# SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

A JOURNAL OF POLITICS & CULTURE

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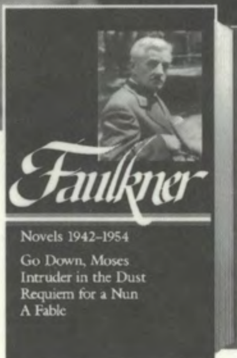


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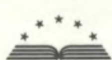

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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

**EDITORS**
Eric Bates and Pat Arnow

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**
Susan Ketchin, Nayo Watkins, Janet Irons, John O'Neal

**DESIGN**
Jacob Roquet

**COVER PHOTO**
Marlene Karas

**CIRCULATION**
Sharon Ugochukwu

**SPECIAL THANKS TO**
Harrell Chotas, Sally Gregory, Jane Fish, Betty Meeler, Carol Roquet, Michelle Ugochukwu, Jeremy Raw, Lorraine Strauss, Haila Rusch, Ewunike Patterson, DuEwa Patterson, Zakiya Patterson, Virginia Shuler, Treon Cummings, Cathy Barbee's class at Riverside High School.

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**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**
Pam Baker

**FALL ISSUE**

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## *From the Editor*

It seems appropriate in an issue with a cover featuring the faces of the newest Southerners to introduce the new faces here at *Southern Exposure* and the Institute for Southern Studies.

But first, a not-so-new face: After seven years as editor of the magazine, I am taking on a new position as Investigative Editor. The switch frees me up to concentrate on investigative reporting — something I've been itching to do for some time. I'll also be directing our newly endowed Investigative Action Fund, which is designed to support hard-hitting investigative journalism, sponsor our annual Southern Journalism Awards, and provide media training for youth and grassroots activists.

Now the new folks:

▼ **Pat Arnow** takes over as editor of *SE* after eight years at the helm of *Now and Then*, a terrific journal published by the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services in Johnson City, Tennessee. Pat also served as managing editor of *Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association*, and her writing and photos have appeared in numerous magazines and several anthologies. The bulletin board in her office sports a life-size image of Michael Jordan's hand, which is considerably larger than hers.

*"Her bulletin board sports a life-size image of Michael Jordan's hand."*

▼ **Stan Holt** joins us as Development Director after four years as executive director of the North Carolina Lesbian and Gay Health Project, a Durham advocacy organization promoting quality health care for lesbians and gay men. He also serves on the board of directors for North Carolina Community Shares and the Durham County Board of Public Health. His bulletin board features a poster of a condom below the words "Right to Life."

▼ **Ron Nixon,** the contributing editor for our Blueprint department for the past year, joins our staff as a Research and Community Development Initiative Associate. He has been a reporter for the weekly *Black News* in South Carolina, a producer for state educational television, and a research analyst for the Citizen Local Environmental Action Network. A poster in his office advertises the Toxic Lotto ("People of color and low-income communities have the best chances of winning!").

▼ **Jo Carson,** an award-winning poet and playwright from East Tennessee and a longtime friend of *SE,* will be coming aboard as Fiction Editor with the winter issue. (Since she works out of her home in Johnson City, I don't know what she has on her walls.) Jo replaces Susan Ketchin, who is moving on to serve as a consultant for the Center for Documentary Studies. Susan has given us six years of good reading. We'll miss her.

Fortunately, I won't miss *Southern Exposure*, since I'll still be here. I hope you'll stay with us too. All of us at the Institute — old and new — will need your support as we strive to produce a lively and troublemaking magazine, provide strategic research to grassroots organizers, and empower communities to have a greater voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

*— Eric Bates*

# ROUNDUP

## ARSENIC AND OLD TEXAS

Driving through the tiny East Texas town of Pittsburg — home of Pilgrim's Pride, the nation's fifth largest poultry company — Susan Nugent points to house after house where someone she knew died from cancer.

"It's kind of eerie," says Nugent, a cattle rancher. "I just learned that several young women that I knew, many I grew up with, all have cancer. Wherever you go, the talk of the town is who has just died or who has just been diagnosed with cancer."

No one knows the exact cause of the cancers. Even nationally renowned M.D. Anderson Hospital in Houston, which just completed a study in the area, seems puzzled at the cancer clusters.

Nugent, who herself has developed skin cancer, halts her Ford Bronco by the Pilgrim's Pride Feed Mill, which looms over her hometown. Gazing through the yellow haze which constantly envelopes the area, she wonders if the arsenic the company adds to its chicken feed as a growth stimulant could be the culprit. After all, she points out, arsenic is a known carcinogen.

THE PILGRIM'S PRIDE FEED MILL LOOMS OVER PITTSBURG, TEXAS.

"I had no idea they added arsenic to chicken feed until after my cattle began dying and the autopsies showed they died of arsenic poisoning," Nugent confesses. "Then a chicken grower for Pilgrim's told me about the arsenic that accumulates in the litter — Pilgrim spreads tons of it as fertilizer on area pastures each year — and showed me the feed tags which clearly state that arsenic was in the feed."

Nugent believes that runoff from arsenic-contaminated litter entered her water supply and killed her cattle. The Texas Water Commission has established no link between arsenic in the litter and arsenic in the dead cattle, but Bo Pilgrim, CEO of Pilgrim's Pride, paid Nugent $24,303 in compensation.

Nugent lodged complaints with regulatory agencies, but no one would listen — until Benny Fisher, a pesticide inspector with the state agriculture department, visited her nearly 100-year-old family farm and recognized the signs of arsenic damage. For two years, Fisher had been investigating alleged arsenic dumping by Voluntary Purchasing Group, a large agricultural cooperative that mixes pesticides in Bonham.

VPG didn't have the best of reputations. As early as 1968, the state tested water runoff from the company's Hi-Yield plant in Commerce and found lethal levels of arsenic. The state's response: Tell the company to erect a corrugated building on the contaminated site and move to Bonham. It wasn't until last year a quarter century later — that the state announced it would remove potentially toxic soil from the mostly black neighborhood around the plant. So far, though, no cleanup has begun.

The delay has taken its toll. Residents near the VPG plant in Commerce have erected crosses to memorialize the 19 people on one street who have died from cancer. Others, like LaRisa McCowan Cannon, wear their evidence. Her nub of a left arm is a birth defect she blames on the arsenic contamination.

According to evidence collected by Fisher, VPG continued its deadly practices after it moved to Bonham. Workers have signed

## WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE

**"Sunshine laws" require elected officials to conduct public business in the open, enabling citizens to hold their government accountable. But in several Southern states, officials have recently circumvented the rules by cutting deals behind closed doors.**

**In North Carolina, state officials tapped the former law firm of Governor Jim Hunt to negotiate an incentive package to attract a California computer company to open a large office in Raleigh. The law firm secretly offered Merisel $1.5 million in tax breaks and more than $7 million in incentives from real estate, utility, and other interests. Since negotiations were conducted behind the scenes by a private firm, the public knew nothing about the offer until months later, after the deal fell through.**

**Such incentive packages have become a common way for states to woo private industry but since the deals frequently draw sharp public criticism, officials are eager to keep negotiations secret. In Texas, State Senator Florence Shapiro has proposed an exemption to the open meetings law that would allow cities and states to privately offer tax dollars to private firms.**

**Citizen advocates say such closed meetings violate the public trust. "I think taxpayers have a right to know if you're getting ready to give away the store," said Suzy Woolford, executive director of Common Cause of Texas.**

**In Florida, officials have used creative semantics to circumvent open-door meetings. When two citizens tried to enter a closed-door budget meeting of the El Portal village council in July, they were barred by Mayor George Eckert, who insisted the confab was a "workshop," not a public meeting.**

**"I have been on council for 12 years," the mayor said, "and we have never had anybody from the general public at a workshop."**

**Florida's Sunshine Law is explicit: Two or more members of the same commission cannot meet, even informally, without public notification and access. State attorneys are investigating El Portal officials and the closed-door "workshop."**

***— John James***

**RESIDENTS BLAME THE VPG PESTICIDES COMPANY FOR DUMPING ARSENIC-CONTAMINATED BARRELS IN POWDER CREEK NEAR BONHAM.**

sworn statements that the company routinely dumped arsenic waste at night, while no one was watching. Photographs show barrels oozing contaminates dumped in East Texas and Oklahoma creeks; residents allege the barrels came from VPG. Autopsy reports on cattle, horses, and dogs in the area indicate high levels of arsenic, and residents say birds flying over the plant while the company was cooking its arsenic would fall "dead out of the sky."

"It's not just Pittsburg, and it's not just Commerce," warns Fisher, who no longer works for the state. "Arsenic contamination can be found all across Texas and the South — anywhere chicken litter has been spread or aerial spraying of cotton has occurred." (Herbicides used on cotton fields also contain arsenic.)

The state attorney general filed suit against VPG in 1990, charging the company with disposing of its toxic waste in a fertilizer it sold to the public — without a label indicating it contained high levels of arsenic. VPG countersued, alleging the investigation was tainted because evidence was obtained without company permission. The case is still pending.

Fisher says agriculture officials ordered him to halt his investigation and dispose of his records in 1991. "What I want is for the public to know that the very agencies that are supposed to protect them are the ones turning their backs," says Fisher. "If the state has known since the 1960s about the contamination and VPG dumping, why didn't they do something about it then? Why wait 25 years, and then make the public pay for the cleanup?"

— *Carol Countryman*

## WANT NOT WASTE IN JOHNSON CITY

When local officials in Johnson City, Tennessee named their new regional landfill the "Iris Glen Environmental Center," some residents started to worry. After all, they reasoned, anyone with such an impressive capacity for kidding themselves could be dangerous.

The Iris Glen dump is one of the recent development deals cooked up by the city manager and commissioners in this East Tennessee town of 50,000. Officials insist the contracts they are making with private industry will generate public revenues; many residents believe they will damage the environment and ultimately cost the city more than it receives.

The Iris Glen landfill stands on an old mining site operated by General Shale, just nine blocks from city hall and only 600 feet from homes and a low-income housing project. The shale on the site is cracked and broken, and a stream running through the property could contaminate groundwater.

The "environmental center" is a great deal for both General Shale and WMX, which has contracted to run the garbage dump. The city bought the site from General Shale for twice its assessed value, freeing the company from regulations requiring it to reclaim the land. Yet the city will continue to pay the firm a penny of every nickel it receives from WMX in dumping fees.

What's more, the fees themselves may also amount to a giveaway. Johnson City will receive $2.50 a ton from WMX — about half what waste management companies can afford to pay, according to *The Wall Street Journal.*

As soon as plans for the dump became public in 1991, more than 200 residents formed a group called Citizens for Responsible Government to fight it. Led by Mickii Carter, a local business owner, members challenged the landfill at the local and state level.

"I got very interested in environmental discrimination," says Carter. "I didn't realize that things were so bad as they were. I had been in Republican Women for 15 years. I thought you could depend on the EPA. I gave money to organizations and thought when someone had an environmental problem, they'd come to your aid."

Carter won election to the city commission to fight the dump, and her husband Doug took over leadership of Citizens for Responsible Government. "Usually you've got local government saying, 'We're going to protect the citizens,'" he says. "In this case we're fighting the city and the state."

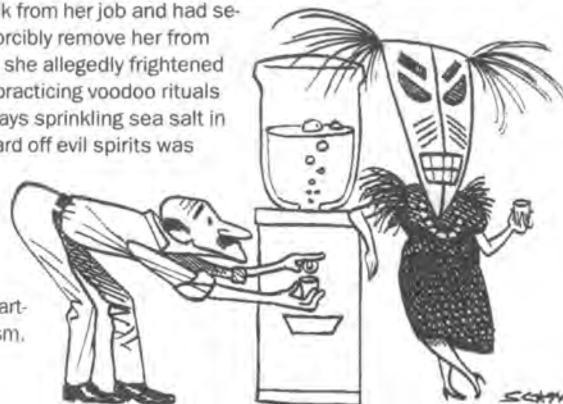
So far, the city and state are winning. Despite testimony by environmental experts about potential damage from the landfill, Iris Glen is scheduled to open in October.

But citizens have won a victory in a second deal between the city and industry. Officials planned to sell a watershed the city owned in neighboring Unicoi County to Lauré Water Company for less than a third of its assessed value. To make matters worse, Laure planned to build a bottling plant on the site, which contains an aquifer and natural springs.

Ben Scharfstein, a liquor store owner, thought it was "a lousy

### VOODOO ECONOMICS

Government bureaucrats are often blamed for trudging through their days like zombies, but one Florida agency claims Anna Polk went a little too far. The state Department of Business and Professional Regulation recently suspended Polk from her job and had security guards forcibly remove her from her office after she allegedly frightened co-workers by practicing voodoo rituals at work. Polk says sprinkling sea salt in the office to ward off evil spirits was just a joke; co-workers say her real offense was blowing the whistle on departmental nepotism.



## KENTUCKY TAKES OVER LETCHER SCHOOLS

**Last summer a team of state education officials appeared unannounced at schools in Letcher County, Kentucky. In the July heat, men in white shirts carted away boxes of school documents, causing quite a stir in the county seat of Whitesburg. After years of complaints from frustrated parents, the state was finally conducting an audit of southeastern Kentucky schools.**

**Almost a year later, State Education Commissioner Thomas Boysen summed up the findings: "Gross mismanagement . . . to the level of incompetency, nonfeasance, misconduct in office and willful neglect of duty." Boysen pointed the finger specifically at Jack Burkich, charging the Letcher County superintendent of schools with "willful neglect of duty, to such a degree that reasonable explanations are not and cannot be forthcoming."**

**When the audit was released in May, Boysen recommended a state takeover of the school system. At two hearings in June, a state panel approved the takeover — the first in Kentucky — and suspended Burkich from his remaining 21 days in office.**

**"What struck us about this system is the comprehensive breakdown across the board," says Sandra Gubser, the state education official who supervised the audit. She recommended the takeover, she adds, because the problems were "so pronounced and longstanding."**

**Dr. Vickie Basham, assistant state education commissioner, has been appointed to run the schools in concert with former Assistant Superintendent Larry Ison. Basham has created 14 "action committees" to deal with problems identified in the report, ranging from school renovations to governance and leadership.**

**"We tried to design the process so no one would be left out," says Basham. She answers a longstanding complaint of residents in a district which has never allowed significant community input in planning and decision-making.**

**Still, most parents are adopting a wait-and-see attitude. "She's created a lot of committees," says Josephine Richardson, a parent who has called for reforms for years. "But I don't know that I see much happening. I know that sounds cynical and pessimistic, but that's how a lot of people feel."**

***— Lorraine Strauss***

deal" and bought an ad in the local paper to say so. The 15 people who responded never formally organized, he says. "All we did was phone calls at night. We're certainly not powerful people. I call it a groundswell of everyday people who said, 'this is wrong.'"

The publicity they generated and the pressure they exerted were effective. Commissioners backed away from the deal.

Scharfstein is no hero to some residents of Unicoi County, a hard-pressed rural, mountain area. "You're destroying a chance for jobs, and it's a clean industry," they told him. Scharfstein reassured them that Lauré Water was "not going to go anywhere. They need you more than you need them."

He was right. Lauré is negotiating to build its bottling plant on private property a safe distance from the water table. Scharfstein and his group are "90 percent pleased," but are still concerned that the property taxes on the watershed being demanded by Unicoi County will exceed the low fees Lauré pays the city to use the site.

Scharfstein doesn't blame the city, but says direct citizen action is essential. Without pressure from residents, he says, "No question, Lauré would never have moved."

Doug Carter of Citizens for Responsible Government puts it more bluntly. "Our city commission was a bunch of cheap whores," he says. "They sold out cheap."

*— Pat Arnow*

## SOUTH HAS HIGHEST RATE OF CESAREANS

Those looking for ways to reform the health care system might examine a new report by the Public Citizen Health Research Group. The non-profit organization studied four million births from 1992 and concluded that the South has the highest rate of the nation's most common major surgery — Cesarean sections to deliver babies.

According to the study, every Southern state except Georgia performed C-sections at rates above the national average of 22.6 percent. The five highest rates in the nation were posted by Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, and West Virginia.

"With the exception of New Jersey, all of the highest rates are in the South," notes Mary Gabay, who helped compile the Public Citizen report. Only Colorado, Alaska, Minnesota, Idaho, Wisconsin, and Washington had C-section rates below 18 percent.

Cesarean rates have been gradually falling since 1988, when they were used in a record 24.7 percent of all births, but they remain well above the maximum rate of 15 percent recommended by the Centers for Disease Control. While C-sections are sometimes needed to save the life of a baby, the surgery adds risk to the mother and costs $3,100 more than a vaginal delivery.

The higher price tag may be one reason that doctors perform Cesareans more often than necessary. Public Citizen found that women with private insurance have the highest rates, followed by those in HMOs, those with Medicaid, and the self-paid. C-sections are also safer for physicians (they reduce the risk of lawsuits) and more convenient (unlike vaginal births, they can be scheduled).

The major reason Cesarean rates are decreasing nationwide is increasing acceptance of medical recommendations that women who have had Cesareans should deliver subsequent babies vaginally. The practice — known as Vaginal Births After Cesareans (VBAC) — is slowly replacing the conventional wisdom of "once a Cesarean, always a Cesarean."

The Public Citizen report notes that "states with high Cesarean rates tended to have low VBAC rates and vice versa. In fact, those five states cited as having the highest Cesarean rates were also the five states with the lowest VBAC rates." No Southern states boasted a high rate of vaginal births after Cesareans.

*— Pat Arnow*

### REFORM THIS

Every Southern state except Georgia has higher rates of C-sections and lower rates of vaginal births after Cesareans (VBAC) than the national average.

| | % Cesarean | % VBAC |
|---|---|---|
| Alabama | 25.1 | 17.5 |
| Arkansas | 28.4 | 14.7 |
| Florida | 24.7 | 21.0 |
| Georgia | 22.3 | 20.5 |
| Kentucky | 24.3 | 16.1 |
| Louisiana | 28.2 | 10.9 |
| Mississippi | 27.7 | 13.5 |
| N. Carolina | 22.8 | 23.6 |
| S. Carolina | 23.2 | 18.1 |
| Tennessee | 23.4 | 19.0 |
| Texas | 27.0 | 13.6 |
| Virginia | 23.4 | 23.0 |
| W. Virginia | 26.3 | 15.3 |
| **U.S. Average** | **22.6** | **25.7** |

Source: Public Citizen Health Research Group

## Texas Gamblers Hedge Their Bets

**High-stakes investors hoping to legalize casinos in Texas have found some high-placed gambling partners to help increase the odds. Governor Ann Richards, Lieutenant Governor Bob Bullock, and Attorney General Dan Morales are all on record as opposing legalizing casinos — but that hasn't stopped them from accepting contributions from casino developers for their fall reelection campaigns.**

**One of the largest political contributors in any Texas race this year is Daniel Robinowitz, a Dallas businessman who has contracted to build the world's largest land-based casino in New Orleans. Robinowitz gave $105,000 to Governor Richards and $100,000 to Lieutenant Governor Bullock, thanks to generous laws in the Lone Star State which place no limits on individual contributions to candidates for statewide office.**

**Robinowitz admits his interest in opening a casino in Dallas if the opportunity arises, but denies any connection between his business ambitions and his campaign contributions. Observers in Texas note, however, that Robinowitz has never anteed up for a political campaign before this year.**

**Other first-timers in the political game include James and Linda McIngvale, a couple interested in opening a casino in Houston. They made large contributions to Richards and Bullock and supplied $100,000 to Pat Lykos, the Republican contender for attorney general. When Lykos lost the primary, the McIngvales shifted their bets to Attorney General Morales, staking $75,000 on the Democratic incumbent.**

**Don Wittig, the Republican challenger, lashed Morales for his blatant opportunism. "I am shocked that the attorney general would accept that large a contribution from anyone who has stated gambling interests when a decision is pending," Wittig said.**

**Morales does have a pivotal role in the decision to legalize gambling. The state legislature is awaiting an opinion from the attorney general as to whether lawmakers can legalize casinos without an amendment to the state constitution — a process which requires approval of two-thirds of legislators and a majority of voters.**

**Pro-casino interests would prefer the legislative option, and Morales might oblige them. He recently solicited a brief on the constitutional issue from a law firm that represents casino operators.**

**George W. Bush, the Republican challenger for governor and son of the former President, has blasted Richards for accepting gambling money, but he is also backed by casino interests. Bush received a six-figure donation from Richard Rainwater, another potential casino owner. He and Rainwater are also co-investors in the Texas Rangers baseball team and other business ventures — deals which accounted for 60 percent of Bush's personal income in 1993.**

***— John James***

## Women of Color Organize at Work

Conesta Williams was working at the Imperial Foods poultry processing plant in Hamlet, North Carolina when fire broke out in 1991. "It looked like someone was throwing big beach balls of fire," she recalls. Twenty-five workers were killed, trapped behind exit doors locked by management to prevent theft. Williams was one of the lucky ones: She escaped by squeezing through a single unlocked door and jumping into a garbage dumpster.

Since then, Williams has realized that her co-workers who perished shared more than a job. Twelve were African-Americans; 18 were women.

Worldwide, women of color suffer some of the most hazardous working conditions and lowest wages of any group of workers. They toil in garment factories and meat-processing plants, suffering repetitive-motion injuries. They work on farms and in migrant labor camps, exposed to multiple chemical hazards. They labor in service industries, cleaning hospitals and hotels for minimum wage with little hope of advancement.

According to a 1989 study by researchers at the University of California, women of color face disproportionate dangers in the workplace. The average black worker is one and a half times more likely to sustain an injury on the job than a white worker; African-American women face risks twice as high as those of white women.

But grassroots workers like Williams are determined to change all that. In March, she and nearly 200 other activists attended a conference entitled "Women of Color in the Workplace" in Greensboro, North Carolina, to forge alliances and formulate strategies to prevent exploitation and abuse of women of color.

"If we don't form this chain of unity locally and globally, we will be slaves forever," said Mattie Jones, head of the racial and economic justice program of the Fel-

## JACK DANIEL'S ENDS DRY SPELL

After nearly a century as a dry county, voters in Moore County, Tennessee agreed in August to allow Jack Daniel's to sell commemorative bottles of sour mash whiskey at its distillery in Lynchburg. The vote came after intense lobbying by the distiller — the county's largest employer and tourist attraction. The 250,000 visitors who tour the distillery each year can now buy souvenir bottles, but they can't enjoy them until they cross the border. There is still no place to drink alcohol in Moore County.

lowship of Reconciliation, which sponsored the conference.

The event brought together women working for change at all levels: union organizers from Central America, theologians from the South Pacific fighting for equality within the church, public policy researchers in North Carolina advocating for legislative reforms, and representatives of grassroots organizing and funding groups throughout the South.

Worker health and safety were at the top of the action list, with activists citing employee training and involvement in workplace reform as keys to improving conditions. Other issues seen as crucial to women of color were sexual harassment, public housing reform, labor organizing, and the discrimination faced by undocumented workers.

Workers in North Carolina detailed their efforts to enact workplace safety reforms in the wake of the Hamlet tragedy, but they warned that recent changes in workers compensation law will once again roll back protections for workers.

To keep insurance premiums for workers compensation down, state lawmakers opted to cut worker benefits instead of preventing on-the-job injuries. Under the new law, injured workers will have a much tougher time proving they qualify for benefits. Those who do qualify will see their checks cut dramatically.

But sharing stories of reform efforts and setting goals and objectives weren't the only point of the conference. Equally important for the grassroots activists in attendance was the message that they are not alone in their work. The meeting enabled them to make connections with other activist groups from across the nation — groups that are in the vanguard of social change. "People are struggling everywhere," said Anne Braden, who helped found the Birmingham-based Southern Organizing Committee for Social and Economic Justice.

One of the conference's main goals was to link grassroots groups together and create a network of activists fighting injustice and discrimination against women of color.

"We fed up, we fired up, and we can't take it no more," said Jones. "That is why we're here."

*— Liz Enochs*

## CLEAN COAL COMPANIES?

Coal companies apparently know how to obey the law — when it saves them money. Fed up with mine inspectors charging bribes to overlook safety violations, several eastern Kentucky companies blew the whistle. As a result, three inspectors have pled guilty to charges of extortion and filing false reports.

"It's a particularly pernicious and despicable crime," says Tony Oppegard of the Mine Safety Project in Lexington. "It's essential that miners be able to trust the federal inspectors. Miners depend on these guys to protect them." With six mining fatalities in the first six months of this year, Kentucky leads the nation in mining-related deaths.

## WORKERS WIN BIGGEST VICTORY SINCE STEVENS

It took 15 years and five tries, but textile workers at Tultex Corporation in Martinsville, Virginia finally won the right to union representation. In August, employees voted 1,321 to 710 to join the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union — giving ACTWU its largest victory since workers organized the J.P. Stevens plant in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina in 1974.

Tultex workers have tried unsuccessfully to organize since 1979. But when Tultex went public in the mid-1980s, conditions became intolerable for many workers who previously voted with the company.

"When I first started, it was a relatively good place to work," says Clifford Broady, a Tultex employee for 16 years. "Over the last five years I've seen that change. It's expansion, corporate greed. They've forgotten about those people who are making the products."

From its founding in 1937 as Sale Knitting Company, the firm was family-owned and operated; John Franck inherited his position as CEO from his father. But changes in management style followed fast on the heels of Tultex stock sales.

"They pushed out the older supervisors and brought in younger ones," says Broady. "It just wiped out that family feeling."

Since 1990, the company has also wiped out 800 permanent positions and given them to temporary workers, slashed paychecks, and eliminated Christmas bonuses and retirement plans. Tultex blamed the cuts on poor sales, but, as ACTWU points out, the company acquired nearly $70 million in assets last year and still cleared $6 million in profits.

"The cuts were so extreme that many folks lost up to $6,000 in benefits and pay," says Patricia Westwater, communications director for ACTWU's Southern region. "Those losses meant some workers could no longer send their children to college; others had to move into cheaper housing or could no longer support their families with their income.

Still, Westwater says, ACTWU was wary about launching a fifth organizing drive. "When workers called us, we told them, 'Look, we've been here four times. Show us you mean business.' We gave them a week to get us a majority of workers to sign cards — and they did."

"This is an historic change for workers here," says Ernest Bennett, the union's assistant regional director and coordinator of the Tultex campaign. "The town's been controlled by the same families for a long time. This has always been an anti-worker town. I graduated from high school here in 1966, and not much has changed." Bennett smiles. "But it's a new day in Martinsville."

*Photo courtesy ACTWU*

**TEXTILE WORKERS AT TULTEX CELEBRATED THEIR UNION VICTORY IN AUGUST — THE LARGEST WIN FOR ACTWU SINCE J.P. STEVENS.**

Tultex was the 15th election that ACTWU has won in 20 months, and union membership in general has been on the rise after years of decline. "This victory shows a growing unrest in the South, in the textile industry," says Bennett. "There are a lot of dissatisfied workers."

Clifford Broady is one of them. He works 12-hour shifts, taking materials to the floor of the knitting department. "We're hoping that the union will give us a voice. The company preaches a lot about being a team," he says, referring to the "Team Tultex" signs hanging at the plant gates. "We want to see if they really want to work, all of us together, as a team. We're ready."

*— Lorraine Strauss*

## COMMUNITY FIGHTS POLICE MISCONDUCT

It has been two years since Willie Edward James, a black motorist, was killed by Police Chief Henry Duke during a routine traffic stop in Springfield, South Carolina. Yet for many in the community, his death continues to raise disturbing issues of police accountability.

Duke, who is white, shot the unarmed driver in the neck and chest. The police chief claimed James was resisting arrest, but a grand jury indicted him for murder. When Duke was set free due to a legal error, the Federal Bureau of Investigation took over the case. After two years, they have no answers.

Tri-County United Action, a local community group, has waged a campaign to get the FBI to move faster on the case. "It's sad — the Justice Department is dragging its feet," says Kamau Marcharia, founder of TCUA. "This is a serious issue in our community — of cops killing people and getting away with it. Who's policing the police? There needs to be some accountability."

To press for justice, TCUA has joined the national Campaign for Community Safety and Accountability. The campaign emphasizes two principles:

▼ **Prevention over punishment**. Groups in the project call on the government to match every dollar spent on jails, prisons, and more police with community-based programs for job creation and training, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and educational and cultural programs. This is especially important in the South, which has some of the highest incarceration rates in the nation.

▼ **Police accountability**. In every community the campaign calls for an independent review system to hear and investigate allegations of police misconduct. Currently most investigations into police wrongdoing are in-house operations. "What you have is cops policing cops," says Ted Robinson of TCUA. "It's time to break up this fraternity of cops protecting each other."

Another major concern of the campaign is the abuse of asset forfeiture money. Under federal law, the government can seize money obtained through criminal activity — as long as it returns 15 percent of the funds to the community from which the property was seized.

Unfortunately, most of the money remains in the hands of authorities. "Very little of this money is ever returned to the community for constructive use," says Marcharia. "This money could go to reducing our tax burden or providing preventive programs to help curb crime."

Ted Robinson of TCUA urges community groups around the South to join the campaign. "Where there is no justice and no accountability," he says, "there is no damn peace."

*— Ron Nixon*

*Illustrations by Steven Cragg.*

*Readers are encouraged to submit news articles to Roundup. Please send original clippings or photocopies with name and date of publication, or articles of no more than 500 words.*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# FOLLOWUP

## WORKERS WIN LANDMARK CASE

In "Diary of an Organizer" (Spring 1994), *Southern Exposure* chronicled how textile workers at Macclenny Products in Florida voted 58 to 56 to join the union, even though the company engaged in unfair labor practices and threatened to close the plant.

