

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA**

DR. DOROTHY NAIRNE, REV. CLEE
EARNEST LOWE, DR. ALICE
WASHINGTON, STEVEN HARRIS, BLACK
VOTERS MATTER CAPACITY BUILDING
INSTITUTE, and THE LOUISIANA STATE
CONFERENCE OF THE NAACP,

Plaintiffs,

v.

NANCY LANDRY, in her official capacity as
Secretary of State of Louisiana,

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION NO. 3:22-cv-00178
SDD-SDJ

Remedial Expert Report of Craig E. Colten, Ph.D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	2
II. CULTURAL GEOGRAPHIES OF LOUISIANA POLITICS	4
A. The Upper Red River Region	6
1. Natchitoches/Cane River	6
2. Caddo/Bossier Parishes.....	11
B. Acadiana	14
C. River Parishes	18
D. Jefferson Parish.....	23
III. COMMENTS ON REMEDIAL DISTRICTS	25
IV. COMMENTS ON ADDITIONAL CHANGES	27
V. CONCLUSIONS.....	28
References.....	30

I. INTRODUCTION

Assignment: I was asked by Counsel for the Plaintiffs to prepare a report on communities of interest with respect to recent redistricting efforts by the state legislature and the litigation that has arisen from the redistricting maps. My assignment was to assemble qualitative and quantitative evidence of the historical and current status of communities of interest in the following sections of the state: the Red River Parishes including Natchitoches/Cane River and Caddo/Bossier Parishes, Acadiana, and the River Parishes (see Figure 1). This type of research provides evidence of long-standing cultural geographies that supplement the demographic and economic data often relied on for mapping political geographies.

As with my previous reports submitted in this litigation, Counsel for the Plaintiffs has asked me to review expert reports prepared by the Defendants, and I have been requested to provide possible deposition and trial testimony as needed. I was also asked to review the Remedial Plan that Plaintiffs are submitting and to assess whether and how the communities that I have identified are reflected in the Remedial Plan.

Qualifications: I earned my B.A. and M.A. degrees in geography from Louisiana State University and a Ph.D. in geography from Syracuse University in 1984. I worked for the State of Illinois and then a private sector environmental consulting firm for 12 years (1984-1996) doing research on the historical practices and policies related to industrial waste disposal in the era before the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. I took a job at Texas State University (then Southwest Texas State University) in 1996 and began work on topics related to the historical geography of Louisiana. In 2000, I accepted a position at Louisiana State University where I held the position of Carl O. Sauer Professor between 2004 and my retirement in 2021. I also held an appointment at the Water Institute of the Gulf from 2013 to 2015. While employed by LSU, I published numerous peer-reviewed articles and books on various aspects of Louisiana's historical

geography with support from several private and government funding sources. My book *An Unnatural Metropolis* (2005) was the winner of two national book prizes. I recently received the American Association of Geographers Gilbert White Distinguished Public Service Honor. My Curriculum Vitae is attached.

Methods: As a historical geographer, I relied on methods common in my specialty. I reviewed books, academic publications, technical reports, and related news items for the specific areas. Drawing on this literature, I assembled observations and conclusions of scholars who have intensively studied these areas. Based on my 20-plus years of experience researching and writing about the historical geography of Louisiana, I formed conclusions about the enduring elements of the culture histories of each area and the communities of interest there.

Summary of Conclusions: Louisiana has a complex culture history. Its historical geography has given rise to numerous distinctive regions with recognizable culture groups that pursued locally based economic practices. Local cultures and economies contributed to attitudes, beliefs, and values that undergird political activities and also partly shaped demographics. African American people, even when living among white people and participating in regional economic activities, experienced different culture histories and developed strong group identities that are not fully represented in the state electoral districts.

Fees: My fees are \$200 per hour for research, writing, and consultation with counsel and \$400 per hour for expert witness testimony, plus limited travel expenses. This compensation is not dependent upon my findings, and my opinions expressed here do not represent the sum total of my opinions in this matter, which are subject to change upon further research or revelations. I testified as an expert witness most recently in 2022 and 2023 (see attached CV).



Figure 1. Regions with communities of interest. Cartography by Mary Lee Eggart.

II. CULTURAL GEOGRAPHIES OF LOUISIANA POLITICS

Scholarship on Louisiana's culture regions consistently reports on enduring, regionally based values that are rooted in distinctive settlement and culture histories (Parent 2004 and Heppen and Mesyanzhinov 2003). Basic political patterns have arisen from deep-set culture histories which also influence locally important voting preferences in all sections of the state. Political scientist and noted authority on Louisiana politics Wayne Parent argues that the largely Catholic and Acadian south Louisiana is a critical voting block that can help determine a statewide election's outcome by siding with either the conservative northern region or the more liberal urban

Black voters (Parent 2004, 46-47). Political and economic geographers John Heppen and Dmitry Mesyanzhinov make an additional point in a peer-reviewed article noting that before the 1965 Voting Rights Act, Black voters were allowed greater access to the polls in Acadiana. The region also tended in the past to reject far-right candidates that were favored by north Louisianans (Heppen and Mesyanzhinov 2003, 521-22). This report will sketch the settlement and culture histories in the areas that I refer to as the Red River Parishes (which include the sub-areas of Natchitoches/Cane River and Caddo/Bossier Parishes), Acadiana, and the River Parishes (Figure 1) of Louisiana to establish the significance and persistence of regional cultures in Louisiana. It is not feasible to delimit these cultural territories with the precision of regions based on the more fine-grained census data or election results. The reliance on typical census or voting data is one reason that the underlying cultural geographies are neglected in defining voting districts. Political decisions are based on attitudes, values, and beliefs that emerge from culture, and culture is not measured in the same way as economics or demographics. Culture is, however, fundamentally important and central to our understanding of political behavior. Louisiana's regional cultures figure in current political discourse and are an under-considered but significant factor in delimiting voting districts.

