

**Black-and-Tans vs. Lily-Whites:  
Republican Party Organization in the South after Reconstruction**

Boris Heersink  
Department of Politics  
University of Virginia  
[heersink@virginia.edu](mailto:heersink@virginia.edu)

Jeffery A. Jenkins  
Department of Politics  
University of Virginia  
[jajenkins@virginia.edu](mailto:jajenkins@virginia.edu)

Abstract:

In this paper, we track the racial composition of Republican convention delegations in several Southern states from 1880 through 1928, as a way to more systematically examine the rise of the Lily-White movement and how its conflict with the Black-and-Tans affected both Republican convention politics and Southern GOP development more generally. Understanding post-Reconstruction racial divisions within the Southern GOP is important, we argue, because such divisions likely shaped how national party elites dealt with Southern party organizations during this era – existing studies, for example, have suggested that presidents and other national party leaders often shifted their alliances between the two rival organizations, based on perceived strategic advantages. We complement these racial accountings with case studies of two states – North Carolina and South Carolina – which detail how GOP organizational politics evolved over the same time frame. In identifying both the general development of the Black-and-Tans vs. Lily-Whites conflict across several states during the post-Reconstruction, pre-New Deal period and the specific development in two contiguous states, we explore the factors that influenced this conflict and offer some initial insight into the way state GOP organizations functioned, thrived, and competed during an era in which Republicans had little to no chance of success in the electoral arena.

Prepared for presentation at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL.

## Introduction

Following the conclusion of the Civil War, the Republican Party was in ascendance. Led by supermajorities in both chambers of Congress, GOP leaders sought to remake the social fabric of the Nation through a radical reconstruction of the former Confederate South. While meaningful civil and voting rights reforms would be made to enfranchise and elevate African Americans, the “Radical Republican” vision for a colorblind society would be short lived. Within a decade, the white South – embodied in the Democratic Party – would rise up and wrest control of all state governments from the multi-racial Republican coalitions. With the Compromise of 1877, the national Republican Party began to slowly move away from their Reconstruction-era goals. And by the turn of the 20th Century, the Republicans had all but conceded the South to the Democrats, with one-party Democratic rule becoming the status quo for the next three generations.

Scholarship on Republican Party politics has little to say about the GOP’s role or constitution in the South after Reconstruction. Aside from some works that examine the national party’s ill-fated “retreat” from its Radical vision during the Gilded Age,<sup>1</sup> research on Southern Republicanism is largely limited to the post-World War II era – specifically, the decades following the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, when a realignment of the white South helped create a new (and vibrant) Republican Party in the states of the former Confederacy.<sup>2</sup> This is not surprising, as the party had almost no congressional presence in the South after Reconstruction – with the small number of Republican House seats drying up almost entirely by

---

<sup>1</sup> See Vincent De Santis, *Republicans Face the Southern Question: The New Departure Years, 1877–1897* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959); Stanley Hirshson, *Farewell to the Bloody Shirt: Northern Republicans and the Southern Negro, 1877–1893* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962); and Charles W. Calhoun, *Conceiving a New Republic: The Republican Party and the Southern Question, 1869–1900* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Earl Black and Merle Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); David Lublin, *The Republican South: Democratization and Partisan Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

1900 – and GOP presidential candidates failing to capture a single electoral college vote in the South between 1880 and 1948.

While it is true that the GOP's Southern wing had no meaningful impact on national political outcomes after Reconstruction, it did retain a level of influence in one respect – *within the party itself*. That is, the South continued to play a role in the Republican National Convention, with Southern delegates maintaining their seats and voting rights – and most importantly, their ability to choose the GOP's presidential candidate. Indeed, for a time, the South commanded around a quarter of the Republican convention delegates, even as it lacked any ability to wield influence for the GOP on Election Day. This continued convention presence allowed Southern states to be pivotal in some Republican presidential nomination contests long after they ceased to matter on the national stage.

Elsewhere, we examine why this institutional arrangement – providing Southern states with (often significant) representation at Republican conventions – persisted in the post-Reconstruction era.<sup>3</sup> In the immediate years of white Southern “Redemption,” many Republican leaders held out hope for a GOP resurgence in the South, and stressed the need to stay true to their “Party of Lincoln” roots. At the same time, and increasingly as it became clear by the end of the 19th century that (a) a Southern Republican resurgence was not realistic and (b) Republicans could easily win presidential elections and congressional majorities without Southern support, GOP leaders – and particularly presidents – adopted a “Southern strategy” by investing heavily in maintaining a minor party organization in the South, as a way to create a reliable voting base at conventions. Stated differently, Republican presidents and other ambitious party leaders had an incentive to treat Southern convention delegations as “rotten

---

<sup>3</sup> Jeffery A. Jenkins and Boris Heersink, “Southern Delegates and Republican National Convention Politics, 1880-1928,” *Studies in American Political Development* vol. 29, no. 1 (2015): 68-88.

boroughs,” that is, as sizeable voting blocs that could be bought (controlled) via patronage and bribery.

In elaborating this “demand side” story for the persistence of Southern representation at Republican National Conventions in the post-Reconstruction era, we contend that the “supply side” is also deserving of attention. Specifically, little is known systematically about Republican Party organizations in the post-Reconstruction South. While members of these organizations – in their capacity as convention delegates – may have been targets for patronage and bribery offers at Republicans conventions, a clear understanding of who they were and whether they differed in meaningful ways across states is lacking. What *is* known, mostly anecdotally, is that intra-party struggles existed in many states, and rival Republican groups based on race – Lily-Whites and Black-and-Tans – often vied for organizational control.<sup>4</sup> Lily-White Republicans sought to restrict party membership to whites only, while distancing themselves from Reconstruction-era efforts to ensure and protect civil and voting rights for African Americans. In short, the Lily-Whites espoused white supremacy. Black-and-Tan Republicans were the descendants of the Reconstruction-era Southern GOP. They were comprised of African Americans and any whites who supported a more inclusive party. The Black-and-Tans fought to keep the legacy of Reconstruction alive, by stressing the need to preserve the civil and voting rights of African Americans – especially in the face of intimidation, violence, and legal maneuvers to disenfranchise and segregate.

Understanding these post-Reconstruction racial divisions within the Southern GOP is important because they likely shaped how national party elites dealt with Southern party organizations. Existing studies on the topic, which are sparse and cursory in description, have

---

<sup>4</sup> See Hanes Walton, Jr., *Black Republicans: The Politics of the Black and Tans* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1975).

suggested that presidents and other national party leaders often shifted their alliances between the two rival organizations, based on perceived strategic advantages (i.e., by discerning which group could be more easily or cheaply “bought”). Work is thus needed to more systematically examine the rise of the Lily-White movement, and how its conflict with the Black-and-Tans affected both Republican convention politics and Southern GOP development more generally. In this paper, we take some initial steps in this regard, by tracking the racial composition of Republicans convention delegations in several southern states from 1880 through 1928. We complement these racial accountings with case studies of developments in two states – North Carolina and South Carolina – which detail how GOP organizational politics evolved over the same time frame. In following this two-pronged empirical strategy, we seek to better understand the variation in Southern Republicanism that existed in the South in the post-Reconstruction, pre-New Deal era. In identifying both a general development of the Black-and-Tans vs. Lily-Whites conflict across several states and providing a more detailed analysis of the factors that influenced this conflict, we provide initial insight into the way state GOP organizations functioned, thrived, and competed amongst each other during an era in which Republicans had little to no chance of success in the electoral arena.

