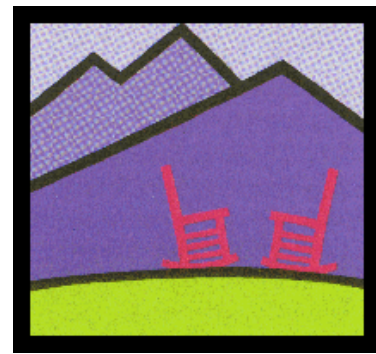


The New Latino South: An Introduction

A Joint Project of the Center for Research on
Women at The University of Memphis,
the Highlander Research and Education Center,
and the Southern Regional Council

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*A Product of the Joint Project
“Race and Nation: Building New Communities in the South”*

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The Atlanta-based Southern Regional Council works to promote racial justice, protect democratic rights, and broaden civic participation in twelve states in the South.

About “Race and Nation: Building New Communities in the South”

This report is the product of a collaborative project involving the Highlander Center in New Market, Tennessee, the Southern Regional Council (SRC) in Atlanta, and the Center for Research on Women (CROW) at the University of Memphis. Our joint project, “Race and Nation: Building New Communities in the South,” combines community-based research with popular education to investigate and influence the changing racial-ethnic dynamics of the region. We hope to understand better both the experiences of new immigrants as they arrive in and adapt to the South, and the attitudes of more long-term residents toward new immigrants. Our overall goals are to identify areas of potential conflict as well as collaboration among different groups, and to encourage multi-racial/ethnic efforts to address common needs.

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Immigration and the U.S. South: A Brief History

Introduction

Immigration is transforming the racial-ethnic demography of the U.S. South. Since 1990, people from all over the world—but above all, from Mexico and other countries in Latin America—have entered the region in record numbers. Of the major metropolitan areas identified in a recent study as “new Ellis Islands,” seven of the top ten were in the South.¹

To be sure, Latinos have lived in certain parts of the South for decades, even centuries. The first Europeans to settle in the present states of Texas and Florida were Spaniards, and Texas was once part of Mexico. Indeed, the original “illegal aliens” in what became the state of Texas were Norte Americanos who crossed the border into Mexico from the north, not the reverse. This history stands as an important reminder that the U.S.-Mexico border is a fluid boundary. Latinos settled in what became U.S. territory well before the contemporary flow of immigrants from Latin America or, for that matter, the great wave of European immigration in the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries.

In the more recent, post-World War II period, U.S. foreign policy combined with political and economic developments in certain Latin American countries has yielded a sporadic flow of Latino refugees, immigrants, and guest workers to the U.S. South. The large Cuban population that migrated to Miami after the Cuban Revolution is probably the most well known, but there are other settlements as well. The bracero program (1942-1964), which permitted Mexican farm workers to enter the U.S. to work in agriculture, yielded small populations of Latinos scattered throughout the South. Many of these Mexican farm workers replaced African Americans who were themselves also migrating—to the North, in search of greater freedom and better-paying industrial jobs. More recently, people of Spanish heritage who already lived in other regions of the United States migrated to the South, especially after the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 granted them amnesty in certain circumstances.

Still, the Latino presence in areas of the South other than Texas and Florida has until quite recently been scant, and it is on those areas of the “non-Latino” South that we focus in this report. (For our purposes, this includes the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee.) Here, the new immigrants who have arrived over the past decade enter a region where most people have no direct experience with immigration. There is little pre-existing infrastructure of Spanish-language institutions, and racial-

¹ Camarota, Steven and John Keeley. September, 2001. “The New Ellis Islands: Examining Non-Traditional Areas of Immigrant Settlement in the 1990s.” Center for Immigration Studies, Background report. New Ellis Islands were identified by comparing the new legal immigrant population that settled between 1991-1998 to the existing foreign-born population in 1990.

ethnic diversity has been highly restricted.² Moreover, the distinctive history of the U.S. South means that new immigrants must find their way in a social landscape defined in many locations by the contentious racial divide between black and white.

Race and Racism in the U.S. South

From the period of initial European settlement in the 17th century up until the prohibition against slave importation in 1808, many people who came through the South's major ports of call arrived not as new immigrants but as human cargo in the holds of slave ships. They came not in search of opportunity or freedom, but as captive laborers whose first stop in their new country was the auction block. This is a defining feature of southern history that, to this day, influences social and economic dynamics in the region—including the complex responses to contemporary immigrants.

