument on why and how socioeconomic segregation, black voting behavior, and redistricting all intersect with each other and help perpetuate the issue of economic stagnation among black people in Tallahassee. The first chapter consists of providing the historical context within Tallahassee dating all the way back to slavery in the mid-1800s when it was the slave trading capitol of the state. From there I focus on the transition from there to the era of Reconstruction, the era of Jim Crowe, the Civil Rights Movement within Tallahassee and how all of these transitions impacted the black citizen, lead to the creation of black institutions, and established current day residential patterns within the city, most notably Frenchtown and the North/Southside divide and became de facto segregation. This chapter also describes the profile of the black voter within Tallahassee. In the second chapter I focus on breaking down the achievement gap within schools in Leon County and how lower property taxes of neighborhoods and standardized education help perpetuate the cycle of poor neighborhoods feeding into poor schools on the Southside of town, in contrast of wealthier neighborhoods. This is an example of how socioeconomic segregation and divided residential patterns play out in the modern day context. This chapter also discusses black voting behavior and how connects it to a voter and candidate's blackness. In the final chapter it is discussed the role redistricting has played in Congressional District 5 and argues how it being a majority-minority district dilutes the black vote. This chapter also discusses potential

legislation that could help potentially mitigate the issue of socioeconomic segregation but remains stalled within Congress.

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## Introduction

I was struck by a study done by the Martin Property Institute back in 2015, that rated the city of Tallahassee, Florida (my hometown) as number 1 for being the most segregated city based on income in America per capita at an index of 0.968. For a city whose population is roughly 200,000 people, this statistic is striking. Usually when it comes to issues regarding race and income inequality cities such as Jacksonville or Miami get more attention and Tallahassee being smaller can be overlooked. Though on an anecdotal level within Tallahassee this statistic isn't that much of a surprise. Tallahassee is roughly one third black, and two thirds white. It falls into being a "tale of two cities" when looking at its history and present.

The central research questions I want to ask while writing this thesis and attempt to answer are the following: Why is socioeconomic segregation in Tallahassee experienced by black people at such a high prevalence? Why does socioeconomic segregation continue to exist? How does socioeconomic segregation affect black people in Tallahassee and how they participate in voting? Why does socioeconomic segregation continue to persist and stagnate? How does it manifest itself and what ways can we attempt to mitigate it legislatively? What are some barriers that exist in Tallahassee's political geography/landscape that make it difficult to address this subject and create change?

Usually when discussing socioeconomic segregation among the realm of academia, it tends to be discussed on a systematic level. While that is important and is a conversation that needs to be had, I think it's all too easy to fall into the trap of trying to apply systematic change as the solution and get lost in the institutional aspects of where socioeconomic segregation comes from. While systematic racism and classism is wholly relevant to the topic, I think it's also important to discuss at a microlevel and not just a macro one and write about what you know and have witnessed firsthand on a local level. What I would like to add to the discussion on the topic of socioeconomic segregation is using the city of Tallahassee as a case study

Socioeconomic segregation can be defined within this paper as the division of wealth and having it concentrated in certain residential neighborhoods. Its impacts are not only felt economically, but politically and culturally. Within the context of Tallahassee socioeconomic segregation plays out in the Northside and Southside divide. These two areas of town can be visually separated by highway I-10, which runs through the middle of the city and simultaneously connects and divides the area.

This divide dates back to the remnants of the Old South. This is seen in how a majority of black people and those who have a lower-income live on the south side of Tallahassee. Some areas of black enclaves and economic ones do exist on the Northside of Tallahassee and the rates of segregation have gone down compared to what it once was in the 1960s. Despite this the socioeconomic/racial segregation still remains very high and reflect the city's past currently based where the city's demographic patterns go to school and which neighborhoods, they reside in.



How I'm going to go about answering these research questions is within the first chapter focusing on Tallahassee's historical context and how socioeconomic segregation came to be a modern issue based on its roots. Tallahassee is unique in not only being the state capitol but being the only Confederate capitol that wasn't destroyed in Sherman's march to the sea during the Civil War. It was also the slave trade capitol of Florida prior to the abolition of slavery. During the era of reconstruction, there was a temporary influx of black institutions being established such as FAMU and Bethel AME Church which would be very influential during the local Civil Rights Movement.

Also occurring in the era of reconstruction one would see the city of Tallahassee transition from an agrarian economy to being focused on citrus, cattle ranching, and naval stores. Also, it would particularly become more of a gubernatorial city than the agrarian slave post it was known for. However, its local politics would be dominated by the "Old Southern Brotherhood" political trope, and would keep black people out of these public sectors/fields of power. It was also during the era of Reconstruction that historic black neighborhoods such as Frenchtown would be established. Due to not having to transition its economy as radically as its former Confederate Southern counterparts since the city escaped the Civil War relatively unscathed. Because of this its racist institutions/segregation patterns remained a staple in the city during the Era of Jim Crow where schools, hospitals, buses, even cemeteries were segregated. Race relations were so bad that Tallahassee had the highest lynching per capita during the 1930s. Eventually the era of segregation was phased out due to the Civil Rights Movement taking place in Tallahassee during the 1950s and 1960s. While racial

tensions have significantly improved since the Era of Jim Crow. However the residential patterns from Jim Crow still remain intact and is just as segregated as it was in the 1960s.

In this same Chapter I also write about the profile of the black voter within Tallahassee. The Civil Rights Movement ushered a wave of black political activists wanting to get involved in local politics by voting. However, within the state of Florida there were many barriers to entry in regards to voting rights, especially prior to passing Amendment 4 in 2018, people who have been convicted of a felony were unable to participate in voting. This disproportionately affected black voters within the state, and even though Amendment 4 passed there are still some loopholes making it difficult for former felons to vote.

In the second chapter I discuss how socioeconomic segregation has played out and what it looks like in present day Tallahassee. This chapter focuses on primarily the achievement gap as well as black voting theory. I wanted to focus on the achievement gap within education because of how education is perceived as being the greatest form of social mobility for anyone regardless of their race or economic background. However, in Tallahassee this has not been the case due to policies of school zoning, neighborhoods and property taxes. The wealthier a neighborhood is, the more funding the zoned school within that neighborhood gets via property taxes, and most of the well-off schools happen to be on the Northside of town. This makes it easier for them to gain access to better resources making them more equipped to have their students perform well on state standardized exams such as the FSA. These wealthier schools on the

Northside of town get additional funding and teachers get bonuses from these higher test results, while Title 1 schools and schools on the Southside continue to be very underfunded. This creates the achievement gap among black and white students within Tallahassee.

In this chapter I also discuss voting behavior of black voters within Tallahassee which emerged from the Civil Rights Movements with two concepts of “Nationalists/ Negro Leadership” and “Integrationists”, where black politicians can choose to either prioritize black voters through separation or wanting to integrate them into white society and how this has played out within local Tallahassee politics. I thought connecting to the first chapter of Tallahassee’s historical context and the achievement gap because voting is a way black people can help change policies that perpetuate the achievement gap and ongoing residential segregation within the city.

In the 3rd Chapter I attempt to answer the question of the role redistricting/ has played in stagnating addressing the effects of socioeconomic segregation and how it has acted as a barrier, regarding Leon County and Tallahassee. Even though Gerrymandering is legally prohibited from the Voting Rights Act of 1965, there is a legal loophole through the “Equal Protection Clause” and Section 5 of the Act. I also talk about the process of redistricting and how this has played out within the state of Florida. I discuss Congressional District 5 as an example of a majority-minority district that has been redrawn and gained notoriety for being one of the most gerrymandered districts in the country. Congressional District 5 contains part of Leon County and Tallahassee but is split roughly where highway I-10 is and mostly covers the south-side of town. While

Congressional District 2 contains the North-side of town and is majority white. It is not a coincidence that the way these two districts were redrawn reflect their residential and racial segregation. I discuss the strategy of how Republican members of the state legislature have redrawn districts in a way where they have an advantage in securing state victories for their party and policies they support, which is typically against the black voter's interest. I made an argument of how majority-minority districts are actually harmful to the black voter since it only helps on a congressional level but on a state and national level it dilutes their vote heavily and makes it harder for legislation that they support to get passed.

To summarize within in the first chapter, I go into detail about the type of city Tallahassee was during starting with the remnants of slavery, the era of Reconstruction, the era of Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement. I want to explain the roots and historical origins and context for how socioeconomic segregation patterns came to be in the city's present day. I also discuss the profile of the black voter within Tallahassee and how they are a reflection of the legacy of political activism and black excellence that dates back all the way to the era of reconstruction and the role they have played within local politics. In the second chapter I go into detail about how socioeconomic segregation has played out in a modern-day context, using the achievement gap within education between black and white students in Leon County as an example. I also discuss how black voting patterns within the city connect to potentially mitigating the achievement gap. In the third chapter I discuss the barriers to be mitigating socioeconomic segregation and having the black vote have power by discussing the role gerrymandering and redistricting has played in regards to Congressional District 2 and 5

and mirrors the residential and racial division within Tallahassee. I argue that District 5 being one of two majority-minority districts has contributed to diluting the black vote and their potential to create change in response to the harms of socioeconomic segregation. I focus on voting in all three chapters because it is a form of political activism for the black voter.

My methodology of source material is using primary sources from various institutions such as FAMU and CORE to describe the history of Tallahassee, particularly during the Civil Rights Era. Also using primary sources from laws such as the Voting Rights Act, the “Equal Protection Clause”, and section 5 of the Act. I use secondary sources such as material on the nationalist/negro leadership movement and integrationist movements to describe how these ideologies emerged and gauge the public’s interest. I also use secondary sources for educational outcomes of the FCAT/FSA testing results, or to illustrate the wealth gap between black and white citizens. I also use the redrawing of congressional districts’ and these maps to explain the effect redistricting has had within Tallahassee.

(Personal Statement)

I am choosing to write about the relationship between socioeconomic segregation and voter disenfranchisement in Tallahassee because of what I witnessed firsthand and how this issue has resonated with me personally. Going to schools such as Fairview Middle School and Rickards High School which are majority black and are on the south side of town showed me how underfunded the schools were. Much of this had to do with the neighborhoods being poor and the test scores on the FCAT/FSA tended to be lower due to the achievement gap and being unable to afford necessary resources for an already

disenfranchised population of students which helped feed this cycle. To me being denied a fair/equal education and it being made harder to vote is a lack of rights and protection and a way that the government has failed its people.

I say this as a daughter of Ethiopian immigrants. Since a young age it has been distilled in me how the value of education and the importance of participating in a democracy is essential and a right that should be provided. My parents immigrated here for my dad to go to graduate school and for their children to have an easier future than their past was. I believe that my parents growing up in a brutal communist regime during a civil war in Ethiopia made them cling tighter to institutions such as education, democracy, and the right to vote since that was something that was deprived from them while growing up. In terms of education at the time of the 1980s there was only one university which was Addis Ababa University. My dad went there after working incredibly hard to improve his living situation since where he lived (which was Adwa) where a lot of the fighting from the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict was taking place. He is a testament to how much education is the best way to improve your social mobility. During my primary education years my parents always emphasized the importance of education because of this and how I had no inherited wealth since I'm only second generation, so it falls on myself entirely to improve my own situation through the means of education.

Also in this sense being politically active and engaged is something they've always taught me not to take for granted because in Ethiopia all the elections there have not

been representative of the voters and people there have been killed for dissenting against the government.

While in the US and being a born citizen I have the privilege of freedom of speech and being able to vote, knowing that it will count. I also have the privilege of knowing my heritage and where my family has come from generations back due to being of Ethiopian descent. This privilege of rootedness is something that has been robbed from black Americans in this country due to the legacy of chattel slavery in the Americas. I feel as though losing that sense of rootedness makes the struggle for racial equality that much harder. I also feel as though not enough African immigrants give black Americans enough credit for all the strides they've created for themselves in fighting for equality and how if it weren't for them many African immigrants would not have been able to even come here in the 20th century and onwards due to racist quotas implemented against Africans. Unfortunately, many African immigrants are either unaware of the legacy of slavery or choose to not recognize how deep its effects are institutionally in the United States so there is often this line of thinking "Why can't black people improve their situation? Or that many of the issues faced by the community is their own self doing. This type of rhetoric is very harmful towards the black community and diaspora and creates a cultural rift between black Americans and Africans when in actuality we should all be a part of the same fight against the institutions of white supremacy and legacy of racism since we are kin and a part of the African diaspora. This is another reason why I was drawn to write my paper on this subject as a means to address this rift and from the belief that since we are all a part of the diaspora this issue of systematic inequality is racism should be our fight together as one people.

## **Ch. 1 Historical Context: Tallahassee Civil Rights Movement/Profile of The Black Voter**

To understand Tallahassee Florida's current voting dynamics and socioeconomic divisions, it is critical to examine antebellum race relations in the city. Prior to the end of the civil war Tallahassee had the largest number of plantations in the state and was a center for slave trade in the state of Florida. According to the 1860 Census, in Leon County – which has its county seat in Tallahassee - black slaves made up 73% of the county's population<sup>1</sup>. Unlike most Southern cities, Tallahassee was mostly spared by the Union's army forces during the Civil War. As the only Confederate capital not sacked and burned by Union troops, Tallahassee's Reconstruction Era recovery period wasn't as drastic as some of its counterparts, as the city literally had less to rebuild<sup>2</sup>.

Despite this unique characteristic, Tallahassee's economy was still reconfigured following the Civil War. Since most of Tallahassee's antebellum industries were heavily reliant on slave labor, they suffered after slaves were emancipated due to the passage of the 13th amendment. Tallahassee's tobacco and cotton industries moved away from

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<sup>1</sup> Rivers, Larry E. "Slavery in Microcosm: Leon County, Florida, 1824 to 1860." *The Journal of Negro History* 66, no. 3 (1981): 235-245.

