

**Across Races and Nations:
Building New Communities in the U.S. South**

**CIVIL RIGHTS, IMMIGRATION, AND THE PROSPECTS
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE COLLABORATION IN GEORGIA**

by
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Unprecedented growth in Georgia's Latino population from 1990-2000 and daily increases of 700 new immigrants per day in 2003 have yielded a combined population of African Americans, Latinos, Asians and Asian Americans, American Indians, and Pacific Islanders that now exceeds one-third of the state's total.¹ Alliances among these groups and progressive whites could wield extraordinary political clout to respond to social justice concerns and address the unfinished business of civil rights. Yet, such diversification is occurring simultaneously with determined assaults on both the gains of the civil rights movement and the rights of immigrants, interrelated trends that raise potentially divisive questions and pose challenges for multi-racial/ethnic coalitions. Who should benefit from race-specific remedies like affirmative action? On what bases and around what issues might civil rights advocates in Georgia unite with more recently arrived people of color? This chapter begins with a brief review of major demographic changes in Georgia, then reflects on certain challenges and opportunities faced by defenders of civil and immigrant rights. Subsequent sections examine in some detail a recent debate in the Georgia legislature over the definition of "minority," and identify lessons from that episode about the prospects for social justice collaboration.

Georgia now has more Latino residents (516,530, according to 2002 estimates) than any other historically "non-Latino" southern state. The 2000 census showed a 300 percent increase during the previous decade in Georgia's Latino population, the third highest relative growth in the region (after North Carolina with a 394 percent increase and Arkansas at 337 percent). Key counties surrounding Atlanta—Gwinnett, Forsyth, Cherokee, and Rockdale—experienced even higher growth rates, reaching 600 percent.² Although metro Atlanta is home to more than 60 percent of Georgia's Latino population, it is not the only such concentration in the state. The carpet industry in Dalton, located in Whitfield County in the northwestern section of Georgia, depends on Mexican immigrants in its low-paying jobs. Gainesville's poultry processing industry is staffed by Latino workers, as is agricultural production in Vidalia and Valdosta to the south.

The intersection between civil rights concerns and immigration issues is visible in each of these communities. In Dalton, for example, civic and business leaders promoted highly acclaimed exchanges with Mexico to build strong inter-group relations in the context of public education, yet white flight has taken place from the now majority Latino public schools. Latino agricultural workers in south Georgia have been harassed by local law enforcement. These and other instances of white flight and racial profiling serve to racialize new immigrants, evoking parallel experiences of African Americans. In response, immigrants have turned to legal and organizational resources created in

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population*, 2000. "La oficina del Censo revela nuevos estudios estadísticos," *Mundo Hispanico*, May 22, 2003, p. 6.

² U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population*, 2000. "State learning to embrace Hispanics," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, April 3, 2001, p. A8.

response to the civil rights movement, such as the Georgia Legal Services Program, to defend against harassment from employers and law enforcement. In Gainesville, local civil rights organizations united with the Hispanic Committee in northeast Georgia to oppose anti-immigrant billboards, which read “Amnesty for Invaders is Treason! (Stop the Illegal Alien Invasion)” and directed people to the www.noamnestycampaign.com website. This locally organized alliance linked support for new Latino residents to longstanding concerns for racial justice to blunt hostile expressions of anti-immigrant sentiment.

However, demands for immigrant rights at times meet the struggle for racial justice uneasily, not only because domestic groups of color may question immigrant claims to race-specific protections and remedies, but also because immigrants do not necessarily define themselves in racial terms. Immigrants from Latin America enter the color-conscious society of the United States self-identified by country of origin, i.e., as Colombians, Bolivians, Mexicans, Venezuelans, etc., and by socioeconomic background. In the home country, less emphasis may have been placed on “race” than on identification with an ethnic group.³ Moreover, first generation immigrants tend to focus on U.S. policy toward and issues in their country of origin, rather than on domestic political issues in their new home.⁴