Geographers and other scholars have researched and written about culture regions for decades (Zelinsky 1980 and Reed 1986). One element of such geographic territories is popular identification with the region. People in the American South or New England commonly share a pride in the region where they dwell and celebrate common food preparation practices, accents, and political beliefs. There are many ways to gauge regional identity, such as business names that reflect the region's name or a shared culture history that provides enduring bonds to place. Economic practices may change, but regional identities can persist for generations. In places with

strong local identity, newcomers may adopt that regional identity even without fully sharing in the long-term cultural identity or ancestry. This is particularly true in Louisiana's Acadian territory.

A. The Upper Red River Region

I will present two sub-territories within the upper Red River which extends northward along the Red River from Alexandria to the Arkansas border north of Shreveport. These two sub-territories are the Natchitoches and Cane River territory and the Caddo-Bossier Parishes metropolitan area (Figure 1).

1. Natchitoches/Cane River

Profile: The Natchitoches/Cane River area includes the parishes of DeSoto, Red River, Natchitoches, Winn, Grant, and Rapides. The Red River passes through these parishes and has created a floodplain that supports extensive cotton cultivation which is the mainstay of the agricultural economy. In the wooded hills beyond the floodplain, pine forests support economic pursuits related to timber and timber products. There is a largely rural population with a few small cities such as Natchitoches and Alexandria. With the exception of Grant Parish, the parishes are near or above the state average for African American population (33%) and percent of population living in poverty (17.8%). Only Grant has mean housing values above the state average (\$168,100). Housing values are below the state average, with the exception of Grant, and high school graduation rates are on par with the state's numbers (85.9%).

Settlement history: French colonists established a remote post at what is now Natchitoches in 1714. Far removed from the colonial capital that was moved to New Orleans in 1718, it had closer ties to the nearby but similarly remote Spanish fort at Los Adaes. It remained an isolated settlement through the colonial period, but by 1804 its population consisted of about 900 free people, an enslaved population that was slightly larger, and a small number of free Black people (gens de couleur libre). Through its isolation, French remained the dominant language which was

a fundamental influence on cultural unity, particularly as Anglo settlers arrived in the area. Additionally, the small number of free people of color gave rise to a community with close and intersecting family ties that also shared the French language. These relationships contributed to strong and enduring cultural unity (Burton and Smith 2008, 37-50).

Commerce and cultural distinctiveness: The nineteenth century produced numerous changes in the Natchitoches region. Federal funds paid to clear the “Great Raft” (a giant log jam) on the Red River (1838) which helped Shreveport usurp Natchitoches as the commercial hub on that waterway. In addition, the Red River changed course in 1840 and left Natchitoches on a relict channel known as Cane River. This relegated it to a commercial backwater. Nonetheless, cotton cultivation expanded on the Red River floodplain in the 1830s. This new enterprise attracted capital and migrants from across the South, the North, and Europe. With this infusion of outsiders, French gradually diminished in use. By the 1860s, newspapers were bilingual and there was pressure in the legal community to replace French with English as the official legal language (Fairclough 2018, 4-6).

Nonetheless, French persisted among the older elite beyond the mid-nineteenth century. Catholicism continued to be the dominant faith among white and Black people, further distinguishing the original settlers from newer arrivals. The church served as a core institution for cultural identity through shared beliefs, social interaction, and cultural rituals. French-Creole architecture (Figure 2) also distinguished the region from other parts of north Louisiana (Fairclough 2018, 4-7). Despite all of the changes brought about by economic change, the Natchitoches area maintained its identifiable local culture.

Free People of Color: Another distinctive subset of the local cultural landscape in the Red River valley was the enclave of free people of color at Isle Brevelle that is known as the Cane

River colony just downstream from Natchitoches (Figure 4). The enclave occupied territory between Old River and Cane River, extending from near Natchitoches southward toward Cloutierville. In 1860 there were approximately 400 free people of color in this agricultural settlement along with about 370 enslaved laborers. This group of free Black people was created when an enslaved woman and her mixed children were released from slavery. This family grew into the larger “colony” with tight-knit family ties. The Cane River colony was exceptional across the wider South because Free Black people were wealthy and owned land and slaves. While unable to vote, they had greater freedom than most free Black people in the South. They had extensive business relations with the white Creoles in the Natchitoches region and had a degree of political influence even without voting privileges (Fairclough 2018, 5 and Mills 1977).



Figure 2. Traditional French hipped Norman roof on the grounds of the Magnolia Plantation in the Cane River Creole National Historical Park. Photo by author.

Race and identity: The colonial French heritage and the presence of a sizable and wealthy free Black population were factors in the absence of excessive violence during Reconstruction near

Natchitoches. Nonetheless, the more recent arrivals adopted a less tolerant stance in terms of race relations. The threat of violence was ubiquitous in the post-war years and underlaid local politics. Democrats overwhelmed the Reconstruction-era Republicans and took control of the election process by the 1890s. Re-ascendant former Confederates embraced the Lost Cause and acted on their belief of racial and cultural superiority. They were largely Democrats in Natchitoches Parish and, ultimately, disenfranchised Black voters (Fairclough 2018, 6-8).

