

Dividing the Donkey

Modern Racism and the Dissolution of North Carolina's Democratic Party, 1963-1968

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Go as far to the left as the people can stand and as far to the right as you can stand.

- Terry Sanford, North Carolina Governor, 1961-1964

He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.

- Revelations 22:11

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Introduction

The Mirror and the Bridge

On the morning of his fourteenth birthday, John, the protagonist of James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, gazes forlornly into his family's dirty living room mirror, contemplating his most earnest desire. He wants desperately to know whether or not he is ugly. Baldwin never needs to answer the question directly. In a novel concerned with spiritual, not physical beauty, where everyone sins, no one is redeemed, and the degrading power of white racism is unescapable, it seems inevitable that John will one day become just as ugly as those around him. "Woe is me," Baldwin's characters cry out, "for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."¹

As I delved deeper into this study of race and politics in North Carolina's recent past, I often found myself contemplating Baldwin's novel, for John's desire is urgently our own. Our shared histories operate like a collective mirror. When we gaze into the past, we do so not as neutral observers, but as partisans, like John, who yearn to see a beautiful image smiling back. For more than a century after 1860, white America's mirror of choice was the Civil War.² Yet with the last remaining personal recollections of the war long gone, the United States has adopted a new mirror — not the Civil War, but the civil rights movement. Like the Civil War, the long and ongoing struggle for black equality profoundly challenged white America's sense of

¹James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (New York: Modern Library, 1995 edition, copyright 1953), 26, 250.

² Writing at the centennial of America's great national tragedy, Robert Penn Warren contended that the war "reaches in a thousand ways into our blood stream and our personal present," providing white Northerners with a "treasury of virtue" to exculpate their sins and white southerners with a "great alibi" capable of explaining away their ignominious poverty. See Robert Penn Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War* quoted in David W. Blight, *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2013).

itself as a basically good nation. By demanding political freedom, personal dignity and the power to fully participate in the economic and civil life of the polity, black Americans ripped off the veneer of beauty in which white Americans garbed themselves. Rather than recognize their flaws and work to change the system of institutional racism they created, many whites elected instead to co-opt the story of the civil rights movement, sanitizing and constricting it until it formed a new reflection capable of telling them how just their country was and remained.³

For few people is this warped mirror so deceiving as it is for the white population of North Carolina. White North Carolinians have long regarded themselves as exceptional – unquestionably Southern, but more democratic, egalitarian and racially inclusive than their neighbors. This study of racial politics during the state’s 1964 Democratic gubernatorial primaries and 1968 gubernatorial general election questions and complicates their view.⁴

³ As the historian Timothy Tyson put it, “The sugar-coated confections that pass for the popular history of the civil rights movement offer outright lies about most white Americans’ responses to the freedom movement instead of reminding us how profoundly it challenged American practices of justice and democracy. No one, in the rosy glow of our hindsight, was opposed to this movement except pot-bellied, tobacco-chewing racist rednecks in Mississippi.” See Timothy B. Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name: A True Story* (New York: Crown, 2004), 106. Here, Tyson is perhaps channeling W.E.B. DuBois who more succinctly wrote “this country has had its appetite for facts on the Negro problem spoiled by sweets.” For the seminal work on the battle over remembering the civil rights movement, see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91 (2005), 1233-63. On the revolutionary character of the civil rights movement, see J. Todd Moe, “Focusing Our Eyes on the Prize: How Community Studies are Reframing and Rewriting the History of the Civil Rights,” in *Civil Rights History from the Ground Up Local Struggles, a National Movement*. Emilye Crosby (Athens Ga: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 163-166.

⁴ At its core, historiography on North Carolina boils down to debating the wisdom of V.O. Key Jr. His portrait of the state was one of progress and hope. In the oft-quoted words of his 1949 essay *North Carolina: Progressive Plutocracy*, the state stood apart from the rest of the South, more “progressive” and “presentable” than its neighbors and better able to foster “cooperation between white and Negro leadership.” See *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984,) 205-206. As later scholarship made clear, Key did not so much invent the myth of a progressive North Carolina as articulate a belief carefully cultivated by North Carolina’s white elite. By portraying their state as moderate, stable and more tolerant of its black population than the rest of the South, wealthy whites attracted investments to the state that allowed their small cohort to prosper even as North Carolina remained one of the poorest, least healthy, least educated, and most racially repressive states in the country. See Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow : Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) 73; Charles W. McKinney Junior, *Greater Freedom: The Evolution of the Civil Rights Struggle in Wilson, North Carolina* (Lanham Maryland: University Press of America, 2010), xix; Robert Korstad and James Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 3-4.

From 1963 to 1968, North Carolina transformed from a state controlled by Democrats with a conservative wing openly hostile to racial equality to a two-party state with a Republican Party more subtly opposed to expanding the rights of black Americans. Though some whites in 1963 supported racial equality, most did not. Over the next five years, the open expression of anti-black sentiment in the state became increasingly rare. White supremacy, though diminished, was not dead or dying, it was evolving. Those who opposed the black freedom movement increasingly did so in the language of “modern racism”—a set of values that promotes resistance to efforts to assist communities of color but that does not explicitly denigrate minority groups as such. In both the 1964 and 1968 gubernatorial elections, the candidate most skilled in using this modern racism to attract votes emerged victorious. This dynamic created an apparent paradox: a politics still dominated by race in a state increasingly devoid of naked racial animus.⁵

The decline of North Carolina’s hegemonic Democratic Party and the rise of its Republicans cannot be divorced from this development. North Carolina’s Grand Old Party, which had long advocated for small business principles and racial conservatism, was ready to pounce when the opportunity arose to win white votes.⁶ When black Tar Heels forced race to the center of North Carolina public life in 1963, they drove a wedge into the Democratic Party that divided it with astonishing speed. As liberal Democrats strove to support racial equality, conservative whites began to leave their traditional political home to become Republicans.

⁵ Other scholars offer similar definitions for the set of attitudes that have replaced white supremacy for many white Americans. According to Donald Kinder and Lynn Sander, modern racism “is neither prejudice, pure and simple, nor traditional values, pure and simple, but rather the combination of the two.” See *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 292. Similarly, John McConahay defines modern racism as “the feeling that blacks are violating cherished values or making illegitimate demands for change to the racial status quo.” Ibid.

⁶ Jonathan Thomas Young Houghton, PHD Dissertation, Chapel Hill, 1993, *North Carolina’s Republican Party From Reconstruction to Radical Right*, 4, 20.

Part social, part political history, this work seeks to integrate the voices of ordinary white Tar Heels and their elected officials. Their relationship was dynamic. Politicians both responded to white public opinion on race and helped shape the acceptable contours of those opinions. Though every Tar Heel possessed a nuanced, unique and sometimes contradictory set of opinions on race, during the mid-1960s, most white North Carolinians could be classified either as a racial liberal, racial conservative, white supremacist, or as an advocate for managed race relations. Racial liberals believed in using the power of the government to move the nation toward racial equality. Racial conservatives professed an insincere desire for racial equality but flatly rejected the role of the government in achieving this end. White supremacists believed in the inherent inequality of different races. Finally, proponents of managed race relations worked to make life tolerable for blacks, but excluded them from the political sphere and supported their continued subordination.⁷ As managed race relations came under fire both from black activists and white politicians during 1963, most of its proponents became racial conservatives. These terms are not perfect descriptors, but North Carolinians of the era would understand this division and many used a similar taxonomy to discuss the racial issues of their day.

Chapter One opens in early 1963 in a state still hanging on to the last vestiges of managed race relations. It focuses on two related campaigns: the efforts of black activists to overthrow Jim Crow and of Democratic politicians to position themselves to succeed North Carolina's sitting governor, Terry Sanford. Sanford took office in 1961 after winning a thrilling primary in 1960 against I. Beverley Lake. Lake, a law school professor from Wake Forest, wrote

⁷ Historian William Chafe refers to this system of oppression as a "code of civilities." See William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 1980). For an account of the origins of managed race relations in North Carolina, see James Leloudis, *Schooling in the New South: Pedagogy, Self and Society in North Carolina, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996,) xvi, 177-179, 227.

North Carolina's amicus brief to the Supreme Court in 1954 attacking school integration and was the state's chief proponent of segregation. Sanford was a remarkable candidate, a creature of North Carolina politics supported by a coalition of liberals and populist farmers; however, he was limited to one term by North Carolina's constitution and thus could not run for reelection.⁸ During the first stage of the 1964 Democratic Primary, three men – Richardson Preyer, Dan Moore and Beverly Lake – decided to run to replace Sanford. Representing racial liberals, conservatives and white supremacists respectively, their campaigns were profoundly shaped by the civil rights demonstrations spreading across the state. The chapter ends on November 30, 1963 when Lake announced that he would run for governor for a second time.

Chapter Two covers the second stage of the gubernatorial primaries, shifting the locus of action from street protests and backroom maneuverings to the campaign trail. Preyer won a plurality of the vote during the first primary on May 30, 1964, only to be defeated soundly in the runoff by Moore on June 27. Though previous scholars have failed to recognize the centrality of race to the 1964 primaries, these months marked a formative moment in the evolution of modern racism in North Carolina. As Preyer moved to the right on race in an unsuccessful attempt to disguise his racial liberalism, Lake and Moore fought to see who could better wield the politics of modern racism to forge a winning coalition.⁹

The third and final chapter accelerates forward to the 1968 general election between the Republican, Jim Gardner, and the Democrat, Bob Scott. While white opposition to the Civil

⁸ John Drescher, *Triumph of Good Will: How Terry Sanford Beat a Champion of Segregation and Reshaped the South* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000).

⁹ See Paul Luebke, *Tar Heel Politics 2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 142- 143; Rob Christensen, *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics: The Personalities, Elections and Events that Shaped Modern North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 198-199; Drescher, *Triumph of Good Will*, 272, or James R. Spence's more comprehensive, *The Making of a Governor: The Moore- Preyer-Lake Primaries of 1964* (Winston-Salem: J.F. Blair, 1968). For a brief but incisive analysis of race and the 1964 primaries, see Korstad and Leloudis *To Right These Wrongs*, 77-79.

Rights Act took center stage during the 1964 primaries, it was white fear – of riots, rapidly evolving racial norms, and of a federal government increasingly committed to helping blacks – that defined the 1968 campaign. Though Scott, son of the popular former governor Kerr Scott, ultimately prevailed, this close contest marked the end of North Carolina’s membership in the Solid South and the beginning of its current political epoch. The 1968 general election is slightly less orphaned in the literature than the 1964 campaign, yet the existing writing on the triumph of Scott over Gardner is still inadequate to properly explain the significance of the election to the broader field of American political history.¹⁰ By analyzing the 1964 and 1968 elections through the prism of race, this work improves upon North Carolina’s political historiography.

A close study of North Carolina politics during the mid-1960s can also help inform broader national conversations on the rise of the Republican South. This work complements the findings of most scholars who emphasize that race was the most important factor driving white Southerners to become Republicans.¹¹ It adds to this literature in two ways. First, it aims to capture the granularity and complexity of change which is often elided in larger national

¹⁰ The fullest assessment comes from Jane Pettis Wiseman, Master’s Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *The ‘New Politics’ in North Carolina: James Gardner and the 1968 Governor’s Race*, 1971. While her thesis proves helpful for understanding the general contours of the campaign, she incorrectly contends that “Both candidates [Scott and Gardner] ignored the racial issue because the preference of black voters was preordained.” In *North Carolina Republicans and the Conservative Revolution, 1964-1968*, Amos Esty argues that “The state GOP grew during the 1960s by forging a coalition of the urban, business-minded middle class and rural social conservatives. United by their race and their antipathy for communism and taxes, these groups formed an alliance that marked the denouement of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition and led to the rise of a politics based on racial polarization and economic individualism.” Persuasive though this point is, Esty creates too neat a divide between Gardner’s conservative-minded individualism and his appeal to racial prejudice; furthermore, by ignoring how Bob Scott responded to these developments, he misses half the story. See *North Carolina Historical Review* volume LXXXII (January 2005,) 2.

¹¹ Surveying the existing literature on this topic in 2011, Glenn Feldman concluded that, “While the rise of the modern GOP in the South is obviously about more than just race, just as clearly it is about race more than anything else.” Glenn Feldman, “Conclusion: America’s Appointment with Destiny— A Cautionary Tale,” in *Painting Dixie Red: When, Where, Why and How the South Became Republican*, ed. Glenn Feldman (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2011), 338

studies.¹² The movement of conservative whites out of the Democratic Party and the blossoming of modern racism that accompanied it was hardly clean-cut in North Carolina. Though the state's politicians learned to speak in the coded language of modern racism, they often struggled to stay on script. In particular, the losers – Preyer, Lake and Gardner – occasionally erred by voicing their privately held racial views, even if those opinions were unacceptable to voters. Likewise the white voters of North Carolina did not uniformly adjust their rhetoric or their voting habits to match the evolution of the state's racial politics. Some voters mastered the art of modern racism years before others; some never learned it at all.

Second, research on the connections between white supremacy and modern conservatism often focuses either on the actions of politicians or on the lived experiences of ordinary white southerners. This work borrows from each approach, both interrogating the choices politicians made to ease the transition of southern whites into the GOP and investigating how this process actually played out among white North Carolinians.¹³ Thus, this story is a messy one, but one that nonetheless reveals an important trend: when forced to choose between a Democratic Party ambivalent on race and a racially conservative Republican Party, many white North Carolinians joined the GOP.

¹² With the exception of William Link's biography on Jesse Helms, North Carolina has not yet benefited from a close study of the origins of its modern Republican Party. See William Link, *Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008). This work augments Link's, adding a grassroots perspective and more strongly emphasizing the role white politicians played in orchestrating the white backlash against racial liberalism.

¹³ For works that focus on politicians, see: Ian Haney-López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014; Dan Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich, Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996). For studies with a more grassroots approach, see Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007).

Finally, this study should be of interest to historians of the black freedom movement. Many recent writings on the fight for racial equality have taken the form of community studies that maintain a concentrated gaze on a small geographic area.¹⁴ This work takes a different approach. Drawing primarily from newspaper articles, editorials and letters, it offers a snapshot of racial protest across the state. It is striking that even this method of inquiry, which risks lending itself to a white-washed view of the civil rights movement by privileging those voices that newspaper editors elected to hear, still furnishes an image of a state riven by racial conflict in which progress came from protest, not moderation.

Though researching this project would have been far easier five or ten years ago – many of the individuals who played important roles on the campaigns have passed away – 2014 to 2015 seem like the optimal time to explore the racial politics of the mid-1960s. The 1964 and 1968 elections pose strikingly contemporary questions concerning the value of black demonstrations, the relationship between conservatism and racism, and the choices facing Democrats who seek to win office while staying true to their values. It is no coincidence that these debates seem ripped from today’s headlines. The years 1963 to 1968 form a bridge connecting the Solid South to the two-party South, Black belt to Sunbelt, North Carolina’s past to its present. What they do not fully connect is the dreams of black Americans for racial equality with the fulfillment of that aspiration. Black Tar Heels dealt Jim Crow a serious blow between

¹⁴ Community studies, according to J. Todd Moyer, excel at accurately describing how individuals became politicized and what their goals were. In turn, this helps better delineate “successful” from “failed” campaigns, disambiguates local, regional, and national trends, and creates a truer chronology and periodization of the civil rights movement. The results are striking. Writing in 2011, Moyer contended that “On the evidence already provided by community studies, scholars now understand the civil rights movement to have been more female, more grass roots, less philosophically non-violent, and less pulpit-directed than they understood it to be thirty years ago, and where they see changes having taken place they are more likely to find decades worth of organizing and struggle behind them.” J. Todd Moyer, “Focusing Our Eyes on the Prize: How Community Studies are Reframing and Rewriting the History of the Civil Rights,” in *Civil Rights History from the Ground Up Local Struggles, a National Movement*. Emilye Crosby (Athens Ga: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 166. For the archetypal community study and one of the foundational texts in the study of North Carolina, see Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*.

1963 and 1968, yet they are not yet equal citizens. The story of North Carolina politics in these years helps explain the disquieting persistence of racial inequality nationwide. At a moment when blacks appeared poised to cross the bridge to the Promised Land, a new politics arose that obstructed their progress and granted white supremacy a new lease on life.

Chapter One

Two Campaigns: The Race to Replace Governor Terry Sanford and the Battle to Overthrow Jim Crow

“At a mass meeting Sunday night, Floyd McKissick, national chairman of the Congress on Racial Equality, told about 1,000 Negroes that Negroes are clamoring for civil rights while the white man is clamoring for a way to halt demonstrations. ‘This,’ he said, ‘is like trying to treat cancer with an aspirin.’”

- Greensboro *News and Record*, September 10, 1963.¹⁵

On February 3, 1963, more than four hundred furious white residents gathered in Yanceyville’s century-old courthouse for a meeting of the North Carolina Defenders of States Rights, a tony white-supremacist organization. Sixteen black children, protected by court order, had integrated Caswell County’s school system the previous month.¹⁶ That development did not sit well with the white citizens of this rural county which rested along North Carolina’s northern border with Virginia and on the western tip of its Black Belt.

Any doubts regarding the group’s opinion of integration dissipated quickly. As soon as Allison James, a pharmacist from Winston-Salem and the meeting’s first orator, commenced to speak, another man in the audience leapt to his feet and yelled, “I see a colored man back there and we don’t want him here!”¹⁷ Joseph Knox, a reporter for the *Greensboro News and Record*, observed the irate individual motion for everyone in the crowd who wanted to eject the black man to stand up. “The audience,” Knox wrote, “rose as a single body amid repeated cries of ‘Get

¹⁵ “Police Arrest 312 Protesters During March: Third Demonstration of Day Brings Officers with Gas Masks,” *Greensboro News and Record*, September 10, 1963,

¹⁶ “Caswell Rally Held to Fight Racial Mixing: Private School Plan Is Pushed At Meeting Attended by Over 400,” *Greensboro News and Record*, February 4, 1963.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

out of here, Jim Graves...Get Out...We don't want him in here!' The Negro, who had been standing in the rear corner of the court room, left without protest.”¹⁸

Furious though Graves may have felt after being forcibly expelled from an open meeting held in a public courthouse by men and women who knew him by name, he had good reason to fear even worse treatment. The Defenders chose their meeting location carefully. On May 21, 1870, John Walter Stephens, a white Republican, was lynched in the Courthouse basement, strangled and then stabbed in the throat and chest by the Ku Klux Klan. If the monument of the Confederate soldier standing guard outside the courthouse did not remind Graves that his white neighbors would resort to violence to defend Jim Crow, this none-too subtle tribute to Yanceyville's bloody past would.¹⁹

Finally freed of the burden of disclaiming before a mixed-race audience, James resumed, letting his neighbors know how best to handle desegregation. He advised, “Unless we take a firm stand and use the word ‘never,’ and that's what they're using in Alabama and Mississippi, we're not going to lick this thing.”²⁰

The night ended with some of the dramatic flair with which it had begun. The final speaker was another man from out of town, a textile executive from Burlington named N.W. Jefferies. The audience expected rhetorical fireworks from Jefferies – he was, after all, State Director of the Defenders – and he did not disappoint. He began in the calmed, measured tone that many white Tar Heels prided themselves on adopting when discussing their dealings with blacks: “The obligation we owe to our children is the reason we are here. It is to protect society, not to hurt the Negroes.” Then he pivoted sharply, yelling, “I'll put it bluntly. We want to keep

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Jim Wise, *Murder in the Courthouse: Reconstruction and Redemption in the North Carolina Piedmont* (Charleston SC: The History Press, 2010), 11-12, 69.

²⁰ Ibid.

them from making bedfellows for our sons and daughters. That's the real reason. . . . I like decent self-respecting niggers. But I also know if he comes in my house and sits on the sofa with my wife, I am going to kill him, so help me God!”²¹

Even inattentive readers scanning the *News and Record* story about the meeting the next day would have noted the excitement that bookended the proceedings. They might, however, have skipped over a seemingly minor bit of procedure that the Defenders attended to between the diatribes. During the middle of the meeting, the chairman of the local chapter rose to his feet and introduced a motion to support Dr. I. Beverley Lake in the upcoming Democratic gubernatorial primary. The motioned passed unanimously and without debate.

Ten months later, on November, 30, 1963, Lake publically confessed to the worst-kept secret in North Carolina: he was running for governor for a second time in four years. His announcement concluded the first stage of the 1964 Democratic gubernatorial primaries in which politicians jockeyed to see who would run for governor and signaled the beginning of the second more public stage in which voters decided who to elect. In the months in between, North Carolina’s white political elite labored to decide who among them would succeed Terry Sanford in the governor’s mansion.

While leading Democrats maneuvered to replace Sanford, black men and women rallied and marched in a campaign of their own: the battle to overthrow Jim Crow. Their campaign profoundly influenced the Democratic primary, and in doing so, bucked a powerful trend in North Carolina politics. In the sixty three years prior to the campaign to replace Sanford, elite, white North Carolinians endeavored to hold the state’s black population in a stable state of servitude through a system of “managed” race relations. Under this system of control, whites

²¹ “Caswell Rally Held to Fight Racial Mixing,” *Greensboro News and Record*, February 4, 1963.

worked to exclude blacks from the political arena, ensuring that when race did surface as a campaign issue, it did so only on terms acceptable to white power leaders. History has not recorded what became of Jim Graves after he was unceremoniously expelled from the Caswell Courthouse, but as the year wore on, white North Carolinians found it increasingly difficult to silence the demands of their black neighbors.