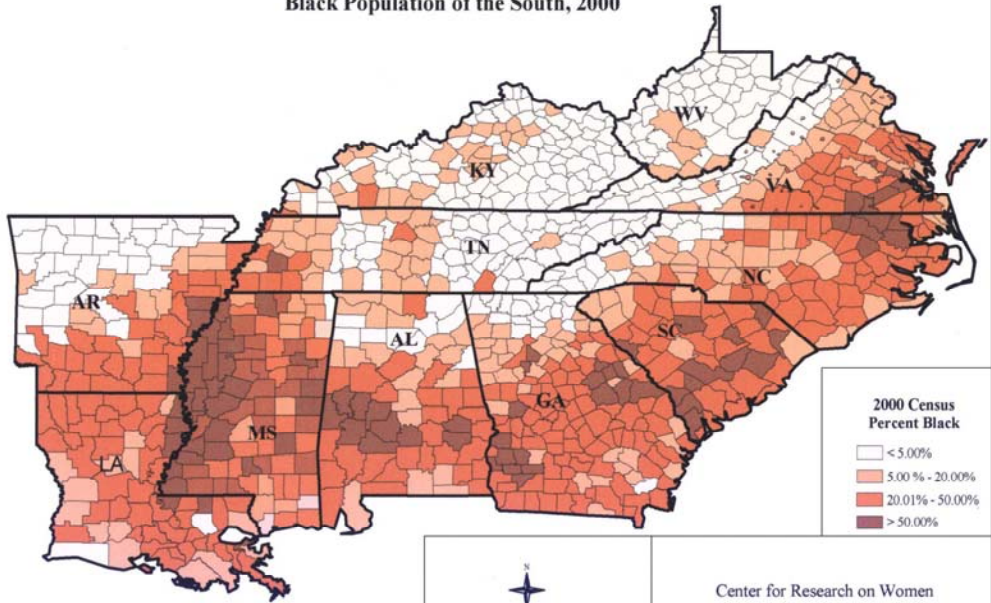
Today, the South has by far the highest concentrations of African American people of any region in the United States. The map on the next page illustrates the distribution of the black population in the historically “non-Latino” South (i.e., minus the states of Texas and Florida). The contiguous group of majority-black counties in Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas compose the Mississippi delta, while the swath of additional majority-black and adjacent counties in Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina represent the Black Belt. Named originally for the color of its rich soil, the “Black Belt” has also become a reference to the racial composition of this sub-region. Many of the counties in the Delta and the Black Belt remain tied to a rural, agricultural economy in which the most fertile land is held disproportionately by a white elite; economic opportunities are limited and poverty, especially among African Americans, is widespread.

The white area in the central and northern portions of the map roughly follows the contours of the Appalachian Mountains. In this sub-region, slave labor built railroads, mined salt, and worked in many other antebellum industries, but mountainous topography prevented the extensive development of plantation agriculture. As a consequence, the African American population today is relatively small. An important exception is the coal-mining area of southern West Virginia, to which many African Americans migrated during the industrial boom in the early twentieth century.

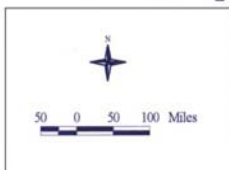
During the industrial transformation of the U.S. economy in the period after the Civil War, most employers in the U.S. South—unlike those in other regions—faced few labor shortages and had relatively little need for immigrant workers. The legacy of the South's labor-intensive agricultural system, organized originally around slavery and later around sharecropping and tenancy, produced a seemingly endless supply of impoverished

² Louisiana is an exception to this generalization. The Spanish and French influence, which dates back to the 16th century, is still evident here, especially in New Orleans and southern Louisiana more generally. However, the population that considers itself “Latino” is small relative to Texas and Florida (as of the 2000 census, 107,738 vs. 6,669,666 and 2,682,715, respectively). Hence its inclusion in the “non-Latino” South.

Black Population of the South, 2000



2000 Census Percent Black	
White square	< 5.00%
Light orange square	5.00% - 20.00%
Medium orange square	20.01% - 50.00%
Dark orange square	> 50.00%



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The University of Memphis
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Source: U.S. Census, 2000

workers, both black and white. (The exception once again was the coal field region of Appalachia, where plantation agriculture was rare and labor shortages during the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries required coal operators to recruit foreign-born workers.) Few of the millions of immigrants who poured through the original Ellis Island, opened in 1892 in the harbor of New York City, found their way to the Deep South. Lacking large concentrations of industry and urban population centers, the South offered neither the economic opportunities nor the ethnic communities that many immigrants sought.

Indeed, in order to industrialize, elites in the South were forced to recruit not labor, but capital. During the late nineteenth century, proponents of an industrial “New South” sought to attract northern capital by advertising the region’s most abundant resource: cheap labor. Abandoning their traditional stronghold in New England, many textile manufacturers relocated their mills to rural areas of the piedmont South, a sub-region that stretches from central Virginia and North Carolina into northern South Carolina and Georgia. Here, they built and controlled company towns where they housed the new workers—women, men and children—who left their hard-scrabble farms for jobs in the mills.

