

**Rural Poverty Research Symposium
December 2 & 3, 2013**

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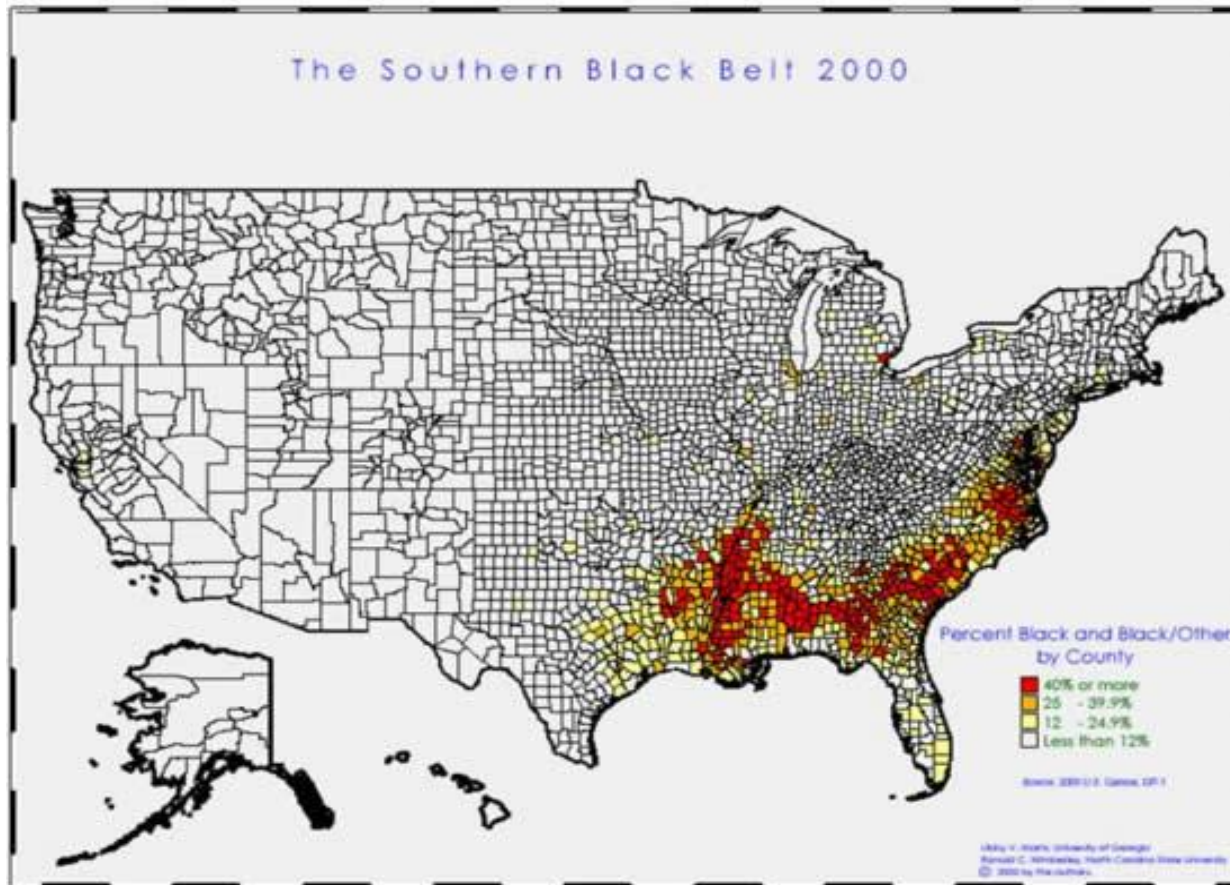
America's Third World

- Modern assessments of the Black Belt define it as *America's Third World*
- A 2002 report by the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute found, "over half of the persistently poor counties in the U.S. are in the 11 southern states known as the Black Belt"
- Dunning, Ledbetter and Whorton (2002) Dismantling Persistent Poverty in the Southeastern United States It's a Matter of Wealth