As black activists threatened to destroy North Carolina's system of managed race relations forever, the men vying to become North Carolina's next governor scrambled to react to the state's rapidly changing racial climate. Though the civil rights revolution appeared to portend electoral disaster for white, liberal Democrats like Richardson Preyer, it afforded a good opportunity for establishment conservative candidates like Dan Moore to reclaim the governorship, and was a godsend for the white supremacist candidate, Beverly Lake. North Carolina's system of managed race relations thus came under attack on two fronts: from the black Tar Heels it had long suppressed and from the very white politicians who had historically maintained it. By year's end, as the second stage of the race to replace Sanford opened, these two fronts were thoroughly intertwined.

The Fire Last Time: Black Protest and the Spectrum of White Responses

Superior Court Judge Joseph Parker was not accustomed to having his quiet courtroom interrupted by the defiant singing of black demonstrators. In May and early June of 1963, Wilmington's black residents demonstrated in the streets, calling for the desegregation of public accommodations and an end to racially discriminatory hiring by New Hanover county and its white businesses. Unsatisfied with the county's response, protestors brought their demonstration directly to Judge Parker. Incensed by their impertinence, he assembled thirty protestors before

him on Thursday, June 13, 1963, and threatened them with the “maximum sentence” unless they hushed up.²² For those North Carolina whites accustomed to the stability of managed race relations embodied by the authoritative ring of the judge’s gavel, the melodies of black protest sounded none too sweet.

Throughout North Carolina in 1963, blacks fought for their rights as equal citizens in a bold challenge to Jim Crow. Their defiance did not go unmet. Though some whites supported the black freedom movement, most reacted to civil rights demonstrations either by shedding the facade of peaceful relations between blacks and whites or else, by doubling down on a liberal strain of managed race relations.

Black North Carolinians’ demands were at once heartbreakingly quotidian and profoundly challenging to the basic order of the South. According to the North Carolina Mayor’s Co-Operating Committee – a group of white mayors with a liberal bent assembled in 1963 by Governor Sanford – civil rights demonstrators sought the right to vote, an end to housing segregation, and the integration of public schools, accommodations, workplaces, churches and hospitals. “The Negro,” it observed, “seeks a change of values and of laws.”²³ The Kingston Chapter of the Congress on Racial Equality succinctly captured the totality of these demands on June 17, 1963, when it called for “the general and complete desegregation of all aspects of Kingstonian life,” and “the replacement of injustices with justice.”²⁴ Such change would not come easily.

To force this transformation of North Carolina life, black protestors targeted white business owners with massive demonstrations designed to force the desegregation of local

²² “NC Racial Developments,” *The (Lumberton) Robesonian*, June 11, 1963; June 14, 1963.

²³ “What the Petitioners Want,” in *North Carolina and the Negro* ed. Campus W. Waynick, John C. Brooks, Elsie. Pitts (Raleigh: North Carolina Mayor’s Co-operating Committee, 1964), 11.

²⁴ *North Carolina and the Negro*, “Kingston,” 117.

businesses. Such demonstrations occurred throughout the state following the famed Greensboro sit-ins of 1960, but the rate of black protests accelerated in May of 1963. That month, major marches shook Raleigh, Durham and Greensboro. Hundreds, sometimes even thousands of blacks participated in these protests.²⁵ Soon activists intensified their assaults on segregation in High Point, Lexington, Edenton, Fayetteville, Chapel Hill and elsewhere across the state. Behind each demonstration stood individual protestors with a host of unique concerns, demands and ambitions; but Jim Crow's procrustean logic ignored this. For instance, on June 9, 1963, Dr. Clinton C. Battle, a black surgeon from Winston-Salem, decided to picket outside a segregated K and W Cafeteria with the help of two young children. His merits as an individual were less important to the cafeteria's owner than his identity as a black man. As a crowd of more than 80 white youths looked on and jeered, Battle was refused service. "I'm a veteran of World War II. I've got an honorable discharge and a good-conduct medal," he told reporters. "And yet I can't get a cup of coffee. Now that's disgraceful."²⁶

Battle's experience was fairly representative. As mass protests erupted around the state, many whites were initially baffled. They had assumed race relations in their cities were tranquil and progressing rapidly enough to mollify their black neighbors.²⁷ Once civil rights activists removed the wool from their eyes, most, like the K and W owner, resisted the coming of racial equality; others, however, attempted to reassert managed race relations by negotiating a slower rate of change.

Many white Tar Heels endeavored to delay the coming of civil rights by physically attacking black protestors. Sometimes this violence was state sanctioned. On June 14, for

²⁵ "Negro Protest is Continuing," *Statesville Record and Landmark*, May 21, 1963.

²⁶ "Cafeteria Picketed by Three Negroes," *Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel*, June 9, 1963.

²⁷ Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006); "Raleigh Felt Free of Racial Discord," *The Robesonian*, May 15, 1963.

example, Fayetteville police teargased a crowd of whites and blacks before arresting 200 blacks.²⁸ In Williamston, on August 31, police attacked 100 black protestors with devices similar to cattle prods. This was a departure from the department's recent action; as the *Raleigh News and Observer* noted, for the thirty-two previous nights of protests, the "police generally sided with Negroes by protecting them from increasingly agitated whites."²⁹

As the ominous crowds of "agitated whites" in Williamston foreshadowed, white vigilantes seldom hesitated to attack blacks for transgressing the state's racial norms. On July 19, for instance, a group of driver attempted to run over black demonstrators in Dunn, striking five of them. The same day, in Thomasville, an assailant fired shots through the window of a black church during an NAACP meeting.³⁰ Such violence was met overwhelmingly, but not entirely, with unarmed resistance. On June 6, following efforts by black residents to desegregate Lexington's cafes, theater and bowling alley, two thousand white men faced off with a crowd of 100 black men on the border of the town's white and black neighborhoods. As rocks and bottles filled with gasoline sailed across the divide, whites vandalized a black church and an unknown assailant shot a white reporter.³¹ In mid-September, young whites and blacks in High Point engaged in "guerilla-type skirmishes," with whites stoning a group of blacks protesting segregation and blacks firing into a white car as it prowled through a black neighborhood. White violence may well have escalated further had the police department not used teargas to break up a crowd massing to oppose desegregation.³² Such brutality was not a new development in the

²⁸ *North Carolina and the Negro*, "Fayetteville," 81.

²⁹ "Both Sides Standing Firm in Williamstown Troubles," *Raleigh, News and Observer*, Sept. 1, 1963.

³⁰ "Cars Run Into Pickets," *The Robesonian*, July 19, 1963.

³¹ "1 White Dead, 1 Wounded in Lexington Race Melee," *The Robesonian*, June 7, 1963.

³² "Demonstrations," *Statesville Record and Landmark*, September 12, 1963. For further examples of violence against protestors and racial conflict between blacks and whites in 1963, see "Negroes Plan School Boycott," *Statesville Record and Landmark*, September 3, 1963; "4 Whites Hit by Gun Blast," *The Robesonian*, August 5, 1963.

state. North Carolina's system of managed race relations, particularly in the east, had always been buttressed by the underlying threat of white violence against blacks.³³ Powerful whites, however, intended this physical coercion to function in a minor key, a supplement to more insidious forms of social control. In 1963, some white North Carolinians, enraged by black agitation, decided that violence might be the most effective way to maintain Jim Crow after all.

Yet many of their peers arrive at a different conclusion. For a substantial minority of white North Carolinians, the civil rights demonstrations of 1963 offered an opportunity to improve living conditions for black North Carolinians, though on terms dictated by whites. Some of these whites desired racial progress but feared tumult or rapid change. In the wake of the Lexington race riot, the *Raleigh Times* captured the ethos of this cohort, declaring that in the state's capital, "Our walking towards this good goal [ending segregation] has been so much faster than some wanted; and it has been so much slower than others wanted. But it has been in peace, and it has been steady and it can, with God's help, bring us to our goal in a decent way."³⁴ Others wished to split the difference between rabid segregationists and civil rights demonstrators. On May 23, 1963, for example, the *Raleigh News and Observer* voiced the common false equivalent that equated white demagogues with black demonstrators, editorializing, "There is still a space, praise God, between [Harlem] Congressman Adam Clayton Powell and Governor George Wallace of Alabama. Only those of both races who prefer the furies will fail to find it."³⁵ This group deplored the violence of white vigilantes but was not prepared to acquiesce to black demands for immediate equal citizenship. They favored

³³ Charles W. McKinney Junior, *Greater Freedom: The Evolution of the Civil Rights Struggle in Wilson, North Carolina* (Lanham Maryland: University Press of America, 2010), xx.

³⁴ "The Wisdom of Raleigh's Actions Shown by Lexington Violence," *The Raleigh Times*, June 7, 1963.

³⁵ "Still Room for Reason," *Raleigh News and Observer*, May 23, 1963.

negotiations over demonstrations, and order, even if their concept of order slowed or temporarily halted the expansion of civil rights in their communities.

This preference led white liberals across the state to create local human relations committees. These groups were encouraged by Governor Sanford and tended to contain a small number of wealthy whites and middle-class blacks, who worked together to prevent increased instability and to avoid further violence.³⁶ Unfortunately, these committees tended to lack the requisite power to enact change within deeply conservative, white-dominated systems. For example, in Winston-Salem, Louise Wilson, a black participant in the city's goodwill committee, was forced to resign after she praised black demonstrators. In Enfield, a biracial committee met for several months; made recommendations for hiring blacks and desegregating private establishments, which the city council ignored; and shut down for good in the fall of 1963. The Mayor's Biracial Committee was similarly outmaneuvered in Kingston; it called for the desegregation of the city's pools, and in response the City Council passed new regulations to make demonstrating harder and closed the city's all-white public pool. In Williamston, town officials and black protestors agreed to break an escalating cycle of nightly demonstrations in order to negotiate. In a spectacular act of bad faith, as soon as the demonstrations stopped, white police arrested the parents of young protestors to punish them for failing to control their children.³⁷ Such action fit squarely within the tradition of managed race-relations. Though an unconscionable number of North Carolina officials beat demonstrators, fire-hosed them or failed to protect them from white vigilantes, a greater number combatted them through subtler means.

³⁶ While no historical consensus has been reached on the overall impact of these committees on the civil rights movement, scholars agree that they provided a better forum for discussion than a vehicle for social change. Timothy B. Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name: A True Story* (New York: Crown, 2004), 106; McKinney, *Greater Freedom*, 218.

³⁷ "NC Racial Developments," *The Robesonian*, July 18, 1963; *North Carolina and the Negro*, "Enfield," 79; "Kingston," 118-119; "Williamston," 172.

In many cases their strategy backfired. The limited success of biracial committees convinced many blacks that they lacked honest negotiating partners in liberal whites, or else, that their partners were not strong enough to overcome conservative white recalcitrance. Both conclusions catalyzed further demonstrations.

White North Carolinians ran the full spectrum from violently opposing reform, to openly supporting it, with most citizens opposing the civil rights movement at least to some degree. Their resistance did not keep their black neighbors from demanding freedom. By the summer of 1963 it was clear that North Carolina's old system of race relations was dead; the black freedom struggle could not be ignored by any candidate for statewide office. The *News and Observer* put it best on May 14, 1963, noting that "Only the blind can doubt that we are in the midst of change whether we like it or not."³⁸ Obvious though this fact was, it was not yet clear whether blacks would triumph in their demands for a more equitable state or if whites would close ranks to continue subordinating them. The stage was set for further conflict, conflict that would shape the range of options available to Richardson Preyer, Beverly Lake and Dan Moore as they plotted their best path through the up-coming Democratic primary.

The Elite Stage: Preyer, Moore and Lake Position Themselves to Run for Governor

On New Year's Eve, 1962, the Greensboro *Daily News* took stock of the political developments of the previous twelve months and ventured an ominous prediction about what lay ahead. The year had been placid, the paper believed, marked mostly by growing discontent with Governor Sanford.³⁹ The year in review made no mention of mounting racial tension but

³⁸ "No Bystanders Now," *Raleigh News and Observer*, May 14, 1963.

³⁹ The *Raleigh Times*, Dec. 31, 1963. Reprinted from the Greensboro *Daily News*. The paper attributed this decline in support to the "traditional downgrading of a Governor's prestige as his second Legislature approaches," and to the shift in political power in the state from rural to suburban and urban voters.

nonetheless concluded, "So while 1962 was a relatively uneventful year for North Carolina on the surface, there were great stirrings underneath."⁴⁰ Its authors were more correct than they could possibly have known. These "great stirrings," both those the *Daily News* discerned and those it missed, did not bode well for Sanford.

If Terry Sanford's triumph over Beverly Lake in 1960 encouraged liberals that a "new day" had arrived in North Carolina, his political fortunes after the election cautioned them that most white Tar Heels could not yet support a governor committed to civil rights. Though history has judged Sanford kindly, by 1963, the voters of North Carolina did not.⁴¹ His chief political liability, and by extension the deadliest threat to his wing of the party, was his racial liberalism. During the 1960 primary, Sanford's operatives curried favor with skeptical whites in North Carolina's eastern Black Belt with a knowing wink, reassuring them that "Sanford's okay on the colored issue."⁴² This had always been a campaign ruse, but during his administration, and particularly in 1962 and early 1963, Sanford moved further to the left on race. The governor called on municipalities to create good will committees to facilitate communication between blacks and whites and created the Good Neighbor Council, a committee charged with encouraging whites to hire blacks. The climax of Sanford's racial evolution came on January 18, 1963, when he traveled to the Carolina Inn in Chapel Hill and delivered a remarkable speech entitled "Observations for a Second Century." Sanford declared that in 1963, the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, it was time for white North Carolinians to quit their immoral

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Sanford is commonly ranked as one of the top ten American governors of the twentieth century. See John Drescher, *Triumph of Good Will: How Terry Sanford Beat a Champion of Segregation and Reshaped the South* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000), xvi.

⁴² Tom Eamon, *The Making of a Southern Democracy: North Carolina Politics from Kerr Scott to Pat McCrory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 66.

discrimination and “to give the Negro a full chance to earn a decent living for his family.” His audience, the North Carolina Press Corps, roared its approval.⁴³

Blacks and liberal white North Carolinians rejoiced at their governor’s actions. On February 6, 1963, Rev. E.L. Brodie of Louisburg wrote to the Raleigh *News and Observer* on behalf of The Franklin County Minister’s Alliance, Christian Citizenship Club, NAACP and “all the sane, good-thinking Negroes of the county.” He thanked Sanford for supporting quality schools and for establishing the Good Neighbor Council. “We believe,” he gushed with the understandable enthusiasm of a black southerner reared to expect nothing from his elected officials, “that Divine Wisdom has led the chief executive of this State to say and do what the writer cannot recall any other governor here in the South to have done before to that extent.”⁴⁴ Wendell C. Somerville wrote on the same day, expressing “my extreme delight” in Sanford’s speech. “As a native of the State of North Carolina,” he continued, “and one who is justly proud of all the progressive achievements of my home state, it is my sincere wish that the Eternal will give to him the strength, courage, and faith to make his observations a living reality.”⁴⁵ Had more whites been of Somerville’s opinion, Sanford’s wing of the party would have been well-positioned to win the 1964 primary for governor.

Unfortunately, Somerville was an outlier among white North Carolinians. In 1963, a majority of white Tar Heels, indeed of whites across the country, were hostile to Sanford’s call for letting old prejudices die.⁴⁶ A week after Brodie and Somerville’s letters ran, the *News and*

⁴³ See Robert Korstad and James Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 54.

⁴⁴ “Letter to the Editor,” Raleigh *News and Observer*, February 6, 1963.

⁴⁵ “Praise for Governor,” Raleigh *News and Observer*, February 6, 1963.

⁴⁶ “Polling data revealed that the majority of white Americans in 1963, prior to the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, believed that the movement for racial equality had already proceeded ‘too far and too fast.’” Timothy B Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name: A True Story* (New York: Crown, 2004) 106.

Observer published reader Louis F. Lawler's take on Sanford's speech. Lawler believed the governor was "about as Southern as Grant's tomb," and that "it was a sad day when we lost the chance to encourage a climate of resistance to integration and allowed Terry Sanford to impose that very integration upon all of us."⁴⁷ "Southern" dislike for Sanford only intensified as the year wore on and black protests accelerated across the state. Far too late to regain his old popularity, Sanford attempted to resurrect the politics of managed race relations. In late June, 1963, he invited 100 black leaders to the Governor's Mansion to ask them to speak out against the protests that were "destroying good will, creating resentment, losing friends and not influencing people." The audience gave him a smattering of polite applause and nothing more; that very day blacks and their white allies re-launched efforts to desegregate Chapel Hill establishments and Sanford's mission fell apart.⁴⁸ Given that Sanford's racial liberalism, in conjunction with his general unpopularity, left his wing of the party in poor shape in 1963, it was somewhat of a surprise that the most likely man to lead it through these tough times was none other than Sanford's 1960 campaign manager, Bert Bennett.⁴⁹

The Liberals: Hiding Their Lamps Under a Bushel

During the summer of 1963, Bert Bennett pondered two related desires: his hope for a liberal Democrat to maintain control in Raleigh and a more specific wish to keep a particular Democrat, Beverly Lake, out of the governor's mansion.⁵⁰ For most of the year it appeared that

⁴⁷ "Not a Southerner," *Raleigh News and Observer*, February 13, 1963.

⁴⁸ "Negroes Turn Deaf Ear to Governor's Counsel," *The Robesonian*, June 26, 1963; "Protest Staged in Chapel Hill," *Statesville Record and Landmark*, June 28, 1963.

⁴⁹ Though the bulk of voter dissatisfaction with Sanford stemmed from his racial liberalism, his decisions to support President Kennedy in 1960 and to raise the state food tax to finance education were also extremely unpopular, see Eamon, *Southern Democracy*, 81; Drescher, *Triumph of Good Will*, 234.

⁵⁰ As he told the *Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel* "I stated many times that if Lake was the only contender, that I'd run if I had to crawl." See "'Not Going Under a Rock,' Says Bennett," *Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel*, July 10, 1964. The feeling was mutual. In September, 1963, Lake told the Associated Press, "He [Bennett] is a disappointed little man who knows he is at the end of his political career. As manager of Mr. Sanford's campaign in

these aspirations would convince him to enter the race as the logical successor to Sanford. To have any chance of winning the primary, Bennett would need to present himself as more conservative than his boss.⁵¹ Unwilling to appeal to white supremacists, Bennett decided instead to deemphasize the critical issue of race. He told the Winston-Salem *Journal and Sentinel* that “Race has no place in politics,” and that he hoped that in the year ahead “voters will defeat anyone who raises it.”⁵² At a time when white North Carolinians associated Bennett with Sanford and the governor with Washington and desegregation, the Sanford brand on Bennett was too strong to be overcome by such misdirection. Ultimately, Bennett decided not to seek his party’s nomination, reasoning that his candidacy would empower conservatives and weaken the state. His choice not to run left the liberal wing of the party without an obvious candidate.

The only man to rise to the occasion was a young judge from Greensboro named Richardson Preyer. Preyer, scion to the Vicks Chemical Company fortune, let it be known through the grapevine that he was amenable to being “drafted” into running, so long as his home county of Guilford supported him. Picking up on this cue for action, William D. Caffrey, a Greensboro lawyer, caucused with the Sanford camp, which approved of Preyer’s candidacy, and then preceded on August 29, 1963, to publish “An Open Letter to Judge L. Richardson Preyer” asking him to run.⁵³ The people of Guilford offered Preyer a rousing endorsement: 16,000 signed

1960, he misled the people. But they know better now.” See “Lake, Moore and Ervin are Potshot Targets,” *Raleigh Times*, September 21, 1963.

⁵¹ On June 22, 1963, in a profile prematurely entitled “Bennett’s Already Running,” Bennett’s hometown paper, the Winston-Salem *Journal and Sentinel*, reported that Bennett considered himself “probably more of a conservative thinker than Sanford but committed generally to the same type of programs— educational improvement, equal rights, a good climate for business expansion.”

⁵² “Bennett’s Already Running,” *Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel*, July 22, 1963.

⁵³ James R. Spense *The Making of a Governor: The Moore- Preyer-Lake Primaries of 1964* (Winston-Salem: J.F. Blair, 1968), 24.

a petition echoing Caffery's call. On September 8, Preyer met with fifty party leaders in Greensboro to announce his intentions. He formally joined the race the following day.⁵⁴

Preyer, like Sanford, suffered from the political liability of supporting increased freedoms for black Americans. In August of 1957, forty one white parents in Greensboro sued the city to prevent it from allowing a small number of black children to attend school with white children. Preyer, then a State Superior Court judge, threw the case out, allowing token desegregation efforts to continue. In May of 1963, his wife, father, mother and sister in-law signed an open letter to the business men of Greensboro asking them "to proceed immediately to remove from their operations all segregation and discrimination based on race."⁵⁵ The letter was published during the height of a wave of protests and sit-ins that rocked Greensboro for eighteen straight nights in the early summer of 1963.⁵⁶ Though Preyer, who was a federal judge at the time, did not sign the letter, his family's public decision to call for concessions to black protesters signaled to skeptical white North Carolinians that he could not be trusted on race.

In order to stay electorally viable, Preyer's team began to repackage him as a white moderate, committed to managed race relations instead of racial progress. Perry Young, press aide to the campaign, recalled that Preyer never considered making his support for integration or the Civil Rights Act public. To bolster his image as a white everyman, Preyer's team ordered that henceforth, the bon vivant was not to be shown wearing tennis shorts, driving his Cadillac, or playing the piano – especially with blacks (as he had once done with John Coltrane.) Going into

⁵⁴ Spense, *The Making of a Governor*, 25. Preyer's meeting with the leadership turned out to be a major, campaign issue. His rivals alleged that at this "secret meeting" he was "handpicked by the Sanford-Bennett machine" to run.

⁵⁵ "Open Letter to Greensboro Businessmen," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 26, 1963.

⁵⁶ Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 119.