Following the code of Jim Crow, which by law required racial segregation in all aspects of social life, these new industrialists hired only white workers for production jobs. Black working class Southerners remained largely confined to agriculture and a narrow band of occupations at the lowest wage end of the labor market—primarily domestic service, janitorial and laboring positions. During World War II and its immediate aftermath, an increasingly diverse array of manufacturing companies opened branch plants in the South. Drawn like their predecessors by the region’s low-wage, non-union, white labor force, for the most part they also upheld the color bar. Only in the 1960s, faced with the demands of the civil rights movement and an increasing shortage of white labor, did southern manufacturers begin to hire African American workers in large numbers.

This path to industrialization has important consequences for the contemporary South, many of which pertain to the social and economic position of new immigrants. Southern elites’ affection for branch plants, low-wage labor and racial segregation produced minimal economic diversification and few opportunities beyond low-skill industrial jobs, though this is changing in certain areas. The rural South in particular (and the South is the most rural region of the country) remains heavily dependent on manufacturing, agriculture and natural resource extraction—economic sectors that date back a century or more. Moreover, the rural South’s manufacturing sector still consists disproportionately of non-union, labor-intensive industries, where corporate profitability, even survival, depends on low-wage labor. During the intensified global competition and “deindustrialization” of the late 1970s and early 1980s, some of these manufacturers downsized or closed their factories altogether, in some cases laying off entire communities, and sought cheaper labor outside the United States.

In more recent years, the global linkages between the U.S. South and other parts of the world have taken new forms. Foreign capital as well as labor has flowed into the region. Investors from Germany, Japan and elsewhere have found the South, particularly the I-85 corridor that stretches between Atlanta and Richmond, a desirable location for their chemical, automobile and other industrial plants. In the early 1990's, Spartanburg, South Carolina boasted more foreign capital per capita than any other city in the United States. The South is still the branch plant haven of the United States, but the corporate headquarters for many of those plants may now be in Tokyo rather than New York.

This period of intensified globalization drew people from all over the world to the U.S. South. Even as jobs became more abundant in this region—albeit low-wage jobs, often with no benefits—the economic viability of many communities in Mexico and elsewhere declined dramatically. Increasingly, the United States and other powerful countries have created global institutions, such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, which impose terms of trade and development that are favorable to corporations and wealthier nations but destructive to poorer peoples and countries. For example, the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement between the U.S., Canada and Mexico destabilized sectors of the Mexican economy and contributed to the unprecedented numbers of Latino workers who arrived in the South during the past decade.

In some instances, particularly in the rural South, these new immigrants found employment in traditional low-wage manufacturing industries, such as textiles and agricultural processing. In more urban locations, and in scenic rural areas with extensive tourism or other sources of growth, immigrants have also found jobs in construction (for men) and the service sector. These jobs are far from stable, however, as the South's disproportionate dependence on traditional manufacturing makes its economy especially vulnerable in the current recession. One recent study indicated that, from January to early September 2001, the interior South (Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee) lost 36,000 jobs—more than twice as many, per capita, as the rest of the U.S.³

In most cases, Latino immigrants enter the southern labor market at the bottom of its racial hierarchy, moving into the position historically occupied by black (and in certain industries and locations, white female) workers. Whether the tight labor markets of the 1990s enabled working class African Americans to leave that bottom rung and move up the occupational ladder is unclear, as is the racial-ethnic pattern of layoffs and unemployment in the emerging downtown. More pointedly, whether employers deliberately hire and retain Latino or immigrant workers instead of African Americans is the ugly question for which there is not yet a clear answer, although we are investigating the issue.

What is already clear, however, is that *employers*—not workers of any race or ethnicity—control these employment decisions. This reality, and the larger history of elite-dominated economic “development” that has limited opportunity for so many

³ David Leonhardt. 2001. “The Rust Belt with a Drawl.” *New York Times*. Nov. 13: C1, C8.

Southerners, is crucial to keep in mind. Anti-immigrant sentiments and organizations have already begun to emerge in the South, and their appeals to fear, racism and patriotism recall those of the Klan and other white supremacist organizations of the past. Unfortunately, southern history is replete with examples of progressive movements that succumbed to racial division and white supremacy. Their defeats inevitably benefited only those who already enjoyed a disproportionate share of wealth and political power in the region.

Generations of Southerners have lamented the region's history of racism, slavery and violence, but very few have placed their hope in those most dispossessed by this legacy. This project grew out of the conviction that social justice in the South depends on bottom-up movements that join people across racial-ethnic barriers. If southern history holds any lessons, surely one of the most important is that white supremacy and racial/ethnic division have repeatedly defeated progressive movements and must be challenged if such movements are to succeed. The extensive immigration of recent years creates a new social context in which multi-racial/ethnic coalition-building becomes more complex yet also more necessary. This report is a first effort to provide the information that, we hope, can help make those new coalitions not only necessary but possible.