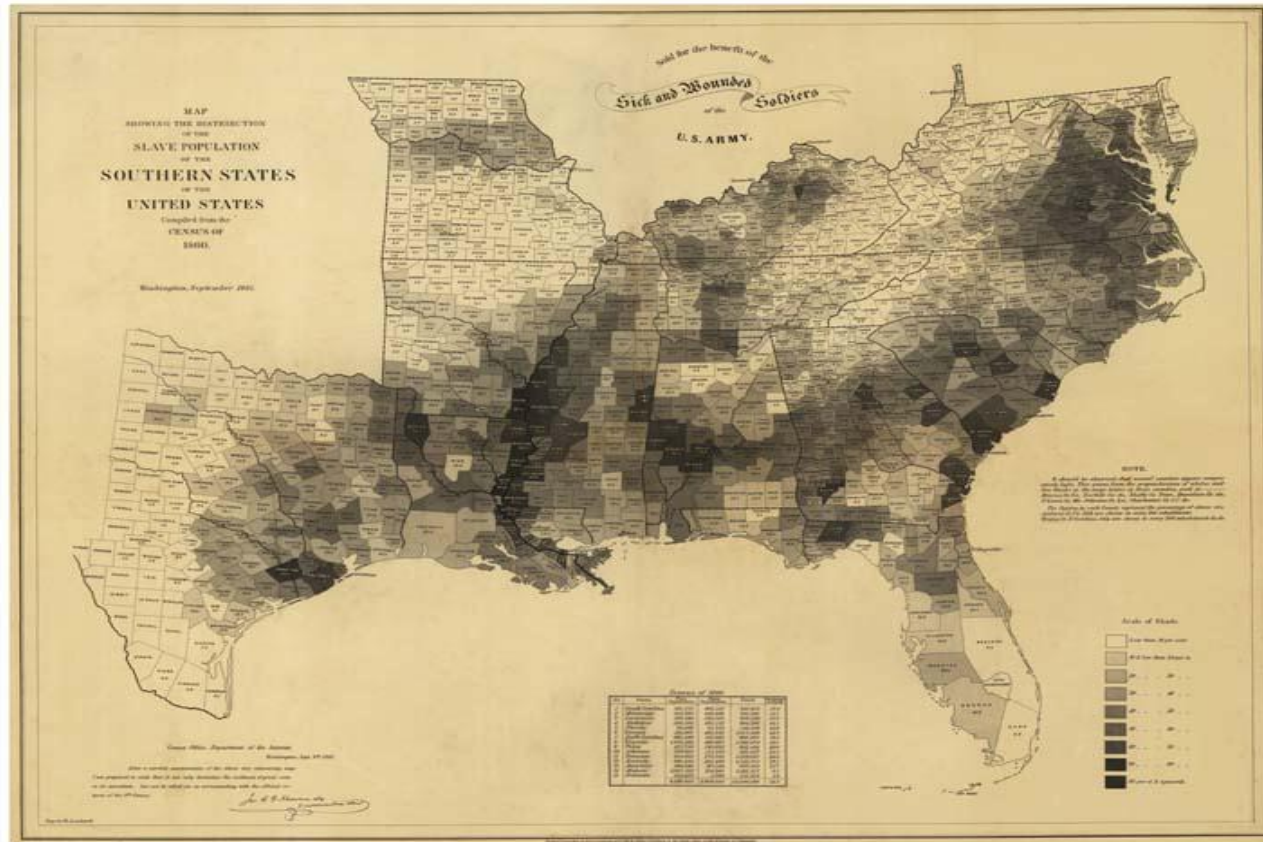
Black Belt region

- The Black Belt region is comprised of 623 counties in eleven Old South States: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia

The Southern Black Belt 2000

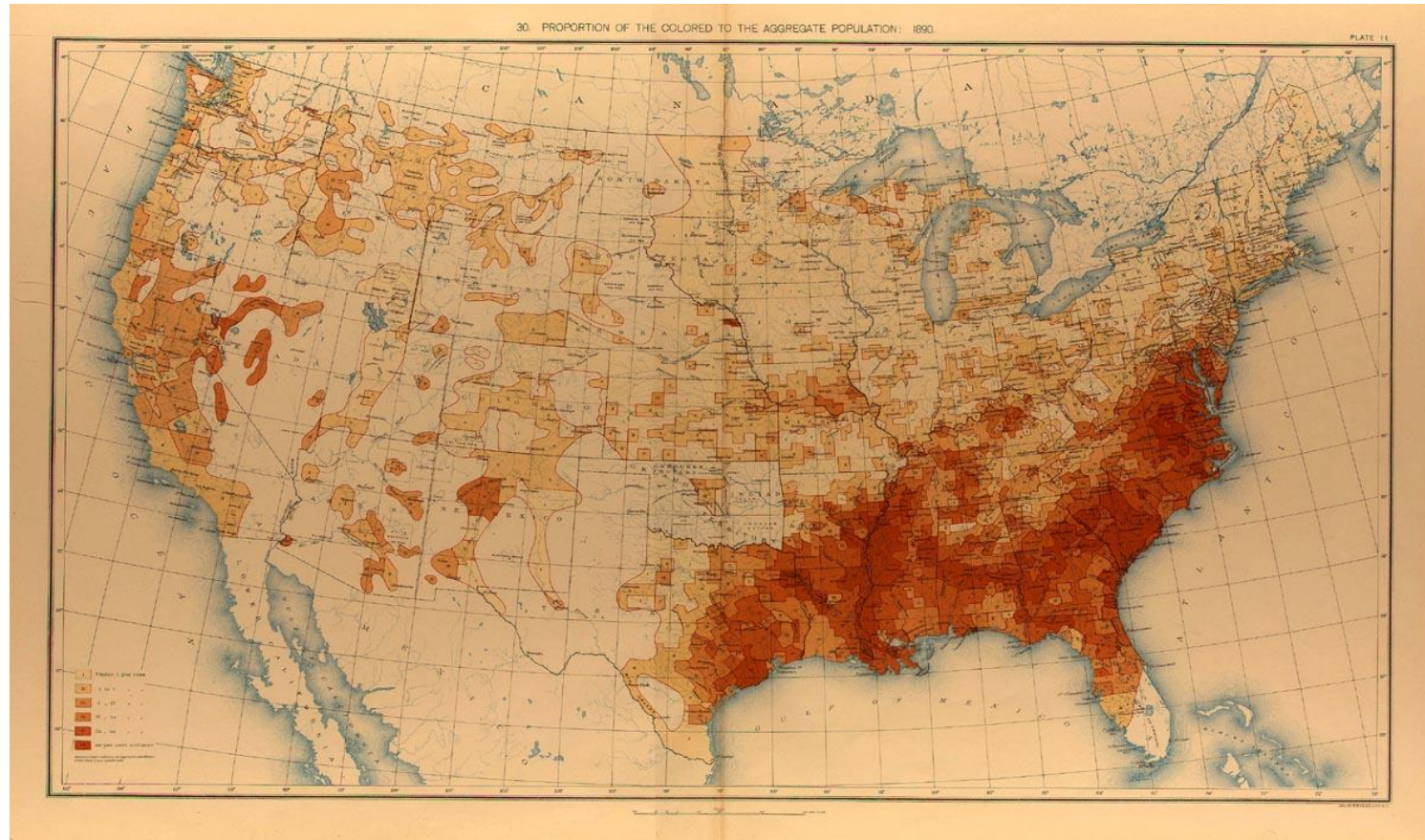


Slave population 1861



http://historicalcensus.net/census_history_1850_1880.html

Black Population 1890



<http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~31955~1151336:29--Distribution-of-the-colored-pop>