Unfortunately, we noted, legal challenges to the vote would "rob workers of their victory. The whole process will take years. Years that workers will spend playing by the rules of the democratic process, while the company continues to make its own rules — and break them as it pleases."

For once, however, justice for workers came swiftly. On July 25, a federal judge issued a landmark injunction ordering the company to bargain immediately with the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU).

It was the first interim bargaining order ever issued by the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals, which covers Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. Such injunctions are only issued when the court determines that irreparable harm will occur to the rights of workers if the company is not ordered to bargain immediately.

"This is a victory for the workers in Macclenny, as well as workers across the country," said Bruce Raynor, Southern regional director of ACTWU. "For too long American workers have suffered under a process which delayed justuce for years at a time. This case should send a clear signal to lawbreaking companies across the nation — you are not above the law."

*— Lane Windham*

## LENDERS PAY FOR PREYING ON POOR

Corporate money machines backed by Wall Street have continued to profit from low-income and minority borrowers since *SE* reported on their predatory lending practices in "Poverty, Inc." (Fall 1993). Over the past year, however, several big companies seeking an even bigger share of the estimated $70 billion market for high-interest mortgages and consumer loans have been dogged by charges of fraud and price gouging.

Associates Corporation of North America, a Dallas-based subsidiary of Ford Motor, lent nearly $24 billion to consumers last year and pocketed almost $524 million in profits. But the company also found its prosperity being challenged in court:

▼ In March, an Alabama jury slapped the company's consumer-lending arm, Associates Financial Services, with a $34.5 million verdict for trying to foreclose on a customer whose signature had been forged on loan documents. Two years ago, the company settled another lawsuit in Washington charging it with forging loan papers.

▼ Last year, Associates agreed to pay $3 million to about 8,000 low- and moderate-income borrowers in Arizona who accused the company of forcing them to buy insurance with their loan packages. The company paid another $375,000 to the Arizona attorney general. A recent lawsuit in Roanoke, Virginia has also accused the company of insurance violations.

▼ In 1990, the company agreed to pay an estimated $230,000 to settle a South Carolina class-action suit charging it with gouging borrowers through a refinancing scheme. Associates currently faces other class-action suits in Alabama, Maryland, and Minnesota.

The company has denied wrongdoing in all of these cases. An Associates spokesman says the company didn't break any laws in Arizona — it settled simply to get the lawsuit over with. "We've been in business 75 years and pride ourselves in the integrity of our company."

United Companies Financial Corporation, another consumer lender, has also been hit with charges of sleazy lending practices. Based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the company has become a $1.8 billion conglomerate by unabashedly targeting homeowners who can't get credit from banks or savings and loans.

"There are 11,000 banks in the country and maybe 2,000 thrifts," United Companies president J. Terrell Brown told the *American Banker* last spring. "If each one of their branches turns down one loan a week, then it's a lot of small numbers that all of a sudden get big. And that's what really fires me up."

United Companies executives compare their company to "fast food before Ray Kroc." They believe they're poised — like McDonald's in the 1950s — to take over a huge, growing market. Analysts say the market for "nonconforming mortgages" — home loans to people snubbed by banks — now totals $25 billion.

Founded in 1946, the company reached critical mass in 1992 when it jumped into "mortgage-backed" securities — a new investment strategy that allows lenders to pump up their cash flow by selling bonds backed by the income from their mortgages. Gary Klein, an attorney with the National Consumer Law Center, says the new market has created vast pools of money for shady lenders.

United Companies has certainly profited. In two years, the lender has expanded from 17 states to 30, and its loan production has tripled to a projected $900 million. Wall Street has noticed: United Companies stock prices skyrocketed by 340 percent last year.

But many borrowers have charged that some of that money was made by cheating them:

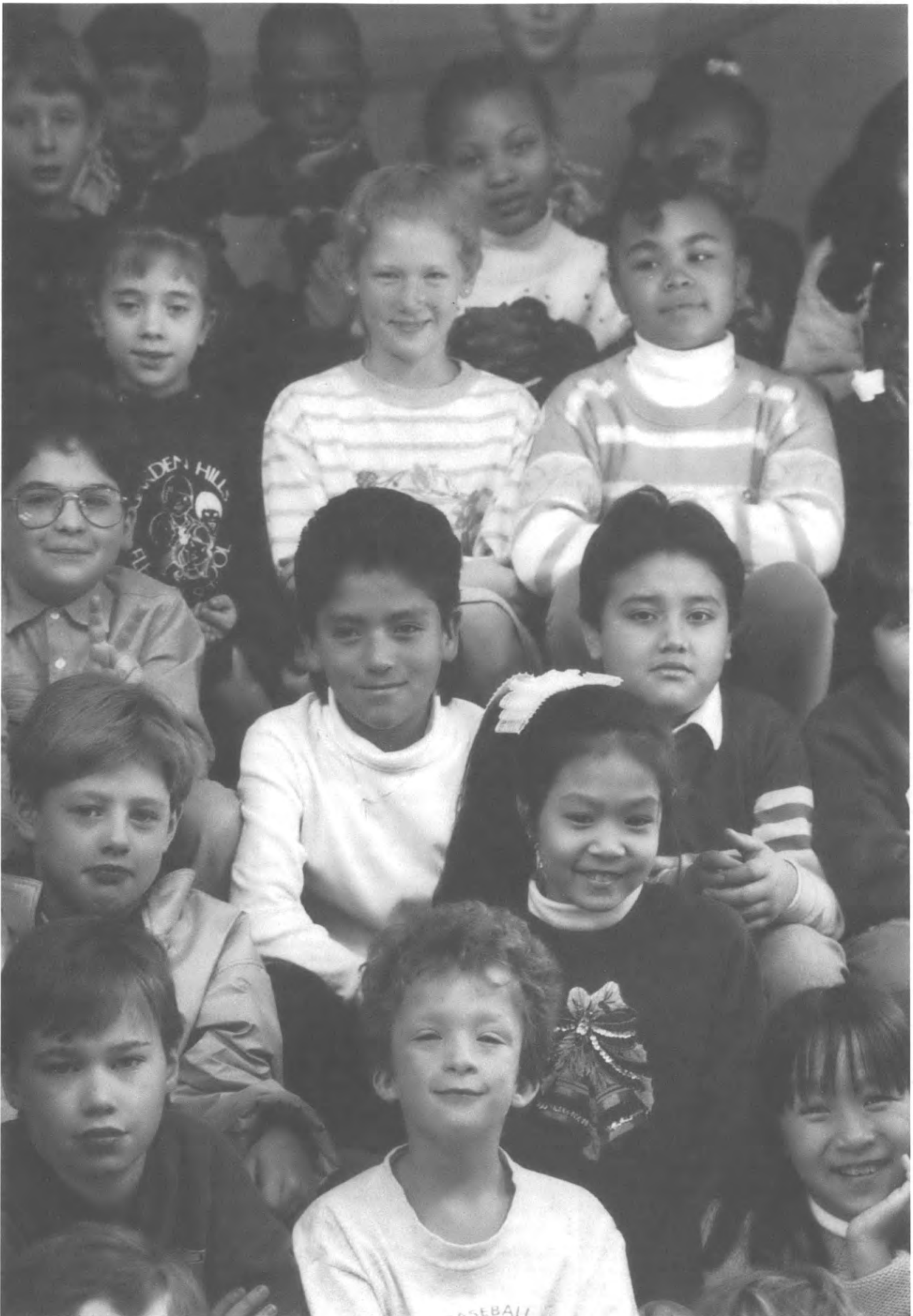
▼ In 1991, the Alabama Supreme Court upheld a $500,000 verdict against United Companies for defrauding Abram Brown and Rosie Holcombe when they borrowed $12,000 for home repairs. The lender picked the contractor and persuaded the couple to pay him, even though the work was never finished. The trial judge found that Brown and Holcombe were forced to "live in deplorable conditions for months and months" — with a kitchen without water, rooms without walls, and a bathroom with only a hole in the floor.

▼ Last year, United Companies paid $4.4 million to settle a lawsuit charging that it had fleeced 1,500 working-class borrowers in rural Alabama. According to expert testimony, one customer, Bobby Ogletree, paid what amounted to 61 percent interest to borrow money for home repairs. The company currently faces two more class-action suits in Georgia and Alabama.

A United Companies spokesman denies any misconduct: "If you look at the hundreds of thousands of loans we've made, I don't think you are going to see anything but a record that is commendable and exemplary."

*— Mike Hudson*

*Photo by Marlene Karas/Atlanta Constitution*



**STUDENTS AT GARDEN HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN ATLANTA REFLECT THE GROWING ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH.**

# Beyond Black & White

By Eric Bates

Just north of Atlanta in DeKalb County, Georgia lies Census Tract 212.04. The sliver of a neighbor hood around the Peachtree Airport contains all the trappings of a working-class suburb — well-kept homes and modest apartments, tree-lined streets and commercial strip malls.

For years, all but a hundred or so of its 1,541 households were white. In 1980, the census showed, Hispanics comprised only five percent of the population, and Asians made up barely three percent.

In a single decade, all that has changed. Today Census Tract 212.04 is one of the most culturally diverse areas in the South. According to the 1990 census, white residents now number in the minority. More than a third of all households are Hispanic, and nearly a fifth are Asian.

The remarkable transformation of this one census tract mirrors the shifting demographics of the rest of metropolitan Atlanta. Over the past 10 years, the city and its suburbs have become home to 4,000 Vietnamese, 10,000 Indians, 25,000 Koreans, 30,000 Chinese, and 100,000 Hispanics.

Rebecca McCarthy of the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* summed up the sudden shift shortly after the 1990 census figures were released. "The city that didn't have a pizza parlor until 1959," she wrote, "now boasts a Korean Chamber of Commerce, a Hmong church, a Hispanic yellow pages, many Catholic masses in Spanish, a Russian Pentecostal congregation, a Korean radio station, a Hispanic weekly newspaper, a Chinese community center, and Baptist churches for everyone from Romanians to Haitians."

The increasing racial and ethnic diversity in Census Tract 212.04 and metro Atlanta may also herald the future of much of the South. The region has long been home to peoples of all races and colors, but their numbers have risen dramatically in recent years, far outpacing the growth in white and black communities. Today one in 10 Southerners claims Hispanic origins or a race other than black or white. That's 7.6 million people — more than the population of any Southern state except Texas and Florida.

But the numbers tell only part of the story. The new wave of settlers — and the rapid pace of change itself — already pose a challenge to a region not known for embracing change. Increasing diversity is forcing Southerners to reexamine virtually every aspect of their lives — from language and land use to education and employment. Even the concept of "race" itself has come under renewed scrutiny, as policymakers consider how to classify people by race in an increasingly interracial world.

In short, as pockets of diversity like Census Tract 212.04 spread, Southerners of all races will find themselves confronting an unexplored region in which whites are one of many minorities. "Some people feel real uncomfortable and worried around other races," a senior at multiracial Cross Keys High School in DeKalb County told a reporter. "You can't feel that way around here because we've got them all — and no one is in the majority."

### THE HISTORY

The South has always had one of the most diverse populations in the country; non-whites currently comprise 23 percent of the region, compared to 18 percent of the non-South. The region is home to all but a few dozen of the nation's 186 counties where minorities constitute a majority. Starr County, at the southernmost tip of Texas, is the least white of all: 97.5 percent of its residents are people of color.

But since colonial times, when European settlers killed and forcibly relocated native inhabitants while importing enslaved laborers from Africa, the racial history of the region has been largely a study in black and white. As Duke University historian Peter Wood has documented, the number of native Southerners fell from 200,000 in 1685 to barely 56,000 by 1790. By contrast, the number of whites soared from 47,000 to more than one million, while the number of blacks climbed from 3,300 to almost 591,000. (See "Recounting the Past," *SE* Vol. XVI, No. 2.)

It was around the same time this demographic revolution got underway that European colonists began referring to themselves as "white." As activist Mab Segrest explains in her *Memoirs of a Race Traitor,* the new term was created to generate solidarity among settlers of diverse and often hostile ancestry — at the expense of people of color. "White people were 'invented' to give Europeans a common identity against Africans," writes Segrest.

Southern plantation owners, eager to add the children they had by enslaved women to their slave populations, also promoted a system of racial classification known as "the one-drop rule." As Lawrence Wright reports in *The New Yorker,* the rule defined as black any person with as little as one drop of "black" blood. Thus, by the time Thomas Jefferson supervised the first census in 1790, the lines of race were clearly — if falsely — drawn. Instead of recognizing traditional differences between cultures, racial classification was devised as a political tool to enforce the

## THE MULTIRACIAL SOUTH

Figures from the 1990 census for each Southern state show the number of people of each race or ethnic origin (in thousands) and their rate of increase since 1980.

| | WHITE | | BLACK | | NATIVE AMERICAN | | ASIAN | | OTHER | | HISPANIC | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Alabama | 2,976 | 3.6 | 1,021 | 2.4 | 17 | 117.7 | 22 | 123.9 | 6 | -24.1 | 25 | -26.0 |
| Arkansas | 1,945 | 2.9 | 374 | 0.0 | 13 | 35.5 | 13 | 85.9 | 7 | 9.5 | 20 | 11.0 |
| Florida | 10,749 | 31.3 | 1,760 | 31.0 | 36 | 88.7 | 154 | 171.9 | 238 | 66.6 | 1,574 | 83.4 |
| Georgia | 4,600 | 16.5 | 1,747 | 19.2 | 13 | 75.3 | 76 | 209.9 | 42 | 126.4 | 109 | 77.8 |
| Kentucky | 3,392 | 0.4 | 263 | 1.3 | 6 | 59.8 | 18 | 78.7 | 7 | -19.9 | 22 | -19.8 |
| Louisiana | 2,839 | -2.5 | 1,299 | 4.9 | 19 | 53.7 | 41 | 72.8 | 22 | 11.6 | 93 | -6.1 |
| Mississippi | 1,633 | 1.1 | 915 | 3.1 | 9 | 37.9 | 13 | 75.6 | 3 | -32.1 | 16 | -35.6 |
| North Carolina | 5,008 | 12.4 | 1,456 | 10.4 | 80 | 24.0 | 52 | 146.3 | 32 | 60.9 | 77 | 35.4 |
| South Carolina | 2,407 | 12.1 | 1,040 | 9.6 | 8 | 43.2 | 22 | 89.1 | 9 | 10.0 | 31 | -8.6 |
| Tennessee | 4,048 | 5.5 | 778 | 7.2 | 10 | 96.7 | 32 | 128.0 | 9 | -13.7 | 33 | -3.9 |
| Texas | 12,775 | 14.1 | 2,022 | 18.2 | 66 | 64.4 | 319 | 165.5 | 1,805 | 55.6 | 4,340 | 45.4 |
| Virginia | 4,792 | 13.3 | 1,163 | 15.3 | 15 | 61.6 | 159 | 140.2 | 58 | 78.3 | 160 | 100.7 |
| West Virginia | 1,726 | -8.0 | 56 | -13.5 | 2 | 52.7 | 7 | 43.6 | 2 | -42.7 | 8 | -33.2 |

Note: Persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race. Many list themselves as "other."

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

gap between the powerful and the powerless.

During the Civil War, immigrants comprised an estimated five percent of the Confederacy, and the category of "whiteness" was expanded to include European newcomers. They proved to be eager recruits. "After the Civil War, immigrants adopt an anti-black point of view also," says Jason Silverman, a Winthrop University professor who has researched the history of the ethnic South. "They want to stay in the South and they want to be successful."

Other immigrants were not granted such favored status. Ever since the first enslaved Africans were brought to the South, the regional economy has depended on importing a supply of cheap labor — and on using race to control the immigrant workforce. Chinese laborers were brought to Mississippi a century ago to build railroads and toil as sharecroppers. Italians and other European peasants who were used to replace slaves often died from forced labor and disease. Many Lebanese settlers were forced to live in black neighborhoods and were able to move into other areas only after a generation had passed. "We were treated as blacks," recalls Thomas Farris of Clarksdale, Mississippi.

Farris spoke to Stephen and D.C. Young, who have traversed Mississippi interviewing and photographing 20 groups of ethnic Southerners. Many migrated to the Gulf Coast and the Delta from New Orleans in search of work and a coastal environment that reminded them of home: from the first Jews who settled in Natchez in the late 1700s, to Slavonians and Acadian French who built the seafood industry in Biloxi at the turn of the century, to recent Vietnamese immigrants who have helped revive it.

"The pattern of ethnic settlement has been consistent throughout the years," the Youngs write in *Ethnic Heritage in Mississippi.* "New Orleans has always been a major port of entry for immigrants, so it is natural that they settled along the Mississippi River and the Gulf Coast."

But wherever ethnic newcomers settled in the South over the past two centuries, they remained few in number. In 1970, the census recorded 257,396 Southerners of races other than black and white — barely half of one percent of the region's 55 million people.

Today the region stands at a demographic threshold no less revolutionary than the one that transformed the colonial South. Fueled by a high level of immigration, the number of Southerners neither white nor black soared to two million in 1980 and 3.5 million in 1990. In addition, there are now 4.1 million black and white Southerners who consider themselves Hispanic, a category the Census Bureau introduced in 1980 and treats as an "ethnic origin" rather than a separate race.

"Up until about 1960, the non-white population was basically all black," Greg Spencer, an analyst in the Census Bureau office of population projections, said shortly after the figures were released. "Now, blacks are less than half the minority population nationally. Clearly, the changes are coming."

### THE NUMBERS

Changes are also coming for the census itself, following seven months of congressional hearings last year. The national headcount has been under sharp attack ever since census-takers began knocking on doors in 1989. According to a report by the General Accounting Office, the census missed an estimated 4.7 million people — half of them in the South. The black undercount was the biggest ever, and many people of Hispanic origin were improperly assigned races based on the neighborhoods in which they lived.

What's more, the GAO warns, "the American public has grown too diverse and dynamic to be accurately counted solely by the traditional 'headcount' approach." Federal officials are now considering modifying the five racial categories used by the census — White, Black, American Indian (including Eskimo and Aleut), Asian or Pacific Islander, and Other — as well as the separate category for Hispanic Origin.

Yet for all its errors and inconsistencies, the census still represents the best way to track racial and other demographic changes. A closer look at the Southern population since 1980 reveals a region undergoing rapid growth and diversification:

▼ The South grew by more than 10 million people during the '80s — and nearly 2.6 million of the new Southerners were Native American, Asian, Hispanic, or other races besides black and white. During the same decade, 3.3 million newcomers of all races moved to the region from the Northeast and Midwest, giving some cities and suburbs a distinctly "Yankee-fied" flavor.

▼ Asians posted the fastest regional growth at 146 percent, followed by Native Americans at 53 percent and Hispanics at 50 percent. By contrast, black and white Southerners increased by just over 12 percent.

▼ The number of Southerners of Hispanic origin — who can be of any race — climbed from 4.3 million to 6.5 million. All but 46,000 of the 2.2 million Southerners listing their race in the "Other" category claimed Hispanic ancestry.

▼ Every group except for blacks and Hispanics grew faster in the South than in the rest of the nation. But the non-South still has a slightly greater concentration of Hispanics and non-black minorities than the South — 13.6 percent versus 10 percent.

▼ The fast-paced growth among Southern communities of color strengthened their presence in the region. Today one of every 200 Southerners is Native American, two are Asian, and 17 are Hispanic.

▼ Despite their growing presence, these "other" Southerners are far from evenly distributed across the region. In fact, their growth mirrors the rest of the South: They increased fastest in the five states with the biggest overall population booms. Nearly 86 percent — all but one million — live in Texas and Florida. Another half million live in Georgia, Virginia, and North Carolina.

▼ Those same states, along with Louisiana, are the only states in the South where minorities other than African Americans comprise more than two percent of the population. The Lone Star and Sunshine states are the most diverse: More than one in four Texans and more than one in seven Floridians is Hispanic or a race other than white or black.

But if Texas and Florida are unusually diverse, demographers say, they are simply precursors of the South — and the America — to come. The Census Bureau projects that by the year 2010, Hispanics will overtake African Americans as the largest minority. By 2020, Florida and Texas will each gain more than two million immigrants, surpassing New York for total population. By mid-century, white Southerners could become another minority.

"It's a big multicultural change," Carl Haub of the Population Reference Bureau told the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*. "It's comparable to the changes that occurred due to immigration in the early 20th century, when people came from what were then considered non-traditional countries in Europe. But this is an even bigger change because it involves language and race."

Photo by D.C. Young

**ONE OF THE OLDEST CHINESE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN MISSISSIPPI WELCOMES WORSHIPERS IN TWO LANGUAGES.**

### *THE IMMIGRANTS*

The current growth in Southern diversity has been fueled in large part by low birth rates among blacks and whites relative to other races. In addition, legal immigrants made up more than a third of the growth in the 1980s, driving population change more than at any other time since the turn of century. Today 14 percent of all Southerners speak a language other than English at home, up from 11 percent in 1980.

"There's no region that needs diversity more than the South," according to Everett Lee, a senior research scientist at the University of Georgia. "The fact that it didn't attract immigrants held us back intellectually and culturally."

Farms, factories, and offices in the region also rely on immigrants to fill many low-paying and dangerous jobs that other Southerners are unwilling to perform. The region has increasingly been integrated into the global economy; most newcomers who arrived in the South during the 1980s migrated from the lowest-paying regions in the world — Asia and Latin America.

As with earlier immigrants, many of the newest Southerners started off in coastal and border states like Florida and Texas, then gradually made their way inland to cities like Atlanta, Charlotte,

and the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C. But unlike earlier immigrants, who formed close-knit communities to preserve their culture, many of the newcomers live spread out around big cities, isolated from each other and their neighbors, their cultural and political base diluted by distance.

"Atlanta's ethnic communities are growing, but you hardly know they're there," said Dr. Cedric Suzman of the Southern Center for International Studies. "If we could string them together they could have some impact on the look and feel of Atlanta, but at the moment they're swallowed up by miles and miles of suburban sprawl."

Still, in some areas around Atlanta, the newest Southerners are starting to make their presence known. As the *Journal and Constitution* has reported extensively, one town in DeKalb County near Census Tract 212.04 offers a glimpse of how the face of the South is changing — and how the change presents a challenge to old and new Southerners alike.

For decades, Chamblee was an overwhelmingly white town of blue-collar workers. But that began to change in the 1970s, when immigrants started arriving in the area, attracted by available construction work, good public transportation, and the "refugee discounts" offered by many apartment managers. As word spread and the flow of immigrants increased, the complexion of the community changed. Hispanic residents quadrupled in number, Asians doubled — and more than a third of all whites packed up and moved.

Yet even though whites are no longer a majority in Chamblee, the town's power structure remains overwhelmingly white. Only one of its 32 police officers speaks Spanish, and none is Asian. All five members of the city council are white men. At one 1992 meeting, city officials joked about setting bear traps to catch day laborers so they could be "sent back to Mexico." Federal officials had to intervene to calm tensions among Latinos.

Local leaders acknowledge that such tensions are likely to increase as longtime residents feel threatened by the growing diversity. "When you have change and you feel like you're losing control, that's no good," DeKalb County Commissioner Elaine Boyer told reporters.

### THE CHALLENGES

The issue of control is central to understanding — and overcoming — the tensions sparked by increasing diversity. As the region adds more hues to its racial rainbow, some white Southerners accustomed to having things their own way have responded to their new neighbors with an angry and sometimes frightening backlash. In 1981, Klansmen terrorized Vietnamese families recently arrived to the Texas coast by burning a mock Vietnamese fishing boat in effigy.

Corina Florez, who migrated to Toombs County, Georgia from Mexico in 1983 to work in the onion fields, has also felt the sting of racism. "When I first came to Vidalia, everybody stared when I walked into a restaurant, like they'd never seen somebody like me," she said. "In a department store, the clerk led me to the cheap sales racks. Sometimes people just assume we're illiterate, we can't speak English, we can't think."

Much of the reaction involves fights over limited resources. As Southerners more closely resemble the rest of the world, some cities and counties already strapped for cash are being pressed to provide English classes for immigrants, translators in municipal courts, and health services for impoverished newcomers. Not far from Chamblee in the town of Doraville, for example, officials fought a recent redevelopment project designed to provide affordable housing for immigrants.

"Why would we want to attract more immigrants?" Vice Mayor Lamar Lang told the *Journal and Constitution*. "We got plenty. We got enough to go around. If you want any in your neighborhood, we'll send you some."

But hostility and discrimination by whites is only the most immediate reaction to diversity. As the white majority dwindles and a multitude of other races find themselves vying for limited resources, the region is experiencing increasing tension *among* minority groups.

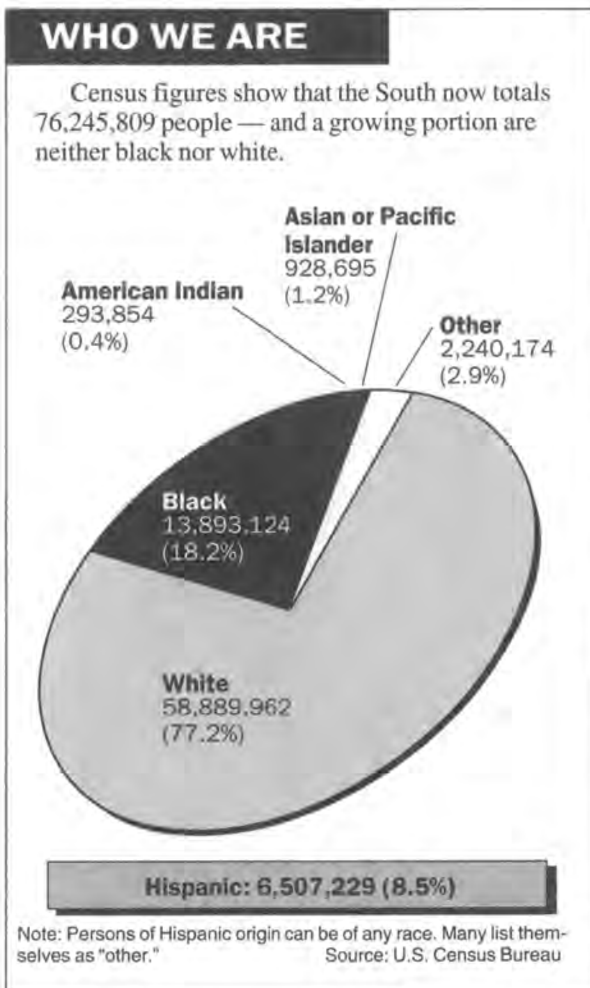
"The tensions are really among the poor people: blacks, Asians, and Hispanics," says Xuan Nguzen-Sutter, a native of Vietnam who directs refugee programs for Save the Children in Atlanta. "I'm trying to get kids into Head Start programs, into all the services that are available for low-income people, and we do get a lot of reluctance. The mid-level managers feel like the program is more for African Americans. They feel we are taking spots that should be reserved for African-American children."

Interracial tensions arise in part from widespread economic disparity among similar groups. According to a 1992 report from the Census Bureau, some immigrants arrive with little capital, while others have money to get started. "Some Asian groups, such as the Chinese and Japanese, have been in this country for several generations," the report notes. "Others, such as Hmong, Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians, are comparatively recent immigrants."

In other words, people classified as members of the same race by the Census Bureau are often as different from one

## WHO WE ARE

Census figures show that the South now totals 76,245,809 people — and a growing portion are neither black nor white.




Note: Persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race. Many list themselves as "other." Source: U.S. Census Bureau

another as they are from members of other races. "Asian" covers people of dozens of nationalities, languages, and cultures, some of whom view each other as traditional enemies. "American Indian" includes every native inhabitant from Eskimos in Alaska to Seminoles in Florida, while "Black" groups together Spanish-speaking Cubans, French-speaking Haitians, and Portuguese-speaking Brazilians. Even "White," a category created and expanded to foster racial solidarity among Europeans, includes groups as disparate as Welsh, Germans, French, Scandinavians, Russians, Scots, Poles, and Slavs.

What's more, the census has no category to acknowledge children of interracial couples — a significant omission, particularly in a region like the South where black, red, and white have been intermingling for more than three centuries. Since 1970, the census reports, the number of interracial couples has jumped from 310,000 to 1.2 million. By contrast, same-race couples have increased by only 16 percent.

In recent years, multiracial citizens have launched a new movement to enable people to identify with the totality of their heritage. In the affluent suburb of Cary, North Carolina, an interracial couple refused to enroll their child in elementary school in September until officials agreed to classify him as Multiracial. In Atlanta, a magazine called *Interrace* founded in 1989 for interracial couples now boasts 25,000 subscribers.

"Before the civil rights movement, the whole effort was to pass as whites," Carlos Fernandez, president of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans, told *American Demographics*. "Now we're seeing the opposite — people wanting to identify the other way. Mixed-race people who once would have let themselves be considered white are insisting they're black."

The same appears to be true for Native Americans, whose ranks in the South swelled by more than half during the 1980s. In fact, ethnic pride may account for part of the increase among Indians, many of whom previously identified themselves as white.

"Native Americans can include anybody," says Eddie Tullis of the Poarch band of Creek Indians in Alabama, where the census showed that Indians more than doubled during the '80s. "If you trace your ancestry back four or five generations, you'll find some Indian ancestry. It's popular to be an Indian now."

