



**WHY GEORGIA FLIPPED BLUE
AND NORTH CAROLINA DID NOT**

LESSONS FOR EQUALITY MOVEMENTS

Theda Skocpol, Harvard University

Hancock County Democrats

July 15, 2021

For years, pundits considered North Carolina likely to go blue....



WHY NORTH CAROLINA IS TRENDING BLUE

BY THOMAS MILLS | AUG 3, 2020 | 2020 ELECTIONS, EDITOR'S BLOG | 3 COMMENTS



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Another poll in North Carolina shows Biden leading Trump and Cunningham with a huge lead over Tillis. We've seen similar polls since the spring. Conservatives don't believe them. They cite the 2016 polls that showed Clinton defeating Trump. They believe rural voters will come out in droves to put Trump over the top. I believe the times, they are a-changin'.

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Could North Carolina Turn Blue? Local Election Expert Says Yes

Posted by Elle Kehres | Nov 3, 2020 | 2020 Election, Election, National, State

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US ELECTION 2020 9 OCTOBER 2020

US presidential election swing states: Can North Carolina turn blue?

GEORGIA

ELECTORAL VOTES: 16



**JOE
BIDEN**

 **PROJECTED
WINNER**

AP IMAGES

But November 2020 and January 2021 brought surprises...

**GEORGIA flipped
instead**



Figure 1. Gaps between Democratic and Republican Vote Shares in Key Statewide Elections in Georgia and North Carolina, 2008 to 2021

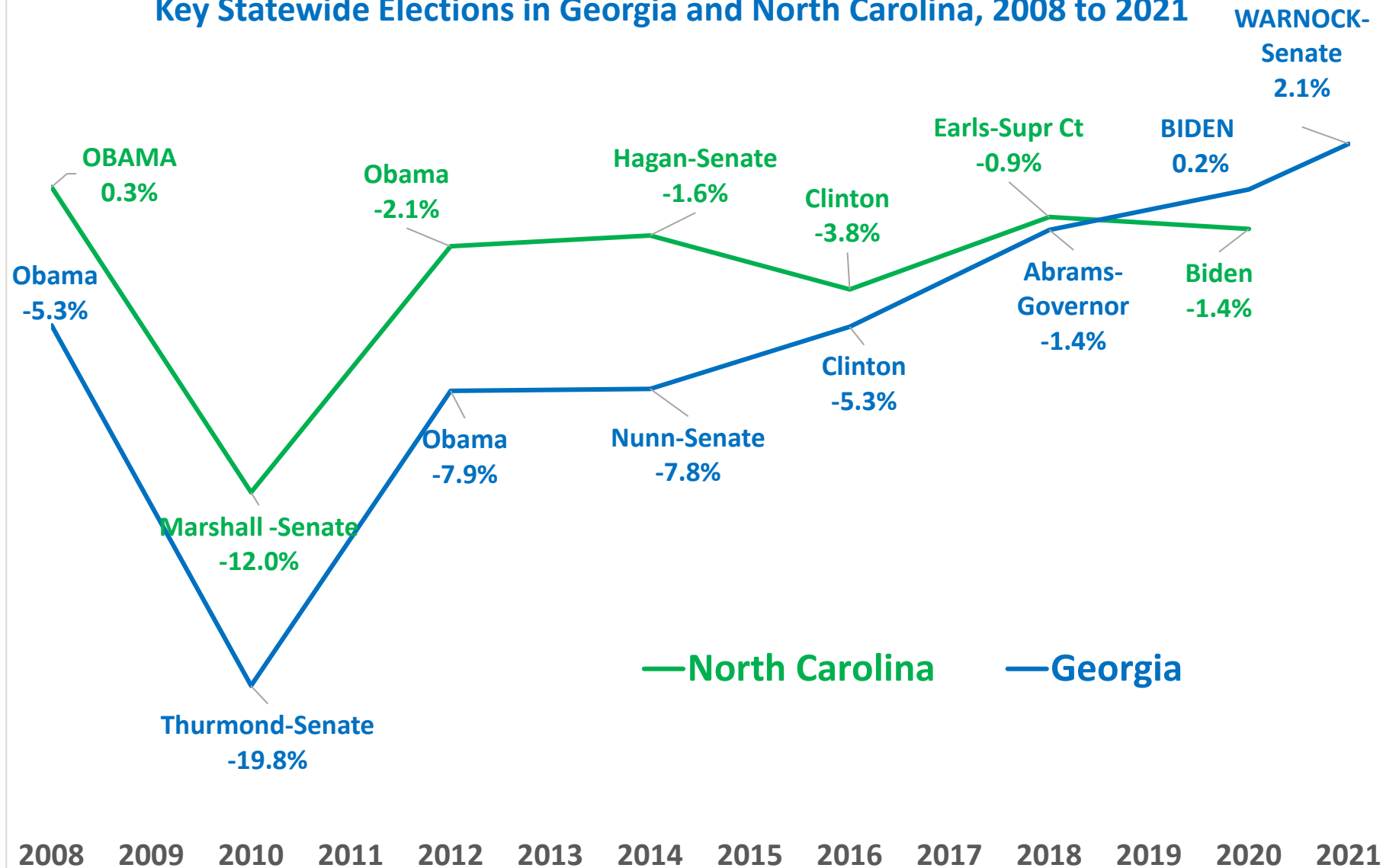
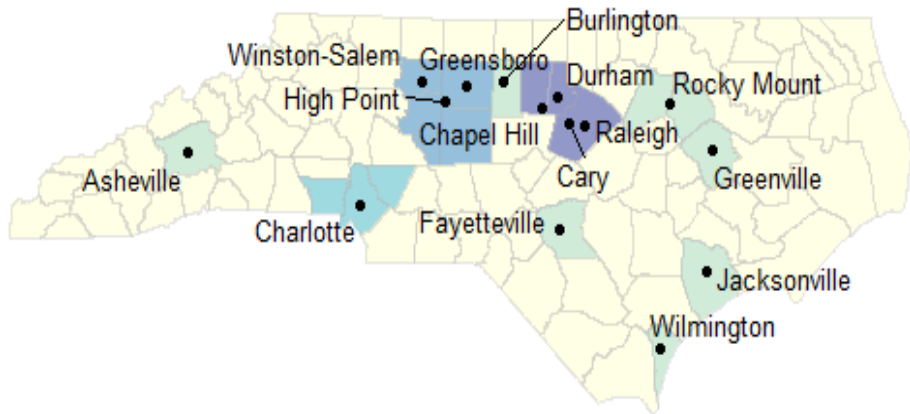


Table 1. Social and Economic Characteristics of Georgia and North Carolina (July 2019 U.S. Census)

	GEORGIA	NORTH CAROLINA		
Total populations	10,617,423	10,488,084		
Growth since 2010	9.6%	10.0%		
Percent Whites (not Hispanic, Asian)	52%	62.6%		
Percent Blacks/African Americans	32.6%	22.2%		
Percent Hispanic	9.9%	9.8%		
Percent Asian	4.4%	3.2%		
Percent BA degree or higher, age 25+	31.3%	31.3%		
Percent over 65 years	14.3%	16.7%		
Percent foreign born	10.1%	8.0%		
Percent in poverty	13.3%	13.6%		
Percent under 65 without health insurance	15.5%	13.4%		

Metro Areas, Secondary Cities, and Nonurban Counties in North Carolina and Georgia