In nearby parishes, violence against Black people was common. White people used intimidation and explicit violence during Reconstruction to reassert their political and social power. The Red River valley had a murder rate that was four times that of the second most violent area in Louisiana during this period (1865-1878). DeSoto Parish had a particularly high rate of violence (De Vries 2015, 263). To the south, in Grant Parish, the town of Colfax was the scene of a horrific massacre of Black residents in 1873 (Figure 3). A conflict between a poorly armed Black militia and former Confederate soldiers who were equipped with a cannon resulted in between 60 and 150 Black fatalities. Historian Eric Foner asserts that “[a]mong blacks in Louisiana, the incident was long remembered as proof that in any large confrontation, they stood at a fatal disadvantage” (Foner 2011).



Figure 3. Colfax “Riot” Marker – This monument in Colfax, Louisiana refers to a massacre as a riot. The terminology reflects the intense racial bias and the enduring legacy of white supremacy when it was erected in 1950. It was removed in 2021. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colfax_Riot_sign_IMG_2401.JPG

During the Civil Rights era of the 1960s, the national Democratic Party adopted more liberal racial policies and became the party of choice for most Black voters. Ultimately, this political realignment drove many of the old guard “Dixiecrats” to the Republican Party. Goldwater’s candidacy in 1964 prompted many Louisiana Democrats to vote Republican and north Louisiana voters continued to drift to the Republican party through the 1990s. Although party names changed, white voters tended to favor the more conservative policies of the Republicans and white people in the region came to share political beliefs in line with those beyond the parish boundary. The Cane River colony, however, persisted and has recently undergone a “cultural revitalization” (Morgan et al. 2006, 44). Their enhanced visibility through the establishment of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park centered on the Cane River community (Figure 4) has strengthened their identity and influence in local affairs. The national recognition of the Cane River area and even a nationally circulated movie about this enclave has brought tourists who have

bolstered the local tourism economy. Black residents throughout this area still retain the memories of surviving past intimidation, threats, and violence as a source of group identity.

Conclusion: Several core culture history elements provided a basis for this area's shared identity. A French speaking population formed the historical core of the Natchitoches/Cane River communities. Anglo settlement and cotton agriculture dependent on enslaved laborers contributed to a sizable African American population and also to the racial tensions and violence in the area, especially following the Civil War. The documentary record provides a sound basis for considering this an identifiable cultural area to the present.



Figure 4. Cane River Creole National Historical Park. Source: National Park Service.

2. Caddo/Bossier Parishes

Profile: The Caddo/Bossier Parishes area (Figure 1) is a functional metropolitan area that was originally dominated by Shreveport. That city no longer serves as an important river port, but the oil and gas industry, along with the Air Force base in Bossier and gaming and other adult entertainment activities, have contributed to the formation of a functional economic area. The

racial demographics reflect white flight since the 1970s with Shreveport having a majority Black population and suburban Bossier's Black population being below the state average (25.1% and 33%, respectively). There is also a stark difference in housing values and average household incomes, with Bossier Parish's numbers for these two measures being above the state average while Caddo's fall below.

Settlement history: Much of the post-colonial settlement of Caddo and Bossier Parishes paralleled that of the Red River Parishes upstream from Natchitoches. Captain Shreve's clearing of the "Great Raft" (a large log jam) in 1838 enhanced Shreveport's position as a river port. That transportation change, along with the spread of cotton cultivation up the Red River floodplain, attracted more Anglo settlers from across the South who brought in additional enslaved laborers to work their fields. Caddo Parish's population grew from 5,200 to 12,100 between 1840 and 1860. Bossier Parish's population increased from 6,900 to 11,300 between 1850 and 1860. On the eve of the Civil War enslaved populations were the majority in both parishes: 7,338 enslaved people in Caddo and 8,000 in Bossier.

Racial violence: The upper river parishes experienced a paroxysm of intense violence with political and racial overtones during Reconstruction. Congressional committees concluded that local acts of racial and political violence earned the parish its label of "Bloody Caddo" (Vandal, 1991, 373). Between 1865 and 1876 it had the highest number of homicides (566) across a notoriously violent state: 85 percent of the victims were Black and 84 percent of the perpetrators were white (Vandal, 1991, 376). Black people, despite their recent emancipation and receiving the right to vote, were prey for mobs who lashed out against their participation in the electoral process. Much of the violence was targeted against male Black leaders (Vandal, 1991, 380).

While overt violence waned after Reconstruction and the reassertion of white political dominance, the slightly less obvious, if not comparably heinous, persecution continued. The Equal Justice Initiative has reported that Caddo Parish Black residents suffered 48 documented lynchings between 1877 and 1950. Bossier Parish also stood out as the setting for many lynchings with 26 occurring there (EJI, *Lynching in America* 2015, Table 5).

Oil discovery in Caddo Parish in 1905 ushered in an economic boom for some. Yet, rural Black landowners found themselves victimized by lawyers who negotiated away their mineral rights and directed the earnings into their own pockets in some instances. Legal cases document the exploitation of uneducated farm families who had riches diverted to white lawyers and businessmen (Wiencek 2019).