Nevertheless, once in the U.S., immigrant ethnicity is redefined, becoming “racialized” by color-conscious classification schemes and the racist reactions of dominant whites. Latinos in Georgia and elsewhere experience problems commonly understood in the U.S. as racial discrimination, such as racial profiling and barriers to full access to education, health services, political participation, and employment. Such discrimination is compounded by socioeconomic status, and often experienced more harshly by working class and low-income immigrants.⁵

History points to other interactions between racial justice and immigrant rights. Anti-immigrant sentiment during the 19th and early 20th centuries was rooted in the same racial theories that buttressed segregation. Likewise, the easing of immigration restrictions paralleled the progress of the civil rights movement. Post-World War II anti-Nazism, a growing emphasis on human rights, and the emerging opposition to Jim Crow segregation led to a decline in acceptance of racial justifications for limiting immigration. The civil rights movement contributed powerfully to change in immigration policies,

³ Also contested is the invisibility of race in Latin American cultures and the distinction between racial and ethnic discrimination.

⁴ Portes, Alejandro and Ruben G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 354-378.

⁵ Class status in the country of origin, combined with immigration status in the U.S., often proscribes opportunities for immigrants. Employer-supported job fairs may reinforce these distinctions, thereby compounding the impact of economic disadvantage, immigration status and racial discrimination. “The Atlanta-based Latin American Association holds two annual job fairs, one geared to entry level service jobs in construction, landscaping, hospitality and restaurant (little English proficiency required), and one aimed at bilingual mid-level personnel and professionals,” notes Luz Borrero of the Southern Regional Council.

including efforts to eliminate the national origins system of racially discriminatory quotas for immigrants and refugees.⁶

Despite this interwoven history, common interests among African American Southerners and new immigrants are not necessarily perceived. Competition surfaces in the context of a volatile economy, amid perceived or real job displacement of African American workers by Latino immigrants. Latinos are often labeled by employers (particularly in industries such as construction, hospitality, and food) as “hard workers” and pitted against African Americans who are labeled “uncooperative” or “lazy.” This process often enables employers to take advantage of the willingness of newly arrived Latinos to work under difficult circumstances and for low wages rather than remained unemployed. Tensions extend beyond the workplace and the interactions of African Americans and Latinos. Community-level tensions can arise in lower-income neighborhoods, often but not always predominantly African American, to which diverse immigrants and refugees are drawn by the relative cost of housing. Disputes can develop over the allocation of public resources, e.g., to bilingual education, and over perceptions that school administrators and teachers favor certain racially defined groups of students, sometimes including Asians as well as whites.

The appearance that members of immigrant groups progress easily to business ownership is another source of conflict. The Buford Highway corridor in northeast Atlanta offers an example of the growth of small businesses owned by Mexicans, Koreans and immigrants from other countries whose shops and stores serve the immigrant neighborhoods that are developing nearby. In other parts of the city, experiences with the employment practices, pricing policies, and customer relations of non-black, often Asian, immigrant business owners in African American communities have become a source of racial/ethnic division. Sociologist Alejandro Portes points to not only “opposition by native whites to the ‘takeover’ by immigrants of certain urban areas” but also “hostility by domestic blacks and other domestic minorities at the ‘exploitative’ behavior of the foreigners.”⁷ African Americans have witnessed one ethnic group after another finding at least partial acceptance by whites, and opportunity that they continue to see denied to themselves. The perception that Latino immigrants are able to choose between racialization as “black” to enjoy targeted remedial programs or racialization as “white” to increase their access to mainstream society, especially in the second generation, can aggravate the sense of grievance.

