

The guiding question of my research agenda is “how do changes in the electorate affect political environments?” My approach to this question—as an Americanist in the subfields of American politics, American political development (APD), political parties, and race and ethnicity—was established in my doctoral dissertation and has deepened over the past five years. Since I continue to write and research in these intersecting subfields, I have considered a constellation of questions that—at their root—ask about the ways that political parties have dealt with and should deal with changes in the political environment. These works include a book project, a journal article, and a book chapter.

My research methods vary, as appropriate to the work. I engage mixed-methods but rely heavily on qualitative methods to answer a series of research questions. For example, my book project and journal article draw on first-hand accounts from archival data, print journalism media sources, government documents, and secondary sources to examine questions related to American politics. In some instances, reliance on quantitative methods is required to answer the question at hand. In my book, for example, I conduct simple quantitative analysis to evaluate data from the United States census and local election returns. In my journal article and book chapters, I engage survey data and election question whether participation from Black voters may change the outcome of elections.

Below, I describe how my published and forthcoming works add nuance to the APD literature on political party change and realignment by describing the political impact of Black migration and Black political participants.

What is your current research agenda?

My research agenda questions how changing electorates reshape political environments. I am especially interested in understanding the impact the migration of Black populations in the United States has on political parties and politicians, and how Black migration has changed the political environment. Much of my work is situated in the literature in electoral change and realignment. However, my work differs from the mainstream realignment literature because it centers the role of race and Black people in party change and realignment. My work also differs from much of the work on realignment in that it forcefully argues that it is impossible to understand political party change—especially the role of race and party change—without paying attention to the massive demographic changes that have occurred in the history of Black people in America. Although political scientists do recognize the relationship between demographic shifts and political change, the literature is usually focused on white voters (Converse, 1966; Frentris, 1989; Black & Black, 2002).¹ Likewise, although some APD scholars are highly concerned with revising the narrative about the liberalization of the Democratic Party on race issues, few of the works focus on Black people as political participants. Much of the literature in American Political Development centers on political elites. One of the goals of my work, by contrast, is to highlight the important role Black individuals play in shaping political institutions.

¹ For example, party scholars have focused on changes in the Southern electorate—as caused by migration of northern Republicans to the South after the 1970s—to explain party development in the South (Black & Black, 2002). More recently, Robinson & Noriega (2010) have described changes in the political make-up of the Rocky Mountain West as a function of changes in the electorate that occurred through migration of liberal Democratic voters from California.

Therefore, my work considers the role of Black voters and party leaders with an intentional focus on the Black community.

Publications

Book Project- 100% Contribution

Grant, K. N. (January, 2020). *The Great Migration and the Democratic Party: Black Voters and the Realignment of American Politics in the 20th Century.*: Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

American political parties underwent a dramatic realignment in the twentieth century, and my book, *The Great Migration and the Democratic Party* examines how the mass movement of Black Americans out of the South before 1965 changed the Democratic Party. Few scholars have examined the role of the Great Migration in the tectonic shift within the Democratic Party. My book helps fill that void by reconceptualizing the transition of Black voters from the Republican to Democratic Party as both conversion and mobilization, with migration changing how parties responded to and interacted with voters. I investigate claims that Black voters often held the balance of power—or could sway elections—at the local level. The book has two parts, in the first I focus on white Democratic politicians’ perceptions of Black voters by analyzing the resulting changes in white politicians’ behavior toward the growing Black electorate. The second part of the book is a significant contribution to the literature, which usually limits consideration of elected officials to white elected officials. This book explicitly argues that Black Americans were people with political preferences and agency. The work goes on to highlight the presence and work of Black elected officials by describing the policy areas and policy positions they found important. This text is among the first to describe Black elected officials in terms of their status as migrants. Through its conclusion, *The Great Migration and the Democratic Party* sketches early understandings of the political impact Black migration patterns had on American politics.