Demographic Overview

Recent Latino migrants and immigrants to the U.S. South have settled primarily in areas where jobs at the low-wage end of the labor market, often in traditional southern industries, have been abundant. From western Arkansas to coastal North Carolina, from the tip of southern Louisiana to northern Kentucky, Latinos have located in rural and urban areas throughout the region.

This chapter presents basic population data from the 2000 census regarding the distribution of Latinos in the South. When interpreting these data, it is important to keep in mind that Latinos do not represent a “race,” as commonly defined in the color-conscious classification system of the United States. Although in popular terms Americans tend to racialize Latinos as “brown,” people of Spanish heritage in fact range in skin color from “white” European to “black” African. This is a consequence of the historical interaction of diverse groups—primarily European colonialists, indigenous peoples, and West Africans—in the areas now known as the southwestern United States and the many countries of Latin America. The history of Spanish conquest and colonialism generated sufficient cultural commonality among these groups that Latinos (or “Hispanics,” as the U.S. census has tended to name this group) are now considered an ethnic group. They are defined by their common culture, most importantly their Spanish language heritage.⁴

The data presented here encompass those individuals who identified themselves as Latino or Hispanic at the time of the 2000 census. Not all of these individuals are recent immigrants, nor are they necessarily foreign-born; some were already in the South and others migrated to it from elsewhere in the United States. As many have noted, these numbers are no doubt an undercount of the Latino population, as those who are immigrants but lack legal documents may seek social invisibility and avoid participation in the census.⁵

The table on the next page provides a state-by-state ranking of the Latino population count in the South. Although Georgia has the largest Latino population as of the 2000 census, both in absolute numbers and as a percent of the total state population, North Carolina experienced a higher Latino growth rate from 1990-2000. Moreover, Virginia and Louisiana, both of which had relatively low growth rates in the Latino population (106 percent and 16 percent, respectively), nonetheless have relatively large

⁴ However, some “Latinos” do not speak Spanish as their first language, and others do not speak it at all (e.g., indigenous peoples, people of Hispanic descent whose families have lived in the United States for generations, or Brazilians, who speak Portuguese). Similar complexities and contradictions may be found throughout the U.S. racial classification system, which creates “races” and, in the case of Latinos/Hispanics, ethnicity, out of extremely diverse peoples.

⁵ Estimates of the Latino population based on non-census sources (e.g., vital statistics, school records) often arrive at figures that are double the census count. For example, a recent study of the Latino population in the Memphis metropolitan area estimated a population of 53,628 Latinos, in contrast to the census count of 27,520. See Burrell, Luchy *et al.* 1997. “Preliminary Estimates and Projections of the Hispanic Population for the Metropolitan Area 1996-2000.” Memphis, TN: Regional Economic Development Center.

Latino populations. That is because their existing population base of Latinos in 1990 was already sizeable.

Latino Population of the South, 1990-2000

State and Rank	Latino Pop. in 2000	% of State Population	% Increase 1990-2000	Latino Pop. in 1990
1. Georgia	435,227	5.3	299.6	108,922
2. No. Carolina	378,963	4.7	393.9	76,726
3. Virginia	329,540	4.7	105.6	160,288
4. Tennessee	123,838	2.2	278.2	32,741
5. Louisiana	107,738	2.4	15.8	93,044
6. So. Carolina	95,076	2.4	211.2	30,551
7. Arkansas	86,866	3.3	337.0	19,876
8. Alabama	75,830	1.7	207.9	24,629
9. Kentucky	59,939	1.5	172.6	21,984
10. Mississippi	39,569	1.4	148.4	15,931
11. W. Virginia	12,279	0.7	44.6	8,489