Persistent Poverty By Top U.S. Quartiles in 1980, 1990 & 2000

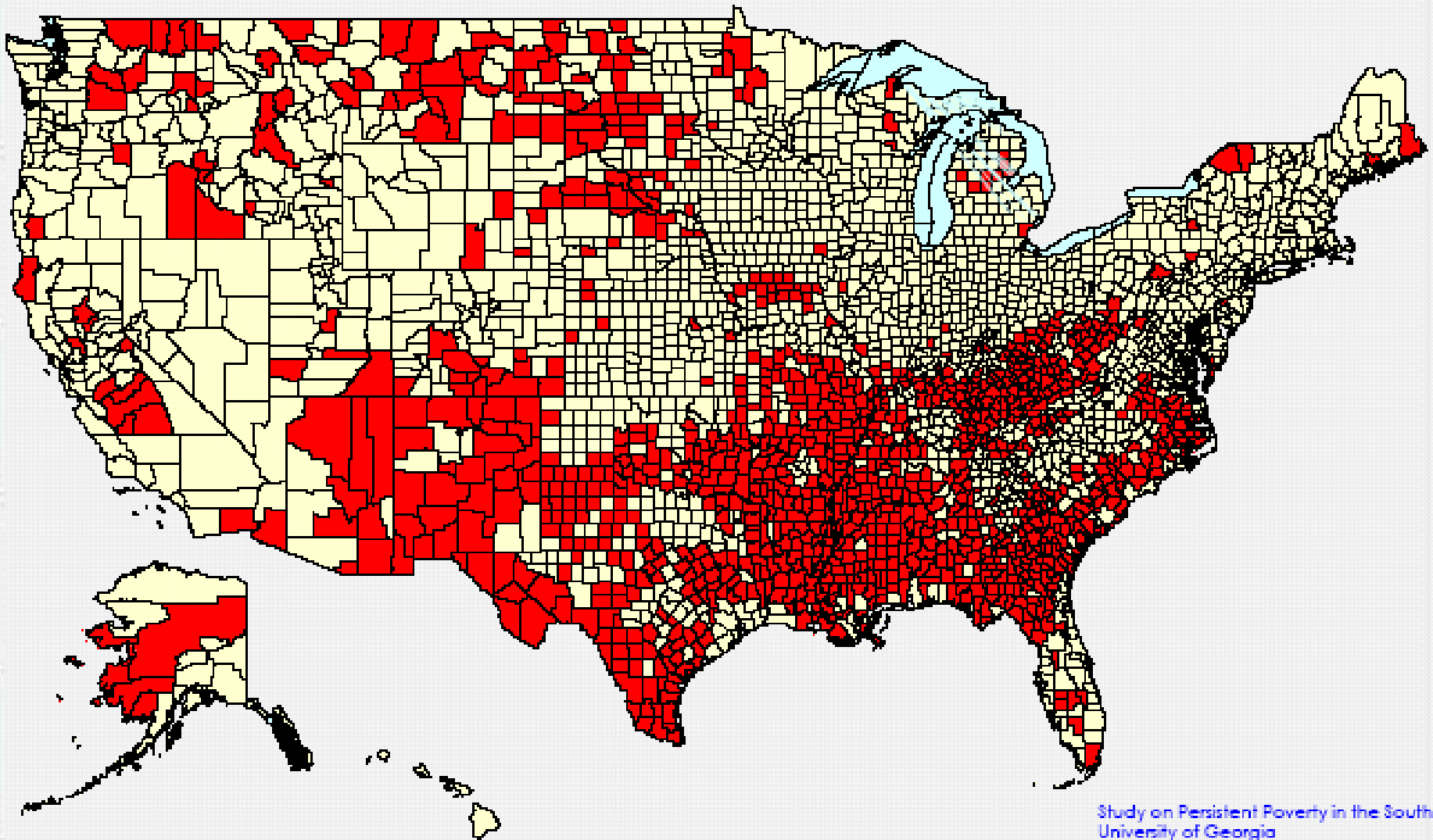
Countries in top 2 quartiles of poverty during 1980, 1990 & 2000



Countries in lower 2 quartiles of poverty during 1980, 1990 & 2000



Source: U.S. Censuses: 1980, 1990, 2000



Study on Persistent Poverty in the South
University of Georgia
L.V. Morris & R.C. Wimberly
07/12/02

Persistent Poverty Feasibility Study

In 2001 Senator Zell Miller of Georgia secured \$250,000 from the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act to study the feasibility of establishing a BB regional commission to address economic problems in the region

Miller stated: “Poverty- not race- should be the guiding principle in my opinion, and I hope those doing this study will take that into consideration”

Black Belt region

- Significant influence of agricultural industry with little industrial and commercial development
- Alarming poverty rates
- Low-skill, low-wage jobs
- High unemployment rates
- Low educational attainment
- Isolated from major transportation infrastructure
- Limited access to healthcare, and substandard housing units
- Reliance on non-elected, unrepresentative special district bodies in local economic development decisions