<sup>2</sup> Rogers Jr, William Warren. "Rebel Storehouse: Florida in the Confederate Economy." *Civil War History* 43, no. 2 (1997): 158-159.



the capital to the southeast section of Florida.<sup>3</sup> Due to this movement of industries, unlike many other cities in the antebellum South, in Tallahassee many former slaves were mostly spared from falling victim to the practice of sharecropping. Instead Tallahassee would shift to producing citrus, cattle ranching, and naval stores. This distinction and lack of disruption to the local economy of Tallahassee is important to note because these factors made the city's economy and social climate develop differently coming out of the Civil War than other Southern cities that had been burned by the Union army, because the city didn't have to completely redevelop itself to the same extent. Because Tallahassee did not have to completely rebuild and reimagine itself from the ground up following the Civil War, it was easier for the city to latch onto the racist ideals that animated slavery there during the antebellum era. Further, this racism carried over into the Reconstruction and Jim Crow Era, and its effects must be considered precursors to the socioeconomic segregation that exists in Tallahassee today.

Following emancipation, many former slaves and black settlers in Tallahassee would move and relocate to the area of what is still known as Frenchtown. Frenchtown was located right near the end of the Carrabelle, Georgia railroad line and would be the earliest example of the black middle class being created within Tallahassee.

<sup>4</sup>Frenchtown also became a largely important hub for black culture. Railroads were

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<sup>3</sup> Rogers, William Warren. "A Great Stirring in the Land: Tallahassee and Leon County in 1860." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (1985): 148-60. [www.jstor.org/stable/30146654](http://www.jstor.org/stable/30146654).

<sup>4</sup> Hare, Julianne. *Historic Frenchtown: Heart and Heritage in Tallahassee*. History Press, 2006.

essential to help rebuild the South and reconnect Tallahassee to other states' economies. It was also during the era immediately after Reconstruction where you would see the first instances of black owned businesses and institutions arise in Tallahassee. The most important of these institutions being FAMU, which was founded through the usage of a land grant and found by other fellow freedmen with the goal of educating the black population of Tallahassee and the surrounding metro area. FAMU was the first historically black college in the United States, and its importance in helping create racial progress in the Civil Rights movement within Tallahassee cannot be overstated since it would directly help collaborate with other institutions involved in the civil rights movement such the NAACP, and the Inter Civic Council. <sup>5</sup> The importance of mentioning these institutions is because they played a large role during the Civil Rights Movement in order to help black Americans within Tallahassee gain equal rights to their white people. In addition to this many of these institutions and organizations are still relied upon today as beacon of assisting black people in Tallahassee during modern day racial issues, and helped usher the creation of an educated black middle class who are politically active.

Adhering to the call of many white constituents and politicians uncomfortable with the concept of freedmen participating as citizens in the state of Florida, the era of Jim Crow and segregation took place in Tallahassee immediately post Reconstruction after 1877. De jure segregation in Tallahassee during the era of Jim Crow and onwards was practiced in all public areas, from schools, to hospitals, to busing, and even in

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<sup>5</sup> Harold R. Washington, "History and Role of Black Law Schools," North Carolina Central Law Journal 5, no. 2 (Spring 1974): 158-189

cemeteries. A small middle class in Tallahassee would emerge from the creation of FAMU but during the era of Jim Crow the hierarchical structure of Tallahassee tended to be composed of white southern boy political brotherhood trope ruling over a smaller disenfranchised population of black voters. <sup>6</sup>This southern political brotherhood transcended politics but also heavily bled into the culture and many whites during this time would police/govern over black people with a paternalistic, condescending tone while strictly imposing segregation.

Tallahassee being a governmental city evolved past being a mostly agrarian driven economy, which made the city stand out among the greater panhandle area. This would in theory create more job opportunities for black citizens in the city to work in the service and government sector. Due to policies barring black people from certain industries, many black citizens were prevented from working in said sector and could not participate in passing local legislation to help their people. Segregation in Tallahassee was so strict that it infamously earned the nickname “Little Mississippi”. Tallahassee also gained a strong Ku Klux Klan following when entering the 20th century due to some portions of the white population feeling threatened by black citizens establishing black owned businesses in Frenchtown and being threatened by FAMU educating the black middle class. The rise of the KKK in Tallahassee created a new series of violence in Tallahassee post reconstruction era. From 1900 to 1930 Leon County would have the highest lynchings per capita in the country. The KKK stands for the Ku Klux Klan, and

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<sup>6</sup> Richardson, Joe M. *African Americans in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877*. Univ. of Alabama Press, 2008.

they are white supremacist organization who believe that black people are inherently inferior to the white race. They had a large following within Tallahassee, Florida during the early 1900s. These lynchings came about as a form of punishment when black men were falsely accused of crimes by their white peers and created a new violent turn for what the fight for the civil rights movement.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1930s NAACP would start to provide ongoing legal assistance for civil rights court cases in Tallahassee. Another civil rights organization that would be important to be Tallahassee's fight for civil rights was known as CORE (Congress of Racial Equality)<sup>8</sup>. CORE and the NAACP would work heavily with students, administration and faculty of FAMU that would organize a series of sit-ins and protest to support desegregation. The first instance of protest for civil rights would occur in 1956 regarding the issue of busing. Inspired by the bus boycott in Montgomery, Tallahassee would be the first to follow by protesting busing having black people sit in the front of the bus instead of back. This bus boycott served as a rude awakening to the white population who had type casted race relations being peaceful compared to other Southern areas and erased that image that Tallahassee was a utopia for racial equality in the South.

The boycott lasted during the latter half of 1956. Tallahassee's busing laws were so stringent on bussing that not only were black people forced to sit in the back, but were

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<sup>7</sup> Howard, Walter T. *Lynchings: Extralegal Violence in Florida during the 1930s*. Authors Choice Press, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Rabby, Glenda. *Pain and the Promise: the Struggle for Civil Rights in Tallahassee, Florida*. Univ Of Georgia Press, 2016.

forced to give up their seats in order to allow white passengers to sit and be required to stand for the duration of the ride. What spearheaded the bus boycott of 1956 were two FAMU students being told to move by the bus driver to make extra space for white women and that they would be given their bus fare in return if they got off the bus. The FAMU students were not given their bus fare in return and taken to the police station by the bus driver and arrested them.<sup>9</sup>The students would get bailed out by the FAMU dean, but this incident would lead to a 6 months' worth of bus boycotts in Tallahassee. The KKK which already has a strong foundation in Tallahassee burned crosses where the students' resided. In response to this, the students from FAMU would ask their fellow black students to not ride the bus in protest. Part of this was inspired by the recent Montgomery, Alabama bus boycotts the year earlier. FAMU's role was hugely influential to the boycott's success as recalled by the Chaplain of FAMU during the 1956 bus boycott when recalling his own experiences with organization the boycott Hudson says as follows, "Students were there in full number, it was a full auditorium, as many faculty as could get in-many of us were there. Well, the students declared that they would protest the action of the bus company, and the police officers, and that they would withdraw student patronage of the bus company and that they would ask the community to join them in withdrawing patronage or boycott the bus company."<sup>10</sup>

Besides FAMU other institutions in Tallahassee would intervene in the bus such as the Intercivic City Council, the NAACP. Charles Steele who was a church pastor from the well-known black Methodist church Bethel would lead the bus boycott. The bus

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid pg. 54

<sup>10</sup> Ibid pg. 72

boycott included a majority of Tallahassee's citizens many of whom were college students from FAMU. Eventually the bus boycotts would help reinforce the federal precedent that *Browder vs. Gase* set up in America, which helped ruled that segregated busing was unconstitutional. This would be applied to Tallahassee as a city and be the end of segregated busing.

The bus boycott also introduced Tallahassee to institutions such as Intercivic City Council and the NAACP, both of which would play a very important role in desegregating Tallahassee's schools and promoting civil rights throughout the area. Together the black people of Tallahassee would demand not only integrated busing but for more black bus drivers. People who participated in the boycott were repeatedly fined and arrested. Integration would be verified by Tallahassee's chapter of Congress of Racial Equality and the local government would succumb to eliminate busing based on the financial burden the boycott had on the bus system, since Tallahassee's bus ridership was  $\frac{1}{3}$  black. <sup>11</sup>What made the Tallahassee bus boycott of 1956 distinct from the Montgomery one was how it started as a spontaneous form of protest by students rather than by civil rights institutions and organizations who happened to join the fight later. In that sense I feel as though this created more precedent for grassroots activism that puts students in a unique position of power in the civil rights movement within Tallahassee. While the Tallahassee Bus Boycott is seen as the beginning of Civil Rights within Tallahassee Florida, the way it was reported by the Tallahassee Democrat (local newspaper which was also segregated) was very biased in favor of white people and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Pg. 75

went out of its way to villainize the protestors and civil rights movement as a whole. The bus boycott was a wake up call to many people in Tallahassee, particularly white people who assumed that race relations were good in Tallahassee, but this shattered that facade and forced people to acknowledge that the city's segregation and other racial progress was just as bad as other parts of the south.

Inspired by the Greensboro sit ins in North Carolina, black FAMU college students began practicing sit ins too at many corporate and local establishments within Tallahassee Florida in the early 1960s. These sit ins weren't initially successful and as a matter of fact indirectly helped the election of racist governor Farris Bryant in 1960. However there would be another series of sit-ins in early 1963 that were sponsored by the NAACP, Intercivic City Council, and CORE. These establishments would eventually be fully desegregated on a state and federal level by 1965 with the passing of the Civil Rights Act. Many FAMU students who participated in these sit ins were arrested by local police. CORE was heavily responsible for teaching the students and other black citizens how to participate in a sit-in and helped mechanize their ability to use their voices to create change.<sup>12</sup>

Schools would be the hardest hurdle to desegregate due to the unpopularity many white parents had about potentially integrating their children's schools. Tallahassee schools would be pressured to desegregate not only by black activists but by the federal

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<sup>12</sup> Killian, Lewis M. "Organization, Rationality and Spontaneity in the Civil Rights Movement." *American Sociological Review* 49, no. 6 (1984): 770-83. [www.jstor.org/stable/2095529](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2095529).

ruling of Brown vs. Board of Education. Former governor Leroy Collins was in favor of gradual school desegregation as well during the 1950s, despite later Governor Bryant being against it. The desegregation of schools in Tallahassee would begin to take fruition in the mid 1960s. <sup>13</sup>All white high schools such as Leon High School and Lincoln High School would be the first to desegregate, and this was a big deal considering that Leon High School still operated during the civil war. However with school zone policies that are still in practice to the present day despite these desegregation efforts in schools, many black students are still segregated due to living in separate neighborhoods.

In addition to desegregating primary schools there was also a great amount of pressure from civil rights activists to desegregate FSU and allow more intermingling between FSU and FAMU. FSU receiving more funding from the state's department of education created a source of tension between the two schools that still exists today, along with the fact that it wouldn't be until 1967 that FSU would start allow black students to study at FAMU. Tallahassee Community College would also open in 1966 as an already desegregated school open to all races, which was a big deal in itself and helped push efforts for integration for FSU and FAMU. <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Rossell, Christine H. "School Desegregation and White Flight." *Political Science Quarterly* 90, no. 4 (1975): 675-95. doi:10.2307/2148750.

<sup>14</sup> Egerton, John. "Black Public Colleges: Integration and Disintegration. A Report." (1971)



This discrepancy in funding between FSU and FAMU would be articulated in the "Tallahassee Democrat" Newspaper issue on January 2nd of 1980 when concern about FAMU's effectiveness at educating the black youth was called into question and the black excellence that it had provided was heavily rooted in tradition. As articulated by Bethune Cookman in the article he's quoted saying, "I went there (a black college). I was able to achieve this level of success, you can too." However at the time its amount of funding was threatened to receive less state funding from the Joint Legislative and Executive Commission on Postsecondary Education as articulated by former governor Leroy Collins who believed that "Predominantly black colleges such as Florida A & M are outdated leftovers from segregation". However Mr. Collins is distorting and missing the point and purpose of why students attend HBCUs. When in actuality many of the black students who attended FAMU at the time came from integrated high schools and made the active choice to attend FAMU, not go there as a default due to how an HBCU would have resources and a cultural experience you simply would not be able to find or have at a predominantly white institution such as FSU. To me this article further cements the role FAMU plays as an institution that transcends simply educating the black population but as a way to preserve and protect their culture and give them the tools to succeed in a predominantly white city that at the time didn't want them to. However for decades as this article discusses FAMU was struggling to be able to stay open for tis students without getting proper funding from the state. This would be one of the many instances the city and state as a whole would attempt to chip away at long standing black institutions.

Even though there is still racist rhetoric during and after the era of desegregation in Tallahassee, the attitude adjustment of its people residing there was not as drastic when compared to other cities. Part of this had to do with how Tallahassee primarily employs people working for the state or education sector, getting many people from the North to work from the government or FSU who already held more tolerable views on the topic of racial integration. This is why it was easier for Tallahassee to have black and white people live in the same city relatively peacefully in spite of being the lynching capital several decades ago.<sup>15</sup>

As mentioned earlier even though desegregation across schools, buses, and public spaces was taking place during the 1960s, it is important to note that neighborhoods remained mostly separate during this time. Many black people in Tallahassee still resided in Frenchtown and other neighborhoods that were located below the train station line. There was no existing form of public transportation during this time period to transport black people to the northern side of town which is predominantly white. Also in addition to still remaining in separate neighborhoods, white people in Tallahassee would begin to move to planned neighborhoods in the suburbs.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to note in a Newspaper clipping of the "Tallahassee Democrat" on April 5th, 1956 journalist CJ Smith was discussing new housing projects that were going

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<sup>15</sup> "Tallahassee, FL Economy at a Glance." *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, [www.bls.gov/eag/eag.fl\\_tallahassee\\_msa.htm](http://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.fl_tallahassee_msa.htm).