The current racial categories used in the census were created in 1978 when the federal Office of Management and Budget adopted Statistical Directive 15 to help federal and state agencies collect and share uniform data to better enforce the Voting Rights Act, equal employment laws, and affirmative action plans. In July, responding to growing dissatisfaction with the categories, the OMB began hearings to consider a variety of changes: adding a Multiracial category, changing "Black" to "African American" and "American Indian and Alaskan Native" to "Native American," including Hispanic as a racial group instead of a separate ethnic category, and adding a new group for Middle Easterners, currently classified as White.

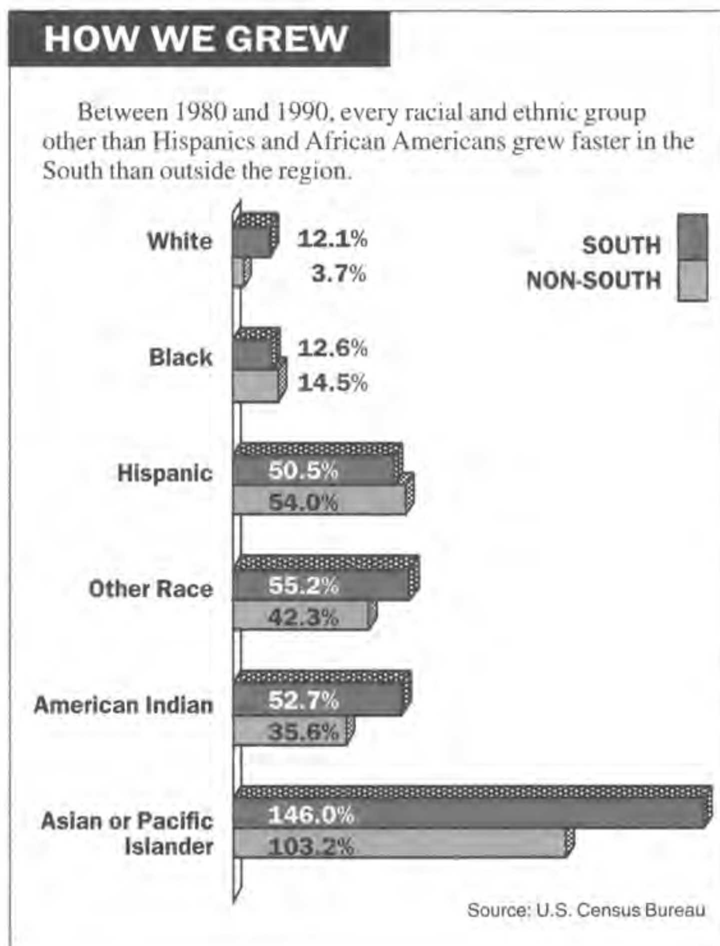
Some policymakers and grassroots organizers worry, however, that diluting categories and allowing people to self-identify their race could undermine enforcement of civil rights laws designed to protect the very people who find the categories offensive. "The programs set up by the government to make sure minorities are treated fairly would take a huge hit," Katherine Waldman, statistics supervisor for the OMB, told the Raleigh *News and Observer*. "How would affirmative action work? How could we enforce anti-discrimination laws if we couldn't look at the records of a workplace and be able to tell there are no minorities working there?"

At the heart of the policy debate is the very concept of "race" itself. Counting and grouping people by racial categories helps us fight discrimination — but does it also perpetuate racism by institutionalizing false racial distinctions? Can we preserve "race" as a useful statistical device and yet find ways to acknowledge that such measurements can never truly reflect our rich diversity as a people?

Such questions will become more pressing as the racial and ethnic composition of the South continues to change — as the region becomes, in the words of the DeKalb County high school senior, a place where "no one is in the majority." Southerners other than black and white may currently represent only a tenth of the region's population, but their influence is already shaping the South of the 21st century.

"Absolute numbers alone do not indicate impact," says Everett Lee of the University of Georgia. "It's a question of visibility and roles played. Just go out to the universities and look at the students. That's where you'll see the impact — and it will get larger and larger as time goes on." ❑

*Eric Bates is editor of* Southern Exposure. *Haila Rusch and Jane Fish provided research assistance for this article.*



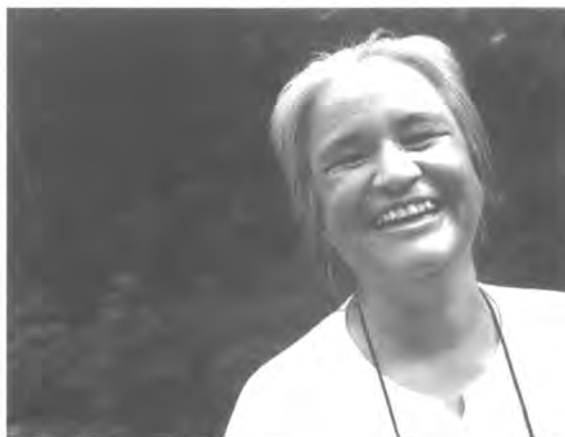
# The "Other" Southerners

The South was a region rich in ethnic diversity long before any of its inhabitants were "white" or "black." The peoples who had lived here for millennia before Columbus arrived developed a startling variety of cultures and political systems, and spoke scores of languages that were, in the words of one historian, "as different from each other as English is from Chinese."

Today the census acknowledges 7,550,102 Southerners of races and ethnic origins other than European and African. Some trace their ancestry in the South back thousands of years. Many have just arrived. All are helping reshape the region by contributing their diverse beliefs, experiences, languages, and ways of life.

To help put a human face on the growing diversity, we teamed up writers and photographers in five Southern states and told them we'd like to meet some of their neighbors. On the following pages, they make the introductions.

*— Eric Bates*



# Chinese

## MISSISSIPPI

*Story by Stephen Flinn Young*

*Photos by D.C. Young*

Bing's Super-Valu faces a busy Highway 1 in Greenville, Mississippi. The wide, flag-draped supermarket sports a modern plexiglass canopy across the front. Although barely midmorning, the parking lot is packed with cars.

"Oh, the parking lot is always crowded," a bag boy says. "Bing's has *lots* of loyal customers. And it's the best place in town to work."

Johnny Choo, the owner of Bing's, greets us at his office, which overlooks the check-out line. The walls are decorated with dozens of red-and-gold Chinese greeting cards, three Chinese calendars, and two large brass fish, which are Chinese symbols of good fortune. Also lining the walls are many plaques and framed citations, which are American symbols of good fortune.

Despite the rush of shoppers and store crew, Choo sits for a moment and talks about his life in Mississippi.

"After I graduated from Mississippi State, I went to California. I was an engineer in the aerospace industry, but I was unsatisfied with my situation. I was making good money for those days, but I was not getting ahead. After I had been there three years, my father called and said he had a 12,000-square-foot store in Greenville. He needed help running it and wanted to know if I would be a partner. I said yes and came home. It is better to be your own boss, of course, and this is where my family is."

Bing's Super-Valu is still a family business; Choo's father-in-law and mother-in-law stock shelves and check out customers. Choo and his family often spend 12 to 16 hours a day at the store, so a room off the office is furnished as a living room. In contrast to the way Americans divide life into segments, the Chinese do not separate life from work.

"My father borrowed money from relatives and traveled from China to the Delta in the 1920s and opened a store. We have many relatives here, from the Canton region of China — that's the dialect we speak, Cantonese. My father could not speak English at all, so it was hard for him at first.

"But it was hard for all the Chinese. In those days we had a separate hospital, school, and church. Over the years, though, the discrimination against Chinese has decreased. Our families are still very close, but the Chinese identity is less. My wife is from Hong Kong, so we maintain contact with Chinese culture. She serves special foods on holidays and we stay in touch with relatives and friends.

"I do not emphasize Chinese ways all that much. Maybe that is because we are more accepted here, I don't know. The need to band together is maybe not so strong now, and many Chinese are leaving the Delta. Anyway, my children do not speak the language except for a few words. The children care less about the culture, and they are educated to be like other Americans."

**JOHNNY CHOO STANDS AT THE CHECK-OUT LINE IN BING'S SUPER-VALU IN GREENVILLE, MISSISSIPPI.**

Just then a Washington County supervisor appears at the door. He shares with Choo the news of fields and roads flooded by recent storms, and explains plans for a meeting with the governor to press for disaster relief. Choo listens intently, then nods and offers whatever assistance is needed from him.

"Just call me," he says when the two men shake hands. The supervisor excuses himself and rushes to the next stop on his rounds.

"Compared with California, I like being part of what is going on, and I like the slow pace of a small town," Choo continues. "I like knowing everybody and being able to get things done with a phone call. I guess my most gratifying work has been with the Salvation Army and setting up the scholarship fund at Mississippi State for students from the Delta. I doubt if I could ever have done these things if I had stayed in California."

**Like most Chinese grocery stores in the Delta, Daniel Shing's is located in an African-American neighborhood.**

Farther up the Mississippi River is Clarksdale, another Delta town where the Chinese have lived for over a century. On a hot August morning, Daniel Shing welcomes us at his grocery store in the heart of the African-American neighborhood.

"My father came to the United States in 1920. The earliest settlers stayed on in the Delta because it is so much like their homeland in climate and living conditions. They could bring over other family members, but only with much hard work. That was the pattern — hard work and bring other family members over. And as far as getting along, well, you might say, 'They didn't stir no water nowhere.' They stayed to themselves."

Shing was born in Clarksdale, graduated from the University of Mississippi with a degree in business administration, and married an immigrant from Singapore in 1967. He returns to China every few years and brings home Chinese videotapes and seeds for Chinese vegetables and herbs.

Although the newer generation keeps up with tradition, Shing says, "we are more outgoing, too." Shing himself is on the board of the Clarksdale Chamber of Commerce, the Exchange Club, and the local arts council. The mayor of the nearby Delta town of Shaw is Chinese, and others are also taking an active role in civic life.

Until recently, Shing explains, "there was rarely any outward involvement with the broader community. Nothing public, like a parade or banquet. Then a few years ago the mayor and some other local businessmen persuaded a group of Chinese investors from Taiwan to visit Clarksdale. These investors had to be persuaded because of the state's reputation for backwardness. So when they came, I met with them, to show that there was an active Chinese community in Clarksdale. I told them that if the Taiwan businessmen have money to invest in the U.S., why not invest it in a Delta town where Chinese live?

"Well, one thing led to another and soon the mayor and I were on our way to Taiwan for more meetings. Not long after that, the state even set up a trade office there. So, to make the story short, the city of Clarksdale asked me to initiate a Chinese New Year's Party that would be open to the whole city. So I did it. There was a parade and the banquet sold out. But, in spite of all the work, the Taiwan investors decided to go elsewhere with their money. "On the good side,

though, the New Year's celebrations succeeded in bringing more Chinese into the life of the whole community. Now Chinese are more willing to join civic groups."

I ask about the Chinese vegetable and herb seeds he mentioned earlier, the ones he brings back from China. Somebody must be gardening with them, right?

"Yes, and the best gardener is Kam Chow. If you want to meet him, I'll take you."

Kam Chow has retired, but his family continues to run his one-room corner store in a mostly black neighborhood. From the street all you see of Kam Chow's garden is a chain link fence covered with vines. But when you enter the garden — which is about 20 feet wide and 30 feet long — you are surrounded by a carefully constructed framework. Melon vines cover walls and a roof made of found lumber and garden fencing. Stacks of lumber, boxes, and cement blocks support huge melons, which are marked with numbers.

"So they can be picked in the right order," Shing explains.

Other canopies support Chinese cucumbers and beans with long pods. Without the overhead vines as a sun screen, the weaker plants simply would be impossible to grow. On the ground, in an open space, there are long, raised beds with Chinese varieties of broccoli and mustard, bok choy, and tomatoes. Some of the flats have just been seeded with crops that will mature in the fall.

Kam Chow has rigged up an ingenious irrigation system with a series of garden hoses to carry runoff from the store's air conditioner to every part of the garden. He makes fertilizer by piling dead plants and trimmings in the spaces between flats.

"He had his soil tested by the agricultural lab at Mississippi State," Shing says. "He learned that the soil was *too rich*, so he had to add some lime. Otherwise, no fertilizer!"

On our way back into the store, I ask Shing if the garden is really as fruitful as it appears to be. "Productive?" Shing smiles. "Kam Chow's garden keeps his whole family in vegetables all year long. That's true Chinese gardening." ❑

**KAM CHOW, A RETIRED GROCER IN CLARKSDALE, MAINTAINS HIS GARDEN USING CHINESE METHODS AND SEEDS.**

# Cuban

# FLORIDA

*Story by Linda Gibson*

*Photos by Alex McKnight*

Her family came to America before she was born in 1914, but Delia Serralles has lived her whole life as a Cuban. Their culture thrived in the Latin quarter of Ybor City in Tampa, Florida, a town turned by their labor into the cigar capital of the world.

A trip to her house is almost like visiting another country. Even after 80 years, Spanish comes more easily to Serralles than English. She translates for her husband, Eduardo, who sits with some friends under the orange trees that shelter cages of lovebirds and parakeets. Chickens and roosters wander around the yard, while the aroma of bread pudding in the oven fills the house.

Serralles worked for 45 years in the brick cigar factories. By the time she was born, some 10,500 workers in more than 100 factories and countless tiny storefront or home-based "buckeye" operations were already producing 250 million hand-rolled cigars a year. Most of the workers were Cubans, with a smattering of Italians. Their employers, the cigar barons, usually were Spanish.

"In those days, hardly anybody spoke English in Ybor City," Serralles says. Her three children started school knowing only Spanish.

Her family followed the cigar trade as it moved from Cuba to Key West to Tampa. With each move, factory owners sought to leave behind the labor strife that resulted from their efforts to control workers. In this, they were continually frustrated.

Cuban cigarworkers considered themselves craftsmen, not laborers. Each step in the cigarmaking process — selecting tobacco leaves, rolling cigars, banding them, packing them — was a speciality. Serralles started at age 18 as a stripper, one who removed the big vein from each leaf. At their peak, she and her husband could roll a thousand cigars a day, all of uniform size and shape, using nothing to measure with but their hands and eyes.

**"I'D RATHER GO HUNGRY THAN BREAK A STRIKE," SAYS DELIA SERRALLES, WHO WORKED IN THE CIGAR FACTORIES OF YBOR CITY FOR 45 YEARS.**

Cigarmakers in each factory paid 10 cents a week for the services of a reader, who sat perched above the rolling tables and kept them entertained by reading newspapers, novels, or short stories. The most talented could imitate any kind of voice and practically enacted the story.

Readers often selected news articles from union papers published in Ybor City, which were heavy on international politics, socialism, and class conflict. Tampa's cigarworkers bankrolled Jose Marti's revolution against Spanish rule in Cuba, donating 10 percent of their salaries each week.

Decades later, another Cuban revolutionary came to Tampa seeking support. He and his companions stopped by the Serralles house one time. Delia didn't know until later that one of the men she served espresso to that day on her front porch was Fidel Castro.

Cigarworkers opposed any change they thought threatened their status as skilled craftspeople, such as measuring out tobacco instead of relying on their own abilities to estimate how much was needed. Strikes were common.

Native-born Southerners viewed the proud, outspoken Cubans as dangerous agitators. They always sided with the factory owners. Serralles remembers watching Tampa police officers escort scabs into the factories. Decades later, her contempt is still evident. "I'd rather go hungry than break a strike," she says.

She also remembers the .38 pistol her father bought after being threatened by the Ku Klux Klan in Key West. He carried it with him all the time. He ran a grocery where customers could charge their purchases with nothing but their promise to pay weekly.

His wife died at 30, leaving him with five children. They came to Ybor City in 1922 and moved around the neighborhood often, always seeking less expensive quarters. Each time, her father would disinfect their latest abode by burning sulfur candles in it. "He raised five good children," she says. "Nobody in jail."

By the time she was 10, Serralles and her sister were doing the housework of grown women. Thursday was laundry day, which meant spending hours scrubbing clothes against a washboard. The wood floors of the house had to be scrubbed every week too, on hands and knees.

On Saturdays, though, she and her friends would promenade up one side of Seventh Avenue and down the other from 14th Street to 19th and back, looking at the boys and stopping by the ice cream store. Her brothers weren't allowed to bring their friends home unless their father was present. Even as a young woman in her twenties, when she went to a movie with her future husband, they had to take a five-year-old niece along as a chaperone. The niece, Evangeline Alvarez, remembers being slipped a nickel on the way home so she would look the other way while the suitor tried for a goodnight kiss.

"We were all virgins when we married," says Serralles. "Things are different now."

She has pictures of herself as a slim, smiling, dark-haired beauty clutching a mariachi while leading a line of costumed rumba dancers at La Verbena, the annual tobacco festival. She was always chosen to lead; she never missed a dance. "I used to be such a good dancer," she says.

As the cigar trade changed, the fortunes of Ybor City declined. Factories mechanized, moved north, or went out of business as demand for cigars dropped. The sons and daughters of cigarmakers looked elsewhere for work. Eventually, they moved out of Ybor City. The final blow, however, was urban renewal.

Block after block of what had been cigarworkers' houses was torn down. Some were replaced with public housing projects. But even today, there are vast vacant areas where houses, corner stores, and barbershops once stood.

Serralles moved out of Ybor City in the '60s when the state purchased her house so it could build an interstate highway through the neighborhood. She got less than $10,000 for the three-bedroom house she'd lived in for 24 years.

She reaches into a cabinet under her kitchen sink and pulls out a coffee pot. She brought it with her from the other house, she says. It's an old-fashioned drip pot with a sock in it. She won't use any other kind. ❑

**As cigar factories shut down, the fortunes of Ybor City declined.**

# Lebanese MISSISSIPPI

*Story by Stephen Flinn Young*

*Photos by D.C. Young*

"Bubba Mohamed is my name," exclaims the wiry man extending his hand as we enter the mercantile store on the main street of the Mississippi Delta town of Inverness. Along the block there are stores named Woo's Grocery and Wing's Variety — and Mohamed's.

"Welcome to the coolest spot in Inverness," Mohamed continues. "What can I help you with?" Around him are piles of jeans and overalls, racks of shirts and dresses — and t-shirts, too, reading "WHERE IN THE HELL IS INVERNESS MISSISSIPPI?"

"We're just passing through," I say, "and thought we'd find out just where in the hell Inverness, Mississippi *is*."

Mohamed shakes his head for a second, then laughs when he catches my joke. Waving us toward the back, he says, "Come on. Let me show you something."

Soon we are standing beside his ancient cash register, the kind that museums would steal for. His desk is strewn with mail (the address "Bubba Mohamed, Inverness, Mississippi" is apparently all it takes), the Memphis paper, dry goods catalogues, sales receipt pads, a well-thumbed copy of *The Meaning of the Koran*.

"There," he says, producing a colorful museum catalogue. "That's my mother, Ethel Wright Mohamed. She's in the Smithsonian!"

The book contains page after page of tapestries she stitched to illustrate the life of her family in the nearby Delta town of Belzoni. Ethel Wright, a woman of hill-country British stock, married one of the earliest Lebanese settlers in Mississippi, a peddler who received the name Mohamed when immigration officials mistakenly put down his religion for a surname.

**Bubba Mohamed runs a mercantile store on the main street of Inverness, Mississippi.**

Mohamed talks for an hour about how his father and brothers chose to flee Lebanon rather than serve in the army of the Turkish Empire. Their trek to Mississippi first took them to Paris, where they worked in a bakery until a cousin, who had come to America and established a store in Clarksdale, sent them money for passage to the United States.

"When my father arrived, his cousin outfitted him with a stock of goods and sent him out as a peddler," Mohamed says. "It wasn't long though, before he opened his own wholesale store in Clarksdale."

When World War I came, there was, as Mohamed tactfully puts it, "friction in Clarksdale." People thought the Mohameds were Turks, and since the Turkish Empire was on the side of the Germans, threats were made. Rather

than fight their neighbors, the family sold the store in Clarksdale and moved to Jonestown, a few miles up the road.

Since then, Lebanese families have become well established in towns along or near the Mississippi River from Vicksburg to Memphis, the route taken by many immigrant groups after they arrive in New Orleans. The largest Lebanese community — in Vicksburg — centers on the St. George Antiochan Orthodox Church.

Founded in 1906, St. George is the twelfth oldest Antiochan church in the country and the oldest in the South. Like Lebanese communities elsewhere, the congregation of St. George has grown steadily in size and prosperity.

Father Nicholas Saikley, who has served as the parish priest for 25 years, greets us in the church foyer. He says there are about 150 families associated with the church — but he is quick to make a distinction.

"You must not confuse the ethnicity of our congregation, which is Lebanese American, with the Orthodox Church, which has no particular 'ethnic' identity. In fact, St. George was among the first Orthodox churches in the U.S. to use English in its services, starting in 1925. The early generation needed to leave old ways behind, you see, to become 'American': so much so that when I used some Arabic phrases once in a service — it was to greet a visitor from Lebanon, where Arabic is still the official church language — one of the older men shouted from the back, 'Only in English!'"

Father Saikley laughs. "The people of the Mississippi Lebanese community are the most Americanized in the U.S. — except for food and church, of course."

Cuisine may truly be the cement that binds the Lebanese to each other, and to the past. Certainly the biggest event of the year at St. George's is the annual Lebanese dinner, where the community serves up different interpretations of that old staple of Lebanese cooking, *kibbie*. Many recipes for this spicy meat-and-bulgar patty may be found in a cookbook published by St. George that features favorite recipes by local Lebanese cooks. To satisfy the Lebanese chef's need for such items as bulgar, pine nuts, lamb, and pita bread, many Vicksburg grocery stores — including the big chains — stock shelves with Lebanese staples.

Aside from their neighbors of African and European descent, the Lebanese are the largest cohesive ethnic group in Vicksburg. Storefronts with names like Jabour, Nosser, Thomas, and Habeeb abound — most are mercantile establishments — and the city's most prominent restaurant, Monsour's, advertises that it offers Lebanese cuisine.

Father Saikley explains that few Lebanese come from the old country today, "because there is just not as much opportunity for them here as there once was." Still, the local community remains strong — in part because of its ability to incorporate new members and teach Lebanese ways to the younger generation.

According to Father Saikley, 40 percent of the St. George congregation is non-Lebanese. "Our group absorbs — and embraces — those who marry into it!" he laughs. "As a matter of fact, in all my years as priest, I officiated at only six weddings in which *both* bride and groom were Arabic."

After Sunday mass, the congregation gathers for an hour of food and fellowship in a meeting hall just off the sanctuary. We talk with dozens of people about life in Vicksburg, about the church, about being Lebanese, and everyone is eager to share a story. In spite of their "Americanization," Lebanese culture in Mississippi seems unlikely to pass away.

**JESUS AND THE APOSTLES GAZE DOWN ON SERVICES AT ST. GEORGE ANTIOCHAN ORTHODOX CHURCH.**

One woman took me by the arm as we were leaving. "Just remember," she said. "There's no such thing as being a little pregnant . . . or a little Lebanese." ❑

# Vietnamese GEORGIA

*Story by Carrie Teegardin*

*Photos by Joey Ivansco*

All around metropolitan Atlanta, there are signs of a cultural change. There are Hispanic grocery stores, Asian nightclubs, and a Spanish newspaper. There are teachers who know how to educate a child who has never spoken English, and police officers know who to call when they pick up a Cambodian refugee who is confused and unaware of his rights.

Amid the ethnic diversity, living at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac in a suburban Atlanta subdivision, there is Yung Krall, the daughter of a Vietnamese Communist revolutionary father and a pro-democracy mother.

When she came to Atlanta 12 years ago, Krall's accent and her story would have dropped some jaws. Today, she is not such an oddity. The Asian community has quadrupled over the past decade, making the city home to one of the fastest-growing Asian populations in the nation.

Krall herself has welcomed thousands of these newcomers in her job with the county health department, where she helps refugees from across the world get medical care when they are sick, and helps doctors understand the foreigners they are treating.

"People like Atlanta," she says. "They move here because of the positive news by word of mouth. People say Atlanta is a good place to live. There's a lot of jobs here and the weather is nice. In the summertime, it's just like home."

Krall's journey from the jungles of South Vietnam to the suburbs of the American South has been a 25-year trip. It has left her thoroughly Americanized in many ways, but still clinging to her native land and identity in many others.

"I miss Vietnam every day, I think because of my work," she says. "I am with the refugees every day."

**THE ASIAN COMMUNITY HAS QUADRUPLED SINCE YUNG KRALL MOVED TO ATLANTA 12 YEARS AGO. "IN THE SUMMERTIME, IT'S JUST LIKE HOME," SHE SAYS.**

At home she keeps a glass jar filled with soil — half from North Vietnam and half from South Vietnam. To look at it brings back the memories of a life filled with conflicting loyalties.

Her father moved to North Vietnam when Krall was nine to join the fight against the French, leaving the rest of the family behind in the South. Her mother supported the family, and while her father rose in the Communist Party ranks, the rest of the family came to reject Communism.

In 1967, she met John Krall, a young American Navy pilot in Vietnam for the war. They fell in love, and he wanted to get married. She wasn't sure whether he'd want to marry the daughter of his enemy.

"I said, 'I'm the daughter of a Communist.' He said, 'So?'"

So she left her country, moved to California, and married John in 1968. During the next decade, she raised their son as they traveled the country, living near naval posts from Washington, D.C. to Hawaii.

When it was time for John to retire, Krall wanted to move to Atlanta to be near her sisters and her mother, who had left Vietnam in 1975 shortly before the fall. "I was so lonely for a big family," says Krall, who is now 48. "We always had an extended family in Vietnam and again I made an extended family here."

While she has seen her family and hundreds of others from all over the world create new homes in Atlanta, Krall believes this Southern metropolis still does not live up to its billing as an "international city."

"Atlanta invests a lot of money in making itself an international city, but they don't invest their emotions into making it an international city," Krall says. "An international city enjoys other cultures, it's curious about other cultures and respects other cultures. It's proud of other cultures and people there know about other cultures. And they don't get stuck with black and white."

Like the rest of the South, Atlanta is obsessed with the issue of race, especially when it comes to politics. But the frame of reference has not yet expanded to include the new minorities, so complex are the continuing problems between Atlantans of African and European descent.

The state has not made it easy for foreigners with limited language skills to get licenses for driving or for jobs that require certification. And unlike residents of a truly international city, many people in Atlanta are still uncomfortable with language and cultural barriers.

It may take more time, more people, more than simply winning the 1996 Olympics to change all this, Krall says. The Asian and Hispanic communities in Atlanta are among the fastest-growing in the nation, but they still are a tiny minority — less than five percent — of the total population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

"There are not enough of us, not enough of the international population," Krall says.

Still, Krall is happy here. She has her family. She has an important job and contacts with refugees that help her keep her ties with the other South she has called home.

"It's like having two parents, two good parents," she says of her solid ties to Vietnam and to the United States. "Because of circumstances, I stay here. And it's great that I stay here. But if the Communists never took over, I'm sure that we might be in Vietnam." ❑

**Krall welcomes thousands of Asian newcomers to Atlanta in her job with Fulton County Health Department.**

# Mexican

## ALABAMA

Story by Marcos McPeek Villatoro

Photos by Ken Elkins

Joe Hernandez flings a thin rope over a tree branch and catches its end. A cigarette dangling from his lips, he ties the rope to the top of a clown-shaped *piñata* that stands before a crowd of brown children waiting excitedly to one side. The kids chat to one another in both English and Spanish over who will be the one to crack it open. Behind them the remnants of last night's kill, a 200-pound pig that Hernandez quartered around midnight and cooked through the early morning hours, lie beside mounds of jalapeno sauce, tortillas, and beer cans. Hernandez sweats as he works on the Mexican toy. The temperature has reached well over 95 degrees today, cooking up the north Alabama humidity.

Others arrive to celebrate his daughter Amalia's eighth birthday. Men and women from the states of Juarez, Veracruz, Matejuela, Chijuaja, and Oaxaca gather in Hernandez's front yard, an hour northeast of Birmingham in the countryside of Blount County. It is Sunday afternoon. Work in the chicken processing factories, the tomato fields, and the furniture factories has been left behind for a day. Now it is time to celebrate a gathering of *La Raza* — literally, The Ancestry.

When Hernandez and his young family first arrived in this part of the South, they encountered few fellow Latinos. Living most of their lives in Texas, they followed the migrant path north, toward New York.

"There was little work in Texas, with so many Latinos doing the same jobs for low pay," Hernandez recalls. "We thought to move to New York, where we had heard that there was plenty of employment."

They made it to north Alabama when their money ran out. In Blount County they encountered a Mexican man named Johnny who had lived in the area for years, and who helped them get on their feet. "Our plan was to work here for a couple of weeks, make some money, and get on the road again. We didn't want to stay. Except for Johnny, there wasn't much *Raza* around."

**JOE HERNANDEZ AND OTHER MIGRANT WORKERS CONSIDER THEIR HOME IN BLOUNT COUNTY, ALABAMA *UN LUGAR TRANQUILO* — A TRANQUIL PLACE.**

Two weeks became six years. Hernandez took any job he could find, from working on trucks in shops to planting pine trees for three cents a tree. Gradually, he saw a change in the community. At first, migrants came and went, working the tomato crops for four months and returning to Florida or Texas for the winter. As the years passed, however, a few workers decided to stay in what became known as *un lugar tranquilo* — a tranquil place. As more

established themselves in Blount County, family members followed, finding a community of Latinos — and a place where their culture can survive.