Such on-the-ground tensions, all of which have surfaced to varying degrees in different locations in Georgia, draw energy and validation from the larger national context of affronts to immigrants’ civil liberties and systematic rollbacks in race-specific policy remedies. Dramatic increases in immigration to the U.S. South during the 1990s were accompanied by a rise in nativist activity, with organizations such as U.S. English opposing bilingual education and use of the Spanish language. Since September 11, 2001, such aggressive insistence on assimilation has given way to a fearful repudiation of many foreigners’ freedom to enter or remain in the U.S. at all. The surge in anti-immigrant

⁶ DeLaet, Debra L. “From Nativism To Nondiscrimination: U.S. Immigration Policy in Historical Perspective.” In *U.S. Immigration Policy in an Age of Rights* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000), pp. 23-48.

⁷ Portes and Rumbaut, *Immigrant America*, p. 133.

activity comes on the heels of national campaigns to undermine civil rights accomplishments—anti-affirmative action initiatives, legal moves to remove court supervision from deeply segregated school districts, and a pattern of racially motivated criminal justice practices. In addition, the worsening economic situation puts greater strain on working people (including whites) in all walks of life, particularly those unable to access more lucrative jobs in the “New Economy,” resulting in increased insecurity and the perception that variously defined “Others” are economic threats.

The situation—at one and the same time daunting and promising—calls for a clarification of civil rights objectives and the meaning of racial justice. The disparate treatment and race-based animosity facing new populations as well as old raise key strategic questions: Can understandings gained from examining immigrant rights issues and the needs of diverse people of color serve to broaden, update and enliven our understanding of civil rights? Even further, can new understandings energize ongoing attempts to implement effective remedies that yield full equality and justice?

Defining Minority

The race-specific policies that grew out of the civil rights movement typically target individual members of certain “minority” groups, understood to have been historically excluded from access to key resources, for remedial action.⁸ The legal definition of minority in such contexts functions as a gate that admits some groups and excludes others. Legislative and executive action to establish or change the parameters of “minority” can become a flashpoint for intense conflicts over race, ethnicity, historical disadvantage and the appropriate role of government. Because so many of the South’s new populations of color are immigrants, above all Latinos, issues of immigrant rights and the relationships between race/ethnicity and immigration status complicate such debates even further in states like Georgia.

A state legislative initiative in 2001 illustrates the potential for such conflict, in this instance across a complex triangle involving African Americans, Latinos and whites. In the context of a measure to amend a provision that gives a small tax break to companies receiving state contracts that subcontract with minority firms, the Georgia legislature was asked to specify that “member of a minority” includes people who are Black, Hispanic, Asian-Pacific American, Native American, or Asian-Indian American. At that time, state law defined a “minority” as “a member of a race which comprises less than 50 percent of the total population of the state.”⁹ The problematic term of “race” was not defined in the existing law, nor was there recognition that people of color represent the numerical majority in some jurisdictions. The 2001 bill proposed to extend to companies receiving a state contract a tax break of up to \$6,000 per year if they hired minority subcontractors for construction services, equipment and goods.

⁸ Here we must acknowledge the inadequacies of the term “minority,” a term some eschew using altogether. In addition to the connotation of “less than,” which may offend, the term is sometimes used to denote relative numbers and at other times to mean relative power. In many cities and in some rural areas, formerly disfranchised African Americans are the numerical majority. The situation leads to complicated constructions, including the unwieldy term “majority-minority.” Our language is inadequate at times, further illustrating the surmountable but real difficulties facing social justice collaborations.

⁹ Ga. Code. Art. 2, Chap. 7, Title 48, Sect. 1(a)(1).