<sup>16</sup> Gaston, Juanita, and Darryl K. Clare. "Residential Segregation Patterns in Metropolitan Tallahassee, Florida: 1970 to 1990." *The Negro Educational Review* 51, no. 1 (2000): 3.

on Sunset Terrace at the time near Lake Bradford within the Western part of Tallahassee. This was an under-developed area of the city and the housing project was intended to be designed for black people to reside there. Many of the residents felt initially economic concerns about moving to this new part of town that was developing with citizens' reactions being depicted as such in the News article, "If I had only the foresight I could have purchased one of those lots in 1949 or 1950 for \$550. Now they can't be bought for less than \$1200". The cost of houses in this area were rising due to its popularity and demand. As a result, northwest Tallahassee would eventually become a part of town that's heavily integrated with black people due to this initial push in housing development for them at the time of 1956. Black housing developers believed that creating neighborhoods with black people in mind would help drive black capital and this would geographically put them closer to institutions in the city such as universities like FAMU. The Newspaper clipping is quoted as saying such, "In a recent real estate transaction which no doubt will affect the Negro citizenry of Tallahassee, the National Home Builders Corporation purchased the land near the drive-in theater from a local firm. It is expected that homes will be constructed on the site in the not-too-distant future". And this prediction was right as the Northwest part of town would have a thriving black population and one of the first instances of the black population moving to areas beyond the historic Frenchtown.<sup>17</sup> This example is also crucial to my argument because while nationwide phenomenon such as suburban white flight were going at the same time (which I will introduce later in the next paragraph) by localizing the issue to Tallahassee I was able to discuss a contrasting narrative of black housing development

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<sup>17</sup> Kharif, Wali R. "Black Reaction to Segregation and Discrimination in Post-Reconstruction Florida." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (1985): 161-173.

projects being successfully created and integrated in 1956, fitting the locality narrative that I want to focus on for segregation without conflating the local with the nationalized context.

The most well known of these neighborhoods is Killlearn, which opened in 1964 on the northside of Tallahassee. Many white people residing there would become members of various homeowner associations with the goal of keeping black people out of their neighborhoods. This would mark the beginning of planned suburban neighborhoods in Tallahassee being strategically used to keep black children out of schools that they weren't zoned for (until school choice) which would help perpetuate one form of de facto segregation.<sup>18</sup>

It is important to know the historical context because it sets up the foundation and narrative for how socioeconomic segregation came to become a current day issue. You cannot discuss a current day issue without knowing its history first and where this legacy of disenfranchisement comes from. This chapter is an attempt to lay the historical groundwork from the past and helps serve as one of the main foundations for my argument on why providing historical context on a localized level makes it easier to discuss black voter re-enfranchisement.

(Profile Of Black Voter)

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<sup>18</sup> Winsberg, Morton D. "Flight from the ghetto: the migration of middle class and highly educated blacks into white urban neighborhoods." *American journal of Economics and Sociology* 44, no. 4 (1985): 411-421.

In 1867 when former confederate states were reconstructing and rejoining the Union, they were required to follow the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments in order to be allowed to join again. Florida's black population in the 1860's represented 45% of the state's total population, much of this being concentrated in Tallahassee since it was a former slave trading hub. One way white legislators would try to get around having to give black voters is by forcing majority minority areas when drafting the new state constitution was to give multiple white representation that was disproportionate to the number of black legislators<sup>19</sup>

. Much of this stemmed from fear of how having black people involved in politics would influence Florida politics since at the time most white legislators were only incorporating black legislators by force in order to rejoin the union rather than by choice. Very briefly in the 1870s you would see former slaves occupy positions of the Florida legislature, roughly 19. This would all change when Florida ratified their state constitution in 1885 when they would administer literacy tests, impose a \$2 poll tax, and would require a lengthy proof of residency in order for them to vote. As a result many black Floridians who were recently freed slaves could not vote due to these provisions in the state constitution. It was very difficult to get around these forms of voting disenfranchisement, so many black people in Leon county would turn to established institutions within their own communities to have their voices heard outside of the context of voting. But because of this form of voting disenfranchisement that took place

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<sup>19</sup> Richardson, Joe M. *African Americans in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877*. Univ. of Alabama Press, 2008.

until the Voting Rights Act of 1865, it is hard to paint a profile of the black voter within Leon County because there were very few who held the right to vote.

As stated earlier the rise of black leadership has existed well before black people in Tallahassee, Florida were granted the right to vote. Even without having the right to vote and directly cast a ballot on issues that directly pertained to them, that precedent of black leadership shaping policy was still a significant stronghold of black political activism that would eventually translate into voting prowess. Much of this black leadership would come into prominence in Tallahassee through the series of protests, boycotts, and sit-ins that were supported by black institutions such as FAMU. NAACP, intercivic city council, CORE.

**N. A. A. C. P.  
Mass Meeting**

FOR  
*"Freedom Now"*

SPEAKERS:

**MR. EZELL BLAIR, JR.**

Of Greensboro, North Carolina  
One of the "Founding Four" Students  
who started the 'sit-in' movements

**MISS PATRICIA STEPHENS**

Of Tallahassee, Florida  
Jailed because of her demand for "Freedom Now"  
for Negro Americans

**MR. BERNARD LEE**

Of Montgomery, Alabama  
Youth Leader of the Struggle for Freedom in the South

**People's Cong. Church**

4707 - 13th Street, N. W.

**Sun. June 5th, 1960**

8:00 P. M.

Special Guest: "Miss Film Festival for 1960"

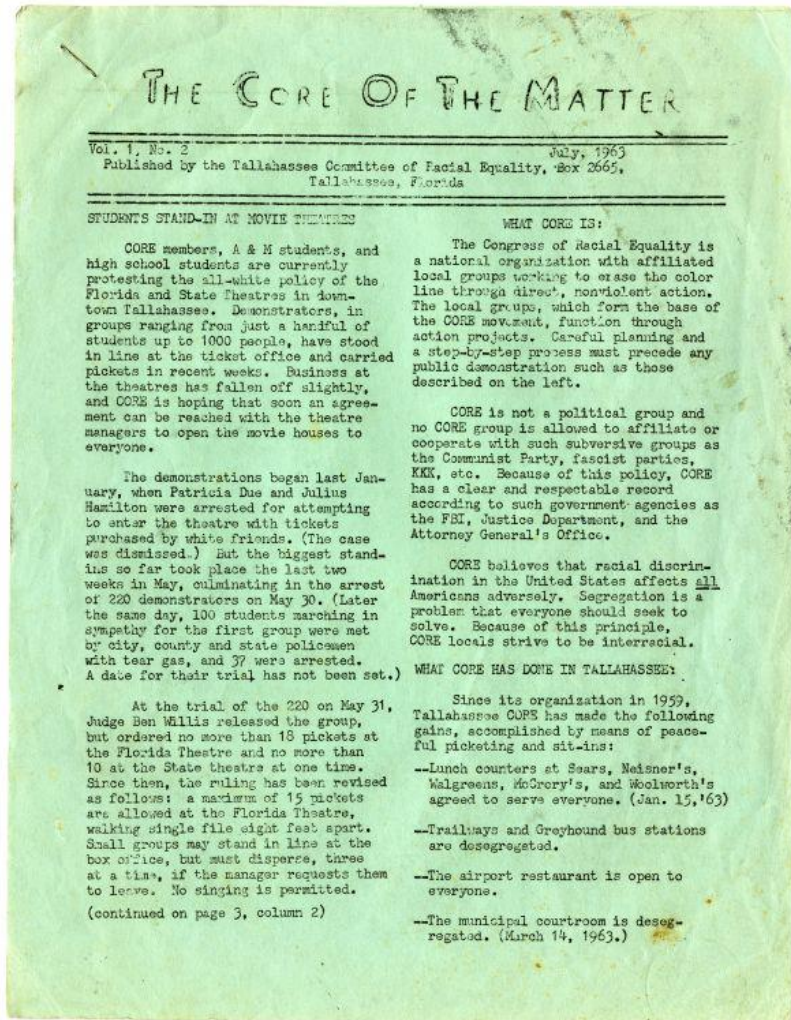
Miss La Jeune Hundley in Person

*Courtesy: De Vore Schools of Charm, Wash., D.C. and N. Y. City*

COME OUT And Strengthen Your N. A. A. C. P.  
Support the Student Demand for "FREEDOM NOW"

[A flier for an NAACP meeting with speakers Ezell Blair Jr., Patricia Stephens and Bernard Lee. The topic was "Freedom Now" and each speaker was actively participating in the civil rights movement at the time. Tallahassee civil rights activist Patricia Stephens was to speak about her experience serving 49 days in jail. She and

seven other students were jailed for holding a sit-in at Woolworth's lunch counter in Tallahassee).



(The Core of the Matter newsletter, volume 1, number 2, published by the Tallahassee Committee of Racial Equality, with information about student stand-ins at movie theaters; a description of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE); a reprint of a telegram sent by Patricia Stephens Due of CORE to President John F. Kennedy requesting that no federal funds be used to celebrate St. Augustine's 400th anniversary



because it would be a "celebration of 400 years of slavery and segregation;" and other news about CORE's activities.)

### (The Black Voter in Today's Modern Context)

The power black voters have had in recent Tallahassee elections cannot be overstated. Tallahassee black voters were primarily responsible for ushering the election of black mayors such as John Lewis in the 2000s and Andrew Gillum in 2014. Since black people make up roughly 35% percent of the population in Leon county their ability to swing local elections in the area. While this is the context of today, historically Florida has a long lasting tradition of disenfranchising black voters.<sup>20</sup>

Even in today's context, Florida remained one of the most restrictive voting rights for black voters with how difficult they make the process of being able to vote for people with felony, which happen to be majority of black, and roughly 25% of the black population in the state has not been able to participate in elections due to having a nonviolent felony. Many felons if they even had their application approved to apply for having their voting rights restored would have to travel to Tallahassee to have the governor and his cabinet on their board of clemency solely making arbitrary decisions on whether their voting rights can be restored.<sup>21</sup> Even though amendment 4 passed in 2018 which would effectively restore the rights of all felons, the restrictions placed on the bill by Republican lawmakers such as needing to complete your sentence, and fulfill

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<sup>20</sup> *Current Data*, [www.leonvotes.org/Current-Data](http://www.leonvotes.org/Current-Data).

<sup>21</sup> Phillips, Anthony Jamal, and Natalie Deckard. "Felon disenfranchisement laws and the feedback loop of political exclusion: The case of Florida." *Journal of African American Studies* 20, no. 1 (2016): 1-18.

all financial obligations still places a restriction on the black voter since many felons are still unable to vote despite the passing of amendment 4.

Despite Florida's legacy of voting disenfranchisement ,(and the fact it still practices it). Leon County has the highest voter turnout rate among all races including black voters. In Leon County there as of 2016 there are 206,000 registered voters according to the Leon County Board of Elections. Out of these 206,000 registered voters, 53% of them are Democrat, while 28 percent are Republican. Breaking this statistic down by race, black voters make up 28% of all registered voters within Leon county which numerically speaking is 57,680. That's a large number and gives blacks voters contributions in voting within Leon County having a very large and important voting prowess as is their potential to swing local elections. For example this can most clearly be seen in the 2014 mayoral race and the 2018 midterms Florida gubernatorial races when black candidate Andrew Gillum ended up getting the vast majority of black vote (86 %) s, which was responsible or him becoming the mayor of Tallahassee, and making the 2018 race very contentious and close.

In conclusion, historically Tallahassee underwent a radical transition in the past 150 years from being the slave capital of Florida, through creating future institutions of black excellence during the era of reconstruction, to being the lynching capital of the US during the 1930s, to eventually desegregating. Institutions such as the InterCivic Council, CORE, and FAMU would play a large role in the civil rights movement of Tallahassee. It's these series of historical events that set up a lot of the socioeconomic segregation that still prevail today 50 years after desegregation since the residential

patterns haven't changed much, and it still remains a 'tale of two cities'. The black vote of Tallahassee is very powerful and can be a deciding factor in local electoral race supporting legislation that holds the potential to change Tallahassee's lack of social mobility, despite repeated attempts by the state to disenfranchise black voters.

## Ch. 2 The Cycle of the Achievement Gap and Black Voting Theory

With the historical context given from the first chapter it is important to understand what it has built up to and the legacy of Tallahassee's unique history. How have things changed for black citizens in Tallahassee and what hasn't changed since the era of desegregation? Where are residents residing? What are the outcomes of desegregated schools and neighborhoods?

In Tallahassee, Florida there are few things that have changed but also many that have stagnated by staying the same. From a perspective the university of FAMU continued to be a stronghold of black excellence and an important actor for the black community. FAMU would also become more integrated with FSU such as establishing the joint engineering program. FSU has a sizable black population of students as of 2019 is 3,800 (9% of the student body), which is quite the amount growth considering it was practically nonexistent prior to the 1960's. <sup>22</sup>The rift between the two universities still exists due to unfair allocation with funding. Despite the endowment difference between the schools FAMU still managed to grow itself considerably outside the realm of the FSU on its own merit by creating the College of Pharmacy, Nursing, Graduate Studies and the College of Law. This is important because FAMU was a contributor to the creation and continued of a black middle class filled with professionals in their field and was largely responsible for ushering the growth. You would see a renaissance in

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<sup>22</sup> Johnson, Larry, Deirdre Cobb-Roberts, and Barbara Shircliffe. "African Americans and the Struggle for Opportunity in Florida Public Higher Education, 1947-1977." *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (2007): 328-58. Accessed March 3, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/20462177](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20462177).

black leadership in political office that you haven't seen since the reconstruction era such as Curtis Richardson, Al Lawson, Andrew Gillam, John Marks just to name a few.

So while there is this ongoing influx of black people in the professional sector of labor and into institutions of higher education, there still remains a barrier to entry somewhere, because residential patterns from the era of desegregation to the 1960s still remain the same from the 1960s. The Northside/Southside divide remains prevalent where still few black families have moved into the suburbs of Killearn, Maclay<sup>23</sup>. More suburbs such as Southwood have spread to parts of the southside of town. For a long time Tennessee Street being near the railroad was almost acting as an invisible border. FSU expanded its residential territory around Tennessee Street nearby to the historic Frenchtown by creating student housing. These apartment complexes and businesses that are catered to students have raised the cost of living in that area and pushed out longtime black residents out of the area, and forced them to relocate to neighborhoods with a lower cost of living.