### **The Onset of Redemption and the Creation of a Southern GOP Divide**

In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, national leaders were confronted with the question of how to create a “reunion” with the eleven states that seceded from the United States and formed the Confederacy. President Andrew Johnson sought a swift reconciliation, which would have empowered the former white elite in the South and severely hampered the political

and economic progress of the Freedmen.<sup>5</sup> Congressional Republicans rejected Johnson's moderate reconciliation plan and devised a more "radical" version, which would place the Freedmen on equal civil and political footing with Southern whites. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 provided citizenship rights to the Freedmen, and the 14th Amendment broadened these citizenship rights and created new federal civil rights that could be enforced by the federal courts. Johnson fought each of these initiatives to no avail, and the Congressional Republicans saw their hand strengthened by a strong pro-GOP tide in the midterm elections of 1866. Emboldened, the Radical faction of the GOP took control of Southern Reconstruction policy, establishing voting rights for the Freedmen (via the 15th Amendment) and designing a plan for the readmission of the Southern states back into the Union. The latter policy, instituted through a series of Reconstruction Acts, established five military zones in the former Confederate states and charged the U.S. Army with overseeing elections.<sup>6</sup>

Radical Reconstruction had positive effects initially for the Republican Party. Once enfranchised and protected by the military during the voting process, the Freedmen turned out for the GOP in large numbers. Their support, combined with some initial suffrage limitations for former (white) Confederate combatants, helped establish a Republican beachhead in the South. The GOP took control of the various Southern state governments, and won Southern-state majorities in both the House and Senate. The Southern GOP during this time was comprised of three types: Freedmen, carpetbaggers (whites who had emigrated from the North), and scalawags

---

<sup>5</sup> Case in point was the passage of various "Black Codes" by Southern state legislatures, which would have established a second-class citizenship status for the Freedmen through the adoption and implementation of draconian vagrancy laws. Such laws would have forced the Freedmen into low-wage work contracts on plantations, in order to pay fines accrued because they were considered unemployed "vagrants." Simply put, the Black Codes were meant to mimic as closely as possible the political-economic aspects of the slave economy, given the post-Civil War realities (the abolition of slavery via the 13th Amendment) – and, in doing so, maintain the pre-Civil War system of white supremacy. See Theodore Brantner Wilson, *The Black Codes of the South* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1965); William Cohen, *At Freedom's Edge: Black Mobility and the Southern White Quest for Racial Control, 1861–1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

(white Southerners, many of whom were former Democrats). Often the Freedmen were the foot soldiers in the Southern Republican movement, with whites (either carpetbaggers or scalawags) filling prominent political roles. But the Freedmen also held positions of leadership within the party, especially at the state level. Between 1870 and 1876, for example, 633 African Americans were elected to the various state legislatures, 15 to the U.S. House, and 2 to the U.S. Senate.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, the GOP did not enjoy the fruits of Reconstruction for very long. As suffrage restrictions on the white populace were eliminated, and as white opposition to Republican rule increased – in the form of intimidation of and violence toward African Americans by paramilitary groups like the White League, the Red Shirts, and the Ku Klux Klan – the GOP’s beachhead in the South began to erode. The Democratic Party aggressively counter-mobilized, painting the Republican organizations as corrupt and illegitimate, and regained political control in Tennessee in 1869 and in Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia in 1870. Four years later, Alabama, Arkansas, and Texas were “redeemed” by the Democrats, and Mississippi followed suit a year later. In 1877, the final three Southern states – Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina – were claimed by the Democrats, following the conclusion of the disputed presidential election of 1876.

As Rutherford Hayes began his presidency in 1877, he and other national Republican leaders felt under fire. The party had seemed dominant as recently as 1872, when Ulysses Grant won an easy reelection and the GOP controlled both chambers of Congress. However, an economic panic in 1873, tied to a railroad over-expansion following the Civil War, ushered in a depression that lasted until the end of the decade – and helped the Democrats take majority control of the U.S. House following the midterms of 1874. By 1877, the Republicans had barely held onto the White House – and did so, many believed, via an explicit deal (the Compromise of

---

<sup>7</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 354–55.

1877) that ended the military oversight that remained in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina and thereby conceded the governments in those states to the Democrats.<sup>8</sup> Now, the GOP had to reassess its position and develop a new strategy going forward, lest the Democrats continue to make gains and drive them from power altogether.

The strategy that Hayes proposed was called the “New Departure.” It was an attempt to rebuild the Republican brand in the South around the “Whiggism” of years past. Specifically, Hayes sought to recreate Southern Republicanism around issues of economic development, rather than civil rights, and in so doing hoped to convince white Southerners that their futures were better invested in the GOP than the Democratic Party.<sup>9</sup> Such a policy was not predicated on a rejection of the Freedmen and their concerns, but rather was a pragmatic response to the reality that a mostly African-American party in the South – amid attempts to limit the Freedmen’s participation – was untenable as a winning strategy. In effect, Hayes sought to shift the focus away from race and make the case that “the South” as a society (or region) had more to gain from Republican economic policies than similar Democratic policies. To give this new policy teeth, Hayes made a concerted effort to bestow executive patronage opportunities on white Southern Democrats – as a way to build good will and potentially shift allegiances. For example, Hayes appointed David Key (Tennessee) as postmaster general, thus allowing Key discretion to make a host of postmaster appointments – most of which went to Southern Democrats. This was a blow to the existing Republican organizations in the South, which normally would have been the beneficiary of this executive windfall.

In the end, Hayes’s New Departure strategy proved to be a failure. Southern Democrats gladly took the patronage opportunities offered to them, but continued to spurn the GOP and

---

<sup>8</sup> C. Vann Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

<sup>9</sup> De Santis, *Republicans Face the Southern Question*; Hirshson, *Farewell to the Bloody Shirt*.



hold it in contempt. One reason was that the Southern Republican brand had been established during Reconstruction, and Hayes's attempt at relabeling was not persuasive. From a white Southerner's perspective, the GOP was the party of African Americans – and, more specifically, the party that elevated African Americans to the level of whites (or above the level of whites, in the minds of many Southern Democrats) by force, at the point of a bayonet. Any whites that belonged to such a party – per this view – were Yankee opportunists (carpetbaggers) or Southern traitors to their race (scalawags). As a result, “respectable” Southern whites could not envision becoming Republicans, Hayes's efforts notwithstanding, as the GOP brand was established and invariant – and would shower anyone taking up the Republican mantle with shame and scorn. It was conceivable, some held, that a Whiggish Republican brand could have been established in the South after the Civil War, and efforts to create a party around (1) white businessmen, (2) yeoman white farmers, and (3) Freedmen – in opposition to the white planter class – might have been successful. But the Radical strategies, and the military-led Reconstruction of the South, created a general white identity (irrespective of economic interests) that would prove impervious to new GOP entreaties.

As the presidency shifted from Hayes to James Garfield and Chester A. Arthur (after Garfield's assassination), the GOP strategy with regard to the South changed, but only in degree not in kind. That is, it was clear that Hayes's dalliance with white Southern Democrats was not successful. However, a segment of the white South – forced into taking on the Democratic label because of the “stain” of Republicanism – was unhappy with the conservative policies of the “Bourbon” Democratic establishment. This populist element emerged in the late-1870s and early-1880s, and ran as Independents. And in their identity as Independents, they were able to align with the Republicans in “fusion” arrangements in order to seek electoral success – and

share in the spoils. In effect, some whites discovered that they could claim another partisan identity and collaborate with Republicans – and be successful. They just could not take on the Republican label.

Garfield and especially Arthur were open to aligning with the Independents, as a way to break the solid Democratic South.<sup>10</sup> They believed winning white votes was necessary to make inroads in the South, and saw the Independent movement as a viable solution – where Hayes tried to convince Democrats to switch to the GOP, Garfield and Arthur saw fusion as an easier road. The prototype for a fusion arrangement was in Virginia, as the Readjusters (led by William Mahone) took control of the state legislature in 1879 and elected a governor and U.S. senator in 1881.<sup>11</sup> The Readjuster movement led to other such populist movements across the South, and Garfield and Arthur saw this as the key toward rebuilding Republican influence in the former Confederacy. To promote fusion, Garfield and Arthur used the carrot of executive patronage – Garfield sought to split such patronage between the Independents and regular Republican organizations, while Arthur was willing to hand over full patronage authority to the Independents. These fusion efforts bore some fruit in 1882, with some GOP gains (thanks largely to Readjuster success in Virginia) in the U.S. House, but largely melted away in 1884.