In the second half of the 20th century, Bossier became the seat of a major Air Force base. Bossier also saw the growth of a massive adult entertainment complex that catered to airmen. The complex also catered to teenagers from nearby Texas and Arkansas who were able to drink in Louisiana if they were at least 18 years old. These flashy nightclubs were open to white patrons only before about 1970. As was typical at the time, separate, segregated entertainment districts evolved and racial segregation persisted.

Following court-ordered desegregation in 1970, segregation academies sprang up to offer white parents and their children a route to avoid integrated schools. This pattern of re-segregation was also accompanied by white flight from Shreveport as families moved to Bossier Parish and to more distant suburbs surrounding the central city.

Conclusion: The lingering effects of violence and segregation in residential, educational, and entertainment sectors within the area has created a strong sense of identity among the Black

residents, particularly in Caddo Parish where they have been able to elect Black leaders to public office.

B. Acadiana

Profile: Acadiana is perhaps the most celebrated cultural region in Louisiana and also the setting for a powerful group identity (Figure 1). It is so well recognized that the state shades the region a different color than other sections of the state on its highway map. Scholars have lavished attention on its distinctive culture, tourists flock to sample its foods and music, and white residents identify fiercely as “Cajuns.” The presence of this culture region in Louisiana is rooted in a singular diaspora of families from Acadie (or Nova Scotia, Canada) in the 18th century and their re-settlement in Louisiana over the following decades. They remain as an identifiable and self-identifying group with particular voting patterns. Additionally, tensions between white and Black residents persist within the region as a widely recognized condition (Parent 2006 and Trepanier 1991).

The population of Acadiana, despite its recognition as an ethnic region, is quite diverse. About 28 percent of the population in the region was African American in 2020. This is below the state average and there is considerable variation across the region. Cameron, Lafourche, Vermillion and Jeff Davis have much lower percentages, while the more urban parishes such as Terrebonne, Lafayette, and Calcasieu have higher averages. Oil and gas extraction has played a huge role in the region’s economy since the early 20th century, with some boom-and-bust cycles that are disruptive. Marine fisheries support the coastal parishes along with agriculture and off-shore mineral pursuits. Calcasieu Parish rose to prominence as a lumber and timber products town, but with the deforestation shifted to petrochemical refining and processing in the latter half of the 20th century. Sugar cane cultivation dominates on the natural levees along the bayous in the eastern portion of the region, while rice is the major crop on the western prairies.

Settlement history: After Great Britain took over the Maritime Provinces of Canada, the British were uneasy with French-speaking Catholics in what they referred to as Nova Scotia. They expelled the Acadians in 1755. This forced exodus, known among Acadians as the *Grande Derangement*, began a protracted diaspora that dispersed the exiles in Europe and along the eastern U.S. seaboard (Faragher 2006). After Spain took possession of Louisiana in 1763, it sought settlers to help secure its hold on the lower Mississippi River colony. The Acadians were ideal candidates. These industrious farming families had been cast into dire circumstances and left with no property and few opportunities. The Spanish offered land near their frontier with British West Florida and some basic agricultural supplies to this group of devout Catholics who harbored deep resentment toward the English. With the assistance of Spain, a small group settled along the Mississippi River downstream from Bayou Manchac. Their number grew through natural increase and through recruiting family and friends who had been dislodged from their homes in Canada. Around a thousand settlers constituted the first node of Acadian settlement. Situated between the English to the north, and French Creole planters downriver, the *petit habitants*, or small-scale farmers, remained a cohesive and distinctive group through the colonial era. They also settled along Bayou Lafourche to the west and spread into a colonial French area along Bayou Teche. In these riverfront communities, they developed a culture quite distinct from their Canadian past. It is the combination of family, language and faith brought from the north and distinctive foodways and music that evolved in Louisiana that define this culture group (Estaville 1986, Trepanier 1991, Comeaux 1972).

Maps of Louisiana's cultural geography portray southwest Louisiana as part of Acadiana, even though it did not follow the same settlement history. French, Spanish, African American, and Acadian ranchers herded cattle on the prairies in the 18th and 19th century. In the late 19th

century, railroad companies recruited Midwestern farmers to cultivate rice in the region. They remained blended with the dominant Acadian population. Lake Charles was a timber town with a large African American population in the late 19th century. The rise of the petrochemical complex there in the 20th century expanded the Black population in Lake Charles and in Mossville, an industrial community to the west.

Economic geography and identity: As sugar became the favored crop along the lower Mississippi in the late 18th century, particularly after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, “venture capitalists” arrived to seek fortunes in the sugar cane fields on the river floodplain. Most Acadians were not inclined to adopt the large-scale, slave-holding agricultural practices, and many sold their land and moved westward into the swamps along the Atchafalaya River or to the Bayou Teche region. Others headed further west into the prairies of south-central Louisiana. The survival of Acadian culture was aided by the relative isolation of their settlements in the Atchafalaya basin (Comeaux 1972).

The discovery of oil in the midst of Acadiana in the early 20th century brought in a host of wildcatters (independent operators drilling for oil) from Texas and other states. Although they were not from the region, the Acadians absorbed many of the outsiders and retained their strong group identity. Following World War II and the exposure of many young Acadian males to other parts of the country through their military service, group identity survived. In the 1960s, ethnic awareness became more pronounced. The state assisted with an effort to restore Acadian French, and festivals attest to a strong group awareness across the region. Election of an Acadian governor, Edwin Edwards, in 1972 added to cultural identification. There have been numerous attempts to map the Acadian region drawing on different cultural traits (Estaville 1986 and

Trepanier 1991). None of the measures offer a precise boundary, but collectively they document a persistent region with a self-aware Acadian population that has absorbed many recent arrivals.