Hearing Spanish on the street and in the stores suddenly became a common occurrence. Local *patrones* and other native Alabamians could not understand what the newcomers were saying, and felt threatened. To overcome their fear, Hernandez offered free Spanish classes to local residents. Though no one walked out of the class fluent, something else happened: Hernandez made relationships with local police officers, store owners, clinic nurses, and teachers.

Such friendships have come in handy. As more Latinos have decided to remain in Blount County, racial tensions have begun to rise. Though the Mexicans are more accepted by white *patrones* (Hernandez once heard two bosses talking, comparing "the boys" — Latinos — to the local African Americans, and how "you can get more work for less pay out of the Mexicanos than you can from the niggers"), the Latino population growth has moved from a novelty to an incipient threat. To avert the growing stress, Hernandez has acted as an advocate for his own people.

"Sometimes you can clear up a problem between a policeman or a doctor and a Mexican by being there to translate," he says. "People call me up more, asking for such help. You've got to respond. More than anything, you've got to keep building *confianza* — trust — with your own."

*Confianza* is getting harder to come by. As the population grows, the white community has relied on fear and intimidation to keep Latinos in check. Immigration raids have become common. The INS has filled trucks with Latino men and shipped them toward the border, visiting trailer parks and apartments with the local police and asking all brown people for identification. Such actions put the Latino community in a panic, making ordinary routines like going to work or attending church on a Saturday evening seem dangerous.

Yet this has not dissuaded Hernandez. He and his wife, along with a few friends, have formed an informal group called *Amanecer Latino* — Latino Dawn.

"Right now we're just a small group of friends who get together every week or so and talk about our people's problems," Hernandez says. "The fact that Latinos pay $120 a week for rent in a broken-down mobile home, while the whites pay $100 a month in the same trailer park. The fact that our children walk out of school confused and hurt because they're made fun of when they speak Spanish. The lack of support in local health clinics. We've got a lot to deal with. But the way we'll deal with it is by gaining *confianza*. There's no other way to do it."

At the party for his daughter, the adults laugh while the blindfolded children take a stick to the *piñata*. Many of the people who eat the pork that Hernandez prepared are folks he has helped out from time to time. It is no wonder that they have come to celebrate this birthday. In this small corner of Alabama, where the traditions of a distant country burst forth in language, music, and food, Joe Hernandez is gaining that communal treasure of *confianza*. ❑

**THE HERNANDEZ FAMILY IS WORKING WITH OTHER MEXICAN NEWCOMERS TO "KEEP BUILDING *CONFIANZA* — TRUST. THERE'S NO OTHER WAY."**

# Asian Indian

## MISSISSIPPI

*Story by Stephen Flinn Young*

*Photos by D.C. Young*

Seetha Srinivasan, a senior editor with the University of Mississippi Press, greets us at her office in Jackson. Like other Indian immigrant women, she wears the traditional silk sari. I ask whether maintaining Indian customs presents any problems for her.

"Oh, yes, it has been difficult," she answers, "but it is becoming easier and easier to have all you need to live the Indian way in Mississippi. Peddlers come from Nashville and set up shop in a motel. They sell spices and clothes — even vegetables and fruit. Indeed, the Indian community is beginning to have a presence."

Srinivasan recalls what it was like when she and her husband settled in Mississippi in 1969 from Berkeley, California. "In those days there were only eight or 10 families in Jackson. Now there are 200 plus. The membership in the Indian Association lists 345 names statewide, but there are many, many more. The Indians who came here in the '50s and '60s were professionals, but now whole families are coming and they are people of all occupations. We have many people from several towns in India, and we have many from East Africa by way of England."

Srinivasan laughs when I ask why many Indians in Mississippi operate motels. "Well, you *do* know about the motels! But there are Indians in every profession and all types of businesses — gas stations, dry cleaners, ice cream parlors, you name it. And you will find that Indians try to employ other Indians, so that Indians will have jobs and not be forced into taking public assistance."

What about the persistence of Indian culture?

"This is very important for us. We now have the Hindu Temple in Brandon, which was built under very difficult circumstances. Our community is not a large one, but we believe that the temple is a way to keep alive the traditions, to serve as a focal point for the group, and to be there for the children.

"Hindu religious practice, by the way, is more relaxed about things like attendance at temple events. Much of our religious life centers on the home, but we go to services more often here for social reasons. And the children go. They should have some roots, because they have a dual heritage. Their children will be even more American, I'm sure, but the roots will be there for them.

**SEETHA SRINIVASAN RECEIVES COCONUT MILK BLESSED DURING THE CELEBRATION OF GANESHA'S BIRTH AT THE HINDU TEMPLE IN BRANDON.**

"The ties to India itself, especially among the older generation, are still strong. People follow the politics and social changes. They travel back when-

ever they can, and bring parents for visits. There are also professional ties, such as the scientist at the University Medical Center who goes to India for a three-month residency. Some doctors even own shares in Indian hospitals. For the younger generation, however, the ties are less strong."

What has it been like for Indians in Mississippi? Have there been any bad experiences because of race or religion?

"Fortunately, Indians in large towns have never experienced hostility or discrimination. In fact, we have been made to feel welcome. People always are asking me, 'Do you *like* it here?'"

Srinivasan smiles. "Maybe discrimination will come when we've been here long enough to be a threat. Maybe. But for now it's okay. The children feel fine in the schools, and that's wonderful."

As it happens, the Hindu Temple is soon to have what may be the most popular celebration of the year, the birthday of Ganesha. Srinivasan invites us to attend as her guests.

One September day a few weeks later we arrive at the Hindu Temple, a long, low white building with no exterior decoration placed neatly in a grove of pine and oak trees. Srinivasan meets us at the door, where we remove our shoes. The service is already in progress.

"Are we late?" I ask.

"Certainly not. The service goes on for quite a while. Remember what I said about our relaxed way? People are free to come and go. The important thing is that the ceremony is performed and that we participate in some way."

Inside the temple a long room opens into other, smaller rooms along the wall opposite the entrance. Srinivasan explains that each stall contains the idol of a god.

"Or *will* contain, when the Temple Society can raise the money. Ganesha is so popular that his was one of the first we bought. Our Krishna will be delivered one day soon."

Ganesha, an idol of an elephant-headed boy, represents the "Lord of Ganas." *Ganas* are the hosts or forces which create obstacles, so prayers are made to Ganesha to remove barriers to any undertaking. The young, who want to do well in their studies, pray to Ganesha.

At the far end of the row of stalls a group of people, women and children mostly, sits on the floor. Everyone faces the narrow entrance to Ganesha's room where the priest, a slender man in white robes, cleans the stone idol. A few people chant along with the priest's assistant, but most only watch. Across the room seated and standing men talk quietly.

and passes it among the celebrants. Each person cups their hands, takes a dribble of the milk, and drinks it.

After the ceremony, the congregation enjoys a light dinner in the temple kitchen. This fellowship hour, Srinivasan explains, is a principal reason for having the temple.

**THE TEMPLE SERVES AS A FOCAL POINT FOR THE INDIAN COMMUNITY TO "KEEP ALIVE TRADITIONS AND TO BE THERE FOR THE CHILDREN."**

Srinivasan introduces us to her friends and we chat while the priest gives Ganesha a rubdown with bananas, oranges, and flower petals. After a while, the priest blesses a cup of coconut milk

"People have driven here from all over the state for this," she says. "What better place to be on Ganesha's birthday?" ❑

# Native American

## NORTH CAROLINA

*Story by Taylor Sisk*

*Photos by Rob Amberg*

Virginia Sexton grew up in a New York orphanage, unsure of where she was born. Since moving to the Cherokee reservation in western North Carolina 15 years ago, however, she is certain where she belongs.

Sexton traces her ancestry on the reservation back to 1751. Initially she and her husband Mike lived quietly on a piece of family land up Noble Mountain. But her peaceful life ended abruptly when the couple was refused custody of Mike's white grandson.

"The reservation was shifting from state and federal jurisdiction to the tribal courts," Sexton recalls. "But it was still the South, and they wouldn't give a white child to an Indian woman. *That* would have been a reversal; they usually give away the Indian children."

**Virginia Sexton has fought the commercialized "Cherokee tradition" that panders to tourists.**

Though the Sextons lost their custody battle, the legal struggle spurred Virginia to begin studying law. Gradually, she began to understand what was happening on the reservation. She saw tremendous sums of money flowing in and out, while the majority of the people, particularly the full-bloods and half-bloods, continued to live in poverty. Power, she learned, lay with a small nucleus of businesspeople, many of whom had ensconced themselves on "the res" with unsubstantiated claims to Indian blood.

The Trail of Tears Gallery, the Tsali Motel, the Tepee Electronic Lotto arcade, the grave men who pose for photographs in full headdress — everywhere Sexton looked she saw a commercialized culture, a culture that tribal leaders boast of having worked 50 years to make "the Cherokee tradition." The tribal council routinely takes land from Native Americans and leases it to businessmen for campgrounds, curio shops, all the blight essential to the tourist trade.

Sexton learned that her own family's land had been taken away — occupied now, in part, by the amphitheater for *Unto These Hills*, an outdoor summer drama in which white college students reenact the struggles of the Cherokee. A nearby parking lot covers what used to be a burial ground where Sexton's ancestors are interred. Using her new-found knowledge of the law, she fought successfully in the federal courts to save the site from total eradication.

Sexton went on to earn her paralegal

license, and she and her husband began helping others fight the tribal council. "After five or six years of people coming and saying, 'The council took my land' . . . we got politicized."

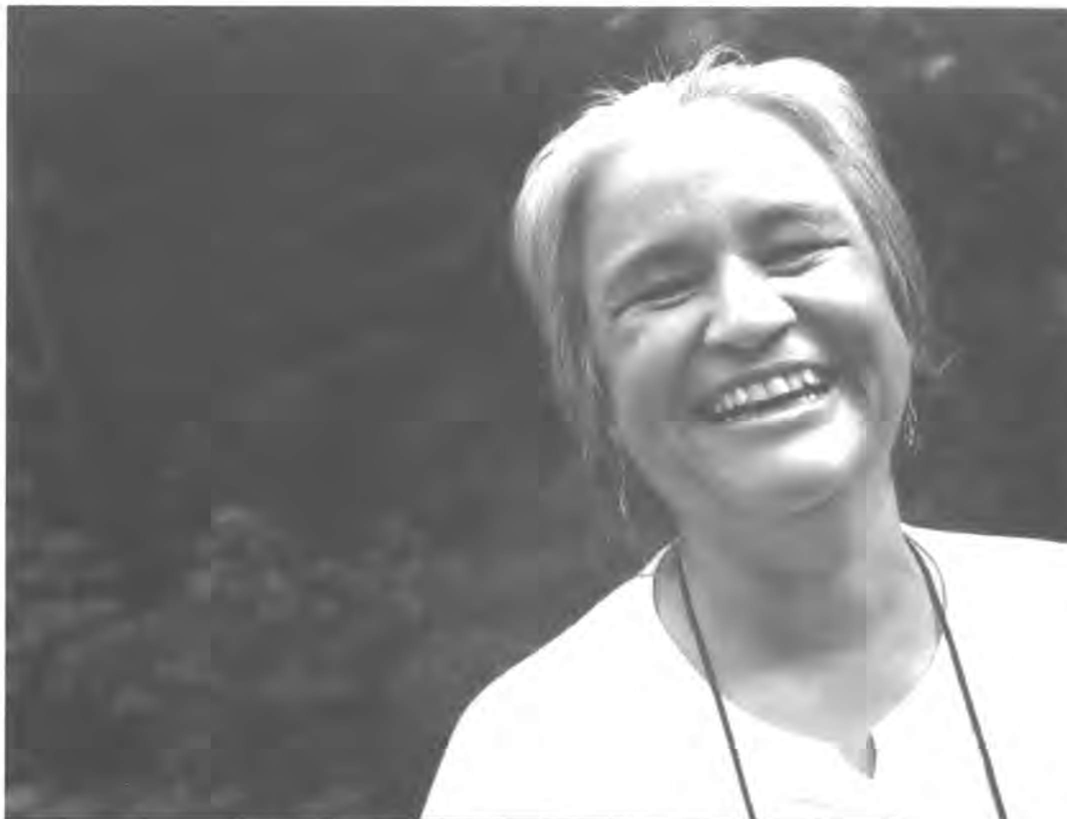
The couple formed an organization called Wake-Up, which has successfully fought off an incinerator, a landfill, and a nuclear depository on the reservation. The group has taken its opposition even further by challenging the very legality of the council. Last year, a council committee rejected a constitutional change expanding the tribal roll to those with less than one-16th Cherokee blood. Wake-Up points out that having been elected by this unconstitutionally expanded roll, the tribal council itself — and every business contract it has signed — is illegal.

So far, however, no action has been taken on the issue. "The Bureau of Indian Affairs is ignoring the tribe's true membership," says Bob Warren, a civil rights attorney from Black Mountain. "It's the same old story of buying off the chief to get Indians to do what the white man wants them to do."

While the "official" roll now totals over 10,000 (one man is listed as 1/1024th Cherokee), Sexton points out that the Eastern Band of Cherokee — those who stayed behind when the Western Band was forcibly relocated to Oklahoma in 1838 — originally had only 91 families. "With all the health problems, alcoholism, the suicide rate, how can we now be 10,000?" she asks. By her count, there are 5,700 true Cherokee on the reservation.

Sexton has run for a seat on the council, but believes that unfair election practices have kept her from winning. When the polls are closed on election day, the council shuts the door and counts the votes in secret.

"Virginia's been fighting a long time to see that votes are counted in the open," Warren says. "Unfortunately, they're still not."



**"We've been here since the Ice Age," says Sexton. "We're still here."**

Both the Carter Center and Amnesty International have expressed interest in monitoring the election next year, and Sexton intends to run — if she isn't in law school. She's scheduled to graduate next May from Western Carolina University with a B.S. in Political Science, and the long-term plan is to attend law school, then return to the reservation to take on the council, the local media, and, when necessary, federal officials.

Sexton has also fought gambling on the reservation, helping to force a temporary removal of video gambling machines. Aside from the more obvious concerns about corruption and alcohol, she and many others feel that gambling will disrupt traditional ways of life. As one Cherokee put it, "We will never again see a quiet winter."

Sexton's opposition to gambling has incurred further wrath from the powers-that-be, including that of the weekly *Cherokee One Feather*. But her ongoing struggle for Cherokee rights has also earned her quite a few admirers. In July, she received the Dr. Marketta Laurila Free Speech Award, presented by 11 progressive groups in western North Carolina.

Despite her opposition to commercial development, Sexton understands those Cherokee who sell a parcel of their tradition. As long as they have few economic options, she says, local men will don headdresses to feed their families, and businessmen will attempt to profit from motels and casinos.

"People come to see the Indians," says Sexton, "and they say, 'Where are the Indians?'" What she wants is to make her people more visible — to move them out of the mountain coves and into the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

"We've been here since the Ice Age, since the woolly mammoth," she says, "We're still here." ❑

# Guatemalan

# TEXAS

*Story by Louis Dubose*

*Photos by Alan Pogue*

By the time Luis Humberto Yax-Patzan walked across the border from his home in Guatemala into Tapachula, Mexico, he was already caught up in a current of Central Americans moving north.

"I just followed people," Yax recalls. "When you get to the frontier with Mexico, you find that there are a lot of people that know what to do. I was trying to do what other people were doing, because they said they were going to the United States."

Yax left Guatemala with no plan, no map, no destination. In his pockets he had about $150 in Quetzales. His problems had started several months earlier, on June 14, 1991. That afternoon, when he and a fellow high school student left the National Library in Guatemala City, they were ordered into a car by two men, beaten, and interrogated about their work as leaders of the CEEM, the city-wide student coordinating board. As student body president, Yax was automatically a member of CEEM, and its protests of school conditions had attracted the attention of the government.

Yax was left in a remote section of the city; his companion was released later. "I knew I was very lucky," Yax says. "Usually they kill you." After hiding for two months, Yax took a job in a Guatemala City factory. When he saw the same car in which he had been abducted parked outside the factory on two occasions, he quietly left the country. His first day in Mexico convinced him that he didn't belong there, either. When the train he was riding slowed to a stop at the first large Mexican city north of the border, men who wore badges and identified themselves as Mexican Federal Judicial Police entered the boxcar in which Yax and 15 men, women, and children were riding and robbed them. The officers then took them to another

**Luis Humberto Yax-Patzan "followed the people" — and a shady horse trader — to his new home in Austin.**

location along the train tracks, showed them where the next train would slow down, and allowed them to continue.

"They confused us," Yax says. "When we took the train where they told us, we were going back. We saw a city that we already passed."

Three weeks later, Yax reached the town of Nuevo Laredo near the Texas border. His money gone, he had only the clothes he was wearing. Although his Guatemalan accent and Mayan features belied his claim that he was a Mexican, he convinced a construction foreman that he was "from San Luis" and was hired as a laborer. "I wanted to work for a week and go to the United States," he says, "but they didn't pay us until after four weeks."

After sleeping in the trainyards and living off the small kindnesses of strangers for a month, it was finally time to cross over into Texas. Yax followed his instincts — and the people.

"A bunch of people said we're going to cross tomorrow," he says. "So the next day, after they paid me, I crossed the bridge. That was Christmas, or the 24th — a lot of people from Mexico were going to shop in the Unites States. The bridge was full of people and I just walked. They didn't check, I mean, they got confused, and that's how I came here."

Three days later, while sitting in the plaza in Laredo, Texas, Yax was detained by the Border Patrol and taken to a shelter for underage INS prisoners in Raymondville. Two months later — three days after his 18th birthday — he was released into the custody of a ranch owner from Austin, who signed him out of the shelter and agreed to provide room and board in exchange for work at his riding stable.

"We worked 12 hours a day," Luis says. "We got food, but not enough, and no pay." When he asked if he could call his mother in Guatemala, the owner told him he could not use the phone. "I was writing letters and stuff like that, but then I couldn't mail them. The stable owner said, 'You can give them to me and I will mail them.' My mom told me later that she didn't never receive anything."

After three weeks, a Spanish-speaking customer finally came to the stables. When Yax told her what was happening, she took him to the St. Louis Catholic Church in north Austin. There a parish priest drove him to Casa Marianella, a 10-year-old sanctuary founded at a time when refugees, most fleeing death squads and the military in El Salvador, were pouring into Texas.

"I remember looking up and seeing this forlorn kid, with his glasses sliding down his nose," says Terri English, the sanctuary director.

Yax was fortunate to wind up in Austin, where Catholics, Quakers, Latin American scholars, public interest lawyers, and a growing number of Central Americans have created a safe haven for refugees. Through Casa Marianella, Yax connected with the Political Asylum Project of Austin, where a volunteer attorney prepared his application for political asylum.

He was also fortunate to have evidence to prove his case. Yax called home and asked his mother to retrieve the death-threat notes left folded under the clothes in a chest-of-drawers. The next day, a professor from the University of Texas Latin American Studies Institute who was working in Guatemala picked up the notes and spent a day looking up the local newspaper account of Yax's abduction.

"He had documentation that most political refugees that these things happen to never have," says Charlotte McCann of the Documentation Exchange, an Austin-based human rights organization that assists attorneys representing asylum applicants.

**CENTRAL AMERICANS HAVE BUILT A STRONG COMMUNITY IN HOUSTON, AS OVER 100,000 SALVADORANS HAVE SETTLED IN THE CITY SINCE 1980.**

The evidence was enough to convince San Antonio immigration judge Bernabe Maldonado that Yax had a well-founded fear of persecution by government agents in Guatemala. In September 1992, the judge granted him asylum.

Earlier this year, Yax graduated from Johnston High School, passed the state exit exam on the second try, and spent his second summer working as a playground supervisor for Austin Parks and Recreation. In August, he began classes at Austin Community College, where he is enrolled in English Composition, Biology, and Algebra. He and another young Central American refugee are sharing a room in the house of an Austin man they met

**YAX-PATZAN HAS APPLIED FOR PERMANENT RESIDENCY AND ENROLLED AT AUSTIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE. "I'M THINKING ABOUT MEDICINE," HE SAYS.**

through Casa Marianella.

If fate had worked to send Yax to a horse ranch in Houston, he might have found his way into one of the largest Central American communities in the South, shaped by the 100,000-plus Salvadoran immigrants who arrived during the 1980s. In Austin, an estimated 5,000 Central Americans are just beginning to develop a nascent community around the first home Yax found in the city. "When I want to talk to Central American people," Yax says, "I go to the Casa."

Beyond Casa Marianella and other organizations that provide immigrant services, however, the Central American community tends to get lost in the established Chicano/Mexicano *barrio* in southeast Austin. All that exists now is "a network that we use to find jobs, to get immigration help, to find transportation," says Juan Cabrerra, a Salvadoran community activist who has lived in Austin for four years.

To build a more cohesive community, Cabrerra and other activists have formed a group tentatively called *Hispanos Unidos*. "We all confront the same problems and we need to confront them together," he says. "We have about 200 names. It is a beginning."

The organization, which held its first meeting in September, wants to connect Central Americans already established in Austin with those just arriving. "A common problem when there is no real *barrio* is that older immigrants turn their back on newer immigrants," says Cabrerra. "We are going to try to bring the two groups together."

Such an organization would certainly have eased the transition for the thousands of kids like Yax who have made their way by pluck and luck from Central America to Texas over the past decade. Kids like Evelyn Rocha, a Nicaraguan child whose hired *coyote* dropped her off in the Chihuahuan desert and said "from here you walk." Or Olger Rodriguez, another Nicaraguan who at 12 left his home with a handful of American dollars and ran the Laredo bridge rather than cross the river because his 13-year-old sister couldn't swim. And Luis Humberto Yax-Patzan, who "followed the people" just as African-American slaves once "followed the drinkin' gourd."

Yax says he has no idea when he will go back to Guatemala. Death threats have continued against CEEM members, and in June the government accused the student group of gang vandalism in Guatemala City.

"I won't go back until I have a diploma," Yax says — which he calculates will include two years at the community college, two years at the University of Texas, and several years of graduate school. After he won his asylum case, he decided to study law. "Now, I'm thinking about medicine," he says.

Three years after he crossed the Mexican border, he has just completed his application for permanent residence. ❑

# Undisclosed Location

By Wendy Brenner

I said yes to Borden's proposition because I was vulnerable; I'd just been turned down for a job at the local rodeo as one of the girls in shorts and boots who get the crowd excited by pretending to rescue the clowns from the bull. I was after some color and action, anything but typing, and I already owned a pair of quality boots, but this was an insider's job — you had to know a cowboy, or at least a clown. Plenty of girls had hand-tooled, snake-trimmed boots like mine, or so the smirking rodeo administrator said. He seemed not to like my looks. So, back home, when fat Borden hissed at me from his doorway, his big gleaming face and shirtfront filling the crack between door and jam, I stopped. Usually I tried to cat-foot across his landing, a tough trick on our building's old hollow hardwood stairs, but this time I was already resigned, and still wearing my fancy, clunky boots from the rodeo interview.

"Hey, CeCe, stop a minute," he said. "Where you been? Those are nice boots you got, none of that endangered shit, right? Listen, I got something you ain't gonna believe." He always said this, and it could mean anything: macaroons, a ceiling leak, new mollies in his tank, Kristy McNichol all grown up on TV. He worked late nights watching over the parking lot of a small-time chemical plant, and spent his days, as far as I could tell, sauntering heavily around his apartment, turning his appliances off and on, and looking out the window. When I came up the block he would often appear there, wave, and then let the curtain fall briskly, as though he had to get back to some top secret business or lingerie model in his bed. Of course I knew that wasn't the case — his girlfriend showed up sometimes in the afternoons, and she was faded-looking, bottom-heavy. She wore a droopy uniform tied with an orange sash, and her name, Frieda, in orange italics across the breast pocket, and though I

recognized this as some fast-food get-up, I hoped vaguely for his sake that she was something more like a crossing-guard — kind, maternal, respectable.

"What can I do for you, Borden?" I said. The canned spaghetti smell of his apartment drifted out and surrounded us, filling the hall.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I noticed you been around a lot lately, and I thought maybe you were between jobs."

"Actually, this is my paid vacation," I told him. It was true. I'd set an office record by holding the position of typist for three years, so they'd given me this — nothing sparkly or engraved, just a week. Borden didn't have to know how I was spending it, looking for work in rodeos and water parks and petting zoos.

"Well, more power to you," he said. "God bless. You enjoy yourself, okay?" He ran a crumpled, cornucopia-patterned paper towel over his brow.

I could have gotten away then, but for some reason I asked him what he had wanted.

He flushed, lit up. "I need a housesitter," he said. "Starting Monday, for a month. Maybe your cute friend with the Mantra? She sure is a sweet thing." He meant my best friend Jeannie, who was pointy and petite and drove an Opel Manta.

"She's full-time at the bank now, and she's busy planning her wedding," I said. "So she's not available. So what's up, Borden? Everything okay? Where are you going?" In two years I doubted he'd ever spent more than twelve hours at a stretch away from his place.

"Undisclosed location," he said. He glowed strangely; drugs occurred to me.

"What are you talking about?" I said. "Are you sick?"

"No, just trust me," he said. "Why do you always look so suspicious? Jeez, you're like what's her name, *Murder She Wrote*. Listen, you just gotta keep up the aquarium. I'll give you seven bucks a week, that's a buck a day. You don't have to stay here or nothing. I know you got a busy life. You can bring your cute friend over if you want, though."

I pictured Jeannie's evil grin, her small hands rifling through his personal belongings. She referred to him as Elsie. "Okay, Borden," I said. "Show me what you want me to do."

"I gotta show you later," he said. "I got a meeting." He stepped out and shut and locked his door. I stood there on the landing watching his fat back, his baggy hips retreating down the stairs. *FBI*, I thought. *America's Most Wanted. Something Anonymous. Betty Ford.*

The next morning, there he was, unbelievable, in the paper, holding a giant reproduction of a check from Florida Lotto like a clown's prop: $2.4 million. His happy, grainy face was the size of my thumb. *Thomas Borden*, read the caption, *thirty-two*, and I was shocked; I'd thought that Borden was his only name — like Dopey or Dumbo — and also that he was years and years older than me. There was no story, only the paragraph-long caption, which noted that this particular win was especially poignant and thrilling because of the death of Borden's parents in a house fire four years previous. Things were finally taking a turn for the better for Borden. He was quoted: "My advice to everyone playing Lotto, don't give up. You never know when the ball will start to roll in your direction." His grin looked knowing and wholesome, instead of fat and sad. "Seven bucks a week," I said out loud. I thought of my mother, who'd recently had to have a marble-sized lump removed, and then there was a distant cousin of mine whose baby got a fever and could now no longer speak: I deserved to win. But those items weren't bad enough to go in a caption, and neither were the real items of my life: my stuck-up sailor boyfriend getting sick of me, for instance, saying he had to "move on" because I "lacked serious ambition," when I'd only started dating him as a joke, a game, something to tell Jeannie — sailor seeming as believable a profession to me as pirate or lion tamer or Indian chief. Or the rodeo man, a stranger, deciding I was too ugly to save clowns. Or Jeannie, the wild one of us, shopping for rings with her professor. Looking at Borden's smudgy 2-D face, I felt panic,

realizing that if he won, no one else I knew could ever win; Borden, only Borden, was the one among us who deserved to win.

I could hear his phone ringing as soon as I stepped into the hallway, and when I got down there it was impossible to talk to him. He opened the door for me but ran back to the kitchen, where he was trying to rig up an answering machine which the ringing phone kept fouling. The machine was a cheap model, I noticed, the same brand as my blow dryer. For a moment I actually pitied Borden. "Big congratulations," I said.

**"'Cause what you gotta remember here is that the fishes' stomachs are *small*, you know what I'm saying? If you look at their eyeballs, you'll see what I'm saying."**

"Yeah, thanks," he said. Drops of sweat fell from his brow onto the blinking, clicking machine. "You're not gonna have to worry about this, once I get it hooked up."

"That was a pretty smart idea," I told him. "Leaving town."

"You bet," he said. "The Lotto Commission advised it. To avoid unwanted solicitations and attention. From acquaintances, you know."

"Are you taking Frieda?" I asked. She was the only person I ever saw going in and out of his place, and I imagined she would look healthier with a nice tan to set off her hair. I wished that for her, honestly.

"Even that I can't say," Borden said. "But I sure wouldn't mind taking your friend. Listen, you mind if I just give you the key and show you the brine shrimp? I'm kind of busy. I think I'm gonna leave tonight. I really appreciate this, CeCe."

"Oh, no problem, I'm just so happy for you," I said.

"Okay," he said. "Now, you ever hear the expression 'Your eyes are bigger than your stomach'? 'Cause what you gotta remember here is that the fishes' stomachs are *small*, you know what I'm saying? If you look at their eyeballs, you'll see what I'm saying." He held his hand up to my face and showed me his finger and thumb pressed together, as though he were holding a tiny, invisible bead. Together we looked significantly at the invisible bead. Seconds went by, and finally he shook his head. "Jeez," he said, "you just never know when the ball's gonna roll your way."