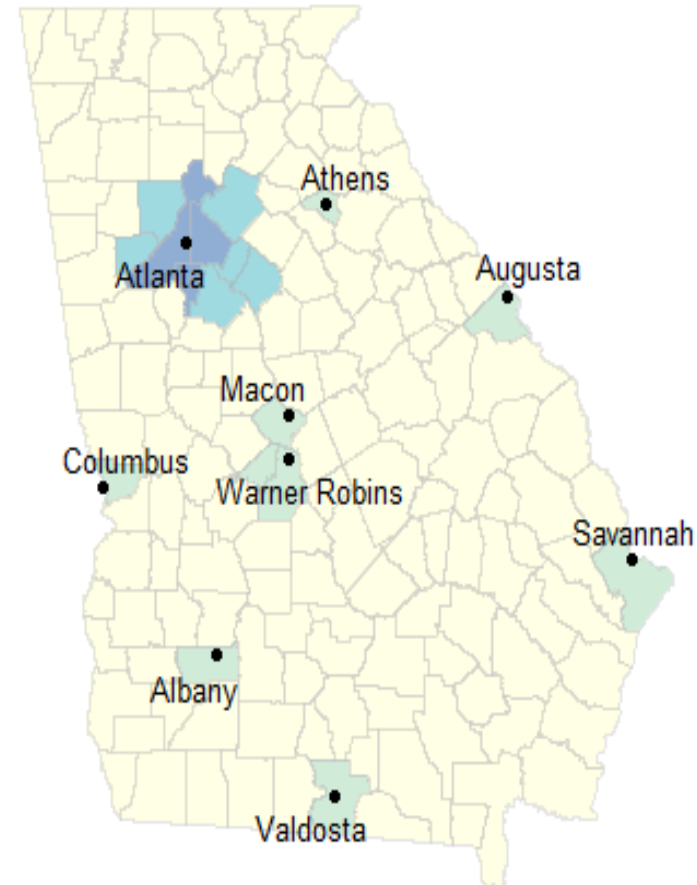
NORTH CAROLINA



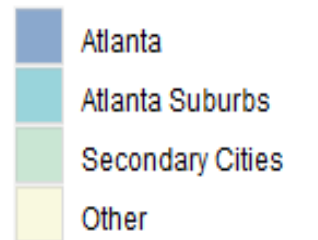
County Classification



GEORGIA



County Classification



Some say....

North Carolina fell short because it does not have “a Stacey Abrams”

referring to Georgia’s charismatic Democratic former House leader and governor contender





But North Carolina has had its own charismatic racial justice leader..... **Reverend William Barber II**, head of the NAACP's Moral Movement that staged huge demonstrations and months of civil disobedience to oppose Republicans in 2013 and 2014.



The stage at the inaugural 2014 Moral Mondays protest in Raleigh, North Carolina., Ari

OUR RESEARCH

- Both the Barber-founded movement in North Carolina and the Abrams-coordinated efforts in Georgia aim to shift power relations, boost participation by the poor and minorities, especially Blacks, and redirect government toward helping lower and middle-income citizens and furthering racial equality.
- Both sets of reformers focus on *changing politics and policy at the state level* as well as national level; and both have been active for years leading into 2020-21.
- From 2014 on, both movements have made efforts to help elect Democrats to counter increasingly radical Republicans controlling their state governments.
- Our research examines Barber and Abrams-led organizational networks and Black electoral engagement and Democratic gains BEYOND the biggest metropolitan areas – in medium-sized cities and non-urban counties where many southern Blacks live. **Which movement has had more electoral impact – and why?**

PRESENTATION TO COME

- **Overview of Rev Barber's Forward Together Moral Movement, from 2006 on.**
- **Overview of stages of Abrams leadership from 2006 on, and the development of the New Georgia Project and allied efforts since 2014.**
- **How and where did each movement organize – and what electoral impact have they had?**
- **Lessons from this comparison for Democrats and equality reformers.**

OUR BOTTOM LINE: Social justice campaigns aiming to boost participation and government responsiveness to poor minority citizens do better if they frankly tie sustained grassroots outreach to partisan candidates and causes. Democrats in turn need to foster cooperation with such aligned civic organizers.

In a contested October 2005 election, the North Carolina NAACP replaced former president Melvin “Skip” Alston, a buttoned-up businessman and Guilford County commissioner, with **Reverend William Barber II** from Goldsboro, who promised to organize public “truth to power” campaigns to press for changes on behalf of minorities and the poor.

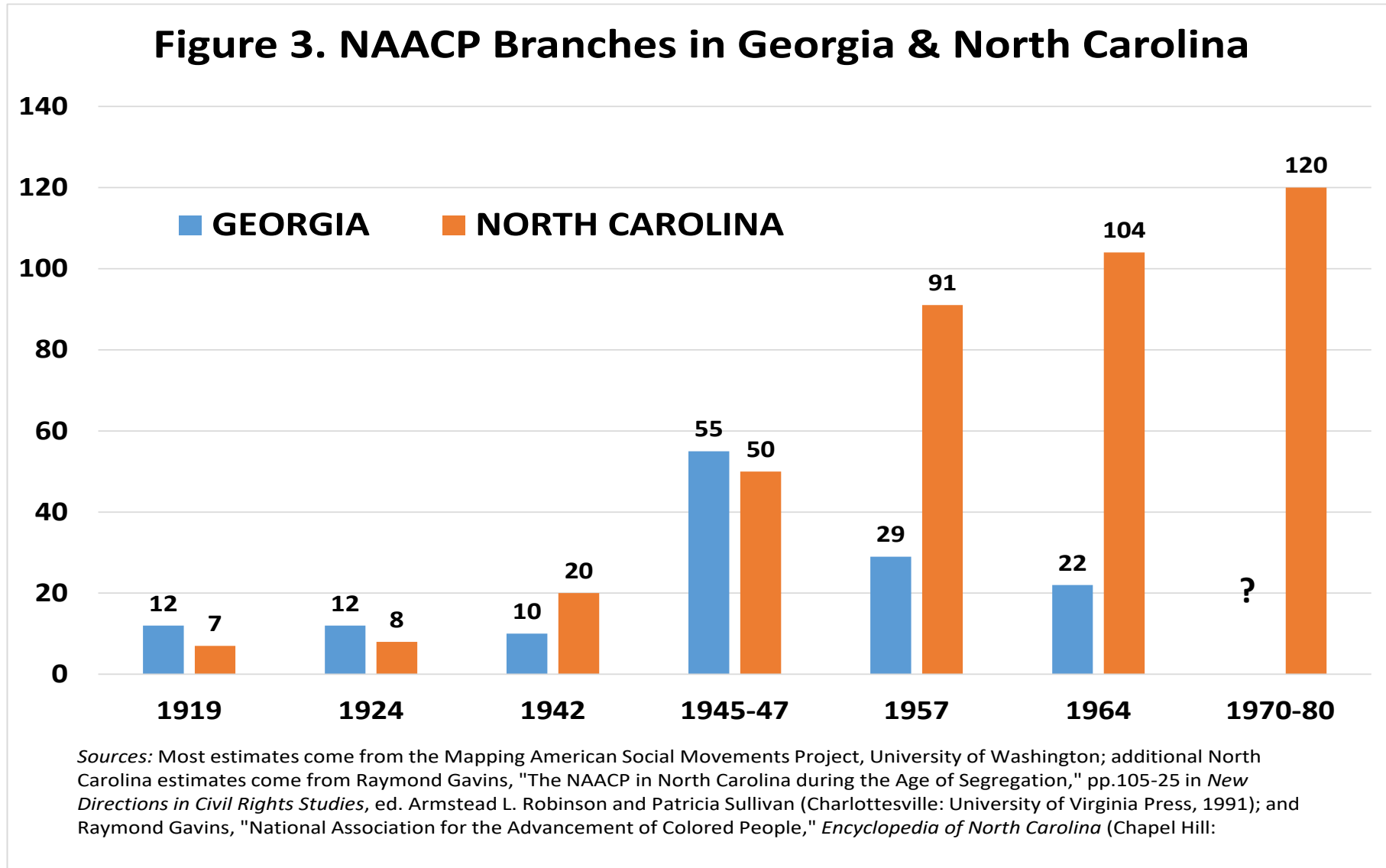
NAACP replaces Alston as president

By Mark Binker Staff Writer Oct 7, 2005 Updated Jan 26, 2015  0

unlimited digital



Barber and his team took the helm of a large, historically leading NAACP state conference.





**The North Carolina State NAACP
invites you and
your organization to**

HISTORIC K(THOUSANDS) ON JONES STREET

Saturday, February 10, 2007

Arrival at 11:00 a.m., Program at 12 p.m. followed by a March to the State Legislature Building, Progress Energy Center (Old Raleigh Memorial Auditorium), 2 East South Street, Raleigh, North Carolina

HK ON J: THE PEOPLE'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In order to make substantial and progressive change in North Carolina public policy, we need a movement and not a moment.