Creoles of Color and Identity: There is another important group within the Acadian region that deserves mention. It too has roots in Francophone culture but is distinct from the Acadians. Creoles of color in the south-central section of Louisiana have forged their own identity, even if they are often eclipsed by Acadians in terms of regional recognition. About 28 percent of the population across Acadia is African American. Although not all trace their ancestry to French speakers, it is common for all Black people in the region to be labeled as Creole. Over time, Cajun or Acadian has come to mean a white resident of the region, and Creole is applied to Black people in the region (Giancarlo 2018).

Creoles in St. Landry Parish trace their heritage to a group of free people of color. Planters along the Mississippi River sent trusted mulattos to work ranches during the Spanish colonial Era (Giancarlo 2017 and Sluyter 2012). They identified as a separate social class, neither Black nor white. This distinctive social situation, in large measure, provides the basis for their continuing strong group identity. In St. Martin Parish, Black residents are more commonly descendants of enslaved laborers brought to Louisiana by white Creoles who fled St. Domingue (Haiti) in the late 18th century. Their experiences in the sugar regions along Bayou Teche parallels that of Black people along the lower Mississippi River in terms of the brutality of slavery and subsequent disenfranchisement and discrimination. French-speaking Black people have endured the effects of racism in terms of denial of voting privileges, lack of access to loans, and poor education opportunities. Despite highly divergent origins, the Black population within Acadiana, through their 20th century experiences, share a comparable position in society and a shared identity.

African Americans in the Lake Charles area held low-paying jobs in the timber trades and lived in a highly segregated and socially stratified society where they were relegated to the bottom social position. Vagrancy and loitering laws were a common form of persecution (McMahon 2004). African American residents in the industrial community of Mossville faced exposure to toxic emissions and forged a strong group identity in their efforts to secure environmental justice (Hines 2015).

Conclusions: Acadiana is a well-known and widely recognized region based on its distinctive culture history. Its cultural past has contributed, not only to a regional identity, but voting patterns that are rooted in the values, beliefs, and traditions of the Acadian people. The strength of the Acadian identity has contributed to this traditional ethnic group lending its identity to outsiders, such as the oil field workers and Midwestern rice farmers, who have moved into the area. Creoles of Color are also a distinctive culture group within the region – identified by their French language history and their African heritage. They represent a distinctive group with a strong identity within the larger Acadian region. Black people in the sugar-producing regions share an identity somewhat distinct from the Creoles of Color.

C. River Parishes

Profile: The parishes adjacent to the Mississippi River between Pointe Coupee and St. John the Baptist Parishes (Figure 1) share several strong culture-history characteristics. With the exception of West Feliciana and East Baton Rouge, which are on the river's east bank, there was an element of French settlement that implanted both language and religious similarities. There were both French colonists and later Acadians who settled along the river. In addition, after 1790, sugar cane came to be the most important cash crop on the floodplain, and its cultivation created shared economic interests and racial demographics (Mandelman 2020 and Morris 2012). West Feliciana and East Baton Rouge had much less of a French influence, with stronger presence of

Anglo settlers, and are culturally part of the Florida Parishes. The planter class in these parishes was engaged primarily in cotton cultivation on the uplands (Hyde 1996).

Several of the river parishes have higher percentages of Black residents than the state average: Iberville, St. John the Baptist, East and West Baton Rouge exemplify this demographic characteristic. All but East Baton Rouge were sugar producing parishes with large populations of enslaved laborers during the antebellum period. Ascension, Assumption, Jefferson, and St. Charles have white populations above the state average. These patterns reflect 20th century economies tied to the petrochemical industries and suburban migration of white people. Both Ascension and St. Charles share these characteristics and substantially lower than the state average poverty rates.

Settlement history: Colonization of the Mississippi River occurred in several stages during the French and Spanish rule of the lower river. The French established a post in Pointe Coupee Parish (Figure 1) before the founding of New Orleans. This outpost served as the basis for further settlement along the Mississippi River. However, settlers along that stretch of the river lost access to the waterway when it changed course in the 18th century. This diversion left plantations facing a relict channel known as “Old River” and no direct access to the main channel.

Upstream from New Orleans, a group of German farmers, recruited to provide essential foodstuffs for the colonial capital, established farms on the west bank of the river. They largely assimilated into the French society along the lower river and over time participated in large-scale plantation agriculture. After Spain took control of the Louisiana territory in 1763, it recruited displaced Acadians to provide a buffer between New Orleans and British holdings around Baton Rouge. Fiercely antagonistic toward the British and devout Catholics, the Acadians initially occupied territory downstream from Bayou Manchac in Ascension Parish. Their settlements

stretched downriver from Iberville and Ascension parishes to St. Charles Parish. Yet, many migrated away from the river as Anglos began assembling large land holdings in order to participate in the sugar boom of the early 1800s. By the mid-19th century, the river parishes had a mix of European residents: Acadian, French Creole, Spanish, and German. Sugar had largely supplanted rice as the economic crop of large planters (Comeaux 1972, Estaville 1986, Brasseaux 1987). Many residents of the region either retain strong identity with Acadian heritage or have adopted it as their own. For example, the Christmas bonfires along the river in St. Charles Parish are celebrated as an Acadian tradition, even if not restricted to those of Acadian ancestry.