As national Republican leaders increasingly focused on winning white votes in the South, organizational GOP politics in the South evolved. The old arrangement of Freedmen, scalawags, and carpetbaggers, which had been the key to Republican success during Reconstruction, increasingly displayed rifts. White Republicans in various states began to complain about “negro

---

<sup>10</sup> Vincent P. De Santis, “President Arthur and the Independent Movements in the South in 1882,” *The Journal of Southern History* 19 (1953): 346-63; Justin D. Doenecke, *The Presidencies of James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1981), 114-23

<sup>11</sup> On Mahone and the Readjuster movement, see Allen W. Moger, *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1968); Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

domination” and made the case that the only reasonable (and realistic) future for a Southern GOP was to re-create the brand around a more respectable image – that of whiteness. That is, as this argument went, the only way that the GOP in the South would become an electorally viable entity once again would be to increase its white membership – but that was only possible by making the party more hospitable to whites. And a party comprised of African Americans, especially one where African Americans held leadership positions, was anathema to “upstanding” Southern whites. Thus, as the Southern GOP foundered in the 1880s, new strategies were floated, and many national Republican leaders and northern intellectuals saw advantages in a Southern wing that moved away from its Reconstruction roots and composition.

The Lily-White Movement officially started in Texas, when in 1886, Norris Wright Cuney, an African American, was elected Republican Party Chairman in the state. White Republicans, who had been feuding with African Americans in the party since the late-1870s, resented Cuney and rejected any African American holding such a leadership role. In 1888, at the state party convention in Fort Worth, they fought to expel several African Americans, and proceedings degenerated considerably thereafter.<sup>12</sup> Cuney held onto his position, but the general Lily-White vs. Black-and-Tan feud in Texas began spreading to other states in the South. This was due, partly, to the White Supremacy arguments discussed earlier. However, it was also the case that Lily-White organizations emerged as a way for Southern whites to vie for influence, when such influence was harder to achieve by working within traditional Southern GOP organizations – where African Americans had played an active and meaningful role for a generation.

And the “influence” that Southern Republicans could hope to realize changed as the 20th

---

<sup>12</sup> Alwyn Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform: Texas Politics, 1876–1906* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971); Paul D. Casdorph, *A History of the Republican Party in Texas, 1865–1965* (Austin: Pemberton Press, 1965).

Century drew near. Electoral viability declined outside of a few states (like North Carolina and Virginia) in the late-1880s and 1890s, as Democrats cemented their control. Then, a pivotal institutional change was made at the state level, first by Mississippi in 1890 and then the other states of the former Confederacy by 1908.<sup>13</sup> A series of disfranchisement provisions – such as literacy tests, residency requirements, and poll taxes, among others – were put in place, based on changes to the state constitution, which severely restricted the voting rights of African Americans (and many poor whites).<sup>14</sup> The result of these restrictions was that African-American registration and turnout rates dropped significantly, to the point of effectively wiping out African Americans as a voting bloc in some areas. And as African Americans comprised the bulk of Republican voters in most places in the South, the disenfranchising provisions drove the GOP's electoral viability in Dixie to zero.

Following the Democrats' formal disenfranchisement efforts, the Southern wing of the GOP remained relevant in only one respect – within the Republican National Convention itself, most specifically, in the choice of the GOP presidential nominee. That is, by the 1890s, as the Democrats securely locked down the electoral arena in the South, the only benefits that a Southern Republican could hope to achieve were limited to patronage and side payments associated with presidential politics. Thus, Lily-White and Black-and-Tan factions began to ignore organizational issues at home – i.e., what the composition of the Southern GOP should be – and increasingly fought over the more pragmatic issue of which group should represent their states at the National Convention. And national Republican leaders also began to ignore organizational issues in the South – i.e., largely conceding the region to the Democrats in the

---

<sup>13</sup> See J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); Michael Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888–1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Many states also adopted “grandfather clauses,” which allowed poor whites to vote (despite their illiteracy and/or poverty), while still excluding African Americans.

aftermath of the widespread disenfranchising initiatives – and increasingly saw the Southern states as a set of “rotten boroughs.”

Thus, in the years surrounding the turn of the 20th Century, the Lily-White vs. Black-and-Tan conflict often emerged in the run-up to the Republican National Convention, as well as at the Convention itself. Battles over seating often emerged, as would-be delegates from each faction showed up and claimed to be the rightful occupants of the state’s representational allotment. Presidential hopefuls would vie for control of these delegates – through support at the seating stage or thereafter – with promises of executive patronage or straight side payments (bribes). The more strategic presidential hopefuls would get to work in the months before the convention, to get a jump on their rivals. William McKinley started this practice in 1896, by touring the South and meeting with representatives of both Republican factions. McKinley and his immediate successors did not view the Lily-White vs. Black-and-Tan dispute in principled terms – while they may have had opinions on the racial composition of the Southern GOP, those opinions were overridden by the more practical question of which faction could be more easily and cheaply corralled for convention purposes.

The remainder of this paper delves into the composition of GOP organizations in the South after Reconstruction. We do this by exploring the racial composition of convention delegations from a select set of Southern states: Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. In creating such an accounting, we can track how GOP politics might have evolved – both within and across states – across time. This will provide some leverage in assessing how the Lily-White vs. Black-and-Tan competition played out, and whether that competition was influenced by external factors (like the adoption of disenfranchising provisions). We then drill down, and explore the political dynamics of two of these states – North Carolina

and South Carolina – in more detail.

### **Data and Summary Statistics**

To analyze the role the Lily-White vs. Black-and-Tan conflict played in Republican Party politics in the South, we have collected data on the racial make-up of delegations to the GOP national conventions in the 1880-1928 period. Delegates to these conventions are important because, as Reconstruction came to an end and Redemption took hold, voting restrictions excluded nearly all black Southerners from voting or holding elected office. Consequently, being a delegate to the national convention became the only remaining form of representative political office that most Republicans could achieve. The conflict between Lily-Whites and Black-and-Tans, therefore, should have been fought largely with the prize of convention delegate seats in mind.

In this pilot study, we focus on five Southern states: Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. For convention delegations in this period, the names and home towns of each delegate (both regular and alternate) seated at the convention were published in the convention proceedings. However, beyond these two basic pieces of demographic data, the proceedings do not provide any other information on the delegates. Most importantly, the proceedings do not list the race of the individual delegates.<sup>15</sup> The most comprehensive data set that does identify the race of nearly all American citizens is the U.S. census. As required in the constitution, the census has been executed every ten years since 1790.<sup>16</sup> The role of the census has changed over time from being focused predominantly on providing population counts to

---

<sup>15</sup> The sole exception being a set of Southern state delegations (Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas) printed in the proceedings of the 1896 convention: for these states, African-American delegates are identified as “colored” while white delegates receive no racial identification. *Republican National Convention, St. Louis, June 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, 1896* (St. Louis: Haas Publishing and Engraving Company, 1896), 175-210.

<sup>16</sup> Specifically, Article I, Paragraph 3, Section 2 of the Constitution of the United States: “The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct.”

collecting other statistics about American citizens, leading to a more expansive list of questions. However, the three fifths compromise reached during the constitutional convention meant that measuring the racial make-up of the American population was (and would continue to be) an essential part of the census' mission from the first census on.<sup>17</sup> While the exact racial classifications and language used on the forms have changed over time,<sup>18</sup> the census is the most consistent and reliable historical source for identifying the race of individual American citizens.<sup>19</sup>

For this study, we have attempted to match each individual delegate listed in the proceedings to their original census forms. We have done so by searching for data on the delegates using the online demographic aggregation search engine Ancestry.com, which allows us to search for historical records based on the (limited) information we have for each delegate: name, residence, and a year in which the delegate lived in that town or city. Census records that match on name, and hometown, and for which the matching census respondents were of voting age at the time of the convention, were accessed and the race listed on the census form was matched to the delegate information.

---

<sup>17</sup> Margo J. Anderson, *The American Census: A Social History* (New Haven: Yale, 1988), 9-12.