Tuskegee/Davis

- **Process Primarily Informed by**
– Community people and CBOs
- **Governance** - Community people participate in decision-making
- **Jurisdiction** - Eleven Southeastern States
- **Primary Areas of Concern** – Education, Healthcare, Housing, Job-training, Local leadership development

UGA/Miller

- **Process Primarily Informed by**
– Academia, Business, Government, NGOs
- **Governance** – No community participation (follow ARC model)
- **Jurisdiction** – Seven Southeastern States
- **Primary Areas of Concern** – Infrastructure development, Economic development

HBCU Collaborative

- State-wide meetings
- Community-University Partners
- Community had an opportunity to design potential model of commission
- Authentic partnership between two groups



SOKOYA
Faculty, Department of
Psychology
Florida A&M University, FL
Friday
2023 20th Annual Meeting - Louisville, KY

DREAMAL
Workshop, Dreamal I
Florida A&M University
Tallahassee, FL
2023 20th Annual Meeting - Louisville, KY

Decision making Process

- Most of the discussion at the state-wide meetings revolved around the decision-making processes of the proposed entity.
- What would be the best structural design in the political culture of the Black Belt with its unique history, political elitism, political exclusion and rigid class structure?
- Most opposed the ARC model which would give most of the power to local development districts...we invited Appalachia

Lessons Learned

- Bills did not pass 108th
- Passed in Farm bill 2008 ..not funded (Southeast Crescent Commission)..10/09 \$250,000 for start-up
- But was instrumental in my work
- Disheartened....enlightened

Southeast Crescent Regional Commission

- Based on ARC model of governance
- AL, FL, GA, MS, NC, SC, and VA
- *transportation and basic infrastructure, job skills training and entrepreneurial development, advanced technologies and sustainable energy solutions (40 percent to infrastructure)*
- Matching fund requirement
- Promote collaboration
- Local development districts
- received \$250,000 in FY2010..no funding proposed
- ...not unique to the Black Belt

Working together

- There is a real need for true University-Community Partnership development
- Universities have experts in policy, policy making, leadership training and research.
- Community-based organizations have experts in activism, grass roots mobilization, and community resource gathering
- Together these groups can work together to mobilize and educate the community on issues of importance and the process needed to turn activism into Policy

End Result

- HR 678 the Southern Empowerment and Economic Development (SEED) Act of 2003: DBBRA (Delta Black Belt Regional Authority) sponsored by Artur Davis (7th District, AL);
- HR 141 which is a reintroduction of the 107th Congress bill HR 3618: SECA (South East Crescent Authority) sponsored by Congressman Mike McIntyre (7th District, NC)
- S.527 entitled the Southern Regional Commission Act: SRC or the Southern Regional Commission which is sponsored by Zell Miller of Georgia
- Bills did not pass
- Passed in Farm bill 2008 ..not funded fully 250,000 in start-up for the commission
- But was instrumental in thinking about a Pedagogy of Change

Black Belt Pedagogy

- Because of the uniqueness of the region there must be pedagogical focus to address the passing of the torch in leadership in the South
- Yet, this pedagogy must be based on the realities of the region itself

Pedagogy that Changes a Region

- We need leaders to change the Black Belt culture by creating a new vision for the community
- There needs to be a focus on radically changing the community economically, socially and politically
- By working with community members both those in the academy and in the community our communities can be prepared for 21st century challenges

The Black Belt Initiative Becomes the Black Belt Action Network

- Exploring university-community engagement through dialogue, scholarship and action
- Sustaining a commitment to Black Belt communities
- Documenting the mobilization – lessons learned - wisdom to share – raising awareness

Congressman Davis with BBAN at Tuskegee





BBAN



Appalachian mentors





Vision

Black Belt Regional Studies and Leadership Development Program

To enhance the capacities of the region's higher learning institutions in preparing a critical mass of leaders equipped to skillfully examine the historical background, cultures and the current social, economic and political realities of the Black Belt region.