Planters brought in enslaved Africans to this region to work on their agricultural operations. Slaves provided the essential labor to clear forests, build levees, and cultivate crops along the Mississippi. As rice became the early successful staple crop during the 18th century, Africans provided critical know how in terms of floodplain cultivation. In 1763, there were about 4,500 enslaved and 3,600 free people in the Louisiana colony—most along the Mississippi River (Hall 1992, 279). During the Spanish rule, forced migration of enslaved people increased, and by 1800 there were about 24,000 African forced laborers in the colony, compared to 19,000 free people (Hall 1992, 279). The fact that enslaved people constituted the majority caused chronic unease among the planter class who feared an insurrection. Indeed, in 1795, Spanish authorities arrested several enslaved people for plotting an uprising near Pointe Coupee (Hall 1992, 344). In 1811, there was an actual uprising in St. John the Baptist and St. Charles parishes upstream from New Orleans, which authorities brutally ended. Memories of the event persist among the residents of the region and provide a basis for cultural identity.

East Baton Rouge and West Feliciana Parishes stand in contrast to the other river parishes. A large portion of East Baton Rouge Parish is atop the Pleistocene Terrace, an elevated bluff along

the east bank of the river. After Spain took control of this area in 1779, it retained a tenuous hold until the early 19th century. An infusion of Anglos from across the South in the early 19th century began a re-population of the area. These settlers resented Spanish rule and led an insurrection that culminated in expulsion of Spanish officials and the brief creation of the independent state of West Florida in 1810. Independence did not last long, and the United States brought the short-lived nation into its territory. The territory atop the terrace became part of the cotton plantation region during the 1800s, with sizable slave holdings. In the eastern portion of these parishes, in the piney woods, small yeoman farmers with few enslaved laborers dominated the rural landscape (Hyde 1996 and Newton 1967).

Economic landscapes: Both cotton and sugar plantations relied on enslaved labor and each typically had “quarters” where workers resided near the processing operations—gins for cotton and grinding mills for sugar. Black workers far outnumbered the families of white plantation owners and their foremen (Rehder 1989 and Aiken 2003). After emancipation, the micro-geography of these plantation types diverged. Cotton planters deployed a share-cropper system, commonly referred to as the “40 acres and a mule” model. Workers received use of housing, a mule, basic implements, and a parcel of land to work in exchange for a “share” of their harvest. The shacks that formerly provided shelter near the gin were repositioned to workers’ assigned fields. This created a dispersed settlement pattern that persisted until mechanization in the 1920s. With declining demand for farm labor, many Black people began to migrate into surrounding towns or to destinations outside the South—including Baton Rouge. The decline in rural population led to the removal of most of the share-croppers housing on plantation lands (Aiken 2003).

In contrast, sugar planters maintained concentrated housing near the grinding mill. The need for more highly skilled labor in sugar processing guided decisions to retain workers on site. In fact, the historian John Rodrigue argues that sugar plantation workers had considerably more bargaining power and were able to gain better pay because of the need for their skills (Rodrigue 2001). Following emancipation, there was a fear that labor would be too expensive, and many planters recruited Italian labor, but the African American population remained high in sugar country with residences provided by the planters near the grinding mills well into the 20th century. During agricultural mechanization in the 20th century and consolidation of grinding operations, the rural Black population declined, and many moved into the numerous small communities along the river. Nonetheless, in sugar country it was common for former slaves to acquire property in narrow slivers of land adjacent to the plantation (Figure 5). This enabled planters to retain a ready workforce. Numerous small linear villages near the plantations became nodes for free African Americans. As large-scale petrochemical industry arrived along the river in the 20th century, these historical communities often persisted as “fencerow” communities adjacent to petrochemical and other industrial operations. These communities have become the sites of environmental justice struggles (Duncan 1992, Markowitz and Rosner 2002, Lerner 2005).

The persistence of African American communities with direct links to the antebellum period and the brutality of slavery, exposure to flood risk, as well as more recent struggles to escape from the shadow of emission-releasing industries, sustains the memories of shared grievances and group identity (Woods 1998 and Mizelle 2014). In recent years, efforts to exhume cemeteries of African Americans buried beneath the levees represent one aspect of group identity. In addition, African American communities have launched environmental justice campaigns

against the siting of new petrochemical plants and also to secure relocation for families living adjacent to facilities releasing hazardous emissions (Lerner 2005).