The Great Migration and the Democratic Party: Black Voters and the Realignment of American Politics in the 20th Century is an important complement to the existing literature on realignment for at least three reasons. First, *The Great Migration and the Democratic Party* is among the first political science texts to detail the political significance of The Great Migration. Second, the text puts the role of race and the political agency of Black people front and center. Together, these developments create space for *The Great Migration and the Democratic Party* to offer scholars and students greater nuance in understanding the development of Black interactions with the Democratic Party, and in particular Black partisanship in the 20th century. Third, my work has consequences for the ways political strategists and practitioners understand today’s politics. I fully expect that the renewed attention to Black voters as a potential balance-of-power voting bloc will influence campaigns’ calculus about their approach to Black voters in the coming elections and beyond.

The Great Migration and the Democratic Party: Black Voters and the Realignment of American Politics in the 20th Century is scheduled for release by Temple University Press in January of 2020. Temple University Press has a strong record of publishing important works in urban and ethnic studies. Among political scientists, it is ranked 47th overall and 47th in familiarity

(Goodson, Dillman & Hira, 1999).² A later study ranks Temple University Press 31st among “publishers that political scientists read or rely upon for best research in their areas of expertise” (Garand & Giles).³

Journal Article- 100% Contribution

Grant, K. N. (2019). Great Migration Politics: The Impact of The Great Migration on Democratic Presidential Election campaigns from 1948-1960. *The Du Bois Review. Volume 16* (Issue 2), pp. 1-25. doi: 10.1017/S1742058X19000109.

My article, “Great Migration Politics: The Impact of The Great Migration on Democratic Presidential Election campaigns from 1948-1960,” is scheduled for fall publication in *The Du Bois Review*; it considers Black migration’s impact on Presidential election campaigns from 1948-1960. The Great Migration changed the spatial distribution of Black people in America, and their movement took them to states that were most important for victory in the Electoral College. Given the strategic political placement of Black voters, I argue that politicians—especially in the Democratic Party—came to view Black voters as the balance of power in elections. The article describes the Democratic Party’s interactions with Black voters. It also questions whether Moon’s (1948) claim that Black voters became the balance of power in election outcomes during this time period was valid. Using Moon’s calculations, I found that Black voters were the balance of power in most presidential elections between 1948 and 1960. However, Black voters’ position as the balance of power did not persist after I reworked the balance of power estimate to account for Moon’s double-counting of some Black voters. As a result, my findings challenge Moon’s claim: I find that white Democratic presidential candidates believed that Black voters were important *and* that they were the balance of power in election outcomes. Yet, my findings were inconclusive about whether Black voters were truly the balance of power (separate from white politicians’ beliefs about them).

As of 2018, *The Du Bois Review* had an impact factor of 1.383. The interdisciplinary journal is well regarded among scholars who study race in America.

Book chapter- 100% Contribution

Forthcoming. Grant, Keneshia N. “Returning Citizens in the Florida Electorate” in Middlemass, K. M. & Smiley, C. J. *Prisoner Reentry in the 21st Century: Critical Perspectives of Returning Home*. New York: Routledge.

In “Returning Citizens in the Florida Electorate,” I consider the potential impact of returning citizens as voters in the Florida electorate following passage of a state-wide citizens’ initiative to restore voting rights to some returning citizens. In this chapter, I highlight the problems inherent in a system that denies the right to vote to men and women convicted of a felony to argue that lifetime denial of the right to vote is akin to a civil death and is in direct conflict with the criminal justice system’s stated goal to rehabilitate individuals who commit crimes. To

² Goodson, L. P., Dillman, B., & Hira, A. (1999). Ranking the presses: Political scientists' evaluations of publisher quality. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 32(2), 257-262.

³ Garand, J. C., & Giles, M. W. (2011). Ranking scholarly publishers in political science: An alternative approach. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(2), 375-383.

make this argument, I describe the history of disenfranchisement in the state of Florida, and highlight the history of felon disenfranchisement as rooted in state officials desire to limit Black Americans' ability to participate in politics following the Civil War. Further, I describe efforts by recent Republican governors in the state to continue denial of access to the ballot box through executive actions—even as other states have evolved to change felon disenfranchisement laws and practices over time. Based on voting outcomes and estimates of how many returning citizens would be re-enfranchised, I use a balance of power estimate to analyze the 2018 gubernatorial and senatorial elections in the state and find that potential voting among returning citizens could have changed the outcome of the US Senate election in the state but would not have changed the outcome of the gubernatorial election. Finally, I provide suggestions for how to implement Amendment 4 in the state by suggesting that state officials learn from best practices in other states that have recently changed their laws to allow returning citizens to vote. I also suggest that the state should facilitate and implement an aggressive voter education program.