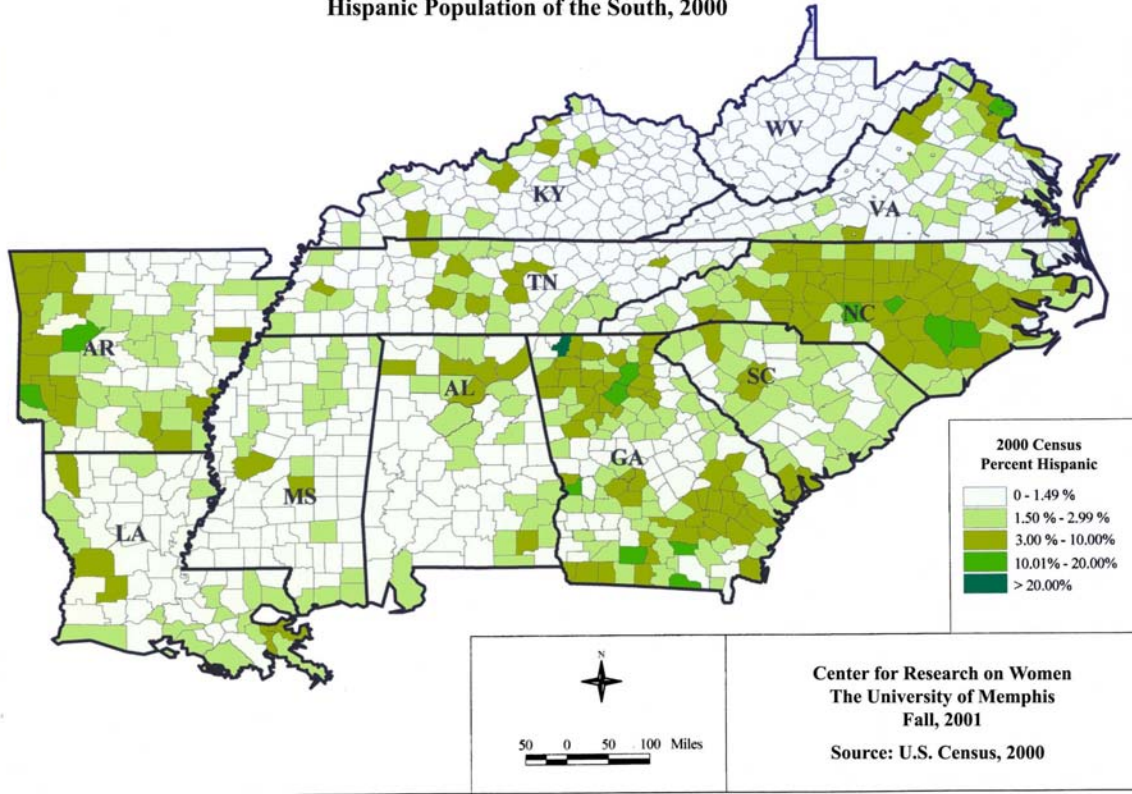
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

The distribution of this new population largely reflects the dynamics of the economy in different sub-regions. Not surprisingly, the mountain or Appalachian South and the Mississippi Delta—areas of entrenched poverty and, in many locations, economic stagnation or decline—have for the most part not attracted large Latino settlements. This is evident in the relatively small Latino populations in West Virginia, the only state that lies entirely within Appalachia, and Mississippi, the heart of the Delta sub-region. However, there are important exceptions to this generalization, such as the Appalachian region of north Georgia, where the extensive textile and poultry processing industries have attracted a large influx of migrants and immigrants.

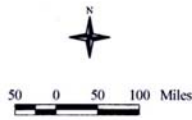
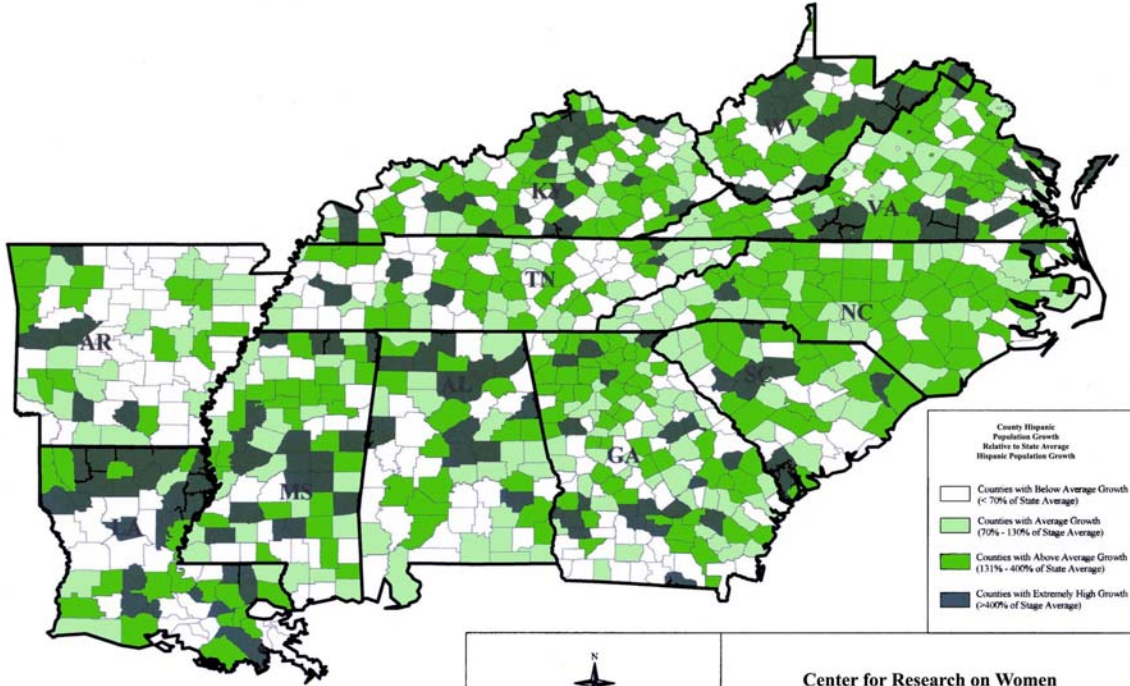
The maps on the next two pages show more detailed, county-level patterns of Latino population distribution and growth. The first map indicates the proportion of the population in each county that identified as Latino or Hispanic in the 2000 census. It is immediately apparent that in several states—above all, North Carolina—the Latino presence is widespread. Although the bulk of each state's Latino population may be found in cities, Latinos have dispersed throughout rural and urban areas alike.