Well, the fat's in the fire now!" Jeannie shouted, when I told her. Her voice was spotty with static because she was on the cellular phone the professor had given her, on her way to lunch at some Pavilion place. She always called from her car, even though the phone on her desk at the bank was unmonitored and had a hundred special features and worked fine, and she always shouted the whole time and complained about the bad traffic she was stuck in. We'd known each other too long for her to be showing off, but that's what it was — like complaining that she looked too young and was always getting carded. She wanted me to say, again, how special the professor was, how lavish, but I refused. He was petite like her, always looked like he'd had his hair cut that same day, and spoke to me in a measured, modest little voice, as though my big bones offended him, as though my neurons and dendrites were large and ungainly and an embarrassment to neuroscience, his honorable chosen field. Delicate, well-groomed men often treated me this way, as though I were likely to breathe up all their air or just fall on them like a tree, but when Roger did it I had to pretend not to notice — we were supposed to become great barbecue buddies, in-laws, practically. And yet even gleeful Jeannie toned herself down around him, I'd observed. He couldn't possibly appreciate the real Jeannie, the Jeannie I'd known all my life.

Now, on the car phone, she was her regular self, shouting that I should have drunk the Riunite. She meant the night I'd moved into my apartment, when Borden had opened his door eight or nine times during my trips up and down the stairs, not offering to help but pretending to check different things: the mail, his deadbolt, a bulb that hung over the landing. After a half-hour of this he finally affected to notice me, and brought out the bottle. "You look like you deserve a glass of this," he said. I shook his damp hand and told him I was allergic to sulfites. "Oh, yeah," he said, "I saw that on *Sixty Minutes*."

"You'd be having millionaire babies now, boy!" Jeannie yelled.

"Okay, okay," I said, and invited her over later to hang out at his place, to sit in the apartment of a millionaire.

"I'll break my hip in his bathroom and sue!" she shouted.

"But don't invite anybody else this time, okay?" I said. "We don't want things to get out of hand. Reporters might be lurking around, or other, more dangerous people."

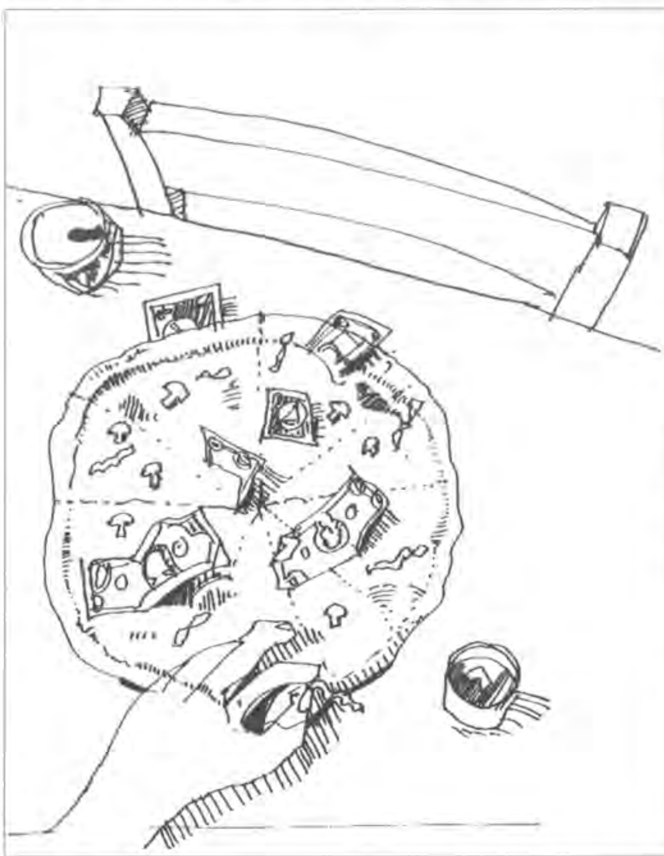
"Alone's better, actually," she yelled, "because I need to talk to you some more about my wedding." She hung up, and the rush of her traffic was cut off with a click. My living room swelled with quiet. I remembered I needed to launder my lace-

collar dress to wear to work, where they planned to take my picture for the newsletter, for having earned this bonus. Only Saturday and Sunday were left of my vacation. If I shut my eyes I could see the days, like empty boxes, lined up in front of me.

We had all of Borden's bug-flecked lights turned on, a bottle of his bargain gin opened in the kitchen, and we'd switched off the ringer on the phone; the little answering machine was clicking away on a corner table like The Little Engine That Could, silently recording messages. A pizza was supposedly on the way, though we'd had to fight with the man on the phone, who said he'd taken half a dozen orders for this address already. "A hundred pizzas," he said. "A pizza with dollar bills on it. A Beluga pizza. Jesus, you think I'm an idiot?"

"Look, we only want *one*," I finally said. "We're using a *coupon*." That had worked.

Jeannie was twirling shoeless across the rug, her lacy slip flashing white, and I remembered meeting her for the first time in fourth grade, her wearing slips under her plain school dresses even then, as though she were better than the rest of us. "I'm spiking these guppies," she said, waving her drink over the tank.



"Check out their eyeballs first," I said. I was slumped on Borden's low yellow sofa, my cheek pressed against the worn velour, which smelled, up close, not like spaghetti but like a stuffed terrycloth pony I'd carried around everywhere until I was eight or nine years old. I had sucked on its matte yarn tail whenever I needed it, and when foam pieces starting leaking from the rump, my mother cut the tail off for me to keep and threw the body in the trash. I took gulps of Borden's cheap gin, recalling how I had imagined the pony's body being absorbed by the roots of a nice tree somewhere, being soaked up and incorporated into the trunk of the tree, the nicest thing I could imagine happening to trash.

"Liven up, will you?" Jeannie said.

"I'm just wondering what stupid Borden is going to do with all that money," I said.

"Well, let's listen to that answering machine. Can't we just turn up the volume, without messing things up?"

"You better do it," I said. "You know how to use a car phone. You know how to use a safe deposit box. I can't even get a job at the rodeo."

Jeannie gave me a look and adjusted the machine, which was in the middle of taping a message. "Mack Fine," a man's voice said. "Fine, Breen, and Janky, financial consultants. Flexibility is really what we're all about, so don't feel limited, say, by the list of services you see in our flyer." The doorbell buzzed.

"It's Janky!" Jeannie screamed.

I let in the flat-haired delivery-girl, who was holding the pizza box propped against her hip like an empty cocktail tray. "Large mushroom onion," she said. "Ain't you the lottery girls?"

"We is," Jeannie said, "but you ain't gettin' no big tip."

"We flipped coins over who got to deliver this one," the pizza girl said. "They at least want the lowdown on you two. You know the guy who won, right?"

"I do," I said.

"I does," Jeannie said.

The pizza girl shook her head, and her stringy hair swung slowly. "What I wouldn't give," she said. "What's he like? Is he your old man?"

"Oh, well," I said, feeling my gin a little, in the way I kept nodding my head to the rhythm of her swinging hair. "He's a big guy, a stay-at-home kind of guy . . ."

". . . Dr. Stopes, I don't know if you remember me," came a sudden nasal voice from the answering machine. The three of us stood still and listened. "The Dermatology Lab in St. Paul. You were here last March? How are your nevi doing, have

you had any recurrences? Anyway, all of us here just wanted to say, you know, congratulations." A high female voice yelped in the background. "Patty, who takes your appointments? Says congratulations. Anyway, we have some new samples of that fluoroplex generic we can send your way, so if you're interested, you can give us a call at your convenience. Congratulations again." The machine clicked off and reset itself.

"Man, doctor wants to do you a *favor*," said the pizza girl.

"Why are you even still standing here?" Jeannie said to her.

"That was compassionate," I said to Jeannie after we'd let the girl out. I was back on the smelly couch, picking the oily onions, her idea, off my slice.

"Me?" she said. "What's wrong with you, anyway? You're probably turning into *Mrs. Borden* sitting on that couch."

"And I'm also sick of looking at that Victoria's Secret shit, by the way," I said. "Am I supposed to be *aroused* or something?"

She came over and stood in front of me and raised her skirt, holding the hem by two fingers so that her slip hung there in my face. I felt like I was watching a blank projection screen, waiting for a movie to start. I remembered a fight we'd had in fourth or fifth grade in which I had called her "prostitute" and she had refused to reply, to that or to any of my insults, except to say, "Good." That had been our last real fight, now that I thought of it. "Is this how you're going to behave at your big important *wedding*?" I said.

"You're not really joking, are you?" she said. She looked at me and let her skirt fall. "Well," she said after awhile, "and I don't even feel bad telling you this, anymore, the way you're acting, but you're no longer maid of honor. Roger's sister is back in the country." Roger's sister didn't like Jeannie and had once given her a bad haircut on purpose.

"You could have just told me that on your *cellular*," I said. "In fact, you could tell your whole life story on your *cellular*." In a flash, I saw Jeannie and me on the school playground in our green Girl Scout uniforms, forming the letters of the alphabet with our small, slender bodies, acting out for our own amusement the physical progression from A to B to C, cocking our knees and elbows at bizarre angles, getting tangled in our sashes and laughing so hard at one another that we couldn't speak. For the first time, I saw that I had always operated on the unconscious assumption that our slow, steady movement away from childhood was arbitrary, that like an amusement park ride time would eventually pause, or halt, or even reverse itself and take us back in the other direction.

**I remembered a fight we'd had in fourth or fifth grade in which I had called her "prostitute" and she had refused to reply, to that or to any of my insults, except to say, "Good."**

I heard the fierce scrape of Jeannie striking a match in the kitchen. "You can't smoke in here!" I yelled. I had to take practically a whole breath to say each word, as though something large, an invisible Borden, had settled down on me; it was hard to hold things in my mind. A woman's voice on the answering machine was saying something about never forgiving, and I thought: "security." Then I realized I had them reversed; the phone woman was talking about securities. "Never forgiving" had come from me. A knock that seemed to have been going on for some time got louder, and I got up to answer the door, but no one was there. The pounding came again, from somewhere over our heads, definitely inside the building. "Jeannie, get out here," I said. "Someone's doing something. Something's happening."

"It almost sounds like it's coming from your place, doesn't it?" she said. She came through, not fierce at all but oddly languid, blowing smoke at the aquarium. The knocks stopped. "I'll go up there and check," she said.

"Don't leave me here alone," I said. "I'm serious."

"Here, give me your key," she said, talking as one would to a child.

I locked the door behind her and went to wait by the window, craning my neck to see if someone who wanted to kill us was pressed up against the building, but all I saw was the empty, darkening view down the street. Two old men were attempting to wheel themselves out of the nursing home at the end of the block, ignored by a group of nurses laughing and smoking cigarettes under the security light. I saw this all the time, had called to complain about it, and I wondered if Borden ever watched it; through this window he had the exact same view I did. The glass was greaseless, spotless. I imagined what our two faces must look like from the outside, one on top of the other, peering through our windows with the blank, identical expressions of passengers on a train. The other units in the four-plex faced north, looked out over a frontage road that led to a mall, though the tenants on that side of the building changed frequently and weren't around much while they did live there: young couples getting through the

winter before they got married, attractive divorcees getting back on their feet, graduate students finishing up their dissertations. I never noticed any of them looking out their windows.

I waited, watching the nursing home and listening to Borden's messages; four more financial advisors called, and then a woman who had to be Frieda came on, though her voice was more formal and youthful than I had imagined. "I never know what to say on these machines," she said. "I hope you're having a lovely time, you deserve it, Tom. Well, I thought it would be nice for you to have a message when you get home. I'll sign off now. Have a lovely vacation." The click and silence after her call filled me with sadness: poor Frieda had been left behind, the way we were all going to be left behind, only in her case it was worse because she probably loved Borden, in her own drab, faded way. *Goddamn Jeannie*, I thought, as though she had something to do with it.

**The pieces of the horse were small and he took them into his hands with great tenderness. I turned to look at him, filled with feeling, and the gold buttons on his uniform caught the sun, blinding me.**

Upstairs, the energy of real fear surprised me. My apartment's door was unlocked and I let myself in, trying to comprehend that something terrible, life-changing, could be waiting, just moments ahead of me in time. I stalled there by the door, switching my three-way lamp twice through bright, brighter, brightest, and then Jeannie padded in, blinking and nude, her skinny body, tiny breasts exactly the same as they'd been in sixth grade. For a second I thought *rape, hostage, help*, but then I saw her expression and something deflated in my chest. "Bachelor party hijinx," she said.

"Hey!" the professor called from my bedroom, in his proper, brain-lecture voice. "Is that CeCe? CeCe, come in here! CeCe, I want to say hello!"

"You were in my *bed*?" I said.

"This wasn't my idea, honest," Jeannie said. "I didn't even know it was him until I got up here."

"CeCe! CeCe!" Roger called. He said my name like it was hypothetical, a joke.

Jeannie stepped up and tried to hug me. "Just ignore him," she said. "They were drinking Rumpelmints. He thought we were at your place. He tried to beep me but my battery was dead." I tried to push her away, but she got her skinny arms over my shoulders, her chin against my ear. "It's okay," she said, her oniony mouth warm against my cheek. "Nothing is going to change, we'll see each other all the time, nothing will be any different."

"Jesus, you have a beeper?" I said. I couldn't get her arms unlocked from around me.

"CeCe!" Roger shouted. "Let me see those boots of yours! I wish Jeannie would get some of those!"

"Don't worry, don't worry," Jeannie was whispering, only it was no longer Jeannie, and no longer me. I shut my eyes and put my hands on her bare back, hypothetically, feeling her ribs, her smooth sides and small breasts, her onion breath in my hair, and I thought, *This is what Roger does, this is what he gets*, and I tried to imagine what kind of luck he thought he had, getting this. It no longer had anything to do with me. Then I imagined Borden imagining this, sitting by the window wanting this, at the expense of poor, polite Frieda. And who could blame him? Everyone wanted it. I pushed Jeannie hard and she stepped back.

"*What*," she said. "What is your problem? Is it the lottery? Any of us could have won the lottery."

"Do whatever you want," I said. "I'm going back down to Borden's." *Prostitute*. She followed me out into the hall and stood there naked, blabbing away like an anchorwoman.

"CeCe, nothing substantial has changed since yesterday, or the day before that, or the day before that," she was saying. "You are creating a self-fulfilling prophecy!" "Fine, good," I heard her say, when she thought I was finally out of her range.

In a dream the sailor came back to me. We sat side by side on a dock overlooking some calm water, and he helped me put back together the pieces of a paper horse I had accidentally torn up. The pieces of the horse were small and he took them into his hands with great tenderness. I turned to look at him, filled with feeling, and the gold buttons on his uniform caught the sun, blinding me. Through the explosion of light I reached for him, unable to see my own fingers, and then the spaghetti smell was there, as close as my own mouth. It was Borden, his face right there, the lamp switched on behind him, and I pushed back at him frantically. "Hey, pussycat, pussycat, take it easy," he said. He was sitting against my hip, pressing me into the back of his sofa, grinning down at me with gray teeth. Chest hair bloomed in a small bouquet from under the neckline of his t-shirt. "Don't touch me," I managed to say.

"Hey, okay," he said, raising his hands as though I'd pointed a gun at him. He stood and shuffled off toward the kitchen, his thighs whiffing against each other. "Jeez, I *live*

here," he said.

"What are you doing here?" I said. It was late, three or four, and Borden's living room seemed calm, even peaceful, the mollies moving slowly up and down in their tank. I pulled myself into a sitting position and looked around for my boots.

"Well, it's funny," he said. "I had a funny feeling. I got all the way over to Epcot, got in my room, got one of them mini-refrigerators with one of everything and then some other stuff you get free, fruit and that, and then I go take a look out the window and that big goddamn *ball* is sitting there. It don't do nothing, you know? It don't rotate, don't open up, don't take off, nothing. Gave me a bad feeling, just knowing it was out there. And then my legs was acting up, you ever hear of restless legs syndrome? Secretaries get it, from all that sitting, you might know. It's when your legs, at night, try to do all the running you was supposed to do during the day but you didn't. Anyway, here I am. How about that, you think I'm crazy?" He stood in front of the open refrigerator, the cold, colorful food steaming behind him.

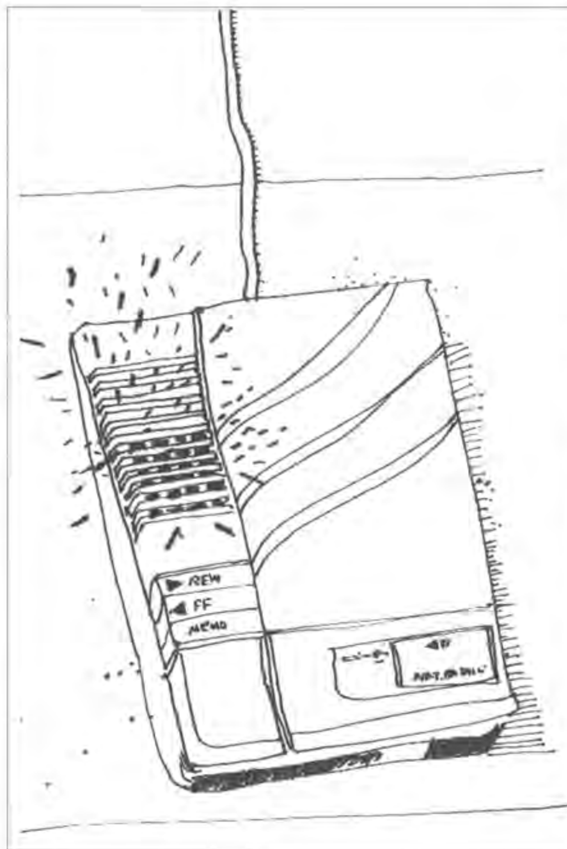
"You went to Epcot?" I said.

"Yeah. Where was I supposed to go? Hey, you don't have to leave or nothing," he said.

"I've got to get going," I said.

"Say, were's your girlfriend at? Ain't that her car out front?"

Our family's poodle had died like this, when I was a child: she ran out onto the two-lane highway, then froze on the center line when she saw the traffic coming. It was impossible for her to go forward and impossible to go back. She stood there in the wind of rushing cars, turning her curly, quivering head back and forth, looking one way, then the other, until a truck finally clipped her, knocking her sideways into the eastbound lane, where a Chevy got her.




"I can't go up there," I said.

"Jeannie's up at your place? Well, tell her to come on down and join the party."

"*Borden*," I said.

"Hey, hey, what's the matter?" He came back over to the sofa and sat, reaching down and lifting my legs by the ankles, before I could stop him, so that my feet rested in his lap. Once they were there, I thought it would be cruel to yank them off; I didn't want to hurt his feelings. His big thighs felt synthetic, slippery and impersonal as upholstery against my bare heels, and I imagined Jeannie watching from the doorway, the little sarcastic points of her eyes and mouth and naked breasts. "I'll tell you what," Borden said. "You're okay, CeCe. At least you got some integrity, some principles. You're the first one so far who ain't tried to get some of the prize for yourself. How about that? You thought I was too big and fat for you before and now that I got the cash, I'm still too big and fat. What do you know?"

"Hello, Tom, it's me again." He gazed, confused, at the wall telephone instead of at the whirring machine, where the woman's voice was coming from. "I don't want to use up your tape over nothing, but you won't believe what just happened to me. I was coming out of Winn Dixie —"

"I was just at Winn Dixie!" Borden said.

"She can't hear you, why don't you —"

"Shh," he said.

"— out of Collins mix, but I only had *one*, I said it before I went out, I said, 'Frieda, tonight you will behave like a *lady*.' So I told the officer I was celebrating for you, I said, 'Officer, I am not in my normal mode,' but he didn't even believe I know you! He said, 'Right, lady,' and then he grabs my arm real hard, and I told him, 'Don't you put your hands on me! When I *tell* you to put your hands on me, you do so with gusto, but when I *say*,' and he says, 'Oh, the lady's got rules!'" She paused, swallowing, and the machine cut her off.

"You can pick up the phone while she's talking," I told Borden, but he just sighed, his thighs giving a little under my feet as though some of the air had gone out of them.

"I know I'm supposed to be celebrating," he said, "but man, everybody *wants* something, you know?"

"Not Frieda," I said.

"What do you know about Frieda?" Borden said. He dug his thumb into the soft ball of my foot and I tried to jerk it

away from him, but the cushions under me were soft and I couldn't get any leverage. "A Chinese girl did this to me one time," Borden said. "Something-su, I forget what it's called. You'll like it."

"*Please* quit that," I said. "All I meant was, Frieda seems to respect and depend on you."

"Naw, she don't love me. She just wants attention, you know? Her old man's in jail, over in Starke, HRS got her kids, and she ain't even allowed in half the bars in the county, because she's always looking at someone's husband and licking her straw. I seen her get a black eye for doing that. That's why she comes by here, because she don't got nowhere else to go, you know what I'm saying?"

"I don't want to know about Frieda," I said. "Maybe she likes her life, maybe she likes not having any responsibility, not having to worry about anything —"

"Naw, she don't," Borden said. "Nobody wants everything taken from them. Everybody wants some give." Frieda had come back on, meanwhile, saying something about Weight Watchers, but Borden spoke right over her — rudely, I thought, even if she did want something from him. "You want to hear something nuts?" he said. "When I got this thing confirmed, that I really hit it big, what's the first thing popped into my head? *Breeder tank.* Number one, my breeding females been dying, I gotta get some more, and a breeder tank. Number two, this tie I saw on TV, one of them shopping shows, some kind of a silk *weave*. I mean, does a Porsche occur to me? No. Yacht? No. Paris, France? Forget it. Girl I took out in high school whose old man was a commie, he was always asking me what was my *ambition*, because he *knew*. He knew I didn't have none. He told me, he said, 'This is how they keep you down — whatever you got, you think that's all you deserve.' You get so you only see one inch in front of your own face, he said."

**"Girl I took out in high school whose old man was a commie, he was always asking me what was my *ambition*, because he *knew*. He knew I didn't have none."**

"Well, what *are* you going to do?" I said.

Borden took his damp hands off my feet and pressed them over his eyes, then combed them back through his thin hair over and over again. He stared across the room at the hovering mollies. "You know what?" he finally said. "I just want to think about it tomorrow."

"Borden, I need to ask you a favor," I said. "Only certain things need to be clear up front. It's not money or anything…"

"You can stay here, just go on back to sleep, don't worry about it," he said, before I could go on. He stood up and walked with his hands in his pockets over to the window. "Don't worry about me," he said. He cupped his hands like blinders against the glass to block out the reflection of the lamp and sighed, making a small patch of steam. "I'm a perfect gentleman," he said.

In the morning he was gone. A note taped on the aquarium glass said: *I went back to You Know Where. I don't want to disturb your beauty sleep. Please feed the fish, O.K.?* I found my boots in the kitchen and left, shutting the door quickly and quietly, as though someone were still in the apartment, sleeping.

I got Jeannie out of my bed and we sat at my kitchen table, smoking cigarettes over plates of eggs. The professor had left right after I'd gone back downstairs to Borden's, she said. She suggested we spend the day together, go to a street fair or maybe go see the royal stallions that walked around on their hind legs. "Or how about that Wet Water place you applied at?" she said.

"We're too old for that shit," I said. "People have heart attacks there."

"Well, I'm paying," she said, "so decide."

At the dog track, where we ended up, she bought me some popcorn and then ran off to the clubhouse to say hello to a jai-alai player she knew. I stayed in the stands, trying to understand the loud announcer, the endless blur of greyhounds whipping by behind their strange fuzzy lure, but after Jeannie had been gone awhile I gave up and stared at the crowd instead. An unexpected hot wind had come up off the Gulf, and people were sitting on their wadded-up jackets and mopping their foreheads with concession napkins. So many of them resembled Borden, I thought — so many lumpy bodies and damp, hungry-looking faces. Right in front of me a man who could have been Borden had stood up and was unzipping and peeling off one sweatshirt after another like a birthday party magician pulling scarves out of a sleeve. Maybe it was an effect of the sun, or the pony sofa smell steaming off my hair, but each time he got another sweatshirt off and revealed yet another one, underneath, my scalp prickled with anticipation, as though we were all there to bet on sweatshirts instead of dogs. I thought of the real Borden wistfully, as though it had been a long time since we had seen each other, and I wished he were there with me, watching; I imagined his damp, gentlemanly face happy for once, laughing, finally, at his own good fortune. ❑

*Wendy Brenner lives in Gainesville, Florida.*

# Remember the Alamo!

*By Junebug Jabbo Jones*

I got a job in Hawaii and figured since I'd be in Paradise, I might as well hang out for a while, make a vacation of it. Hawaii! Even the name conjures up pictures of tropical fancy. Okay, so I had heard of the way the native people had been bumfuzzled out of their land. Considering what happened to black people and the road our Native American sisters and brothers have had to walk in North and South America, it didn't take a lot of imagination to get the picture. But I was bound and determined to make this a vacation!

When my friends heard about my plans, they told me about the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement. I wanted to plug my ears. Finally this radical community organizer (who probably hasn't had a vacation since Bessie kicked the milk pail) said, "The least you could do is make up a button saying something like, 'I SUPPORT THE HEROIC STRUGGLE OF THE NATIVE HAWAIIAN PEOPLES MOVEMENT.'"

"Yeah," I told her, "and when I go to the beach I could write it on a picket sign and stick it in the sand to make a shady spot."

She didn't like my joke.

What most people call Hawaii is eight pretty big islands in a string of smaller islands stretched out along a fault line in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Hawaii marks the northern end of the huge triangle of about 5,000 miles to a side called Oceania, which includes Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia (the "Black Islands" where a bunch of African people have been living for over 40,000 years! I can hardly wait to get down there).

Once you get out of the big cities, Hawaii really does look like the Garden of Eden. In some places we played on black sand beaches, and heard about beaches of red and green sand, too.

*You can also get a picture of hell when you stand on the rim and look down into the crater of a live volcano.*

On the other hand, you can also get a picture of hell when you stand on the rim and look down into the crater of a live volcano. Magma boils up from the core of the earth, and lava carves secret tunnels as it snakes down rugged slopes to shoot steamy, sulfur-smoke clouds over the sea and build towers of rock and fire high in the air. You can actually see new land being added to volcanoes which have reared up from the bottom of the sea. I stood on land that was less than two weeks old and felt the earth as it continued to move beneath my feet. I was humbled and honored to stand in witness to such awesome power.

The story goes that an English fortune-hunting sea captain called James Cook "discovered" the Hawaiian Islands in 1784. What that really means is that he was the first one to get back to Europe to tell about it. Polynesian people discovered this paradise, made homes, and lived there centuries before Europeans made the scene.

Since I knew I wouldn't be able to stay long enough to get very many stories from the people we'd meet, I wanted quick ways to bone up on their history. A bunch of folks told me that the Polynesian Cultural Center, which was developed by a branch of Brigham Young University, was the best place to do that.

I was excited about being able to enjoy a day-long educational experience. I remembered the times I went to Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia and to Harper's Ferry in West Virginia and thought, "This is going to be better than that!"

I should have known that something was wrong when I got to the cultural center and they wanted from $35 to $85 just to get in the place. I thought about it for a bit and figured, since the employees are mostly Polynesian students working their way through the university, it must be all right. So I coughed up the cash and went in.

We started off at a big-screen movie that gave a 40-minute dramatic history of the region. The movie ended with the arrival of the Europeans. When the English sailors were met by the excited islanders, the cabin boy said, "We found it, Captain! We're here!"

"Yes, lad," the Captain said darkly, "for better or for worse."

After the movie, to get familiar with the exhibits that they have at the center, we took a boat ride that was set up to look like an imaginary journey through the various island nations. As we passed Fiji, a big black man in a grass skirt, war paint on his face, and a spear in his hand jumped out from behind a clump of plants and said, "BOO!" It began to be

clear that the center wasn't going to give us much of an education about a unique part of the world with real people demonstrating their culture and reenacting scenes from their history. What we found instead was a theme park about wild, exotic, primitive, tropic peoples who luckily have been *tamed* by our superior culture.

To tell the truth, it hurt my feelings. It put me in mind of the Walt Disney version of Southern culture in that movie *Song of the South*. It felt like some serious "signifying" was going on.

*Said the Signifying Monkey to the lion one day,*
*"Man, you ought to hear what I heard the elephant say,*
*He was talking about your momma, and your papa too,*
*And he didn't have too much nice to say about you.*
*Man, he talked about you and your people so bad-d-d-d!*
*The way he talked about y'all, well, it made me mad!"*

Course, the Signifying Monkey was just stirring up mess, but the so-called Polynesian Cultural Center did hurt my feelings. It reminded me of the time I went to the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas.

I remember all those World War II movies with paratroopers jumping out of planes yelling "Remember the Alamo!" And then there were all those Westerns that made it look like William Travis and Daniel Boone and all those guys who got wiped out by General Santa Anna at the little mission house by the river were heroes instead of outlaws. In fact, Travis and his gang were just that — outlaws who went against the laws of the governments of Mexico, the United States, and Texas. Travis, it seems, was upset because he was on the losing side of the Civil War and was looking for a fight he could be on the winning side of.

*Illustration by Jacob Roquet*

The thing that made me feel so bad about going to the Alamo was that the tour was guided by Mexican youths who had to smile pleasantly while they told the story of how their ancestors — trying to defend their country in an honorable way — had won the battle but lost the war. I felt like I'd been cheated. I found out that people who I'd been taught to think of as heroes were really outlaws. Why have our schools and the movies, with the support of our government, led us to this wrong idea about history? It was like saying that Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, and John Brown were crazy for resisting slavery. Or that Native Americans ought to build a monument for Custer at the Little Big Horn.

That's what I thought about as I left the theme park called the Polynesian Cultural Center. It would have been so much better if the designers of the park had spent more time at Colonial Williamsburg or Harper's Ferry, and less time at Disneyland.