<sup>18</sup> Race – together with age and sex – has been one of the few items consistently asked in every census. However, the option available to respondents has changed over time: in censuses collected between 1790 and 1840 information was collected by household not individual and a distinction was made between free white males, free white females, all other free persons, and slaves. After 1850 the Census Bureau began relying on a form that identified each individual person in a household, whereby each free individual was identified as being white, black, or mulatto. After the Civil War the distinction between free and slaves was dropped, but the three-fold definition of race remained in use. For the 1890 census, workers were given instructions as to how to further characterize black Americans (noting a distinction between black, mulatto, quadroon, and octoroon depending on the extent to which an individual was deemed to have 'black blood'). The term 'negro' was introduced in the 1900 census. The term mulatto was not included in the 1900 census, but reappeared in 1910 and 1920. For the purposes of this study we identify any delegates whose census lists their race as any of the terms listed above as black. Margo J. Anderson (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the U.S. Census* (Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 2000), 19.

<sup>19</sup> As Anderson notes, the end of slavery and, thereby, the three fifths compromise provides no reason to believe local Democratic Southern leaders would subsequently have an incentive to frustrate attempts by census workers to incorporate black Southerners; while black Southerners were banned from voting, post-Civil War they did count as full citizens, increasing the population count for the South and the number of House seats provided to Southern (solidly Democratic) states (Anderson, *The American Census*, 72).

As can be seen in Table 1 and Figure 1, we were unable to identify the race of almost 70% of the 2,414 delegates included in the data set. This extent of ‘unknown’ racial identification is hardly surprising given the limited biographical information the proceedings provide: for example, a date (or even year) of birth for each delegate would dramatically increase the number of matching census forms, but this information is not available in the proceedings. Additionally, our ability to match delegates to census forms is also complicated by potential misspellings of names or home towns in the proceedings, the census form, or both. With the exception of those election years that occurred in a year during which the census also took place, there is also a two or four year gap between the information provided in the proceedings and the most recent census: it is likely that some percentage of delegates may have moved in- or outside their state in that time, or may even have died.

[Table 1 about here]

[Figure 1 about here]

The number of delegates that could not be matched to a corresponding census form is also hampered because of problems related to the 1890 census, which was the first to be counted and tabulated using electronic machines. As a result, no copies were made of the original census forms, and because of the format of the forms and the number of questions asked, the original forms were not bound due to concerns about the space these bound volumes would take up. A subsequent fire in 1921 in the Department of Commerce, where the 1890 census documents were stored outside of a fireproof vault, destroyed nearly all of the original forms.<sup>20</sup> For our purposes, this means that the data for delegates to the 1888 and 1892 conventions are particularly scarce. That is not to say that no data are available at all: delegates who were present at earlier or later

---

<sup>20</sup> Robert L. Dorman, “The Creation and Destruction of the 1890 Federal Census,” *The American Archivist* 71 (Fall-Winter 2008), 350-83.



conventions are frequently covered in the 1880 or 1900 census, and secondary sources listed below also provide racial information for some delegates to these conventions. Nonetheless, the percentage of delegates for whom we cannot identify race is highest for these two convention years (see Figure 1).

To maximize the number of delegates for which we can identify race, we have also checked the list of delegates against three other sources of demographic information on politicians from this era: The Political Graveyard, an online compendium of political biographical data; Eric Foner's list of black officeholders in the American South during Reconstruction; and Hanes Walton's list of black delegates to Republican conventions.<sup>21</sup> Foner's directory was used to supplement the information we had for delegates present at conventions between 1880 and 1900. Walton's list, while far from complete, largely confirmed that our census approach results in an accurate measure of race.<sup>22</sup>

The summary statistics of the five states combined over the period 1880-1928 presented in Table 1 and Figure 2 largely confirm the traditional perspective of the Lily-White takeover of the Southern GOP organizations in the early 20th century (and their success at slowly but surely pushing black Southerners out of the party in the decades that followed). While never constituting a majority in the late 19th century, blacks consistently represented between 40 and 50% of Southern delegates at Republican conventions. However, from the 1900 convention onwards (the first after the realignment election of 1896), the number of black delegates began to drop considerably. Between 1916 and 1924, a mere 22% of Southern delegates were black.

---

<sup>21</sup> The Political Graveyard, [www.politicalgraveyard.com](http://www.politicalgraveyard.com) (Accessed April 3, 2015); Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); Walton, *Black Republicans*.

<sup>22</sup> For the states and period for which we have collected data thus far, Walton only identifies 85 black delegates – of these, 80 delegates were already correctly coded as African-American in our data set. The remaining five delegates concerned either delegates for which race was unknown or which were incorrectly identified as white.

While the number increased slightly for the 1928 convention, black Southern representation at the Republican convention showed a clear decline in the first decades of the 20th century. This decline can be attributed to a general development of Lily-White challenges across the South, which resulted in a dramatic change of fortunes for black representation.

[Figure 2 about here]

However, these summary statistics disguise a set of important state-by-state distinctions. First, some states appear to have moved towards Lily-Whiteism considerably earlier than others. Second, some states appear to have managed to avoid the Lily-White development entirely. This can be seen by comparing the proportion of black convention delegates from the neighboring states of North Carolina and South Carolina (Figures 3 and 4). North Carolina saw a dramatic decrease in black delegates after 1900, and this process of rapid decline continued until the 1908 convention – when delegation became entirely white. In subsequent conventions, this became the status quo: not a single black delegate from North Carolina was seated in national conventions held between 1912 and 1928. However, blacks dominated the South Carolina delegation in the late 19th century (with a high of 71% in 1892), and the percentage of black delegates declined only modestly in the first three decades of the 20th century. Indeed, the results in Figure 4 suggest that Lily-Whiteism was not a particularly strong or successful phenomenon in South Carolina: at no point in the 1880-1928 period did the percentage of blacks in the South Carolina delegation dip below the 50% mark.

[Figure 3 about here]

[Figure 4 about here]

To further analyze the ways in which the Lily-White vs. Black-and-Tan conflict developed across the South in this period, we present more detailed case studies of GOP politics

in North Carolina and South Carolina. In so doing, we aim to identify how these two states differed in terms of racial conflict within the party, the role national Republican leaders played in this regard, and what this differentiation tells us about the development of Lily-Whiteism across the American South.

### **South Carolina: “Tieless Joe” and the Black-and-Tans**

Given the spread of Lily-Whiteism across GOP organizations in the South during the early 20th century, the continuing domination of Black-and-Tanism in South Carolina is surprising (see Table 2). The source of this domination was due to the strength of a local party machine built around one man – Joseph W. Tolbert – in the first decades of the 20th century. Based on a lucrative system in which his Black-and-Tan machine sold federal offices to local Republicans and in return provided a consistent South Carolina voting bloc at the Republican convention, Tolbert managed to hold on to a position of power that made him a reliable – if unattractive – negotiating partner for national leaders seeking South Carolina’s convention votes.

[Table 2 about here]

The son of a two-time failed Congressional candidate and commonly known as “Tieless Joe,”<sup>23</sup> Tolbert was himself white but had managed to build up a party machine consisting of “himself, a few other whites, and handpicked Negroes over the state” with the aim to “choose delegates to the national convention and to distribute patronage.”<sup>24</sup> Building this machine did not make Tolbert a particularly popular political figure, either at the national level or at home. *Time* noted that Tolbert’s leadership of a largely black party organization meant that “to most

---

<sup>23</sup> Tolbert’s view on ties was as follows: “Ain’t never worn one. Don’t bother with nothing I can do without.” See “Joseph W. Tolbert of South Carolina,” *New York Times*, October 19, 1946.