HK on J is a call by the North Carolina NAACP to the progressive and civil rights community to come together to support 14-point public policy strategy that will begin to shift North Carolina political action in a way that will more clearly match our rhetoric with reality.

February 12, 2007 is the 98th birthday of the NAACP, in commemoration of a time when progressive whites and blacks came together to fight racial injustice and social inequality. Today, our challenges revolve around the issues of education, health, labor rights, economic empowerment, civic engagement, and criminal justice.

THE GOALS OF HK ON J ARE TO:

- Gather 50-100 people from each North Carolina county to meet in Raleigh before the General Assembly to embrace a 14-point agenda that we demand the legislature to act upon. We will insert the 14-point agenda in every political debate and discussion until they become a reality.
- Remind North Carolina that the General Assembly belongs to the people, not the powerful; to everyday folk, not just those with the money and the influence.
- Create a statewide network of the progressive and civil rights community which we will build in order to promote a progressive agenda and civil rights in North Carolina.

HK ON J WILL NOT BE A MOMENT, BUT A MOVEMENT. This event will bring hardworking, everyday people together and on March 28, 2007 the Second Annual People of Color Legislative Day where we bring hundreds of people together to lobby the General Assembly will be held.

For more information:

Visit <http://naacp.ubernc.com/> or call 1-(866)-586-6544 Today!

THIS EVENT IS AFFILIATED WITH
N.C. STATE CONFERENCE OF THE N.A.A.C.P.

"OUR servants meet in OUR House. They decide how to spend OUR taxes. But their decisions have been corrupted. Rich corporations pay to play in our House. We can't match their money, but with God's Grace and your hard work, we can sure out-number them! Please join me on February 10, 2007 in Raleigh."

*Rev. Dr. William J. Barber,
President of the North Carolina State NAACP*

THE PEOPLE'S AGENDA: 14 POINTS

1. All Children Need High Quality, Well Funded, Diverse Schools.
2. Livable Wages and Support for Low Income People.
3. Health Care for All.
4. Redress Two Ugly Chapters in N.C.'s Racist History: The overthrow of the bi-racial 1898 Wilmington Government and the sterilization of poor, mainly Black, women from 1947-1977.
5. Same Day Registration and Public Financing of Elections.
6. Lift Every Historically Black College and University.
7. Document and Redress 200 years of State Discrimination in Hiring and Contracting.
8. Provide Affordable Housing and Stop Consumer Abuse.
9. Abolish Racially Biased Death Penalty and Mandatory Sentencing Laws; Reform our Prisons.
10. Put Young People to Work to Save the Environment and Fight for Environmental Justice.
11. Collective Bargaining for Public Employees.
12. Protect the Rights of Immigrants from Latin America and other Nations.
13. Organize, Strengthen and Provide Funding For Our Civil Rights Enforcement Agencies and Statutes Now.
14. Bring Our Troops Home from Iraq Now.

GROWING LIST OF HKONJ COALITION PARTNERS

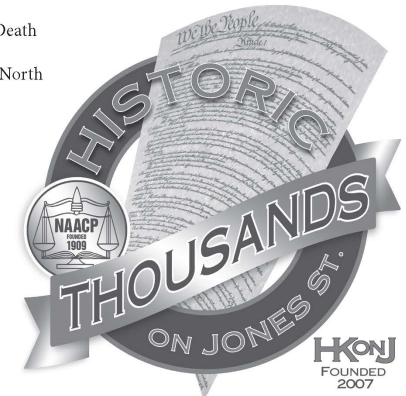
- ACORN
- AFL-CIO
- Black Workers for Justice
- Carolina Justice Policy Center
- Democracy NC
- El Pueblo
- General Baptist State Convention
- Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation
- NC Association of CDC's
- NC Black Leadership Caucus
- NC Community Development Initiative
- NC Council of Churches
- NC Fair Share
- NC Institute for Minority Econ Dev
- NC Justice Center
- NC WARN
- Old North State Medical Society
- Opportunities Industrialization Center
- People of Color Day Coalition Members
- People of Faith Against the Death Penalty
- Prince Hall Grand Lodge of North Carolina
- Southern Faith, Labor and Community Alliance
- Southerners for Economic Justice
- The AME Zion Church
- Triangle Lost Generation Task Force
- Triangle Urban League
- UE Local 150
- UFCW

If your organization would like to endorse this event please contact the NC NAACP by January 30th.

Email HKonJ@gmail.com or visit <http://naacp.ubernc.com/> or call

1-(866)-586-6544 Today!

For grassroots organizations that wish to sign-up for this event contact Curtis Gatewood at 919-939-3401 or curtisgatewood@minister.com

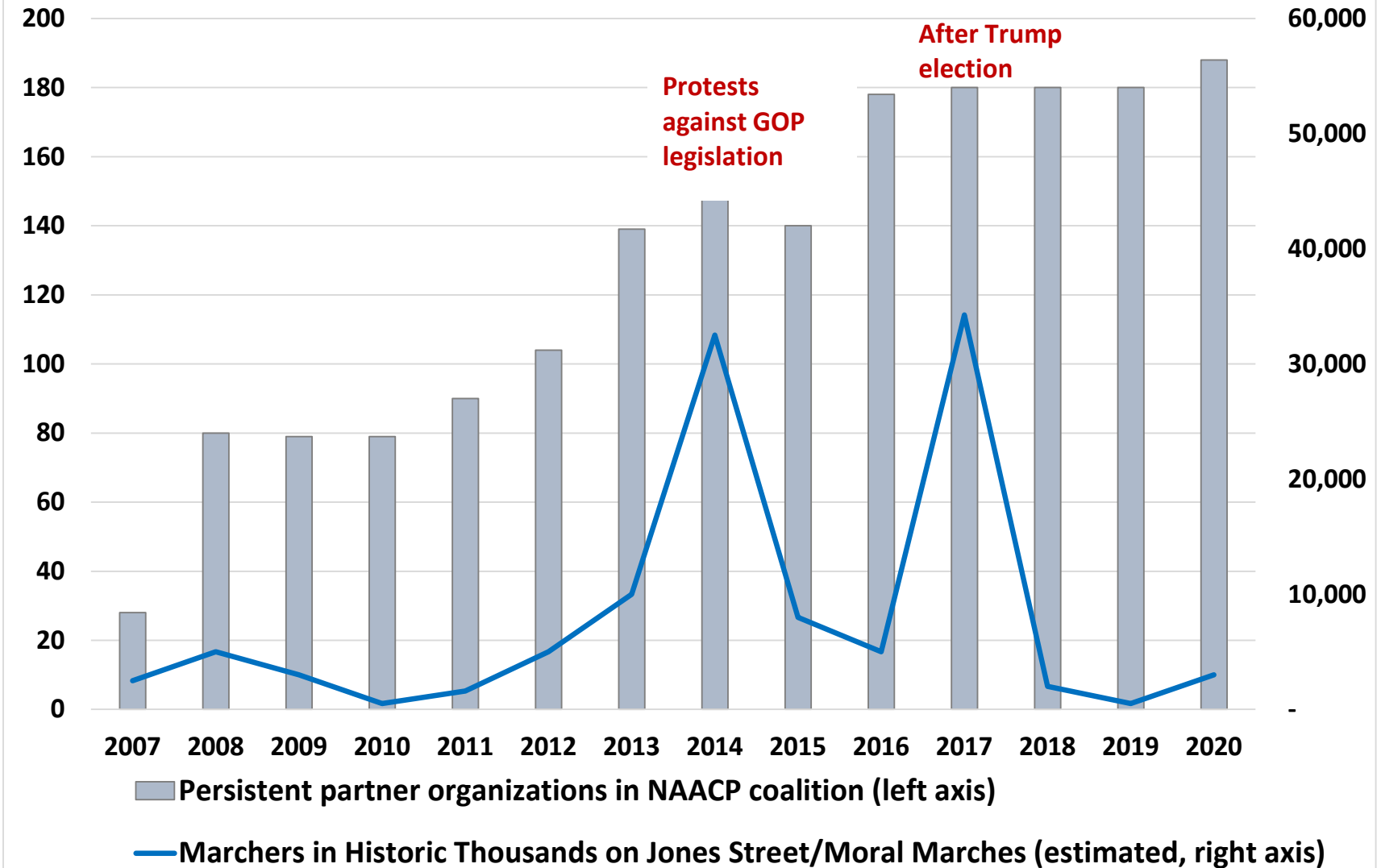


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From 2007 to 2010, the Barber movement pressured North Carolina Democrats to adopt its progressive agenda – with only a little success.