1964, Preyer would need to find much more effective ways to win over the state's white majority.⁵⁷

Though the season was not auspicious for racial liberals, Preyer had good reason to believe that he could be victorious the following summer. On September 19, after Bennett had officially endorsed him, the Charlotte *Observer* cautiously ventured that "For a moment . . . Rich Preyer is in the driver's seat. Bennett's support, added to a good vote potential in the Piedmont, makes him odds-on favorite for the nomination."⁵⁸ And why not? He was popular with the state's influential Young Democrats Club, an old Sanford stronghold – in early November, a poll at the group's convention found that 93 of 128 attending members were for Preyer – furthermore, he was beloved by North Carolina's newspapers.⁵⁹ Heading into 1964, the liberal wing of the party had positioned itself as well as it could. Just maybe, on the back of Bennett's wise decision not to stand for office and the substantial appeal of Rich Preyer, they could play what seemed like a losing hand into a narrow victory.

The Establishment Conservatives: Aiming for Consensus

To keep the governorship, the liberals would have to outmaneuver North Carolina's oldest and most powerful political camp, the state's establishment conservatives. This group was accustomed both to running the state and to establishing the rules governing its dialogue on

⁵⁷ Perry Young, Peter Vogel, February 5, 2015.

⁵⁸ "Bennett's Support Gives Preyer Bid New Strength," Charlotte *Observer*, September 19, 1963.

⁵⁹ "YDC Poll Favors Preyer" (AP) Greensboro *Daily News*, November 5, 1963. Preyer would receive most major endorsement in the spring and summer of 1964. The Greensboro papers and the *News and Observer* were particularly supportive. On April 14, 1964, Jonathan Daniels, editor of the *Observer*, wrote to Emily Preyer, saying "Lucy and I would be delighted to see you and Rich any time. . . . The best thing you and Rich could do for us would be to arrange to win this thing with-out a second primary so we could really get a little time off." See Jonathan Daniels to Emily Preyer, April 14, 1964, Jonathan Daniel Papers, Box 43, Folder 1964 Governor Candidates; in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Henceforth, documents in this collection will be called "Daniels Papers."

race.⁶⁰ Throughout 1963, this group sought to offer their party and state a sense of stability in the midst of a changing racial environment. Trusted to maintain the racial status quo, they had the option of devoting as much or as little attention to the black freedom movement as they wished. To capture the nomination, the conservatives hoped both to persuade white voters to their left to unite with them to keep the Republicans and race baiters out of office. This meant finding a relatively uncontroversial candidate, skeptical of civil rights but palatable to moderates and liberals.

Over the course of the year the conservatives seriously considered running four men: Tom Pearsall, Luther Hodges, Henry Jordan and Dan Moore. The first three men all presented themselves as guardians of managed race relations, who would protect the prerogatives of white North Carolina without encouraging massive resistance.

Both Pearsall and Hodges made their names by charting a cautious, conservative path through the minefield of racial politics in the immediate aftermath of *Brown vs. Board of Education*. Though Pearsall, a state legislator from Rocky Mount, was personally close to Terry Sanford and voluntarily desegregated his own restaurant in 1963, he was known across North Carolina for the “Pearsall Plan,” a 1956 constitutional amendment that gave local school districts the right to close if desegregation seemed imminent and appropriated state funds to pay for white students to go to private school.⁶¹ His plan was supported by Luther Hodges, who was then acting as governor by appointment following the death of Gov. William B. Umstead. Hodges heartily approved of the Pearsall Plan, which he deftly presented as a moderate and just middle course between the ostensibly equivalent evils of integration and massive, violent white

⁶⁰ Since 1960, when the group divided its strength between John Larkin and Malcom Seawell, a tactical blunder that allowed the liberals and segregationists to duke it out in the run-off, the establishment conservatives had suffered an unusual hiatus from power. By 1963, they were eager to retake Raleigh.

⁶¹ Eamon, *Making of a Southern Democracy*, 86-87; Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 49.

resistance. His ploy worked. Racial conservatives were satiated, federal troops stayed away, and black students remained just where they were. By the end of Hodges' term in office, during the 1959-1960 school year, just .001 percent of the state's children went to integrated schools.⁶² To signal his interest in his party's nomination, Hodges, who was then serving as Secretary of Commerce, conspicuously declined to endorse President Kennedy's civil rights proposals.⁶³ Establishment Democrats hoped both Pearsall and Hodges would be tolerant enough for liberals to stomach and conservative enough to beat out both Lake and their eventual Republican opponent.⁶⁴

Henry Jordan, highway commissioner and state senator from Saxapahaw and brother of North Carolina's Senator B. Everett Jordan, sought to fill a similar niche. When asked in early August of 1963 why he was letting his name circulate as a potential candidate, Jordan frankly discussed the importance of race in the coming election. Attempting to distance himself from Bennett and Lake, he argued against President Kennedy's "unconstitutional" proposals for desegregation while also urging private shop owners to sell to blacks.⁶⁵ His rhetoric suggests that he, like his peers, believed that politics in North Carolina would, and should, stay a white man's game. For example, he declared that he was "puzzled" by the extent of black demands and that "the race issue" had affected him neither "personally nor politically."⁶⁶ When pressed to comment on his policy prescriptions for the state's racial tumult, Jordan offered that black

⁶² Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 53-54; Michael J. Klarman, "How Brown Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis," *The Journal of American History* 81 (1994), 84.

⁶³ "Hodges Speculation Feeds on Bennett's Uncertainty," *Charlotte Observer*, August 18, 1963.

⁶⁴ Ibid; "Banker Holding Gets Feelers As a Gubernatorial Candidate," *Charlotte Observer*, August 18, 1963; "Pearsall's Name is Standing Out in Political Talk," *The Raleigh Times*, June 7, 1963.

⁶⁵ "Dr. Henry Jordan Looking for Middle Ground on Most Urgent Political Question," *Greensboro Daily News*, August 4, 1963.

⁶⁶ "Jordan Dubs Self 'Common Sense' Candidate," *The Raleigh Times*, July 25, 1963.

protest “[had] gotten out of hand— badly.”⁶⁷ This strategy of playing to the white middle paid considerable dividends for the conservatives in the year ahead, yet it was neither Jordan nor Hodges nor Pearsall who would take up the standard for North Carolina’s establishment.⁶⁸

That honor belonged to the relatively unknown former superior court judge, Dan K. Moore, from Canton in the state’s mountainous west. Moore was not happily drafted into running like Preyer, or compelled to run by a commitment to shaping state policy like Lake. He simply wanted to be governor. On September 22, 1963, he told the *Charlotte Observer*: “This is not something new with me. I’ve been toying with the idea for years. As a matter of fact, when I was just a little shave, an old family friend said to me, ‘Dan, go to law school and become a judge like your father, and then run for Governor.’”⁶⁹ Moore, according to the manager of Richardson Preyer’s campaign headquarters, Phil Carlton, was “a dream candidate.” “Handsome, courtly, distinguished,” the general council of Champion Paper, Moore boasted a highly competent campaign team and was flush with money, courtesy of his closeness with North Carolina’s commercial elite.⁷⁰ Policy, however, was not the self-styled mountaineer’s strong suit. He candidly admitted that he did not have a platform, but planned to develop one as he traveled across the state.⁷¹ Moore’s underdeveloped ideology and limited political history soon proved to be advantages. Unlike Preyer or Lake, he had no public record to speak of on race, and thus, could tell white North Carolina voters what they wanted to hear without being accused of flip-flopping.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Moore was the most eager of these four men to be governor. When he made it clear in August 1963 that he was entering the race, the remaining three decided to fall in line behind him rather than risk splitting their faction apart by running against him. See Spense, *The Making of a Governor*, 16.

⁶⁹ “Moore Considered Race for Years,” *Charlotte Observer*, September 22, 1963.

⁷⁰ Phil Carlton, Peter Vogel, February 19, 2015.

⁷¹ This was no gaff, he comfortably told the *Raleigh Times* the same two weeks later. “Moore Glad He Declared Early,” October 17, 1963.

Moore's other great asset was his solid support from the state's racially conservative Democratic establishment. Moore officially declared his candidacy on August 31. Over the long Labor Day weekend he received two important endorsements. First, he got the nod from his potential conservative rival, Henry Jordan. Next, he scored the support of Senator Sam Ervin, who was wildly popular in the state at the time for his legalistic opposition to Kennedy's civil rights bill.⁷² Soon Moore received the full throated support of almost all the state's conservative leadership.⁷³ Though the instincts of North Carolina's establishment conservatives were correct on two fronts in 1963 – they were wise not to dilute their strength and to support Moore, a centrist candidate not yet committed to any particular stance on the inconstant issue of race relations – they fell short on one important front. They failed to prevent their segregationist rival from entering the race.

Beverly Lake: General of the Unreconstructed

Beverley Lake's path to entering the 1964 primary was a good deal more straightforward than Preyer's or Moore's. The calamitous events of what his contemporaries termed the "negro revolution" virtually guaranteed his second run for office.⁷⁴ The most pressing question for Lake in 1963 was not if, but how, he would run for governor.

Following his defeat in 1960, Lake spent much of the next three years traveling the state, giving talks and debating his opponents, often on topics related to race. Lake believed in the biological inferiority of blacks; however, he was increasingly inclined to refrain from making this belief clear. Instead of objecting to the principle of black equality, Lake began arguing that

⁷² Spense, *The Making of a Governor*, 35.

⁷³ On October 17, 1963, a poll of 66 legislators found that 39 supported Moore, 25 favored Preyer, and that 2 planned on voting for Lake. See Spense, *The Making of a Governor*, 37.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 32.

policies designed to assist blacks violated cherished conservative principles of freedom and liberty. In late October, 1961, for instance, he went to State College in Raleigh to urge young North Carolinians to reject proposed fair employment legislation, which would expand government regulation by preventing companies from adopting racially discriminatory hiring policies. "Do you want yourself at the mercy of incompetent and disloyal employees?" he pressed his audience, "The purpose of the welfare state is to destroy our free capitalistic society and reduce you to the common denominator. Don't let them get away with it."⁷⁵ Such rhetoric was hardly demagogic; Lake did not need to rant and bluster to remind his supporters where he stood on race. In fact, as the on-going demonstrations of 1963 forced race into the center of North Carolina politics and demanded a federal response, Lake found that he could de-emphasize his racial appeal in order to avoid alienating potential voters. As an anonymous friend of Lake's told the *Charlotte Observer* "All he's got to do is keep quiet, let the President's civil rights bill do all the work."⁷⁶ This gave Lake a built-in advantage over his opponents in the primary. Most white voters opposed civil rights, and they knew in their guts that Lake did too, yet, by not belaboring this fact, Lake could maintain his reputation as a respectable segregationist.⁷⁷

His opponents, both within the party and in the media, recognized and feared Lake's rapport with the state's conservative white voters, and thus spent much of 1963 attempting to force him from the contest. After Moore announced his candidacy, he received an unusually strong show of support from the party's establishment. He could thank Lake for this. "The cumulative effect of the endorsements," Joe Doster of the *Charlotte Observer* reported, was

⁷⁵ "Golden and Lake Debate Fair Employment Laws," *Raleigh News and Observer*, October 27, 1961.

⁷⁶ "Leave 'Race' Out of Race for Governor, Lake Told," *Charlotte Observer*, July 28, 1963.

⁷⁷ According to historian John Dresher, Lake was not just any segregationist, "He was the best of them." He was "smart, successful, religious, generous and courteous. He didn't hate black people; he said he wanted to help them." Dresher, *Triumph of Good Will*, 112.

“supposed to convince Lake that conservative support and money needed for a campaign will not be available to him.”⁷⁸ Such a strategy would work under two conditions. First, if Lake was drawn to the governorship for personal, rather than policy-based reasons, then he would not enter a campaign he stood little chance of winning. Second, if Lake felt that Moore was sufficiently conservative on race, then he would not bother to launch another uphill battle for the nomination. Neither condition held. Meanwhile, a chorus of journalists called on Lake not to run. They argued that his removal from the field would allow the Democratic Party to continue addressing race under carefully circumscribed terms. The *Charlotte Observer*’s editorial board led the charge. Mocking those who argued that keeping Bert Bennett out of the campaign would be sufficient to avoid the race issue, it expounded its belief that “Lake’s presence in the primary would make race a factor. He would not even have to mention it to make it so. The race issue will be eliminated only if Lake steps down.”⁷⁹ The editors would have a chance to test this theory after Lake was eliminated from the primary the following year.

Not only did such calls for a race-free campaign slight the countless black men, women and children across the state who were working to keep southern race relations at the burning heart of public life, they also underestimated the depths of Lake’s commitment to his cause. In 1986, Lake wrote to Sanford, recalling that ideological differences, “not personal ill will, brought us to the leadership of the opposing forces in the 1960 campaigns, just as former classmates at West Point fought so fiercely against each other a century earlier. I still believe the losing side was right in each instance.”⁸⁰ Military analogies suited Lake. In his study of white opposition to racial progress in North Carolina from 1954 to 1957, Lawson Kuhnert argued that, “Like an

⁷⁸ “More and Moore Heat Put on Lake to Quit,” *Charlotte Observer*, September 8, 1963.

⁷⁹ “Only Withdrawal of Lake Would Remove Race Issue,” *Charlotte Observer*, August 8, 1963.

⁸⁰ Rob Christensen, *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics: The Personalities, Elections and Event that Shaped Modern North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 198.

army with no general, the popular opposition across the state discovered various means of resistance, throwing up breastworks here and there in an attempt to stymie the advance of racial equality.”⁸¹ By 1963, Lake had undoubtedly become the general of choice for millions of North Carolinians. After temporarily delaying his declaration in light of President Kennedy’s assassination, Lake officially joined the field and brought the opening stage of the primary to a close on November 30.⁸²

⁸¹ Lawson Kuhnert, undergraduate thesis, ““Our South has Changed” The Popular Response to Civil Rights in North Carolina and the Evolution of a Social Vision, 1954-1964,” The University of North Carolina, 57.

⁸² Spense, *The Making of a Governor*, 32.

**There Is Every Indication
That Over
1,000
COLORED
PEOPLE
WILL VOTE
In Thursday's Recall Election**

In public meetings, in published reports, in reports on registered voters . . . the obvious conclusion is that . . . PRACTICALLY ALL OF THE COLORED PEOPLE WHO ARE REGISTERED VOTERS IN STATESVILLE WILL BE CASTING THEIR VOTE ON THURSDAY.

Their leaders, the NAACP and CORE have told them HOW TO VOTE. They HAVE BEEN TOLD TO VOTE FOR THE PRESENT CITY COUNCIL in Thursday's recall election. THIS BLOC VOTE WILL BE DELIVERED.

★ ★ ★

NEGROES represent only about 20 per cent of the registered voters in Statesville . . . BUT over 90 per cent of the NEGROES ACTUALLY GO TO THE POLLS and VOTE . . . a much greater percentage than the white citizens. This means their bloc voting power is increased many times.

★ ★ ★

**In Order To Offset This Bloc Vote
WHITE CITIZENS MUST
GO TO THE POLLS AND
VOTE THEIR CONVICTIONS**

Above Figure One: A flier in the *Statesville Record and Landmark* from September 18, 1963, appeals directly to white racial prejudice, a maneuver that would become increasingly unacceptable in state politics as the decade wore on. Below Figure Two: Dr. Clinton Battle fights to desegregate a cafeteria in Winston-Salem in June of 1963. White advocates of managed race relations in North Carolina hotly contested his sign's claim. Photo courtesy of the *Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel*, July 9, 1963.



Conclusion: A Referendum in Statesville

In 1963 black activists and white politicians erased the old line that artificially divided the political from the racial in North Carolina. Though some reporters and would-be candidates still hoped to “remove” the race issue from consideration during the primary, black activists worked to keep civil rights at the center of the state’s attention.⁸³ Recognizing that the genie was out of the bottle on race, at least for the time being, Preyer, Moore and Lake worked to gain as much political traction as they could from the protests. Their positions on civil rights were constrained by the white population of the state, but only to a degree. As Preyer moved to disguise his racial liberalism, Lake relished his status as the unquestioned champion of segregation within the Democratic Party. Moore, meanwhile, drew his support from racial conservatives but did not commit to a fixed position on race. Given the white majority’s hostility to civil rights, all three candidates staked out positions on race more conservative than Terry Sanford’s, but by year’s end their exact positions remained unfixed.

If any further proof was required that the 1964 Democratic gubernatorial primary would center on race, the Democratic Party’s elite could have considered the ramifications of the Statesville City Council’s decision to integrate Statesville’s pools. On Thursday, September 19, 1963, in the largest election in the city’s history, more than 5,000 voters gathered for a special recall election catalyzed by the integration and voted out all six members of the Council. The voters, Dwayne Walls contended in a news analysis in the *Charlotte Observer*, “weren’t voting for or against a candidate. They were voting against the Brothers Kennedy in Washington, against Martin Luther King in Birmingham, against Terry Sanford in Raleigh, and most of all, against the Negro in general in Statesville.”⁸⁴ Like the North Carolina Defenders who had

⁸³ “More and Moore Heat Put on Lake to Quit,” *Charlotte Observer*, September 8, 1963.

⁸⁴ “It Didn’t Take Much Effort To Be Elected in Statesville,” *Charlotte Observer*, Sept. 22, 1963.

expelled their black neighbor and endorsed Lake back in February, the majority of white voters in Statesville were ready to take their anger out on politicians who dared support civil rights, no matter how obliquely.

Yet as would prove to be the case throughout 1964, this white supremacist faction was challenged both by more moderate whites and by black North Carolinians. Statesville's Mayor J. Garner Bagnal fell into the first camp. Seeking to avoid further notoriety and conflict in the city, he promised to recommit to the city's bi-racial community relations committee. Bagnal also did his best to distance North Carolina from its Deep South cousins. "We will continue to maintain contact between the races," he insisted, because the six newly elected councilmen "are not a bunch of Ross Barnetts or George Wallaces."⁸⁵ Unfortunately for Bagnal, his white constituents were not in the mood for such accommodating rhetoric, and black voters were even less inclined to resign themselves to mere "contact between the races."

The referendum catalyzed black political action too. On September 10, the city's NAACP petitioned the school board to desegregate Statesville schools. The same night 300 blacks answered Rev. J.C. Harris's invitation to meet at the AME Zion Church. Between hymns and prayers the group called for immediate desegregation and vowed to register as many blacks as possible to vote in the up-coming election.⁸⁶ Such black political mobilization frightened most whites, all the more so because it showed no sign of abating after the referendum. "If the people of Statesville voted in a new city council to stop desegregation," local black leader Rev. Wilson Lee told the *Observer*, "then a lot of people are in for a disappointment."⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Barnett was governor of Mississippi, Wallace of Alabama, both infamous for their opposition to civil rights. "No Halt Foreseen in City's Integration," *Charlotte Observer*, Sept. 22, 1963.

⁸⁶ "City Schools Get NAACP Request to Cease Operating on Racial Basis," *Statesville Record and Landmark*, Sept. 11, 1963; "City's Negroes Urged to Register For Vote," *Statesville Record and Landmark*, Sept. 11, 1963.

⁸⁷ "No Halt Foreseen in City's Integration," *Charlotte Observer* September 22, 1963.

Black Statesvillians' objectives – keeping the city pool open and integrated, gaining more janitorial jobs from the city and desegregating Iredell Memorial Hospital – seem eminently reasonable by contemporary standards. Yet in cities and towns across the state, such demands for equality and human dignity excited tremendous anger among whites. Unlike the *News and Record*, which in its New Year's Eve 1962 article detected no sign that the black freedom movement would soon reshape state politics, Charlotte *Observer* reporter Dwayne Walls understood exactly what was at stake. With considerable prescience, he opined, "Some observers already have seen Statesville as an early ripple in the wave of anti-Negro resentment that has been building up throughout the State in the wake of a summer of racial tension and mass demonstrations. Its significance could spread from the Statesville city limits into eastern North Carolina and the neighboring Piedmont counties with an impact on the 1964 governor's race."⁸⁸ He was right. By the end of 1963, what had started out as two separate campaigns, one to replace Terry Sanford, the other to overthrow Jim Crow, had blurred into one fight for control of the future of North Carolina.

⁸⁸ "It Didn't Take Much Effort To Be Elected in Statesville," Charlotte *Observer*, September 22, 1963.

Chapter Two

Modernizing Racism: The Democratic Party's Evolving Discourse on Race during the 1964 Gubernatorial Primaries

"I don't think there was another issue. . . Of course, all the speeches were about this and that and the other thing, but the undercurrent, the underlying thing was absolutely race."

- Perry Young, press aide to Richardson Preyer, when asked to comment on important issues in the 1964 Primaries other than race.

"I don't recall it being an issue in the campaign."

- George Ragsdale, legal counsel to Gov. Moore, when asked what role the Civil Rights Act of 1964 played in the same primaries.⁸⁹

Believers in "the North Carolina way" on race relations had reason to smile when they awoke on Thursday morning, July 9, 1964. For years, white political leaders had claimed that North Carolina could address its civil rights problems without the interference of the federal government or the full political participation of black citizens. On a surface level, the events of the last two weeks seemed to justify their optimism. Just one week before, The U.S. House of Representatives approved the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Opposition to the bill had been fierce prior to its passage. In fact, North Carolina's Senator Sam Ervin had led the congressional filibuster against its implementation. But now that the bill was the law of the land, the state seemed to be rapidly adjusting to its mandates. David Coltrane, Chairman of the North Carolina Good Neighbor Council, found it "remarkable the way the act has been received and complied with by the people of North Carolina."⁹⁰ To top it off, less than two weeks before, on June 27,

⁸⁹ Perry Young, Peter Vogel, February 5, 2015; George Ragsdale, February 22, 2015.