<sup>24</sup> V.O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Knopf, 1949), 288.

decent whites he is guilty of South Carolina's supreme sin."<sup>25</sup> The Tolbert family had direct experience with what the consequences of engaging in this 'supreme sin' could be: in 1898, during an attempt at collecting evidence of voter disenfranchisement, Robert Redd Tolbert – “Tieless Joe's” brother and himself a frequent delegate to Republican national conventions – was shot and wounded outside a polling station after a conflict with local white Democrats.<sup>26</sup> In the days that followed, white Democrats went on a rampage, killing several local black men in revenge. Tolbert's father was temporarily arrested, and the local press blasted the Tolberts for inciting a race riot by encouraging black citizens to vote.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the danger of running a Black-and-Tan organization in the post-Reconstruction South, Tolbert's machine became one of the most successful at fighting off Lily-White challenges. The basis of Tolbert's success lay in his ability to deliver patronage and charge considerable sums for it. The economics of this system became public in a series of accusations against Tolbert in the first half of the 1920s, after President Warren Harding nominated him to be U.S. Marshall for the Western district of South Carolina. Harding's decision to nominate Tolbert was surprising, as Harding represented one of the few Republican presidents in this period that had not relied on a Southern pre-convention strategy to win the nomination.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the Harding administration in its first months in office postponed all federal appointments (the lifeline of the party machine) in South Carolina, in order to search for an alternative to Tolbert. By 1922, however, the administration had concluded that both the Tolbert machine and any alternative Lily-White organization shared a single-minded focus on controlling access to federal

---

<sup>25</sup> “Palmetto Stump, Thirties Style,” *Time*, August 24, 1936, 17.

<sup>26</sup> T.P. Tolbert had “set up a box outside the regular polling place in the community of Phoenix. Negroes who were refused the right to vote were asked to fill out a form affidavit and drop it into a box which was in the possession of Tolbert.” After a white Democrat challenged Tolbert's right to collect this information, an altercation followed which ended in the death of the Democrat and the wounding of Tolbert. George Brown Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952), 256-57.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 256-58.

<sup>28</sup> Heersink and Jenkins, “Southern Delegates and Republican National Convention Politics.”

offices, while displaying little passion for Republican policies.<sup>29</sup> As a result, Harding appears to have made up his mind to stick with the devil he knew, resulting in “Tieless Joe’s” own nomination for a high profile federal office.

Tolbert’s nomination, however, set off a firestorm that damaged the reputation of the Republican Party in the South and revealed the Tolbert organization for the patronage machine that it was. While the scandal did not threaten Tolbert’s control over the South Carolina GOP in the short term, it provided insight into the way the Tolbert machine managed to remain in control of the party for so long. Additionally, Harding’s unwillingness to drop Tolbert after the scandal broke indicates the value he placed on building a relationship with South Carolina’s political boss and the important role local Southern Republican leaders played in the party, regardless of their region’s failure to provide any electoral votes in general elections.

In July 1922, several months after Harding had nominated Tolbert, Senator Nathaniel B. Dial (D-SC) criticized the nomination, and accused Tolbert of dividing “the State into districts, in each of which he had stationed a henchman who sold the Federal plums for one-half the first year’s salary.”<sup>30</sup> Dial claimed that Tolbert stood to gain \$100,000 from the sales of federal offices:

I am told of many instances where the offices were sold – one bringing \$750, another \$1,200, another \$600, another \$2,000, and different sums all around the State where there was competition. A recent case was reported where \$1,200 was paid and the party failed to get the office, and, after considerable wrangling, the funds were returned. It is alleged that appointees to small offices often have to contribute.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Richard B. Sherman, *The Republican Party and Black America: From McKinley to Hoover, 1896-1933* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1973), 155-56.

<sup>30</sup> “Dial Charges Sale of Federal Offices in South Carolina,” *New York Times*, July 31, 1922.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

While Tolbert strongly denied the allegations, the scandal resulted in the Senate's refusal to confirm his nomination, despite the fact that Republicans controlled the chamber.<sup>32</sup> However, instead of dropping his now toxic candidate, Harding chose to use a recess appointment to give Tolbert the position. Once the Senate reconvened, it again refused to confirm Tolbert, which resulted in a second recess appointment.<sup>33</sup> Finally, in late 1923, after Harding's death, Tolbert resigned his position.<sup>34</sup> His resignation, however, did not end the public scrutiny of the Tolbert party machine. In 1924, when a Senate committee on campaign funding heard testimony from J.T. Doyle, secretary of the United States civil service committee, Tolbert was further implicated in the sale of offices:

Doyle said that Howard A. Littlejohn, postmaster at Belton, S.C., had been told by Joseph W. Tolbert, Republican national committeeman in South Carolina, that he would get him reappointed postmaster "if your heart and pocketbook will get right." He also testified that Maj. James W. Bradford, at Sumter, S.C., had paid \$500 to get promoted from assistant postmaster to postmaster.<sup>35</sup>

Despite these charges, Tolbert and his delegation were seated again at the 1924 and 1928 Republican conventions. Nonetheless, the negative national attention around Tolbert eventually did lead to the rise of a rival Lily-White coalition under the leadership of Joe Hambright. Throughout most of the 1920s, the Hambright organization failed to successfully undermine the Tolbert machine.<sup>36</sup> However, this would change after the 1928 Republican convention. Unlike most previous Republican presidential candidates, Herbert Hoover had built genuine popularity in the South heading up the Coolidge administration's response to the Mississippi flood of 1927. Additionally, Hoover was willing to use the Catholic religion of his likely Democratic opponent

---

<sup>32</sup> "Tolbert Denies Sale of Offices," *New York Times*, August 1, 1922.

<sup>33</sup> "Tolbert Reappointment Seen Unconstitutional," *Washington Post*, March 10, 1923.

<sup>34</sup> "Joseph W. Tolbert of South Carolina," *New York Times*.

<sup>35</sup> "Sale of Patronage in South Carolina Charged at Hearing," *The Washington Post*, October 31, 1924.

<sup>36</sup> Indeed, while Tolbert himself was seated in every convention between 1900 and 1928, Hambright was not once a delegate in that period. Hanes Walton Jr., et al, *The African American Electorate* (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2012, Volume 1), 454.

Al Smith as an issue to convince white Southern voters to desert the Democratic Party.<sup>37</sup> To achieve this, the Hoover campaign invested heavily in Lily-White organizations in the South, a move that Tolbert opposed during the 1928 convention.<sup>38</sup>

After the general election, Hoover hoped to continue the process of building a more viable Republican Party in the South, by overthrowing the existing leadership of the corrupt Black-and-Tan coalitions. For South Carolina, Hoover named Hambright the chair of the Republican Party, hoping to replace the Tolbert machine with one loyal to his administration. The move was largely a failure, but did initiate the end of the Black-and-Tan domination of the South Carolina GOP. Tolbert, working with Democratic Senator Cole Blease (D-SC), succeeded in delaying or blocking the confirmation of U.S. marshals and postmasters recommended for appointment by Hambright. As Donald J. Lisio notes, this subterfuge meant that Hambright did not have the necessary building blocks to create a viable alternative organization: without the jobs, Hambright “lacked security and the proof of leadership needed to build a new state party.”<sup>39</sup>

Tolbert, meanwhile, also organized his own state convention, arguing that as a RNC member he represented the true Republican Party in South Carolina; in doing so, he elected party office holders of his own and declared the rival Hambright party to be illegal. The clash between the two competing party organizations reached its high point during the 1932 convention, when Tolbert successfully convinced his fellow RNC members to recognize his organization alone – arguing that it was against the interests of local party leaders to allow the president to choose his

---

<sup>37</sup> Heersink and Jenkins, “Southern Delegates and Republican National Convention Politics.”

<sup>38</sup> Donald J. Lisio, *Hoover, Blacks, & Lily Whites* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 59-60.