Tallahassee's transition of attitude on desegregating compared to other Southern cities wasn't as hostile. Much of this difference can be attributed Tallahassee's university system, as FAMU, FSU, and Tallahassee Community College attracted a lot of people from out of state to work in state, many of whom held more liberal views. However primary schools were institutions that did considerable backlash following desegregation efforts. Former students of Old Lincoln High School were saddened by

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<sup>23</sup> Gaston, Juanita, and Darryl K. Clare. "Residential Segregation Patterns in Metropolitan Tallahassee, Florida: 1970 to 1990." *The Negro Educational Review* 51, no. 1 (2000): 3.

the loss of the culture, community, and leadership opportunities that came with going to a black only school as quoted by Althamese Barnes<sup>24</sup>. When Old Lincoln high school closed down and the integration of Lincoln High School occurred, it made it harder for black students to get access to those same leadership positions, or harness that same sense of community they once had, it was considered a loss at the time. Whereas on the flip side there was also initial backlash by white parents.

During the 1970s and onwards many high schools in Leon County have opened up since then with an influx of students enrolling in schools. Rickards High School and Godby High School opened up on the south side of Tallahassee in the 1970s. Chiles High School opened up on the north side of town in 1999. Lincoln High School and Leon High School are more racially integrated compared to Chiles, Rickards, and Godby due to being located closer to the center and west side of town and were the oldest predominantly white schools to be integrated<sup>25</sup>. This means their populations are more reflective of Tallahassee's demographics, both of which are  $\frac{2}{3}$  white,  $\frac{1}{3}$  black. Generally students who are zoned for these areas and the North side of town perform better on standardized tests that were administered from the 2000s and onwards.

What is it about these schools in the center and Northside of town that made them perform better on these tests? And why the emphasis on education? In the 2000s on a national level former President George HW Bush created the "No Child Left Behind"

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<sup>24</sup> <https://news.wfsu.org/post/florida-schools-resegregate-heres-look-back-desegregation-fifty-years-ago>

<sup>25</sup> Tomberlin, Joseph A. "Florida and the school desegregation issue, 1954-1959: A summary view." *The Journal of Negro Education* 43, no. 4 (1974): 457-467.

program in 2001 which increased federal funding for education on a nationwide and state level and created requirements on a state level for schools to adhere to and outlined a penalty system for state education systems to adhere to. The objective of the “No Child Left Behind” program was to improve disadvantaged students and create a way to measure academic growth.<sup>26</sup> Former George H. W. President’s brother Jeb Bush was governor of Florida at the same time and as a result Florida was one of the states that felt the effects of the No Child Left Behind program the most since it was heavily implemented here.

In Florida The No Child Left Behind Act led to a newfound emphasis of the FCAT, also known as the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test which has been around since 1976 but wasn’t administered as widely as it is today until 1998. The FCAT would test students in math and reading every year starting from when students are in 3rd grade until 10th grade. Testing in writing and science would also be administered during 5th and 8th grade. Receiving a score in the Level 3 to 5 range would be considered average and above average, while receiving a score in the Level 1 to 2 range would be considered non-satisfactory. Not meeting the benchmarks of the FCAT could hold a student back, even if they were passing all their classes. There is often a disconnect between the reading and math levels the state expected students to be in the FCAT versus what they were learning in class. Not to mention that preparation for the test would take weeks out of the classrooms’ curriculum just to focus on it. A teacher’s pay would be tied to it and which would cause them to prioritize the students that were

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/archive/fcat/>

already doing well and the ones who could border on passing, meanwhile not focusing on the disadvantaged students. The FCAT has led to thousands of students being held back and even barred from graduating high school. The FCAT as a whole has hurt minority students the most<sup>27</sup>.

The FCAT helped create a culture of teaching to the test that has a severe disconnect to the schools' curriculum and has had economic impacts on the very students it was designed to help. One issue with the FCAT is the scores are a large factor in determining how public school receives funding from the state of Florida along with the grade they receive from their school district. Schools were also assessed on a state level known as the Adequate Yearly Program which is a set of benchmarks that are set by the state every year for schools' students that are expected to achieve on reading and math. <sup>28</sup>Schools that fail to meet the state benchmarks of the Adequate Yearly Program or two years are categorized as Title 1. Being categorized as a Title 1 for over a year allows for school choice to take place, where parents can choose to send their child to any other school in the district. In addition to not meeting the Adequate Yearly Program's benchmarks from FCAT testing, Title 1 schools are also given supplemental educational services and free tutoring through additional federal funding. These supplemental education services would come in the form of every student receiving free school lunches or waivers for college application fees. The goal is

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<sup>27</sup> Yates, Trisha Loscalzo. "A Criticism of the No Child Left Behind Act: How the Convention on the Rights of the Child Can Offer Promising Reform of Education Legislation in America." *Whittier J. Child. & Fam. Advoc.* 5 (2005): 399.

<sup>28</sup> Buck, Julie, and Joseph Torgesen. "The Relationship between Performance on a Measure of Oral Reading Fluency and Performance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test. FCRR Technical Report# 1." *Florida Center for Reading Research* (2018).



to help close the achievement gap for schools classified as Title 1 with these additional programs.<sup>29</sup>

Within Leon County it is not a coincidence that schools classified as Titled 1 also happen to be predominantly black schools on the southside of Tallahassee. Schools that fall into Title 1 Categories are Hartsfield Elementary, Ruediger Elementary, Fairview Middle School, Nims Rickards High School, and Godby High School. Not only do Title 1 schools not meet the benchmarks of the FCAT, but they also receive a lower designated grade by the Leon County school board. The grade they receive from the Leon County school board combined with their FCAT scores determines how much funding they get and how much resources they get and the type of students who are able to go to their school based on which neighborhood they live in. The FCAT has helped accelerate the achievement gap that already exists. Half of the schools within the Leon County School system are classified as Titled 1 with parents earning an income of less than \$30,000.<sup>30</sup> Not only is this relevant to students living in the Tallahassee metro-area but also pertains to students living in nearby rural areas within Gadsden County, coming here for better educational opportunities due to school choice policy.

The FCAT was phased out by 2014 for the Florida State Assessment (FSA) in 2014 along with end of course exams being administered as a replacement. End of course

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas, Dianne H. "The digital divide: What schools in low socioeconomic areas must teach." *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* 74, no. 4 (2008).

<sup>30</sup> Campbell, Chari A., and Greg Brigman. "Closing the achievement gap: A structured approach to group counseling." *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work* 30, no. 1 (2005): 67-82.

exams would be administered around the state and based around subjects students were taking courses in at school such as Biology or US history. While the FSA tried to mitigate the “teaching to the test” backlash that many had, it did not address how the “No Child Left Behind” program and the FCAT’s implementation help facilitate the achievement gap between black and white students in Leon County. This cycle has become a negative feedback loop combined with the fact of how residential areas between black and white neighborhoods haven’t changed very much from the 1960s to today.<sup>31</sup>

What the cycle of the achievement gap entails and how residential areas and schools interest is that the property values of homes decrease when it was a majority minority neighborhood. Lower property values lead to lower funded schools, since public schools in the state of Florida get their annual funding based on the property taxes of neighborhoods within their assigned school zoning district. <sup>32</sup>The lack of funding within schools leads to unequal educational opportunities for students depending on the neighborhood you may live in. As a result, schools on the southside of town are left with smaller funding from the surrounding property taxes. These schools receive lower grades on their school evaluations due to not having access to the same resources, on top of already being left at an economic disadvantage. This is also a big source of why the “achievement gap” between black and white children along with children from low- and high-income neighborhoods exist within Leon county. A combination of these

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<sup>31</sup> Simon, Marsha. "Assessment versus Achievement: Winner Takes All!." *Florida Journal of Educational Administration & Policy* 3, no. 2 (2010): 73-85.

<sup>32</sup> Saenz, Willie. "A Correlational Study Between The Amount Of Property Wealth Behind Each Student Attending Florida District Schools And The Acade." (2010).

factors help perpetuate this cycle of a lack of social mobility in low income and minority communities. .Now knowing the historical context of Tallahassee's segregation discussed in chapter 1, often the neighborhood patterns on the South side of town originally being predicated on de jure segregation and now impacting school zones, where one lives can determine a black student's access to resources via education. The fact these residential patterns haven't changed leaves many students vulnerable to staying trapped in a cycle where mobility isn't easily accessible<sup>33</sup>.

So with an achievement gap that continues to stagnate the development of black youth in Tallahassee, Florida, who is there to advocate for black citizens on the cycle of lack of social mobility, that is still pervasive as it was in the 1960s and prior? The poverty rate for black people in Tallahassee Florida still remains high at 35.7%, when making up only a third of the city according to Welfare Info. While the high school graduation rate remains high at 80%, the bachelor's degree attainment rate remains at 25%. Where does the stagnation lie? And why do educational outcomes for the black youth matter? What is the existing connection between the achievement gap and voting? One can argue for a connection between educational outcomes and voting. What exactly is this connection?

It speaks volumes that Tallahassee is located in a majority minority district due to the zoning of district 5 as of 2017, and yet has not successfully passed local legislation to help mitigate this issue. The connection between black voting and education outcomes in regard to the achievement gap is that voting allows for agency in a marginalized

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<sup>33</sup> Dixon, Maressa L. "African American perceptions of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and high school graduation." (2009).

group, to vote for legislation that favors and benefits them. Otherwise it is historically liable for the black voter to disengage when the electoral system has disenfranchised them. Given the ongoing stagnation of social mobility in Tallahassee's southside, is it possible to reframe black voting in terms of re-enfranchisement? Because if one poses socioeconomic segregation and the achievement gap that comes with it as the problem, then voting could be seen as the solution. One would be under the impression that it would be relatively easy for black voters to participate in the legislative system as voters to get legislation their community needs passed considering that they are in a majority minority district, the fact that black people in Tallahassee makes up 33% of the city's population giving them large voting prowess, and given that Leon county as a whole has a large voting turnout rate. So, what has happened to voting legislation in Tallahassee, that could mitigate issues of the achievement gap and socioeconomic segregation?

First in order to answer this question it's important to dispel the damaging fallacies that exist on the subject of black voting. There is a myth within our political landscape that black people do not vote. That is not true. Besides continuous present and historic attempts to disenfranchise black votes, black voters will and do vote when having a candidate to vote for that address issues that directly impact their community, along with supporting legislation. When nothing is presented that benefits them or actively hurts their community, no political party or candidate is owed the vote.

There are two main schools of thought on black voting emerging from the 1960's civil rights movement regarding what is the best way to go about mobilizing the black vote and getting results. One of these ideologies is known as "nationalists" which support the

notion of “negro leadership”. A black nationalist in this context believing in the notion of “negro leadership” means that due to the fact this country was founded on white supremacy, which systematically abused black people in ways by using their bodies for labor through slavery and continuously oppressing the black individual, t the only way to resolve this is to have black people elected in office/positions of power since they are the only ones who understand the plight of black people and will represent the community’s best interests.<sup>34</sup>

In response to “negro leadership” and how it pertains to Tallahassee, it is one of those theories that has so far worked out better abstractly than in actual practice. While Tallahassee has had its share of black leaders on a local level, there is a noticeable transition on how they handle this power once elected. Initially while campaigning black candidates will run on the promise of meeting the needs of black voters and being a voice in a white dominated political field. However once put it in office they tend to “sit at the table” and “rub elbows' ' with white political figures from the “good old boys' ' club. They don’t outright betray their black electorate, but they aren’t as ambitious with their promises. Not as radical as they once were while on the campaign trail and try to settle for less change than initially wanted and little progress is actually made when they are actually in power.

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<sup>34</sup> Gleason, Shane A., and Christopher T. Stout. "Who Is Empowering Who: Exploring the Causal Relationship Between Descriptive Representation and Black Empowerment." *Journal of Black Studies* 45, no. 7 (2014): 635-59. Accessed March 3, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/24572881](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24572881).

Late political analyst Gwen Iffel discusses this phenomenon in her book, “The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama”<sup>35</sup>, although written in 2008 in an era where the country for a moment was under the false impression of being a post-racial society at the election of Obama. She discusses black modern political figures as case studies such as Kamala Harris or Cory Booker who have won elections in their respective areas, and yet have a record that contradicts how they run as black candidates. She interviews them hearing their different perspectives on how race has impacted their careers as a politician. She also cites Obama as an example of being “just black enough” for a white populace, due to his background. What’s important about Iffel’s work was how concise it was in its analysis, and how it still holds up today in a radically different political landscape. Black politicians still have a white population that they also have to govern to in office and appeal to in elections. Also historically due to the radicalists of the “negro leadership” from the 1960s allowing black politicians to get their foot in the door in positions of office, they have generally become less radicalized over time while race relations appeared to get better under the impression that “enough progress has already been made”. Thus they’ll choose electoral opportunism over representing their community.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand another competing ideology on black voting to emerge from the 1960s civil rights movement are known as “integrationists”. The integrationists believed

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<sup>35</sup> Iffel, Gwen. *The Breakthrough, Race and Politics in the Age of Obama*. 2008

<sup>36</sup> Sass, Tim R., and Bobby J. Pittman. "The Changing Impact of Electoral Structure on Black Representation in the South, 1970-1996." *Public Choice* 104, no. 3/4 (2000): 369-88. Accessed March 3, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/30026433](http://www.jstor.org/stable/30026433).

that the only way to mobilize black voters and get results was through the means of integrating black people into white parts of society as much as possible including with voting. Hence a black candidate while not abandoning the issues of their people would need to also make an effort to appeal to the white electorate. The integrationists believed that nationalists' approach was too separate and would isolate a larger electorate of non-black liberal supporters. Instead they would rely heavily on the constitution and ruling segregation as unconstitutional given the 14th amendment. That unconstitutionality was measured against de jure segregation in the 1960s making it easier to gain wide appeal among liberal white people and moderate leaning black voters.<sup>37</sup>

The idea of what it means to be an integrationist has played out in Tallahassee as well. Local city commissioners have used the parts of Midtown and college town where FAMU and FSU are located as places of integration between black and white citizens. Leon and Lincoln High School are examples of integration since they were the first schools to be desegregated/integrated. In regards to voting white candidates in Tallahassee such as Charlie Christ, Gwen Graham, and Bill Nelson have managed to maintain popularity and a base among black and white constituents of Leon County alike to relying on moderate/left policy points.