In 2010 and 2012, hard-right Republicans took control of state government and the NAACP coalition became the hub for protests against extreme legislation.

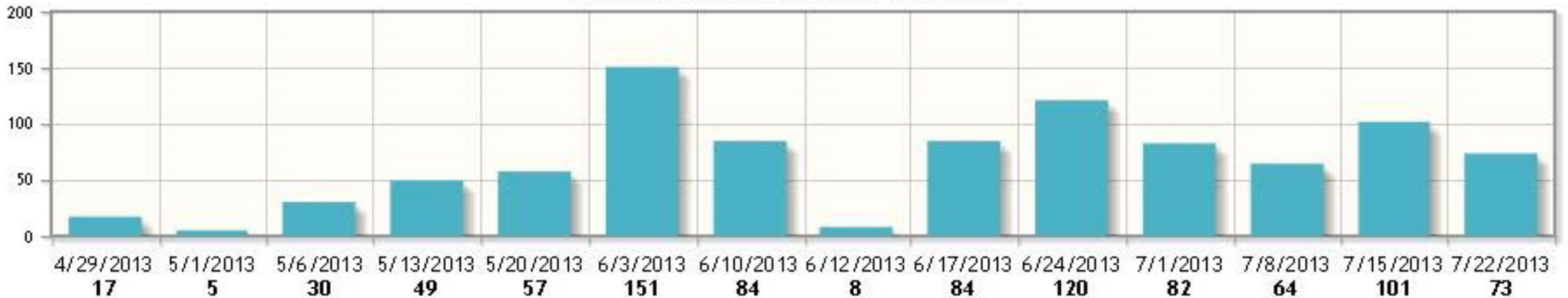
Figure 5. North Carolina NAACP's Partner Organizations & Annual Marchers in Raleigh, 2007 to 2020



From late April to July 2013, Moral Mondays protests included civil disobedience sit-ins at the legislature – and almost 1000 participants were deliberately arrested.



Total protest arrests over time





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statesvillenaacp #NCMFS organizer
Tyler Swanson and #MoralMonday
Arrestee Faye Daniels registering
Voters in Iredall Co.

After direct action protests failed to counter the GOP, the Barber-led coalition launched [MORAL FREEDOM SUMMER](#) in 2014 -- with 34 field organizers deployed to do voter registration and support various activities by local NAACP branches.



Turning to Georgia, around the same time Reverend Barber started building the Forward Together movement, an Atlanta attorney, STACEY ABRAMS, decided to run for the state legislature – as a step toward a potential run for governor – in the belief that state government has “tremendous potential” to help people, including minorities and the poor.

Abrams won her Atlanta-area House seat in 2006 and was reelected in 2008 and 2010.

**After November 2010,
Abrams won the post of
House Minority Leader**
– at a moment when Georgia
Democrats had experienced
major losses and nine newly
re-elected white Democratic
legislators switched to the
GOP.



Ms. Abrams, right, in the Georgia House of Representatives, where she was the minority leader for six years. David Goldman/Associated Press

The Macon Telegraph
Jan 7, 2011.

Right after she became House Minority Leader, Stacey Abrams hit the road.

An early trip took Abrams and Caucus Chairman Brian Thomas to mid-state and southern stops in ALBANY, COLUMBUS, VALDOSTA, and MACON.

Georgia Democrats seeking a road back

House leaders travel, talk in rebuilding effort

By JIM GAINES
jgaines@macon.com

Holding barely more than one-third of state House seats, Georgia Democrats plan to play a long game, according to their leaders.

House Minority Leader **Stacey Abrams**, from Atlanta, and House Democratic Caucus Chairman Brian Thomas, of Lilburn, spent the past two days touring southern Georgia and the midstate — including a stop in Macon — as they try to figure out ways to rebuild following a

Republican sweep of statewide offices in fall 2010.

“We believe the resurgence of the Democratic Party comes with information,” Abrams said.

They visited Albany, Columbus, Valdosta and Macon, seeking to build new connections in areas that now have little or no Democratic representation, Thomas said.

Facing the reality that they’re unlikely to pass legislation of their own, or even seriously hinder Republican initiatives, House Democrats plan to focus attention on the details and con-



Abrams



Thomas

sequences of Republican plans — something Democrats have done poorly for some time, Abrams said.

“Our job is to hold the majority accountable,” she said. “The ability to pretend that anybody else did it is now gone.”

House Democrats plan to focus on three themes: economic security, educational opportunity and individual freedom, Abrams said.

Economic security covers not just job creation but keeping sales tax off groceries and preventing a corporate tax cut at the expense of taxing nonprofits, she said.

Thomas acknowledged that 57 percent of the state budget is spent on education, but he said a well-funded school system is the biggest attractor of new businesses.

“I think the big battle lines this year will be drawn on education,” he said.

Generous funding is not the only criterion for judging educational quality, “but it’s a really good indicator,” Thomas said.

On the third theme, individual freedom, Abrams mentioned “reproductive rights.” Among many bills pre-filed by Rep. Bobby Franklin, R-Marietta, is a bill that would

SEE DEMOCRAT, 3A

“Abrams said Democrats plan to connect ... throughout the state with lonely Democrats and ‘people who don’t know they’re Democrats yet.’”

Also aimed to recruit “2012 Democratic candidates for areas that are now represented only by Republicans....”



Stacey Abrams ✓
@staceyabrams



Just won champion showman @Legislative Roundup @GeorgiaNationalFair in Perry. V. proud of calf Sweetie & coach John



6:14 PM · Oct 6, 2012 · Photos on iOS

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Atlanta, July 14, 2011 – Georgia Asian Times honored this year's 25 Most Influential Asian Americans in Georgia with a memorable dinner attended by distinguished dignitaries, politicians, community leaders, businesses, activists, and ethnic media.

