

# US Midterm Elections Leave Crisis in Political Leadership. Racist Power Structure. Mississippi, Georgia, Florida

Developments in the South and the worsening economic situation portends instability

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*Results from the Mississippi Senatorial runoff elections where Republican Cindy Hyde-Smith defeated Democratic candidate Mike Espy by an 11 percentage points margin illustrates the formidable obstacles placed before the opposition party within the United States body politic.*

Hyde-Smith was captured on videotape making a macabre joke about being invited to a public hanging. Mississippi is one of the most dreaded states in the country as it relates to racial violence and terror.

Untold numbers of lynchings and other pseudo-legal forms of torture and execution have been carried out in the state since the conclusion of the Civil War over 150 years ago. During the period of Reconstruction after the war, southern planters resisted vehemently the empowerment of African Americans.

Other factors involved in the Hyde-Smith and Espy race was the revelation that the Republican candidate had attended an all-white segregationist academy during the 1970s. These schools were established as private institutions to avoid the federally-mandated desegregation of public education in the aftermath of the Brown v. Topeka Supreme Court ruling of 1954 and subsequent decisions by lower courts and state administrative structures.

Yet this was clearly not enough to convince the majority of whites in Mississippi that such a politician would be bad for the state. The notions of a “new south” seemed to have faded into oblivion of past decades in the aftermath of the turbulent 1960s.

Adding insult to injury was the appearance of nooses on trees outside the capitol building in Jackson on November 26, just one day prior to the runoff election. There were also hand written signs posted which said that things have not changed in Mississippi since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.



Mississippi nooses found hanging outside state capitol building in Jackson

There were numerous false statements made by the corporate media saying that if Espy won he would be the first African American senator to represent Mississippi in history. In fact there were two African American senators in Mississippi during the 1870s and early 1880s during Reconstruction.

Hiram Rhodes Revels, a former African Methodist Episcopal (AME) minister and Civil War regiment leader for the Union army, was elected to the Mississippi state legislature and eventually selected by the state senate to serve as its senator as a Republican during 1870-71 in Washington. Later Blanche Kelso Bruce, a politician and successful commercial farmer, was elected by the Republican-dominated state house to the U.S. Senate where he served from 1875-1881.

During this post-Civil War period in U.S. history, the Republican Party sought the support of African Americans in their quest to disempower the white former slave-owning planters who were Democrats. By 1880, with the 1876 end of Federal Reconstruction, Senator Bruce lost his political base in Mississippi and was forced out of the Senate. He remained in Washington, D.C. until his death in 1898 where he was appointed to several federal positions such as the Register of the Treasury and the Register of Deeds.

The election of Hyde-Smith sends an ominous message to African Americans and their allies in Mississippi along with the entire country. President Donald Trump campaigned for Hyde-Smith in line with his alignment with the most conservative and racist political forces in the U.S.

#### Stolen Statewide Elections in Georgia and Florida

Two major gubernatorial elections in the southern states of Georgia and Florida provided opportunities for African Americans Stacey Abrams and Andrew Gillum to break the glass ceiling of the political structures of these areas. There was overwhelmingly documented proof of voter suppression in the state of Georgia which drew national and international press coverage.



Georgia candidates Stacey Abrams and Brian Kemp

Abrams, a state legislator, refused to concede the race for over a week after the controversial November 6 ballot. Initially she demanded that all votes be counted saying there was enough support for her candidacy to force a runoff election against Republican former Secretary of State Brian Kemp.

Nonetheless, on November 16, Abrams said she was ending her campaign for Governor. This was the announcement even after her supporters had won a favorable court ruling on the necessity of counting all votes just three days earlier.

In response to the national uproar over the suppression of African American voters in Georgia, people across the country were contemplating ways to strike back against the racist power structure in the state. However, there was never a call from the Democratic Party of Georgia to engage in any type of national mobilizations in defense of the basic political rights of the African American people.

After the ending of the campaign by Abrams, some leading figures in the film entertainment industry such as Alyssa Milano, Bradley Whitford, Ron Perlman and Frank Rich called for a boycott of the state of Georgia. It is estimated that \$4.6 billion in revenues are generated annually through filming in the state and such a withdrawal of these movie production firms would send a solid message to the racists who control the political apparatus of Georgia.

These methods have been successfully utilized dating back to the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s and the anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s. Yet Abrams came out against a boycott saying that people in Georgia needed the jobs generated by the film industry. She claimed that the problem of voter suppression would be fought in the courts.

Nonetheless, when has federal court litigation achieved any advancement for African Americans absent of mass mobilizations such as demonstrations, boycotts, divestment, sanctions and other measures? There were many court rulings against voter suppression and segregation from the 1940s through the 1970s. However, it was the advent of picket lines, civil disobedience, marches, strikes, boycotts and rebellions which brought even minimal reforms to the institutionally racist system.

In Florida, Andrew Gillum, the Mayor Tallahassee, conceded the elections to former Republican Congressman Ron DeSantis on November 17. The situation of voter suppression in Florida has been well known for decades and was highlighted in the 2000 presidential race where the conservative majority on the U.S. Supreme Court decided the outcome of the vote in favor of former President George W. Bush.

Although a referendum overturning the exclusion of former felons from the electorate passed by a wide margin, restoring the right to vote to over one million people in the state, this still excluded these same people from participating in the November 6 poll. As was the case in Georgia, there has been no call for any type of national protest activity in response to the irregularities in Florida.

Who Will Lead the Democrats and Who Will Lead the Masses?

These developments in the electoral arena during the midterms illustrate again the political failures of the Democratic Party leadership to address important issues impacting the African American people. On a national level there are efforts to reinstall California Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi to be Speaker of the House in January despite the election of dozens of new Democratic representatives, many of whom are much younger African Americans and women of color.

Pelosi's tenure as Speaker of the House from 2007 to 2011 was disastrous. Even after former President Barack Obama won the White House with a comfortable majority in 2008, no fundamental reforms were initiated by the Democratic Senate, House and executive branch.

The Pentagon continued to wage unjust genocidal wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Haiti. Later the war against the Libyan people beginning in 2011 destroyed the most prosperous state in Africa and spread destabilization and dislocation throughout the Northern and Western regions of the continent.

In 2011, as well, the U.S.-engineered a war against Syria which has brought about the deaths of hundreds of thousands and the forced removals of millions. Today the world is facing the largest number of refugees and internally displaced persons since the conclusion of World War II.

Racism and state repression is on the incline in the U.S. This is compounded by a worsening economic situation as exemplified by the proliferation of sub-standard wage labor; a widening gap between the rich and poor; a burgeoning federal budget deficit due to the corporate tax cuts imposed by the Republican-dominated Senate and House at the aegis of President Trump; the levelling of tariffs against foreign states creating havoc in the agricultural and industrial sectors of the economy; as well as the recently-announced plant closings by General Motors leaving tens of thousands of workers to a future of joblessness and uncertainty.

What is needed is an independent political party of the workers and oppressed in the U.S. which can speak in its own name based upon proletarian economic interests. A party of the workers and oppressed being brought into existence would end imperialist wars abroad and the super-exploitation of workers and the oppressed inside the country.

The Democrats cannot effectively represent the masses in this period of heightening

international tensions since the leadership is pro-war and follows the dictates of Wall Street. Only a socialist-oriented party can put forward a program of struggle aimed at seizing the commanding levers of the political structures and national economy, to institute the monumental changes needed to liberate the people from the imperatives of capitalism and imperialism in the U.S. and worldwide.

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