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<sup>37</sup> Welch, Susan, and Lorn S. Foster. "The Impact of Economic Conditions on the Voting Behavior of Blacks." *The Western Political Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (1992): 221-36. Accessed March 3, 2020. doi:10.2307/448772.

However in exchange of being an integrationist one does not pay attention to the needs of black constituents enough and that causes backlash. When the stagnation of social ability and the achievement continues to not be addressed for decades, it makes it appear as the politician in office does not care about their issues. On the rare occasion that integrationist black politicians do run and embrace their blackness locally it can create a lot of momentum. During Andrew Gillum's campaign for Tallahassee mayor in 2014 he did not shy away from his blackness, but instead embraced it. He was a FAMU alumni, ran focusing on issues that affect the south side community, focused on closing the achievement gap that the FCAT/FSA helped create, while also running as an integrationist because he ran on platforms on wanting to integrate north and south side of town. Gillum was an unapologetically progressive black candidate and mayor of Tallahassee. However as Gwen Iffel predicted in her work "The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Politics", though Gillum won his mayoral race, when he ran a campaign a similarly unapologetically black campaign gubernatorial candidate in 2018, reminiscent of radical separatists of the 1960s, Gillum lost after racially charged attacks were made against him. The current Florida governor, and Gillum's Republican opponent, Ron Desantis, said on the subject of Gillum potentially serving as Florida's governor, that "the last thing we need to do is monkey this up."<sup>38</sup> The use of the word monkey in this context widely viewed as a racial dog whistle. Incidents such as this lend credence to the argument that Gillum's blackness was a factor in Gillum's loss in Florida's gubernatorial race.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Allen, Robert L. "America, The Melting Pot with Only One Ingredient: Why Are So Few African-Americans Elected as US Senators or Governors?."

<sup>39</sup> Bergad, Laird W. "The Politics of Race and the Florida Gubernatorial Election of November 2018." (2018).



As a result this ongoing rift between and spectrum of separationists and integrationists voting patterns/politicians continues to leave black voters of Tallahassee/Leon County in a hard place. How can they vote for policies that favor them when none are being put forth in place because the candidates transition from their platform, or end up attempting to appeal to the white electorate? It is important to note here that while radical separatists' candidates still do exist and run, they end up not winning local elections as easily as they're more integrationist counterparts.

The result of winning these elections is that the goals of black voters are often left at a loss of having their interests met. They still will engage with the Democratic candidate (black or white) and their policies when needed at the expense of having a dog whistling Republican as the alternative in office. This may be favorable toward party politics and the democratic party has a reliable electorate base within Leon County elections. But in terms of increasing participation among black voting behavior and encouraging them to turn out to vote, this pattern fails at creating an incentive and is harmful in the long term.

The connection between black voting patterns and socioeconomic stagnation can also be made based on how Tallahassee's black middle class has grown substantially as seen today when compared to the era of desegregation in the 1960s. The black middle class makes up a high amount of the electorate and potential candidates who run for office. Being a middle class voter due to typically being more educated leads to more high informed voting. When high informed voting takes place particularly among

black voters, they look at candidates most likely to represent their interests and do not vote against their own self-interests. The black middle class electorate has grown massively and continues to, however it hasn't grown fast enough considering as of 2018 according to Welfare Info, the poverty rate remains high at 35.7% . Also, where the black middle class lies is the main source of governance and agency for potential change within the black community of Tallahassee. The growth of the middle class has helped usher that change in power, but it needs to expand beyond the middle class and professionals. The power that comes with governance and agency needs to expand to parts of Tallahassee where the black community has been hit the hardest. Part of the reason why the black middle class has been able to be as powerful a force is not only because of their collective wealth, but because of their ability to integrate. They are not confined to the "tale of two cities" narrative due to having more collective wealth and the ability to be integrationist as voters and citizens, being able to interact in both black and white spaces helps give them an edge. However despite the growth of the black middle class in the past 5 decades, it is important to note that their status does not make them able to transcend the issues that come with being black and their race; rather it helps lessen the blow and is one of the few ways the achievement gap and effects of socioeconomic segregation has been fought against on an individual level.

While it's a positive thing that these examples exist on an individual basis, how does one create a way for the cycle of the achievement gap and socioeconomic to be fought against all facets (aside from voting)? The black middle class is a double-edged sword because once black citizens have attained a certain amount of capital, they are more

likely to move to the suburbs to gain access to the opportunities that are now available to them. In Tallahassee this looks like them moving to neighborhoods within the North side of town and Midtown and going to schools that are more integrated. The harm of this is that it helps perpetuate the cycle of concentrated poverty. Concentrated poverty is when poverty is localized to a specific region. In Tallahassee's context, the area with concentrated poverty is the south side of town. When choosing to leave historic neighborhoods of black people on capital and wealth is attained, it limits potential investment opportunities for black businesses, and limits it to already wealthy parts of town. It limits education opportunities when their children go to better funded, integrated, majority white schools. It subliminally sends the message that development/growth is not possible in predominantly black neighborhoods on the Southside and the only way to get yourself out of the cycle of poverty is through leaving the area and moving to more integrated neighborhoods.<sup>40</sup>

There is also a spatial component in the achievement gap and socioeconomic segregation that ought to be addressed since it impacts the perception of the issue and how those react to it. Spatially there was a study conducted on how segregation of neighborhoods takes place and how it impacts perception of the problem. In his work on "Spatial Segmentation", New York University sociology professor Patrick Sharkey argues that the black community is unique that even in the middle class neighborhoods, black residents tend to always be in close proximity to low-income neighborhoods<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Iceland, John, and Erik Hernandez. "Understanding trends in concentrated poverty: 1980-2014." *Social science research* vol. 62 (2017): 75-95. doi:10.1016/j.ssresearch.2016.09.001

<sup>41</sup> Patrick Sharkey, "Spatial Segmentation and the Black Middle Class," *American Journal of Sociology* 119, no. 4 (January 2014): 903-954.

This is something unique to the black community due to being historically segregated for long, that the proximity has always been close when compared to whites or Hispanics. Because of this Sharkey says that we should re-approach how we discuss segregation in the black community as being all contained within one neighborhood, but rather incorporate why is there such a small spatial proximity between being middle class and the most disadvantaged communities? Because it is telling that there is no emerging black middle class neighborhood within Tallahassee, only integration into predominantly white ones. This leads to the perception that adopting the “negro leadership”<sup>42</sup> mentality is something that can only be successfully applied to voters and candidates rather than residents of the South side. In order for Southside to thrive there needs to be a greater support between the black working and middle class of Tallahassee, because the ongoing separation and distancing has only helped perpetuate the cycle at a faster rate.

A common thread linking the aforementioned issues is that they stem from active efforts to strip black people in Tallahassee of their agency. As such, these blights could be alleviated by giving black people a sense of agency and control over their own circumstances in order to make change for themselves that they want to see within their own communities. This can be applied to the neighborhoods they live in, the schools they go to, the achievement gap between these schools, legislation/policies they favor, and candidates they vote for in local elections. Voting is one of the best ways to do that, since it can create concrete change and legislation. Whether it can be through taking a

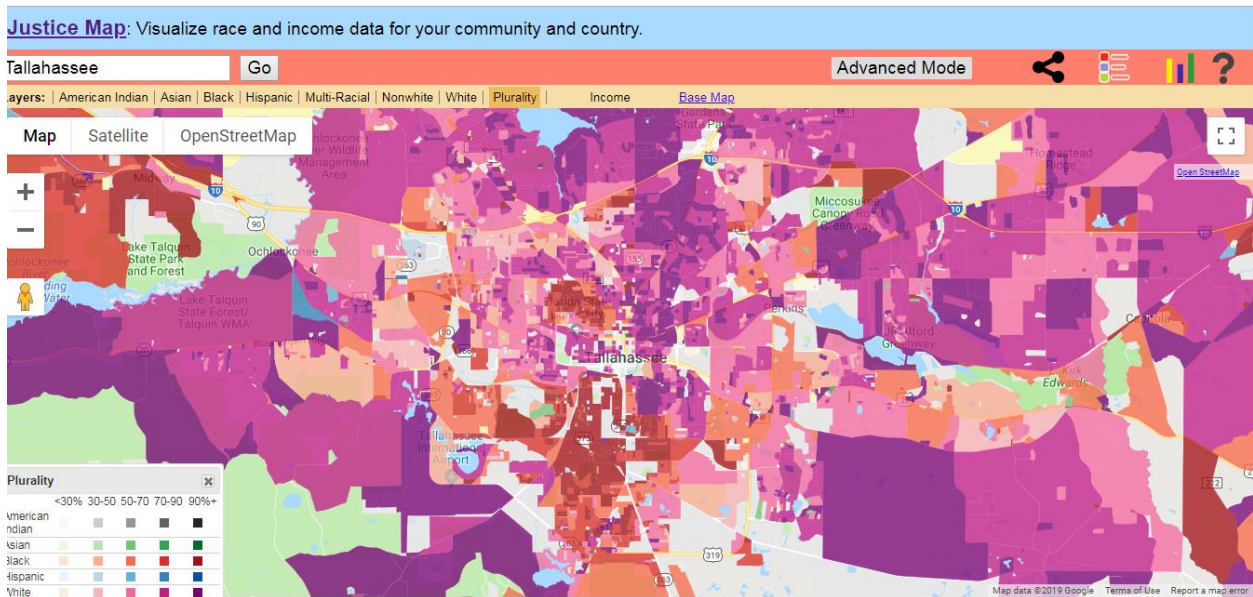
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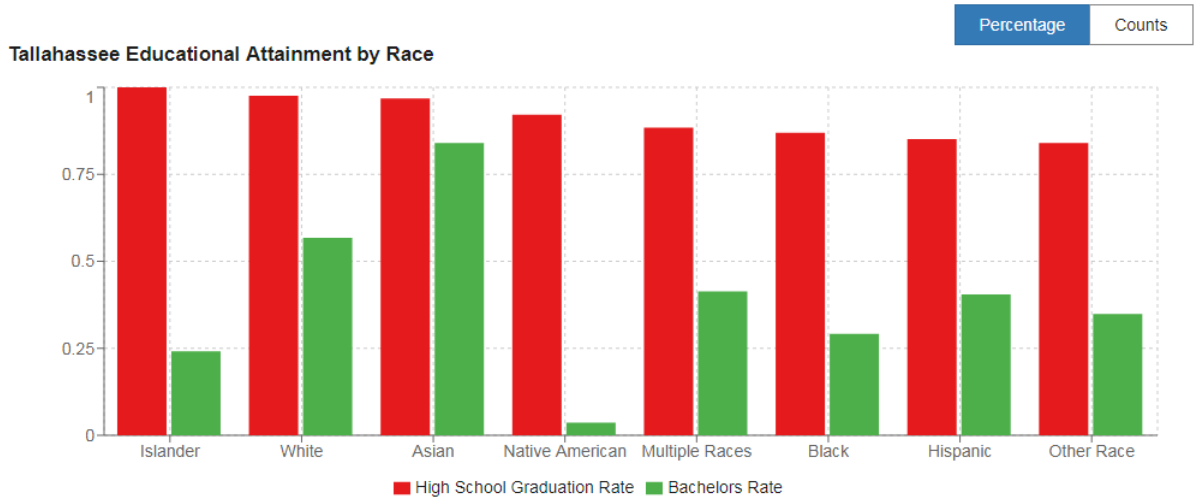
<sup>42</sup> Marx, Gary T. "Religion: Opiate or inspiration of civil rights militancy among Negroes?." *American Sociological Review* (1967): 64-72.

black nationalist approach or an integrationist approach, I'd make the argument that combining aspects of the two when voters vote is the best choice and represents black voter's behavior. Since they get to prioritize the needs of their community by putting pro black policies in power without relying on compromising for a white electorate, while at the same time being able to successfully integrate into Tallahassee's economy and school system since there are more opportunities outside of Southside. But given the unique spatiality of black neighborhoods, it is important to focus on spreading the growth of the black middle class to invest in the southside, while simultaneously not singling out the south side of town, since the lack of growth and economic stagnation in Tallahassee is multifaceted. The black middle class due to being so new doesn't have the same amount of generational wealth as their white counterparts in the city.

This is where the present issue of Tallahassee lies currently at a crossroads. Until we are able to empower a black electorate, you will not see change enacted. You give the black electorate power and agency by being able to create legislation and policies that benefit the black vote. You must deconstruct the policies of school choice and FSA standardized testing that has disproportionately targeted and impact low income neighborhoods and title 1 schools. You must address the rise of the black middle class, their economic incomes, and how the flight from predominantly black neighborhoods has impacted those still living in poverty in those areas. You have to address the unique legacy of speciality that no other race has besides the black community in Tallahassee and how even once the black middle class gains capital can't escape due to the close proximity.

In terms of spacialty this line of thought will be expanded in the next chapter, with an emphasis on how gerrymandering and redistricting, a modern tool of voter suppression, has impacted Leon County as a whole. Further, attention will be given to how socioeconomic segregation has been addressed through the legal system and what the future for black voting in Tallahassee looks like.