A Transformational Pedagogy will:

- Promote ongoing collaborations between community activists, farmers, practitioners, scholars, educators, students,
- Emphasize collaborative efforts,
- Engage in dialogue, action, community-building activities, research, scholarship and policy-shaping,
- Be vital in addressing persistent poverty, and
- Will foster an increase in the quality of life through asset building, democratic participation and the appreciation of Black Belt cultures and experiences regionally, nationally and internationally.

Why is it an asset building strategy?

- A pedagogy of change would focus on community development and leadership development within the Black Belt region
- The University –Community exchange could serve as an agent for information sharing among local leaders... Elected and nonelected
- It could build capacity and knowledge
- It also serves to identify and promote new community leaders (must move away from middle class model)

Has Taken on Many Approaches

- University-Community Partnerships for Community Development
- Service Learning projects linking students with community leaders
- Community Participatory Research

Partnership with Georgia Conference of Black Mayors 2006



Students who worked with conference and me



Officers of Georgia Conference of Black Mayors



BBAN talking with Lt. Gov. of Ga.



Labor Commissioner of GA at the conference



Shirley Sherrod at the Conference presenting



Supporters of GREEN project

- Office of the President
- Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity (OIED)
- Georgia Association of Black Elected Officials (GABEO)
- Georgia Conference of Black Mayors (GCBM)
- GCSU Department of Government and Sociology

What was GREEN?

- University-Community Partnership to address underdevelopment in Middle Georgia.
- Coverage area: Baldwin, Twiggs, Hancock, Putnam, Wilkinson, Washington and Bibb counties
- Membership: Faith-based institutions, elected officials, institutions of higher education, school board members, community-based organizations, non profit organizations

How does this work?

- This network focused on community development within the rural Georgia Black Belt region.
- GREEN served as an agent for information sharing among local leaders.
- This network was dedicated to improving the quality of life for the geographic area and making needed changes by local leaders, all working together on a regional basis.

What was our purpose?

To improve the quality of life for residents of the Georgia Black Belt region and to create economically, socially and politically thriving communities.

Our community development approach included:

- Capacity building. We are dedicated to providing community education, technical assistance, access to resources, as well as, the development of our people.
- Sustainable Strategies. We seek sustainable community development strategies that will benefit our communities in the long-term.

Difference of this effort

- This effort was an innovative project that promoted partnership with the community to provide needed information and resources to community leaders.
- However, this partnership was unique because it reflected the desire to have a true community-university partnership by promoting community leadership capabilities within all sectors of the Middle Georgia area.

GREEN

- Fall of 2009, GREEN identified several leaders in the region and invited them to a meeting as advisors to the organization on October 3, 2009. In addition, a presentation of GREEN and its' goals were provided to the group, including the desire to provide information on resources.

GREEN

- Sustainability session included representatives from USDA, Congressman John Barrow's office, the Atlanta Black Metro Chamber of Commerce and the Presbyterian Committee on Self-Development of People.
- Community Asset Mapping discussion
- Fanning Institute Training

GREEN Workshop

- The Fanning Institute workshop was held on April 10, 2010, and was attended by a cross section of the Middle Georgia community, including economic development specialists, faculty from GCSU, faith-based leaders and others.



April 2010 meeting of community asset mapping



April meeting



Mayor of Eatonton John Reid (Alice Walker's hometown) mapping his community



GREEN develops REE, Inc.,

- Rural Economic Empowerment Inc., worked with community members to incorporate so the partnership will be equal
- Building community connections
- Continue to diversify group
- 501c3 status 2011-2012

Me, Fanning Institute and President of REE



UNC, EPA and GC partnership

An Introduction to Asset Management Training and Workshop, Macon, GA 2012 and 2013

“As the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act get more stringent and the operating revenue decreases, it becomes more challenging to effectively manage a water utility. This training explored asset management principals and techniques to assist water utilities in meeting these challenges. The training included a blend of presentations, hands-on exercises, and peer to peer learning.”

Partners:



The Need

- The needs of the Black Belt region are great and unique in many ways. It is important to address these issues through regional approaches and broad definitions of economic development.
- Innovation
- Creativity
- No politics as usual

The End

Thank you