Counties where Latinos represent a relatively large percent of the total population are typically more rural areas dominated by a traditional southern industry (including agriculture) or, in some cases, a military base (which some might consider a “traditional southern industry.”) This is true, for example, of Whitfield County (represented by the dark green area in the northwest corner of Georgia), where carpet mills have attracted a large Latino work force to Dalton, the county seat, and surrounding areas. This pattern also accounts in part for the concentration of Latinos in western Arkansas, where many have located to work in poultry processing. The major metropolitan counties where

Hispanic Population of the South, 2000



Hispanic Population Growth in the South, 1990-2000



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Fall, 2001
Source: U.S. Census, 1990 & 2000

Latinos approach or exceed ten percent of the population are Fairfax County, Virginia (located in the Washington, D.C. area), Gwinnett County, Georgia (part of the Atlanta metro area), Chattahoochee County (part of the Columbus MSA in western Georgia, where Fort Benning is located), and Chatham County, North Carolina (in the Raleigh-Durham MSA).⁶

The second map illustrates the growth in the county-level Latino population from 1990-2000, as compared to the average Latino population growth statewide. This map makes it possible to identify those areas where the growth rate diverges significantly from that of the state overall.⁷ This includes areas of relatively low growth, such as the counties of metropolitan New Orleans (on the southeastern edge of the state), which already had a sizeable Latino population in 1990 that grew slowly relative to the statewide average. High growth areas include many counties, e.g., in West Virginia, that are so designated simply because their Latino population base in 1990 was quite small. More significant are those counties that have *both* high growth rates from 1990-2000 and a large Latino population (as a proportion of the total county) in 2000.

In general, Latinos have settled in larger numbers in areas with expanding labor markets, where they have both followed and enhanced economic growth. How they will fare in the current economic downturn is unclear, as many determining factors—including post-9/11 immigration policy changes as well as employer decisions about layoffs—are just beginning to emerge. What does seem clear is that many of these newcomers are here to stay, and they are permanently transforming the racial-ethnic landscape of the South.

⁶ The relatively high proportion of Latinos in certain rural counties is in part a statistical artifact of the small population base. The majority of Latinos in the South live in metropolitan areas, but the large population base in cities means that they represent a smaller percentage of the total county population.

⁷ It is important to stress that many areas with apparently high growth rates are simply rural counties where the population base of Latinos in 1990 was so small that modest numerical growth translates into a large percentage increase. (For example, an increase from 10 to 100 people represents growth of 900 percent.)

Project Description

This report is the product of a collaborative project involving the Highlander Center in New Market, Tennessee, the Southern Regional Council (SRC) in Atlanta, and the Center for Research on Women (CROW) at the University of Memphis. Our joint project, “Race and Nation: Building New Communities in the South,” combines community-based research with popular education to investigate and influence the changing racial-ethnic dynamics of the region. We hope to understand better both the experiences of new immigrants as they arrive in and adapt to the South, and the attitudes of more long-term residents toward new immigrants. Our overall goals are to identify areas of potential conflict as well as collaboration among different groups, and to encourage multi-racial/ethnic efforts to address common needs.

Each of the three participating organizations is pursuing the project in a distinctive socioeconomic and organizational context. Memphis, where CROW is located, is the “capital of the Delta” and reflects the historically bipolar racial context of the Deep South. Highlander is located in East Tennessee, a predominantly rural, white working class Appalachian context, while SRC is headquartered in the much more multi-racial/ethnic context of metropolitan Atlanta. Each of the three sites thus represents in effect a different “case study” of Latino immigration in the South. Each of the organizations also has a distinctive mission, which influences its approach to the project. We hope that this diversity will enhance the usefulness of what we learn for others who also struggle for social justice in the many dynamic contexts of the contemporary South.

Highlander Center

The Highlander Research and Education Center is a popular education workshop center in East Tennessee. The mission of Highlander is to support the building of movements for economic justice and democratic participation, with a focus on those groups that have been marginalized or experienced systematic discrimination. Since 1932, Highlander has convened community people at its folk school in Tennessee to share the stories of their struggles and to create strategies for resistance and change.

