

# Axe handles and voting rights

written by Stephen Millies

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Officials take down a KKK sign from a building downtown in Dahlonega, Ga., in 2017.

There's nothing new about the attack on voting rights in Georgia. In 1868, the racists in the state legislature declared its Black elected members to be ineligible. ("Black Reconstruction in America" by W.E.B. Du Bois.)

One hundred fifty-three years later, the Black woman legislator Park Cannon was arrested and dragged out of Georgia's Capitol by police on March 25. Cannon was trying to witness the signing of the SB 202 voter suppression bill by Gov. Brian Kemp.

In 1966, Georgia's House of Representatives kicked out the Black human-rights activist Julian Bond for opposing the Vietnam War.

Lester Maddox closed his Atlanta chicken shack restaurant in 1964 so he wouldn't have to serve Black customers. The civil rights bill passed that year would have forced the bigot to do so. Maddox instead handed out axe handles to his white customers to beat Black people.

Two years later Maddox was selected to be Georgia's governor despite getting less votes than his opponent. When the chicken-bone fascist ran for president in 1976, he campaigned at the Allen-Bradley factory in Milwaukee, which is now closed.

The Bradley family wouldn't hire Black or Latinx workers at the factory despite other Milwaukee plants doing so. Today the [tax-exempt Bradley Foundation](#) greases voter suppression efforts with its \$850-million hate kitty.

Atlanta's ruling class claims the city is too busy to hate. Yet the initial reaction of Atlanta-based [Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian](#) was to support the voter suppression bill. The act makes it a crime to give water or food to voters waiting in line for hours.

Delta boss Bastian was following in the tradition of former Delta CEO Carleton Putnam, who wrote the segregationist manifesto "Race and Reason." The book

became a bible of the White Citizens Councils, which were an uptown version of the Ku Klux Klan. Neo-nazi David Duke promotes the book today.

But within a few days [both Delta and Coca-Cola](#) changed their tune and were instead speaking against the SB 202 anti-voting bill. These corporate giants didn't get religion. They were feeling the power of the people.

### **Blood libels and lynching**

The denial of voting rights allowed super-racist Eugene Talmadge to be "elected" Georgia's governor four times. Talmadge declared martial law to break the 1934 textile workers' strike. Almost all of the strikers were white.

Talmadge is believed to have [instigated the lynching](#) of two Black couples on July 25, 1946: Dorothy and Roger Malcom, and Mae Murray and George Dorsey.

A week before, the World War II veteran Maceo Snipes was [murdered by the Klan](#) for having been the first Black voter in the history of Georgia's Taylor County.

The election of Rev. Raphael Warnock to the U.S. Senate enrages racists. Warnock is the first Black U.S. senator in Georgia's history. He's the senior pastor of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once presided.

A century ago, Tom Watson occupied the senate seat now held by Raphael Warnock. According to the historian C. Vann Woodward, Watson arranged the 1915 lynching of Leo Frank, who was Jewish. It was Frank's lynching that marked the beginning of the modern Ku Klux Klan.

Frank had been framed for killing a young white woman, Mary Phagan. The frenzied campaign against Frank was a blood libel, like charges in medieval Europe that Jewish people were responsible for the plague.

Today racists want to blame Asian people for the coronavirus. That's a blood libel, too. Six Asian women and two other people were killed by a racist shooter near Atlanta on March 16.

Georgia's master class never wanted Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latinx and poor people in general to vote. The resistance to the attacks on voting rights shows that the days of Tom Watson and Eugene Talmadge are over. Poor and working people won't allow their votes to be stolen.