I hear that Disney is trying to get approval for a plan to build a big theme park about American history in Manassas, Virginia. Lord have mercy on us if the same people who gave us Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Goofy, and the gang get the chance to make their view of history official. I can see it now — Uncle Remus with Betsy Ross and Scrooge McDuck with Harriet Tubman, dancing arm in arm and leading the chorus of "It's a Small World After All."

Think it's impossible? Remember the Alamo! ❑

*Junebug Jabbo Jones has been learning about American history ever since the turbulent days of the civil rights movement. He sends along stories from his home in New Orleans through his good friend John O'Neal.*

# Hometown Flava

By Thomasi Mcdonald

*Back in the days when I was young/I'm not a kid anymore/but some days I sit and wish I was a kid again . . .*

These rap lyrics take me back . . . back to days when I was a kid growing up in Rockingham, North Carolina, listening to Freda Paine, James Brown, Gil Scott-Heron, and others. I learned that music ain't just music — it's political platform, memory reinvented, mythology, and yes, weapon.

So now, in my truly not-a-kid-anymore days, I look in on the world of rap music and hip hop culture . . . and understand:

▼ Rap is a unifying force among young people — especially young black males — more potent than the black church, the Nation of Islam, and all the community service organizations combined. Despite attempts by these organizations to provide alternatives or solutions for "at-risk" youth, it is rap that reaches them most directly and most poignantly.

▼ Rap is BIG, and living quite large. For better or worse, rap has been wed to a plethora of cultures worldwide from urban France to rural Cuba. Its roots, growth, and development here in America parallel the be-bop revolution in jazz and the Motown story in Detroit, with an ample helping of '70s Blaxploitation flicks flung into the gumbo.

▼ For the young, politically maturing offspring of Malcolm's Generation Xers, rap and hip hop culture are nothing less than the freedom songs of the civil rights movement. Powerful, and yet unfocused, rap is their embraced medium of expression for unity, justice, and full recognition.

The power of rap became apparent in the late 1970s. As the political climate took a conservative downturn, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five echoed the political platform of countless youth with "The Message," a hard-edged, landmark rap that graphically detailed the perils of inner-city living — "Don't push me/'cause I'm close/to the edge/I'm trying not to lose my head."

It was reminiscent of Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues," and his strong, searching face on the cover of the 1972 album. "It makes me wanna holler sometimes/the way they do my life," he lamented. Seemed like that same embittered brother was rapping in "The Message," except this time, he ended on a note of defiance, laughing, "ha/hahaha/haha," like he was ready to do somebody in then and there.

Illustrations by Jacob Roquet

On the eve of jheri curls, crack, and ronald reagan, the preacher — the perennial voice of the black community — had gone and reinvented itself, and come again as a rapper. Young people started human beatboxing on street corners, drumming rap rhythms on school desks, and inventing their own hiphopnitized vernacular. For youth who endured the onslaught of a national policy tantamount to domestic vengeance and exacerbated by AIDS, drug abuse, homelessness, and unprecedented levels of violence, rap became both an accessible art form and a weapon.

Rap is young — celebrating its 15th birthday — yet it has long and honorable roots traceable to the oral traditions of griots and praise-singers of Afrikan cultures.

The griot or historian-storyteller was vested with keeping the histories of families and entire villages. When Alex Haley traced his Afrikan roots, he visited a Gambian village and listened to a griot. The skillcraft, passed down from generation to generation, is still active and intact — and in rap, too. Rap groups form crews, posses, and klans, each with its own unique flavoring and commentary; they chronicle the stories of their lives and their communities. "Rap music," says Chuck D, "is the black CNN."

The praise-singer, though not occupying as strenuous a position as the griot, was the courier of legend and myth. Often accompanied by instrumentation, the praise-singer praised, sang, and recounted the many exploits and events of the community, the tragedies and comedies, marriages and deaths, and countless other meanderings of any given day. The praise-singer's gig happened anywhere at anytime: in the royal

court, on the side of the road, at parades, baby-naming ceremonies, or weddings. I imagine many of them like the rural blues singers of American lore.

When the Afrikan was enslaved and forced to the Americas, the vocal culture ingeniously reinvented itself in the form of the oft-discussed patois languages, worksongs, the storytelling tradition, the dozens, and the drums of Congo Square in New Orleans. Though much of the Afrikan memory has been systematically suppressed, the Afrikan sensibility remains. As Spike Lee's movie title suggests, we've always sought a "mo' better blues."

*The Southern flava split the airwaves with its underground lyrics some years ago as gangsta rap was being born on the West Coast against a backdrop of gangs and crack.*

As rappers broke on the scene, more than a few folk (me included) started cross-referencing these vocal artists with musical personalities, techniques, and styles across the time and geography of Afrikan Diaspora. "Rap isn't a music," critic Nelson George noted in the *Village Voice* in 1989. "It's a cultural black hole able to suck up r&b, rock, go-go, house, and, soon, third world rhythms without losing its combative personality."

The funky, hard-as-nails style of Jamaican rappers like Shabba Ranks and Patra surely recalls the dj toasters of early reggae music. Shabba's style also recalls the djembe drum, a powerful, roaring instrument used as the signal drum for dancers in traditional Afrikan orchestration.

The Marley legacy notwithstanding, hip hop culture has been the vehicle largely responsible for introducing reggae music to the Stateside masses. Twenty years ago, dreadlock culture was viewed as an aberration, a "cult" of violence and incoherence. Thanks to the new jack hiphopnitization, dreads are to the '90s what George Clinton and Parliament were to the '70s: the funky vanguard.

Consider more connections between past and present: Public Enemy and KRS-One represent extensions of Black Nationalism — Malcolm X's speeches augmented by John Coltrane's sheets of sound. They pay homage to the 1960s consciousness rap of the Last Poets, Gil Scott-Heron, Bama the Poet, and Amira Baraka. I can see Salt-n-Pepa as the new jack Supremes; and Queen Latifah's audacity on the mike calls to mind former female royalty such as Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Dinah Washington, and Aretha Franklin. The human beatbox draws on jazz scat, while the elemental record scratches on the rapper's turntables mimic the one-stringed kora reborn in the Mississippi Delta via a nail, broom wire, and cigar box played with a broken bottleneck. And dare we compare the black church's shouting tradition of call and response to rap's communal party cliches?

Geographically, rap is everywhere — and most definitely in the South. But the lines separating each region's unique flavoring are blurry. Rap is a chameleon, whose being adapts and changes to the colors around it, while maintaining its own distinct selfhood. Hip hop culture, like the elusive Esu-elegbara of the Afrikan orisha religion, is not a monogamous spirit.

There is a Southern rap tradition, but save for the blues idiom that informs all black music, it has little to do with traditional devices of black Southern music — the field hollers, gospel moans, and blues shouts. In the rap tradition, the Southern flava is the notorious Miami-based Luke Skywalker and 2 Live Crew. It is up-tempo music with big bass guitar sounds and in-yo-face words about big behinds and other body parts on womenfolk.

The Southern flava split the airwaves with its underground lyrics some years ago as gangsta rap was being born on the West Coast against a backdrop of gangs and crack. Out of New York, an East Coast flava rose from "stop the violence" and consciousness rap of groups like Public Enemy and Po' Righteous Teacher, and the stylized similes and metaphors of DAS EFX and others.

In the South, there are other "hometown flavas" on more organic and grassroots levels. In Durham, North Carolina, I came across Trendsetter Music, which sponsors an annual Rap Summit, and Boss Records, which boasts of being the first national distributor of rap music in the South. In nearby Greensboro, I visited the Flava Spot, a rap and hip hop retail store, and Funhouse Records, a recording studio. And in east Tennessee, I worked with Field Nigga Nation, a hard-edged group.

So it's going on. "More rap records are sold in the South than in any other part of the United States," says Trendsetter rapper John Watkins.

But as further testimony to rap's elusive nature, the popular Atlanta-bred group Arrested Development is not even considered Southern flava. "The mellow, uplifting message and catchy lyrics of Arrested Development put it in a different school all together," points out Watkins. "AD follows positive uplift-type groups like De La Soul, Tribe Called Quest, Digable Planets, Jungle Brothers, Zulu Nation, and Afrikka Bambaata."

"You see," Watkins insists, "that's the way to look at hip hop — not geographical, but its unique flavor."

Watkins started rapping while growing up in Mississippi. "Being from Mississippi, you'd think that I have a Southern flava, but no, it's East Coast," he says. "In junior high we would rap around school and you'd hear something from all four major flava groups."

Watkins readily acknowledges the difficulty of expanding notions of rap flava in the South. But believing the Southern market to be wide open, he and the other Trendsetters — many of whom are fast food managers — pooled their money to get started.

"We've bought our own preproduction equipment, samplers, reverbs, turntables, mixers, an effects machine, drum machines, and two portable studios," Watkins says. "We're capable of any product, and that's what really matters — the product."

Though marginalized, rap and hip hop have created a significant economic market and — of necessity

— more than a few young entrepreneurs. Nestled in the Tate Street shopping district of Greensboro, the Flava Spot sells rap music and hip hop gear to students at the nearby University of North Carolina. When I rapped with the owners this summer, the store was enduring its first off-season. The sounz being spun by proprietor Frank Jay filled the space with this thing the hip hop kids are calling acid jazz — strictly underground and straight outta New York.

The young businessmen behind the Flava Spot were adamant about one thing: They want it known that drug sales did not in any way finance the opening of the store. "I've always made do with what I had," said founder Mervin Sealy, "and I always dealt with what I had."

"I'm not going to do anything to pollute my body or my cipher," agreed Eli Davis, another Flava Spot operator. "Still, a lot of rappers have personally experienced selling rock cocaine. If someone lives that life and raps that, then it's legitimate."

We talked about rap lyrics that degrade women. "I contradict myself sometimes," Davis conceded. "I mean, I'll listen to Sade and I'll be like, 'yeah black woman,' then I'll listen to some N.W.A. right after that and . . . "

Sealy's younger brother, Shane, interjected. "Women in rap are called bitches, 'hos, tricks, skanks, scalawags, and hoochies," he says bluntly. "It's just humor."

This comes to the hard part. Citing rap lyrics that glorify violence and degrade women, Senator Carol Mosely Braun has called for hearings to investigate whether gangsta rap should be banned. Her colleague, Congresswoman Maxine Waters, counters that "the youth have a right to express themselves." Waters notes that lawmakers would better serve young people by fighting the perils of their reality instead of censoring their music.

Is rap a catalyst for drugs, violence, and other social ills? Is there a point at which rap becomes, as one pundit put it, "black-on-black crime with a beat"?

What comes to mind for me are two slogans embraced by rappers during the Los Angeles riots: NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE and FUCK DA POLICE. Both echoed the sentiments of blacks and others who witnessed the Rodney King beating on prime time. NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE has reached the modern canons of "We Shall Overcome," and serves as the rallying cry of boycotters protesting a police assault on a black woman in Battleboro, North Carolina. By contrast, Ice T's "Cop Killer" was censored by the recording industry and banned by many record stores.

Clearly, the choice of slogans is a matter of personal preference. But both are real and legitimate. Considering the violently arrogant history and current reality of this country, an F-D-P day comes pretty natural for some folks, me included.

Still, there is evidence of a change in rap music. John Watkins of Trendsetter Music says that the word is it's "check-up neck-up" time — a time of new self-awareness and social consciousness. Gangsta rap is loosening up as a result of the recent gang truce, as evidenced by Tupac Shakur's latest effort, "Keep Your Head Up." Luke Skywalker and 2 Live Crew are fast becoming old school in the South, as rappers increasingly heed the clarion call of OUTKAST, a new group from Decatur, Georgia — "get up, stand up, and do something."

What impresses me about all of the "hometown flavas" that I rapped with is their sense of commitment not only to the music, but to one another. If there is a single common denominator among rappers beyond their music, it is a cooperative spirit and shared vision that's sadly lacking in many youth today. In the face of all the negative media hype rap receives (black columnist Stanley Crouch once challenged another writer to point out a literate rapper), many rappers are making serious and sound decisions regarding where they're going with their own lives, and raising some helluva righteous issues through their music.

As a black man, I have to be worried about the casual dissin' of women and the lack of historical context many youth are working out of. But I do understand that just as the sounz spun by Frank Jay fill the empty space at the Flava Spot during the off-season, rap fills a great void in the lives of many young people. For them, America is in a permanent state of off-season. And that's the real hometown flava — the stone-cold, unfunky universal of being young, black, and poor in America.

There just ain't nothing wrong with rappers weaving their tapestry of future mythos . . . epic events, heroes, gods and goddesses. As Eli Davis of the Flava Spot puts it, "It's all a part of people's lives — where they are and what they see — that's interpreted in the music."

I'm outta here y'all. PEACE. ❑

*Thomasi Mcdonald works with youth in Durham, North Carolina. He received the North Carolina Arts Council's Poetry Fellowship and presented* Imperial's ism, *his poetry video on the poultry plant fire in Hamlet, North Carolina, at the MTV Human Rights Watch International Film Festival earlier this year.*

# Gold & Green

**By Bob Hall**

## Can we have good jobs *and* a healthy environment?

**SCENE ONE:** To convince Mercedes-Benz to locate a factory in Alabama last year, state officials hand the automaker more than $300 million in incentives, including free land, wage subsidies, and 25 years of income-tax exemptions. The package will cost Alabama at least $153,000 per promised job.

**SCENE TWO:** The same year, a judge declares Alabama's cash-starved school system unconstitutional because it fails to give children an adequate education. Schools get most of their money from property taxes, and Alabama's are the lowest in the nation, thanks to steadfast lobbying by large farm and timber landowners.

**SCENE THREE:** Timber companies, encouraged by low taxes and lax regulations, slash more Alabama forests and begin the ecological madness of riverside chip mills. Pulverized trees are shipped to Mobile and then to Japan, where workers turn them into wood products for the Far East. Alabama loses jobs and its trees. "Witnessing the amount of active deforestation in Alabama was much worse than any experience I've had in the rainforests of Central America," says Daniel Dancer, a photographer who has documented the destruction.

These three scenes in one Southern state underscore what's wrong with the traditional approach to economic development. Instead of treasuring natural resources and using them to promote sustainable development, officials continue to discount their true value. The subsidy strategy benefits corporations, but imposes a huge cost on taxpayers, school kids, workers, and the environment.

Perhaps to mask the human and environmental cost of their policies, Alabama leaders keep the focus on "outsiders" (federal regulators, labor unions, foreigners), happy for the occasional bit of good news. "There's a great feeling of elation that the Mercedes facility is coming," says Barry Mason, dean of the College of Commerce at the University of Alabama. "Any time you can bring in good wages and steady employment, you're not talking about destroying the quality of life, but of enhancing it."

Such thinking is common — and dead wrong, according to the Rocky Mountain Institute. Working in dozens of communities across the nation, the non-profit group identified three fallacies in the conventional approach to economic development: "(1) decisions are best when they're made by . . . the small group of old white men who have always made the decisions; (2) communities must sacrifice their environment in order to get jobs, and (3) in order to prosper, communities must recruit outside businesses."

The staff of the Institute — including economists and noted scientists like physicist Amory Lovins — aren't inclined to radical rhetoric. But they have little tolerance for habits of thinking or behavior that obstruct genuine problem-solving.

Sacrificing the environment for jobs is just stupid, says Michael Kinsley of the Institute. "When we use our resources and other assets faster than we renew them, we treat them as if they're income. That's lousy accounting . . . like

a dairy farmer selling her cows to buy feed."

### GREEN GROWTH

For too long, the South has been selling its future like Kinsley's farmer. Decades after the oil embargo and Club of Rome's report on suicidal growth rates, most Southern cities lag well behind their national counterparts on recycling programs, and reducing toxic chemicals is considered a threat to economic prosperity.

"There's been lots of talk, but not much done to either reduce those emissions or determine which are causing the most significant public health risks," says Alan Jones of the Tennessee Environmental Council.

Proponents of stricter protections for public health are constantly told they're jeopardizing jobs. "Corporations use economic blackmail as a club to keep people quiet," says Richard Grossman, co-author of *Fear at Work*. "It's a tactic to divide and intimidate, but it has no justification in fact."

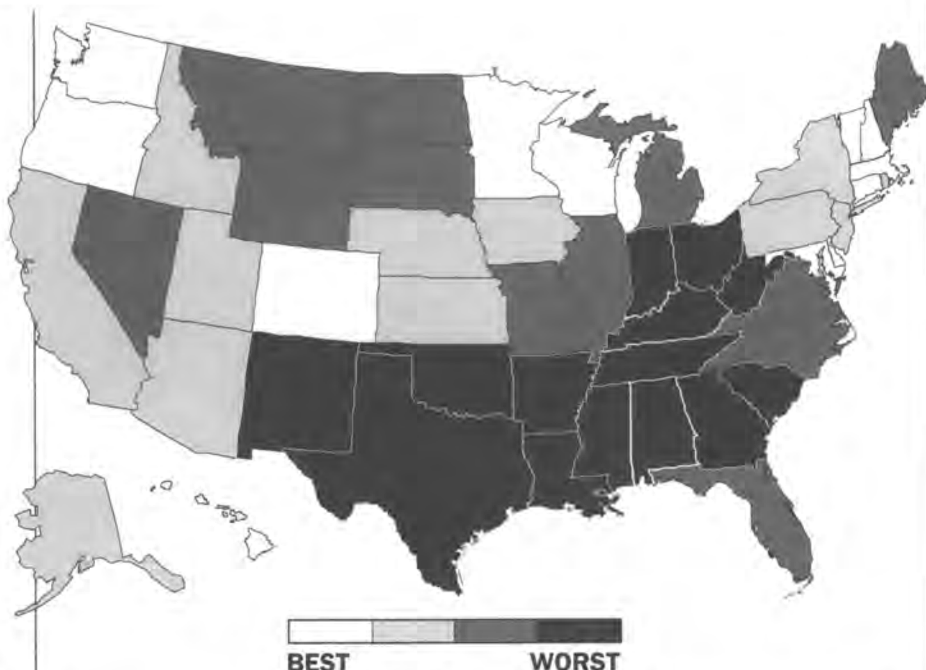
What is the real connection between a healthy economy and healthy environment? Can a state with strong conservation standards provide good jobs *and* outperform the subsidy-based development strategy typified by Alabama?

To find out, *Southern Exposure* and its publisher, the Institute for Southern Studies, collected two sets of indicators — one measuring job quality and economic vitality, the other measuring stress on the natural environment. The 20 economic indicators emphasize job opportunities, working conditions, protection for disabled or unemployed workers, and job creation. The 20 environmental measures focus on toxic emissions, recycling efforts, and state spending to protect natural resources.

We ranked the states based on each indicator, and produced an overall score for each state by adding up its individual ranks. Comparing the two lists reveals a remarkable correlation:

▼ Louisiana ranks dead last for jobs *and* for environmental quality. Eight other Southern states (along with Indiana, Oklahoma, and Ohio) rank among the worst 14 in both categories.

▼ Hawaii, Vermont, and New Hampshire rank among the top six on both lists. Six other states rank among



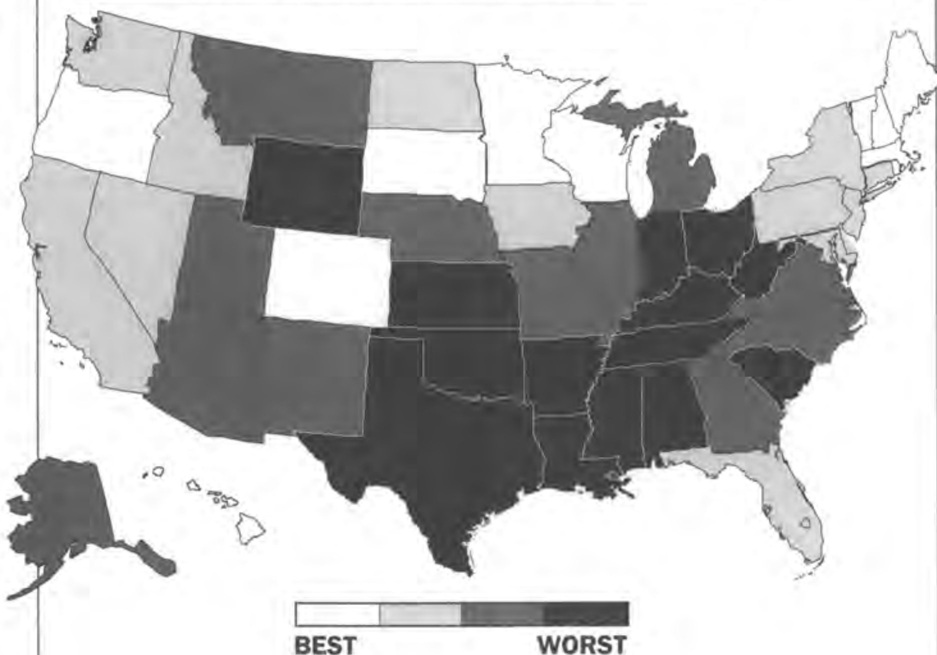

## JOBS & THE ECONOMY

States are ranked on their economic and environmental health using 20 indicators in each area. The data come from government reports, the *Development Report Card* by the Corporation for Economic Development (CFED), *The Climate for Workers* by the Southern Regional Council (SRC), and our *1991-92 Green Index*.

Each state is ranked from 1 (best) to 50 on every indicator; the sum of its rankings provides an overall score and rank. Data and rankings for Southern states start on page 50.

To receive source descriptions and data for all 50 states, send $10 to the Institute for Southern Studies, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702. The report is free for Institute members.

## POISONS & THE ENVIRONMENT



## GOLD & GREEN

| | | ALABAMA # | ALABAMA Rank | ARKANSAS # | ARKANSAS Rank | FLORIDA # | FLORIDA Rank | GEORGIA # | GEORGIA Rank | KENTUCKY # | KENTUCKY Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **JOBS & THE ECONOMY (final score & rank)** | | **704** | **46** | **713** | **47** | **550** | **36** | **666** | **42** | **675** | **45** |
| 1 | Workplace deaths (per 100,000 workers) | 9.2 | 31 | 12.0 | 41 | 9.1 | 30 | 9.6 | 33 | 11.6 | 39 |
| 2 | Workers in high-injury jobs (% mfg.) | 37.8 | 32 | 45.0 | 41 | 33.7 | 23 | 30.6 | 18 | 30.3 | 17 |
| 3 | Workers in toxic industries (% mfg.) | 29.7 | 32 | 24.5 | 25 | 26.9 | 27 | 23.3 | 22 | 27.7 | 28 |
| 4 | Workers in high-disease jobs (% mfg.) | 2.5 | 41 | 1.5 | 34 | 0.5 | 12 | 1.3 | 30 | 3.1 | 43 |
| 5 | Disability benefits (maximum $/week) | 400 | 29 | 252 | 48 | 425 | 26 | 250 | 49 | 394 | 31 |
| 6 | Employer health insurance (% covered) | 64.8 | 25 | 54.9 | 45 | 53.7 | 47 | 57.1 | 39 | 61.4 | 32 |
| 7 | Laws protecting workers (SRC score) | 2.0 | 49 | 11.5 | 26 | 10.0 | 38 | 9.0 | 41 | 13.5 | 18 |
| 8 | Unemployment rate (1993) | 7.5 | 41 | 6.2 | 22 | 7.0 | 32 | 5.8 | 18 | 6.2 | 22 |
| 9 | Youth unemployment rate (age 16-19) | 23.7 | 43 | 21.4 | 37 | 24.9 | 45 | 19.3 | 29 | 15.7 | 15 |
| 10 | Long-term unemployed (% of jobless) | 13.4 | 14 | 13.0 | 13 | 19.5 | 33 | 22.5 | 38 | 25.2 | 43 |
| 11 | Women's opportunities (% with top jobs) | 18.9 | 45 | 16.6 | 47 | 25.1 | 29 | 19.2 | 43 | 20.9 | 42 |
| 12 | Minority opportunity (% with top jobs) | 10.2 | 45 | 8.6 | 48 | 16.6 | 23 | 11.3 | 44 | 13.2 | 34 |
| 13 | Annual pay ($) | 22,340 | 31 | 20,108 | 46 | 23,144 | 27 | 24,373 | 21 | 21,858 | 37 |
| 14 | Income below poverty (% households) | 17.1 | 40 | 17.4 | 41 | 15.3 | 33 | 17.8 | 42 | 19.7 | 46 |
| 15 | Income gap (top 20% vs. poorest 20%) | 10.2 | 41 | 9.2 | 34 | 9.2 | 33 | 11.0 | 47 | 11.2 | 48 |
| 16 | High-school grads (% household heads) | 73 | 42 | 73 | 42 | 80 | 27 | 75 | 41 | 70 | 47 |
| 17 | Tax fairness (CFED score) | 11.6 | 48 | 19.4 | 41 | 19.2 | 42 | 19.5 | 40 | 31.6 | 32 |
| 18 | Job growth (% gain since 1985) | 12.1 | 25 | 13.5 | 21 | 22.8 | 6 | 21.5 | 9 | 9.7 | 32 |
| 19 | Business start-ups (per 1000 workers) | 5.5 | 38 | 7.2 | 19 | 9.8 | 6 | 7.7 | 18 | 5.2 | 42 |
| 20 | Job growth in new business (since 1987) | 10.1 | 12 | 3.1 | 42 | 10.6 | 11 | 1.9 | 44 | 7.7 | 27 |
| **POISONS & THE ENVIRONMENT (score & rank)** | | **681** | **46** | **579** | **37** | **461** | **20** | **544** | **30** | **594** | **40** |
| 1 | Hazardous waste generated (lbs./capita) | 2,230 | 23 | 1,336 | 15 | 172 | 6 | 6,350 | 37 | 5,072 | 32 |
| 2 | Toxic chemical discharges (lbs./capita) | 44.0 | 39 | 45.3 | 40 | 9.5 | 10 | 19.7 | 22 | 42.5 | 37 |
| 3 | Cancer-causing toxins (lbs./capita) | 23.0 | 44 | 3.3 | 22 | 0.5 | 6 | 4.1 | 25 | 28.5 | 47 |
| 4 | Solid waste generated (lbs./capita) | 2,529 | 37 | 1,796 | 13 | 2,877 | 43 | 2,340 | 31 | 1,716 | 12 |
| 5 | Solid waste recycled (% as est. by state) | 14 | 27 | 11 | 33 | 29 | 5 | 12 | 30 | 15 | 24 |
| 6 | Pesticides (lbs./harvested acre) | 4.2 | 42 | 2.5 | 23 | 41.3 | 50 | 5.2 | 44 | 2.1 | 16 |
| 7 | Fertilizer use (lbs./capita) | 197 | 29 | 509 | 41 | 36 | 11 | 133 | 22 | 311 | 35 |
| 8 | Water use (gallons/day/capita) | 2,002 | 34 | 3,335 | 44 | 1,386 | 22 | 827 | 4 | 1,172 | 15 |
| 9 | Hazardous spills (1000s of gals, 1990-92) | 471 | 21 | 267 | 13 | 9,461 | 49 | 332 | 16 | 307 | 15 |
| 10 | Global warming gases (tons/capita) | 32.8 | 41 | 30.9 | 38 | 12.9 | 3 | 26.0 | 33 | 34.4 | 43 |
| 11 | Air quality (CFED score) | 0.18 | 15 | 0.00 | 1 | 0.73 | 26 | 1.18 | 32 | 0.66 | 20 |
| 12 | Gasoline use (average mpg) | 16.8 | 26 | 14.1 | 47 | 16.7 | 28 | 17.7 | 7 | 16.0 | 37 |
| 13 | Miles driven (1000s per square miles) | 902 | 28 | 443 | 17 | 2,119 | 42 | 1,345 | 34 | 958 | 29 |
| 14 | Energy consumption (million BTUs/capita) | 400 | 39 | 332 | 30 | 227 | 4 | 310 | 25 | 408 | 42 |
| 15 | Change in energy consumption (% 1973-92) | -3.0 | 33 | -13.1 | 16 | -7.5 | 26 | 3.3 | 39 | 12.0 | 47 |
| 16 | State spending on environment ($/capita) | 22.43 | 40 | 25.66 | 35 | 29.30 | 31 | 21.69 | 42 | 28.38 | 32 |
| 17 | Spending on environment (% of budget) | 1.02 | 38 | 1.29 | 27 | 1.51 | 22 | 1.06 | 36 | 1.16 | 32 |
| 18 | Env. policy record (Green Index grade) | 25.6 | 47 | 23.1 | 50 | 58.6 | 12 | 39.6 | 30 | 35.4 | 33 |
| 19 | Pollution investment (+) vs. subsidy (-) | 59 | 40 | 48 | 39 | 17 | 32 | -26 | 14 | -42 | 9 |
| 20 | Emissions-to-Jobs ratio (toxics/mfg. jobs) | 325 | 38 | 225 | 35 | 186 | 33 | 116 | 21 | 231 | 37 |