In the early years, the focus was on low-wage workers and farmers, followed by an intense period of participation in the development of the Civil Rights Movement (particularly through the Citizenship Schools). During the 1970s, Highlander entered an Appalachian period that had a strong emphasis on environmental issues, then more recently began to focus on regional economic issues in the expanding global economy. Highlander’s method is to support community organizing by using the tools of popular education, participatory research and cultural work to change the conditions which local people identify as harmful to their communities. The primary constituency has always been poor and working people, primarily from Appalachia and the South, though groups from around the country participate in occasional workshops.

Highlander's work on this project involves constructing a case study of one industrial Appalachian town in East Tennessee called Morristown. Located in Hamblen County, this town and the surrounding rural area are rapidly being changed by immigration. Morristown was chosen in part because of the large jump in the Hispanic population (**official** census figures recorded a 1785% increase, from 175 Hispanics in 1990 to 3,299 today, to register as 6% of the total county population). These figures of course leave out many undocumented immigrants in the area. In the public schools of Hamblen County, the number of Latino students went from 117 in 1995-6 to 455 in 2001-2002. Hamblen County has a large manufacturing base with many non-union, low-wage factory jobs in light industrial plants that were recruited over the decades since World War II. About 40 percent of the workforce is employed in manufacturing, and there are two labor pools that funnel large numbers of Hispanic workers to jobs in industry and agriculture.

Highlander is conducting interviews with low-income African American, white and Latino residents of Morristown in order to record their stories and develop a sample of the experiences and reactions of these groups regarding racial/ethnic change. In addition, we are conducting interviews with a small number of employers, faith leaders, service providers, educators and business leaders to measure the impact of immigration on community institutions and the local labor market. Our aim is to relate these local dynamics to what is happening in the larger political and economic world. We hope to develop materials for use by people in Morristown, to be determined by a leadership group of interested people from the area. The information and ideas should also be helpful to people working on related issues across the South and Appalachia.

Southern Regional Council

The Atlanta-based Southern Regional Council works to promote racial justice, protect democratic rights, and broaden civic participation in twelve states in the South. Founded in 1919 as the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, SRC's work for democracy has fostered racial understanding, reform of public schools, and increased representation for African American voters.

SRC's participation in the Race and Nation collaborative is one element in a new initiative, Partnerships for Racial Unity. As SRC continues to work towards better understanding and collaboration between members of the white and African American communities, the Partnerships Program allows us to expand that work by learning from new immigrants. The goal of the program is to bridge racial and ethnic communities and foster multi-racial/ethnic collaborations.

The Partnerships Program and SRC's participation in the collaborative Race and Nation project grew in part from the major demographic changes occurring in metropolitan Atlanta, where one of every ten people is now Latino or Asian. The changing demographics have made DeKalb County (which is part of the metro Atlanta area) one of the most diverse in the nation: African Americans now represent 55.3 percent of the population, whites are 37 percent, and Latinos and Asians comprise 7.9

and 4.6 percent, respectively. Attracted by economic opportunity, increasing numbers of men, women and children from Mexico and other Latin American as well as Asian countries are moving into the area.

SRC has focused its research effort on the Chamblee/Doraville portion of DeKalb County. This urban area stretches along Buford Highway, which has developed over the past two decades into a powerful economic generator with hundreds of small Asian and Latino businesses. Unlike certain long-established immigrant communities in cities like Los Angeles and New York, where different ethnic groups located in distinct neighborhoods, the Chamblee/Doraville area blends Asian and Latino businesses and people in one commercial and residential melange. Project staff are meeting with local activists in Chamblee/Doraville and conducting approximately 50 interviews regarding the changing racial/ethnic composition of the area. Although SRC has focused on the new Latino population, staff are also developing relationships and gathering information in the more longstanding Asian community of DeKalb.

SRC has formed a multi-racial/ethnic advisory body to help guide both the research and the process of building relationships and, hopefully, coalitions across different groups. SRC has also created a partnership with MALDEF (the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund) to co-sponsor a series of “Atlanta Parent Workshops” that are designed to increase Latino parents’ involvement in the public schools and their children’s education. SRC plans to share findings from the project through its journal *Southern Changes*. Lessons from the Race and Nation project will also inform the ongoing work of the Partnerships Program.

Center for Research on Women

The Center for Research on Women is an interdisciplinary unit at the University of Memphis that conducts, promotes and disseminates research on women and social inequality. Founded in 1982, CROW’s approach to research has always emphasized an integrated (race-class-gender) understanding of social inequality. Over the past five years, we have sharpened our areas of emphasis to focus more clearly on urgent questions of social inequality and social change in Memphis and the U.S. South.