Future Research

The next step in my research agenda is bringing my examination of changes in the Black electorate into the current political context. Continuing to focus on Black migration, I will examine and challenge the dominant narrative about gentrification in American cities, which focuses on its economic consequences; however, scholars are beginning to consider the political externalities of the phenomenon (Knotts & Haspel, 2006; Martin, 2007; Owens & Brown, 2014; Wilson, 2012). I will contribute to this research by focusing on the political externalities of current Black migration patterns.

Book 1 - *Displacement Politics: Black Political Power in Suburban America*

My first post-tenure book will focus on the political and racial changes in inner-ring suburbs. Most scholars argue that political displacement befalls Black citizens after they are physically displaced from their communities. However, there is a different way to think about gentrification's impact on politics and Black politics, in particular. Black migration out of the city into inner-ring suburbs has the potential to re-shape the political landscape in those suburbs. The movement of Black citizens from urban places to the suburbs has the potential to change urban politics in previously "Black" cities (i.e., Detroit and Washington, D.C.) and changing suburban politics in ways that have yet to be accounted for. Black politics is synonymous with urban politics. However, the numbers of Black people who live in cities has declined as cities become increasingly expensive and inhospitable to individuals of low to moderate incomes. While some works have already begun to question the impact of these changes in cities, scholars are slower to consider what happens to politics in the places where displaced individuals eventually reside. This book manuscript will examine inner-ring suburbs near some of the nation's fastest gentrifying communities to determine whether and how displaced people participate in politics after they move. Like my work in *The Great Migration and the Democratic Party*, I am also interested in understanding how politicians deal with the changes in the electorate they experience once their communities change.

Book 2 - *The New Great Migration: The Politics and Black Voters' Return to the South*

Since the 1970s, Black populations have been shifting from Northern cities, where families went during the Great Migration, and are returning to the South. Known as “The New Great Migration” (Frey, 2014), this movement describes the process of Black Americans actively choosing to leave urban areas in the North and return to the South. This process is reshaping Southern politics in unprecedented ways. My book manuscript will consider what happens to politics in the South as the number of Black, mostly Democratic, voters changes the electorate in Southern cities to determine in what ways the region is becoming liberal and Democratic. This manuscript will examine changes in three Southern states to determine whether racial changes have led to a change in election and political outcomes at the state and local levels and will consider how a re-shifting of the Black population will impact national political party strategies.

Journal Article - *Creating Black Democrats*

Building on my book, *The Great Migration and The Democratic Party*, I will offer a theoretical contribution to the party change literature to argue that political scientists need to reexamine changes in Black party affiliation during the 20th century. Scholars’ description of Black voters’ changing party identification does not account for the fact that many of them were participating in party politics for the first time. Current scholarship suggests that Black voters converted to the Democratic Party from the Republican Party. However, the language of conversion inherently assumes that Black voters could participate in politics as Democrats and chose not to or that they did participate as Republicans in large numbers and later changed their party identifications. Both these assertions are problematic because they do not acknowledge that Black voters were barred from political participation in the South. Thus, many of them could not register as Republicans and then change their party identification to the Democratic Party. This manuscript highlights the importance of the Great Migration in bringing Black voters into the electorate through their migration out of the South. I argue that we should add mobilization of northern Black voters by the Democratic Party to the narrative about Black party affiliation.

Black Colleges & Black Politics

When the dust settled on election night in 2016, Florida A&M University—a historically Black college in Tallahassee, Florida—had eight alumni serving as mayor of American cities. Black colleges are important to the Black community as a conduit to and sustainer of the Black middle class. It is easy to think about the impact of Black colleges in terms of their economic impact on Black individuals and families, but what about their political impact? This project, which I envision as an edited volume or solo-authored book manuscript, would explore the ways that HBCU culture has shaped politics in America. I would examine questions that explore HBCU graduates and their policy concerns, how their Black college experience has shaped their political activities, including electoral participation, and whether the HBCU college experience informed or encouraged their interactions with elected officials. This project will contribute to the literature on Black electoral experiences and contribute a new way of thinking about how some Black voters are shaped by their HBCU college experience.