<sup>43</sup> <http://www.city-data.com/city/Tallahassee-Florida.html>

<sup>44</sup> <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/tallahassee-population/>

Tsion Kiros

Ch. 3 of SPROJ

### **The Effect of Congressional Gerrymandering/Redistricting on the Black Populace in Tallahassee, Leon County**

In this chapter I will be discussing the role gerrymandering has played in perpetuating socioeconomic segregation within Tallahassee, where it has functioned as an additional barrier to passing legislation serving black communities in Leon County. Leon County has undergone a series of changes as it has been reshaped through redistricting patterns drawn by the state legislature. Modern-day Leon County has unique positionality within the state of Florida as it, in addition to being the state's capital, is within one of only two majority-minority districts within the state. In this chapter, I will argue how Florida's districting has ended up diluting the black vote within the county. I will also discuss legislation that has been proposed to help reduce socioeconomic segregation in the county and summarize why Tallahassee, a city where the interrelatedness of socioeconomic segregation and black voting patterns can be clearly traced, serves as an important political case study. I will also elaborate on how gerrymandering has been repackaged as affirmative redistricting into Florida's modern state politics.

First one must establish what exactly gerrymandering is. Gerrymandering can be defined as the redrawing of districts in order to favor a political party or limit the voting prowess of a minority group<sup>45</sup>. Redistricting is done based on U.S Census data

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<sup>45</sup>Brian Duignan, Gerrymandering, Encyclopædia Britannica,,Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.,October 11, 2019<https://www.britannica.com/topic/gerrymandering>



collected every 10 years - an endeavor which is undergone as a means for the federal government to keep track of the country's population and demographics. The constitution calls for an "equality in the size of constituencies" drawn by districting. Racial gerrymandering was ruled unconstitutional in the Miller vs Johnson case of 1995, and the constitutional precedent against gerrymandering is further codified in the Equal Protection Clause of 14th amendment which states that "every person's vote must be counted equally"<sup>46</sup>. Since deviation can be defined as defying established norms, in the U.S gerrymandering may be considered an act of deviance, because engaging in this practice flouts the standards by which the Constitution outlines voting is to be carried out, which are considered to be the norm.

I chose to focus on the racial effects of gerrymandering in this chapter because of the effects this practice has had on election outcomes and policies being passed, and because of how gerrymandering has hurt minority voters within Leon County. On a federal level this practice dates back to the 1800s. Though constitutionally there are existing amendments directly opposed to it, it still continues to be routinely engaged in.

Ongoing engagement in gerrymandering saw an uptick in the 1960s, when Republican President Nixon helped create a legacy of redrawing states' districts that favored white voters within their community. In particular Nixon and other members of the Republican party would redraw much of the South with the goal of establishing the South as a longstanding political stronghold for Republicans and a place where they

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<sup>46</sup> Briffault, Richard. "Defining the Constitutional Question in Partisan Gerrymandering." *Cornell JL & Pub. Pol'y* 14 (2004): 397.

can easily secure victories in elections by actively diluting the voting power of certain areas with large black Democratic electorate<sup>47</sup>. They also redrew districts that are less socially integrated so their party would be favored in elections based on the electoral college system, as well as in local and state elections.

There is considerable legal precedent regarding gerrymandering. In the *Reynolds vs Sims* of 1964, the Supreme Court ruled that the allocation of seats based on districts within the Senate and House must be representative of their population and cannot be based on something as arbitrary as property and must be consistent based on the Census every 10 years.<sup>48</sup> The Voting Rights Act of 1965 addresses redistricting and is often applied in legal practice to prevent localities from drawing districts with the intention of denying minorities a fair chance to elect their candidate of choice<sup>49</sup>.

However, despite gerrymandering being unconstitutional, there is a legal loophole that has permitted it to still continually be practiced by politicians on some level. Within the Equal Protection Clause it reads. "Mathematical nicety is not a constitutional requisite" when drawing legislative plans. All that is necessary is that the maps achieve "substantial equality of population among the various districts." Deviations from population equality in legislative plans may be justified if they are "based on legitimate

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<sup>47</sup> Bullock, Charles S. "Comment: The Gift that Keeps on Giving? Consequences of Affirmative Action Gerrymandering." *American Review of Politics* 16 (1995): 33-39.

<sup>48</sup> Hladick, Beth. "Redistricting and the Supreme Court: The Most Significant Cases." National Conference of State Legislatures. NCSL, April 29, 2019. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/redistricting/redistricting-and-the-supreme-court-the-most-significant-cases.aspx>.

<sup>49</sup> Polsby, Daniel D., and Robert D. Popper. "Ugly: An inquiry into the problem of racial gerrymandering under the Voting Rights Act." *Mich. L. Rev.* 92 (1993): 652.

considerations incident to the effectuation of a rational state policy,” such as maintaining the integrity of political subdivisions and providing for compact districts of contiguous territory<sup>50</sup>.

That fact that this clause directly states deviations from population equality is capable of being justified on the condition of political effectuation of rational state policy is where the fault in this amendment on gerrymandering lies. The fault in this lies in the fact that it leaves an opening for exploitation by legislatures, because achieving political effectiveness in the name of a “good” state policy for all is something that is incredibly subjective and can easily be manipulated.

How does one objectively determine what is the so-called “rational policy”, and how do you justify this policy being so important that it overruled the drawing of maps to be mathematically sound? This seems to be contractary of the very nature of the “Equal Protection Clause” in the first place, whose very objective was to ensure that state’s redrawing of their districts will be accurate and based on that area’s population. But this whole premise loses legitimacy and effectiveness when any politician can potentially choose to ignore these provisions and redraw districts in the name of attempting to achieve so called “maximum political effectuality” and “rational policy”. The questions we should be asking ourselves is who is “maximum political effectuality” and “rational policy” really for and benefitting? Ideally it should be in favor of the constituents the

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<sup>50</sup>“Reynolds V. Sims.” Findlaw, n.d. <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/377/533.html>.

member of legislation is representing but unfortunately on numerous occasions this has turned out not to be the case.

Because of this legal loophole in this amendment it is all too easy for members of legislation when redrawing districts to do this in the favor of their party's interests to strategize winning elections, considering the nation's two party system. By allowing this to continue it undermines the unconstitutionality of gerrymandering and highlights a key vulnerability and loophole of "The Equal Protection Clause" and how it has been able to be exploited at the expense of constituents. This conveys that labeling an act as unconstitutional and making it illegal has not been enough of a deterrent for politicians to stop practicing gerrymandering. If anything I would argue it has become an unspoken staple of modern American politics and the way they are practiced, dating back to Nixon's southern strategy in the 1960's. This loophole in gerrymandering's illegality and legacy is harmful on a federal level because it prevents people from being able to have their vote equally counted and instead favors victories of party politics over what their constituents want and undermines the individual's vote.

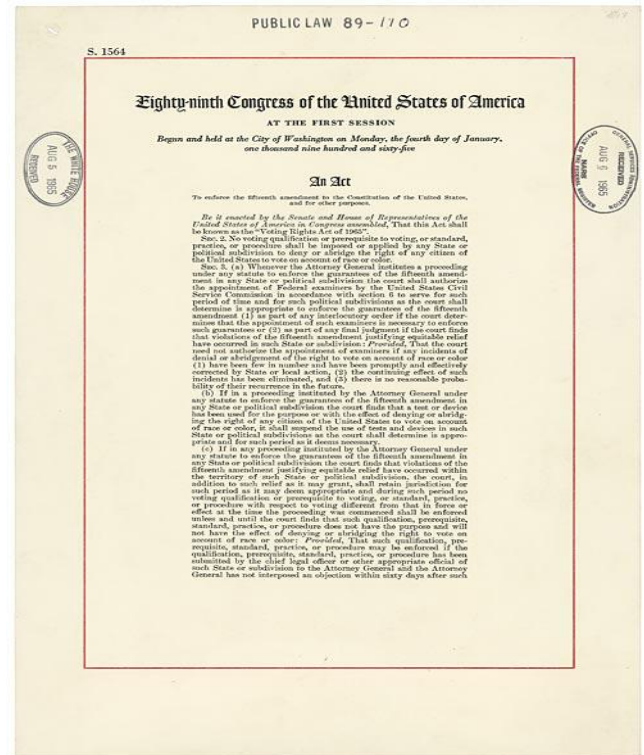
Now that we have explained the background of gerrymandering and established the weaknesses of gerrymandering's unconstitutionality on both a federal/conceptual level and how aspects of the "The Equal Protection Clause" have allowed the practice of gerrymandering to continue under the law, one must also focus on the locality of Tallahassee and Leon County and how its own history of gerrymandering has played out and impacted black voters and local legislation.

In the state of Florida both the congressional lines and state district lines are both drawn and mapped out based on state's data by Florida's state legislature. How the process of redistricting occurs in the state there is a distinction between the creation of congressional lines and state district lines, which is that congressional lines are passed as any form of legislation would be and can be vetoed by the governor.<sup>51</sup> Whereas the process of creating state district lines has to first be ratified by a joint committee that consists of a majority vote from the Florida house and Senate, and instead of the governor it goes to be approved by the Supreme Court who ultimately rules the mappings' constitutionality before they are set in place

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<sup>51</sup>Altman, Micah, and Michael P. McDonald. "Paradoxes of political reform: Congressional redistricting in florida." *Jigsaw Puzzle Politics in the Sunshine State*. University Press of Florida. Forthcoming (2013).

As mentioned earlier federally and on a state level as part of the Voting Rights Act it reads, “No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color<sup>52</sup>”. That sentiment within the Voting Rights Act is going to be the standard on how I assess how Florida’s history of redistricting has fared in regards to Leon County as a case study. (Voting Rights Act, 1965)



The process of how redistricting is carried out varies state by state, but despite the flaws in its implementation it is done under the premise to assure fair and equal representation to all citizens. And even instances where redistricting turns into covert forms of gerrymandering, usually its ripple effect just reinforces the power of the majority party within that country. Florida is a unique exception to this rule due to its unique positionality as a swing state due to its demographics. Based on the American Community Survey of 2018 serving as US Census Projections Florida’s demographics are: 53.26% white, 26.2% Hispanic, 16.1% Black, 2.72% Asian<sup>53</sup>. Considering these statistics each of these racial demographics carry varying political views and voting patterns and occupy certain regions of the

<sup>52</sup>Davidson, Chandler. *Quiet revolution in the South: The impact of the Voting Rights Act, 1965-1990*. Princeton University Press, 1994.

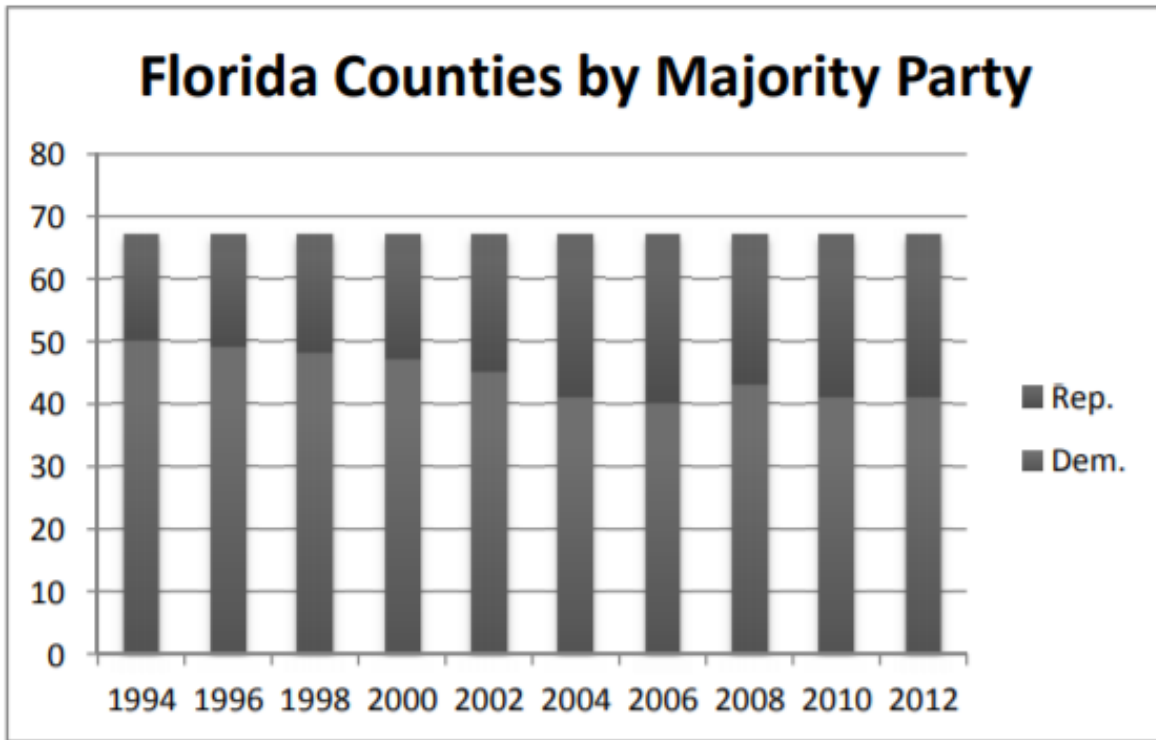
<sup>53</sup> Gates, Gary J., and Abigail M. Cooke. "Florida Census Snapshot: 2010." (2011).

country. While white people reside throughout the nation, “snowbirds” who move from the Northeast may tend to vote more democratic, while white retirees tend to vote more Republican, along with most white people . White Cuban Hispanics who mostly reside in South/Central Florida tend to vote Republican with some voting Democratic. A majority of Florida’s black population resides in North Florida with also a sizable population in pockets of South and Central Florida, and they tend to vote Democratic.<sup>54</sup>

This breakdown of Florida’s racial demographics is important to consider because it informs why one constituency continues to see extreme proximity and variation in political views and voting patterns and why there is a tendency for election results to be in such close numbers. As a make the effects of redistricting throughout the state much more consequential and instead of having the majority’s power reinforced, which party hold’s power on a state and local level tends to not necessarily be reflective of a district’s populace, and makes redistricting efforts on a county and state level more inevitably polarized. What this results in is you see mostly majority Democratic or Republican districts, making them not competitive and gives the false allusion to the voter that they agree with are being voted on within a district level, when in actuality the vote is being diluted when looked at the bigger picture of the state. And this occurrence is no clearer than when looking at black voters within Leon County and how this district has been redrawn for the past decades.