State Rep. Stephanie Stuckey Benefield, a white legislator who represents progressive intown Atlanta neighborhoods, advanced the measure with help from Governor Roy Barnes's office, along with co-sponsor Rep. Roger Byrd (D. – Hazelhurst), from more conservative south Georgia. Because the proposal was designed to add Hispanic businesses to the list of those eligible for minority business status, the bill was actively supported by the Atlanta-based Latin American Association, a group formed more than twenty years earlier when the majority of Atlanta's Latino population was Cuban American. Rep. Jeanette Jamieson (D. – Banks Co.), co-sponsor of the bill that eventually passed, said it was "our intention to include other groups who have influence in our state...[but there was] concern on the part of certain groups [that], if you broaden the pie, their slice would be less."¹⁰

When the measure came up for a vote, some members of the legislative Black Caucus, whose numbers in 2002 totaled 47 in the Georgia House and Senate (out of 236, or 20 percent of the total), were among those who initially thwarted the bill. State Rep. Robert Holmes (D. – Atlanta) articulated the concerns of some African-American legislators. He argued that race, ethnicity, national origin, and immigration status are distinct concepts, which can be accompanied by distinct forms of discrimination.¹¹ "Many Hispanics are not people of color. They are a language group, an ethnic group," said Holmes. "These folks never experienced the same things we did." Holmes continued, "Why would a person [benefit] based on the language that they speak?" Several white legislators joined the legislative Black Caucus in opposing the measure. "Many [white legislators] did oppose the bill because the Black Caucus did," said Rep. Holmes. "They were deferring to our judgment."

Not all African-American legislators opposed the move. Long-time civil rights activist State Rep. Tyrone Brooks (D. – Atlanta), for example, was outspoken in favor of the measure. "We've got to expand the tent," said Rep. Brooks. And, Rep. Benefield admits that her failure to consult black legislators before introducing the measure added to confusion over the intent of the bill. Rev. Jesse Jackson, in Atlanta for another purpose, held a press conference with Reps. Brooks, Benefield, and twenty other legislators, calling for unity.

Press reports focused on African American legislators for opposing inclusion of "Hispanic" in the list of groups to be specified. However, opposition was not limited to African Americans, nor was support based solely on an inclusive understanding of racial/ethnic justice. Some conservative whites, motivated by opposition to affirmative action in any form, opposed the bill. For example, Rep. Earl Ehrhart (R. – Cobb Co.) offered an amendment to the measure to keep the old language. Ehrhart's incentive was "completely different" from that of African American opponents, said Rep. Holmes. "He wanted no local affirmative action."

Other Republican legislators, including some who were not noted for their progressive racial politics, supported the measure in order to court the burgeoning Latino

¹⁰ Quotes are from interviews by the author, except as otherwise noted.

¹¹ See Quiroz-Martinez, Julie, "Missing Link," *ColorLines*, Summer 2001, p. 17.

vote. “The Republicans, including [House minority leader Rep. Lynn] Westmoreland (R. – Sharpsburg), were all over the bill,” said Democratic Rep. Benefield. Republicans “were very supportive, they were trying to woo the Hispanic vote,” said Rep. Benefield. “Plus they liked seeing the Black Caucus fight with the other Democrats.”

In the end, the political desire to capture the growing Latino electorate trumped other considerations. When the initial House bill was blocked, Gov. Barnes took the extraordinary step of lobbying personally to include Hispanics in the definition of minority. Sensitive to a growing Latino electoral presence in the state, the governor was also aware that the National Hispanic Chamber of Commerce planned to hold its convention of some 10,000 attendees in Atlanta in the fall of 2001. Anticipating the need for Latino votes and financial backing in a tight 2002 gubernatorial race, Gov. Barnes also created a Hispanic Commission to solicit input from Latino leaders and strengthen political ties with the Latino community. “The State Commission was headed by a long-time Barnes friend of Spanish descent, Frank Perales Ros, a mid-level executive with the Coca-Cola Company,” noted Luz Borrero, executive director of the Southern Regional Council.