⁹⁰ "Coltrane Hails State's Rights Compliance," *Raleigh News and Observer*, July 9, 1964, 7.

after a bruising campaign season that included a primary and a run-off, North Carolina had selected a “moderate,” Daniel Kilian Moore, to be their Democratic nominee for governor.⁹¹ With no urgent updates from Washington to read up on, and no pressing campaign developments to follow, busy Tar Heels could glance at the sports section or skip the paper entirely as they rushed off to work.

Even North Carolinians committed to managed race relations who stopped to read the paper may not have immediately spotted anything that disturbed their sensibilities. In the Greensboro *Daily News*, they would have found further reassurances from the editorial board, which crowed, “The lesson of the gubernatorial primary is simply that North Carolina gravitates between ‘responsible conservative’ and ‘moderate liberal’ Governors. It has prospered under both kinds in this century and can expect more of the same before the year 2000.”⁹² Indeed, the morning would have given this group of self-identified moderates no cause for concern at all, unless they looked just below the editorials, to the letters to the editor, and listened to the voices of their fellow citizens.

The letters that morning did not echo the sentiments of the editorial board. Rather than portraying a state unified around a “moderate” approach to race relations, they reveal a white body politic fiercely divided between proponents of managed race relations, racial liberals and white supremacists. Dr. R. C. Walker from Burlington, for instance, echoed the establishment line that the Civil Right Act should be carried out “on a peaceful basis,” and that in exchange “racial demonstrations of the N.A.A.C.P. and other organizations should be disallowed.”⁹³ Meanwhile, Josh Warren, a liberal from Alamance County, was incensed by the prejudice that

⁹¹ “Moore's Win Shows Proof of Revolt,” *Ashville Citizen-Times*, July 1, 1964.

⁹² “North Carolina’s Political Pendulum,” *Greensboro Daily News*, July 9, 1964.

⁹³ “Letter to the Editor,” *Greensboro Daily News*, July 9, 1964.

prevailed around him. Why did he have to share his state with retrograde “provincial hate mongers” who plastered North Carolina’s highways with signs demanding the impeachment of Supreme Court justice Earl Warren? “Isn’t it a shame,” he wrote in defense of his liberal governor, “that Terry Sanford is admired in every state except North Carolina?”⁹⁴ But Josh Warren was not the only one adamantly opposed to the state’s political trajectory. Douglas Winn from Greensboro directed his ire at the *Daily News* itself, which had strongly supported Richardson Preyer, the progressive candidate and loser of the run-off primary. “Perhaps it would be wise for you to spend the rest of your summer with Martin Luther King or the rotten United Nations or a suburb of Moscow,” Winn helpfully suggested. “Perhaps then you would appreciate real genuine old-fashion American conservatism.”⁹⁵ As the diverging sentiments on display in *The Daily News* that morning indicate, in 1964, the state’s consensus on race only ran so deep.

These divisions on the ground closely mirrored the ideological divides separating the three Democrats running for Governor in 1964. During the first stage of North Carolina’s Democratic gubernatorial primary, black Tar Heels forced race into the center of the campaign. In response to this pressure, Preyer, Lake and Moore began to talk about race in new ways that reflected both their ideologies and their desire to win office. Constrained though they were by the values of their constituents, these values were in flux. Heading into 1964, the candidates had a range of options at their disposal when deciding how their campaigns would address race.

No candidate was a visionary leader willing to stake out a position on race drastically different from the state’s median white opinion. During the second stage of the primary – which began when Lake entered the race in late November 1963 and ended with Moore’s victory on June 27, 1964 - all three men continued to seek a racial policy that a majority of the state’s white

⁹⁴ “The Idiot Awards,” *Greensboro Daily News*, July 9, 1964.

⁹⁵ “Rotten to the Core,” *Greensboro Daily News*, July 9, 1964.

electorate could accept. The resulting tenor of the campaign seemed “moderate” by the standards of 1964 because it promoted neither virulent white supremacy nor rapid racial progress. All three candidates campaigned against integration yet none were explicitly opposed to racial equality.

There were, however, important differences among the candidates. Preyer campaigned against integration, particularly during the second primary, but never believed in his message. Meanwhile, Beverly Lake and Dan Moore did not so much moderate their racism as modernize it. Instead of campaigning on the innate inferiority of blacks, they began to appeal to their constituents in the carefully coded language of modern racism. Both men rejected civil rights in practice but did so in a color-blind language that many whites found palatable. Moore adopted this new discourse on race more convincingly than Lake and thus captured the Democratic nomination. The legacy of his victory would long outlive his administration, for North Carolina’s Democratic Party emerged from the primary too fractured to continue in its existing form but with a new and politically effective way to talk about race.

Richardson Preyer’s Choice

“I don't think there's any question whatsoever that [Preyer's defeat] was entirely the race issue.”

- Bert Bennett⁹⁶

From the late fall of 1963 through his defeat in the run-off primary in June, Richardson Preyer experimented with three different strategies for neutralizing the impact of the civil rights movement on his campaign. Constrained both by his desire to win the nomination and by his conscience, Preyer tried to advocate for racial equality, attempted to walk back this support, and labored to reorient the campaign to focus on non-racial issues. His campaign offers a haunting illustration of the conundrum facing white liberals seeking office in the South during the 1960s.

⁹⁶ “Strategy of a Tough Campaign,” *Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel*, July 8, 1964.

Preyer's first, preferred, and least effectual strategy was to cautiously embrace the cause of racial progress. Speaking to the Kiwanis Club in his hometown of Greensboro on November 1, 1963, Preyer called for a "more enlightened view of states [sic] rights," accusing "the spokesman of states rights" of emphasizing "their constitutional right to do nothing" and in so doing, inviting the federal government to step into the vacuum to provide leadership.⁹⁷ Nowhere in his speech did Preyer explicitly mention race, yet in the context of the day, in which white Southern politicians were fighting tooth and nail against a federal civil rights bill that they saw as an unconstitutional infringement of their rights, Preyer's sympathies clearly rested more with Washington than with racially conservative Southerners. The following month he told the *Durham Morning Herald* that he believed it was the governor's job to help solve racial differences in the state, a far more activist stance than his opponents were willing to take.⁹⁸

During the winter and early spring of 1964, Preyer realized that even such vague language was too explicit and began relying more heavily on rhetoric promoting progress, opportunity and unity, all code words for racial liberalism. Echoing Terry Sanford's "new day," he concluded most of his stump speeches by telling North Carolinians, "We have grown strong, now together we can grow great. And when history looks back on us, let it be said in the generation to come that it was in the 1960's that our fathers opened the door to opportunity."⁹⁹ Preyer knew he could not call openly for interracial unity or for programs targeted to assist black Tar Heels. Instead, he opted for more generic rhetoric indicating that he would aid all Tar Heels. For instance, on March 18, 1964 a letter from the People for Preyer campaign headquarters to the

⁹⁷ "Preyer Assails Inertia," *Raleigh News and Observer*, December 1, 1963.

⁹⁸ "Preyer Seeks Unified Progress on All Fronts," *Durham Morning Herald*, December 29, 1963.

⁹⁹ For example, see "Address: Westminster Fellowship Meeting at N.C. State," Richardson Preyer, April 5 1964, Box 1964 Campaign, Folder Speeches; Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Henceforth, documents from this collection will be called "Preyer Papers."

Wake County Democrats announced that “The mood of the people all across the State is one of dedication and ambition, and the future can be prosperous if we renew our energies and our spirit. To do this we need leadership that will unite and serve all our people.”¹⁰⁰ The contrast with Lake, who anchored his campaign rhetoric on an idealized view of the state’s past, and on the ostensible wisdom of “the day before yesterday,” and with Moore, who rooted his campaign’s legitimacy in “North Carolina’s heritage,” was telling.¹⁰¹ Preyer wanted to move into the future; his opponents were skeptical of that goal. All concerned understood the implications this had for black North Carolinians.

Why did Preyer initially adopt this approach? Mostly, he seems to have been abiding by his personal feelings on race. In a possibly apocryphal tale, an associate tells Preyer, “Rich, I don’t believe you could convince the people of North Carolina that you were Anti-Negro if you publically flogged one on Jefferson Square in Greensboro,” to which Preyer zinged back, “And if I did flog one, Lake would be quick to point out that I didn’t look like I was enjoying it very much.”¹⁰² To his electoral detriment, Preyer did not believe in segregation, and the voters could tell.¹⁰³ In effect, no one could wink and say, “Ole Rich is okay on the Negroes,” as Terry Sanford’s associates did in 1960.

This strategy, however, could only take Preyer so far in a Democratic Party that remained opposed to civil rights. Long before the first election night, Preyer’s racial liberalism began to wilt under a barrage of attacks from the right. An unattributed newspaper attack ad, “Five

¹⁰⁰ People for Preyer Campaign to Wake County Democrats, March 18, 1964. Daniels Papers, Box 43, Folder 1964 Governor Candidates.

¹⁰¹ “Speech at N.C. State College,” April 5, 1964, Dan K. Moore, Campaign Speeches of Dan K. Moore; North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Henceforth, speeches from this collection will be labeled “Moore Speeches.” “The Future of Tobacco,” Beverly Lake, January 23, 1964, Biographical Clippings, Lake, Isaac Beverly; North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Henceforth, clippings from this collection will be referred to as “Lake Clippings.”

¹⁰² Spense, *Making of a Governor*, 66.

¹⁰³ Perry Young, Peter Vogel, February 5, 2015.

Reasons Why You Should Vote for 'Rich' Preyer for Governor of North Carolina," reminded voters that Preyer was "supported for the Governorship by such fine organizations as the NAACP, CORE, Martin Luther King, Kelley M. Alexander, James Farmer and other similar 'fine organizations.'"¹⁰⁴ During the first week of April, "Negros welcome" bumper stickers appeared on Preyer campaign signs in Davidson County. On April 14, Moore declared that three employees of Terry Sanford's anti-poverty North Carolina Fund were using their state positions to promote unlawful racial protests.¹⁰⁵ On May 18, less than two weeks before the first primary, the *Sanford Herald* ran a copy of an attack ad featuring a menacing black man wearing a sign that read, "Social Equality: Preyer for Governor."¹⁰⁶ So inundated was he by these attacks that Preyer could hardly afford to dwell on this instance. Just one week later, at a rally in North Wilkesboro, Moore forces circulated a flier declaring that Terry Sanford, Bert Bennett and Preyer kowtowed to the NAACP and other "Negro organizations" solely out of a cynical effort to win votes. Preyer chose not to directly confront these attacks, understanding that any critique he made of race baiting would sound to white voters like a call for racial equality. He briefly deviated from this policy on the day before the first primary when the Klan burned crosses around North Carolina in a show of its political might. In the exception that proved the rule, Preyer harshly condemned the Klan for "fanning the flames of hate." Back in Raleigh, Preyer's campaign team panicked and called the Judge to beg him not to repeat the line.¹⁰⁷

Preyer reacted to this onslaught by becoming gradually more critical of the civil rights bill and by contrasting his self-proclaimed moderate course for North Carolina with both the

¹⁰⁴ Alexander headed the North Carolina NAACP, Farmer co-founded the Congress on Racial Equality. "Five Reasons Why You Should Vote for 'Rich' Preyer for Governor of North Carolina," Preyer Papers, Box 1964 Campaign for Governor of North Carolina, Folder Campaign General, 2 of 2.

¹⁰⁵ Spense, *Making of a Governor*, 76.

¹⁰⁶ May 18, 1964, Daniels Papers, Box 43, Folder 1964 Governor Candidates.

¹⁰⁷ Perry Young, Peter Vogel, February 5, 2015.

integrationist model of Washington and the massive-resistance model adopted elsewhere in the South. In a typical statement on race, he appealed to white North Carolina's sense of exceptionalism, denouncing the public accommodations section of the Civil Rights Bill and then arguing that "we have the reputation as the most sensible state in the South on civil rights, we have proved we can solve our own problems without outside interference from anybody, including the federal government."¹⁰⁸ He also attempted to subtly shame his fellow Tar Heels into accepting racial progress. Invoking one of the few slurs worse than Yankee, Preyer warned, "We don't want to slip back and become Alabama or Mississippi, filled with fear and disorder. . . I am concerned with children and roads and jobs. That's what the Governor's job is about."¹⁰⁹ Preyer was praying to run against Lake in the second primary, not against Moore. Had he received his wish to run against a true segregationist, these efforts to appear both supportive of segregation and against massive resistance might have been sufficient to win him the party's nomination.

On May 30, the night of the first primary, Preyer and his team gathered around the television, growing increasingly nervous as Moore's strong results poured in. Before the polls closed, Preyer spoke hopefully of a Lake surge that was never to come.¹¹⁰ Preyer won the first primary, with Moore and Lake taking second and third respectively, but there was a palpable sense of defeat in the air. Lake and his voters were almost guaranteed to swing to Moore. Phil Carlton, Raleigh office manager, immediately cut the campaign's budget, knowing that few potential donors would give to a doomed effort.¹¹¹ It did not help that WRAL-TV insisted on

¹⁰⁸ "Civil Rights," in "1964 North Carolina Democratic Gubernatorial Election" (Raleigh: Candidates' Forum, 1964), 2; North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Henceforth, this voter guide will be referred to as "Candidates' Forum."

¹⁰⁹ "Candidate Backs State's Handling of Race Problem," *Raleigh News and Observer*, May 10, 1964.

¹¹⁰ "Triumph For Moore," the *Charlotte News*, June 1, 1964.

¹¹¹ Phil Carlton, Peter Vogel, February 19, 2015.

flashing graphic after graphic depicting Preyer winning the “bloc vote” of North Carolina’s blacks. Soon there would be scarcely a voting white North Carolinian unaware that 150,000 blacks citizens were all that separated Preyer from finishing in third place.¹¹² With this news, many white voters who supported Preyer in the first round began abandoning him. Preyer’s campaign manager in Burke County, for instance, recalled being told by voters, “Well, I was for your man Preyer. But he’s for the niggers.”¹¹³ “There was really no need for a second primary,” author James Spense concluded, “but it was impossible for the man with the most votes to give up.”¹¹⁴ Instead of giving up, Preyer needed to change his strategy.

In the manic month between the first and second primary, Preyer chose to overcome his electoral handicap as a racial liberal by attacking Moore on non-racial issues and by moving even further to the right on race. His first parry was vintage Sanford. The governor had learned during the 1950 Willis Smith-Frank Porter Graham senatorial primary that an aggressive campaign could force a race-baiter off script. Preyer hoped he could pull off an improbable victory by exposing Moore’s weaknesses as a candidate. The *Raleigh News and Observer* marveled at the change in Preyer’s tempo as he took to the road in the final weeks “hammering [Moore] on such points as a television debate, special interest groups, who is supporting Moore, who injected the racial issue, who injected sectionalism - the role of banks and power companies, and the tobacco problem.”¹¹⁵ Preyer also did his best to portray Moore as a plutocrat, “the candidate of the multi-millionaire machine men.”¹¹⁶ In a less racially charged election, such

¹¹² “Viewpoints,” Jesse Helms, WRAL-TV, 870, 875, 879.

¹¹³ Richardson Preyer, Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, January 28, 1974.

¹¹⁴ Spense, *Making of a Governor*, 87.

¹¹⁵ “Preyer Forces Chop Away at Moore’s Planks,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, June 22, 1964.

¹¹⁶ “Working Men and Women Take Note!” Biographical Clippings, Preyer, Richardson; North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Henceforth, documents from this collection will be referred to as “Preyer Clippings.”

economic populism might have wrestled the vote of working-class whites away from Moore. In 1964 it fell flat as racial identities proved more important to most Democrats than class.

To hedge against the failure of this offensive strategy, Preyer also started engaging the racial issue on Moore's terms. Increasingly desperate to win the white vote, Preyer spoke more often of his opposition to the Civil Rights Act. In mid-June Preyer took out ads in state papers proclaiming, "Don't let them fool you on the Civil Rights Bill! Preyer has taken his stand, Against: The Civil Rights Bill and all its sections, For: The North Carolina Way on race relations."¹¹⁷ In the final week of the primary Preyer grew even more desperate. On June 22, he accused Moore of soliciting the black vote after a Lake campaign worker revealed that Moore had written a prominent black leader, John W. Winter, asking for his support.¹¹⁸ The next day, Preyer's campaign sent a mailer to the High Point Police Department, which, unlike previous mailings, focused exclusively on civil rights. Sounding far more like a segregationist than the alleged hand-picked successor of Terry Sanford, he assured them that as governor he would "never tolerate violence by anyone or any group." "Any disturbance," he continued with obvious reference to the black protests that had rocked white High Point in the previous year, "should always be handled firmly. I shall stand behind firm handling of these cases and shall fight for adherence to and respect for the law by all citizens."¹¹⁹ It was all too little too late.

Lake: Old Dog, New Tricks

"The emphasis which I plan to develop will be on the conservative development of the faith of the people in North Carolina on individual freedom and responsibility."

- I. Beverly Lake, December 29, 1963¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ "Don't Let Them Fool You on the Civil Rights Bill," Preyer Papers, Box 1964 Campaign, Folder General, two of two.

¹¹⁸ Spense, *The Making of a Governor*, 103.

¹¹⁹ People for Preyer to High Point Police Department, June 23, 1964, Preyer Papers, Box Campaign for Governor of North Carolina, Folder General, 1963-1964 one of two.

¹²⁰ "Lake Believes that Conservatism and New Organization Will Beat 1960 Showing," *Durham Morning Herald*, December 29, 1963.

“Dr. I. Beverley Lake has quit his post as a Sunday school teacher at Wake Forest Baptist Church, where two Negroes were accepted for membership in February.”

- Winston-Salem *Journal and Sentinel*, April 24, 1963¹²¹

While conceding defeat in the 1960 gubernatorial primary, Beverly Lake vowed to his supporters, “We shall never surrender. We shall serve and defend our principles and four years from now our candidate will win that office.”¹²² Despite the best efforts of his opponents in 1963 to keep him out of the campaign, Lake decided to run for Governor for a second time. The principles he sought to defend remained the same. In his private actions, Lake was as firmly devoted to segregation as ever. In March of 1963 for instance, he stopped leading his Bible study at the Wake Forrest Baptist Church when it integrated, choosing instead to offer a private, white only class at a separate location. Though many white voters in the state sympathized with Lake’s desire to keep Sunday morning segregated, he knew that the majority did not desire a governor that fixated on suppressing blacks. He needed a plan to appeal to his loyal supporters from 1960 while also drawing in new, more racially tolerant voters. During the 1964 primary he developed a twofold racial strategy to accomplish this task.

Lake’s first strategy was to embrace the language of modern racism. This required him to sing a less white supremacist tune in public than he had adopted four years prior. In 1960, Lake berated the NAACP in every speech. In 1964 he was more inclined to talk about schools, roads, tobacco or patriotism. During the run-up to the 1960 campaign, Lake exploited white fears of miscegenation to great effect. For example, in the fall of 1957, Lake told voters that the NAACP was “trying to condition your children, even before they are old enough to be conscious of sex,

¹²¹ “Lake Quits Teaching at Church,” Winston-Salem *Journal and Sentinel*, April 24, 1963.

¹²² “Lake Mutes Race Issue; He's Sure of Victory,” Raleigh *News and Observer*, May 27, 1964.

to accept integration not only in the classroom, but in the living room and bedroom as well.”¹²³ But this language was conspicuously absent from the 1964 campaign. Similarly, in 1960, Lake attempted to distinguish himself from his opponents by arguing that the Supreme Court’s decision to mandate the integration of public schools was illegitimate.¹²⁴ When asked how he would respond to a single black student integrating a white school, he cruelly replied, “I would not advise the school board to welcome the child with open arms. . . . I would regard the child as an invader.”¹²⁵ By 1964, however, he conceded that *Brown* was the law of the land, a tacit admission he made only by declining to publically decry school integration. Instead, he spoke of the need to pay teachers better and to finance the costs of textbooks and other teaching supplies.

This transformation was hardly incidental. According to Eli Evans, a researcher for Preyer, “Lake’s whole effort was aimed at broadening his 1960 racial appeal by remaining calm and reasonable, letting the federal Civil Rights Bill and his reputation bring his old friends into the fold.”¹²⁶ In a rare bit of flattering media portrayal, the *Chapel Hill Weekly* acknowledged that Lake’s transformation had been at least partially successful. Comparing his 1960 and 1964 platform, it concluded that “there is much that is obviously new and sensitively wrought in the mind that most observers concede was the most impressive in the 1960 race.”¹²⁷ Even his liberal opponent lauded Lake’s decision not to stoop to unsophisticated racial attacks. Many years after the campaign, Preyer recalled, “I think his followers were hungering for the real demagogic bit. . . . They wanted him to attack the Jews and the Catholics and the bankers and most of all, the liberals on the racial matters. But Dr. Lake, instead, would give them a lecture on constitutional

¹²³ Drescher, *Triumph of Good Will*, 52.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 137.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 145.

¹²⁶ “North Carolina: The Reluctant Confederate,” Eli N. Evans to Richardson Preyer, Preyer Papers, Box 1964 Campaign, Folder General, one of two.

¹²⁷ “Dr. I. Beverly Lake,” *The Chapel Hill Weekly*, May 19, 1963.

law.”¹²⁸ Lake no doubt realized that with no candidate running to the right of him on race, there was little to no risk of alienating white supremacists by offering a more subtle racial appeal. His campaign strategy was at least partially vindicated during the first primary: he won an overwhelming share of the white vote in the counties where whites were most opposed to the black freedom movement.¹²⁹

For those who knew how to listen, Lake continued to talk about race. In order to do so, he linked racial animus with more acceptable issues, such as anti-communism, and portrayed his defense of segregation as a defense of American values.¹³⁰ Long into his old age, Lake believed that integration had been a disaster for children of all races.¹³¹ Instead of clearly articulating this conviction on the campaign trail, he insisted that schools teach children that “Freedom recognizes differences between people.”¹³² He was referring to the innate differences supposedly separating children of different races, but he dared not say so for fear of narrowing his appeal. Yet this code did not act merely as a shield to fend off accusations of racism, it also served as an offensive weapon to advance Lake’s small government ideology. For example, instead of explicitly praising segregation, Lake preached that “We must not teach our children that the greatest good is conformity, to think like other people, to live like other people, to suppress differences between individuals so that all will be reduced to a common denominator and all will look together to the Government . . . to do their thinking for them.”¹³³ For centuries Southern

¹²⁸ Richardson Preyer, Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, January 28, 1974.