<sup>39</sup> Lisio, *Hoover, Blacks, & Lily Whites*, 181.

own state party leaders.<sup>40</sup> Hoover, however, was not to be denied. During the convention, he personally interfered to ensure that Tolbert's delegation would not be seated: when the Credentials Committee approved the seating of the Tolbert Black-and-Tan delegation, Hoover made his disapproval known and the committee reversed itself and seated the Hambright delegation instead.<sup>41</sup>

This victory for the Hambright organization proved to be a temporary one: after Hoover's landslide defeat in the 1932 general election, the South Carolina Lily-White organization lost its most prominent national defender and Tolbert succeeded in getting seated at the 1936 convention. However, during the New Deal, the Black-and-Tan machine no longer had access to the type of executive patronage that had been the foundation of its existence. By 1940, Tolbert no longer was capable of getting himself or members of his organization seated at the national convention. By the time of his death in 1946 – due to injuries sustained from a mysterious accident, having been struck by a truck while walking along a highway in his hometown<sup>42</sup> – Tolbert's machine had been replaced with one formed by J. Bates Gerald, who built an organization combining white leadership with a small minority of black representatives from among “Negro college presidents, lawyers, doctors, and [...] businessmen.”<sup>43</sup>

South Carolina's uncommon history provides insight into a variety of elements that defined both the Black-and-Tan vs. Lily-White conflict as well as the Republican Party organizations in general across the South. First, it shows how important control of patronage appointments was to these organizations. Once Tolbert's access to federal jobs was closed off – first by Hoover's opposition to his organization, followed by the Democrats' control of the

---

<sup>40</sup> Lisio, 261-266.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Oulahan, *The Man Who...: The Story of the 1932 Democratic National Convention* (New York: The Dial Press, 1971), 62.

<sup>42</sup> “Joseph W. Tolbert of South Carolina,” *The New York Times*.

<sup>43</sup> Key, *Southern Politics*, 288.



federal government during the New Deal years – Tolbert’s organization collapsed. Importantly, however, the South Carolina case also shows that the Lily-White movement in the early 20th century did not possess the moral high ground. The Hambright organization’s main opposition to the Tolbert machine appears to have been that *they* wanted control over patronage distribution, not that South Carolina’s existing Republican Party was corrupt.

### **North Carolina: A Tale of Two Extremes**

While the Lily-White movement in South Carolina made few inroads against Black-and-Tanism in the early 20th century, the same was *not* true in North Carolina (see Table 3). That is, while African Americans comprised a significant proportion of North Carolina’s GOP delegation up through the 1896 convention –between 38 and 55% of the delegates in each year – that proportion plummeted to barely 10% in 1900 and 1904. And by 1908, there were *no* blacks in North Carolina’s delegation to the Republican convention. This remained true in every subsequent GOP convention for which we have collected data. The North Carolina case, then, shows not just a victory for the Lily-White movement, but the complete obliteration of the Black-and-Tan movement.

[Table 3 about here]

The disappearance of black delegates is particularly interesting since, as noted above, North Carolina was somewhat unique among Southern states in that the state into the 1880s and 18890s continued to elect a considerable number of Republicans to Congress and the state legislature. Thanks to a considerable voting base of ex-Union soldiers in the Mountains, a substantial number of African-American voters who had not yet been disenfranchised, and successful fusion arrangements with Populists, the North Carolina GOP remained competitive in

North Carolina far longer than nearly anywhere else in the South.<sup>44</sup> Even more unique was the state's ongoing ability to elect *black* Republicans.<sup>45</sup>

The most notable example of North Carolina's exceptionalism in this regard was the career of George H. White. White became the last black southerner to be elected to Congress before Jim Crow legislation fundamentally excluded African Americans from voting altogether. White represented the second district of North Carolina (known as the "black second" – a district packed with black Republicans to help elect Democrats in surrounding districts), which elected a series of black Republicans in the period 1872-1897. White's career in public service provides some insight into the possibilities available to North Carolina's African American population in the late 19th century: before becoming a two-term Congressman, White had been a state legislator, a district attorney (the only black prosecutor in the country at the time), and a delegate to two Republican National Conventions.<sup>46</sup> During his two terms in Congress, White "had the strong feeling he spoke for all the nation's Negroes,"<sup>47</sup> not merely his own constituents, and opined frequently on the abuse black Americans received in North Carolina and elsewhere. White also followed suit in his role as legislator, introducing the first anti-lynching bill in Congress.

Although White was perhaps the most prominent of the black Republicans in North Carolina in this period, he was far from alone: the second district elected about fifty black members of the state legislature, as well as "numerous mayors, town commissioners, registers of deeds, sheriffs, and clerks of court."<sup>48</sup> While disenfranchisement and segregation efforts existed,

---

<sup>44</sup> Rob Christensen, *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics. The Personalities, Elections, and Events That Shaped Modern North Carolina*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 9.

<sup>45</sup> Helen G. Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1951), 97.

<sup>46</sup> Christensen, *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics*, 12.

<sup>47</sup> Eric Anderson, *Race and Politics in North Carolina 1872-1901: The Black Second* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1981), 280.

<sup>48</sup> Christensen, *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics*, 14.

they had not yet been codified in law and African Americans were able to participate in society (including politics) at a level unlike most other Southern states. However, as Christensen notes, “life for African Americans in the last decades of the nineteenth century was better in many ways than it would be for their children.”<sup>49</sup>

This situation changed dramatically in the late 1890s, as white Democrats increasingly relied on violence to terrorize African-American voters and their white (Republican) supporters. While building up over several years, the critical juncture occurred in 1898 when the infamous Wilmington race riot resulted in what has been described as the only coup d'état in American history. Despite intimidation attempts by ‘Red Shirts’ – a paramilitary arm of the Democratic Party in North Carolina – the 1898 election produced a victory for the Black-and-Tan fusionist ticket in Wilmington; while the newly elected mayor and two thirds of the city’s aldermen were white, black candidates were successfully elected despite the Democrats’ scare tactics and voter disenfranchisement efforts. In response to these election results, a group of 500 armed whites destroyed the offices of the Wilmington newspaper *Daily Record* – the only remaining black newspaper in the state. Alfred Moore Widdell, the leader of white supremacists, in his memoirs described the destruction as follows:

A negro printing office was destroyed by a procession of perfectly sober men, but no person was injured until a negro deliberately and without provocation shot a white man, while others, armed and defiant, occupied the streets, and the result was that about twenty of them were killed and the rest of them were scattered. [...] On the evening of the day of this revolution the Mayor and Board of Alderman, then in charge of the city of Wilmington, one by one resigned and in the same order their successors were nominated and elected.<sup>50</sup>

Prior to the (forced) resignation of the mayor and aldermen, the group of supremacists – which had now grown to over 2,000 people – had driven opposing white business and political leaders

---

<sup>49</sup> Christensen, 12.

<sup>50</sup> Alfred Moore Waddell, *Some Memories of My Life* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company, 1908), 243-44.

out of town. The subsequent resignation of the elected officials was a non-negotiable demand of the Red Shirts, and Widdell was named the new mayor. In a matter of days, the democratically elected leadership of an American city had been overthrown in a violent coup. Neither the federal nor the state government intervened.<sup>51</sup>

The Wilmington insurrection had a dramatic effect on North Carolina politics. Democrats were emboldened to push for the full exclusion of blacks from North Carolina politics, while at the same time, white Republicans largely embraced the concept of a Lily-White party as an alternative to the Black-and-Tan version, given the increasingly hostile racial relations. As the Hendersonville *Times* noted, “politically we believe the ‘elimination’ of the negro from politics will be a blessing in disguise for the Republican Party” because with the “negro bug-a-boo eliminated, the whites of the South are sure to split on economic issues.”<sup>52</sup> The Democratic majority in the state legislature then passed a constitutional amendment in 1899 limiting suffrage based on a literacy test and poll tax. Importantly, the North Carolina suffrage amendment included a ‘grandfather clause,’ which excluded any citizens or those in direct lineage to them who had held voting rights prior to 1867 from the new law. The intended effect of the amendment – which would still need to be ratified at the polls in 1900 – was clear: since slaves did not have voting rights prior to the Civil War, but poor whites sometimes (or often) did, the suffrage amendment would largely affect African Americans.<sup>53</sup>

Despite opposition to the amendment by Republican governor Daniel L. Russell, who called on all non-Democrats in the state to oppose the effort to make black voters the key issue in the 1900 elections, the Populists – who had previously worked with the Republicans – refused to

---

<sup>51</sup> Christensen, 22-27.