In 2002, Gov. Barnes urged the Senate committee considering the legislation to add language expanding the definition of minority to an unrelated bill. That bill passed; the whole process was concluded within a couple of weeks. The state of Georgia now has an inclusive definition of minority. However, the actual impact of the expanded definition may be limited. Before the vote, approximately three companies per year accessed the tax benefit, according to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Nevertheless, the extension of “minority” status to Latinos in a Deep South state known for its black-white divide is of great import. As Sam Zamarippa, then-chairman of the Board of Directors of the Latin American Association in Atlanta, told the newspaper, “Symbolically, it’s enormous.”¹²

Historical Background: Minority Business Contracting in Georgia

African American ambivalence and outright opposition to the expansion of “minority” in Georgia can only be understood in historical context. In the U.S. South, many black legislators, mayors and other elected officials rose to power in the post-Jim Crow era hoping to translate voting rights into commensurate economic gains in the form of government contracts, investment in African American neighborhoods, and civil service jobs. Although civil service employment expanded, particularly in majority-black cities like Atlanta and Memphis, access to government contracts has not been forthcoming. A familiar array of mechanisms continues to preserve the economic status quo: bonding requirements prevent African American small businesses from accessing state contracts and minority media are not utilized to advertise bidding opportunities, just to mention two examples.

At stake is not only the survival of black-owned businesses, but also the employment opportunities of black workers. “There is ample evidence that minority

¹² Bixler, Mark, and Kathey Pruitt, “Barnes lobbies to widen minority definition,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, March 9, 2001, p. D3.

business contracting gives opportunities to minority workers,” stated attorney Rodney Strong, who has conducted a number of studies on minority businesses in Georgia. Strong estimated, based on a study he conducted for the city of Atlanta in the early 1990s, that minority businesses hire 80 percent or more of their workers from minority communities. With almost 7,000 people employed by minority-owned firms at that time, the employment impact of state contracts could have extended to more than 5,000 individuals. The number of African American firms has doubled since then.

However, African American demands for equity in state contracting in Georgia have been persistently challenged by whites. A long series of reports has documented the pitiful percentage of contracts awarded to minority-owned firms, yet the principle of numerical targets for minority contracting has been regularly threatened in the legislature. For example, the Advisory Committee on Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) in its January, 1992 study reported that, “while no comprehensive State records [are] maintained to precisely document what portion of these contracting dollars are awarded to MBE firms, . . . the Advisory Committee, using available documentation, estimates that minority contractors are awarded no more than one percent of the contracts issued each year by the studied agencies.” Still, this modest MBE program came under vigorous assault in the 1997 and 1998 legislative sessions.

Subsequent reports have indicated extremely limited gains in minority contracting. The 1995 MBE numbers showed slight overall increases from 1992, but with many divisions of the state university system still reporting less than one percent utilization of minority firms. Stone Mountain Park, that venerable monument to the antebellum South, came in at 2.2 percent. A report by Georgia Tech economist Thomas D. Boston published in 2000 showed marked increases in 1998 and 1999 in the initial years of Governor Roy Barnes’ administration.¹³ But attorney Strong suggested that after an initial “bump” in 1998 and 1999, when Gov. Barnes took office, few additional advances have been made.

One of the most scrutinized and contested divisions of state government is the Department of Transportation (DOT), where big dollars are at stake and a vigorous and determined campaign has been waged to expand minority contracting. The Georgia DOT reported 5.3 percent minority participation in its 1995 contracts. In 2002, the DOT’s target percentage for minority contracts stood at eight percent, until a vote at a DOT meeting in late summer lowered the percentage to five. A furor ensued, with the result that the DOT Board reversed itself in the following meeting, increasing the target to 10 percent. The discrepancy between these numerical targets and actual population figures should be kept in mind: according to the 2000 census, African Americans compose 29.2 percent of Georgia’s population.

The debate over the definition of minority in programs designed to overcome discrimination in contracting has not been limited to Georgia. In Memphis, Tennessee, the majority black school board voted 5-4 in August 1996 “to define minority as ‘Black

¹³ Boston, Thomas D., *State of Georgia Minority Business Utilization FY 2000* (Atlanta: Boston Research Group, October 6, 2000).