¹²⁹ According to the journalist Arthur Johnsey, “Martin, Caswell, Granville, Wake and New Hanover Counties, which have been visited by racial demonstrators, stood fast in the Lake column. So did Wayne, Pender, Pitt, Wilson, Lenoir, Pasquotank and Washington, all in the Eastern ‘black belt’ areas where the pending civil rights bill has stirred the strongest fears and animosities ‘This was also true’ he noted, ‘in Bertie, Bladen, Harnett, Franklin, Warren, Chowan and Columbus.’” “Preyer, Moore Start New Drive for Votes,” Greensboro *Daily News*, June 1, 1964.

¹³⁰ “Lake Mutes Race Issue: He’s Sure of Victory,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, May 27, 1964.

¹³¹ I. Beverly Lake, Charles Dunn, September 8, 1987.

¹³² “A Program for Education: State College, Raleigh,” Beverly Lake, March 13, 1963, Lake Clippings.

¹³³ Ibid; “Lake Assails Civil Rights Bill in Franklin Speech,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, August 23, 1963.

politicians combined racial animus with appeals for limited government, Lake's innovation in 1964 was to more thoroughly subliminate the former under the later.

Second, Lake attempted to portray any trouble with Blacks as the work of external agents. In a speech to the Mecklenburg Kiwanis Club on February 10, 1964, he declared, "as Governor, I shall call upon those responsible, good Negro citizens . . . to take the leadership of their people away from outsiders and trouble-makers of both races, who are leading them into a blind alley of resentment where the cold comfort of a court decree will be a sorry substitute for respect and friendship."¹³⁴ This externalization of trouble, a hallmark of white reaction to civil rights across the South, allowed Lake to attack the movement while simultaneously claiming to be a friend of black North Carolinians.

In 1964 as in 1960, Lake's campaign resonated with many white voters, but this time his message could not carry him past the first primary. Most observers remained unsold on this newer, gentler Lake. Occasionally, he would slip up and remind white North Carolinians why he was outside of the racial mainstream. For instance, back during the summer of 1963, Lake had testified against the proposed civil rights bill before the Senate Commerce Committee. "To pass this bill," he threatened, "is to assume a fearful responsibility for human life . . . if the people of America are denied recourse to the police and the courts for protection of their persons and properties they will resort to their constitutional right to keep and bear arms and, when tempers flare, these arms will be used."¹³⁵ In contrast to North Carolina's Senator Sam Ervin, who implored private business owners to desegregate, Lake said he "would prefer to see Negro

¹³⁴ "Industry and Race Relations: Kiwanis Club, Mecklenburg Charlotte," Beverly Lake, February 10, 1964, Lake Clippings.

¹³⁵ "Dr. Lake Warns of Arms Threat," *Raleigh News and Observer* July 30, 1963.

businessmen open establishments for Negro people.”¹³⁶ This outburst occasioned an incensed letter to the editor of the *Raleigh News and Observer* from Luther H. Davis, an old friend and classmate of Lake’s, who found it reprehensible that the judge would “remind the people of the right to bear arms” in “the present climate of public opinion and strong feeling.”¹³⁷ Many, if not most, white North Carolinians agreed with Davis, and with the *Charlotte News*, which mused, “Although he has moderated his utterances, Dr. Lake’s fascination with race as a problem rather than as a challenge to creative leadership, remains a hallmark of the man and his spirit.”¹³⁸ Even though he would never make any comment as vitriolic as his Senate testimony after he officially entered the gubernatorial race, North Carolinian’s press was particularly unconvinced that he had undergone a change of heart. Not a single major paper in the state endorsed him.¹³⁹

Even after his defeat in the first primary, Lake remained a potent electoral force. The Preyer camp hoped against hope that Lake would either refuse to endorse or would support their man. On June 4, 1964, Charles Ervin, a Preyer operative, wrote to Allen Bailey, Lake’s campaign manager, to broach the topic of an endorsement. In a letter that did not explicitly address any campaign issue, he hinted at Preyer’s trustworthiness on racial issues, promising that Preyer would “speak his mind without attempting to placate any particular group and/or the Federal Government.”¹⁴⁰ Neither Bailey nor Lake was convinced.

On June 24, 1964 Lake agreed to go on television, not so much to endorse Dan Moore, as to attack racial liberalism and Richardson Preyer.¹⁴¹ Lecturing came easily to the former law

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ “Letter to the Editor,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, August 8, 1963.

¹³⁸ “We’re for Dan Moore,” *The Charlotte News*, May 18, 1964.

¹³⁹ “Preyer Draws Slightly Ahead in Paper’s Preference,” A.P. and *Charlotte News*, May 28, 1964.

¹⁴⁰ Charles Ervin to Allen Bailey, June 4, 1964, Preyer Paper, Box 1964 Campaign for Governor, Folder General one of two.

¹⁴¹ After the first primary, Moore met with Lake to solicit his endorsement. Lake drove a hard bargain, requesting control over a substantial number of state appointments. Moore, determined on principle not to enter office beholden to another, refused. Lake later endorsed Moore anyway. George Ragsdale, Peter Vogel, February 22, 2015.

professor, and when he felt no need to delay his lesson any longer, he began, “I want you to vote for the man whom you, yourself, believe comes closest to standing for the principles for which you and I fought in the First Primary and in which we still believe.”¹⁴² The campaign had been fought on many issues. There had been talk of “secret meetings,” “chain banks” and “hand-picked candidates,” and he addressed them all, efficiently and methodically reminding his supporters why they had picked him over his two opponents in the first place. But Lake had run for governor for a second time to advocate for white supremacy, and it was time to address the cause he most ardently believed in.

“Why” he asked, “do the white and Negro people who have written for, spoken for, marched for, and demonstrated for the Civil Rights Bill now vote en masse for Judge Preyer who says it's a bad bill?” Throughout 1964 Lake had endeavored to maintain the civility the country expected from the Old North State. He did not view himself as a race-baiter or demagogue. He was a former professor, former state attorney general, and now, former candidate for governor. It would be unbecoming to yell or snarl. Yet his anger was uncontainable. “Is it not that these people believe his opposition to their favorite bill is a mere academic, intellectual opposition, which they can persuade him to put aside now that the bill has been passed by Congress?” he bitterly asked. “Is it not that these friends of his believe Judge Preyer has honestly, sincerely placed his own faith in the false and evil social and political philosophy of Chief Justice Warren, Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King?”

Lake had lost his second war in four years, but he felt confident that history would vindicate him. Back home in his study rested the .44 caliber pistol of his maternal grandfather,

¹⁴² “Statement by Beverly Lake in Support of Dan Moore Democratic Candidate for Governor” Beverly Lake, June 24, 1964, Preyer Papers: Box 1964 Campaign, Folder General, one of two.

John W. Caldwell. When Kentucky refused to secede from the Union, Caldwell left the state, leading a brigade of like-minded men against the North. Above his grandfather's ancient service weapon flew Lake's prize possession, Caldwell's unsundered Confederate battle flag. Lake believed it to be the only one of its kind and was quick to joke that he kept the gun and flag close by, just in case the South ever decided to try again. As Lake's speech ended and the last viewers switched off their television sets, he might have embraced a moment of solitude. For the first time in many years, he was not running for governor. In the serenity of that moment it is unlikely that it would have occurred to Lake that despite his partially successful efforts to talk about race in a new and more palatable way, a majority of white voters viewed him as a similar relic, a man whose contributions were to be honored but whose time had passed.¹⁴³

Moore: The Winning Formula

"I enjoyed the statement Lake's campaign manager in Gaston, C.B. Falls, made on television. He said he was supporting Moore because he was the candidate the white people voted for."

- Mike Plumdis Letter to the Editor of the Charlotte *Observer*¹⁴⁴

While Preyer and Lake tried a multiplicity of strategies to win the heart of the electorate on racial issues, Moore tried but one, and it was successful. Moore understood that all he had to do was campaign as a sensible alternative between two ostensible extremes. This did not mean he simply split the difference between Preyer and Lake. Instead, he would campaign as an opponent of racial equality, but one with better credentials as a color-blind conservative than Lake.

¹⁴³ I. Beverly Lake, Edward C. Harrelson, February 18, 1992.

¹⁴⁴ "On 'Bloc' Voting," Charlotte *Observer*, June 10, 1964.

Unlike Preyer, who would have loved for the race issue to disappear from the campaign altogether, or Lake, who spent much of 1963 and 1964 trying to disguise his deeply-held beliefs regarding blacks, Moore evinced an eagerness to discuss his conservative stance on race during the primaries.¹⁴⁵ For example, half-way through a speech on agriculture in Greenville on May 6, 1964, Moore abruptly transitioned to discussing the Civil Rights Act, which he termed the “mixed bag of legal absurdities now pending before the Congress.”¹⁴⁶ Though he vowed to “exert every influence of the office of the governor to seek just and honorable settlements of differences” between black and whites, he did not believe these efforts should actually include leveraging government power to promote racial change. Legislation mandating integration, Moore believed, was doomed to fail, for changes in belief “could come only from the human heart.”¹⁴⁷ Later, in the waning days of the second primary, Moore even delayed before rejecting the endorsement he received from North Carolina’s powerful Ku Klux Klan.¹⁴⁸ He condemned the Klan in Charlotte where it was widely reviled, yet the same day, speaking in Greenville – part of the Klan’s eastern heartland – he balked, claiming that “he did not know the nature of the Klan or its membership.”¹⁴⁹ These actions signaled to racially conservative North Carolinians that they could trust him with their vote. Moore managed to maintain his brand as a “moderate” candidate despite these fairly bald appeals to racial prejudice for two reasons: he was still less conservative than Lake, and endorsements from the Democratic Party establishment and from

¹⁴⁵ Moore believed that there was a disappointing “lack of public discussion” on the civil rights movement during the 1964 gubernatorial campaign, a claim Preyer and Lake would have hotly contested. See “Address,” Dan K. Moore, March 13, 1964, Moore Speeches.

¹⁴⁶ “Address,” Dan K. Moore, May 6, 1964, Moore Speeches.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Most Klan members voted for Lake in the first round. Their leader, Bob Jones, endorsed Moore during the second week of the runoff. David Cunningham. *Klansville, U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights Era Ku Klux Klan* (Oxford University Press), 14.

¹⁴⁹ Preyer campaign document, in possession of the author, courtesy of Perry Young.

prominent papers – including the Asheville *Citizen-Times*, the Asheville *Times*, the Shelby *Daily Star*, and the Charlotte *News* – lent him an air of respectability.¹⁵⁰

Moore, like Lake, was also happy to present his opposition to racial progress as support for freedom and capitalism. In fact, when it came to deploying the language of modern racism for electoral advantage, Moore was the better campaigner of the two. In Rocky Mount on April 25, 1964, Moore informed his audience that the civil rights bill would bring “the greatest tyranny this country has ever known under constitutional government.”¹⁵¹ The bill was not about race or segregation, he suggested, it was about infringing on white freedom. Taking a shot at Preyer, the frontrunner at the time, he charged, “Maybe my opponent isn’t concerned about individual freedom, but I am.”¹⁵² Taking his speech down a level in abstraction, Moore then began to assault federal overreach, tying “the present racial struggle” together with “each new socialistic scheme that is advanced in Washington.”¹⁵³ Moore laid out this connection between an expansive government and a government that meddled in North Carolina’s racial affairs even more clearly during a speech to the Carolina Society of Association Executives in Raleigh on March 13. Decrying the “nearly back-breaking” burden of regulation and the “endless caverns of federal and state government bureaucracies” that accompanied it, he resolved to provide his “unyielding resistance to those who would pile on just one more straw.”¹⁵⁴ Later in his speech he explicitly clarified that the straw he had in mind was “the problem loosely termed the civil rights movement, and the intolerable pressures it is exerting on the small businessman.” Moore closed with declarations of his adamant opposition to a public accommodations or fair employment law

¹⁵⁰ “Preyer Draws Slightly Ahead in Paper’s Preference,” A.P. and Charlotte News, May 28, 1964.

¹⁵¹ “Address: Rocky Mount,” Dan K. Moore, April 25, 1964, Moore Speeches.

¹⁵² Ibid

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ “Address,” Dan K. Moore, March 13, 1964, Moore Speeches.

and with a warning to “integration militants” that as governor, he would not “tolerate racial chaos” or trample on the rights of “independent businessmen and citizens in fear of it.”¹⁵⁵ It was this racial rhetoric disguised as economic policy that allowed George Ragsdale, a campaign volunteer and Moore’s future legal counsel and law partner, to recall that race did not play an important role in the 1964 campaign.

When not espousing his own position on civil rights, Moore went on the offensive against Preyer. In reference to Preyer’s softness on the civil rights bill, Volunteers for Moore, the media arm of Moore’s campaign, ran an ad reminding voters, “One candidate for Governor doesn’t seem to think the people of North Carolina have anything to fear from any parts of this bill... except perhaps the one part that deals with ‘public accommodations.’”¹⁵⁶ The *Charlotte News*, which supported Moore, continued the attack against Preyer during the second primary, fuming, “There *has* been an exploitation of race feeling in the second primary— a sustained exploitation by Judge Preyer, his associates, and the Preyer press... to paint Dan Moore as a racist and a reactionary.”¹⁵⁷ Meanwhile, Moore, secure in his belief that the voters would see him as a moderate regardless of his rhetoric, was quick to condemn “racial chaos” and praise “private property rights.”¹⁵⁸ Especially once Lake was eliminated from the contest, a majority of white Democrats liked what they heard.

After garnering only thirty-four percent of the vote in the first primary, Moore won a commanding sixty-two percent in the run-off, sweeping ninety-three of the state’s one hundred

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ “What About The Civil Rights Bill?” Biographical Clippings, Daniel Moore North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Henceforth, this collection will be referred to as “

¹⁵⁷ “The Race Issue,” *The Charlotte News*, June 13, 1964.

¹⁵⁸ “No Quibbling in Order on The Klan,” *The Charlotte Observer*, June 23, 1964; “Civil Rights,” *Candidates’ Forum*, 2.

counties in one of the most resounding victories in North Carolina political history.¹⁵⁹

Ultimately, Dan Moore prevailed because his position on race was closest to that of the white electorate. As Lake's campaign proved, unreconstructed segregationists were no longer electable in the state, but in 1964 Preyer's campaign was still a bridge too far for most white North Carolinians. In a state that often boasted of its moderation, Moore found that the middle, as whites understood it, was the best place to be.

While Moore prepared to seal up his election in November, the loss left Preyer and his staff with ample time to contemplate his choice not to vocally advocate for racial equality. Reflecting on Preyer's decision, Phil Carlton mused "you want to do what you believe in, but you're not going to get to serve and do anything about it unless you are careful."¹⁶⁰ Other supporters were struck by a powerful sense that the campaign had forsaken an opportunity to speak the truth to the voters of North Carolina. On the night of the run-off, Perry Young, Preyer's press aid, Bert Bennett and Jonathan Daniels, editor of the *Raleigh News and Observer*, gathered to bitterly drink away their disappointment. Together they pondered Preyer's decision to appeal to white North Carolina's conservative racial instincts rather than to fight openly for justice. Young recalls announcing to the group, "I will always wonder what he might have done if he could have run as himself."¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ George Ragsdale, Peter Vogel, February 22, 2015.

¹⁶⁰ Phil Carlton, Peter Vogel, February 19, 2015.

¹⁶¹ Perry Young, Peter Vogel, February 5, 2015.



Figure Three: Though their ideologies conflicted, little personal animosity divided Preyer, Lake and Moore, pictured here from left to right at the Azalea Festival in Wilmington April, 1964. Photo courtesy of UNC Digital Collections.

Conclusion: Modernization and a Dinner Party

From late 1963 through June of 1964, as Preyer, Lake and Moore took to the campaign trail to win the hearts of white North Carolinians, race became the state's dominant topic of political discussion. Forced by growing black resistance to the status quo, all three candidates articulated their own visions of North Carolina's racial future. Though Richardson Preyer believed in racial equality, he declined to make this support public, opting instead to campaign against government-mandated integration. Beverly Lake made the opposite progression from Preyer. He understood that North Carolina was unlikely to elect a traditional segregationist, so he expanded his sphere of concern to include economic and social issues a degree removed from

race. Finally, Dan Moore struck a posture that in substance resembled Lake's, but that ostensibly fell between the two other candidates. These movements resulted in the convergence of the candidates into what many of their fellow whites termed a "moderate" position: the candidates, to varying degrees, claimed to be against forced racial equality but not to be against black North Carolinians themselves. At no point during the primaries did any of the candidates articulate a vision of racial justice.

Calling this position moderate implies that it represented a stable, even consensus opinion among white North Carolinians. In fact, no such consensus on race existed among the state's whites or even among their three Democratic gubernatorial candidates. During the 1964 Democratic gubernatorial primaries, Beverly Lake and Dan Moore modernized, not moderated, how white politicians in North Carolina expressed their prejudice. While other segregationists running across the South in the 1960's went out of their way to be as intransigent and vehement in their opposition to civil rights as possible, Lake and Moore endeavored to soften racism's hard edge.¹⁶² Their campaigns avoided the sexually charged imagery that dominated previous southern elections and eschewed racial epithets or references to the intrinsic superiority of whites over blacks. Instead of attacking blacks as a racial group, Moore and Lake framed their opposition to black equality as a defense of American values and capitalism. In relying almost exclusively on such rhetoric, they were ahead of their time.

Their "modernization" efforts did not go uncontested, for Richardson Preyer's campaign hinted at a very different vision of what North Carolina politics could look like. Preyer, a racial liberal at heart, did not passively wait to receive the judgment of the electorate in response to his

¹⁶² Michael J. Klarman, "How Brown Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis," *The Journal of American History* 81 (1994).

racial views; rather, he experimented with a number of positions, and ultimately followed the most politically expedient path forward by moving to the right on race. Most white voters, however, remained unconvinced that he actually supported racial conservatism. That he secured the endorsement of the *Raleigh Times*, the *Charlotte Observer*, the *Greenville Reflector*, the *Sanford Herald*, and the “preference” of the *Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel* in addition to thirty-seven percent of the vote in the first round, and thirty-eight percent in the second, indicates that a strong minority of white voters supported racial equality in 1964.¹⁶³

At times during the campaign Preyer, Lake and Moore may have sounded like each other, a natural effect of seeking the support of the same median voter. Yet the three men represented three distinct groups whose opinions on race diverged substantially. The same summer that President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act – and famously, if apocryphally, announced he had given the South away for a generation – the growing divide between racial liberals and conservatives was already tearing North Carolina’s Democratic Party apart.

This division was on full display on July 31, 1964, when the Party’s organizers and elected officials met in Charlotte for a “unity dinner” heading into the November election.¹⁶⁴ The dinner resembled something of a last hurrah for an old party on the cusp of dramatic change. By 1964 many black North Carolinians were voting and they were doing so almost uniformly for Democrats; yet of the 1,450 guests at the dinner, fewer than ten were black. Support for the national party was also quickly eroding— Moore had already declared that voting for Johnson would be the extent of his support for the President’s campaign. But on that day, Luther Hodges, Terry Sanford and Richardson Preyer took to the stage to extol the virtues of fidelity to their

¹⁶³ “Preyer Draws Slightly Ahead in Paper’s Preference,” *Charlotte News*, May 28, 1964; Spence, *Making of a Governor*, 125.

¹⁶⁴ “Unity, Victory Theme of Democratic Dinner,” *Statesville Record and Landmark*, August 1, 1964.

party. Fittingly, the only man not reading from the script of party unity was Beverly Lake. Lake did not formally leave the Party to become a Republican until 1980, but by the end of the 1964 primaries, it was clear that his days as a Democrat were numbered. No tent was big enough to accommodate both the vision of black participation that Preyer secretly endorsed and Lake's cherished principle of a social order dominated by whites. As Hodges and Sanford finished their speeches and the audience leapt to their feet to applaud, Gertrude, Lake's wife, could be seen conspicuously imploring her husband to do the same. He remained resolutely in his seat.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ "A Research Proposal: The Politics of Transitional Political Systems--- The South Moving From One Party and Modified One Party Systems To Competitive, Pivotal, or Two Party Systems?-- The North Carolina Delegation to The Democratic National Convention of 1964 in Political Context," Donald M. Freeman to Richardson Preyer, August 15, 1964, Preyer Papers, Box 1964, Folder Analysis.

*"Boys, if There'd Been 'Law And Order In The Streets'
When This Union Organized 30 Years Ago, You'd
Still Be Trying To Crawl Out Of Slums Yourself."*



Figure Four: Driven by their racial conservatism, many working class whites left the Democratic Party to become Republicans during the late 1960s. Photo courtesy of the Raleigh News and Observer, October 25, 1968.

Chapter Three

Playing to Fear: Bob Scott, Jim Gardner and the Rise of a Two-Party North Carolina

“In my hometown of Chapel Hill, Negro spokesmen have warned, ‘It’s not only going to be a long, hot summer; it’s going to be hell.’ I, for one, am scared.”

- Joseph A. Austin, letter to Jim Gardner, April 7, 1968

“I think the dominant issue in this election campaign is one that some candidates cater to, but none mentions out loud – fear.”