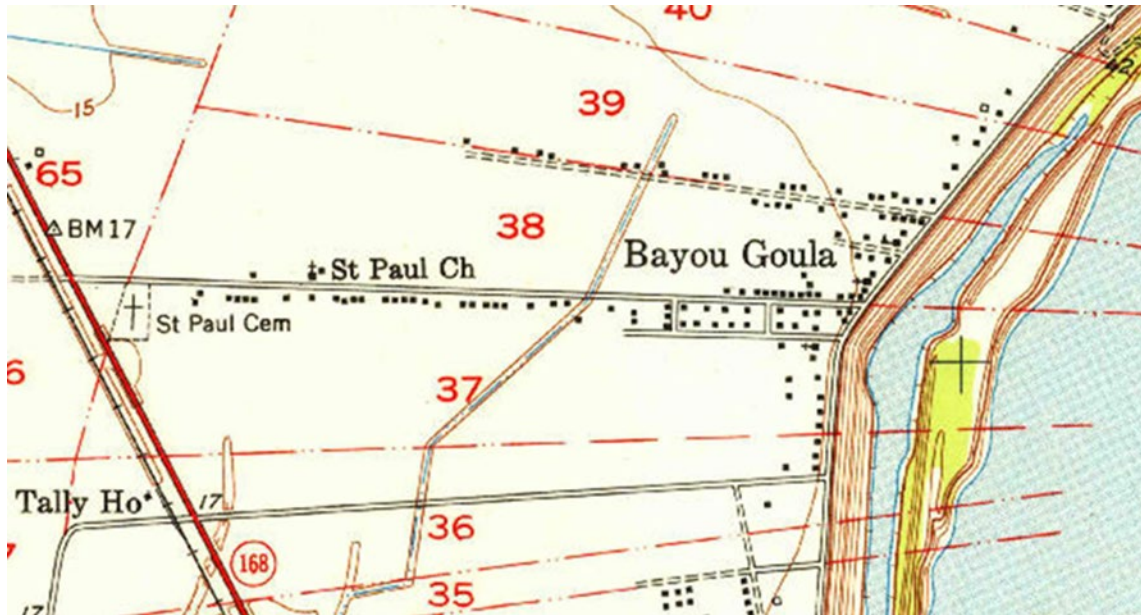


Figure 5: Bayou Goula linear community near White Castle, Louisiana. Emancipated Black workers often resided in these narrow linear communities adjacent to the plantations where they worked. U.S. Geological Survey, 1953 White Castle topographic map.

Conclusions: Both colonial-era plantations and the sugar economy of the 19th century produced locations with majority Black populations. A mixture of European settlers constituted the planter class along the Mississippi River within the area. Fear of an insurrection among white planters was common before the Civil War. African Americans—who endured enslavement, poor living conditions, exposure to flood and industrial hazards, and strict segregation—draw on this culture history as the basis for strong group identity.

D. Jefferson Parish

Profile: Jefferson Parish is an anomaly among the parishes along the lower Mississippi River and deserves separate consideration (figure 1). Although it occupies a position on the Mississippi River, it is a functional component of the New Orleans metropolitan area and has a

largely suburban population. Despite its proximity, Jefferson Parish is separate from New Orleans in many ways. Most residents made a decision to leave or not live in New Orleans, and hence, the two parishes have distinctive populations, separate parish governments, and distinct social identities. Black people constitute nearly 29 percent of its population and most live on the west bank of the river. On the east bank, the population has been predominately white people, with an influx of Hispanic people since Hurricane Katrina in 2005 (Zaninetti and Colten 2012). Racial segregation is a prominent aspect of the parish's social geography (Campanella 2020). Economic activities have also been segregated, ship-building and petrochemical industries cluster on the west bank, while suburban retail and related commercial activity dominates the east bank.

Racial geography. Jefferson Parish had an economic history similar to upstream parishes through the 19th century. Sugar cane plantations occupied the floodplain upstream from New Orleans and planters relied on enslaved laborers for cultivating their crops. Industrial development replaced sugar in the twentieth century as ship building and petrochemical industries claimed territory along the river. This activity attracted primarily white working-class residents into mill-gate communities (Campanella 2020). After World War II suburban sprawl lured white residents into east bank Jefferson. Construction of hurricane protection levees provided additional incentive and integration of schools in New Orleans propelled more white people to flee to the suburbs. West bank Jefferson Parish suburbs have become highly segregated with a rising Black population near large industries and their emissions. Areas that are low lying and prone to flooding from local rainfall are more affordable and have attracted lower income residents (Colten 2005). Segregation and poverty have come to characterize west bank Jefferson Parish (Campanella 2020). Segregation was formerly de jure in the form of strictly segregated public facilities, but residential segregation evolved with poverty and the lack of employment opportunities which restricted Black

peoples' residential options (Campanella 2020). Superior flood protection on the east bank and flood prone neighborhoods in the west bank further reinforced racial segregation (Colten 2005). Segregation has contributed to community formation and group identity.

Conclusion: West bank Jefferson Parish has a concentration of African American residents with shared experiences of segregation that contribute to Black residential neighborhoods adjacent to industry and in floodprone areas. This set of recent experiences underlies community identity among Black residents. On the east bank, white and Hispanic residents are the dominant groups. The Mississippi River is a major social and cultural divide between these two communities within one parish.

III. COMMENTS ON REMEDIAL DISTRICTS

I have reviewed the Remedial Plan that Plaintiffs have submitted. In it, I found no substantive changes from the illustrative districts that I discussed in my reports and testified about at trial. Based on my review, I reiterate here the same conclusions (from my supplemental and rebuttal reports) about how the Remedial Plan reflects communities of interest.

SD 38 & 39. The boundary between SD 38 and 39 reflects an important historical division in the city of Shreveport. SD 39 includes much of the old African American residential core in Shreveport, the heart of the “counterpublic space” where African American businesses concentrated and strong community life existed. SD 38 contains neighborhoods that underwent “white flight” and demographic change since the 1960s. While simple racial patterns may be similar on both sides of the boundary, these two areas represent two distinct communities of interest at the local level.

SD 2 & 17. The territory contained in SD 17 and SD 2 is a largely rural area inhabited by Acadians and African Americans, which contain communities with long-standing local economic

and cultural ties based on sugar cane cultivation and processing and natural resource harvesting in the backswamps.