Our interest in the Race and Nation project arose initially from concern for the implications of Latino immigration in Memphis, a majority-black, predominantly working class city, and the Deep South more generally. In this sub-region where African American oppression and resistance and white supremacy have all been visible and longstanding, the arrival of large numbers of people who do not fit within the bipolar black-white paradigm is disrupting conventional understandings of “race” in ways that are potentially volatile as well as promising. Tension between African Americans and Latinos, focused especially on jobs and economic resources within working class communities, is already evident. We have therefore focused many of our interviews on issues related to employment and work relations.

At the community level, we have worked with staff at the newly formed mayor's Office of Multicultural and Religious Affairs to develop and administer surveys about problems encountered by new Latino immigrants. We also collaborated with the local Spanish radio station to sponsor a community gathering for Latinas, which drew more than 180 women and 60 children and is serving as the genesis for an ongoing organization of Latinas.

CROW plans to publish findings from the research project in our newsletter *StandPoint* and to post periodic reports on our web site. As the overall coordinator for the project, CROW will also pull together findings from the three sites into materials that may be used by others interested in race, economic globalization and immigration in the South.

Future Directions

This project began in the spring of 2000 and will conclude over the next 12-15 months (in 2003). Prior to September 11, we focused our efforts on identifying issues of common concern and/or potential conflict between Latino immigrants and other Southerners, particularly African Americans and white working class people. These issues included: access to public education, including bilingual education and the rights of immigrant students; political representation and civil rights, including redistricting issues, access to drivers' licenses and relations with law enforcement and the INS; access to employment and economic resources, including relations on the job; and community/neighborhood dynamics, problems and needs (e.g., crime).

Project staff continue to be involved in issue-specific work in concert with other organizations (e.g., coalitions to lobby for immigrant access to drivers' licenses), as well as issue-focused research (e.g., the dynamics of employment and layoffs in local labor markets). However, the post-9/11 backlash regarding immigrants, immigrant rights and national immigration policy has also led us to explore, primarily through interviews, more general attitudes and fears regarding immigration. Although we find discouraging expressions of racism and anti-immigrant feeling, sometimes cloaked in nationalism and patriotism, we also can see sources of hope. Specifically:

- Immigration has become a visible political issue to a degree that it was not before (at least in the South). Although many of the forces and positions coming to the fore are anti-immigrant, there is also new awareness of the need to defend immigrants and their rights.
- There is an awareness that people in the U.S. cannot afford to be so ignorant about the rest of the world. There is a new openness to learning about globalization and some of the transnational dynamics relevant to immigration.
- The targeting of Muslims and Arabs has produced an anti-racist "backlash" in which racial profiling and other racially motivated hate crimes are defined as un-American.

- There is widespread concern for peace, and new energy in some faith-based institutions (which are very strong in the South) to press for peaceful solutions.
- Civil liberties are coming to the fore as an issue, which it may be possible to link with both immigrant rights and the civil rights legacy in the South.

Over the next 12-15 months the participating organizations will be convening workshops among constituent groups on topics related to race/ethnicity, immigration and globalization. We will also be creating a variety of materials that summarize what we have learned through the research process, and that speak to certain of the issues and attitudes identified above. We hope thereby to contribute in a small way to the development of progressive activism in the South that crosses boundaries of race, ethnicity and nation, driven by an agenda that is both anti-racist and pro-immigrant.

Greetings from the staff of the collaborative project that produced the enclosed report. We are sending this report to a list of some 225 groups and individuals, primarily in the U.S. South, who work on issues related to race/ethnicity and/or immigration. In the future, we will produce additional materials on these issues, including a list of organizations, publications, and other relevant resources. Please take a moment to complete the survey below and let us know your own interests, so that we might target your needs and include your organization in future publications. Thank you!

Do you have interest and/or experience in?:

Labor/Economic Issues

- Worker rights []
 - Worker organizing []
 - Workplace health and safety []
 - Job competition (real/perceived) between immigrant
and native workers []
 - Other (*please specify below*) []
-
-

Health and Education

- Quality of public education []
 - Access to bilingual education []
 - Adult education, including ESL []
 - Health insurance and affordable health care []
 - Bilingual health providers []
 - Other (*please specify below*) []
-
-

Immigration Policy and Immigrant Rights

- National immigration policy []
 - Immigration law []
 - Immigrants' civil rights []
 - Immigrant access to, e.g., drivers licenses []
 - Other (*please specify below*) []
-
-

Community/Neighborhood Issues

- Affordable housing []
- Public transportation []
- Crime []
- Relations between new arrivals and established Residents []
- Other (*please specify below*) []

Political Representation and Civil Rights

- Voting rights []
- Redistricting []
- Civil liberties []
- Affirmative action []
- Other (*please specify below*) []

Please mention any other areas of interest or relevant resources you may have. Also feel free to give us feedback regarding this introductory report:

Your name and address: _____

E-mail address: _____

Please return to Barbara Ellen Smith, CROW, The University of Memphis, 339 Clement Hall, Memphis, TN 38152, or e-mail her at bsmith2@memphis.edu.