<sup>52</sup> Cited in Jeffrey J. Crow and Robert F. Durden, *Maverick Republican in the Old North State: A Political Biography of Daniel L. Russell* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 138-39.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

condemn the suffrage amendment.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, Republicans actively discouraged black party members from running for public office in the 1900 election, arguing that black candidates would only help the Democrats' argument in favor of the suffrage amendment. During the campaign, the Red Shirts once again terrorized African-American voters and newspaper offices and editors who did not support their supremacist views. Even Governor Russell did not vote on election day: voting would have required him to travel to Wilmington, which he feared would lead to further riots. The suffrage amendment was ratified by a landslide vote – 182,217 to 128,285 – and black citizens, from 1900 onwards, would face serious hurdles that would prevent them from participating in any elections.<sup>55</sup>

The negative effects the suffrage amendment had on black participation in North Carolina elections were particularly clear in the second district: while George H. White had won reelection in 1898 by a comfortable margin (49.5 against 42.1% of the vote), based largely on his support from black voters, the Democratic candidate in the 1900 elections (during which African Americans were not yet banned from voting but faced the very real threat of violence from Red Shirt Democrats if they chose to vote) won the seat with nearly 65% of the vote. By 1902, after the implementation of the new voting laws, the now incumbent white Democratic Congressman won reelection without a Republican opponent and received 99% of the vote.<sup>56</sup>

The particularly noxious way in which Democrats excluded black North Carolinians from the political sphere can explain why black Republicans were banned entirely from their state's delegation after the 1900 convention. In effect, white Republicans in North Carolina came to place considerable blame on their black party members for the 1898-1900 demise of the state's Republican Party. To some extent, black Republicans were a victim of their own success; by

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 155-156.

<sup>56</sup> *CQ Press Guide to US Elections* (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2010), 1108, 1113, 1118.

participating not only actively but also *successfully* in their state's political system prior to the 1898 Wilmington insurrection, they inspired a level of vitriol in the Democratic supremacist movement that not only disenfranchised black voters but also carried over in their own party's Lily-White wing. Once the North Carolina electorate ratified the suffrage amendment in 1900, blacks were shunned from all levels of political participation.

### **Conclusion**

Our data and case studies in this paper provide an introductory view into the different variables that can explain developments in Republican state party organizations in the South in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Nonetheless, based on the information presented here, it is clear that there is no uniform story that can correctly capture the nature and development of the Black-and-Tan vs. Lily-White conflict across the South in this period. Rather, GOP organizations were affected by national developments (most notably changes in the cost-benefit analyses national Republican leaders made with regard to investment in the South), but also by specific local circumstances that national party leaders did not control.

Indeed, while the Republican Party experienced some version of intra-party conflict between Black-and-Tans and Lily-Whites in both North Carolina and South Carolina in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the timing, context, and influence of national political actors on this conflict was noticeably different. In South Carolina, a Black-and-Tans coalition managed to control the local Republican Party over a long period of time, largely because the (white) leader of the organization had constructed a highly effective machine built around the distribution of federal patronage. This machine was the product of an intricate dance between local Republican leader Joseph W. Tolbert and national players such as Warren G. Harding and Herbert Hoover. On the one hand, Tolbert's organization made him a reliable – if unpopular – provider of

convention votes to non-Southern Republican leaders with presidential ambitions. As such, while Republican leaders may not have been particularly happy to have to deal with the local party machine, replacing it with some unknown alternative was costly and introduced considerable uncertainty, strengthening the position of the Black-and-Tans. On the other hand, Tolbert's machine relied entirely on his ability to provide a consistent stream of patronage jobs to his supporters back home. Once access to those patronage jobs disappeared – first due to Hoover's hostility towards the Black-and-Tan organizations in the South and, later and more permanently, due to Democratic control of the federal government, Tolbert's machine disintegrated and was replaced by a Lily-White organization.

In North Carolina the story was decidedly different. Here, Black-and-Tans were an active part of the Republican Party – not merely as voters, but as candidates that could actually win elections. However, the fact that the Republican Party remained competitive in North Carolina until the late 19th century produced an even more violent response from the Democrats than had existed in South Carolina. The terrorization of (mostly black) Republican voters, elected officials, and newspaper editors in the late 1890s not only succeeded in suppressing the vote and disenfranchising blacks after 1900, but also in driving a wedge between black and white Republicans. If a party *with* African Americans resulted in such violence that political participation became all but impossible for even the incumbent Republican governor, then a party *without* blacks became the preferred outcome for most white North Carolina Republicans. Importantly, the North Carolina case also shows that the role of national leaders in these local, intra-party conflicts was not always a deciding factor as to the outcome of the conflict. Whether Republican presidents like William McKinley or Theodore Roosevelt would have preferred a Black-and-Tan or Lily-White organization in North Carolina became all but irrelevant after the

1900 elections: the expulsion of African Americans, not just from the electoral process but from the Republican Party as a whole in the state, become simply a fait accompli.

Much more work is needed to comprehensively chart the different dimensions of the GOP organizations in the South during the late 19th century and early 20th centuries. In particular, future research must grapple with the way different political actors (black Republicans and white Republicans in the South, white Republican leaders at the national level, and Democrats in the South) affected the way these organizations looked and functioned. Additionally, a more concrete assessment of the role patronage division played in creating and (perhaps most puzzling) sustaining these organizations (whether Black-and-Tan or Lily-White) across the South will provide crucial insight into the economic basis of these machines. Finally, more work must also be done to connect the specific party organizations to outcomes at the Republican convention. While it is clear that convention politics was the crucial force that kept Southern party organizations relevant at a time when Republicans were all but powerless in any other political realm in their home states, we currently lack a comprehensive understanding of exactly when and how Southern Republicans affected decisions at the conventions – or how patronage payoffs led to, or followed, ‘correct’ Southern votes at the convention.



**Table 1: Racial Division of Delegates from Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina, 1880-1928.**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Delegates</i>	<i>White Delegates</i>	<i>Black Delegates</i>	<i>Race Unknown</i>
1880	167	63	57	47
1884	180	48	57	75
1888	187	47	50	90
1892	197	50	61	86
1896	185	66	71	48
1900	192	85	51	56
1904	241	115	50	76
1908	240	116	62	62
1912	212	110	42	60
1916	170	94	46	42
1920	143	80	26	37
1924	148	81	24	43
1928	152	87	33	32
TOTAL	2414	1042	630	754

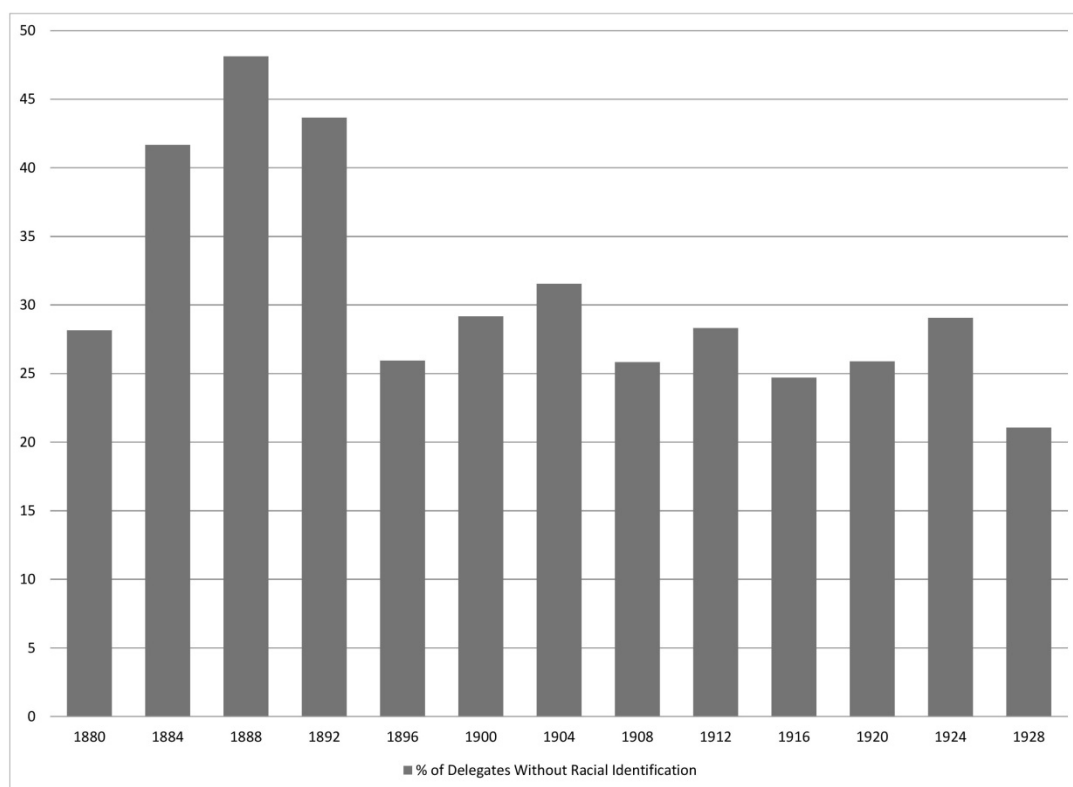
**Table 2: Racial Division of South Carolina Delegation, 1888-1928**