- Whitney M. Young, *The Carolina Times*, October 12, 1968

The status of black Americans improved more rapidly in the five years separating the start of the campaign to replace North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford in 1963 and the election of Robert W. Scott to the same post in 1968 than during any comparable span in the twentieth century. From the White House, Lyndon Johnson brought his formidable eloquence to bear in a call to assault black poverty in the “next and . . . more profound stage of the battle for civil rights.”¹⁶⁶ From Capitol Hill, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 helped put the full weight of Washington behind racial equality for the first time since Reconstruction. Change was not immediately forthcoming - black residents still had to fight to win the rights guaranteed to them by the law - but it was undeniably present. Across the South, de jure segregation began to crumble and black voter registration soared— from 1964 to 1968 one million black Southerners registered to vote, an increase of thirty percent.¹⁶⁷ Emboldened by growing black political strength and a concomitant decline in the political viability of white supremacy, in 1968, Reginald Hawkins, a Charlotte dentist, became the first black North Carolinian to run for Governor.¹⁶⁸ The same year, for the first time in many decades, no

¹⁶⁶ David C. Carter, *The Music Has Gone Out of the Movement: Civil Rights and the Johnson Administration, 1963-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of Chapel Hill Press, 2009), 6.

¹⁶⁷ “Rights Leaders Concerned About Expected Negro Vote,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, October 27, 1968.

¹⁶⁸ “‘Common Cause’ for Poor Whites, Negroes Seen by Hawkins,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, January 21, 1968.

gubernatorial candidate expressly committed to segregation ran for governor. Even black incomes were growing. Despite the persistence of grinding poverty for most blacks, from 1961 to 1968 the total national income accruing to black Americans increased by 110 percent, far outstripping the robust gains of white Americans.¹⁶⁹ These political and economic changes were given teeth by rapidly evolving social norms. Across the country whites moved toward accepting the fundamental equality of people of different races, even while many remained hostile to policies designed to actually bring this equality about.¹⁷⁰ To the optimist, the black freedom movement appeared to be “at Canaan’s edge.”¹⁷¹

This progress, though real, was only partial and remained fiercely contested. America was still in initial stages of the ongoing process of becoming a nation where the principle of racial equality was universally shared. Few states illustrated this incomplete transformation better than North Carolina. Physical and structural violence remained a daily threat to black North Carolinians in the late 1960s. On July 17, 1968, a fairly representative day, the *Charlotte Observer* reported the conviction of a Greensboro Klansman, Clyde A. Webster, for burning a cross in an effort to frighten his one black neighbor into moving. The same day, the *Observer* alerted its readers that a black-owned home had been firebombed in Fayetteville. Thankfully, the young white couple living in the house survived. Hundreds of similar acts of white violence were recorded in North Carolina in the 1960s while thousands more went unrecorded.¹⁷² Even when

¹⁶⁹ Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 29.

¹⁷⁰ Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 102. Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in The Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 1.

¹⁷¹ Taylor Branch, *At Canaan’s Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-1968* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

¹⁷² David Cunningham. *Klansville, U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights Era Ku Klux Klan* (Oxford University Press), 14.

they were not direct targets of white terror, black Tar Heels still struggled against political marginalization. According to David Cunningham, “by 1968, North Carolina had fewer black elected officials than any other southern state, with no black representation among mayors or state legislators, or in county governance and law enforcement. Only one school board member statewide was black.”¹⁷³

Alongside these traditional obstacles, black North Carolinians also faced a troubling new political development: the rise of a viable Republican Party in what had very recently been the Solid Democratic South. While no segregationist ran for governor of North Carolina in 1968, a conservative Republican, James Carson Gardner, did— and he nearly won. His campaign against Bob Scott was the most closely contested general election for governor in North Carolina in almost seventy years and the clearest sign yet that the state was changing politically. By the time Dan Moore triumphed over Richardson Preyer and Beverly Lake in 1964, North Carolina’s Democratic Party was badly divided over race. In the next four years these divisions began to work themselves out as racially conservative Democrats started to leave the party. In 1968, a paltry 28,000 new voters joined North Carolina’s long-dominant Democratic Party, while a stampede of 104,000 voters registered as Republicans.¹⁷⁴ Similar developments were playing out across the region in the late 1960s: in a very short period of time the Solid South became a two-party region and the nation’s long march toward racial equality began to slow.

The 1968 gubernatorial election in North Carolina offers a fascinating opportunity to explore the relationship between these two trends in an understudied state. As an examination of the racial attitudes of white Tar Heel voters and of the strategic use of race by the state’s

¹⁷³Cunningham, *Klansville U.S.A.*, 113.

¹⁷⁴ *The Two-Party System in North Carolina: Do We Have One? And What Does It Mean?* N.C. Center for Public Policy Research and UNC Center for Public Television Dec.1987

candidates for governor reveals, this transition was messy but not haphazard. While blacks and many liberal whites continued to demand a more just society, the prevailing sentiment among white voters remained one of fear: fear of racial disorder, of crime and of a newly assertive black populace. Though a multiplicity of forces pushed whites out of the Democratic Party and pulled them into the Republican Party, no single cause was as important as this dread.¹⁷⁵ Like Moore and Lake before them, both Scott and Gardner attempted to manage these fears on their path to the governor's mansion by relying on modern racism to attract white votes. Scott prevailed in the election by staking out a position just to the left of Gardner, one that earned him the grudging vote of the overwhelming number of black North Carolinians. By Election Day, 1968, few observers could doubt that North Carolina was a two-party state with a Republican Party whose appeal rested largely on race and with a Democratic Party split between two factions, one profoundly committed to racial justice, the other decidedly ambivalent about that goal.

Fear and Anger: White Public Opinion on Race and Politics

“P.S. A Lot of my Democratic friends have joined the Wallace Party and the Republican Party.”

- Joseph R. Overby, Letter to Jim Gardner, April 5, 1968¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ I am indebted to Ira Katznelson whose *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright, 2013,) helped structure my thinking on this subject. This chapter is grounded in letters between Jim Gardner, Bob Scott and their constituents, along with letters to the editors of leading newspapers, the observations of journalists, and campaign speeches. Relying heavily on letters to explore complex and dynamic attitudes is problematic. Most writers only wrote in once and offered few biographical details. This makes it extremely difficult to contextualize their attitudes. Letters, however, do offer several advantages as sources. First, writing a letter requires the deliberate and clear expression of an opinion, one that is often deeply felt; as one man put it to Bob Scott, “I don’t have time this morning to write a letter but I am taking it anyway.” See Folder “Law and Order Two”, box 52, Robert W. Scott II Papers, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, North Carolina. Second, many correspondents spoke not just for themselves, but for other members of their family and community as well. For example, see LaVerne W. Thorton to Jim Gardner, September 8, 1967, Folder “Governor 1968,” box 11, James Carson Gardner Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Of course, the authors could be accidentally or even deliberately misrepresenting the opinions of those around them in order to bolster the credibility of their arguments, but this is a problem inherent to all expressions of opinion, not one unique to letters.

¹⁷⁶ Joseph R. Overby to James C. Gardner, April 5, 1968, Folder “Tax Increase”, box 15, James Carson Gardner Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. All subsequent letters from this collection will be referred to as “Gardner Papers.”

Though a historian searching for proof of an attitude in a sufficiently large pool of sources will almost always be able to find it, no researcher, no matter how myopic, could fail to locate the fear and anger that pulsed through white North Carolina during the 1968 campaign season.¹⁷⁷ Nor could they miss the fact that many whites directed their vitriol at their ancestral party. The white South had long offered nearly unconditional support to the Democratic Party, but by the mid-1960s, many of its inhabitants felt that the Democrats did not adequately provide for them. Harvey Griffin of Nashville reflected this sentiment when he wrote, “We have been told that the Democratic Party is the party of the people. If so, why then after 67 years of continuous support for the Democratic Party is Eastern North Carolina one of the least progressive and least prosperous areas of all the United States?”¹⁷⁸ His letter serves as important reminder that white Southerners did not betray the Democratic Party when they became Republicans, rather, the party over many years failed to adequately represent them or respond to their needs. Yet if the Democratic Party had failed to represent the economic interests of working and middle-class whites for decades, why was it only in the mid-1960s that a substantial number of conservative North Carolinians began to leave the Party?

Important as it is to consider Griffin’s admonishment of the Democratic Party, it is equally important to recognize the central role race played in propelling conservative, white, Tar Heels to become Republicans. While on assignment in Eastern North Carolina in October of 1968, journalist Roy Parker Jr. was struck by the vitriol he detected in the region’s political discourse. Its origin was no mystery: “whether spat out or more politely described as ‘the civil rights issue,’” he wrote, “the main-cause for anger is swiftly moving social change which marks the

¹⁷⁷ For the methodological point, see Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 8.

¹⁷⁸ “Letter to the Editor,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, January 10, 1968.

racial picture in the area.”¹⁷⁹ Though Parker correctly identified anti-black sentiment as the primary cause angering white voters in the east, he failed to observe the complex range of opinions white North Carolina voters held regarding race.

In 1968 just as in 1963, the citizens of North Carolina possessed a wide-range of views on the racial unrest gripping both the nation and their state. Two points of view – white supremacy on one hand and racial liberalism on the other – formed the outer limits of the political space in which Gardner and Scott could have conceivably run for governor. In between these visions stood a vast collection of white individuals furious over and terrified by what seemed to be an impending collapse of their social order. Once loyal Democrats, they were increasingly inclined to support Republicans. These were the median voters Scott and Gardner battled over.

White North Carolina voters as a whole lagged behind their elected officials in eliminating avowedly white supremacist rhetoric from their vernacular. “Why can’t they just leave us alone?” a white woman in Saratoga asked of blacks, “All my life we’ve been separate. That’s how it should be again.”¹⁸⁰ Chuck Hardee – or more likely one of his parents – wondered the same. In a letter that uncannily expressed white fears of losing the power their race provided them, the boy of nine, son of the mayor of Rocky Mount, wrote Congressman Gardner, “If necessary, I can tolerate (maybe) Negroes in my school room. But, I do not understand when they ask to live next door to me... go to parties with me... and their Daddys want to be Mayors of our towns.”¹⁸¹ In a state with the region’s most robust Klan, others wrote in to defend the terrorist group, arguing that it served as a vital protector of whites against “Black Power leaders”

¹⁷⁹ “Political Anger and New Prosperity Dot the Landscape in Eastern N.C.,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, October 13, 1968.

¹⁸⁰ “Easterners Found Moving to Wallace,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, October 3, 1968.

¹⁸¹ Chuck Hardee to Jim Gardner, July 24, 1967, Gardner Papers, “Civil Rights Segregation and Desegregation,” Box 9. A year later the boy’s mother wrote Gardner to oppose school integration, signing off, “It seems to me that we are at Mr. Nixon’s mercy. Only you, he and God can help us now.” Mrs. Charles B. Hardee to Jim Gardner, August 8, 1968, Gardner Papers, “Civil Rights Segregation and Desegregation,” Box 9.

and “the commie indoctrinated segment of the population concentrating upon the burning of our cities.”¹⁸²

Few, if any, of these North Carolinians saw themselves as hateful. Wilbur A. Raynor of Raleigh, for instance, wrote to Jim Gardner to praise him for supporting freedom of choice for school desegregation and for scrutinizing “give-away programs” designed to help blacks. After cheerfully informing Gardner, that “the people in my area appreciate the good work you are doing and I hope you don’t let the Negros, the newspapers and the communists get you down,” he clarified, “Don’t get me wrong, I am in favor of treating everyone right regardless of color.”¹⁸³ Likewise, Henry Gregory, President of First Federal Bank in Rocky Mount, wrote Bob Scott to alert him that “The Yankee-inspired so-called civil rights goal is to transform this section of the nation, not into a negro Eden but into a mullato paradise.” To establish his credentials as a reasonable and honorable man, he tacked on an addendum: “I consider myself very pro-Negro because I have three Negro clerical employees in my office. We began integrating five years ago.”¹⁸⁴

By 1964 all state-level politicians in North Carolina attempted to disguise naked appeals to white solidarity or white racial fears with coded rhetoric, but four years later many of their constituents still had not made this adjustment. These white supremacists came from all regions of the state and from all walks of life, bank president and town mayor on down. These voters

¹⁸² “Letter to the Editor,” D.M. Howell, *Raleigh News and Observer*, January 11, 1968; R.T. Hoskins to Robert Walter Scott II, Oct. 19, 1967, Folder: “Alamance”, Box 57, Gubernatorial Campaign Material, 1967-1968, Robert W. Scott II Papers, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, North Carolina. Henceforth, documents from this collection will be referred to as “Scott Papers.”

¹⁸³ Wilbur A. Raynor to Jim Gardner, “Civil Rights Segregation and Desegregation,” box 289, Gardner Papers. “Freedom of choice” legislation removed explicit reference to race from pupil assignment plans and decentralized control of the integration process, allowing white-controlled local school boards to dictate the rate of integration. A masterstroke in the maintenance of North Carolina’s moderate image, freedom of choice enabled the state to avoid both the destabilizing effects of massive resistance and to maintain nearly full school segregation.

¹⁸⁴ Henry Gregory to Bob Scott, “Law and Order,” folder four, box 52, Scott Papers.

ensured that no liberal candidate could vocally support racial equality and hope to be elected. Meanwhile, they provided cover to racially conservative candidates such as Moore, Gardner and Scott, allowing the politicians to present themselves as safe alternatives to more virulent whites. The group's impact on the election would have been far more pronounced had the intensity of their opposition to racial justice not been matched by that of their ideological opponents.

A second group of North Carolinians, composed of newly enfranchised blacks and liberal whites, challenged their leaders to create a more equal state. At times this group struck an optimistic chord incongruent with the dominant tone of the campaign. For instance, in the dark days immediately following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., Dan and Linda Wilbanks of Raleigh wrote Gardner, "North Carolina urgently requires a leader who will bring the light of hope into a dark time for white and Negro alike." Where others saw black Americans as a looming threat to "law and order," the Wilbanks viewed "the patience, persistence and suffering of the majority of Negroes in the civil rights movement [as] one of the greatest pages in the history of man's attempts to create a better world."¹⁸⁵ At other times, white liberals displayed a fear of black violence their conservative counterparts could identify with, even if the conclusions they drew from it were very different. Some believed that racial riots were harbingers of worse violence to come. John W. Dixon Jr. of Chapel Hill, for instance, believed that riots resembled the Boston Tea Party— a protest for liberty. "It now remains to be seen," he wrote, "if we will force them to Lexington and Concord."¹⁸⁶ A fellow college-town resident wrote Bob Scott in the late fall of 1967 cautioning that unless white conservatives resisted their desire to suppress blacks, "we may very well have a spontaneous revolt on our hands— but only

¹⁸⁵ Dan and Linda Wilbanks to Jim Gardner, April 9, 1968, Folder, "Riots-PM", box 16, Gardner Papers.

¹⁸⁶ "Law and Order," *Raleigh News and Observer*, Jan. 19, 1968.

because we asked for it.”¹⁸⁷ In the fearful climate of 1968, these liberals surveyed the conflict surrounding them and came to the disquieting conclusion that things could still get much worse if white conservatives continued resisting racial change.

This group was not inclined to let racially coded rhetoric go unchallenged, and thus posed a particular problem for conservative Democrats like Bob Scott. On October 1, 1968, J.A. Blyth of Raleigh urged his fellow voters to “no longer turn our backs on decency and take a serious look at the votes of ‘law and order candidates.’”¹⁸⁸ James Grady, also of Raleigh, wrote the *News and Observer* that month with the message that “in too many cases, racism and state’s rights are synonymous.”¹⁸⁹ Likeminded voters were unwilling to pledge unconditional fidelity to the Democratic Party. After finishing third in the Democratic primary in May, Reginald Hawkins, the black dentist from Charlotte, waited until October 30 to endorse Bob Scott, offering the ringing praise that he was “not too enthusiastic about either gubernatorial candidate” but would vote the straight party ticket.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, Howard Fuller, a prominent black anti-poverty activist in Durham, publically announced “that he could see no difference in the two candidates for governor.”¹⁹¹ While Gardner had virtually no hope of winning over this cohort, they remained important to Scott’s electoral path to the governor’s mansion: if he moved too far to the right they might refuse to vote at all, handing victory to Gardner. The Democratic nominee would have to walk a tight-rope throughout the campaign: neither shunning nor embracing racial liberals.

¹⁸⁷ Mrs. Jean C. Luker to Bob Scott, Folder, Nov. 20, 1967, “Law and Order” number two, box 52, Scott Papers. This desire for change – if only to forestall even worse racial violence – was widespread, e.g. Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Ringwalt to Jim Gardner, April 8, 1968, folder, “Riots-PM,” box 16, Gardner Papers; Walter R. Pearson to Jim Gardner, April 5, 1968, folder “PM: Open Housing”, box 15, Gardner Papers.

¹⁸⁸ “Humane Treatment,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 1, 1968.

¹⁸⁹ “Federal Aid,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 28, 1968.

¹⁹⁰ “Hawkins Backs All Democrats,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, October 31, 1968.

¹⁹¹ “Fuller Says Didn’t Urge Not Voting,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 29, 1968.

The bulk of white North Carolina voters in 1968 fell somewhere between these two camps. On all the pressing racial issues of the day – riots, open housing, school integration and the War on Poverty – their views were more closely aligned with defenders of the racial status quo than with proponents of the black freedom movement. Much of the historiography on the southern civil rights movement has focused either on its heroic black demonstrators or else intransigent promoters of massive resistance and white supremacy.¹⁹² Elucidating the opinions of this largest group of white voters belies such stark dichotomies.

Rioting, and the fear for personal safety, property, and social order it engendered, was the most important issue to white voters in North Carolina in 1968. Every summer since 1964 major cities across the country had burned at the hands of low-income black residents. The Kerner Commission – created on President Johnson’s orders – found that the roots of the crisis lay in “white racism,” and famously concluded that “our nation is moving toward two-societies, one black, one white— separate and unequal.”¹⁹³ To the majority of white North Carolinians, this was heresy. They blamed the riots primarily on welfare programs, black agitators, and the permissiveness of Democrats. “The Negro population,” according to Bertis Deans in a letter on what he called “the recent rev. martin luther king non-violent riots,” “has been given enough.” Echoing a sentiment shared by many fellow whites, he insisted, “In my opinion it is time they are made to work for the positions and handouts that they are demanding.”¹⁹⁴ King was scarcely buried before Roy Hawkes lashed out: “Dr. King preached non-violence on the one-hand all

¹⁹² Charles Eagles, “Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Journal of Southern History* (November 2000,) 815-848.

¹⁹³ Carter, *The Music*, xiv.

¹⁹⁴ Bertis Deans to Jim Gardner, May 21, 1968, folder, “Riots-Pm,” box 16, Gardner Papers. For further examples, see Stephen Ludwinski to Jim Gardner, April 6, 1968, folder, “Riots-PM,” box 16, Gardner Papers. For an extensive analysis on the link Gardner’s constituents drew between the War on Poverty and racial change, see Robert Korstad and James Leloudis, “Counterassault,” in *To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

right, but he disregarded the law on the other. His speeches and manner certainly aroused the emotions of his followers and encouraged the very violence he preached against.”¹⁹⁵ Others seemed to take it as a given that blacks would riot and blamed powerful white institutions - the Johnson Administration, the courts, and state and local government - for failing to prevent them from doing so.¹⁹⁶ Scott and Gardner could propose slightly different solutions to quell the riots convulsing North Carolina, but, to remain electorally competitive, those solutions would need to tap into this diagnosis of what ailed America.

When not specifically addressing riots, Scott and Gardner needed to wrestle with the problems of open housing and school integration. Mainstream white North Carolina was at best undecided about these propositions and more commonly decried both, typically in the language of modern racism. For instance, Mrs. James Masten wrote Gardner in January 1968 to express her opposition to open housing legislation designed to prevent landlords from discriminating against potential renters or buyers because of their race. She was disturbed “to think that another whack is being taken at the already dwindling freedoms of the individual Americans.”¹⁹⁷ W.F. Jones was of a similar mind. After stressing that he was “no strong segregationist,” he continued, “It seems quite inappropriate to take away my constitutional rights in order to afford someone else theirs.”¹⁹⁸ For Dorothy Effland, the issue was not school integration, which she supported, but Washington forcing the rate at which school districts desegregated.¹⁹⁹ Mary Riggsbee of Pittsboro agreed. When the Chatham County school system lost its federal funding for failing to integrate, she wrote Gardner to defend freedom of choice, which she presented as fair and

¹⁹⁵ Roy Hawkes to Jim Gardner, April 9, 1968, folder “Riots-PM.” Box 16, Gardner Papers.

¹⁹⁶ See Joe L. Hall to Jim Gardner, Dec. 4, 1967; Darrel Peeler to Jim Gardner, Sept. 15, 1967; Ottis Moore to Jim Gardner Dec. 3, 1967 in folder “Governor 1968,” box 11, Gardner Papers.

¹⁹⁷ Mrs. James Masten to Jim Gardner, Jan. 27, 1968, folder, “Civil Rights Segregation and Desegregation,” box 9, Gardner Papers.

¹⁹⁸ W.F. Jones to Jim Gardner, folder, “Civil Rights,” box 9, Gardner Papers.

¹⁹⁹ Dorothy Effland to Jim Gardner, folder “Civil Rights,” box 9, Gardner Papers.

democratic.²⁰⁰ Unlike white supremacists, none of these individuals questioned the basic justness of integration, at least in their public declarations. Unlike liberals they did not support state and federal action to make integration a reality. The chief effect of their letters was to further reassure Gardner and Scott that should they decide to oppose policies designed to help black Americans, a majority of their state would support them.