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<sup>54</sup> “Race and Ethnicity in Florida (State).” *The Demographic Statistical Atlas of the United States - Statistical Atlas*, [statisticalatlas.com/state/Florida/Race-and-Ethnicity](https://statisticalatlas.com/state/Florida/Race-and-Ethnicity).



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Leon County, also referred to as Florida’s 5th Congressional District of Florida in a congressional district, was most recently redrawn in 2015. It’s two main metropolitan areas include Jacksonville and Tallahassee. This is significant because prior to this change Jacksonville was not a part of Tallahassee’s congressional district and now adds an additional 240,000 black people from Duval County on top of Tallahassee’s 70,000 black voters to be represented . This change was done due to how prior to this reshaping it was named District 3 and previously only consisted of predominantly black

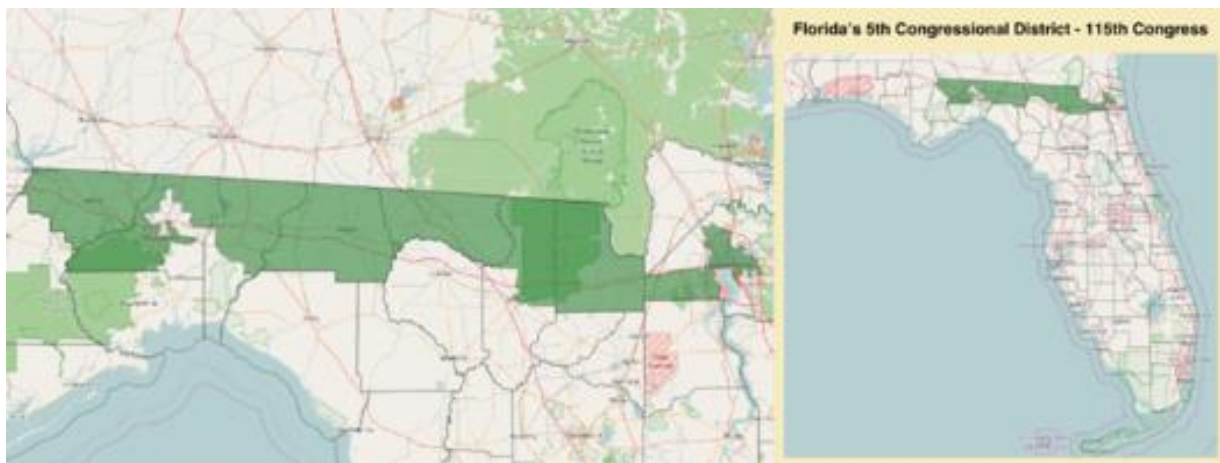
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<sup>55</sup> Devon Ombres, "The Recent History of Gerrymandering in Florida: Revitalizing David v. Bandemer and Florida's Constitutional Requirements on Redistricting," *Washington and Lee Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice* 20, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 297-340

McGill Guide 9th ed.



areas of Orlando, Gainesville, and Jacksonville. District 3 remained this shape from 1993 to 2014.<sup>56</sup> It was through 2014 to 2015 that conservative Florida Circuit Judge Terry Lewis saw that it would be fit to redraw District 3 on the basis that its shape favored the Republican party by being a majority black district. The Black Congressional Caucus along with local representatives were adamantly against this and accused Judge Lewis as trying to undermine the black vote. This dispute was taken to the Florida Supreme Court until a shape for the 5th district was agreed upon. However in the end District 5 ended up being a majority-minority district, much like its predecessor District 3 was, so the concerns the Black Congressional have still reign true despite all the dispute over the redrawing of District 3 to District 5.<sup>57</sup> In addition to the black congressional caucus's outrage, this decision was also unpopular among Leon County residents within Tallahassee due to how this split the city up into 2 congressional districts.

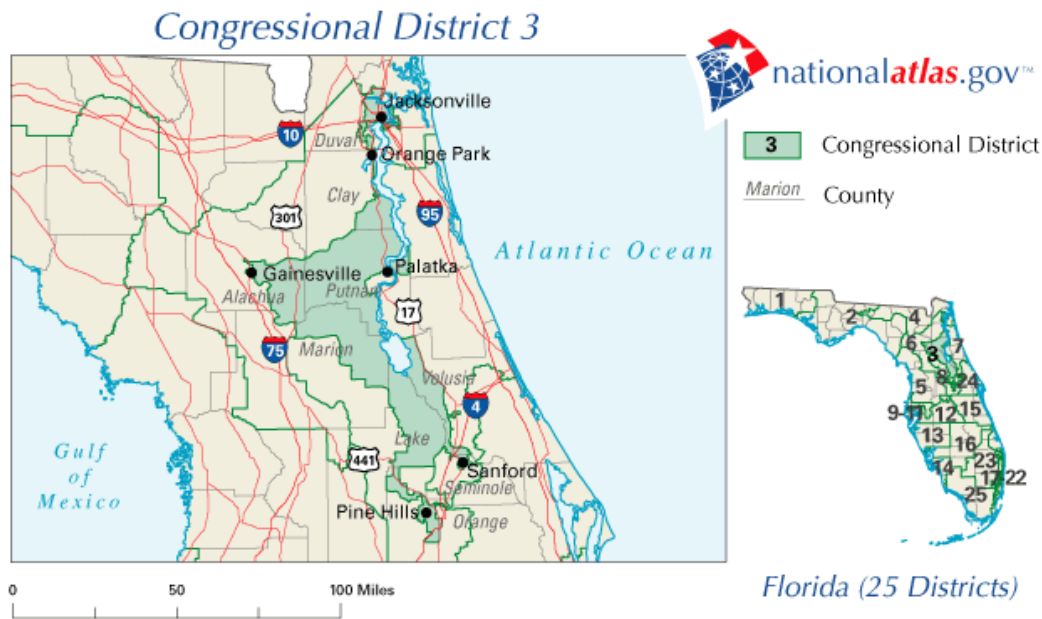


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<sup>56</sup> Ingraham, Christopher (May 15, 2014). "America's most gerrymandered congressional districts". [washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com). Retrieved May 21, 2014.

<sup>57</sup> James, Frank. "Florida Ruling Is A Primer On Redistricting Chicanery." NPR. NPR, July 11, 2014. <https://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2014/07/11/330771339/florida-ruling-is-a-primer-on-redistricting-chicanery>.

(Florida's 5th Congressional District, 2015-onwards)



Florida's Previous 3rd Congressional District, 1993-2012)

Meanwhile in regards to the historic congressional drawing of Leon County until the 2015 redrawing of the 5th district, since its inception in 1963 to 1983 it was known as the 9th congressional district and from 1983 till today it was known as the 2nd congressional district. Until the redrawing of 2015 it was one of the few districts that maintained its primary shape, representing the Western area of the panhandle, "the forgotten coast", and most importantly Tallahassee. The 2nd district is also tied to the capital of Florida's statewide session/legislative/affairs, as well as being the county seat for Leon County.<sup>58</sup> However when it was redrawn in 2015 it split Tallahassee into 2 different congressional districts. When the 2nd district was redrawn and split Tallahassee up in between congressional districts 2 and 5, it also happened to be in

<sup>58</sup> Bureau, US Census. "Geography Program". *The United States Census Bureau*.

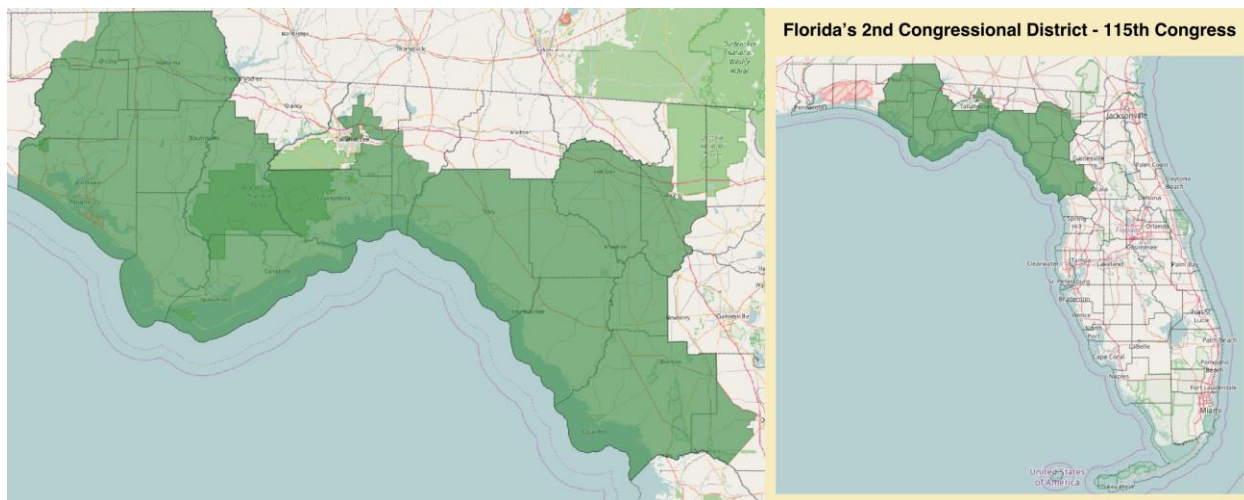
close proximity to the North/South Side divide within Tallahassee which is heavily racially divided. As a result of the redrawing, District 5 became a majority-minority district and leaned Democratic, while District 2 is primarily white (81% white) and mainly rural and suburban. This leaves District 2 mainly voting Republican.<sup>59</sup>

This instance of Tallahassee being split up into two different congressional districts through the redrawing of Districts 2 and District 5 has led to a majority White district and majority-minority district consisting of black voters. This is an example of why redistricting along party lines is harmful to the constituent, particularly the black constituent since their vote is diluted due to how it falls under party lines. So while victories for Democrats constituents on a congressional level in District 5 may appear to be a positive outcome at first glance, and the same with victories for Republican constituents on a congressional in District 2, it actually is a detriment since it makes it more difficult for legislation to be passed on a state level, especially for black voters. Since the year 2000, Florida remains the state with one of the highest amounts of gerrymandered districts in the country and has been redrawn in a way that favors Republicans. Creating majority-minority districts such as District 5 in Tallahassee may appear beneficial for black voters on a congressional level from the surface, but on a state level it has been a detriment, a form of voter disenfranchisement, and works against their best interests. Hence having a segregated district, promotes segregated interests and since black people are still the minority within Tallahassee and Leon County and live in segregated areas within the city and county, most of them live in

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<sup>59</sup> "Partisan Voting Index – Districts of the 115th Congress". The Cook Political Report. April 7, 2017.

district 5. The functional effect of this grouping is that the state-wide voting power of black voters lumped into these majority minority districts is diluted<sup>60</sup>. This creates an additional barrier of having legislation passed that directly benefits their populace. Especially considering that in the state of Florida there are only 2 majority-minority districts, while being surrounded by white districts, which leaves black voters outnumbered and is a direct reflection Tallahassee's segregation patterns and Leon County being split up is a clear example of how Republicans within Florida successfully deployed a strategy to give the black vote less power.



(Florida Congressional District 2, 2015-onwards)

How can one begin to overcome these effects of gerrymandering and redistricting within Leon County? I would argue that due to the demographics of district 5 we need to

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<sup>60</sup> Lewis, Jordan. "Fair Districts Florida: A Meaningful Redistricting Reform." *U. Miami Race & Soc. Just. L. Rev.* 5 (2015): 189.

see it redrawn in a way where all parts of Tallahassee are incorporated in the same district, rather than clumping the minority votes in District 5 and splitting the remainder of voters in District 2b. Redrawing the district in a way that would unite Tallahassee Florida would make it easier for democratic legislation which benefits black voters to actually be enacted. Tallahassee leans democratic not only because of the black population but due to white liberal voters. This coalition of voters that would emerge from the Florida panhandle after the congressional district was redrawn would create a blue democratic panhandle for the first time in history. Tallahassee's population would overshadow nearby Gadsen, Madison, and Jefferson county which are rural and also consist of black voters, so their votes would be empowered too, despite being majority white thanks to Tallahassee. This would stop the legislative North-South side divide from continuing.

An attempt to make Florida's congressional districts more competitive and deter the practice of redistricting, in 2010 voters 63% of voters within the state during midterm elections overwhelmingly voted in favor of passing "the Fair District Amendments" . The Fair District Amendments consist of the following, "Congressional districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party. Districts shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. Districts must be contiguous. Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>"STANDARDS FOR LEGISLATURE TO FOLLOW IN CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING." Initiative Information, July 2015. <https://dos.elections.myflorida.com/initiatives/initdetail.asp?account=43605>.

While the Fair District amendments created a good legal precedent to limit the practice of redistricting, how it was administered allowed it to be undermined repeatedly by politicians within the state. The first way this was undermined was by former Governor Rick Scott, who through using his gubernatorial powers reached out to the federal government to apply the Voting Rights Act in regards to the minority vote in Florida to require pre-clearance on his act, in order to be enacted. Ultimately giving him veto power to restrict the implementation of the Fair Districts Amendment. The reaction of black voters and democratic voters within the state viewed this action of Rick Scott as a disgrace and shameful since it undermined what 63% of voters wanted. Rick Scott's attempts to undermine the Fair Districts Amendment escalated to a lawsuit against him and the state, though this was ultimately dismissed by the US department of Justice stating that preclearance is simply a routine step to be taken and does not encourage redistricting in any way.

In late 2010 and 2011 two Republican senators attempted to file a lawsuit and sue the Fair District Amendments 5 and 6 against the state legislature viewing these amendments as unconstitutional on the false premise that it hurt minority voters, when in actuality it was to hold onto their Republican stronghold districts. Both the Districts Court and US Court for appeals rejected this claim and upheld both amendments in the case of *Brown vs the State of Florida* in 2011.<sup>62</sup> In addition to these court cases, Tallahassee would be the battleground for how districts were redrawn in 2011 when

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<sup>62</sup> "Fair Districts." Common Cause Florida. Accessed May 4, 2020. <https://www.commoncause.org/florida/our-work/ensure-fair-districts-reflective-democracy/fair-districts/>.