<i>Year</i>	<i>White Delegates</i>	<i>Black Delegates</i>	<i>% Black Delegates</i>
1880	9	12	57.14
1884	10	14	58.33
1888	5	16	76.19
1892	6	19	76
1896	10	26	72.22
1900	9	17	65.38
1904	6	16	72.72
1908	8	20	71.42
1912	6	20	76.92
1916	3	14	82.35
1920	2	11	84.61
1924	7	11	61.11
1928	7	13	65

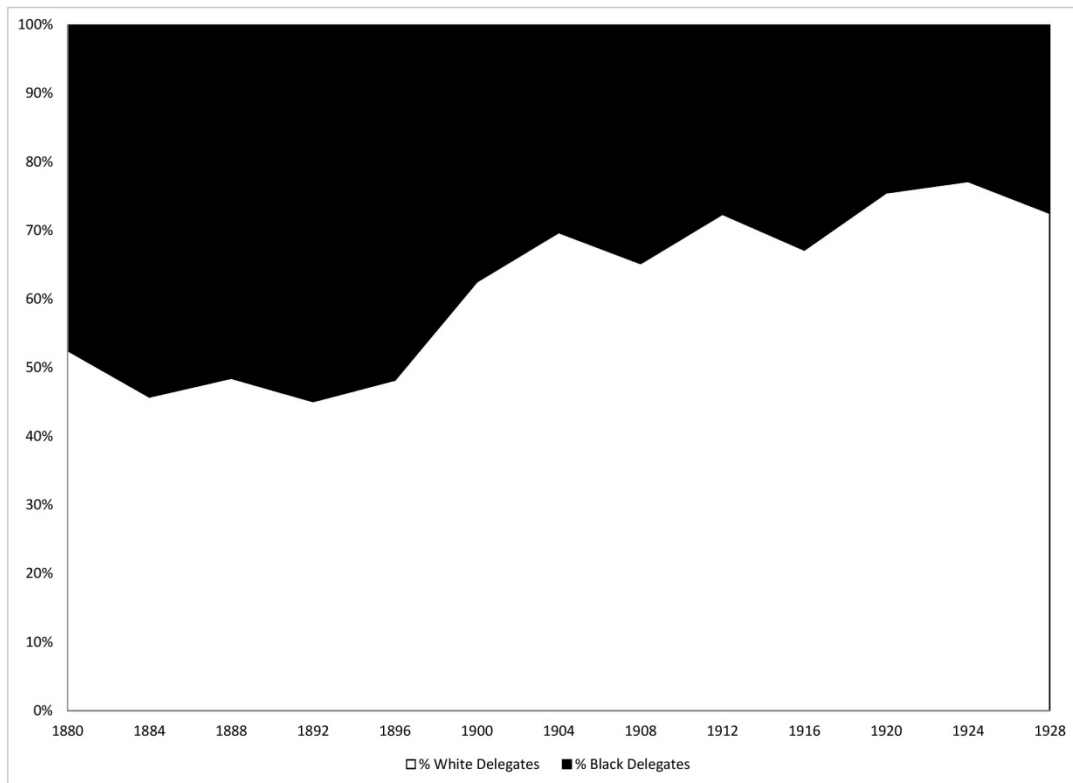
**Table 3: Racial Division of North Carolina Delegation, 1888-1928**

<i>Year</i>	<i>White Delegates</i>	<i>Black Delegates</i>	<i>% Black Delegates</i>
1880	12	9	42.86
1884	8	10	55.56
1888	7	6	46.15
1892	14	11	44
1896	11	7	38.89
1900	22	4	15.38
1904	30	4	11.76
1908	36	0	0
1912	31	0	0
1916	28	0	0
1920	33	0	0
1924	34	0	0
1928	29	0	0

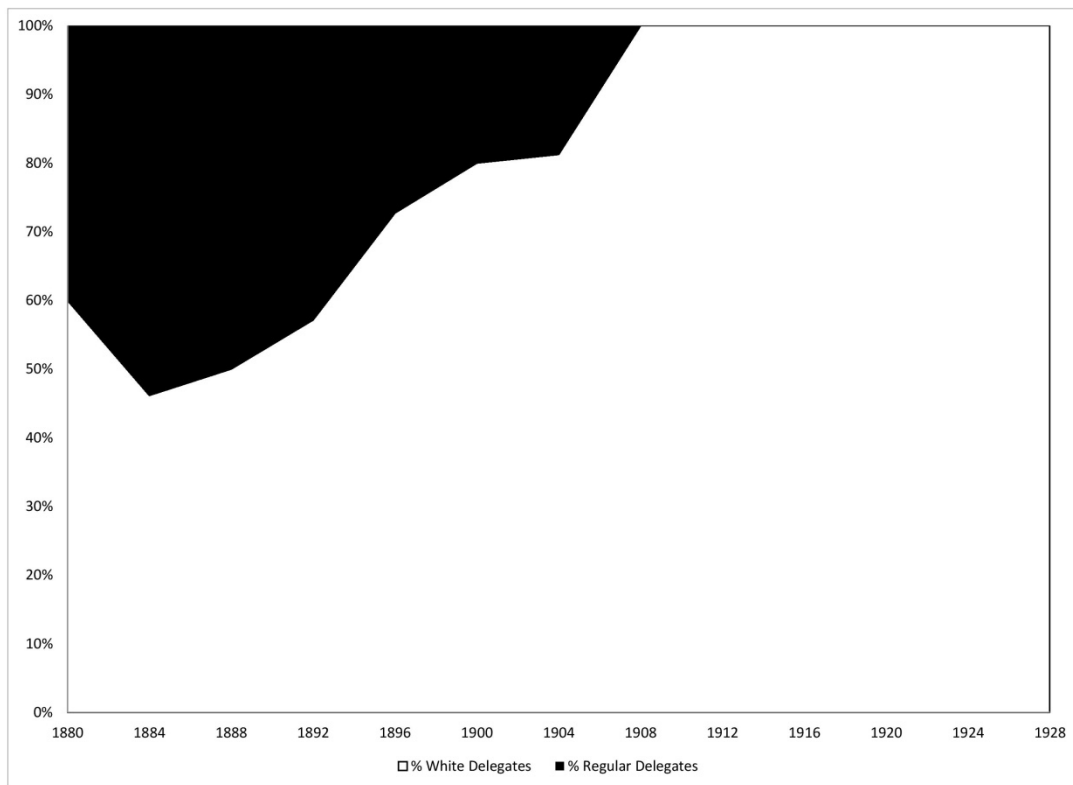
**Figure 1: Southern Republican Delegates without Racial Identification, 1880-1928**



**Figure 2: Racial Division of Delegates from Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina, 1880-1928.**



**Figure 3: Racial Division of Delegates from North Carolina, 1880-1928.**



**Figure 4: Racial Division of Delegates from South Carolina, 1880-1928.**