American(s) ... having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.”¹⁴ Their action came in response to pressure from Latino business interests who argued, based on a 1994 disparity study conducted by J.D. Miller and Associates, that Hispanic businesses in Memphis had been excluded from city contracts at higher rates than African American-owned firms. As in Georgia, the controversy opened the door to whites opposed to any affirmative action at all, who in this instance prevailed. The predominantly white Associated Builders and Contractors subsequently sued the city over the minority contracting program, which resulted in its replacement by a “race-neutral” Fair Business Plan.

These political efforts to limit African American business owners’ access to state contracts form the backdrop for the 2001 legislative initiative in Georgia to expand the definition of minority. As we have seen, the debate over that measure turned primarily on conflicting interests regarding its political and perceived economic consequences and, more subtly, on different concepts of race. Its actual impact may be slight. However, the history of minority contracting in Georgia, which mirrors that of many locations throughout the South, renders this change both symbolically significant and politically instructive.

Lessons for Collaboration

The debate over minority business contracting illustrates some of the potential difficulties for social justice coalitions—and shows why deliberate attention to coalition-building is necessary. “This kind of opened things up in a way,” said Rep. Holmes, referring to the debate’s impact on subsequent collaborative efforts in Georgia. Despite the ultimately inclusive outcome of the legislation, however, perceptions of conflicting interests between African Americans and other people of color, specifically Latinos, persist.

Central to these conflicts is a fundamental difference in how the problem is defined. Do institutional racism and other injustices prevent African Americans and other people of color from accessing the economic resources that they need and deserve? Or, is the central problem competition over access to racial remedies? The role of opinion-makers, i.e., respected leaders in each community, in defining the nature of the problem is fundamental to the prospects for social justice collaboration. Several civil rights leaders whom we interviewed articulated an inclusive perspective. Among the most respected and well-known was the civil rights veteran, Rev. C.T. Vivian of Atlanta. “All of the minorities together only get 2.5% of the [private sector] business in Atlanta,” he stated. To counter this problem, Rev. Vivian repeatedly emphasized the need for unified action. “We must find a way of working together in close unity, understanding our need for each other and depending upon each other for the greater good of all of us.”¹⁵

The tendency for many immigrants, including working-class Latinos, to concentrate geographically in what may be key political jurisdictions, such as Atlanta, creates an obvious incentive for political overtures from African Americans, perhaps

¹⁴ Lancette, Chris, “Memphis Lock-out,” *Hispanic Business*, November, 1996, p. 10.

¹⁵ Interview conducted by Dwayne Patterson, January 30, 2002.

especially those steeped in the struggle for voting rights. Coalition building is important, Vivian argued, “particularly between blacks and Latinos where we have the best chance of [unity] and where it is most important because of numbers so that we can keep the political ground that we have.” However, Rev. Vivian argued that coalitions must be based on relationships of mutual understanding that extend beyond immediate political expediency. He stressed the need for cultural collaborations, such as bringing Afro-Cuban artists and musicians to perform in local festivals. “We need to be using everything we’ve got as outreach to them to show that we are really concerned and that every phase of black leadership is concerned within the cultural sphere as well as the political sphere.”

Coalition-building is by definition multilateral, and depends on overtures from Latino leaders as well as African American. Teodoro Maus, former Mexican Consul General in Atlanta, who moved on in 2002 to head the national Mexican-American Chamber of Commerce, has been one of the most prominent such leaders in Georgia. Maus has taken care to acknowledge both the racial oppression of African Americans and the great experiential resources that they bring to the table. He has pointed out that Latinos can learn much from the civil rights struggle, and has applauded the political power and organizing savvy that African Americans have gained. “They have been struggling for a long time and have a great understanding of how things should be moved and ... how pressure could be applied.”¹⁶ At the same time, Latino strength in numbers and in the labor force brings a powerful addition to the coalition table, he noted.