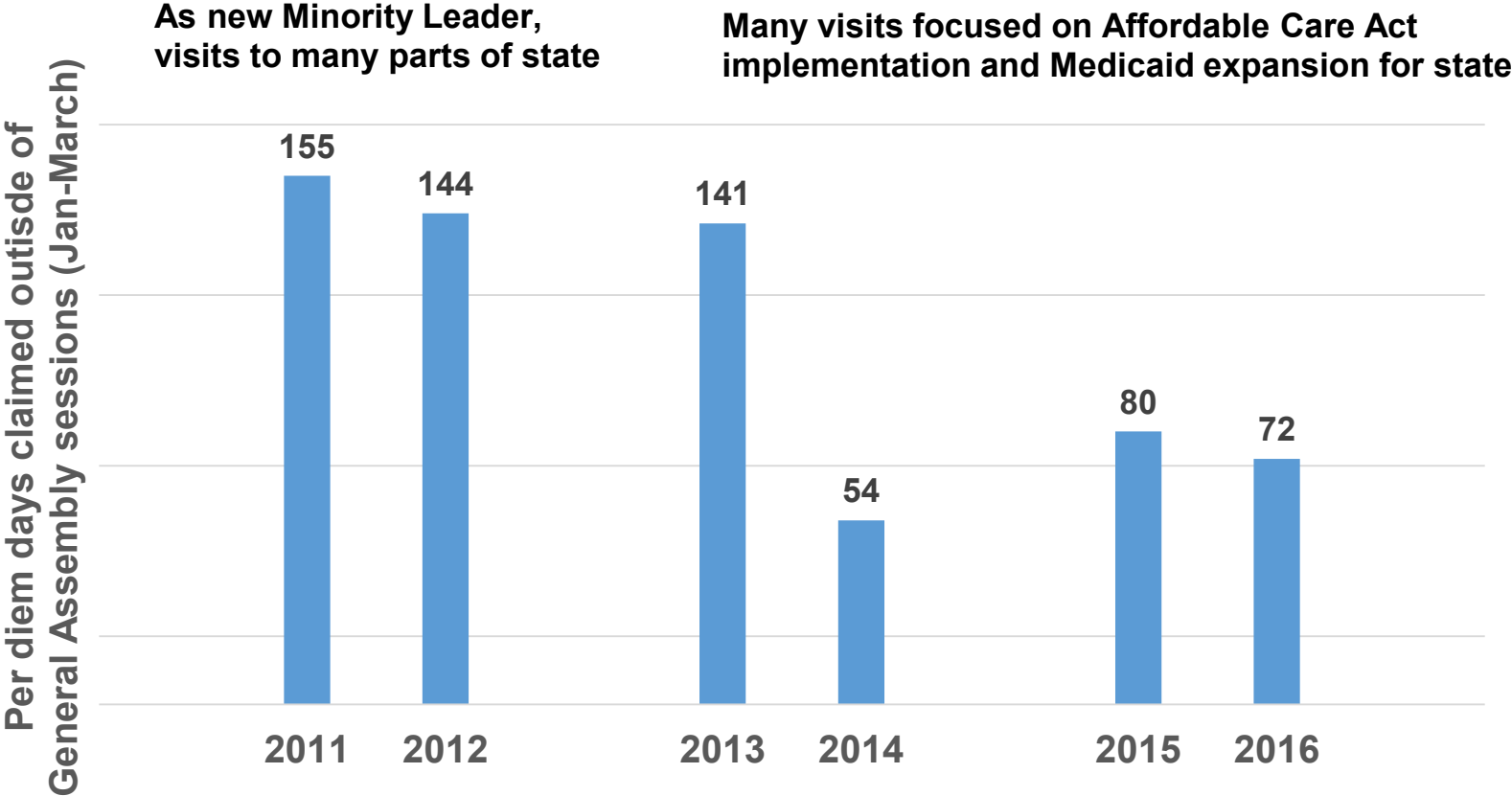
Over 300 guests attended the awards dinner included Anna Kao, Director General of TECO Atlanta, Takuji Hanatani, Consul General of Japan Atlanta, Al Busyra Basnur, Consul General of Indonesia Houston, Ray Donato, Honorary Consul of Philippines, Sam Olen, Attorney General of Georgia, Sue Everhart, Chair of Georgia's Republican Party, and Stacey Abrams, Georgia House Minority leader.



2021 GAT 25 Most Influential Asian Americans Pacific Islanders in Georgia

NOMINATION OPENS!
<https://gasiatimes.com/g8x1>

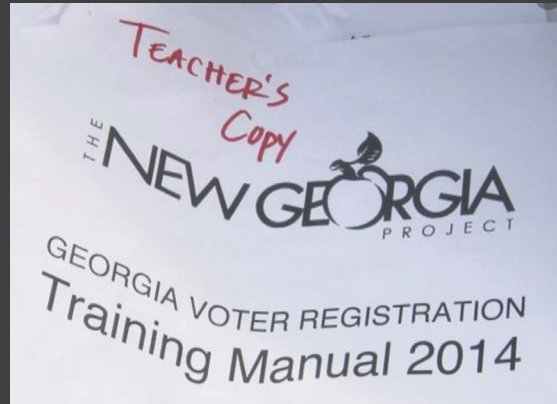
Days House Minority Leader Stacey Abrams attended conventions, town halls, and events, most in Georgia cities and counties



Sources: Salzer 2018; Szilagyi 2018.

As the top Georgia Democratic leader, Abrams raised money to improve her caucus's message capacities, created an intern program, and articulated a broad message focused on expanding access to health care and education and shifting tax burdens toward the rich rather than the poor and middle class.

In 2013, to counter GOP efforts to obstruct the implementation of President Obama's Affordable Care Act, she launched the "New Georgia Project – Affordable Care Act" to send field outreach people into dozens of counties, including rural areas, to explain to people how to sign up on the insurance exchange. They learned that many Blacks and less economically privileged people did not understand that state-level Republicans were the ones obstructing their chances to gain health coverage. Partisan stands had to be spelled out for people.



In late 2014, Abrams turned the New Georgia Project into a major voter outreach organization sponsoring sustained on-the-ground voter registration and education



Funding for Abrams Candidate Campaigns & Nonprofit Voter Projects

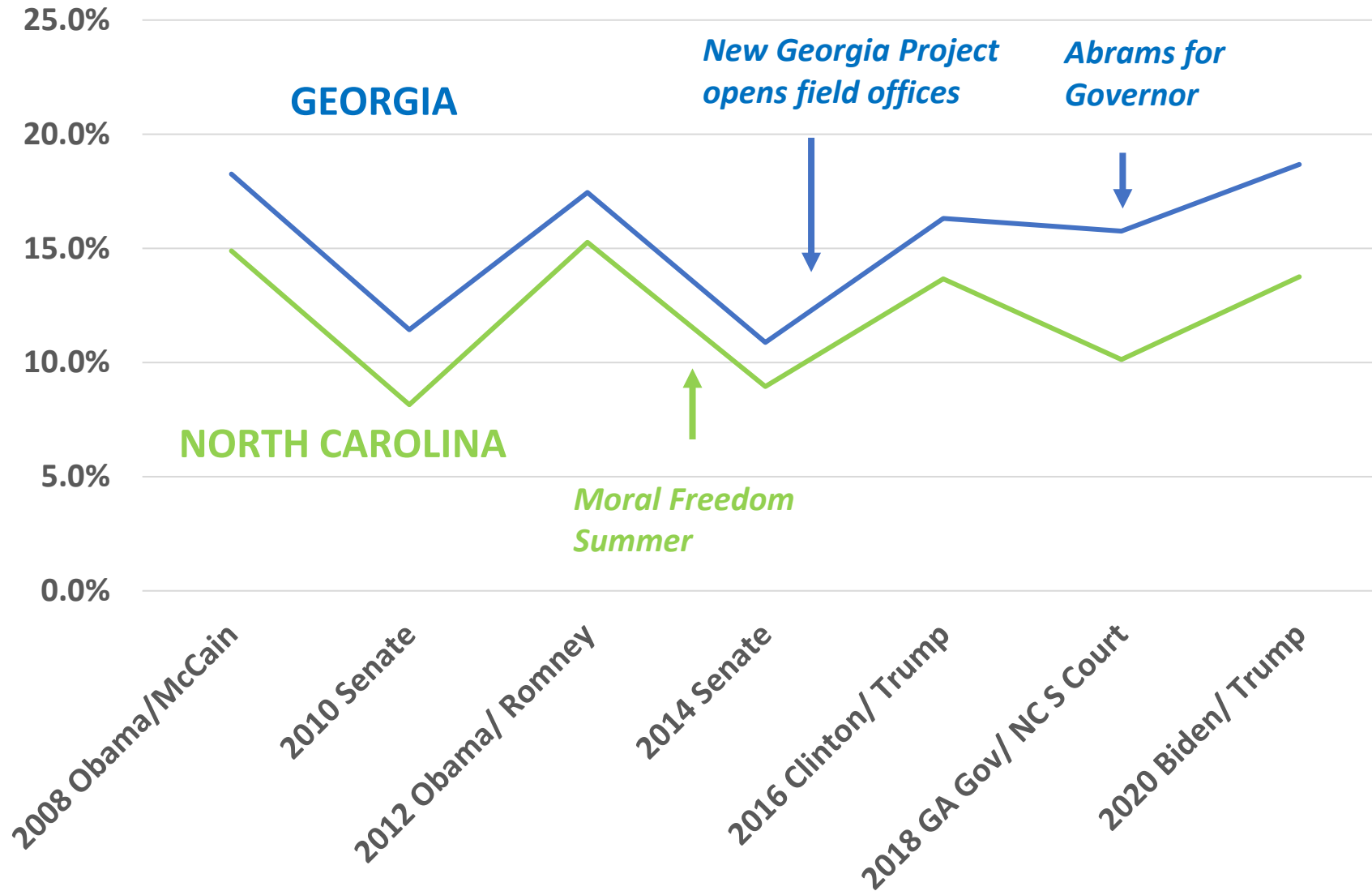
Time Period	Amounts Abrams raised as candidate	Amounts raised for nonprofits Abrams founded	Total Sums
Career in Georgia House, 2005-10	\$285,010.22	X	\$285,010.22
Minority Leader initial period, 2011-12	\$249,679.00	X	\$249,679.00
Organizational development, 2013-16	\$643,398.39	\$12,547,048	\$13,190,446.39
Gubernatorial bid, 2017-18	\$27,664,188.57	\$5,574,034	\$33,238,222.57

Sources: Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission, authors’ searches of candidate campaign reports filed under Stacey Yvonne Abrams, not including any donations she solicited to the state party or caucus. Total amounts for Abrams’s founded nonprofits determined from authors’ searches of IRS 990s for Third Sector Development, the Voter Access Institute, New Georgia Project, and New Georgia Project Action Fund.