Some of the writers would go beyond penning their elected officials and switch their party registration in response to the racial events unfolding across the state. Race was not the only issue animating the concerns of recently converted Republicans and disenchanted conservative Democrats, but a review of their letters, both those focused explicitly on race and civil rights and those nominally focused on other major issues including crime, the war in Vietnam, education and the economy, indicates that it was by far their dominant concern.²⁰¹ Ms. Horton Wendell wrote Gardner to voice her opposition to the war in Vietnam and her discomfort over civil rights, informing him, “I am a registered Democrat, my family has always been Dem, and my father was very active in local politics. . . . Now I am through with the democratic party.”²⁰² Another constituent, Paul Whitaker, railed against “liberal forces,” before sorrowfully concluding, “the Democratic Party is no longer the party of my forbears.”²⁰³ Voter Elton Hayes explicitly clarified that it was racial developments in North Carolina and not national political

²⁰⁰ Mary Riggsbee to Jim Gardner, folder, “Civil Rights,” box 9, Gardner Papers.

²⁰¹ Race permeated the content of many letters nominally focused on other hot button issues of the 1960s. For example, one constituent decried draft dodgers but with a reference to the KKK—“King, K-armichael K-ompany.” See Percy Morton to Jim Gardner, May 26, 1967, folder “Vietnam Protestors,” box 15, Gardner Papers. Similarly, Mr. And Mrs. Raymond R. Batchelor, opposed a tax increase on the racially tinged grounds that “We don’t need a tax increase for anything. The money used for helping Communism and feeding people too lazy to work for a living could be used to win the war.” See April 10, 1968, folder, “PM-Tax Increases,” box 15, Gardner Papers. Others voiced their opposition to tax increases, a potentially color-blind belief, but then immediately lambasted civil rights demonstrators. For example see, Robert Sheilds, May 6, 1968; D.W. Frazier, April 8, 1968; in folder “PM-Tax Increases,” box 15, Gardner Papers.

²⁰² Ms. Horton Wendell to Jim Gardner, Sept. 15, 1967, folder “Governor 1968,” box 11, Gardner Papers.

²⁰³ Paul Whitaker to Jim Gardner, September 10, 1967, folder “Governor 1968,” box 11, Gardner Papers.

trends that made him vote Republican. In his letter to Gardner he recalled voting for a Republican for the first time in 1966: “It was said that the national situation brought about the change. But when I council[sic] myself and see my own White race being snowed under on every hand . . . I am inclined to believe people like myself voted according to personal guidance rather than party.”²⁰⁴ He was correct. For an increasing number of white North Carolinians, to follow their “personal guidance” meant leaving the Democratic Party in search of a new political home more supportive of a limited government— particularly a government that would not actively work to promote the equality of black Americans. The challenge for Jim Gardner was to attract these voters, for Bob Scott, to retain them.

²⁰⁴ Elton Hayes to Jim Gardner, May 26, 1967, folder “Governor 1968,” box 11, Gardner Papers.

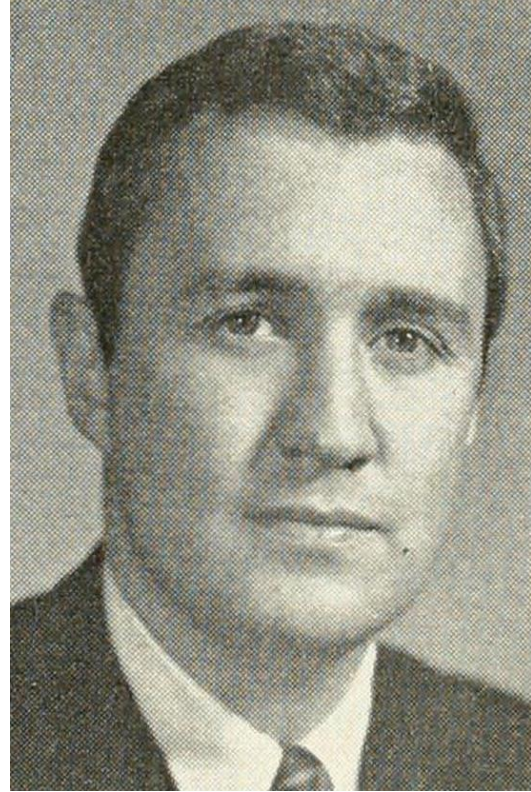


Figure Five, Top: Lt. Governor Bob Scott outside his farm in Haw River. His rural background helped him retain conservative whites who may otherwise have voted for Gardner. Figure Six, Right: Rep. Jim Gardner, owner of the Hardee's Franchise and dogged critic of The War on Poverty and the civil rights movement, appealed to business owners and racial conservatives. Photos courtesy of North Carolina State Archives and UNC Digital Collection.

Business Conservative or Segregationist? Jim Gardner's Complex Racial Appeal

Looking back on his long political career during a 1995 interview, Jim Gardner drew a sharp distinction between the “business conservatives” who voted for Barry Goldwater in 1964 and the “segregationists” who supported George Wallace in 1968. Tellingly, he chose not to label the forty-seven percent of the North Carolina electorate that supported him for governor in 1968. His silence was well advised, for his campaign clearly illustrates the futility of artificially dividing the appeal of smaller government from that of racial conservatism.

Gardner certainly viewed himself as a fighter for a better North Carolina, not as a villain in someone else's freedom struggle. In his campaign book *A Time to Speak* he blamed North Carolina's woes, particularly its low per capita income, dilapidated housing and abysmal education, on "The Raleigh Machine" that had run the state for the last 68 years.²⁰⁵ Throughout his campaign he vowed to reinvigorate the state by replacing this desiccated ruling elite with young, energetic conservatives.²⁰⁶ Important though this argument was to his campaign, Gardner set out to win the election by solidifying his reputation as a racial conservative. By articulating a powerful sense of racial grievance while offering lip service to policies designed to help all North Carolinians, Gardner won an unprecedented share of support from white Democrats. Had his weaknesses as a campaigner not hobbled him in the final stretch, he may well have become North Carolina's first Republican Governor in the twentieth century.

In a year defined by burning cities and conservative backlash to the War on Poverty, Gardner distinguished himself by launching a blistering critique both of rioters and of economic liberalism. The Congressman had first risen to national attention in 1967 on the back of his dogged criticism of the Office of Economic Opportunity and its local partner, The North Carolina Fund; the first of which he accused of organizing and leading riots across the country.²⁰⁷ Even if the agents of liberalism were not actively igniting city blocks, he argued, they stimulated destruction by eroding the values of hard work and just compensation. Gardner saw "give away welfare programs and civil rights legislation" as little more than blackmail payments to black "militants" too lazy to work.²⁰⁸ "These people," Gardner wrote of destitute blacks who

²⁰⁵ James Carson Gardner, *A Time to Speak* (San Diego: Viewpoint Books, 1968), 122.

²⁰⁶ According to Rob Christensen, Gardner, a young, handsome, rich businessman offered his supporters a vision of what North Carolina could be. Scott, the farmer from tiny Haw River, reminded them of where they came from.

²⁰⁷ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 298-300.

²⁰⁸ Jim Gardner to George Page, May 14, 1968, folder "Riots-PM," box 15, Gardner Papers.

participated in riots, “have come to expect the Government and the average working man to support them . . . they have no pride in their possessions or the possessions of others.”²⁰⁹ Nothing in Gardner’s statements explicitly referenced race as a cause of riots but they painted a portrait of black Americans as a culturally distinct and hostile other, a parasite eager to leach the lifeblood of businesses and cities run by industrious white Americans.

Gardner’s solution to the riots differed from that of most white voters. While they advocated for greater force in ending riots, or else, sympathized with poor blacks, Gardner proposed increased force against rioters *and* increased efforts to improve education and expand job opportunities in North Carolina. For example, he campaigned for government sponsored job fairs, providing transportation between low-income housing and job sites, public kindergarten and increasing vocational training.²¹⁰ These measures were incremental and failed to address the system of low-wage labor that impoverished black and white North Carolinians alike, but they were intended, as Gardner wrote to his constituents, to “provide the Negro, as well the poor in general, with the necessary tools for self-help.”²¹¹ This mixture of hostility toward poor blacks and support for conservative legislation to help their cause was unusual. His stance on the riots is indicative of how he worked throughout the campaign to keep himself just to the left of hard-line segregationists. He was “law and order” enough to reassure them he was on their side, but liberal enough to compete for moderate white votes by plausibly denying accusations that he harbored anti-black sentiment. Gardner did not mind if this claim failed to withstand careful scrutiny; throughout his life he made no pretense of seeking black votes.²¹²

²⁰⁹ Jim Gardner to Mrs. Michael Flanigan, May 31, 1968, folder “Riots-PM,” box 15, Gardner Papers.

²¹⁰ Gardner, *A Time to Speak*, 33, 124.

²¹¹ Jim Gardner form letter, April 25, 1968, folder “Riots-PM,” box 16, Gardner Papers.

²¹² Jim Gardner, Jonathan Houghton, September 6, 1995.

Gardner's support for some legislation to expand economic opportunities for blacks did not carry over into support for open housing or government enforced school integration. Though he claimed not to oppose integration itself, he believed that "the integration process should be gradual instead of trying to legislate the social and moral objectives of others."²¹³ Gardner couched his attacks on civil rights legislation in the language of equal opportunity. In a letter to a Raleigh voter, Gardner declared he would not support the 1968 Civil Rights Bill and its open housing provision because he did not "believe that we can guarantee equality for everyone by taking away from one to give to another."²¹⁴ Likewise, the congressmen professed that freedom of choice legislation designed to maintain segregation was "a real freedom for each individual of our State to be able to choose the school which he will attend."²¹⁵ Such arguments were not intended to trick or fool anyone. Instead, Gardner spoke to white voters in the same language that they spoke to him, a discourse that could preserve both their racial privilege and their sense of personal integrity.

Gardner did not reserve his racial conservatism for select audiences; rather, he pushed it to the center of his campaign. A typical Gardner speech featured a mixture of attacks on state Democrats and broadsides on race. For example, in late March, 1968, Gardner gave a speech in Winston-Salem to propose a "Committee for Efficiency in Government" designed to save taxpayers money. While the bulk of his speech featured calls for technocratic solutions such as examining the use of state automobiles and trucks for private matters, Gardner began with a clear message about riots. Offering a comically inaccurate homage to "the inspired leaders" who

²¹³ Jim Gardner to R.N. White, July 26, 1967, folder "Civil Rights Segregation and Desegregation," box 9, Gardner Papers.

²¹⁴ Jim Gardner, April 12, 1968, folder "Civil Rights Segregation and Desegregation," box 9, Gardner Papers.

²¹⁵ Jim Gardner to Cary Junior High Seventh Grade History Class, Feb. 12, 1968, folder "Civil Rights Segregation and Desegregation," box 9, Gardner Papers.

violently rebelled against the British, he insisted, “They were not rabble-rousing, wild-eyed ruffians... No, they were soft-spoken men of means, character and ability.” In case anyone in the audience missed the intent of the ruffian imagery, he elaborated: “In honor of the sacrifices of these men and many of our fellow North Carolinians who have made lasting contributions, I pledge to you that as your chief executive, law and order will be maintained in this state, and your person and property shall be protected.”²¹⁶ Later in the campaign Gardner put out press releases condemning “the lawlessness that has made a jungle out of so many of our nation’s cities.” In July he attacked the “filth” and violence of the Poor People’s Campaign— a six week rally for economic justice held on the national mall in Washington that Martin Luther King organized prior to his death. In September he preemptively accused Scott of soliciting the “bloc-vote” of blacks.²¹⁷ In North Carolina in 1968, no state-level white politician would say “nigger” – as they still might in the Deep South – but such language that implicitly portrayed blacks as an unwashed mob, barely civilized since their importation from Africa, was still acceptable to many whites.

During the late summer and fall of 1968 Gardner also attempted to tie his campaign to the fortunes of George Wallace, the former Governor of Alabama and darling of racially conservative whites, who was running for President as an independent. For example, in Tabor City on October 4, Gardner announced he would support any candidate for President other than the Democrat, Hubert Humphrey; given that Gardner’s party had nominated Richard Nixon, his statement was correctly interpreted as a quasi-endorsement of Wallace.²¹⁸ Such ploys were highly successful in eastern North Carolina; as the Franklin *Times* editorialized on August 13,

²¹⁶ Jim Gardner, March 29, 1968, folder “WS Speech,” box 22, Gardner Papers.

²¹⁷ “Gardner for Governor,” April 11, 1968; “Gardner for Governor,” July 4, 1968; folder, “Resurrection City,” box 22; “Gardner for Governor,” September 20, 1968, folder, “Negro-bloc vote Scott,” box 22, Gardner Papers.

²¹⁸ “Gardner Courts Wallace Backers,” Raleigh *News and Observer*, October 4, 1968.

1968, “throughout the eastern stronghold of Mr. Gardner's, the Gardner-Wallace forces are synonymous.”²¹⁹ Collectively, Gardner’s efforts to denigrate black rioters, oppose integration and tie himself to Wallace constantly reminded potential voters that if they were worried about the civil rights movement, he was their man.

While Gardner had an undeniable sense of style, he was widely viewed as an unreliable, self-promoting ultraconservative. These traits cost him the election. Cozying up to Wallace, though helpful in the east, hurt him dearly in November, when many Piedmont and western Republicans refused to support a candidate who failed to back his own party’s presidential nominee.²²⁰

Gardner also forfeited any possibility of winning votes from blacks and liberal whites by occasionally voicing anti-black animus that was too blatant to be disguised with references to cherished American values. For example, in October 1968, Gardner’s campaign – or at the very least people sympathetic to it - circulated a pamphlet doctored to depict Scott and Reginald Hawkins standing together; the backside featured a picture of Democratic Presidential nominee Hubert Humphrey kissing a young black girl.²²¹ Traveling in Eastern North Carolina’s Johnston County, Gardner appealed to white insecurities about losing their prominence within the Democratic Party, telling an audience, “Reginald Hawkins says the Negroes are going to take over the Democratic Party.” Not missing a beat, one man replied, “Going to? They’ve done it.”²²² In Roanoke Rapids, speaking in the Confederate room of the Rebel Restaurant, Gardner criticized the University of North Carolina for employing the “Negro militant,” Howard Fuller. Lest anyone overlook Gardner’s efforts to link his stand against Fuller to the values of the

²¹⁹ “Gardner Luck Changing,” *Franklin Times*, August 13, 1968.

²²⁰ Jim Gardner, Jonathan Houghton, September 6, 1995. Importantly, their lack of support for Gardner reflected their loyalty to the Republican Party and their desire to punish him for failing to support Nixon, it did not indicate that they disliked Wallace or Wallace’s racial conservatism.

²²¹ “Bob Scott Says Literature, Posters Intended to Mislead,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, October 17, 1968.

²²² “Jim Gardner Reacts to Absentee Tag,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 6, 1968.

Confederacy, Gardner went on to force his audience of whites and one black to stand and sing “Dixie.”²²³

None of these actions would have been particularly noteworthy a few years prior, but in 1968 they were sufficiently outside the state’s racial mainstream to earn Gardner the media’s opprobrium. Before the May primaries, the *Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel* called Gardner “the most disturbing candidate in the field.”²²⁴ The *Chapel Hill Weekly* went even further, naming him “the worthy successor to Dr. I. Beverly Lake as the most dangerous man in North Carolina today.”²²⁵ These editorials pegged Gardner well. He may not have campaigned solely on race, but appeals to white racial fears and anger were the crux of his campaign.

Perhaps the most important condemnation of Gardner’s racial politics came not from the media but from his opponent. Though Scott’s racial politics were often indistinguishable from Gardner’s, he was a more subtle politician who criticized Gardner for injecting racism into the campaign. This dynamic infuriated the congressman. In a fundraising speech on July 28, Gardner complained that the Democrats were stealing his main campaign issue, huffing that “the machine speaks of law and order and yet crime continues to grow at an alarming rate.”²²⁶ To better understand how race created a two-party state in North Carolina, it is imperative to look beyond Gardner’s challenge to see how “the machine” struggled to hold itself together for one last victorious election cycle.

“The Machine Speaks of Law and Order”: Bob Scott’s Costly Victory

²²³ “‘Discontented’ Flock to Gardner,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 13, 1968.

²²⁴ “The Governor’s Race,” *Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel*, April 30, 1968.

²²⁵ “The Phenomenon of Jim Gardner,” *Chapel Hill Weekly*, May 10, 1968.

²²⁶ Jim Gardner, July 28, 1968, folder “Speech introducing Ronald Regan,” box 22, Gardner Papers.

Bob Scott, North Carolina's sitting Lieutenant Governor, launched his gubernatorial campaign on November 14, 1967, with a hard-line speech on "law and order" in Dunn, and scarcely looked back. After prevailing in the Democratic primary over Reginald Hawkins and Mel Broughton – an establishment conservative and Dan Moore's favored candidate – Scott went on to face Jim Gardner in the general election. On issues of policy he was every bit as conservative as Gardner; only by more deftly navigating the fraught terrain of racial politics did he differentiate himself from his opponent. Scott opened his address with a collage of images – an elderly storekeeper beaten, a mob rampaging through a city, a bomb hurled through the window of a sleeping child, a black power militant invading a college campus – all carefully calibrated to terrify his white audience. "It is frightening," he intoned. "Many times it is sickening. Law and order . . . the benchmark that separates civilized man from the creatures of the jungle . . . must be preserved if the vitality and greatness of our state and nation are to be maintained." Moving from one black specter to another, he attacked crime, militant intellectuals and crazed mobs of rioters. Though he made a brief concession to racial liberals, allowing, "we can all recognize that a man must be able to live, work and play in his community without fear for his life or property," he finished his speech on the offensive with a diatribe against the "evil philosophy that the end justifies the means."²²⁷

If the end of Scott's speech was to secure his right flank, he was tremendously successful. From across the state, praise poured in. Paul Nunn from Winston-Salem cheered: "Frankly, I had been on the fence until I read the report of your speech, but now I am for you."²²⁸ A.M. Patterson from Raleigh added with even greater effervescence, "If Mrs. Patterson and I had any doubts

²²⁷ RWS II box 38, folder NA

²²⁸ Paul Nunn to Bob Scott, Nov. 24, 1967, folder "Law and Order Number One," box 52, Scott Papers.

about our candidate for governor, your Dunn speech completely erased them. You are our man!”²²⁹ Best of all, a Charlotte man wrote in with tantalizing proof that Scott could reclaim the votes of wayward Democrats: “Several years back, when the National Democrats became so very, very rotten, I started voting Republican. . . . I like your style of talking, and it will be apleasure [sic] for me and my folks to favor you with our votes so long as you keep talking as you did in Dunn.”²³⁰

The praise was by no means universal. In an insult Gardner would have been happy to receive, James Thomas wrote the Lieutenant Governor that he “thought it . . . was George Wallace speaking.”²³¹ W. M. Cochran, from “here in Hyde County [where] we have an active Klan organization,” took Scott to task for failing to properly condemn night-riders. Dick Gregory, who identified as a former supporter of the man from Haw River, called Scott a “demagogue” and argued that “poverty, unemployment, lousy housing . . . and a basic distrust of the white majorities” caused the riots. Recognizing the limits of the possible, Gregory stressed, “I do not expect you to develop this theme at any length as it would make you unpopular with the white, conservative majority in this state.”²³² Such critiques did not fundamentally change the political calculus that drove Scott to speak in Dunn. Resigned, Asnee Scott wrote him, “Of course I understand that there are more votes in eastern North Carolina than there are in Chapel Hill.”²³³ That there were liberals all over the state and not just in its chief university town made little difference. Scott was confident that the majority of voters would applaud his speech.

²²⁹ A.M. Patterson to Bob Scott, Nov. 16, 1967, folder “Law and Order Number One,” box 52, Scott Papers.

²³⁰ Name indecipherable to Bob Scott, Nov. 17, folder “Law and Order Number One,” box 52, Scott Papers.

²³¹ James Thomas to Bob Scott, Nov. 18, 1967, “Law and Order Number Two,” box 52, Scott Papers.

²³² Dick Gregory to Bob Scott, Nov. 16, 1967, “Law and Order Number Two,” box 52, Scott Papers.

²³³ Asnee Scott to Bob Scott, Nov. 18, 1967, folder “Law and Order Number Two,” box 52, Scott Papers.

George Colclough laid such considerations bare in a letter to Scott, opining, "I don't think you lost a single vote where you didn't gain five by the stand you took in your address at Dunn."²³⁴

Receptive though the state was to his message, Scott could not afford to drift too far to the right, and he never again gave such a visceral address on race. It is possible that he came to regret his remarks on ethical grounds. When it came to civil disturbances his personal orientation was conservative, yet he was no white supremacist, at least by the standards of the day.²³⁵ In the aftermath of Dunn, a campaign staffer wrote a new address for Scott, one designed to take a firmer stance against the Klan, to "correct some misconceptions in the Dunn speech to regain some lost souls, and to give you something to live with."²³⁶ Perhaps Scott was ashamed of so blatantly exploiting white fears. Alternatively, Scott may have come to believe that he overreached in Dunn and was at risk of alienating liberal voters if he continued pushing even further to the right on race. In all likelihood, both were true. Yet if Scott did have ethical qualms with his Dunn speech, they were not sufficiently powerful to prevent him from continuing to rely on racial politics after he officially launched his campaign in January 1968.

From January 1968 through the end of the primary on May 4, Scott continued to pound away on law and order themes and to assail his black opponent, Reginald Hawkins. On the campaign trail Scott often promoted his "program for progress," a standard North Carolina call for a greater emphasis on "roads, programs for the physically and mentally handicapped, agricultural and industrial development, conservation and development of both human and

²³⁴ George Colclough to Bob Scott, Cite, folder "Law and Order Number Four," box 52, Scott Papers.