| LOUISIANA # | Rank | MISSISSIPPI # | Rank | N. CAROLINA # | Rank | S. CAROLINA # | Rank | TENNESSEE # | Rank | TEXAS # | Rank | VIRGINIA # | Rank | W. VIRGINIA # | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **783** | **50** | **766** | **49** | **537** | **32** | **673** | **44** | **630** | **41** | **626** | **40** | **508** | **27** | **731** | **48** |
| 11.0 | 37 | 14.5 | 45 | 7.0 | 21 | 6.8 | 20 | 7.8 | 25 | 11.3 | 38 | 9.4 | 32 | 15.7 | 46 |
| 41.0 | 37 | 36.5 | 30 | 18.1 | 6 | 17.4 | 4 | 29.6 | 16 | 34.4 | 25 | 31.4 | 20 | 36.8 | 31 |
| 45.9 | 46 | 22.1 | 19 | 15.8 | 12 | 23.0 | 21 | 29.7 | 33 | 32.2 | 36 | 28.2 | 31 | 48.3 | 47 |
| 4.9 | 47 | 1.1 | 25 | 1.9 | 38 | 3.5 | 44 | 1.8 | 37 | 3.6 | 45 | 1.2 | 28 | 7.9 | 49 |
| 307 | 43 | 236 | 50 | 442 | 20 | 393 | 32 | 318 | 42 | 456 | 16 | 434 | 23 | 405 | 28 |
| 50.7 | 50 | 53.6 | 48 | 63.5 | 29 | 55.9 | 41 | 60.9 | 34 | 55.2 | 44 | 65.6 | 23 | 56.6 | 40 |
| 4.0 | 48 | 0.0 | 50 | 11.5 | 26 | 5.0 | 47 | 10.5 | 36 | 9.5 | 39 | 6.5 | 45 | 15.5 | 4 |
| 7.4 | 38 | 6.3 | 27 | 4.9 | 8 | 7.5 | 41 | 5.7 | 17 | 7.0 | 32 | 5.0 | 9 | 10.8 | 50 |
| 20.4 | 35 | 28.2 | 48 | 18.9 | 27 | 17.4 | 22 | 17.2 | 21 | 23.4 | 42 | 21.8 | 39 | 29.5 | 49 |
| 18.1 | 29 | 15.9 | 22 | 14.8 | 18 | 16.9 | 26 | 12.4 | 11 | 15.4 | 21 | 18.5 | 31 | 30.4 | 47 |
| 25.3 | 27 | 14.5 | 50 | 16.8 | 46 | 16.4 | 48 | 19.1 | 44 | 26.2 | 24 | 25.8 | 25 | 27.2 | 15 |
| 12.8 | 35 | 6.9 | 50 | 8.7 | 47 | 7.7 | 49 | 11.9 | 40 | 16.6 | 24 | 15.8 | 28 | 19.2 | 9 |
| 22,340 | 31 | 19,237 | 48 | 22,248 | 33 | 21,423 | 40 | 22,807 | 29 | 25,080 | 15 | 24,937 | 17 | 22,169 | 34 |
| 24.2 | 49 | 24.5 | 50 | 15.7 | 37 | 18.9 | 45 | 17.0 | 39 | 17.8 | 42 | 9.4 | 4 | 22.3 | 48 |
| 14.0 | 50 | 10.8 | 45 | 8.9 | 29 | 9.0 | 31 | 9.7 | 38 | 10.4 | 43 | 8.5 | 26 | 9.6 | 37 |
| 71 | 45 | 69 | 49 | 72 | 44 | 70 | 46 | 70 | 48 | 78 | 36 | 79 | 32 | 68 | 50 |
| 23.6 | 39 | 31.0 | 33 | 30.2 | 36 | 41.1 | 22 | 14.1 | 46 | 12.8 | 47 | 35.1 | 29 | 26.0 | 38 |
| -1.0 | 47 | 12.3 | 24 | 14.7 | 18 | 15.9 | 16 | 13.8 | 20 | 13.3 | 22 | 18.9 | 12 | 5.7 | 41 |
| 5.6 | 37 | 5.9 | 34 | 6.6 | 26 | 5.3 | 40 | 6.2 | 30 | 7.0 | 21 | 6.7 | 24 | 6.4 | 28 |
| 10.0 | 13 | 8.6 | 19 | 9.1 | 16 | 4.5 | 38 | 8.0 | 24 | 9.6 | 14 | 7.3 | 30 | 3.8 | 40 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **708** | **50** | **612** | **43** | **578** | **36** | **611** | **42** | **698** | **48** | **703** | **49** | **521** | **26** | **652** | **45** |
| 21,320 | 47 | 7,187 | 41 | 1,223 | 14 | 2,192 | 22 | 30,540 | 50 | 22,143 | 48 | 7,181 | 40 | 26,141 | 49 |
| 166.2 | 50 | 72.1 | 48 | 35.0 | 33 | 46.3 | 42 | 59.5 | 44 | 46.1 | 41 | 19.5 | 21 | 43.4 | 38 |
| 93.5 | 50 | 5.9 | 29 | 7.0 | 32 | 7.1 | 34 | 12.8 | 41 | 72.9 | 49 | 3.9 | 24 | 17.2 | 43 |
| 1,625 | 9 | 1,377 | 2 | 2,014 | 23 | 3,164 | 47 | 2,189 | 29 | 2,776 | 40 | 2,384 | 34 | 1,876 | 17 |
| 14 | 27 | 9 | 38 | 5 | 48 | 20 | 15 | 9 | 38 | 12 | 31 | 24 | 10 | 11 | 33 |
| 4.0 | 41 | 3.6 | 34 | 3.6 | 33 | 4.6 | 43 | 1.7 | 12 | 2.4 | 21 | 3.6 | 31 | 1.8 | 14 |
| 166 | 25 | 410 | 37 | 165 | 24 | 105 | 18 | 190 | 27 | 169 | 26 | 97 | 16 | 27 | 9 |
| 2,217 | 36 | 1,413 | 23 | 1,350 | 20 | 1,721 | 31 | 1,884 | 33 | 1,484 | 25 | 1,109 | 12 | 2,554 | 40 |
| 4,571 | 46 | 490 | 23 | 840 | 30 | 3,597 | 45 | 831 | 29 | 9,750 | 50 | 1,415 | 34 | 391 | 19 |
| 51.6 | 47 | 20.8 | 20 | 18.7 | 17 | 17.8 | 15 | 24.7 | 30 | 31.2 | 39 | 17.3 | 13 | 61.7 | 48 |
| 0.45 | 17 | 0.00 | 1 | 0.72 | 25 | 0.01 | 13 | 0.75 | 27 | 1.62 | 38 | 1.26 | 35 | 0.52 | 18 |
| 15.4 | 41 | 16.3 | 34 | 17.3 | 20 | 16.0 | 37 | 16.4 | 33 | 16.4 | 32 | 17.6 | 12 | 16.0 | 39 |
| 777 | 26 | 559 | 20 | 1,386 | 35 | 1,164 | 31 | 1,213 | 32 | 624 | 21 | 1,602 | 39 | 684 | 23 |
| 830 | 48 | 370 | 37 | 295 | 18 | 340 | 32 | 357 | 34 | 562 | 47 | 291 | 16 | 438 | 45 |
| -1.1 | 37 | 6.2 | 42 | 6.9 | 43 | 10.8 | 45 | -5.9 | 28 | -15.7 | 7 | 3.0 | 38 | -12.8 | 19 |
| 49.16 | 15 | 30.41 | 30 | 16.96 | 47 | 32.92 | 27 | 22.04 | 41 | 18.36 | 46 | 28.27 | 33 | 21.02 | 43 |
| 1.97 | 13 | 1.51 | 22 | 0.75 | 46 | 1.27 | 28 | 0.88 | 99 | 1.06 | 36 | 1.31 | 26 | 0.79 | 45 |
| 34.3 | 34 | 28.8 | 43 | 56.7 | 13 | 38.3 | 31 | 31.7 | 40 | 37.4 | 32 | 47.0 | 21 | 27.5 | 45 |
| 410 | 49 | 170 | 44 | 28 | 33 | -5 | 23 | 174 | 46 | 14 | 31 | 30 | 35 | 3 | 25 |
| 2,623 | 50 | 473 | 44 | 135 | 24 | 182 | 32 | 436 | 42 | 445 | 43 | 175 | 31 | 370 | 40 |

the best 12 on each list: Wisconsin, Minnesota, Colorado, Oregon, Massachusetts, and Maryland.

▼ New England and the Scandinavian-influenced states rank best on both sets of indicators, perhaps reflecting their progressive political heritage. Similarly, states that rank best on the bellwether indicator of infant mortality generally score high on both our lists.

▼ The states most dependent on mining and oil wells generally fair poorest on both lists, no doubt reflecting a political tradition that tolerates resource exploitation.

There are a number of important exceptions, but the overall picture is clear: The best stewards of the environment also offer workaday citizens the best opportunity for prosperity.

Our findings confirm earlier research by Dr. Stephen Meyer of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who tracked 20 years of economic performance by state. His conclusion: "States with stronger environmental standards tended to have higher growth in their gross state products, total employment, construction employment, and labor productivity than states that ranked lower environmentally."

In 1993, Meyer updated his data and used our *1991-92 Green Index* as a measure of each state's commitment to conservation. Again the numbers refute the myth that environmental protection harms job growth. "If environmentalism does have negative economic effects," he says, "they are so marginal and transient that they are completely lost in the white noise of much more powerful domestic and international economic influences."

In other words, a particular factory may be so marginal that the cost of environmental controls pushes it over the competitive edge, but the demand for safeguarding public health is not to blame. A facility this fragile is operating on borrowed time, forcing someone else (taxpayers, workers, downwind residents) to subsidize its true costs to the environment and public.

Identifying — and ending — hidden subsidies for pollution would dramatically advance sustainable development. "If we were forced to pay the cost of acid rain in Canada, or include the cost of Middle East defense in our utility bills, I think society would likely alter its energy choices," says Karen McCarthy, president of the National Conference of State Legislators.

Dr. Paul Templet of Louisiana State University has studied several hidden subsidies which states absorb on behalf of their polluting industries. In each case, the subsidies actually hurt the economy rather than create good jobs. For example, states that allow industry to spend below the national average on pollution-control equipment have the weakest economies (see Indicator #19 on our "Poisons and the Environment" chart).

As head of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality from 1988 to 1991, Templet created a handy indicator for measuring the cost-versus-benefit of a polluting industry. His "Emissions-to-Jobs" ratio became a hot political potato, but he has since expanded his research and says the indicator offers an excellent barometer of a state's overall health. The ratio simply divides the toxic chemical emissions of a state's manufacturers by its number of manufacturing jobs. Vermont's 1991 ratio is 24; Louisiana's is 2,623.

Identifying — and ending — hidden subsidies for pollution would dramatically advance sustainable development.

Templet has found strong statistical correlations between the ratio, environmental subsidies, and such social indicators as poverty, unemployment, and income disparity. "The subsidies are generally paid by the public, and indicators of public welfare and environmental quality decline as the subsidies increase," he writes. "The state becomes poorer, more polluted, less diversified, subject to boom and bust economies, and more reliant on the very industries which are reaping the subsidies."

## A NEW INITIATIVE

Fighting subsidies is an effective strategy for building alliances that can negotiate for environmental equity and alternative economic development (see "Horses and High-Tech," page 53). The harder step is building a new political culture that supports sustainable development through broad policies and specific projects.

Success requires inverting the three development myths identified by the Rocky Mountain Institute: Sustainable programs must (1) engage ordinary people so they can become decision makers and teachers of future community leaders; (2) integrate respect for the environment with respect for basic human needs; and (3) recognize a community's natural and human assets as its core strength.

Fortunately, dozens of organizations are putting these principles into practice. Many are young and small, and their resources pale compared to the billions poured into promoting old-style economic development. But they hold great promise as examples for what local communities can do.

To strengthen these bottom-up efforts and share their lessons, the Institute for Southern Studies has launched a Community Development Initiative that includes forums, reports, training, resource mobilization, and targeted research. The CDI creates a partnership with grassroots leaders engaged in solid community-building programs — health clinics, housing, youth programs, worker organizing, job development, environmental planning, political education. Isaiah Madison, executive director of the Institute, has already coordinated a survey of 50 leaders from across the South and convened a mini-conference in August
to begin charting the next steps of the collaboration.

While the Institute continues its hard-hitting investigative research, the new initiative recognizes that we can't settle for simply naming the problem. We too must be proactive, developing solutions that overcome false divisions with the common goal of environmental *and* economic justice. It's slow, hard work, but that's what sustainable development is all about. ❑

*Bob Hall is research director of the Institute for Southern Studies, publisher of* Southern Exposure.

# Horses & High-Tech

**By Ron Nixon**

## How three grassroots coalitions are debunking the myth of "jobs versus environment."

In 1977, the *Sumter County Journal* announced that a new industry planned to locate in the poor, rural community of Emelle in west Alabama. "New Industry Coming," the headline read. "New Use For Selma Chalk to Create Jobs." Rumors circulated that the new industry might be a brick factory or a cement kiln.

The "new industry" turned out to be a landfill owned and operated by Chem-Waste, a subsidiary of WMX, the world's largest hazardous waste disposal company. Today, the Emelle landfill covers 3,200 acres and accepts waste from 35 states and several foreign countries.

In its early stages, company and local officials speculated that the landfill would attract other industries. Few people doubted their sincerity, and even fewer questioned the notion that any new job is a good job. But while the landfill is now the county's largest employer and taxpayer, providing 450 jobs and millions in revenue each year, Sumter's economic base has slowly deteriorated since 1977.

Ten major employers have left the county. Both hospitals have shrunk to little more than clinics. Unemployment jumped from 6 percent to 21 percent, then leveled to 14 percent — largely because 2,000 people have moved away. The income gap between Sumter County and the rest of Alabama has widened, and the infant mortality rate is 70 percent higher than the national average.

Reports of illegal dumping in the landfill and groundwater contamination continue to concern residents. But many say they are afraid to speak out against the dump for fear of reprisals and job loss.

"We're like toxic waste junkies," says Mayor James Daily of Emelle. "We can't live with the landfill and we can't live without the revenue it brings."

Sumter is hardly the only Southern community being asked to choose between good jobs and a clean environment. "When you live in a poor area like many of us do, anything is welcomed," says Mildred Myers of South Carolina Environmental Watch in Gadsden, a community targeted for a number of polluting industries.

"Whenever the subject of environmental protection comes up, we're beaten back in line by employers telling us that the regulations would cause us to lose our jobs. It's a no-win situation."

### GOOD WOOD

It's not easy overcoming the difficulties posed by economic blackmail. Developers and corporations often paint a picture of gloom and doom if their projects are blocked. In reaction, many environmentalists look suspiciously on every economic development plan. But across the South, many grassroots organizations are going beyond the "no-win" face-off of jobs versus environment, fostering a discussion about how communities can have both.

One such group is the Coalition for Jobs and the Environment (CJE), which focuses on a dozen counties in southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee along the Clinch and Powell rivers. Member groups that had spent years battling the ill-effects of coal mining and timbering on the region's land and water formed the coalition as a way to show that economic growth can co-exist with ecological protection.

"We were always against things," says Eileen McIlvane, executive direc-

tor of CJE. "We wanted to start having a positive stance about things that could be done as opposed to things that we didn't want."

As one of its first steps, CJE organized a meeting of local leaders to begin planning a new approach to combining economic development with environmental protection. With a grant from the state-funded Virginia Center on Rural Development, CJE invited key individuals from five counties in Virginia and five counties in Tennessee to the Clinch Powell Sustainable Development Forum.

"The forum brought in a real cross section of people," says McIlvane. "We had small business owners, people from the planning districts, small-town mayors, legislators, and labor unions. We also brought in environmental activists and people from the local chambers of commerce."

Getting a good mix of participants proved crucial to the project's success. Many of the business leaders owned small companies or had new ideas they wanted to implement. Through a series of one-on-one meetings, CJE identified a legislator from each state interested in sustainable development.

"Many of the participants still believe in bringing in business from the outside," explains McIlvane. "We didn't say, 'You're wrong.' We said, 'Will you help us with this other way of doing business and creating jobs?' So they weren't giving up the old way of recruiting business, but they came along with the idea and it was a big help."

Forum participants were divided into groups to study issues of tourism, agriculture, small business, and forestry. After meeting for more than a year, the forum produced a report called "Sustainable Development for Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia." The document outlines several programs for achieving sustainable development in the bi-state area.

*Photo courtesy CJE*

**IN VIRGINIA, UNEMPLOYED LOGGERS ARE TEACHING YOUTHS A METHOD OF SUSTAINABLE LUMBERING THAT USES HORSES TO DRAG CUT LOGS.**

Specific recommendations are made in key areas, including Eco-Tourism, Sustainable and Diversified Agriculture, Regional Information Bank, Land Resources, and Recycled Materials and Energy Efficient Products. The report received wide acclaim, and the forum plans to incorporate and hire its own staff to help implement its vision.

Officials from one of the planning districts involved in the forum are studying how to set up a micro-enterprise network that would allow small businesses to maximize their resources and enter new markets. Other forum participants are developing a regional information bank that would provide data on eco-tours, businesses looking for places to send materials for recycling, and markets for locally produced recyclable goods.

As an example of a new sustainable enterprise, McIlvane points to a program begun by the Lonesome Pine Office on Youth with a small grant from the Virginia Center on Rural Development. The office teams up youths with unemployed loggers and teaches them a method of lumbering that uses horses to drag the logs after they have been cut. "With this type of logging you don't need roads or tractors trampling on the forest," says John Hackett, an independent consultant with the center.

Unlike clear cutting, the process is ecologically sound and creates more jobs. The center is in the process of building a solar kiln to dry and treat the wood. "As a result of the horse logging, using the solar kiln, and a band saw which makes a finer cut, the lumber will be of a finer grade and quality," says Hackett. The finished product will go to woodworkers, cabinet makers, and craftspeople tapped into the growing market for environmentally sensitive wood products.

In addition to being trained in woodcutting, young people are learning to make professional-quality videotapes to teach others how to log and market environmentally sensitive wood products.

Yet another forum participant, People Incorporated, is using federal funds to provide start-up money for micro-business, eco-tourism, and small business operations. The group also provides ongoing small business training and management for loan recipients.

The Coalition for Jobs and the Environment is raising money to produce a 30-minute video that will document how people in rural Appalachian communities are pursuing sustainable development. According to McIlvane, the film and an accompanying workbook will provide "real life examples of people doing the work."

"The idea is to keep the money in the community from start to finish," says McIlvane. "Our whole emphasis is to preserve our quality of life. We don't want to deplete our resources in order to bring up our economic status."

## WEALTHFARE

Louisiana Citizens for Tax Justice

(LCTJ) has taken a different approach to debunk the jobs-versus-environment myth. Through careful research, it has documented how state tax breaks to promote new business investment actually harm Louisiana's environment *and* its economic health, depriving communities of much-needed money for schools and social services.

The coalition includes a dozen groups, from feisty regional organizers like ACORN and the Gulf Coast Tenants Organization to labor unions and community groups that cut their teeth fighting the state's giant petrochemical companies. By focusing on tax inequities and what it calls the state's "Wealth-fare" system for corporations, the coalition has tapped into Louisiana's deep populist traditions. It also offers a clear solution for a state still reeling from the oil bust of the mid-1980s: Make the rich pay their fair share, use the money to rebuild communities, and penalize (rather than reward) polluters.

The group's message is direct and often confrontational. "The rich and powerful WEALTHfare recipients have been taking care of one another for years," reads a recent LCTJ newsletter. "We will not leave our state in the hands of greedy corporate giants. If we all work together we can take back Louisiana and make it work for the good of all the citizens."

The central target of the group's research has been the Industrial Property Tax Exemption Program, which grants new or expanding companies up to 10 years of tax exemptions on their buildings, equipment, and machinery. Government and corporate officials have long praised the program as pivotal in attracting new business investment; any change in the system, they have insisted, would result in massive job loss and plant relocation.

Then in 1986, Oliver Houck, a law professor at Tulane University, authored a study which found that petrochemical companies received 80 percent of all the tax exemptions — but created only 15 percent of the state's permanent jobs. His study also showed that violators of state environmental laws received tax breaks worth 10 times the potential fines they faced.

"We took what we learned from Houck and took three years to do a study of our own," says Mary Faucheux, executive director of LCTJ. The resulting 266-page book, *The Great Louisiana Tax Giveaway*, exposed the fallacies in the jobs-or-environment debate. The study found that:

▼ the state gave away $2.5 billion in tax breaks to major polluting industries, which in turn cut their payrolls by 8,000 jobs.

▼ only 11 percent of the projects receiving tax exemptions created more than 10 jobs; one third added no jobs.

▼ nearly all the tax breaks went to existing plants for expansions or routine maintenance; only six percent went to companies building new plants.

More than just a statistical exercise, the study provided a valuable educational tool that capped three years of organizing and research. "We coordinated a 20-city tax caravan through the state to announce the publication of our book and to distribute it as well," says Faucheux. "We gave free copies to school board members, mayors, council members, and legislators. We wanted them to look at the revenue we're losing and see the impact of these tax breaks on people's lives."

> "We're not asking industry to pay more than they should, but their fair share."

Students in grades K-12, for example, lose $100 million a year through industry tax breaks, fueling school deficits and teacher layoffs. Armed with this data, state Senator Cleo Fields sponsored a bill to eliminate the school tax exemption in 1991. Citizen lobbying spearheaded by LCTJ helped get the bill through committee, but the measure was defeated on the senate floor. A similar bill died after a bitter fight during the 1994 state legislature.

In spite of these defeats, the coalition has gained a broad array of allies, from teachers to public housing tenants, and it continues to make tax exemptions a public embarrassment for state officials. Early in its life, the coalition won a major victory when Governor Buddy Roemer enacted an "environmental scorecard" that linked the tax benefits a company received to the pollution it produced.

Among other things, the scorecard measured the ratio of an applicant's toxic chemical emissions to workers on its payroll. Dr. Paul Templet, creator of the scorecard and head of Roemer's environmental protection agency, defended his "Emissions-to-Jobs" ratio from charges that it would chase chemical companies out of Louisiana.

"They're not going to leave the state," Templet told a reporter. "They're making so much money it's unbelievable."

When the industry-dominated state agency that awards tax exemptions fought full implementation of the scorecard, LCTJ waded into the center of the debate. The coalition targeted the application of one company that had omitted mention of its fine for a large chemical spill. Demonstrations by LCTJ supporters sparked a series of agency meetings and more than 200 news articles. Governor Roemer was forced to halt all tax exemptions for several months, and citizens received a rare education in the intricacies of a small agency that cost them billions of dollars.

Although the scorecard was poorly enforced and eventually dropped after Governor Edwin Edwards was elected in November 1991, it succeeded in pressuring companies to clean up their act. The scorecard is credited with stimulating new investments in pollution-prevention equipment that have increased jobs and reduced toxic emissions and air pollutants by 177 million pounds.

LCTJ is now pressuring local officials to fight the tax breaks by sharing how their communities have been hard hit by declining taxes, job loss, and pollution. It also continues to help local groups battle environmental and labor abuses by corporate "Wealthfare" recipients.

"This is a complex problem, so it's hard to explain to people," says Faucheux. "What we try to do is to get across to them that there are alternatives. We're not asking industry to pay more than they should, but their fair share."

## HAVING A VOICE

Next door to Louisiana in Austin, Texas, another group is also promoting state and local policies that balance eco-

nomic growth with environmental protection.

PODER — People Organized in Defense of the Earth and her Resources — began in 1991, following the arrival of several high-tech companies in East Austin's predominantly Latino and African-American community. Companies like Motorola and Apple Computer were moving in from Silicon Valley in California, so PODER linked up with the Silicon Valley Toxics Campaign and other groups to learn more about their new neighbors.

"We have some of the leading high-tech companies here in East Austin, and other industries locate here to provide services to them," says Antonio Diaz of PODER. "We felt that it was time we started to look at how the development of these industries was affecting Austin. The more we learned, the more our members realized we need to address the social and economic impact of high-tech companies, as well as the potential health hazards."

PODER also began pulling together a broad coalition of Latino, African-American, and environmental groups to reform the city's policy of granting tax abatements to industries settling in East Austin. The city council began the two-year program in 1989 to stimulate business investment in an area with the city's highest unemployment rate.

As the program neared its renewal deadline, research showed that it had helped attract 12 companies promising an estimated $1.2 billion investment and 6,857 jobs over the next decade. But only 84 workers had been hired in the initial two years, and one firm that received $14 million in tax abatements pledged to provide only 14 jobs.

PODER learned that many of the companies, while marketed as high-paying and clean, had a history in California of exploiting workers, particular Asian and Latina women, by exposing them to highly toxic substances. The group also learned that several companies settling in East Austin were responsible for toxic sites in Silicon Valley targeted for federal Superfund cleanup.

*Photo courtesy LCTJ*

**In Louisiana, citizens launched a 20-city caravan to publicize their study showing how tax breaks promote pollution without creating jobs.**

"We got together with some other groups in the area to discuss these issues and look at our common interests," says Diaz.

Slowly other groups began expressing interest in the coalition's work, including such mainstream environmental groups as the Sierra Club and Audubon Society. "It was a bit more difficult convincing them of the interrelationship between so-called economic development policies and the broader impacts," says Diaz. "We brought them in by addressing the impact the new work force coming to town would have for new housing developments and apartment complexes."

After a series of meetings, the coalition presented the city council with 14 recommendations to improve the tax abatement program. PODER recommended increasing public participation in awarding abatements and requiring companies that received tax breaks to ensure worker health and safety, obey environmental regulations, inform the community of toxic threats, and hire more local labor.

"Strategically, we discussed the importance of developing these recommendations as opposed to just saying this is a bad policy and the city should do away with it," says Diaz. "We worked on the recommendations because an aide for one of the councilmen told us outright they weren't going to do away with the tax abatements. They felt that if other cities were using the abatements, they had to do it, too."

In meetings with city officials, tensions nearly boiled over. "We just want to have the right to participate, and to have a voice in what's coming into the community," Susana Almanza of PODER declared at one meeting.

The climax came at a public hearing in November 1991. East Austin residents detailed their 14 recommendations for improving the tax abatement program, but business leaders wanted even fewer restrictions.

"It's clear there are some economic storm clouds on the horizon, the most obvious one being the closure of Bergstrom Air Force Base," said Glenn West, president of the Austin Chamber of Commerce. "This is no time to get cocky."

But citizens won a partial victory. The city required companies to hire more local workers and abide by all federal, state, and local environmental regulations — "something they should have done in the first place," notes Diaz.

With the recent economic upswing in Austin, city officials have ended the abatement program. But since the council is now seeking federal "empowerment zone" status, PODER and its allies are considering revisiting the 14 recommendations as criteria for judging investment decisions under the new program.

"I think what we did around the tax exemption ordinance is applicable to

empowerment zone situations," says Diaz. "It's important to see what kinds of subsidies the city might be giving industries and using that as a hook to bring up broader issues of social, economic, and environmental impact. Too often low-income communities and communities of color are not part of the policy debate where we can articulate what we think is best for our communities and what is sustainable for us."

As in Appalachia and Louisiana, PODER's experience illustrates the importance of defining what the community is *for* as a way of overcoming the false choice between "good jobs" and a "clean environment." Detailed research is an essential part of the process, but to succeed, citizen groups must ultimately redefine the issues and refocus the conflict into political strategies that speak to the needs of their communities.

"Industry uses job blackmail to keep people from speaking up," says Mary Faucheux of Louisiana Citizens for Tax Justice. "They say that without the tax exemptions they'll leave. But we have the river, natural resources, and the cheap labor they need. They're not going anywhere because they're making millions of dollars each year. When people realize this, they're in a better position to stand up to this type of intimidation." ❑

*Ron Nixon is a research and Community Development Initiative associate with the Institute for Southern Studies, publisher of* Southern Exposure.

# RESOURCES

**Coalition for Jobs and the Environment**
P.O. Box 645
Abingdon, VA 24210
(703) 628-8996

**Louisiana Coalition for Tax Justice**
8841 Bluebonnet Boulevard
Baton Rouge, LA 70810
(800) 259-LCTJ

**People Organized in Defense of the Environment**
55 North I-35, Suite 205B
Austin, TX 78701
(512) 472-9921

**Stephen Meyer**
Political Science, Building E38-628
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 253-8078

**Richard Grossman**
Communities Concerned About Corporations
211 1/2 Bradford Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
(508) 487-3151

**Dr. Paul Templet**
Louisiana State University
Institute For Environmental Studies
42 Atkinson Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
(504) 388-6428

**Rocky Mountain Institute**
1739 Snowmass Creek Road
Snowmass, CO 81654
(303) 927-3851

**Environmental Resource Program**
University of North Carolina
Miller Hall, CB# 8185
Chapel Hill, NC 27599
(919) 966-7754

*In addition to reports available from the previously listed individuals and organizations, the following works are highly recommended for anyone concerned about integrating community economic development with environmental protection:*

**From Rio to the Capitols: State Strategies for Sustainable Development**
Book features excerpts from dozens of presenters at a national conference held in Louisville, Kentucky in 1993, a year after the UN Earth Summit. Available free from Karen Armstrong-Cummings, Kentucky Natural Resources & Environment Protection Cabinet, Capital Plaza Tower, Frankfort, KY 40601. (502) 564-3350.

**Guidelines for State-Level Sustainable Development**
Report details the origins and principles of sustainable development, UN and global projects, and state policy initiatives. Send $15 to Center for Policy Alternatives, 1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009.

**Not Just Prosperity: Achieving Sustainability with Environmental Justice**
Report examines 64 studies of race or class disparities in environmental policy, reviews the history of the environmental justice movement, and places sustainable development in its larger context. Free from the National Wildlife Federation, 1400 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036. (202) 797-6800.