ELECTORAL PAYOFFS?

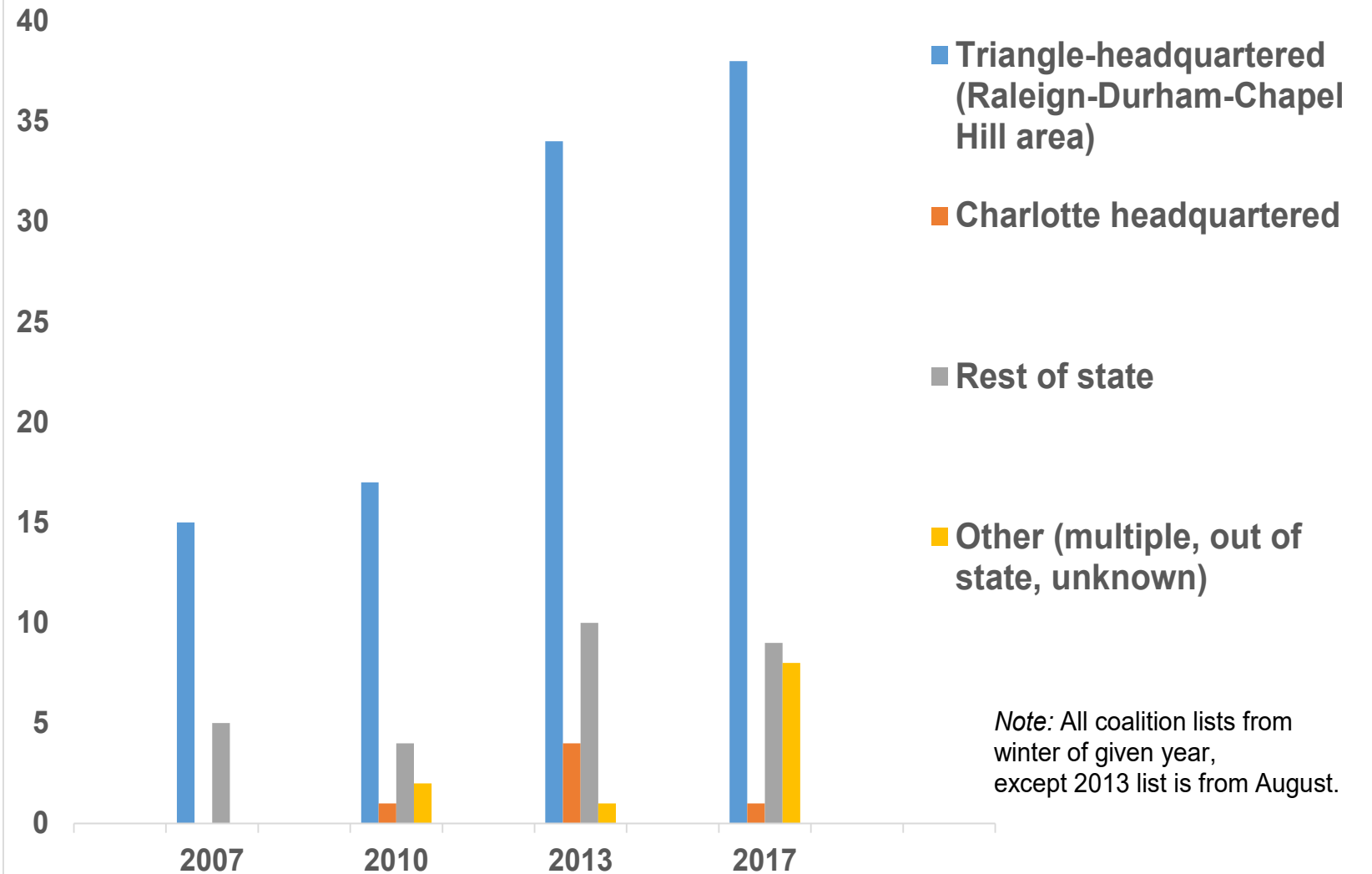
Our research looks for connections between counties where movements organize and increases in Black turnout and/or electoral gains for Democrats.

Figure 8. Georgia and North Carolina Black Turnout as Percent of Voting Age Citizens for Statewide Top of Ticket Races 2008 to 2020



Most advocacy and constituency organizations that joined the Forward Together coalition led by Reverend Barber's NAACP were headquartered in the metro Research Triangle counties

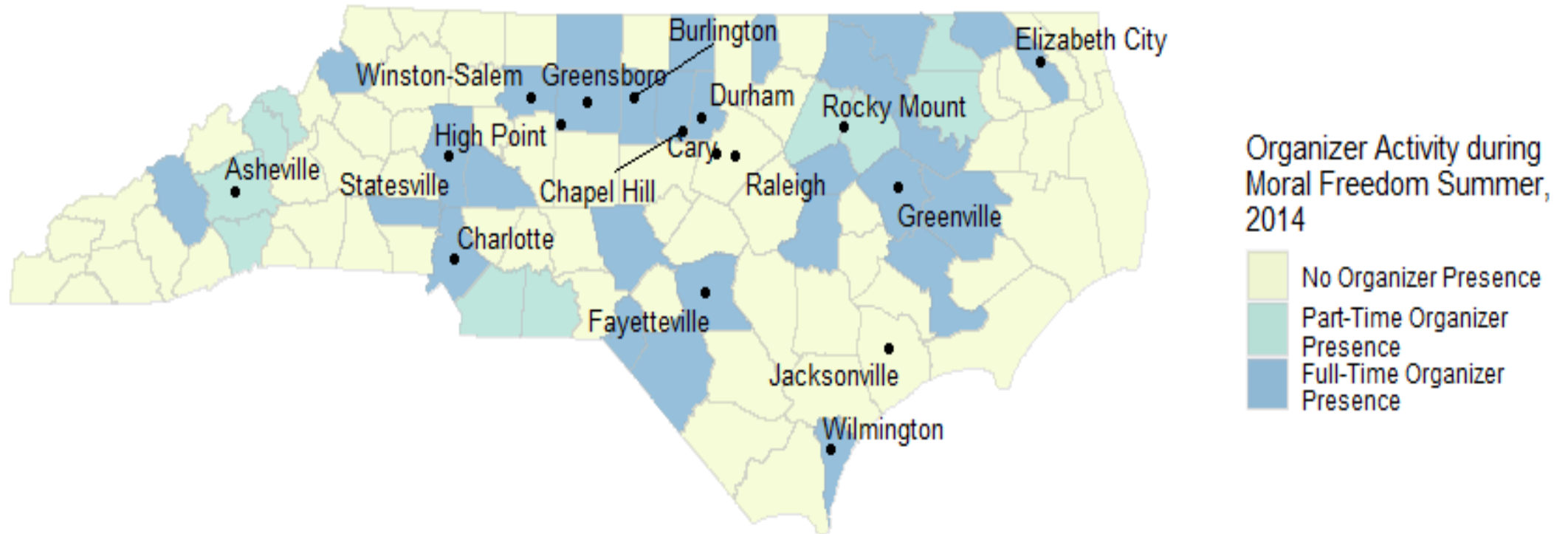
Figure 6. Organizational Partners in the North Carolina NAACP's Advocacy and Annual March Coalition
Persistent Partners from given year to 2020



Civil disobedience protesters arrested during the 2013 Moral Mondays were often affiliated with coalition organizations and fit the profile of metropolitan progressives:

- 86% white**
- 57% female**
- almost three-fifths were 55 years or older**
- many were active or retired ministers, professors, teachers, public sector workers, nonprofit employees, or business owners**
- c. two-thirds from metro counties (three-fifths from the Research Triangle counties alone); 9% from medium-city counties; just 20% from non-urban counties.**

North Carolina Counties with Moral Freedom Summer Organizers, 2014 – a range of rural counties had organizers, but they were disproportionately deployed in metro and medium city areas



NO EVIDENCE OF ANY DISCERNIBLE ELECTORAL IMPACT IN 2014 OR BEYOND FROM MORAL FREEDOM SUMMER ORGANIZING OR OTHER MOVEMENT EFFORTS

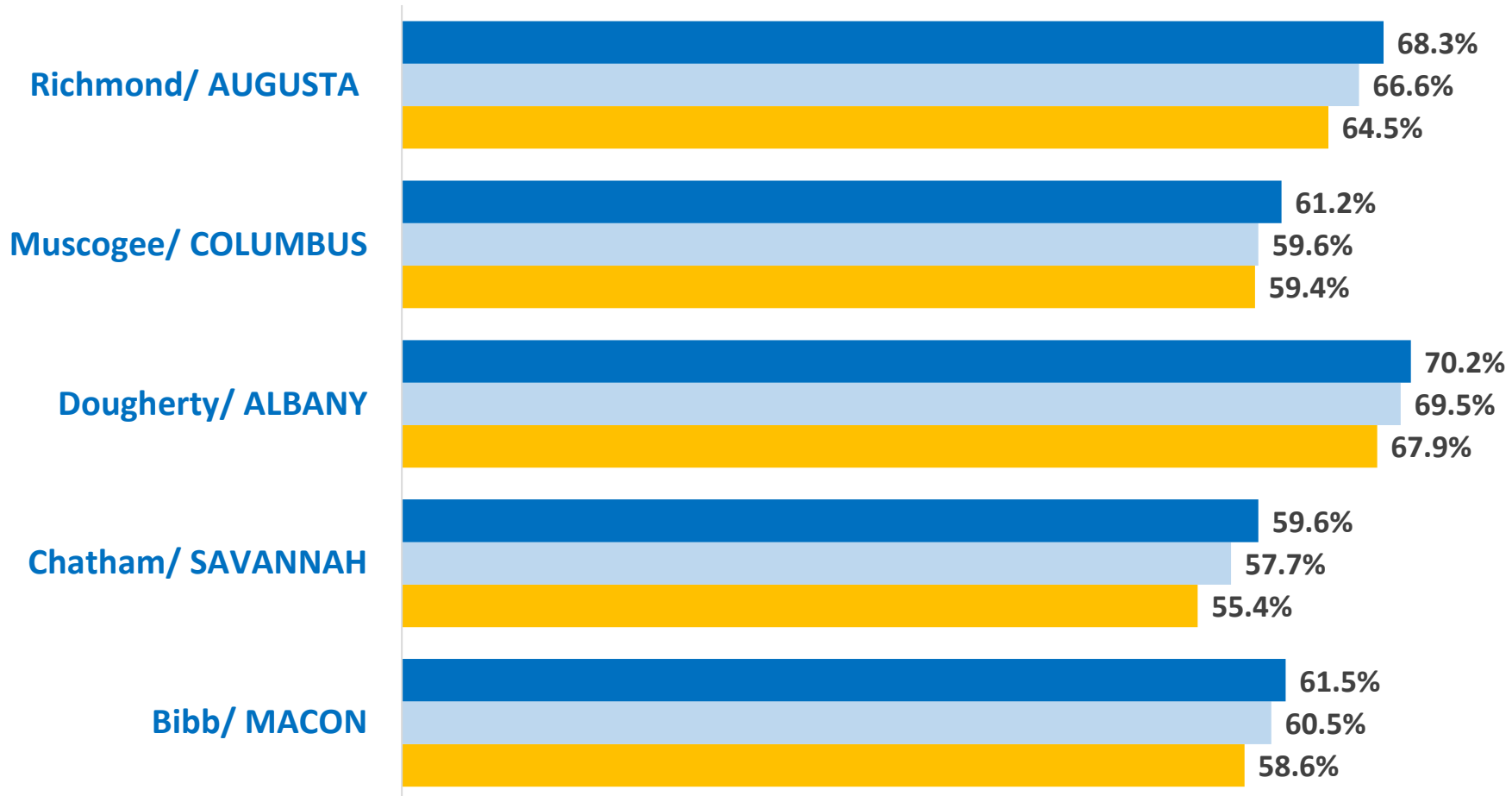
- **Journalistic accounts found that rural organizers registered very few new voters – and only about 4000 new registrations happened (despite goal of 50,000)**
- **In November 2014, Democratic Senator Kay Hagan lost badly to GOP challenger Thom Tillis – and turnout was sharply down among Blacks and young people.**
- **Our statistical models found no positive impacts of various Barber movement measures on turnout or Democratic margins – in 2014, 2016, or 2020.**

Turning to GEORGIA...

From 2015 on, the New Georgia Project operated beyond as well as within the Atlanta region, out of regional offices in Albany, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, and Savannah, to support on the ground work in those medium cities and surrounding counties. By the time of the 2021 runoffs, substantial connections were already in place through the NGP and many allied nonprofit organizing groups.

After the **NEW GEORGIA PROJECT** opened field offices beyond Atlanta in 2015, Democrats gained vote shares vs. Republicans

■ **ABRAMS 2018 Governor (49.3%)** ■ **CLINTON 2016 president (47.3%)**
■ **NUNN 2014 Senate (46.1%)**





Organizers from the New Georgia Project, including Carey Jenkins, talk about what it takes to be an effective community organizer in Fulton County on Nov. 3. (Melina Mara/The Washington Post)

New Georgia Project, which was founded by Abrams in 2013, has focused on registering young voters of color across the state. Nse Ufot, the organization's chief executive, said her staff has identified 100,000 people they'll try to register before the Dec. 7 deadline and expects to sign up as many as 20,000 of them.

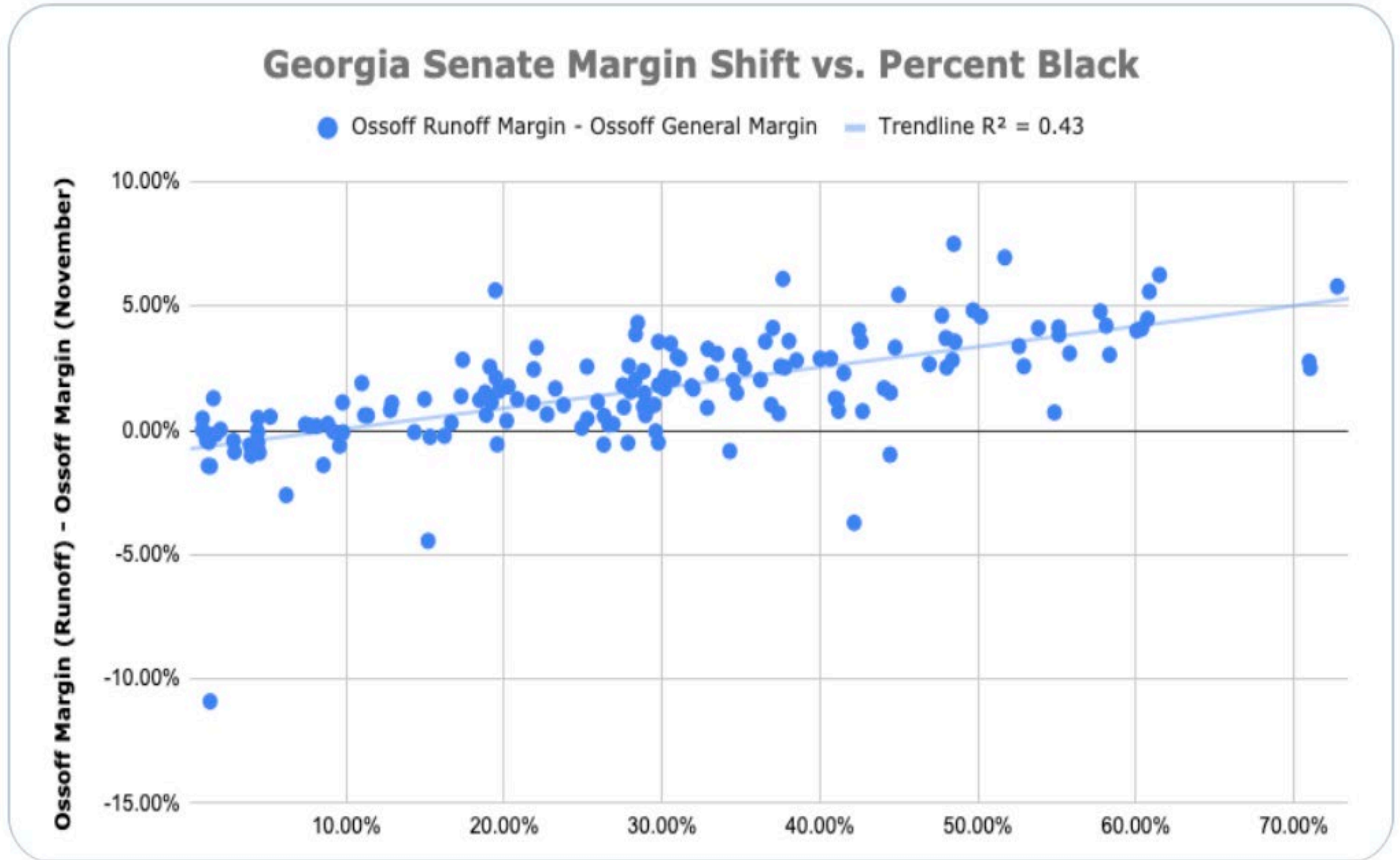
**BLACK VOTERS
MATTER field
worker canvassing
for January 2021
runoffs in the
small town of
Blakely, in Early
County, southwest
Georgia.**