SD 19. SD 19 encompasses one of the most historically traumatized regions in the state and one that has an exceptionally strong sense of community. It includes both sides of the river upstream from New Orleans, the location of the 1811 Slave Insurrection and brutal response. This historical incident provides a powerful sense of community in the communities along the river. The district's extension into the West Bank urban area includes working class neighborhoods that have shared experiences in industrial labor. The extension southward at the eastern end of the district includes neighborhoods within post-1965 levees that have endured rainfall induced flooding. Experiences with high water have mobilized community activism and engendered a sense of community there.

HD 1. HD 1 divides the historical African American urban core from more recent African American neighborhoods (HD 2) that resulted from white flight and post 1960s neighborhood demographic change. These neighborhoods with similar racial demographics have different settlement histories and have developed distinct communities of interest.

HD 23. HD 23 includes historically affiliated African American neighborhoods in Natchitoches and its near suburbs. The boundary largely follows the Red River below the city and ends before the community of Creoles of Color in HD 25. It shows sensitivity to the urban communities of interest as well as keeping the Creoles of Color community separate.

HD 62, 63 and 65. The house districts in suburban Baton Rouge reflect the sequential expansion of the city since the 1950s. Districts 61, 68, 69, 65, and 101 capture the extension of additions to the city during the 1960s and 1970s. As the city population grew and sprawled outward, a series of suburban additions appeared as arcs, each a bit farther from the city center.

Each addition had residential areas, schools, and commercial districts. Internally they were of a comparable age and residents developed shared concerns based on schools, commerce, and political representation. These multiple suburban additions represent another geographic manifestation of communities of interest.

HD 67 & 2. The Remedial districts provide a realignment over the legislated districts that effectively restore communities of interest. Shifting the boundary between districts 29 and 67 to follow the Mississippi River north of the Baton Rouge central business district connects the urban African American communities in North Baton Rouge and Gardere (south of town). This alignment keeps the urban, Baton Rouge residents of East Baton Rouge Parish in one district and maintains the west bank communities of interest. The west bank had a traditional history of sugar cultivation, while north Baton Rouge was part of the cotton culture region.

IV. COMMENTS ON ADDITIONAL CHANGES

Attorneys representing the Plaintiffs requested that I extend my evaluation of the geographies of Community of Interest in terms of culture histories to Remedial Senate District 29 and House District 21, which resemble the Enacted versions of those districts.

SD 29 includes a swath of territory commonly included in the “upland south” culture region of the American South. This territory traditionally consisted of small farms with relatively fewer enslaved people than the nearby river parishes. During the last half of the 20th century, cotton cultivation declined. Much of the rural landscape was converted to pine plantations that subsequently provided employment in timber harvesting and lumber mills along with small-scale farming. A largely rural, working-class white and African American population resided in this area following the Civil War. White residents within this district share a similar culture history. Likewise, African Americans who had been emancipated after the Civil War shared culture histories with rural Blacks across much of northern Louisiana. They endured poverty, few

economic opportunities, and racial segregation, discrimination, and violence. Even Grambling University, created as an “industrial institution,” provided training in agriculture and home-making during its early years. It served nearby African Americans and thus its population largely reflected the surrounding region. It was not an academic outlier for much of its history. The extension of District 29 northward from Alexandria to the area encompassing much of Grambling and Ruston includes people with shared culture histories of others within that district. Likewise, including populations in Natchitoches, Alexandria, and the stretch along the Red River in between them connects communities with shared culture histories of the Upper Red River region, as discussed in further detail above.

HD 21 follows the Mississippi River from the Arkansas border southward to the northern edge of the West Feliciana Parish. This region has small towns, low population density, a largely rural population, a relatively large African American population, and high poverty rates. The physical landscape was formed by the land-building process of the Mississippi River and consists of mostly low lying floodplain and wetlands. Large scale agriculture concentrates on producing export oriented soybean, cotton, and rice, and before the Civil War relied chiefly on enslaved labor. Since emancipation and later mechanization in the 20th century, agriculture, which dominates the district’s economy, provides few jobs, which contributes to the high poverty rates. Given the demographic and economic history this district includes a population with deeply established and common culture histories characterized by wealthy farm owners, working class small town populations, and poor rural residents.

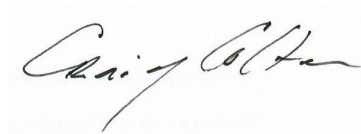
V. CONCLUSIONS

Louisiana has had a complex culture history. With a blend of Native American, French, Spanish, African, and Anglo settlers and highly distinctive regional cultural and economic practices, its cultural geography contains a set of localized landscapes that reflect these respective

pasts. The current voting practices are rooted in the attitudes, values, and beliefs that have arisen from these geographies. Taking these underlying influences into consideration can contribute to voting districts that incorporate fundamental influences not always captured by the census or voting patterns.

African American people constitute about a third of Louisiana's population. In different sections of the state, they endured different culture histories. Extreme violence during and after Reconstruction was common in the upper Red River valley. Segregation in the 20th century contributed to cohesive and self-aware communities in this region. The Free People of Color near Natchitoches, while privileged in many respects, have also emerged in the late 20th century as a self-identifying group. Creoles of Color in Acadian have not been absorbed like many of the recent arrivals and remain a distinctive group with a strong identity. Descendants of enslaved sugar cane workers along the Mississippi through the pre-emancipation and more recent culture histories have developed a strong sense of identity.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Craig E. Colten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Craig" being more prominent than the last name "Colten".

Craig E. Colten, Ph.D.
Executed on: May 23, 2025

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