Both Latino and African American leaders who support coalition-building have sought to counter the perception that racial/ethnic progress is a zero-sum game, or that one group’s efforts to advance must necessarily come at another group’s expense. “This notion of a shrinking pie is a myth,” said Leticia Saucedo, a Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) representative from Texas, at a statewide meeting in Georgia to examine the need for building bridges between African American and Latino leaders. “We have shown in other places that where you do coalition-building, the pie does expand,” Saucedo continued, “and there is an increase in the level of well-being for all parties.”¹⁷

Since the 2001 debate in Georgia, relationships and mutual understanding between black and Latino leaders have continued to develop in the context of coalitions around public education and racial profiling. This mutual education has extended to the unfamiliar and previously unaddressed arena of immigrant rights, and has led to additional coalition efforts specific to the needs of new immigrants. For example, a statewide legislative effort to make driver’s licenses available to Georgia drivers from the 34 countries involved in the Free Trade Area of the Americas without regard to citizenship status attracted support from African American and progressive white legislators, though it did not pass during the 2003 legislative session. A small gain for Mexican immigrants was realized when the Mexican Consul in Atlanta, Remedios Arnau, developed a proposal in the second quarter of 2002 that the Mexican Consular ID Card be

¹⁶ “Dialogue for an Inclusive Democracy.” Video produced by George King. (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, February, 2002).

¹⁷ Ibid.

accepted as a form of identification for temporarily undocumented immigrants seeking to obtain a driver's license in the metropolitan Atlanta county of DeKalb. National organizations such as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) and grassroots Latino groups joined in the effort. Just as differences surfaced among African Americans over the expanded definition of minority, so too the Latino community was not unified on this question. Borrero of the SRC noted, "The Latin American Association, largest Latino organization in Metro Atlanta, located in DeKalb County, refused to endorse the proposal." After a heated debate, the Board of Commissioners of DeKalb County approved the measure with one dissenting vote in October 2002.

Electoral power remains one of the most important arenas for coalition-building. Although foreign-born Latinos and other immigrants are unable to vote in U.S. elections unless they become naturalized citizens, their U.S.-born children are automatically citizens and potential voters. Even in the South, where African Americans are by far the largest group of color in all states but Florida and Texas, activists across the political spectrum have taken serious note of the large increase in the Hispanic population quantified by the 2000 census. Courtship of the Latino electorate by politicians and political parties provides leverage not only to Latinos but also to the multi-racial/ethnic coalitions that they join. Unlike California and other states with large Latino populations, the relatively small voting base of Latinos in Georgia and elsewhere in the South means that they must seek alliances to succeed politically, a reality that obviously encourages coalitional overtures.

Multi-racial/ethnic electoral coalitions are still not easy to create. The combination of immigrant settlement in certain Atlanta neighborhoods and white gentrification in others has led some African American activists to fear the loss of the city as a power base for black elected officials. In this context, activists such as Rev. C. T. Vivian have argued for collaboration, and recent electoral trends lend pragmatic support to that position. Already Latino political clout is being exercised in Georgia, with the election of three Latino state representatives in 2002. Sam Zamarippa, senior vice president of community development at the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, who had campaigned for the broadened definition of minority for the Latin American Association, won in a closely contested intown Atlanta Democratic primary runoff with African American former school board member Brenda Muhammed. Latino housing advocate Pedro Marin won the uncontested Democratic primary in Gwinnett County and, in the general election, Republican candidate David Casas (District 66) won handily over a Libertarian Party candidate.

In southern states like Georgia, where African American disfranchisement is a living memory to many political activists and the struggle for civil rights continues, immigration and racial/ethnic diversification are transforming the political landscape. Successful coalitions have already been built, but many more are needed around specific demands: increasing the pool of MBE financing, improving workplace and wage policies, bettering education, ending racial profiling in the context of criminal justice, and implementing fair immigration policies. Translating electoral potential into successful political coalitions depends on framing an expanded and reinvigorated civil rights

agenda, one that encompasses the needs of diverse people of color and the rights of immigrants, as well as the historical legacy of African American dispossession and resistance in the South.