From “In Georgia, get-out-the-vote operations that helped Biden win haven’t stopped,” by Vanessa Williams and Reis Thebault, *Washington Post*, November 19, 2020.



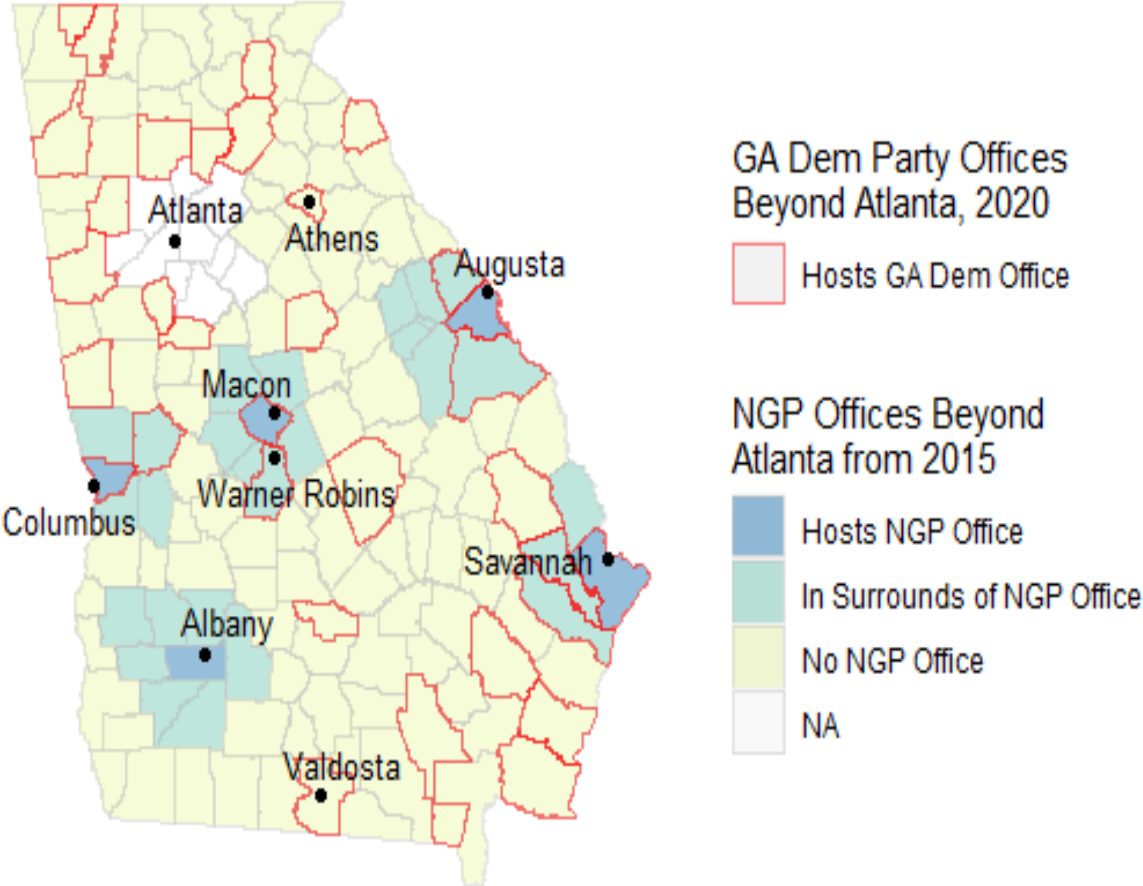
Wanda Mosley with Black Voters Matter visits voters in rural Blakely, Ga., on Nov. 2. (Melina Mara/The Washington Post)

Shift in Black votes from Nov 2020 to January 5 runoffs



Ryan Matsumoto,
Jan 6 NYTimes?

We have data on Democratic Party and New Georgia Project offices beyond Atlanta during the 2021 Georgia Senate Runoffs --= and we consider rural counties around the NGP hubs as within reach of its field organizers.



Our statistical analysis backs up media accounts that on-the-ground organizing in the runoff period significantly boosted Black voter turnout and improved Warnock and Ossoff’s margins.

NGP and probably other nonprofits’ efforts had a greater impact on Black turnout than party offices – and there may have been a de facto division of labor.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Black Turnout Retention (1)	Change in Dem Vote Share (2)
Dem Party Field Office, 2020	-1.647* (0.834)	0.045 (0.176)
NGP Field Office, 2015ff	2.002** (0.780)	0.525*** (0.165)
Ossoff-Warnock Tour Stop	-1.515 (1.041)	-0.107 (0.217)
Black Reg %, 2020	0.024 (0.018)	-0.001 (0.004)
Change in Black Reg %, 2020-2021	-0.050 (0.077)	-0.014 (0.016)
Black CVAP as % of Total, 2020	0.076*** (0.020)	0.003 (0.004)
% of Total CVAP (25+) with BA	0.108 (0.078)	-0.007 (0.017)
Median Per Capita Income	0.005 (0.068)	-0.041*** (0.014)
Population Density	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.0005)
Constant	83.358*** (1.842)	2.071*** (0.388)
Observations	150	150
R ²	0.248	0.221
Adjusted R ²	0.199	0.171
Residual Std. Error (df = 140)	3.345	0.706
F Statistic (df = 9; 140)	5.117***	4.412***

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

THE BOTTOM LINE FOR TWO SOCIAL JUSTICE CAMPAIGNS

- The Barber movement *built from outside the party system*, linked NAACP branches to a coalition of professional advocacy organizations, and favored *non-partisan moral messages* about a wide range of issues. It has not engaged in sustained electoral or local organizing – or boosted Black or non-metro turnout.
- Abrams orchestrated networked projects started from within government and the Democratic Party – and eventually knit de facto alliances of partisan and civic organizations doing *well-funded, sustained, explicitly partisan outreach to educate and turn out voters, especially Blacks*. Gains in turnout and Democratic margins have been gradual but steady.
- Arguably, the Abrams approach has made more headway in shifting the balance of political power. Media-oriented protests. Issue advocacy, and moral non-partisan messages have not achieved similar results in North Carolina – and may have left reformers and Democrats increasingly/overly dependent on metro college-educated progressives with little on-the-ground capacity. Black turnout has declined.