Republican politicians allegedly forged public submissions to redraw district maps in their favor, it was Leon County circuit judge member Terry Lewis who rejected this redrawing and implemented a redrawing of maps that was approved by both the American Civil Liberty Union and the League of Women Voters.<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately Lewis's version of redrawing was undermined by the Florida House Committee limiting the challenge period to redrawn redistricts to no more than 60 days after being implemented, and have them needing to be cross-examined by opposing parties making it much harder for fair districts to be created.

Even prior to these recent attempts of Republicans undermining the Fair Rights Amendments and encouraging the practice of redistricting in their favor, the Republican party already has a well documented and established history of creating a party stronghold within Florida and undermining the black vote. This is through a combination of redistricting, encouraging the creation of majority-minority blocs, and by maintaining a majority of seats and power within the Florida legislature, This dates back to the 1990s when Republicans held a majority of what is deemed as "safe districts" at 61%, while Democrats held 39% of "safe districts".<sup>64</sup> Safe districts are districts that are deemed to be non-competitive and guarantee a political party's victory and tend to be consistent in their voting patterns. The republican party managed to maintain a majority of these types of safe districts despite the fact that the demographics of Florida is much more politically diverse.

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<sup>63</sup>Bureau, Mary Ellen KlasHerald/Times Tallahassee. "Florida Supreme Court Approves Congressional Map Drawn by Challengers." miamiherald. Miami Herald, December 2, 2015. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article47576450.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Ombres, Devon. "The Recent History of Gerrymandering in Florida: Revitalizing David v. Bandemer and Florida's Constitutional Requirements on Redistricting." *Wash. & Lee J. Civ. Rts. & Soc. Just.* 20 (2013): 297.

The GOP obtained a hold of these districts through the practice of redistricting within the state. They redrew the districts in a way that would continue to secure victories for the Republican party and gained a majority in the state legislature during the 1990s. This political stronghold by Republicans has ushered a legacy of redistricting that favors their party into the 2000s. This was done when the Department of Justice approved of Republican Lawmakers redrawn maps under the justification of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. Section 5 of the Civil Rights Act consists of states being prohibited to replace discriminatory practices towards people of a certain race, and changes in voting practice must undergo a process known as “pre-clearance”. Every 25 years, Section 5 needs to be reapproved by congress and is used as verification to prevent racial discrimination in voting. However section 5 is not covered completely in all states, in the context of Florida it is only partially covered. Since Florida is only partially covered by the protection of Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act this created an opening for Republicans to not only redraw districts in their favor, but in the name of upholding protecting Section 5 Republicans would attempt to maximize the amount of majority-minority districts within Florida. In The 1990s there were a total of 5 of them, which made it easier for the Republican party to help secure victories in predominantly white districts while simultaneously diluting the black vote. This has been reduced to 2 majority-minority districts in the state today during the 2010s.<sup>65</sup>

Not only was this how Republicans in Florida managed to dominate the state legislature and have their policies more easily passed, by creating majority-minority

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<sup>65</sup> Hayes, Danny, and Seth C. McKee. "The intersection of redistricting, race, and participation." *American Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 1 (2012): 115-130.



districts under these provisions in the 1990s, but this limits voting participation of black voters. Even though majority-minority districts do carry the potential for black voters to vote when seeing a higher number of incumbents who look like them in the house and legislation, closing the participation gap between them and white people. However the problem with this is since Republicans control a majority of districts within the state of Florida as well as the state legislature, this in turn gives a disincentive for the black voter to participate due to not wanting to support Republican policies that are against their own self interests.

How the Republicans maintained a majority within the state legislature through redistricting and creating majority-minority districts has also played out and been applied to various court cases. One significant court case is the Martinez vs. The Bush case of 2000 shows us an example of the effects the GOP had. This occurred in response to the 2000 proposal plans for redistricting where Martinez viewed the Republican dominated Florida State Legislature redistricting maps proposal of 2000 as violating the "Equal Protection Clause", as part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The plaintiffs of Martinez's case ultimately failed in their attempt to prove this claim to the state of Florida, and it was dismissed<sup>66</sup>. But the case did create the first of its precedent in the new decade, that the State Legislature can and will be held accountable when there is obvious evidence of illicit gerrymandering occurring when redrawing maps. Because as of 2002 when Martinez made their case, Republicans fared a 2 in 1

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<sup>66</sup> Ombres, Devon. "The Recent History of Gerrymandering in Florida: Revitalizing David v. Bandemer and Florida's Constitutional Requirements on Redistricting." *Wash. & Lee J. Civ. Rts. & Soc. Just.* 20 (2013): 297.

favorability of winning races within the state based on how the map was drawn. I wanted to highlight the failure of this court case because of its timing in a new millenium, when Florida was already garnering national attention of alleged voter fraud/tampering in response to the 2000 Bush vs. Gore Election, and an era of questioning whether the state would allow gerrymandered redistricting by Republicans to continue (the answer to this question being yes). While the number of majority-minority districts have declined, they still contain a large amount of black voters. And given the circumstances on how District 5 was shaped, it is a representation of the quagmire and everything that is wrong in regards to Florida.

In conclusion with the history and legacy of redistricting/ gerrymandering and its harms established in Florida it makes sense why it has been difficult for black voters to mobilize and get legislation in their best self interest passed. This is due to how the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment and Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 have been repeatedly exploited by the Republican party within the state, and since they have the majority within the State Legislature, the party has managed District 5 has been created to be a majority-minority district leading to a stagnation of democratic legislation. The future of black voters' participation is harder when in a Republican "safe" district, or a district that is non-competitive or safe. The black voter and their voting prowess is also diluted when contained in a majority-minority district, much like how Leon County currently is. The history of Leon County being redrawn and divided on being north or south of I-10 is not a coincidence but plays into the existing

socio-economic segregation within the city<sup>67</sup>. Rather than uniting a Democratic electorate that is the majority of voters within Leon County, it is split up primarily by race, class, and political leanings. In order to help mitigate socioeconomic segregation, clearly gerrymandered majority-minority districts such as Leon County need to be eliminated, and instead Tallahassee should be under one district which could serve as a means of giving agency back to the black voter. That way legislation that has been stalled in congress can be passed and acted upon.

There is current legislation aimed at combat socioeconomic segregation that has been stalled in the house, in part because Leon County is a majority-minority district.

Congressman Al Lawson, a representative of Florida's district 5, supports mitigating income inequality and reintegrating the 5th district's schools and neighborhoods. Some legislation that Congressman Lawson has recently cosponsored includes HR 865, known the Rebuild America's Schools Act, which focuses on providing more funding for low-income schools and improving their facilities. Lawson has also cosponsored HR 1054, the HBCU Partners Act which is designed to help increase the competitiveness and capacities of HBCUs to that of PWIs. This is important since the 5th district is home to both FAMU and Edwards Waters College, another HBCU, in Jacksonville. Lawson has also supported the HR 3745, the Housing Urban Development Inspection Act which held public housing to a higher standard to be inspected, and have it be a place of temporary transitioning for low income individuals<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Lewis, Jordan. "Fair Districts Florida: A Meaningful Redistricting Reform." *U. Miami Race & Soc. Just. L. Rev.* 5 (2015): 189.

<sup>68</sup> "Education: U.S. Congressman Al Lawson." *Issues / U.S. Congressman Al Lawson*, [lawson.house.gov/issues/education](http://lawson.house.gov/issues/education)

Beyond Lawson's initiatives, other ways to help mitigate the socioeconomic disparities this work has discussed is to prohibit basing public school funding on neighborhood property tax values, and to instead make public school funding dependent on financial need for economic support going to lower-income schools as a means to help close the income and racial achievement gap. Also the 5th district can start creating incentives for neighborhoods to reintegrate on all neighborhoods across Jacksonville and Florida. Federally the United States Congress could pass an Economic Fair Housing Act as an amendment to the Fair Housing Act of 1968 which would prohibit discriminatory school zoning policies<sup>69</sup>. Also Representatives Marcia Fudge and Chris Murphy have introduced the Strength in Diversity Act which would give \$120 million to districts that effectively integrate their schools and neighborhoods<sup>70</sup>. Since it has been proven that people of all races and incomes benefit socially and economically by living and being educated in a diverse environment, these combined efforts would help mitigate the cycle of income inequality as a whole<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> KAHLENBERG, RICHARD D. "Ensuring Equity in Housing through an Economic Fair Housing Act."

<sup>70</sup> Fudge, Marcia. "Strength in Diversity Act of 2019 (H.R. 2639)." *GovTrack.us*, [www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/hr2639](http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/hr2639)

<sup>71</sup> Milem, Jeffrey F. "The educational benefits of diversity: Evidence from multiple sectors." *Compelling interest: Examining the evidence on racial dynamics in higher education* (2003): 126-169.

## Conclusion

After researching this paper I have learned that attempting to write about socioeconomic segregation and how it intersects to black voting behavior and patterns is so difficult to fully capture. Even the very phrase “socio-economic segregation” is not a catch all term and has multiple meanings depending on the context it is used and is very multi-faceted since it comes from many sources and can be addressed in a multitude of ways. In this context of my research I wanted the focus to be on residential patterns within Tallahassee in regards to the North and Southside economic and racial divide. I wanted to answer the questions: Why did this come to be one of the most segregated areas in the country? How does this play out in the present day? Why haven't the residential patterns changed? What are ways we can attempt to address this? And how does this form of segregation intersect with voting? These were the central questions I explored throughout my paper and wanted to answer.

What I discovered was the answer to these questions was more complicated than my initial impression before starting this whole process of research and writing. I attempted to break down and find the answer as to why Tallahassee remains one of the most segregated cities in the country. For me it was a natural progression to explain the origins of this dilemma by diving into Tallahassee's unique history and learning the historical context since it has a unique heritage as both a southern city and a state capitol. I wanted to make that argument clear to the reader by describing Tallahassee's transition from the slave capitol, to the era of reconstruction, to the era of Jim Crow, to their Civil Rights Movement. Each of these various eras that Tallahassee underwent helps ground the story of how black excellence managed to create a legacy of political

activists, voters, and institutions that still make a difference when fighting for reducing residential segregation within the city. Tallahassee's positionality is also unique being the capital of a state that is already notorious for disenfranchising minority voters.

I transitioned to explaining how socioeconomic segregation played out within Tallahassee in the present day and wanted to focus on education because of how it is a strong indicator/form of measurement for social mobility and is an example of how the achievement gap forms, which is a direct result from the socioeconomic segregation within the city. I found that the usage standardized testing as a measurement for student's progress of growth, the policy of former President Bush's "No Child Left Behind Policy" helps fuel the economic division of neighborhoods and perpetuate the achievement gap and its cycle even more due to schools' reliance on neighborhood's property taxes.

I wanted to draw the intersection to black voting patterns due to how voting is the best way to create change within a community and here I wanted to highlight the behaviors of black voters and how they initially gravitate towards a "nationalist/negro leadership" but the phenomenon of a black candidate becoming more "integrationist" once in office. This is the duality that both the black and candidate and the black voter have to pick is how interconnected they want to be in their blackness, and whether that helps their chances of being elected/having policies passed that benefit the black voter. These black voting concepts emerged from the civil rights movement in the 1960s and lead me to one of the lingering questions I still have after finishing my project which is: do you reconcile embracing blackness or distancing from it to have beneficial legislation passed? And does this premise have to be mutually exclusive?

In my third chapter I expanded upon the role gerrymandering and redistricting has played as being barrier on having legislation to mitigate the effects of socioeconomic segregation within Tallahassee. I focused on “The Equal Protection Clause” and Section 5 of the Voting Right Act as examples of how the Republican party within the state legislature has managed to maintain a hold of Republican “safe” districts within the state and securing victories, while simultaneously creating majority-minority districts under the premise of “protecting minority voters”.

I made the argument in this chapter while majority-minority districts may look good on paper and help the black voter on a congressional level due to it being easier to elect black leaders who embrace the concept of “nationalism/negro leadership” it still ultimately dilutes the black vote on a state and national level. I tried making that argument based on how much legislation has been stalled within congress within District 5, that House members such as Al Lawson have tried to pass to help address issues of socio economic segregation within the district. I also discussed and researched the history of Districts 2 and 5 and how these maps have been repeatedly redrawn in a way that is both gerrymandered and reflects the North-Southside divide within Tallahassee.

Out of all the chapters in chapter 3 left me with the most questions, about what would a reunited District incorporating all parts of Tallahassee look like? Is their potential for it to be redrawn? Or would there be pushback from the constituents of District 2 who is represented by Republican House Member Neal Dunn, and is primarily white and somewhat rural and conservative district. I also have a bunch of questions of what

eliminating majority-minority districts would look like in the state of Florida? Would an already segregated city lead into a segregated district?

My journey from GIS to political studies as a major was realizing I was initially focused on looking outwards about problems on a global scale when hearing a quote from a professor's Global Citizenship course and they said, "How can we focus on problems internationally, when there are issues domestically?" and that quote really resonated with me and is partially responsible for inspiring my research on this topic and jumpstarted me changing majors. Political studies is so versatile it can be applied domestically or abroad, and in this context political studies can be applied on a super microlevel to study a city of just 200,000 people.

Political studies in this senior project as a field helped me ground the historical context from Chapter 1 into a modern issue in Chapter 2. It allowed me to breakdown from an economic and policy standpoint how the achievement gap occurs. It allowed me to explain the behavior of black voters and candidates and their relationship to blackness by exploring Civil Rights Movements voter mobilization concepts. Political studies also allowed me to explore the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and its components, learn how redistricting takes place, how many types of congressional districts there are, how redistricting can be strategized, how gerrymandering can occur, etc. It helped me learn how to explore legislation and apply it to phenomena that we see today and base arguments around it, and ground my research. Overall I feel like this paper has been a starting point in answering these questions about the intersections of socioeconomic segregation and black voting within Tallahassee, and can definitely be expanded upon as another longer project of its own. The process taught me how to create a cohesive



central argument as well and how to link all the chapters effectively, so they build on each other, and how to conduct research on a micro/local level.

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