

Chapter 1 : The Routledge Atlas of African American History : Jonathan H. Earle :

Building on the authoritative text of the first edition, Atlas of African-American History, Revised Edition chronicles the important cultural, historical, political, and social experiences of African Americans through the years.

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Chapter 2 : Atlas Of African American History by James D. Ciment

The Atlas of African-American History and Politics: From the Slave Trade to Modern Times, 1st Edition by Arwin Smallwood and Jeffrey Elliot () Preview the textbook, purchase or get a FREE instructor-only desk copy.

Definitions[edit] Many definitions and geographic delineations of the Black Belt have been made. One of the earliest and most frequently cited is that of educator Booker T. Washington , president of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. He wrote in his autobiography, *Up from Slavery* , about the Black Belt: The term was first used to designate a part of the country which was distinguished by the color of the soil. The part of the country possessing this thick, dark, and naturally rich soil was, of course, the part of the South where the slaves were most profitable, and consequently they were taken there in the largest numbers. Later and especially since the war, the term seems to be used wholly in a political sense—that is, to designate the counties where the black people outnumber the white. Ninety-five of these counties were located across the Coastal and Lowland South in a loose arc related to traditional areas of plantation agriculture, including the Mississippi Delta. It defined the region, called the Southern Black Belt, as a patchwork of counties scattered throughout the South. During the Cretaceous period, about 66 million years ago, most of what are now the central plains and the southeast of the United States were covered by shallow seas. Tiny marine plankton grew in those seas, and their carbonate skeletons accumulated into massive chalk formations. That chalk eventually became a fertile soil highly suitable for growing crops. The Black Belt arc was the shoreline of one of those seas, where large amounts of chalk had collected in the shallow waters. Percentage of slaves in each county of the slave states in African Americans as percentage of local population, African-American population density in the United States, Before the 19th century, this region was a mosaic of prairies and oak-hickory woods. Short-staple cotton did well here, and its profitable processing was made possible by invention of the cotton gin. It grew better in the upland regions than did the long-staple cotton of the Low Country. Ambitious migrant planters moved to the area in a land rush called Alabama Fever. Many brought slaves with them from the Upper South , or purchased them later in the domestic slave trade , resulting in the forced migration of an estimated one million workers to the Deep South. The Black Belt region became one of the cores of an expanding cotton plantation system that spread through much of the American Deep South. Eventually, the term Black Belt was used to describe the larger area of the South with historic ties to slave plantation agriculture and the cash crops of cotton, rice , sugar , and tobacco. After the American Civil War and Emancipation, most freedmen continued to work on plantations, generally by a system of sharecropping. The poverty of the South and decline in agricultural prices after the war caused suffering for planters and workers both. Although this had been a richly productive region, the agricultural economy was depressed in the late 19th century; by the early 20th century, there was a general economic collapse of the region. Among its many causes were continued depressed cotton prices, over-reliance on agriculture, soil erosion and depletion , the boll weevil invasion and subsequent collapse of the cotton economy, and the socially repressive Jim Crow laws. But, after regaining power in the state legislatures and ending Reconstruction, at the end of the 19th century white Democrats in the former Confederate states completed disfranchising most blacks and many poor whites by passing new constitutions that provided for an array of discriminatory voter registration and electoral rules. They did not lose any seats in congressional apportionment, which was based on total state populations, despite their disfranchisement of many of their citizens. This allowed the Democrats to accumulate seniority in Congress, where they acquired important committee chairmanships and exercised outsized political power for decades. The South became a one-party region, and whites controlled all Congressional representation allocated for the full population, although in many areas, the majority of residents could not vote. Whites exercised political power outsize to their numbers, as Democrats continued to have a one-party system through disfranchisement of blacks through much of the 20th century. They controlled a disproportionate number of seats in Congress, gaining seniority and thereby control of important committees. In the South and elsewhere, many states suffered malapportionment of state and congressional representatives, as rural areas had retained political control when state legislatures refused to redistrict long after demographic and economic shifts increasing

population in urban areas. Lynchings were frequent in this region as whites used violence to impose white supremacy. Rates of lynching were high at times of economic stress and, annually, when it was time to settle accounts for sharecropping. The southern states passed Jim Crow laws establishing racial segregation in public facilities. During the first half of the twentieth century, up until , a total of 6. They migrated to northern and midwestern industrial cities for jobs and other opportunities. The second wave of the migration began shortly before World War II and lasted to , as thousands of blacks migrated to the West Coast for jobs related to the growing defense industries. Because of Jim Crow laws and disfranchisement, African-American residents of the old Black Belt became supporters of the midth-century Civil Rights Movement , seeking exercise of their constitutional rights as citizens. Current status[edit] Black citizens have achieved many political and social gains since the late 20th century as a result of the civil rights movement, including the ability to vote. Most of the area continues to be rural, with a diverse agricultural economy, including peanut and soybean production on large, industrial-scale farms. These are highly mechanized, requiring few workers. There have been many changes in the social, economic, and cultural developments in the South since the late 20th century. Some blacks have considered the Black Belt as a kind of "national territory" for African Americans within the United States. In the s, some activists proposed self-determination in the area, up to and including the right to independence. Brookings Institute [citation needed] Other southern states, including Mississippi , Louisiana , South Carolina , Alabama , and Arkansas , have seen little net growth in the African-American population from return migration.

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