²³⁵ As Rob Christensen noted, Scott had a military background, almost worked for the State Bureau of Investigation and had been giving speeches that touched on law and order for years before Dunn. However, in interviews later in life, Scott seemed remarkably unconcerned with race and evinced no dislike for blacks. See Bob Scott, Karl E. Campbell, September 18, 1986; Bob Scott, Jack Fleer, February 11, 1998.

²³⁶ Unidentified staffer to Bob Scott, folder "Political Campaigns," box 27, Scott Papers.

natural resources.”²³⁷ These planks, however, shared time with a continued focus on the threat black North Carolinians seemed to pose to whites. When Scott choose to talk about race, his rhetoric ranged from sublimated to direct. For instance, speaking before the American Association of University Professors on March 1, 1968, he limited himself to a bloodless critique of “hippies, drugs and draft protestors,” while obliquely referencing “self-proclaimed messiahs who are impatient with tradition, and have made clear the fact that, now, they are ready to take matters into their own hands.”²³⁸ Five weeks later, speaking in Washington, North Carolina shortly after the King assassination, Scott began with his standard pitch on schools and roads before pivoting hard back to law and order, declaring “I will make it crystal clear that willful violations of our laws will not be tolerated whether it be by individuals or groups, organized or unorganized, black or white, rich or poor.”²³⁹ To ensure that no voter would fully forget his stand at Dunn, Scott could always contrast himself with Hawkins. For instance, on January 28, 1968, the Greensboro *Daily News* quoted Scott as saying, “At least one candidate in this race is in favor of open housing. I want to make it clear that I am not that candidate.” Scott’s campaign proceeded to produce fliers containing the news article and mailed one to every realtor in the state.²⁴⁰ Armed with a built-in bogeyman in Hawkins, more popular than his conservative rival Mel Broughton, and blessed with a considerable base of support courtesy of his father and his able work as State Grange Master and Lieutenant Governor, Scott won the primary in the first

²³⁷ “Announcement of Bob Scott Candidate for Governor of North Carolina.” box 36, Scott Papers.

²³⁸ “Remarks by Lieutenant Governor Bob Scott,” May 1, 1968, Scott Papers.

²³⁹ “Address by Robert W. Scott,” April 10, 1968, folder “political”, box 27, Scott Papers.

²⁴⁰ Folder “Open Housing,” box 27, Scott Papers. Scott faced two opponents. To his right, Mel Broughton, another son of a governor, represented the old establishment-conservative wing of the Party, a faction dwindling as its members left for the GOP. To his left stood Hawkins, who attempted to construct a campaign uniting poor black and white North Carolinians. This arrangement suited Scott splendidly for he could triangulate between his opponents and claim to represent the Party’s middle ground.

round with relatively little strain, receiving forty-eight percent of the vote.²⁴¹ Just four years before, his primary victory could reasonably have warranted a coronation. This time the main battle still lay ahead.

During the general election campaign, Scott matched Gardner issue for issue on opposing government efforts to assist blacks; however, he did so less conspicuously and while quietly courting black votes. His deft handling of this tricky act proved vital in his ultimate victory. Recognizing that Gardner had tapped into a deep vein of white frustration with federal anti-poverty measures, Scott went in search of an anti-poverty group of his own to attack and found one in Wake Opportunities. Starting in May, Scott accused the group's director Eugene F. Toton of numerous malpractices, including using organization funds to purchase writings of the deceased Black Power leader Malcom X and books on black culture. At his most fantastical, Scott declared that Toton's employees had been forced to use their wages to buy weapons for use in future racial violence.²⁴² Though subsequent investigations of Tonton, one led internally, the other by the federal Office of Economic Opportunity, found no evidence substantiating Scott's charges, it was the director, not the candidate, who was convicted in the court of public opinion.²⁴³ Gardner, no doubt fuming over Scott's successful effort to co-opt one of his primary campaign issues, told the *Charlotte Observer*, "I am glad Mr. Scott has finally gotten his head out of the sand."²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Our Campaigns, "NC Governor – D Primary," access March 12, 2015, <http://www.ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetail.html?RaceID=208766>. Broughton, who with 18.5 percent of the vote came in second, understood that Hawkins voters would opt for Scott in a run-off and conceded.

²⁴² "Wake Poverty Chief Survives Firing Bid," *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 10, 1968.

²⁴³ "The Antipoverty Cloud," *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 11, 1968; "OEO's Probe Clears Wake Poverty Group," *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 1, 1968.

²⁴⁴ "Gardner for Liquor Votes," *Charlotte Observer*, Aug. 14, 1968.

Fresh from his successful efforts to use the War on Poverty to reassure conservative white voters that he was tough on blacks, Scott went on to cleverly reframe the discussion of public school integration as a referendum on Gardner's competence. When Congress held a vote to weaken the mandate of the Department of Housing, Education and Welfare, the entity that regulated desegregation in the state's school system, Gardner missed it to stay on the campaign trail. Scott's team immediately sprung into gear. On October 4, Scott told an audience in Murphy, "Just this week [Gardner] hammered away with words, words, words—telling everyone that he is in favor of local people running their schools." Implicitly supporting a slower rate of integration while keeping the focus on Gardner's character, Scott elaborated, "We can't count on Gardner in Congress. The people know it, and we also know we couldn't count on him as Governor of North Carolina."²⁴⁵ Gardner's missed vote quickly turned into one of the most important issues during the final month of the campaign. The Committee for Truth in Government, an anti-Gardner group, began running newspaper ads informing voters that "if Jim Gardner had been on the job... Freedom of Choice – instead of Federal desegregation guidelines – could have been the law of the land."²⁴⁶ Tom Inman, associate editor of the *News and Observer* reported that "literally thousands of eastern North Carolina voters think [Gardner] should have been in Washington that day acting against HEW the way he has been talking against it."²⁴⁷ Gardner might be flashier, Scott implicitly told his white constituents, but he was the more reliable bet for retaining white privilege.

During the waning days of the campaign Scott began to pull back from appealing to modern racism. Gardner was hemorrhaging support from traditional piedmont and mountain Republicans

²⁴⁵ "Scott Scores Gardner for Missed Votes," *Raleigh News and Observer*, October 5, 1968.

²⁴⁶ *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 20, 1968.

²⁴⁷ "Has Gardner Blown It?" *Raleigh News and Observer*, October 17, 1968.

who were unimpressed with his failure to firmly support Richard Nixon's candidacy for President. By mid-October, polls suggested that Scott was sufficiently far ahead that he could extend an olive branch to black and liberal white voters without fear of losing the election.²⁴⁸ In Statesville, on October 30, Scott accused Gardner of distributing racist pamphlets doctored to show him standing with Reginald Hawkins.²⁴⁹ He also started running campaign ads in black newspapers and asking individual black men and women to vote for him.²⁵⁰ These paltry measures were good enough to win Scott the overwhelming number of black votes, but they were far too little too late to set a more inclusive tone for the campaign or for the state.²⁵¹

During the final week of the campaign, Deborah Hooks, a 15 year old black student was awoken by gunfire in her Vanceboro home, a Klansman's punishment for her attempts to integrate Pitt County's segregated school bus system. The following day, her school punished her for the same transgression, expelling her for refusing to ride the bus as directed.²⁵² Jim Gardner may have cultivated a politics of racial fear more egregiously than Scott, but neither man spoke for Hooks or her interests. Both Scott and Gardner saw racially conservative voters as the key to their success and designed their campaigns to appeal to those base instincts. In doing so they both responded to the will of their constituents and created and maintained an environment in which prejudice could flourish. Not all of their contemporaries were resigned to such divisive politics. Blacks and liberals continued to fight for a better North Carolina, and most of state's media condemned the racial overtones of the campaign. In a season of fear and anger,

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ "Scott Says His Opposition Using Racism in the Campaign," *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 20, 1968.

²⁵⁰ *Carolina Times*, Oct. 26 and Nov 2, 1968; "Scott Says Foe Is Going Underground," *Raleigh News and Observer*, October 16, 1968; "Scott Raps Foe at Siler City Rally," *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 31, 1968.

²⁵¹ On November 5 Scott won 52.7 percent of the overall vote but received far fewer black votes than did Hubert Humphrey, who finished third in North Carolina, a sign of growing black resistance to being taken for granted by conservative whites. See "Voting Patterns Change," *Raleigh News and Observer*, Nov. 11, 1968.

²⁵² "Nightriders Fire on Negro Home," *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 30, 1968.

these North Carolinians maintained a flicker of optimism. As the *Chapel Hill Weekly* editorialized in reference to the racially charged campaign, “Somehow, it seems, we ought to be able to expect something better.”²⁵³

Conclusion: A Different Courthouse in a Different State

Exploring the attitudes of ordinary North Carolinians side by side with an analysis of the actions of their political leaders reveals four themes not easily discernable with a less granular focus. First, far from a homogenous group universally eager to adopt the racial politics of the modern Republican Party, white North Carolinians were divided into at least three factions. Some whites, unacquainted with the new coded racial discourse they were expected to adopt, continued to preach white supremacy. Others joined with black North Carolina to demand racial justice, a clarion call that both political parties failed to answer. A majority of whites, angry at the chaos enveloping them and fearful of further social change wished to resist, slow or turn back the forces of racial equality. Many of these racial conservatives found the Republican Party more receptive to their demands, and left, or prepared to leave, the Democratic Party. Little about this transition from a single-party state to a two-party system was simple or clean, but it was undeniably driven by the politics of race.

The 1968 gubernatorial election also belies scholarship that portrays unsophisticated, rural, white racists as the engine driving the Republicans’ growth in the South. While geographic patterns did emerge from the letters written to Scott and Gardner – Chapel Hill was a bastion of liberalism, and white, eastern North Carolina was especially worried about the coming of black equality – these differences were less striking than the similarity in attitudes that prevailed across geographic and class lines. Focusing solely on poor whites persuaded by prejudice to become

²⁵³ “Strategy Outlined as Candidates Open Gubernatorial Drive,” *Chapel Hill Weekly*, June 22, 1968.

Republicans is both inaccurate and dangerous, for such a narrow view unfairly exculpates elites like Scott and Gardner who clearly maneuvered to win the hearts of racially conservative Tar Heels and the middle-class whites who supported them.

Third, the campaign provides a clear case study of how conservative politicians in the late 1960s successfully linked racial and economic conservatism. During the Johnson Administration, as the federal government expanded financial assistance to poor Americans, conservatives sought to racialize debates over taxation and government spending. In attacking the War on Poverty, and by attributing riots to the excesses of welfare capitalism, Gardner, and to a lesser extent Scott, suggested that blacks were no longer to be disliked as such, but rather, to be opposed for unjustly taking a larger share of the nation's resources than was rightfully theirs. This message was brutally compelling: across the country many working and middle class white voters lost what little interest they had in identifying with their class over their race. On the national level, anti-New Deal politics quickly became mainstream.²⁵⁴ In North Carolina, when Reginald Hawkins tried to expand beyond his black base to build a coalition that included all poor North Carolinians, he found that his appeal fell on deaf ears.

Finally, the rhetoric of the 1968 gubernatorial campaign suggests that while North Carolina did move toward becoming a more racially just society in the years after 1963, this progress was slowed and threatened by the insidious effects of modern racism. As late as Dan Moore's triumph over Richardson Preyer, many white North Carolinians and their elected officials opposed racial equality on principle. Four years later, much of the state's racially conservative population professed a desire for equality but retained their resistance to measures

²⁵⁴ Ian Haney-López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 6.

meant to bring it about. Gardner, Scott and a healthy majority of their white constituents claimed they wanted blacks to rise out of poverty and to be able to go to school where they wished and rent or buy houses where they chose. They simply disagreed with racial liberals over whether or not the federal government should attempt to bring these changes about. Instead of campaigning *against* blacks, they campaigned *for* whites, and their “rights” to benefit from a system deeply stacked in their favor.²⁵⁵ White supremacists articulated such rights-centered arguments before 1968, but what was truly new about this emerging brand of modern racism was the importance it took on once strains of white supremacy rooted in biological racism could scarcely be expressed aloud.

This novel element of modern racism – and the strong extent to which it simply grew out of more traditional anti-black animus – was on display in Wilmington on July 15, 1968. That summer day, many of the city’s white residents assembled at the New Hanover County Courthouse, the same courthouse where the protestors sang in 1963, for a meeting of Save Our Schools (SOS), a local organization dedicated to delaying, not avoiding, integration. Earlier in 1968, the Department of Health Education and Welfare rejected New Hanover County’s proposal for integration. H.G. Grohman, police deputy and SOS spokesman, stressed that it was this “federal interference” and not integration itself that SOS opposed.²⁵⁶ Their gathering differed in important respects from that of the North Carolina Defenders in the Yanceyville Courthouse in the winter of 1963. The residents of Caswell met to openly resist integration, voted unanimously to remove a black man from their meeting, and advocated for violence against blacks; all this would be beyond the pale just five years later. In these changes between the first courthouse

²⁵⁵ Kevin M. Kruse argues that most segregationists saw themselves as defenders of their own rights, not as villains attempting to restrict the rights of others. See *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 8.

²⁵⁶ “Freedom of Choice Group Plans Fight,” *Charlotte Observer*, July 17, 1968.

meeting and the second it becomes possible to view the subtle but important evolution of North Carolina's racial politics during the 1960s.

But change over time can also throw continuity into sharper relief. The Wilmington gathering, while ostensibly open to all, was no more integrated than its predecessor in Yanceyville. By 1968 whites had found better ways than overt white supremacy to justify maintaining their racial privileges, ways that seemed to stress the flaws of individuals, not groups. "The SOS is a non-political, non-racial organization," Grohman insisted in the language of modern racism. "We invite anybody, but so far I can't say any Negroes have showed up."²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

Conclusion

Taking The Smell off the Skunk: Racial Politics in North Carolina Today

At the conclusion of *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, John experiences a religious conversion on the dusty floor of his father's church. Though the elders of the church rejoice that the young man has entered the ranks of the saved, Baldwin – who grew up in and eventually abandoned an evangelical church – hints that salvation may not be so easily acquired. As the morning dawns over the streets of Harlem, John's extended family walks home to freshen up before their Sunday service. John walks in lockstep with an older boy for whom he holds a forbidden desire; hinting that one day soon, he will be tempted to fall off the path of the righteous. As the two stroll along, John fails to notice that his father Gabriel and Aunt Florence are locked in a tense argument. Gabriel is a wicked man who has merely disguised his true nature by adopting an austere and unforgiving brand of Christianity. No matter how many times Gabriel preaches about being saved, he will never convince Florence that he is truly different. "I ain't changed," she spits at her brother with the accumulated venom of years of hatred, "You ain't changed neither."²⁵⁸

A fierce advocate for civil rights, the late James Baldwin would express similar disdain for North Carolina Republicans who draw a clean distinction between the past, when the state's conservatives opposed racial equality, and the present, in which they purport to support it. Ever since Beverly Lake decided he was better off appealing to modern racism rather than forthrightly arguing that blacks did not deserve equality, racially conservative North Carolinians have adopted a more inclusive rhetoric while declining to adjust their policy stances to reflect any true change of heart.

²⁵⁸ James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (New York: Modern Library, 1995 edition, copyright 1953), 282.

Carter Wrenn, former aide to North Carolina's late Republican Senator Jesse Helms – who from 1973-2003 was one of the nation's most conservative Senators – inadvertently coined a perfect term for this maneuver. In 1984 Helms found himself in a tough reelection battle. Facing an uphill fight, his campaign decided to appeal to white racism.²⁵⁹ After overreaching by engaging in racial politics too blatantly for the comfort of the average white North Carolina voter, Helms traveled to Livingstone, a historically black college, to assure white swing voters that he was not a racist. Wrenn recalled, "It was all calculated, it was all racial politics . . . what we were after were some moderate whites . . . If they could just get the smell off the skunk, they might vote for Jesse."²⁶⁰ As Wrenn suggests, modern racism has nothing to do with seeking equality, but everything to do with disguising and denying racism.

The story of why North Carolina's Democratic Party divided and how the state developed a politics of race seemingly in the absence of racism has profound implications both for the state and for the nation. First, North Carolina's transformation from a one-party to two-party state offers further evidence of the primacy of race in driving the growth of the Republican Party across the South. That North Carolina's GOP owes its modern success in large part to racism helps make sense of the astonishing wave of retrograde legislation the Party passed after its takeover of Raleigh in 2012. During the last three years, North Carolina Republicans have weakened public education while expanding support for charter schools (a move reminiscent of the Pearsall Plan,) made voting more difficult for communities of color, repealed the Racial Justice Act, a law designed to prevent the unjust executions of racial minorities, and launched a

²⁵⁹ David Flaherty, chair of the state Republic Party, recalls sending mailers to white voters emphasizing the dangers of mounting black voter registration. "We used race..." the chairmen candidly admitted, "because we knew we couldn't beat Jim Hunt on the issues." William Link, *Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2008), 284.

²⁶⁰ Ibid 285.

devastating war upon the poor, who, by no coincidence, are still disproportionately people of color. Fluent in modern racism, they have been wise enough not to litter their language with racial epithets and thus can plausibly deny that any of their actions are racial in motivation or consequence.

Instead of denigrating black North Carolinians, conservative lawmakers now attack government policies designed to help the poor. Big government, they say, fosters dependency and allows the state's shiftless underclass to benefit illegitimately from the hard work of taxpayers. This code is no more subtle today than it was in 1968 and its effect is precisely the same. Modern racism encourages whites, particularly low-income whites, to vote their racial identity, even if that means supporting economic policies that are disastrous for their bottom-line. By equating poverty with blackness and the virtues of personal responsibility and individual liberty with whiteness, modern racism has seriously limited the potential of biracial class politics in North Carolina.²⁶¹

Until advocates for racial justice develop an effective counter appeal to modern racism, they will struggle to win the votes of many white North Carolinians. Unfortunately, this study raises serious doubts as to whether North Carolina's Democratic Party is up to the task. After electing Terry Sanford in 1960, the party failed to arise to the occasion in 1964 and 1968 when it supported racial conservatives. Once in office, Bob Scott, in particular, evinced a firm desire for the problem of civil rights to simply go away.²⁶² In 1967 Vance Barron, the pastor at Chapel Hill's University Presbyterian Church, penned Scott expressing his "hope that the Democratic

²⁶¹ For examples of such rhetoric, see "The World According to Rucho," *Raleigh News and Observer*, February 28, 2015; Mark Walker, "Why I'm Running," Mark Walker for U.S. Congress, access March 9, 2015, <http://walker4nc.com/content/page/Platform>. For more on this division of voters along racial rather than class lines, see Ian Haney-López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

²⁶² Bob Scott, Jack Fleer, February 11, 1998.

Party will offer the people of North Carolina something better than the choice between whether they want reactionary government under a Democratic or Republican label!”²⁶³ Almost fifty years later, Barron’s exhortation remains largely ignored.

For now, state Democrats remain split between racial liberals and those who see no need for major government action to move the nation toward racial equality. In a year when black-led protests against police brutality and Latino-led activism for the rights of the undocumented mark a profound reassertion of the American color line, white North Carolina liberals should heed the example of the state’s Moral Monday coalition – an ecumenical, preacher driven alliance of NAACP chapters, labor, students and LGBTQ activists – and forthrightly advocate for racial and economic justice. Their alternative, at least in 2015, is not gradual progress under the leadership of moderate Democrats, but continued setbacks under the rule of conservative Republicans.

Finally, this work offers some cautious hope. Race relations have legitimately improved in North Carolina, if only because they were so very bad so recently. Civil rights agitators have made state and municipal government more responsive to black North Carolinians and forced white Tar Heels to examine their beliefs on race. To a remarkable extent, white North Carolinians have internalized the norm of racial equality, a cultural shift that has remade the fabric of daily life across the state. At the conclusion of my interview with Phil Carlton, I asked him how race relations had changed in his hometown of Pinetops since 1964. With a wide smile on his face Carlton told me “I noticed the other day down at this restaurant . . . There was a black lady in there and all the young whites were calling her “Miss Lowis, Miss Lowis,’ Just as respectful as they could be of her. And I said to myself, ‘isn’t that amazing’. Because that wouldn’t have happened when I was their age.”²⁶⁴ Carlton’s observation of daily life in a small

²⁶³ Vance Barron to Bob Scott, Nov.16, 1967, folder “Law and Order Number Two,” box 52, Scott Papers.

²⁶⁴ Phil Carlton, Peter Vogel, February 19, 2015.

town in eastern North Carolina speaks to the fact that many white North Carolinians are more supportive of racial equality than they once were; however, his genuine surprise that people of different race could be respectful of one another reinforces how thoroughly anti-black prejudice once poisoned the state.

Though Carlton saw evidence of improving race relations in his town, he detected no signs that this evolution had yet entered the political sphere. His white neighbors uniformly detest Barack Obama, a sentiment he attributes to the President's race. Furthermore, once entirely Democratic, Pinetops is now precisely half Republican. For the time being, it is difficult to envision anything but demographic change interrupting this equilibrium. In these days of modern racism, in a conservative North Carolina town that is fifty percent white and fifty percent black, how could it be otherwise?

Yet nothing in North Carolina's history suggests that the politics of race that created this balance must be permanent. North Carolinians are not fictional characters bound to follow an author's whims. Rather, they are active agents, free to write scripts of their own. From 1963 through 1968, a critical mass of white politicians and voters chose to update the old script of white supremacy to fit a new age of black political participation. During the same five years, black activists like Clinton Battle, Reginald Hawkins, Deborah Hooks and countless other Tar Heels forged a different path into the future, one that moved toward racial justice instead of a more subtle form of racial hierarchy. Their example reminds us that nothing in North Carolina is fixed forever. North Carolinians may yet come to reflect on their past and see a beautiful and true history staring back at them.

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