**The 1994 Development Report Card**
Annual report evaluates business vitality, economic performance, and development capacity of the 50 states, based on several dozen indicators. Separate reports analyze development strategies for each state. Send $75 to Corporation for Enterprise Development, 1725 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20006. (202) 293-7963.

**The Climate for Workers in the United States**
Biennial study by the Southern Labor Institute includes 41 indicators of working conditions, income, job growth, state laws, and the social health of 50 states, with rankings and comparative analysis. Send $20 to Southern Regional Council, 134 Peachtree Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30303. (404) 522-8764.

**Communities in the Lead**
Book provides comprehensive description of rural and small-town economic development strategies in the Northwest, but valuable for other regions. Send $32.50 to Northwest Policy Center, University of Washington, 327 Parrington DC-14, Seattle, WA 98195. (206) 543-7900.

**Development with Dignity: Community Economic Development in the South**
Report based on extensive survey of 50 Southern leaders from diverse economic development projects. Examines goals, internal and external pressures, and lessons learned, with emphasis on people-centered development. Send $12 to the Institute for Southern Studies, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702. (919) 419-8311.

**Where We Live: A Citizen's Guide to Conducting a Community Environmental Inventory**
Working draft of handbook offers suggested activities, worksheets, and contacts for discovering community pollutants, their sources, health effects, and regulators. Contact the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development, 433 Chestnut Street, Berea, KY 40403. (606) 986-2373.

# Fighting for Jobs

*Interview by Ron Nixon*

*As Southern factories close up shop at home and head farther south in search of cheaper labor, they do more than abandon factories and throw people out of work — they devastate entire communities. The Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network of Knoxville is helping to combat the disruption created by the global economy. With a staff of four and support from labor unions, community organizations, and environmental groups, TIRN assists those hardest hit by plant closings. Bob Becker, a TIRN organizer, talked with* Southern Exposure *about how the group builds consciousness and coalitions.*

The Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network was founded because of the continuing deindustrialization in Tennessee. Back in 1988, the Commission on Religion in Appalachia did a study that found that over 25,000 people in the region lost their jobs between 1984 and 1988. Since then, federal figures show that more than 50,000 jobs have been lost in over 400 plant closings and mass layoffs.

In June of 1989, a coalition of workers and activists pulled together 100 people in Chattanooga and brought in some national experts on plant closings and deindustrialization. After the conference folks decided to form an organization to deal with these things, and TIRN was born out of that.

We're actually a coalition that utilizes the resources of different organizations. We work on three issues: plant closings and job loss, fair trade, and temporary employment.

Say you're in a community and you think your plant might be closing. You might have gotten a 60-day notice. You might have just heard rumors. You might just be looking around the shop floor and see all the signs — equipment moving out and things running down. What we do first is come in to help people get organized. If there's a union in the shop, that's already done. In most cases there isn't. So the first step is organizing folks so that they can make decisions and communicate.

Then we help assess what can be done. In some situations, there's not much that *can* be done — places are going to close. They're not profitable. The machinery is too old. The product is of bad quality. In those cases, we organize people to take advantage of retraining programs or to provide moral support for each other. A plant closing has been compared to a death in the family, and having a support network is real helpful.

Photo by Greg Williamson/Leaf-Chronicle

**When Acme Boot got tax breaks to move to Puerto Rico, workers in Tennessee staged protest rallies — and looked for a new owner.**

In most cases, however, plants aren't closing because of lost money or lost market shares. They're closing because of corporate restructuring, or because the factory is moving for cheaper labor. And in that case, there are lots of low-key options — finding a new owner, new financing, new products, or new management.

Another option is organizing a big pressure campaign to stop the company from doing what it's doing. That's what we did at the Acme Boot Company in Clarksville, Tennessee. We tried to keep the company from moving jobs to Puerto Rico just so they could take advantage of a big tax credit.

The Acme Boot campaign started in 1992 through a contact with the union that represented the workers there — the United Rubber Workers. We spent the rest of the year working with the union, talking about the options. If you've been working on the shop floor like these people had for 20 or 30 years, you haven't thought a whole lot about strategies for saving your job.

At the same time we did a couple of rallies protesting the closing. We had one that involved 500 people. Al Gore's dad, who had been a U.S. Senator back in the '60s here in Tennessee, came to the rally.

Around the beginning of '93, we got confirmation that Acme was moving the jobs to Puerto Rico. The campaign then became one of organizing to do something about Acme getting these tax breaks to move jobs overseas.

We held rallies and meetings with congressional people. We got on the CBS and the ABC evening news. Bill Clinton mentioned jobs going overseas for tax breaks in his State of the Union address. That was one of the high points of my life hearing that. So we had good publicity and good action to keep the issue hot. We also filed a lawsuit against Acme, challenging the legality of them getting tax breaks in Puerto Rico.

They still moved there. But as a result of our work and as part of the national campaign, there was some change made in the tax breaks. It's a lot better than it was.

The publicity also drew another poten-

tial owner onto the scene. A Florida businessman worked on a deal with the union for a majority worker ownership plan that would start a new company. He also worked out a plan where Acme was going to buy most of the product of the company for two years on a subcontract basis.

When the potential new owner couldn't come up with the money he promised by the end of last year, Acme sold the building to another company to use as a warehouse. That took the steam out of everybody's engine. With the building and the jobs gone, people moved on to other things.

So the effort to reopen the boot factory ended. People didn't have the energy to try again. Now the American Federation of Labor has sanctioned a boycott against Acme products, and we're pushing that.

We got involved in fair trade issues not long after the founding conference back in 1989. We started workers' think tanks, where workers who had lost their jobs in closings could get together and talk about what needed to be done.

People at that time were saying, "The Mexicans took my job." We dealt with that by bringing some Mexican workers up from the free trade zone. Two of them toured the state, talking about their own working conditions and wages and living conditions.

We followed up by taking eight or nine east Tennessee workers down to the free trade zone in Mexico. Their attitudes changed from "The Mexicans took my job" to "The company moved my job to Mexico to exploit people there."

Folks got a real good sense of what all this free trade talk is about. It's about lowering wages and working conditions so corporations can make more money. Folks came back from that tour and did a slide show that they took around to unions and churches and community groups. And they started learning more about the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The worker educational exchange grew into a big campaign for a renegotiated NAFTA. As long as the agreement didn't include provisions to raise working and living standards in Mexico, all it was going to do was drive down wages here, drive down wages there, drive down living conditions in both places, and allow big corporations to make big profits. We had working people from Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. who did a tour across the state talking about what NAFTA really meant for working conditions and free trade.

We ended up getting sold out completely. In the final blitz to approve NAFTA, Bill Clinton and Al Gore pulled out all the stops and got everybody in the Tennessee delegation except Jim Sasser to vote in favor of it. We were real disappointed. We had gotten promises from several congressmen that they were going to vote against NAFTA. They had obviously lied to us or didn't really give a hoot about what the people thought. They were going along with the president and the vice president and the business community.

Now we've moved on to a monitoring project that tracks the impact NAFTA is having on wages and living conditions in the state. We're also doing some more education and lobbying, and we have another group of eight workers from Tennessee visiting in the free trade zone for another educational exchange.

## TOOLBOX

For more information about organizing for jobs and economic justice, contact:

**Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network**
1515 East Magnolia Avenue, Suite 403
Knoxville, TN 37917
(615) 637-1576

**Carolina Alliance for Fair Emploment**
1 Chick Springs Road, Suite 103
Greenville, SC 29609
(803) 235-2926

**Southerners for Economic Justice**
P.O. Box 240
Durham, NC 27702
(919) 683-1361

Our efforts around temporary workers began with the closing of a warehouse in Morristown. After folks lost their jobs, they went to the unemployment office. They were told, "We don't have any openings. You need to go over to the temporary agencies in town."

When they got there, they found factories that were run completely by temporary workers. They found workers who had been temporaries for a couple of years doing the same job as full-time employees — for half the pay and no benefits.

We hooked them up with a group called Save Our Cumberland Mountains and they organized themselves into a group called Citizens Against Temporary Service. We worked together on a statewide legislative campaign to change the laws on temporary workers. We said that you can't pay workers less just because you call them temps if they're doing the same work as regular employees. We got beat but we are going to keep trying.

Ultimately rebuilding the economy is going to take some legislative changes — new laws that say it's not right for a company to do anything it can to cut wages. The idea is to start with local actions. One thing we learned from our last effort is you can't do some good work in two locations in the state and then go to the legislature. You've got to build up a much broader perception of the problem and develop a much broader network.

We start in communities where we have a base, either with unions or community groups, and do some direct action against a factory that is using a lot of temporary workers. We also broaden our base by reaching out to allies and doing education work with churches and civic groups.

TIRN and other organizations like it are working to give citizens power in making decisions about the economy. If people don't organize around economic issues like plant closings, worker rights, and economic development, the decisions will be made by unelected corporate officials. And the decisions will hurt workers and local communities. Changing the structure of power between citizens and corporations is essential to having good jobs and a strong economy. ❑

*Ron Nixon is a research associate with the Institute for Southern Studies, the publisher of* Southern Exposure.

# Strong Southern Women

*By Martha A. Crunkleton*

**HOW AM I TO BE HEARD?**
**Letters of Lillian Smith**
Edited by Margaret Rose Gladney
UNC Press. 420pp. $34.95

**MEMOIR OF A RACE TRAITOR**
By Mab Segrest
South End Press. 274pp. $15.00

My friend, Lee Knefelkamp, likes to put books side by side on her bookshelf before she goes to bed at night so that the books might talk to one another and so that she can imagine what they talk about. What a great chinwag the letters of Lillian Smith and Mab Segrest's *Memoirs of a Race Traitor* could have!

Both books feature white Southern women speaking about their lives and grappling with what it means to challenge fundamental Southern myths about race and womanhood. Yet while Smith and Segrest share a common identity, they speak to each other across different generations. Smith reached maturity at the height of the Cold War during the 1940s, when radical voices were being silenced, while Segrest came of age in the 1970s and '80s, when both the civil rights and the women's movements had created new spaces for self-expression and political action.

Smith is best known for her interracial romance, *Strange Fruit* (1944), a best seller which enjoyed national notoriety after it was banned in Boston. But her eloquent criticism of Southern race relations in *Killers of the Dream* (1949) ensured that she would have a hard time getting any more of her work published. Influential Southern editors like Hodding Carter and Ralph McGill did not support her passionate call for immediate federal action in civil rights. And Northern publishers in the 1940s tended to solicit the opinion of men like Carter and McGill when deciding which Southern viewpoint to publish in *The Atlantic* or *The New York Times*. (Of course, one viewpoint was enough.)

Smith's letters from 1950 until her death in 1966 reveal her growing frustration with this kind of informal exclusion — a practice which resembled blacklisting. Because she had always been staunch in her opposition to communism, she was particularly frustrated that she was being treated as a "known" Communist.

The letters also reveal a side of Smith unknown to most of her readers. What would people who enjoyed *Strange Fruit* or who reacted so strongly to the prophetic pleas of *Killers of the Dream* have thought if they knew that the author was a lesbian from the Southern upper classes who lived on a mountaintop in Georgia, ran an expensive camp for girls, and corresponded with people whose words and acts propelled the civil rights movement? There are letters in this volume to Eleanor Roosevelt; to Benjamin Mays, president of Morehouse College and mentor to Martin Luther King; to Virginia Durr, another outspoken Southern advocate of black civil rights; to Eugene Patterson, liberal assistant editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*; and to Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP.

Here, too, are letters and reports to the Julius Rosenwald Fund, from which Smith and her partner, Paula Snelling, received support for several years for travel and study throughout the South. These reports reveal the fund's role in encouraging a remarkable variety of activities for social change and nurturing informal networks of friendship among activists across the South.

The letters also emphasize Smith's lifelong interests in psychology, culture, nonviolence, and education. One of her earliest letters collected here was written in 1925 to her daddy from the school in China where she was teaching. She described at some length the horrible treatment of the "poor old coolies" by the military.

"Most of them are sick and emaciated — many wounded," she wrote. "They say that many of the coolies have died. All of it makes one wonder how Christians can sit by and say: 'Of course war is wrong — but.' There is no but to it. Personally, I'll go to prison before I'll help in any way fighting in another war."

Equally fascinating is the way the letters outline the development of Smith's thinking about the connections of race and gender. (She doesn't appear to have developed a comparable degree of insight about class.) Smith came home from China earlier than scheduled to run the camp her parents owned in Clayton, Georgia. She ran Laurel Falls Camp as an "exclusive" (that is, expensive) summer camp for white girls of the Southern upper classes from 1932 until 1949. There she encouraged the campers and counselors to talk about race and to dream about a more egalitarian world, and she promoted these same ideas in frequent newsletters to parents and friends of the camp.

Ultimately, however, Smith made the painful decision to close the camp so she could devote her energies to writing. "In a troubled world, whose children are in many lands lost and lonely and hungry," she wrote to parents, "it is good to remember those years on Old Screamer Mountain and the dreams we dreamed there, so many of which have come true in the lives of girls now grown and mothers of children. I hope that the idea of Laurel Falls will not die. I want to believe that we have started a chain reaction of dreams that will go on touching child after child in our South."

It is tempting to speculate about the freedom that Laurel Falls gave Smith to conduct her relationship with Paula Snelling. Spending so much time outdoors, relatively unencumbered except

when the camp was in session, she and Snelling lived far from the social conventions of Southern womanhood. The letters in this volume, however, provide little support for such speculation. Even in the several letters to Snelling that are included, Smith is circumspect about their relationship. Nowhere does she refer to herself as a lesbian, although one letter mentions her missing Snelling's kiss. Several letters detail with painful self-awareness Smith's own limitations in their relationship and her belief that her own career held Snelling's back.

People who care about the history of progressive thought in the South and about human freedom owe Margaret Rose Gladney many thanks for her work in gathering, editing, and commenting on these letters. She has arranged them thoughtfully to show the arc of Lillian Smith's life: how she became a writer, worked for three decades for better race relations in Georgia, and earned a national reputation as a passionate spokeswoman for what she called "racial democracy." The letters show the public woman helping to shape the civil rights movement of the 1960s and criticizing other Southern writers. They also show the private woman struggling to find a voice, get published, earn money, live with Snelling, survive three fires which destroyed much of her work, and live with cancer for 13 years.

The year before she died, Smith asked, "Am I really going down in history as just the 'brave little woman who spent her life helping Negroes' or am I ever going to be acknowledged as the writer I think I am — and many Europeans think I am?" Smith's work hasn't yet found the audience she hoped for. Perhaps these letters will help her achieve the stature she deserves.

*Photo courtesy Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library/University of Georgia*

**LILLIAN SMITH (RIGHT) WROTE AND DEEPENED HER RELATIONSHIP WITH PAULA SNELLING WHILE DIRECTING THE LAUREL FALLS CAMP IN GEORGIA.**

If Lillian Smith were alive today, she might recognize Mab Segrest as a kindred spirit. Also a white lesbian from the Southern upper classes, Segrest now lives an activist's working-class life in Durham, North Carolina. Raised in northern Alabama, Segrest worked as a college professor and a writer for several years before becoming the director of North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence (NCARRV).

Every Southern lesbian I have known, whatever her race, has loved reading Segrest's book, *My Mama's Dead Squirrel: Lesbian Essays on Southern Culture*. One woman, an African American from Mississippi, told me after reading it, "Lord, it feels so good to be recognized."

But those who want a sequel to Segrest's first book will not find it in *Memoir of a Race Traitor*. In fact, this book may represent a new genre. It's part thriller, part documentary, part history, and part meditation on the long-term effects of the past and of our families on our lives. The thriller part comes from the vivid description of the work of NCARRV to oppose racism in North Carolina by fighting the white supremacy movement.

At breakneck pace Segrest recounts recent North Carolina history: the murders at the anti-Klan rally in Greensboro in 1979, cross-burnings and attacks on interracial couples and blacks by the Iredell County White Knights in the early 1980s, the convictions of those Klansmen by an all-white jury in 1985, the work of the White Patriot Party throughout the past decade, white su-

## LILLIAN SMITH...

I especially like your philosophy of non-violence. I cannot see how means can be separated from ends, how the process (which never ends) can be judged in one light, and the goal (which one never attains) in another. Many of us realize that the man who is prejudiced is a man whose personality is sick and threatened. We know that racial hate is only a way of expressing hate that began to flourish long before the child's mind knew anything about "color." We know that anything that threatens such an unstable personality, increases his fear; and hence economic need does drive him to give racial expression to his hate. But the man himself is what we are working on. And if we want to change him, to show him better and more creative ways of using this hatred, we must win him. We must change his mind. Force doesn't change a man's mind; anger only reinforces his own and increases his fear.

*From* How Am I to Be Heard? *Used by permission of UNC Press.*

premacists murdering blacks and Lumbee Indians in Robeson County in the late 1980s, and members of the Klan murdering men, several of whom were gay, in an "adult bookstore" in Shelby in 1987. What comes through clearly is the coherent philosophy of white supremacy, with its hatred not just of African Americans, but of Native Americans, gay men and lesbian women, and white people who, by befriending and loving people of color, are considered "traitors" to their race.

With great power, Segrest conveys the feelings of pain and loss suffered by communities targeted in these attacks. Yet she also shows how communities can organize to confront and stop white supremacists. The day-to-day work of organizers, community leaders, and working-class people is wonderfully drawn. Segrest shows NCARRV members speaking to church groups, coordinating their efforts with local police, notifying the media of ongoing developments, and ensuring a community presence at trials. For a picture of daily life in communities dealing with the violence white supremacy always brings, this account is invaluable.

Like Lillian Smith, Segrest has a powerful social vision, an incredible work ethic, a commitment to her writing, and a good sense of humor. Unlike Smith, Segrest consciously chooses activism as a career. As an organizer, she knows that we must go beyond scholarship and take responsibility for working in communities to stop the violence of white supremacy.

Yet her autobiography also bears witness to the influence of her academic training. She includes an essay on the history of racism in the United States, even though she acknowledges that it may bore activists — her colleagues, she writes, have told her that they already know this history. As an intellectual, however, she believes that if we better understand our history, we will change our behavior.

Segrest lives in both the scholarly and activist worlds at the same time, and she struggles to integrate them. While each world gives her something, she feels that each also ignores the other to their mutual detriment. It is a difficult gap to bridge, and her narrative may frustrate some scholars who lack her sense of urgency and some activists who lack her scholarly impulses.

Throughout her memoir, Segrest lovingly but with a cool gaze assesses her own background, family, and personal choices. We learn as much about her parents as we do about organizing. Through her detailed account of how she deals with her family and how they deal with her, we come to realize that our personal histories and the public history of racism are inextricably intertwined.

Still, Segrest provides less detail than one might want about her partner and her daughter; they are not as present in her memoir as the family in which she grew up. Though she does not say so, it may be that her reticence reflects her desire to protect her family from violence.

If Lillian Smith could talk with Segrest, she might echo the advice of Segrest's friend Chrystos: "Mab, you need to have more fun." Smith used her sense of humor mostly on others; Segrest turns her humor — almost painfully — on herself. "Had I lived in another century," she writes, "I would probably have headed off to the confession booth or on a pilgrimage or to a doctor who would have fastened leeches to the flesh. As a white lesbian in the late 20th-century United States, I turned to self-help, Karate, Twelve-Step, co-counseling." Wryly, Segrest notes that writing an autobiography has increased her appreciation for why people write fiction.

It is apparent that Segrest and Smith are sisters. Both know that we do not have to accept racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, misogyny, or greed. Both show communities fighting these evils, and remind us that the way we fight for freedom is as important as the fight itself. Finally, and no less important, both show that the writer's craft, the joys of art, are central to the struggle for a more just society.

For Southern white lesbian women, these two books give us some part of our history. For all of us, they give delightful evidence of the power of the pen in the hands of strong, smart, principled, funny Southern women — and the effects of that power on our society. ❑

*Martha A. Crunkleton, a white lesbian from Georgia, is vice president for academic affairs, dean of faculty, and professor of philosophy and religion at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.*

## MAB SEGREST...

Our failure to understand racism is killing us. Maybe twenty years ago, our movement and institutions had the luxury of stupidity. Maybe twenty years ago, white queers could approach issues of racism out of guilt, or a desire to be liked, or to be "good." Maybe then we could offer token jobs and token recognition to people of color, saving the decision-making, the real power, for the folks who looked like the President, or the Chief Justice, or the CEO of Exxon. But the Right has called our diversity bluff. Their most recent and effective propaganda, such as the video "Gay Rights, Civil Rights," uses African American spokespeople to proclaim that we are not a "genuine" minority in the tradition of Martin Luther King but a privileged group after "special rights." Many Black people have no illusions that the producers of this propaganda have their best interests at heart. However, these divisive strategies become most apparent as the lies they are where our movement has relationships with people of color (including those in our own midst). In all those towns and cities where there are few links between visible gay organizations and people of color, such strategies are dangerously effective among both people of color and straight whites. The wildfire of the Right's insurgent fascism is sweeping down the canyons that divide us, and we must respond to racism now for our own survival — to save our little white asses. And we should be thankful for the opportunity.

From *Memoirs of a Race Traitor.*
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# RESOURCES

## ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The Southeast Regional Economic Justice Network connects groups and individuals interested in grassroots labor organizing. Participants come from all sectors of the workforce, as well as research programs and churches. Working groups address the contingent workforce, health and safety, poultry and catfish organizing, transient industry and economic revitalization, Southern economic research, religious partnerships, and small farmers and farmworkers. Dues are one-tenth of a percent of an organization's budget, up to $100. For more information, contact:

**Southeast Regional Economic Justice Network**
P.O. Box 240
Durham, NC 27702
(919) 683-1361

## APPALACHIA

The Appalachian Studies Association sponsors an annual conference of scholars, activists, and youth interested in the history, culture, economy, politics, and social conditions of the mountain South. The association also publishes the *Journal of Appalachian Studies* and presents the Cratis D. Williams Service Award to an individual who has made exemplary contributions to the region. Dues are $30; $15 for students. For more information, contact:

**Appalachian Studies Association**
c/o Ronald L. Lewis, President
Regional Research Institute
West Virginia University
P.O. Box 6825
Morgantown, WV 26506
(304) 293-8541

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

*Our Earth Matters* is a new quarterly newsletter published by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. The newsletter is designed to exchange information and heighten awareness about local, regional, and national battles for environmental justice. To receive the newsletter free, send your name and address to:

**NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund**
315 W. 9th Street, Suite 208
Los Angeles, CA 90015
(213) 624-2405

*Toxic Waste and Race Revisited* updates the landmark 1987 study that documented the disproportionate siting of toxic and hazardous waste facilities in communities of color. The updated report finds that the number of people of color living near toxic waste facilities has grown since the original study. The 27-page document offers a breakdown of environmental inequities by region and state, with the South ranking the worst. To order the report, send $20 to:

**Center for Policy Alternatives**
1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 710
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 387-6030


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***Excerpted in the June 1994 issue of*** Southern Exposure

THE UNIVERSITY *of* GEORGIA PRESS
ATHENS, GEORGIA 30602

# Protest Music

*By Guy and Candie Carawan*

Young African Americans from around the South form a circle with veterans of the civil rights movement. It is Saturday night, the close of a workshop at the Highlander Center near Knoxville, Tennessee. "Overcoming" is the theme of the gathering, and the participants end the evening by singing a rap the young people created based on the civil rights anthem "We Shall Overcome."

*I overcome . . . the slums, ghettos in decay*
*I overcome . . . adversity always coming my way*
*I overcome . . . so many evils and so much hate*
*I overcome . . . those suckers who discriminate.*

The young people and their rap song are part of a long and vibrant movement of musical protest in the region. Generations of talented songwriters and singers have used their pens and their voices to highlight injustices in their communities. Using humor, satire, poetry, sharp analysis, anger, and sometimes hope, these musicians have chronicled the most pressing problems of the South and inspired millions working for social and economic change.

Protest music emerged as a genre in its own right during the 1930s, when Southern workers crafted socially conscious songs as a weapon in their labor struggles. In the Mississippi Delta, John Handcox armed his fellow sharecroppers in the Southern Tenant Farmers Union with "There are Mean Things Happening in This Land" and "Roll the Union On." In Kentucky, Florence Reece stung the enemies of Harlan County miners with "Which Side Are You On?"

Throughout its long history, Highlander has encouraged grassroots activists to put music at the center of the struggle. Zilphia Horton drew songs from people at Highlander workshops during the 20 years she worked at the center. She loved and encouraged traditional music and urged people to write new words when the old ones didn't address their daily concerns.

Horton was at a Highlander workshop in 1945 when some women from Charleston, South Carolina brought "We Will Overcome" from a food and tobacco workers strike. They had already adapted the religious "I'll Be All Right Someday" to suit their picket line. Horton in turn introduced "We Shall Overcome" to countless community and union groups as she traveled the South.

Horton and the center served as a bridge between the earlier generation of protest singers and the emerging civil rights movement. Black activists reworked older religious and folk songs to sustain them on marches and in Southern jails, and their stirring music found its way into American popular culture.

Our own work as singers, songwriters, and organizers built on the methods of Horton and Highlander. The center encouraged us to organize workshops for people engaged in community campaigns to challenge social ills — including segregation, unfair working conditions, and environmental destruction. Each era, each issue, each campaign and struggle produced its songs.

Two Appalachian songwriters who attended a recent workshop on environmental culture demonstrate the power of protest music in the contemporary South. Elaine Purkey grew up in the coalfields and can touch her audience deeply with the traditional ballads and gospel songs of West Virginia. It's her contemporary labor songs, however, that best express what she cares about today. When community groups or unions call on her to tell their story in a song, she goes. At a 1989 rally by miners in southwest Virginia months before they struck against the Pittston Coal Group, Purkey was there with a powerful alto and a solid guitar.

*Illustration by Jacob Roquet*

Kenny Rosenbalm came to a gathering at Highlander in the mid-1980s after organizing a major protest against strip mining in Pineville, Kentucky. He found himself in awe of the Native American elders who sat in the circle, but by the end of the workshop he shyly admitted that he'd written a few songs. Over the next few years Rosenbalm became the unofficial balladeer of the STP program at Highlander (Stop the Poison, Save the Planet, Start the Party, or Shoot the Politician). He listened to people describe their experiences and composed songs based on their stories. His songs are mostly dead-serious, but his wicked humor creeps out in titles like "Paranoid to the Bone."

The South today is replete with creative people who shape their perceptions and struggles into songs of protest. Bernice Johnson Reagon draws on her experiences in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee when singing with Sweet Honey in the Rock. Si Kahn still uses music in his work as a community organizer in North Carolina. And youth activists like the Highlander rappers add new styles that help us win age-old struggles:

*I overcome . . . the stigma of addiction*
*I overcome . . . all the media fiction*
*I overcome . . . with my sisters and brothers*
*I overcome . . . so in turn we can help others*
*We overcome!* ❑

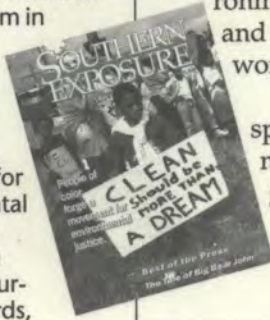
*Guy and Candie Carawan are musicians and cultural organizers based at Highlander. The authors thank Amira Haqq, Rebecca Hoffecker and Umar Tate for their contributions to the "Overcome Rap."*

# The Green Library

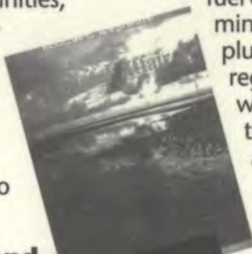
From the natural world to the human landscape, the South is unique — and *Southern Exposure* takes a unique approach to exploring the region's environment. By viewing both ecology and personality, we reveal how human and natural forces interact to shape all life in our homeland, for better or worse.

Our "green library" of book-length issues of *Southern Exposure* and special reports from the Institute for Southern Studies feature this dynamic approach to the environment. They integrate oral histories, photographic portraits, in-depth research, historical essays, and case studies of grassroots organizing. Our 162-page *Green Index* goes even further, documenting environmental health and public policy in every state.

**Clean Dream**
The history of environmental racism in the South and how people of color are forging a movement for environmental justice. Also includes the Southern Journalism Awards, six prize-winning articles by journalists from Texas to Virginia, covering topics from lead poisoning to racism in the war on drugs. **$5**




**Coastal Affair**
What's happening on Southern coasts, barrier island development, fishing communities, endangered life, folktales, Oregon Inlet, Hilton Head, Gulf Coast Oil fields plus state-by-state coast profiles from the Chesapeake to the Rio Grande. **$4**



**Our Promised Land**
225 pages on land use, rural co-ops, mountain development, model land-use laws, government-owned forests, South Carolina energy and agribusiness, and a state-by-state analysis of food, fuel and fiber, with charts on corporate ownership. **$4**

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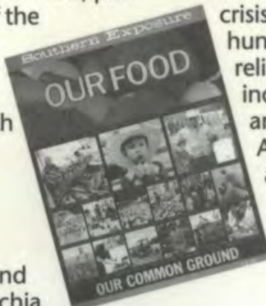


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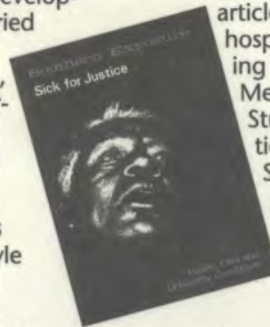


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